

# Careers in Sport

## Sports psychologist

Sports psychology is a branch of sports science that examines the psychological factors associated with sport and exercise. Sports psychologists' work includes:

- helping athletes to achieve optimum mental health and enhance their sporting performance;
- conducting research about how participation in sport/physical activity affects an individual's psychological health and well-being.

Sports psychologists apply psychological principles in sport settings through experience gained working with athletes, coaches or sports teams as clients. They also have expert knowledge and a research base in the psychology of sport and familiarity with the field of exercise science.

Most sports psychologists are employed as University lecturers or work as consultants in the private sector. Many psychologists work normal office hours, but some also work evenings.

Starting salaries for psychologists in the NHS are around £17,000. With experience this rises to around £39,000.

This is still a comparatively new specialism in the UK and currently there is no clear career path leading to work as a sports psychologist, although it is well developed in the USA. The majority of sports psychologists are either employed as university lecturers or work as consultants with clients from both sport and business/industry. [www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Explore\\_types\\_of\\_jobs/](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Explore_types_of_jobs/)

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The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) runs an accreditation scheme for both sports psychologists and sports scientists and keeps a list of members who can offer these services.

## Sports development officer (SDO)

Sports development aims to increase the participation in sport of all sections of society. SDOs identify people who don't usually participate in sports – eg. women with young children, some ethnic groups, people with disabilities – and work to encourage and support their participation. SDOs work for local authorities, while sports-specific SDOs work for governing bodies of sport.

### Typical activities include:

- planning activities in consultation with local groups
- managing a budget
- training and employing coaches
- applying for external funding for activities and projects
- evaluating the outcome of activities
- working with individuals and groups

SDOs may be based in an office but spend time meeting community groups and sports venues. The hours of work vary and involve some evening and weekend work.

An SDO assistant earns £12,900-£16,700; a sport-specific SDO earns £20,000 plus. Managers or heads of sport earn about £40,000.

Increasingly, sports development work requires a degree in, for example, sports studies, sports science, physical education or recreation/leisure management.

## Leisure centre manager / fitness centre manager

Leisure and Fitness Centre managers promote, develop and run leisure or fitness centres. Those who work within Local Authorities are generally called Leisure Centre managers; Fitness Centre managers are more often found in the private sector. Centre managers are responsible for developing use of the centre (which may include a swimming pool, spa, sauna, bar or coffee shop), protecting the health and safety of staff and customers, as well as for motivating staff to achieve high standards of service. They control the budget, co-ordinate marketing and publicity and lead a team of assistant and duty managers to ensure the centre runs smoothly.

### Typical activities include:

- recruiting and managing staff
- meeting with a management team to plan activities
- ensuring the equipment and facilities of the centre are maintained and in good working order
- implementing health and safety procedures
- preparing and implementing a varied programme of activities which meet the needs of the local community
- researching the market and developing new facilities
- managing a budget
- keeping up to date with trends in leisure, health and fitness
- handling concerns and complaints from customers in a tactful manner
- liaising with local community groups and schools

Working hours can include evenings, weekends, late nights and shift work. Salaries vary according to the size of the centre but typically start at £12,000 to £16,000 and can rise to £40,000.

Many managers have qualifications in management but it's more common to gain experience through jobs at lower grades and then apply for promotion. Some study part-time for relevant qualifications from, for example, the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management or the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management.

### Leisure centre assistant

A leisure centre assistant typically works in a centre run by the local authority, and is managed by a Leisure Centre manager (see above). Their work involves helping and supervising people who use the leisure centre.

#### Typical activities include:

- taking payments, issuing cards and making reservations
- demonstrating how to use equipment
- checking that safety regulations are observed
- maintaining a swimming pool
- ensuring areas and facilities are clean and tidy

Leisure centre assistants typically work a 40 hour week, with evenings, weekends, late nights and shift work.

They earn between about £10,000 and £14,000.

They should have a good level of secondary education including GCSEs, an accredited coaching qualification or a revised GNVQ/Access in Leisure and Tourism. Foundation and Advanced Modern Apprenticeships may be available.

### Sports administrator

Sports administration embraces a wide range of skills and activities as well as various jobs and careers in sport and recreation. Most organisations need administrators; these posts can involve various administrative and organisational tasks. Traditionally, sports administration has been associated with the administration of clubs and governing bodies in the voluntary sector, or with a national body such as Sport England.

#### Typical activities include:

- managing budgets, raising sponsorship and/or applying for funding
- organising meetings, training, coaching, conferences and other events
- marketing and promoting events and activities

- collecting and monitoring information
- producing promotional literature, reports and events materials
- managing and supervising staff
- liaising with sports councils, regional committees and national governing bodies of sport
- consulting with clients, local communities and local sporting organisations
- advocacy and lobbying policy-makers and decision-makers
- developing and implementing policies and strategies
- working at a local, regional, national or international level

Working hours can include evenings and weekends. Travel to meet clubs, sports development officers, sponsors, event organisers etc is common. The work is usually team-based and may involve liaising with staff from a variety of different organisations although periods of working alone are sometimes common.

Sports administrators work at different levels which require different levels of experience and qualifications; this is reflected in the salary which varies widely between jobs but starts at about £14,000 and can rise to about £40,000.

This area is open to all graduates although entry without a degree or HND is sometimes possible. Pre-entry experience is essential and often more important than formal qualifications.

### Sports coach/instructor

Coaches work with teams or individuals to enable them to take up sport and develop their abilities. They identify the needs of the individual or team and plan suitable training programmes. As well as helping individuals to gain skills, techniques and knowledge, they have an important role in inspiring confidence and the right attitude. Coaches are role models and need to gain the respect and trust of those they work with. They need to be able to help, instruct, lead, encourage and communicate with those they coach.

#### Typical activities include:

- evaluating performance and providing suitable feedback, balancing criticism with positive comments so that participants are encouraged to fulfil their potential
- identifying strengths and weaknesses in participants'

- performance and producing appropriate training programmes
- being flexible, as participants vary considerably in the level and manner in which they require help and guidance
- developing a knowledge and understanding of fitness, injury, nutrition and sports science
- communicating effectively
- inspiring confidence and positive attitudes

Coaches work in sports centres, health clubs, youth clubs, swimming pools, and children's activity schemes. They usually work evenings and weekends. Opportunities vary from sport to sport, with most full-time posts in professional sports such as football, cricket, horse-riding and tennis. Full-time positions for coaching professionals are scarce and competition is fierce. There are opportunities for coaching abroad, for example in the US and Canada.

There are thousands of coaches working in the UK; about 80% of them are volunteers. Some coach part-time, many are self-employed and work for several clubs or teams. Full-time salaries vary between £12,000 and £40,000. Part-time rates vary between £6 and £20 per hour.

A coach must have experience in their sport and qualifications approved by the relevant national governing body.

### Health and fitness instructor

A health and fitness instructor shows people how to do exercises and how to use exercise equipment correctly, in groups or one-to-one. They may specialise in teaching one activity such as aerobics, or yoga, or they may instruct in a range of activities.

#### Typical activities include:

- planning a programme according to the needs of the group
- marketing and promoting your services
- keeping up to date with health and fitness information and issues
- keeping up to date with health and safety regulations
- using good interpersonal skills, being out-going, enthusiastic and motivating

Some instructors work full-time, often during evenings and weekends. Many work part-time. They work in gyms, swimming pools, leisure and fitness centres, health centres or sometimes

in schools or in clients' homes.

Salaries start at about £11,000 a year and can rise to £30,000 a year. Freelance instructors are usually paid £10-£20 an hour.

Fitness instructors do not need academic qualifications but a specialist qualification is required, such as the NVQ in Exercise and Fitness at Level 2 or 3, or a qualification from the YMCA or OCR.

### Sport and exercise scientist

Sport and exercise scientists study, research and advise clients on scientific aspects of sport and exercise. They might work with individuals to assess and devise individual training programmes to improve their sporting performance or physical well-being. They might work within a research centre or in sports equipment manufacturing to investigate the equipment, conditions or training required by athletes to enhance their performance. Or they might teach college or university students on courses such as Sport Studies or Leisure Management.

#### Typical activities include:

- working with individual athletes to develop programmes to help them reach their optimum potential
- laboratory-based work to test athletes' performance during training – eg. doing tests of aerobic capacity, blood, body fat, lactic acid, lung functioning
- having a good understanding of the science of health and fitness
- working with people such as athletes, performance directors of National Governing Bodies, coaches, others scientists.

Working hours vary with employer, but weekend and evening work is common. Employment opportunities exist in national governing bodies of sport, at universities and colleges, in sports centre management and with Sports Councils.

Salaries vary and start at about £16,000, rising to £25,000 for those with experience. Some consultants earn £35,000 or more.

Sport and exercise scientists are usually graduates and have at least a first degree in sports science. Some have postgraduate, coaching or teaching qualifications.

### Sports physiotherapist

A sports physiotherapist helps athletes operate at peak performance, gives advice on preventing injuries and helping them recover from injuries. Physios use a range of treatments, including manipulation, massage, taping, heat treatment, therapeutic exercise, electro-therapy, ultrasound, acupuncture and hydrotherapy. They can work with top-level athletes as well as amateur sportspeople. They may specialise in one sport or in one aspect of physiotherapy, such as rehabilitation.

#### Typical activities include:

- writing reports and patient case notes;
- collecting patient statistics;
- educating and advising patients and their carers about how to prevent and/or improve the condition;
- seeing patients for several consultations over weeks or months in order to make progress;
- keeping up to date with new technologies available for treating patients;
- liaising with other health care personnel to supply and receive relevant information about the background and progress of patients as well as to refer patients who require other specific medical attention

Most sports physiotherapists work irregular hours, including evenings and weekends. They work in the public or private sector, in clinics, exercise areas, pools, and sports centres or with individual clubs.

A newly qualified physiotherapist in the NHS is paid about £17,000. A senior physio can earn up to £26,000.

To train as a physiotherapist, you must take a physiotherapy degree approved by the Health Professions Council and you may take an MSc course in sport or rehabilitation science.

### Outdoor instructor

Outdoor instructors lead adults and children in a range of activities, usually based in the countryside. They may specialise in outdoor recreation, outdoor development training or outdoor education, or do all three. They may also teach about nature and the environment and nature-based school subjects, lead competitive games and arrange evening social activities.

#### Typical activities include:

- designing, marketing and delivering programmes for individuals or groups such as guided walks, rock climbing expeditions, watersports etc
- teaching, supporting and encouraging participants
- giving advice on safety equipment and how to avoid injuries

Working hours can be irregular and vary widely. Evening and weekend work is likely. Many jobs are offered on a short-term basis, for example, over the summer season. Instructors work in local authorities, charitable organisations and commercial firms. With experience, they may operate freelance or set up their own firm.

Salaries start at about £9,000. Experienced instructors earn about £12,000. Senior instructors with special skills may earn up to £20,000.

Some jobs require proficiency or coaching awards, or formal academic or teaching qualifications.

### Sportswoman

There are two categories of sportswomen – amateur and professional. Amateurs may compete at the highest levels but do not make money from their sport. Most combine their sport with other employment. Only a small number of women's sports have professionals, eg. athletics, equestrian sports, tennis, golf. Very few people make a full-time living from their sport. Those who do can earn money through prize money and advertising products.

#### Typical activities include:

- training at least twice a day
- working with trainers, coaches, nutritionists, sports scientists, sports psychologists
- travelling long distances to train and compete
- dealing with the media
- seeking sponsorship

Most professional sports do not require formal qualifications but a good standard of education is useful, especially for taking up a second career. Amateur and professional sports do require talent and ability. Each sport has a national governing body that can advise about the best way to progress in a chosen sport.

Some universities have sponsorship schemes to support sportspeople to pursue training whilst studying.

## Sports journalist

There are opportunities to cover sport in TV, radio and the press. Journalists keep people informed about events happening locally and globally. They may do this by writing news and feature articles for newspapers, magazines or on-line publications, or for broadcasting on radio and television.

### Typical activities include:

- researching events, people, stories
- generating stories by attending meetings and press conferences
- interviewing people over the phone
- writing articles about sports news or issues
- working with editors to discuss what kinds of stories are needed
- working quickly and to tight deadlines
- having a genuine interest in the sports you cover, so that you can be well informed about current events in sports

Working hours vary. They can be long, irregular and include evenings and weekends. Shift and part-time work are possible. Journalists are based in an office but also spend time out of the office, chasing up stories.

Trainees on local papers earn between £8,000 and £12,000, on a magazine up to £14,000, and in radio or television up to £21,000. With experience, they could earn from £15,000 to over £40,000.

There are several routes to journalism, with fewer opportunities to specialise in sport from the outset. Some are recruited by the media as trainees and offered basic training; others follow full-time journalism or photography courses at college or university. The minimum entry requirements are five GCSE passes (grades A-C) (one of which must be English), although over 60% of journalists have a degree.

## Sports photographer

Sports photographers are essential for reporting sport. As well as daily local and national papers, there are hundreds of special-interest magazines and books dedicated to sports that require photographs. Photographing sport presents a challenge because it is usually fast moving, because weather conditions are not always ideal for getting good quality pictures and because there is competition from film and video.

### Typical activities include:

- taking pictures of sportswomen and men, either action shots during or pictures before and after games, matches and events;
- being prepared to start by covering minor local events and trying to market the resulting pictures to sports participants, their friends and relatives;
- working with sports writers and editors to discuss what kind of pictures they would like;

- working quickly and getting material back to publishers
- being very competent with equipment and able to get the best out of poor conditions such as when there is bad weather
- having a genuine interest in the sports you cover, so that you can be well informed and match pictures to events, eg team numbers, names of jockeys, racing colours, etc.

Sports photographers work either for newspapers or magazines, though many are freelance, covering events and selling their work to appropriate publications. Working hours vary. They can be long, irregular and include evenings and weekends. Shift and part-time work are possible. Self-employment is common in the industry.

Trainee photographers earn around £8,000 to £9,500. Established photographers can earn £30,000 plus.

There are no set entry requirements but employers normally require a good standard of secondary education. It is possible to gain experience under the guidance of a successful photographer. Academic qualifications may be required for entry to some courses, although there is no direct link between formal training and employment.

## Useful Contacts:

### The Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Sports Medicine

is the clinical interest group recognised by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy as representing physiotherapists who have an interest and involvement in Sports Physiotherapy.

5 Ewden House, 12 Holyrood Avenue  
Lodge Moor, Sheffield S10 4NW  
Tel: 0987 456 4432  
Fax: 0987 456 4432  
www.acpsm.org/

### British Association of Advisors & Lecturers in PE

is an association for advisers, lecturers, inspectors, consultants, advisory teachers and other professionals with qualifications in physical education, sport and dance.

It exists to promote and maintain high standards and safe practice on all aspects and at all levels of physical education.  
Leeds Met Uni, Carnegie Faculty of Sport  
Fairfax Hall, Leeds LS6 3QS  
Tel: 0113 283 6162  
www.baalpe.org

### The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES)

is the UK professional body for all those with an interest in the science of sport and exercise. Sport and Exercise Science is the application of scientific principles to the promotion, maintenance and enhancement of sport and exercise related behaviours.

Within Coachwise Building  
Unit 2/3 Chelsea Close  
Off Amberley Road  
Armley  
Leeds LS12 4HP  
Tel: 0113 289 1020  
www.bases.org.uk

### Central Council of Physical Recreation

is the representative body for National Sports Organisations.

Francis House  
Francis Street  
London SW1P 1DE  
Tel: 020 7854 8500  
Fax: 020 7854 8501  
Email: info@ccpr.org.uk

### Central YMCA

provides a range of services including fitness qualifications and training and supports a range of other charities and organisations across the UK.  
Great Russell Street  
London WC1  
Tel: 02073431700  
www.centralymca.org.uk

### English Federation Of Disability Sport

aims to be the united voice of disability sport in England and to expand sporting opportunities for disabled people and actively increase the number of disabled people involved in sport.

### North East

The House of Sport  
University of Durham  
South End House  
South Road  
Durham DH1 3TG  
Tel: 0191 334 7207  
Mobile: 07764 291667  
Minicom: 0191 334 7210  
Email: northeast@efds.co.uk

### Head Office

Manchester Metropolitan University  
Alsager Campus  
Hassall Road  
Alsager  
Stoke on Trent ST7 2HL  
Tel: 0161 247 5294  
Fax: 0161 247 6895  
Minicom: 0161 247 5644  
Email: federation@efds.co.uk

### Fitness Industry Association

*is the trade body for the health and fitness sector.*

115 Eastbourne Mews  
London W2 6LQ  
020 7298 6730  
www.fia.org.uk

### Institute for Sports Parks and Leisure (ISPAL)

*is the professional body for sport, parks and leisure professionals. IPSAL was formed after a merger between ILAM and ISRM. The Grotto House*

ILAM House, Lower Basildon  
Reading RG8 9NE  
Tel: 01491 874800  
Fax: 01491 874801  
Email: info@ipsal.org.uk

### The British Psychological Society -

*Division of Sport & Exercise Psychology represents the interests of psychologists working in sport and exercise settings. The division was formed in 2004, in response to the increase in academic status and public recognition of sport and exercise psychology. Membership is drawn from those working in academic settings and professional practice. St Andrews House  
48 Princess Road East  
Leicestershire LE1 7DR  
Tel: 0116 254 9568  
Email: enquiry@bps.org.uk  
www.bps.org.uk/spex/spex\_home.cfm*

### National Governing Bodies

*There is an NGB for each sport. Contacts are available from Sport England. See [www.sportengland.org/resources/resource\\_ul.shtml#govern](http://www.sportengland.org/resources/resource_ul.shtml#govern)*

### National Training Organisation for Sport and Recreation (SPRITO)

*providing development, innovation, regional and European affairs for the Sport and Active Leisure Sector.*  
24 - 32 Stephenson Way  
London NW1 2HD  
Tel: 020 7388 7755  
www.Sprito.org.uk

### Sport England

*is an organisation committed to creating opportunities for people to start in sport, stay in sport and succeed in sport. It provides the strategic lead for sport in England and is responsible for delivering the Government's sporting objectives.*

### Sport England North East

Aykley Head  
Durham DH1 5UU  
Tel: 0191 384 9595  
Email: info@sportengland.org

### Sport England - Head Office

3rd Floor Victoria House  
Bloomsbury Square  
London WC1B 4SE  
Tel: 020 7273 1500  
Fax: 020 7383 5740  
Email: info@sportengland.org

### Sporting Equals

*is a national initiative working to promote racial equality in sport throughout England. It is a partnership between Sport England and the Commission for Racial Equality. Fairgate House  
Kings Road, Tyseley  
Birmingham B11 2AA  
Tel: 0113 389 3636  
Fax: 0113 389 3601  
www.cre.gov.uk/speqs*

### BECON Black and Ethnic Community Organisation Network

*In the North East, the work which is done elsewhere by Sporting Equals, is the responsibility of BECON  
9th Floor, Cale Cross, 156 Pilgrim Street  
Newcastle NE1 6SU  
Tel: 0191 245 3850  
Email: info@becon.uk.com*

### sports coach UK

*is the national coaching foundation.*  
114 Cardigan Road  
Headingley  
Leeds LS6 3BJ  
Tel: 0113 2744802  
Fax: 0113 2755019  
Email: coaching@sportscoachuk.org

### UK Sport

*is the agency charged by the Government with responsibility for creating a strategy for developing high-performance sport in the UK. It aims to lead the UK to sporting excellence by supporting winning athletes, world class events, and ethically fair and drug-free sport.*  
40 Bernard Street  
London WC1N 1ST  
Tel: 020 7211 5100  
www.uk sport.gov.uk

### Women's Sports Foundation

*is the leading voice of women's sport – dedicated to improving and promoting opportunities for women and girls in sport and physical activity.*

### WSF - North East

c/o Sport England  
Aykley Head  
Durham DH1 5UU  
Tel: 0191 384 9595  
Email: k.storie@wsf.org.uk

### WSF - Head Office

3rd Floor, Victoria House  
Bloomsbury Square  
London WC1B 4SE  
Tel: 020 7273 1740  
Email: info@wsf.org.uk  
www.wsf.org.uk

