

Athletes and Sports Competitors

SOC: 27-2021 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$62,360

Median Salary

19,100

Employment

+5.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: No formal educational credential

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Low Risk - 15.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

■■ Work-Life Balance

6.3/10 - Good work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	5.0/10	Investigative	5.6/10
Artistic	9.6/10	Social	7.4/10
Enterprising	6.2/10	Conventional	4.4/10

■ Top Skills Required

Athleticism, Concentration, Decision-making skills, Dedication, Hand-eye coordination, Stamina, Teamwork

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Athletes and Sports Competitors are professional performers who train and compete at the highest levels of **physical performance, skill, and strategy** in individual or team sports. Their work centers on mastering sport-specific techniques, maintaining peak physical condition, and performing under intense pressure in competitive environments. Success depends on discipline, resilience, and continuous improvement.

This career is well suited for individuals who thrive on competition, rigorous training, and pushing the limits of human performance.

What Do Athletes and Sports Competitors Do?

Athletes dedicate their careers to training, competing, and representing teams or themselves in organized sporting events.

Common responsibilities include:

- Training daily to improve strength, speed, endurance, and skill
- Practicing sport-specific techniques and strategies
- Competing in professional, amateur, or elite-level events
- Following coaching plans and performance feedback
- Maintaining physical conditioning, nutrition, and recovery routines
- Studying opponents and game tactics
- Representing teams, sponsors, or organizations publicly

Types of Athletes and Competitors

Athletes compete across a wide range of sports and formats:

- Team Sport Athletes: Compete in sports such as basketball, football, soccer, or hockey.
- Individual Sport Athletes: Compete in sports like tennis, golf, boxing, or track and field.
- Combat Sports Competitors: Participate in wrestling, martial arts, or mixed martial arts.
- Endurance Athletes: Specialize in long-distance or stamina-based sports.
- Extreme or Action Sports Athletes: Compete in sports such as skateboarding, snowboarding, or BMX.

Skills and Abilities Needed

Athletes combine physical capability with mental toughness and strategic awareness.

Core Performance Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Training and Development Pathway

Becoming a professional athlete typically involves years of progressive development:

- Early Skill Development: Youth leagues, clubs, or individual training
- High-Level Coaching and Competition: Advanced amateur, collegiate, or academy play
- Specialized Training: Strength, conditioning, nutrition, and mental performance
- Tryouts, Drafts, or Qualification Events: Entry into professional or elite competition
- Ongoing Training and Performance Management: Continuous improvement and injury prevention

Paths vary significantly by sport and level of competition.

Where Do Athletes and Sports Competitors Work?

Athletes compete and train in diverse environments:

- Professional Sports Teams and Leagues
- Training Facilities and Performance Centers
- Stadiums, Arenas, and Competition Venues

- National and International Sporting Events
- Independent or Sponsored Competition Circuits

Work schedules often include travel, irregular hours, and seasonal competition.

How Much Do Athletes and Sports Competitors Earn?

Earnings vary widely by sport, league, and performance level:

- Developmental or Minor League Athletes: Often earn modest or supplemental income
- Professional League Athletes: May earn substantial salaries
- Elite or Star Athletes: Can earn significant income through contracts, endorsements, and sponsorships

Income is often variable and performance-based.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career is extremely demanding physically and mentally. Athletes face intense competition, injury risk, performance pressure, and uncertain career length. The challenge lies in maintaining peak condition, adapting to competition, and managing short career windows.

Who Should Consider Becoming an Athlete or Sports Competitor?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Are deeply passionate about a sport
- Enjoy intense physical training and competition
- Can handle pressure, criticism, and uncertainty
- Are disciplined and goal-oriented
- Are willing to commit years to development

How to Prepare Early

- Participate in organized sports from a young age
- Seek quality coaching and competitive opportunities
- Develop strength, conditioning, and flexibility habits
- Learn about nutrition, recovery, and injury prevention
- Build mental resilience and performance focus

Athletes and sports competitors dedicate their lives to excellence in performance, transforming discipline, talent, and perseverance into moments of competition that inspire fans and redefine the limits of human potential.