

How To Select A Fitness Class

Contributed by Administrator
Tuesday, 02 May 2006
Last Updated Sunday, 01 April 2007

HOW TO SELECT A FITNESS CLASS

Studios around Long Island are adding different types of fitness classes to their schedules, but which one is right for you? Selecting a class that fits your goals, physical conditions and fitness level is important. We offer these tips for finding a safe, effective fitness class to include in your workout:

- **Determine Your Goals.** Start by thinking about why you want to start a fitness program. For instance, your doctor may have suggested that you start an exercise program to lose weight.. Make sure the fitness program meets ALL your body's needs. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) identifies three components of a balanced fitness program. These are:

- **Aerobic fitness.** When you're aerobically fit, your body converts oxygen into energy more efficiently. You have more endurance and can work out at a higher intensity for a longer length of time. Examples of aerobic exercises are aerobic dance, step classes, running, bicycling and swimming.\

- **Muscular fitness.** Your muscles are strong when you're fit. They can also endure activity longer. You use your muscles all day long, whether it's to lift a book from the shelf or walk from your workplace to your car. You can improve your muscular fitness by taking a strength training or muscle toning class.

- **Flexibility.** When you're flexible, you can bend your joints and muscles through their full range of motion. To keep your body limber, stretch your muscles safely and regularly. Classes that promote flexibility include yoga and Pilates.

- **Consider Your Physical Limitations.** Always check with your doctor before beginning a new fitness program. Most educated, experienced fitness instructors are sensitive to their students' physical limitations and knowledgeable of the contraindications that might be applicable. However, you also need to recognize that your physical condition should influence the type of class you choose. For example, if you work out on an elliptical trainer at home, but you aren't very flexible, a class that emphasizes flexibility, such as yoga or pilates, may be an option. Do you lift weights at home? Then consider signing up for an aerobics class to balance your fitness program. Do you love to dance, then maybe you should consider a cardio dance class like Zumba.

- **Ask Questions in Advance.** Before beginning a class, ask the instructor if it is appropriate for you and will help you meet your specific goals.

- **Consider Your Likes and Dislikes.** Think about activities and sports that you've enjoyed in the past. Write them down. Doing so will help you select a fitness program you'll enjoy. And if you have fun doing the exercises you've selected, you'll keep doing them. For instance, if you have a blast on the dance floor, you may find yourself coming back for the aerobics class, which features dance moves such as salsa or hip-hop.

- **Try A Variety of Classes.** Don't be reluctant to admit that a certain style of fitness class or instruction is not for you. Try as many classes and instructors as necessary.

- **Listen To Your Body.** During class, do not force or strain and remember to breathe. Do not attempt exercises or movements that feel uncomfortable or painful.

- **Discuss Your Experience With Your Instructor.** Inform your instructor if certain movements or exercises are problematic for you. He or she should be able to offer an explanation and suitable modifications.

- **Find Out About Your Instructor's Experience and Credentials.** Ask your instructor about his or her fitness training and teaching experience. Many different certifications are available. Your teacher's education and experience should demonstrate a commitment to safety, professionalism and ongoing education.

- Facility. Beyond certification, potential students should look for a clean, convenient facility that offers the types of classes they want and whose staff is professional and open to their concerns.
- Be Patient With Your Progress. Mastering exercise choreography takes time. Don't be discouraged if you do not learn as quickly as you would like. The more you practice, the more you will realize the many benefits of the exercise.