

Things To Consider In Selecting A Health Club

Before you can get started with a physical fitness program, decide what type of equipment you want to use (free weights, machines, Nautilus, Cybex, etc.) and where you want to train (home, health club, hard-core gym, office, etc.). The best choice for you is **the facility and equipment that fits you and your lifestyle best** and will keep you motivated enough to continue using it on a regular basis. Making the wrong choices will keep you from continuing to work out.

You should also select the *type* of equipment that you as an individual enjoy working with. While each type of equipment may look and feel different from the next, they all work the same muscle groups, so choose whatever feels best to you. Attitude and commitment are more important than equipment in achieving your goals. Many elite athletes have faced limitations and overcome them. With a positive attitude and enough determination, you can overcome any obstacle.

When selecting the type of equipment to use, the most important characteristic to look for is the proper feel of the equipment. Try it before you choose! Don't choose it just because it's supposed to be good, and a famous person endorses it. If it feels smooth and comfortable without feeling awkward it is right for *you*.

SELECTING THE TYPE OF EQUIPMENT

When making your decision, ask yourself:

1. Does it feel consistent and smooth throughout the entire range of motion? If not, move on.
2. Does it fit you comfortably? Make sure that the seat adjustments fit you, especially if you are tall, short, narrow or wide.
3. Does it apply too much resistance at the beginning and not at the end or vice versa? If yes, try another.
4. Are there any sticking points? Any points throughout the range of motion where it is not smooth, or tension is not being applied equally. If yes, it's not for you.
5. Is it well maintained? Particularly when selecting a health club, it is very important (whether it be for your safety or the achievement of your goals) that the equipment is maintained properly.
6. Does it hurt your joints or limit you in any way? If yes, don't consider this one.

SELECTING THE TYPE OF CLUB

In selecting a health club, you should consider the following:

1. *What type of club do you prefer?*
 - a. Hard-core - Mostly bodybuilders and powerlifters. High on atmosphere, low on luxury, and member pampering.
 - b. Fitness - All types of people are serious about getting healthy. Service-oriented and semi-luxurious.
 - c. Social - For those who prefer to mingle. Very large, comfortable

places with juice bars, lounges, etc.

2. *What amenities are you looking for?* There should be lockers and hairdryers provided in the locker rooms and possibly towel service as well. Tanning and massage are very popular. Ask about childcare.
3. *What fits your budget the best?* The more amenities, the higher the cost. They should also be willing to let you try the club at no cost or apply a walk-in fee towards your membership. Try to visit the club for a few days before deciding if it is for you.
4. *Distance from home or office?* It should be convenient to get to at all times and on all days.
5. *How long has the club been in business?* If you buy a long-term membership, the club might not be around for the length of your membership. If you are going to make a large investment as found in an extended-year plan, find out as much as you can about its financial solvency. Ask for some hard figures, and what ifs (what if the club closes prior to the end of your membership?)
6. *What is their total membership?* How many of the members are active? Inactive? There may be a reason. Some clubs, especially the larger ones, might be reluctant to give out this information. Explain to them that this information is important in helping you to make up your mind about the club. With highly advertised club's membership size might be a problem when trying to use the equipment when you want to. This information is vital.
7. *Does this club use high-pressure sales tactics?* If so, you might spend more time upgrading your membership options than actually working out.
8. *Is there enough equipment to handle the current membership, and is the equipment well maintained?* If there are lines to use the equipment, you may find it very difficult to get a good workout. When taking your tour of the facility, look at the condition of the equipment. Are there many pieces out of service? Do the pads need replacement? Do the machines look like they need replacing?
9. *How busy are they during peak hours?* Usually, peak hours include 5:30 a.m. - 7:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. Make sure you make it a point to visit the club during the time you most likely will be using it. This will give you a good feeling of how busy it is and what kinds of lines, if any, you might encounter.
10. *What about employee participation?* Are their employees knowledgeable and helpful? Are they certified? If not, be wary of advice. Are the employees active participants? They should help as spotters, and coaches, and encourage you to perform at your best every workout. Are there enough employees to handle the

membership? It does no good if no one has the time for you.

ALTERNATIVES TO HEALTH CLUBS

If you don't want to fight all the people, don't have the extra time to drive to a gym, or just can't find a facility to suit your needs, a home gym is the best idea. However, keep in mind that unless you have the money to invest in a well-equipped home gym, a commercial gym will offer more variety and safety.

If you decide to go with a home gym, visit a store that specializes in fitness equipment and try it out, as well as ask a good deal of questions. These questions should include, but are not limited to: Will they deliver the equipment? Will they assemble it? What future support do they offer? What charges, if any, are associated with these services? A home gym can be a substantial investment. Once you do decide to spend the money, make sure you are getting what you need.

With the rigorous time demands of today, a home gym is a great alternative to help you achieve your fitness goals.

Excerpt from The Final Edge: Look & Feel Your Best

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