

KICK YOUR WAY TO FITNESS

Are you bored with your current fitness routine?

It may be time to kick your way to one of the hottest workouts around. Kickboxing, also referred to as boxing aerobics and cardio kickboxing, is a hybrid of boxing, martial arts and aerobics that offers an intense cross-training and total-body workout.

It blends a mixture of high-power exercise routines that strengthen the body and mind, decrease stress and hone reflexes, while also increasing endurance and cardiovascular power. While kickboxing's roots are in full-contact fighting, it has found a safe and very effective niche in the fitness community.

While some estimates of kickboxing's calorie-burning potential have reached as high as 500 to 800 calories per hour, ACE-sponsored research suggests that only very large individuals working out at exceptionally high intensities are likely to burn that many calories.

Instead, a 135-pound person is likely to burn 350 to 450 calories during a typical 50-minute class that consists of a warm-up, aerobic period and cool-down. There are, however, other important factors to consider before taking the first kick.

What is your current fitness level?

Keep in mind that many clubs may not offer classes that are based on progression. Even if your current routine features a hearty combination of cross-training workouts, you may want to take it easy at first, and then build as your body adapts.

For this reason, an hour-long session may not be the wisest choice for someone who isn't used to this level of concentrated activity.

Familiarize Yourself With the Basics

Remember, adequate warm-up and close attention to proper technique are paramount. Classes should begin with basic stretches and a light cardiovascular warm-up such as push-ups and jumping jacks.

A typical aerobic kickboxing routine involves a series of repetitive punches alternating with hand strikes, kicks and then a combination of all three. The repetitions help participants focus on proper technique while engaging several muscle groups and getting a fierce cardiovascular workout.

After the main section of the routine,



stretches and floor exercises are commonly performed as a cool-down.

Don't forget to wear loose clothing that allows freedom of movement during your kickboxing workout and drink plenty of water.

Beginner Beware

When attending your first class, try to avoid these common mistakes:

- Wearing weights or holding dumbbells when throwing punches, which puts your joints in danger of injury
- Locking your joints when throwing kicks or punches
- Overextending kicks (beginners should avoid high kicks until they get used to the routine and become more flexible)
- Giving in to group peer pressure and exercising beyond fatigue

Of course, you should ask your instructor about his or her training. Cardio kickboxing is a combination of martial arts and aerobics, and employs different techniques than a "pure" martial arts class.

Many teachers may have boxing or martial arts training, but may not have the appropriate class experience or be properly certified by an organization such as the American Council on Exercise. Finally, once you understand the basics of this stress-relieving, total-body workout, you can kick your way to a new level of fitness.

Basic Moves and Equipment

It may seem awkward at first, but the basic moves in a kickboxing class can be mastered with time, patience and practice.

A prepared class will have mirrors, a punching or "heavy" bag and hit pads for participants to use.

To give you an idea of what to expect in a beginner class, here are two basic lower-body kickboxing moves that work the hamstrings, gluteals and quadriceps:

- **Roundhouse kick**—Starting from a basic stance (side of body facing bag, knees slightly bent, feet shoulder-length apart), lift your right knee and point it just to the right of your target. Pivot on your left foot as you extend your right leg. Kick the target with the top of your foot.
- **Side kick**—From the basic stance, pull your right knee up toward your left shoulder. Pivot on your left foot as you snap your right leg into your target. Strike with either the outside edge of your foot or your heel.

Additional Resources

ACE's Guide to Kickboxing Fitness DVD: www.acefitness.org/acestore/p-305-aces-guide-to-kickboxing-fitness.aspx

American Council on Exercise—*Kickboxing Fitness* by Tony Ordas & Tim Rochford: www.acefitness.org/acestore/p-289-kickboxing-fitness.aspx

If you are interested in information on other health and fitness topics, contact: American Council on Exercise, 4851 Paramount Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, 800-825-3636; or, go online at www.acefitness.org and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts™



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