

FitFacts®

How to Choose an Exercise Video

THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF EXERCISE OPTIONS. WALKING, RUNNING, BIKING, SWIMMING, STRENGTH TRAINING, GROUP FITNESS CLASSES—THE LIST GOES ON AND ON.

But what if you have time constraints caused by a busy home and work life? Or you live in a rural area and the closest gym is 100 miles away? What if you are too shy to ask about the fitness classes at your local gym, let alone actually walk into one?

Luckily, another option is available to people who want to enjoy the benefits of exercise but prefer to do it from the comfort of home. Exercise videos are a good alternative to a gym membership when there are monetary or logistic concerns.

While some videos are boring or hard to follow, there are many that are well produced and have the marks of a seasoned, professional fitness instructor. Before you warm up the VCR or DVD player, however, you should make sure that exercise videos are right for you.

ARE YOU A VIDEO PERSON?

Exercise tapes are like running shoes: One size does not fit all. You might get claustrophobic just thinking about doing a step routine in the 3- by 5-foot space in front of your TV. You may be the type of person for whom the act of driving to the gym and walking in to a room full of people is the only way to get you motivated.

On the other hand, you may like the idea of dancing to the beat of a different drummer in your pajamas and aerobic shoes. And if you need a little variety, or reside in an area with bad weather, this may be the perfect mode of exercise for you.

KEEP GOALS IN PERSPECTIVE

While videos can motivate and inspire you, understand that they can't shut your kitchen cabinet door or magically melt away 40 pounds in three weeks. It's very important not to give in to all the hyped marketing surrounding many videos that may make unsubstantiated promises. In fact, any video that promises quick weight loss or instant results is probably unsafe and should be avoided.

If you are really interested in purchasing a video, do some research and find out if one of your friends has the same video or if your local video or library store carries it. That way, you can try it before you buy it.

When starting out, look for boxes that indicate that the video is for beginners. Choosing an intermediate or advanced tape can be frustrating and lead to discontinuation of the program.

FIND AN INSPIRING INSTRUCTOR

Ideally, you should shop for a video that features a certified, experienced instructor who includes a warm-up and a cool-down in the workout. Avoid videos that feature a celebrity as the main selling point, especially if he or she tries to teach the routine alone, without support from a trained fitness professional.

Also, it is important that the instructor offers alternatives to the main program if it is too difficult for you. These are usually referred to as modifications. Modifications are included in good videos for a reason, and you shouldn't feel out

of shape or otherwise embarrassed if you have to do a combination on the floor instead of on an 8-inch step.

STRIKE A BALANCE

No matter what style exercise video you choose—such as funk, ultimate step or yoga—work toward building a collection that fosters balance and overall conditioning. This includes aerobics, strength training and stretching. Many tapes combine all of these elements.

Perhaps most importantly, dedicate yourself to whatever style or method gets your blood flowing and your body moving.

ASK QUESTIONS FIRST, SWEAT LATER

Here are some questions to ask before choosing an exercise video:

- Am I familiar with the instructor? Is the instructor certified by a certification organization accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies like the American Council on Exercise (ACE)?
- Before I buy it, does a friend own the same video or can I rent it? Do they make any outlandish claims on the case? ("Lose 20 pounds in two weeks!" or "Firm up in only five minutes a day!")
- Does the video suit my specific needs?
- Do I have enough room to do the workout safely?
- Do I need special equipment or props (steps, barbells, stretch rope, chair)?
- How do I begin? It is a good idea to watch the video all the way through at least once before you attempt the workout so that you are well prepared.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Collage Video](#)

[WebMD](#)