

Fit Facts™

FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE®

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

START WITH NATIONAL CERTIFICATION

Certification from a nationally recognized certifying organization is the first thing to look for. It's your assurance that you're working with a group fitness instructor who has the knowledge to provide you with a safe and effective workout.

Certification is more than a piece of paper. For example, ACE, which is the largest not-for-profit fitness-certifying organization in the world, requires group fitness instructors to pass an intensive three-and-a-half hour, 175-question exam that covers exercise science and programming knowledge, including anatomy, kinesiology, health screening, basic nutrition and instructional methods.

After checking certification, there are a few other things you should take into consideration when choosing a group fitness instructor. Here's a guide:

✓ Choose an instructor who accommodates your needs

A group fitness instructor should be able to design moves that help you get the most out of your workout — whether you're a beginner, intermediate or an advanced fitness participant. The class should not fatigue or exhaust you. And you certainly should not feel pain during or after it.

✓ Look for an instructor who is interested in you

A good instructor will want everyone to feel welcome. Making you feel welcome means the instructor should try to learn your name, make eye contact

during the session, and most important, put your workout before his or hers.

✓ Make sure the emphasis is on personal accomplishment

A good group fitness instructor will emphasize personal accomplishment and won't create a competitive environment. The class should focus on improving or maintaining your health, not just on looking better.



✓ Select a good teacher

A good teacher will explain the benefits of each exercise and demonstrate how to do the exercise. A good teacher will also demonstrate modifications for intermediate and advanced movements and explain if you should avoid an exercise if you have an existing injury. A big part of being a good instructor is the ability to be a good teacher.

✓ Be sure you're having fun

The right instructor will be dedicated to helping you enjoy the class, committed to making your workout the best it can be and will be able to translate his or her enthusiasm into a fun class. Remember, the only way you will stay with a program of regular aerobic exercise is if you look forward to attending the class.

✓ Check the intensity of the exercise and the way the instructor relates to you

For an effective cardiovascular workout, you must exercise at a certain intensity during class. The instructor should have you take your heart rate or teach you how to rate your level of exertion using the perceived exertion scale. Before you even begin your workout, the instructor should ask you some general questions about your fitness level and invite your feedback.

✓ The final decision is yours

Choosing a group fitness instructor and class is a very personal decision. The class that's right for you may not be right for another person, and the same applies to an instructor. Take your time and make the right decisions.

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