

HOW TO DESIGN YOUR OWN HOME GYM

Exercising at home is a good alternative for people who are short on time or enjoy the convenience of working out at home, can't afford or don't want to spend their disposable income on a club membership, or just can't seem to make it across town to the local gym.

Many people are interested in setting up home gyms, but are intimidated by the many available choices. Before you invest time and money in designing a gym of your own, take a minute to consider your fitness needs, available space, budget and other factors that will determine how much time and money you are able to devote to home fitness.

Quality Matters

Home gym equipment is of higher quality and more space-efficient than ever before. The real challenge is choosing from the many options. Before purchasing a piece of equipment, make sure you test it out yourself. The following factors should be considered when creating a home gym.

What is your budget?

You get what you pay for. Expensive equipment is usually priced that way for a reason. High-quality equipment that is reliable and will work for years to come can't be made cheaply. However, there are options for every budget.

For example, if you really want a \$1500 stair stepper, but it's not in your budget, some qual-

ity step-training DVDs and a set of benches with risers for around \$150 is a good alternative. This would be a better choice than spending \$300 on a low-quality machine that will quickly wear out. You may also want to consider purchasing used commercial equipment from a reputable dealer who offers a warranty.

A home gym represents a significant investment. Trimming the budget on cardiovascular equipment is a false savings. Any equipment in this category should suit your interests and fitness level and should be able to maintain at least 20 minutes of smooth continuous motion. The activity you choose should be enjoyable as well as challenging and you should be able to increase the resistance, incline or duration.

Who will be using the equipment?

Will other people in your household be using the gym? If so, keep in mind that a treadmill may need enough programming features and a long enough deck to accommodate the different body shapes and fitness goals of multiple users. Similarly, weight machines and free weights should adjust to safely accommodate a range of sizes and abilities.

Other Issues to Consider

- **Strength equipment for any budget**—Choosing strength-training tools is a matter of budget and safety. Novice exercisers may be better off with a multigym, which is safer to use unsupervised than free weights. The key with any home gym is to make sure it's easy to adjust. If a multigym isn't in your budget, a set of free-weights is an affordable alternative, as is resistance tubing.
- **Think about the space**—Even equipment designed for home use can be a space hog, especially treadmills and multigyms. Space limitations may mean you have to opt for a space-saving rack of dumbbells instead of a multigym. Also look at ceiling height, since some equipment sits high off the ground.
- **Equipment design and features**—Before purchasing a piece of equipment, inspect it

for safety, serviceability, design and appropriate features. The equipment should be adjustable and easy to learn, and your body should move in a correct and safe manner. Parts should be easily removed and replaced, and moving parts should lattice well. There shouldn't be any design flaws or weaknesses that could increase the risk of injury.

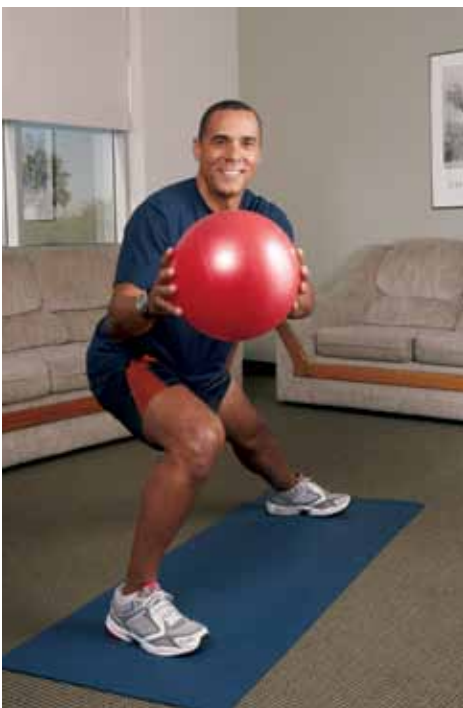
Finally, be honest with yourself about how motivated you will be to exercise at home before you make the investment. It is also important that you understand how to exercise safely and that your doctor has cleared you to exercise. Once you have made the decision to design your own home gym, your next step could be on a new treadmill or elliptical trainer.

Square Footage

Use these guidelines to determine approximately how much room you'll need:

- Treadmill—30 square feet
- Elliptical trainer—30 square feet
- Single-station gym—35 square feet
- Free weights—20–50 square feet
- Stationary bike—10 square feet
- Rowing machine—20 square feet
- Stair climber—10–20 square feet
- Ski machines—25 square feet
- Multistation gym—50–200 square feet

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/GetFit and access the complete list of ACE Fit Facts:™



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