

# Fit Facts™

FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE®

## How to Choose an Exercise Video



### 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?
- Before I buy it, does a friend own the same tape or can I rent the video?
- Do they make any outlandish claims? ("Lose 20 pounds in two weeks," or "Firm up in only five minutes a day.")
- Does it 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? Make sure you watch the video all the way through at least once before you attempt the workout so that you are well prepared.

**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 their home. Exercise videos are a good alternative to 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, however, you should make sure that the video you choose is 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 a 3 ft. by 5 ft. living room space. 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. Conversely, 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 inclement 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 store carries it. That way, you can try it before you buy it. When starting out, look for boxes that indicate the video is for beginners. Choosing an intermediate or advanced tape could 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 they try to teach the routine themselves 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 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 and stretching. Many tapes combine all of these factors. Perhaps most importantly, dedicate yourself to whatever style or method gets your blood flowing and your body moving.

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