

SHARE THE WELLNESS TIP



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Are You A January Gym Joiner?



Are you ready to join a gym? There are clubs and community centers geared for all types of members and budgets. If you're going to make the investment, why not join a gym that works for you? Whether you're switching gyms or joining for the first time, visit several, preferably at the time you'll want to use the gym. Request a free day or week pass if it's available. To choose a gym that meets your fitness goals, here's what to consider when you're surveying your options.

A Family Affair

Does the gym you want to join have a family membership? Do they offer childcare, or any special programs or classes for kids? Getting a membership to a gym that has something to offer your whole family can be a better investment of time and resources than a gym that only accommodates adults.

Convenience

Is the gym you're considering close to your home or office? If it is, you'll be more likely to use it because you won't have to go out of your way to get there. Also, think about when you'll use the gym and its hours of operation. If you want to get your workouts in before your commute to work, does the gym open early enough? If you'll be going after work, does the gym stay open late enough?

Get to Know the Staff

Be sure to ask about staff certification when you're taking a tour of the gym. Look for staff certified through an organization accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, such as the American Council on Exercise. Certified instructors have the training to provide a safe and efficient workout, and the ability to modify classes and programs to meet your individual needs. While you're considering the staff factor, take a look around. Is there plenty of staff to answer your questions or show you how to use the fitness equipment properly, if necessary? Do they seem approachable?

Class and Equipment Offerings

Think about what you'll want to do at the gym. Does the health club offer the types of classes and programs you like, at times that fit your schedule? If you're interested in specialty classes, such as suspension training or a specific type of yoga, does the club offer them? Is there plenty of fitness equipment — the kind you like to use — so that you won't have to frequently wait to use it? Is most of the aerobic and weight equipment in working order? Too many "out of order" signs can indicate poor facility maintenance.

Cost

Many health clubs offer sign-up specials. But before taking advantage of them or signing up in general, ask about specifics. Find out what the membership fee entails. Do you have to pay extra for special classes or towels? Is there an initiation fee? Does your membership let you use other clubs within the network for free? What if you decide that the club isn't for you? Be sure you understand the cancellation policy, billing procedures, length of the agreement, and the membership renewal process. Ask to take the contract home to review it before you sign.

Working out is hard work. But in your overall assessment, the gym you ultimately join should feel like a place where you'll enjoy spending your time.

Sources: *American Council on Exercise, Shape.com*