

How to maximize your gym membership

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(HealthDay)—So, you've made the decision to get healthier and join a gym, a great way to reach the U.S. national guideline of 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week.

But don't let your [good intentions](#) or your membership fee go to waste. Whether your gym is near home or close to work, here's how to get the most from it.

First, set a specific [fitness](#) goal for yourself with your gym's offerings in mind. This will help you reach the big-picture goal of [better health](#). This could be to develop a strength-training program that uses either machines or free weights, or to take your cardio workouts to a new level with advanced classes. Set a start date for your new endeavor and stick to it.

Ask one of the trainers at the gym for one-on-one instruction, especially for strength training because each movement needs to be done with the right body mechanics. This will be worth the effort, even if it means paying a fee for a private session. Then check in with the trainer periodically to assess your progress.

Each week, take a class you've never tried before. This will keep you interested in the gym and allow you to discover new fitness disciplines that you might have shied away from in the past. You might even develop a passion for something like spinning or kick boxing.

Take advantage of any amenities like spa treatments, a steam room, hot tub or juice bar where you might even make a new fitness buddy who can provide added motivation.

Finally, make sure you're going to the gym at the best time for your personal schedule. If you're too tired after work or have family obligations, start your day at the gym. You just might find that you feel more invigorated once you get to the office.

More information: New to the gym? The American Council on Exercise has [tips](#) to help you fit in.

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