

Confused by Unlimited Exercise Choices? How to Choose What's Best for You.

Updated: Jan 29



Yoga, Weight Lifting, Swimming, Pilates, Barre, Kickboxing, Weights, HIIT, Pole Dance – Help!

Where do you begin once you've made the decision to start moving?

The list of possible exercise routines and classes seems to go on forever. Once you are clear about WHY you want to exercise and the results you are looking for, then it's time to choose. You're anxious to get moving!

How do you choose which one is best for you? You don't want to injure yourself, but you want to get started ASAP.

Talking to your friends, one says yoga. Another says weightlifting. Then, there are Pilates, Barre, and kickboxing classes. Others swear by getting on a road bike or hitting the trails on a mountain bike. Some love swimming, Zumba, or Pole Dance.

Fun Fact: Pole Dance is not only for strength and conditioning – it is also a competitive sport!

Let's slow down for a minute, breathe, and take a step back.

First, the world of exercise is overflowing with unlimited options, opinions, and passionate debate on what the best training program is. Even the supposed research statistics casually thrown around as to what the most popular exercises and group classes are, vary wildly from website to website.

In the articles you read, there are many strong opinions, with most people totally convinced that their approach is the only correct way.

Therefore, we want to help you avoid this trap of trying to make complete sense of it all or trying to *understand the one and only best way*. That will probably result in having too much conflicting information and getting lost in the weeds. You may never actually start exercising.

Ask your friends, your hair stylist, your colleagues at work – what do you do?

Get some ideas on personal trainers or training routines to try, knowing again that everyone will have their own opinion. You may have to try a few things or work with a few different instructors to find out what you really like.

The main goal, in the beginning, is to pick some classes or some solo exercises and perhaps a few instructors/trainers that sound like fun and GET STARTED trying things.

As we said last week, start slow for the first month or so with whole-body movements and mobility exercises that can be geared toward beginners and all levels. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Pilates Class** – low-impact exercise with a focus on your core, trunk, and other muscles while improving postural alignment and flexibility.
- **Barre Class** – focuses on low-impact, high-intensity movements to build strength and develop agility and flexibility in unique ways.
- **Walking** – 20-30 minutes, 2-4 days a week
- **Mobility exercises** – bear crawl, push-ups, glute-bridge, plank, mountain climbers, ankle alphabets, walking Spiderman, and much more.

As a general rule, try things to see what suits you and what you like to do. There may be some great training, like CrossFit or aerobic dance classes, that you've never heard of that you find are perfect for you, even if you are experienced at exercise.

Review what your WHY is.

We talked about our WHY last month, and you thought deeply about the results you want to get out of your exercise program. Hopefully, you decided upon your goal, which could be something like the following:

1. Living a long and healthy life – so you start by exploring functional fitness, focusing on strength and stability for daily activities.
2. Becoming more flexible and gaining more peace of mind – you may want to try some yoga.
3. Get your heart pumping, turn up the music, and have fun! Check out dance classes like Zumba or HIIT.
4. You resonate with the idea that strong is the new skinny – so you may consider some strength training.

Whatever your personal goals are, you can use them to shape your search for personal trainers, classes, or exercises to try. The options are endless. Start with one!

What's best for you – to exercise in a group or on your own?

Some people know right away they want to do a group or private class. They may be the type to never do anything on their own but procrastinate. Others are the opposite and prefer to exercise in their garage, spare bedroom, or at the park. They like being on their own schedule without having to go anywhere else.

Or, you may be looking for a *hybrid approach*. Depending on many factors – your time available, your budget, your fitness experience, or proximity to good classes:

- One session per week with a personal trainer, followed by 1, 2, or 3 more sessions solo, by yourself.
- One exercise or yoga session in a group/class setting, followed by 1 to 3 more sessions online with your instructor or watching YouTube.
- Start out with an instructor, build confidence, and then go solo.



Do you prefer exercising solo? Some ideas to start with:

1. **Walking!** It is still one of the most popular ways to get moving. 20 to 30 minutes, 2-5 days a week, is a good beginning goal. *Bonus:* Bring your dog!
2. **Bodyweight and Mobility Exercises:** These are fun! They build functional fitness, agility, stability, balance, and strength without injury. Think pushups, lunges, bear crawls, pull-ups, and more.
3. **Swimming, Bicycling, Running/Rucking, Rock Climbing.**

4. Do you have the space and cash for a few **dumbbells or exercise bands**? Then you can strength train on your own – Bench Press/Fly, squats, deadlifts, shoulder raises, curls, and much more.
5. **Online classes at home** – yoga, Pilates, aerobic dance, spinning/cycling, Tai Chi, to name a few.
6. **Weight training**, AFTER you've spent time on the whole-body, mobility-type exercises, and walking

You need a private or group class to get going – here's some ideas:

Fitness tech platform MINDBODY did an online survey of 17,000 US survey participants between 18 and 65 in 2019 for their *Wellness Index Report: Fitness in America* [1]

From this survey, they were able to rank the participants' preferences for facility-based (Gym) group exercise classes.



Here are the exercises to explore from the survey, starting with the most popular:

Yoga, strength training, Zumba, dance, spin, aerobics, cardio machines, cross-fit, HIIT, kickboxing, team sports, Pilates, martial arts, boot camp, gymnastic, tai chi, barre, climbing, aerial, pole, Gyrotonics.

Once you have been moving and exercising for a month or two, you're probably ready to expand into more challenging things. Depending on your fitness level, flexibility, injury history, budget, and age, you may find you're drawn to group or private classes in:

- **Combat-based exercises:** Kickboxing, martial arts, (most popular for 18-45-year-olds)
- **Gentler, lower impact exercises:** Pilates, Barre, yoga, Tai Chi, dance, spin, cardio machines, Gyrotonics (more popular for 45-65-year-olds [1]).
- **Intense aerobic fitness:** Zumba, HIIT,
- **Strength Training:** weights, body-weight exercises, aerial, pole dance, CrossFit
- **Aerobic and strength combo:** boot camp, gymnastics, rucking

Ready to start? Here's a summary checklist:

1. Get some training ideas without trying to decide on the one perfect thing. *Choose something and get started.* Get the details later. Keep going on the 2-6 days a week you originally committed to!
2. Research the exercise options covered in this blog. Ask your friends, co-workers, and hair stylist, "What exercise do you do? And why?"
3. Remember, memorize your why and your overall goals.
4. Try things in your style: Group classes, private classes, OR solo training.
5. Talk to experienced people who have done what you want to do. Or search credible experts on YouTube and the internet. Get their tips and things to avoid.
6. Congratulate yourself! You're DOING it! Get a massage or spa treatment as a regular reward or incentive!

And now, the ball is in YOUR court! Soon, you will be knocking it out of the park!

PS: If you want to receive Kirk and Jenny's free coaching/exercise tips, plus find out about special offers, sign up for the DIALED [IN] monthly newsletter:

Sign Up for Monthly Newsletter [HERE](#)

Peter Douglas Black, LMT, Freelance Writer

Footnotes:

1. [Revealed: The most popular group workout categories for members](#)