

Health

Test drive exercise equipment before buying

On average, Canadian adults spend \$238 a year on exercise equipment.

Equipment does not come with commitment and without adequate planning, it can end up collecting dust.

Developing a home fitness centre is a matter of answering some basic questions, knowing what type of equipment you want and test driving the equipment before buying it, said Edmund Burke, editor of Complete Home Fitness Handbook. As with any major purchase, it is important to be as well-informed as possible.

Here is a three-step plan to purchasing exercise equipment.

1. Determine your goals

If your goal is to develop cardiovascular endurance or lose weight, you will be choosing among stair climbers, stationary bikes, ski machines, treadmills and rowers.

Treadmills and stationary bikes have the easiest learning curve. Ski machines and rowers are harder to get used to, but they offer superior full-body workouts.

If you're looking instead for strength and muscular development, you will be focusing on dumbbells, barbells and multi-station gyms.

2. Shop around

Buy the best equipment you can afford. Cheap gym equipment can be a waste of money if it leads to unpleasant workout experiences.

Consider buying good used equipment. New items can be costly.

Another affordable way to ease into a home gym is to buy equipment for either your aerobic or your strength training and choose activities that don't require equipment for the other component. For instance, choose brisk walking for aerobics and purchase equipment for strength.

You will be more likely to use equipment if you choose a machine that suits you best.

Equipment should be comfortable, easy to use and it should fit your body. Try out equipment in a local gym for several weeks before buying. What you like in the gym, you will probably like at home.

When you know what you want, shop around. Inquire about discounts and upcoming sales. You will find a better selection of high-quality equipment and more professional service at a specialty store

than at a discount or department store.

Before you commit to buying equipment, test it for several minutes in the store.

3. Make the most of your equipment

Once you bring your equipment home, install it in a pleasant room where you won't feel cramped or constrained while exercising.

To avoid injuries, make sure you know how to use the equipment.

Dress in lightweight, breathable clothing, have a bottle of water handy. Start slowly.

Make your exercise enjoyable - read, watch TV or listen to music while you actively work toward your goal.

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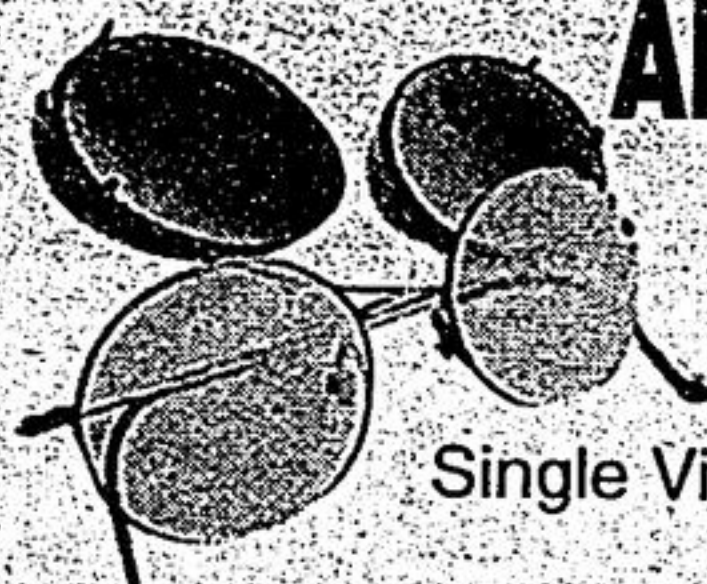
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