



goodbye

GUESSWORK

Fitness editor **Martha Lourey-Bird** decodes the jargon and sets you up for success with our beginner's guide.

at the gym

DO I REALLY NEED *a personal trainer?*

The quick answer is no, you don't have to invest in a personal trainer. However, this option may interest you if you need greater motivation or variety, as a personal trainer can certainly provide you with both of these.

Watch personal trainers in action with clients and ask around your gym for one you think would be right for you, as one of the most important factors is that your personalities gel as well. Be sure the trainer is adequately qualified and suitably experienced in the area you need assistance with, be it back pain, weight loss, post-natal exercise and so on. Some gyms offer a couple of free personal training sessions to give you a kick-start, but be sure to read the fine print so you don't end up with additional fees for the privilege.

WHAT HAPPENS IN *a fitness assessment?*

Don't let the word 'assessment' scare you off. The purpose of an initial fitness assessment is to test your fitness in such areas as flexibility, core strength, upper and lower body muscular endurance and stamina, so that a personalised exercise program can be tailored to suit your needs.

It's a great way to determine an appropriate exercise starting point and it also provides a benchmark for yourself further down the track. Plan to do fitness assessments through the year to keep you honest, check that you are improving and that your exercise program is giving you the results you're after. Most gyms provide a free initial assessment.

HOW TO DECODE *the gym machines*

Rather than feel overwhelmed by the sight of so many machines, look at the gym in sections. There's the cardio-theatre section with treadmills, bikes, steppers, rowers and cross-trainers where you can watch television or listen to music as you sweat it out. There's also a free-weights area with benches, dumbbells and barbells for a whole range of resistance training exercises such as upright rows and bicep curls. The final section has larger pin-loaded machines that perform very specific exercises such as the leg curl and lat pull-down. It's important to be shown how to use each machine correctly – this should be a free introductory service provided at all gyms, so be sure to ask for it.

FAST FITNESS FACTS

38% of Australian women aged 15–54 regularly participate in aerobics classes.

824 was the number of fitness centres in Australia in 2005 and that number is rapidly rising.

Health and fitness are the main motivators for Australians to work out, followed by enjoyment factor.

WHAT ABOUT THE *group class option?*

There are currently scores of different gym classes taught by a range of skilled instructors so you're sure to find something to suit you. These include yoga, Pilates, boxercise, step, pump, spin, dance and circuit. If you're new to classes, check and see which are the best entry-level ones to begin with. Always inform the instructor that it's your first time to a class and whether you have any injuries, and take it easy to begin with. Try and get to the class a couple of minutes before starting so you can talk to the instructor alone if you're a little nervous. Once you get your confidence levels up and your fitness improves, branch out and try them all.

IS IT NECESSARY TO *have a tailored program?*

If you're unfamiliar with gyms, it's a good idea to get an exercise program written for you as it'll help you make the most of each gym visit, and this is often a free service included in your membership. Initially, you can simply walk in and follow the program then, when your fitness level has increased, get it changed to provide more of a challenge and some variety. A good gym program should include a warm-up, cardio exercise and resistance training plus a series of stretches at the end and should complement the classes you attend on other days. It will give you direction when there's no instructor telling you what to do and, even better, is an extremely motivating way to see your improvements. **WWW**

CONVENIENCE FACTOR IS KEY. TO FIND A GYM NEAR YOU VISIT
WWW.GOODGYMGUIDE.COM.AU/ OR [HTTP://GYMLINK.CO.NZ](http://GYMLINK.CO.NZ)