

Building your home gym, simple can be effective

For some assembling and using a workout space at home is an effective approach for maintaining or improving fitness levels. Depending on your needs and goals the home workout area can augment or replace the need for a fitness center membership or (gasp) even hiring a trainer! Home fitness areas do not need to be filled with machines, benches, or racks of weights to be effective. Here are some things to be aware of when you set up a home fitness area.

If possible divide your floor space into a carpeted area and a rubber mat area. The carpeted area works well for stretching and the use of the “slider pads” designed for many exercises. The rubber floor is good for your weight training area.

My first rule for buying home fitness equipment is to start small and work your way up. So in other words: If you could use it to hang clothes on, DON'T BUY IT! If you find with time that you are using your home gym four or more times a week then you can start making bigger equipment purchases.

Space is key, of course the larger the space the better, but a well utilized floor space as small as five feet by ten feet can be made to work. Utilizing your space well means avoiding cluttering up your wall space with mirrors, charts, and posters. If you want to place posters or charts put them up high out of the way on your walls. If you think you need a mirror try getting by with the free standing type. Keeping your walls open will allow the use of your walls for a myriad of stretching and postural strengthening exercises. If you happen to have a larger space with a concrete or cement block wall leave it exposed so you can use it for medicine ball wall chops and throws. Also try to plan for various attachment points on walls ceilings and even floors. A wide variety of properly installed attachment points on ceilings and walls allows the use of pull up bars or handles and suspension training products like the TRX and XT systems. These types of systems have made a big impact in college and professional sports programs due the challenging combination of core strength with upper and lower body strength training they provide. Your various attachment points also support the use of elastic bands and tubing products designed for resistance training.

When it comes to weights, dumbbells reign supreme as tools that can fill a broad range of applications. The adjustable sets that are now available take up minimal space and are quite good for home use. I personally prefer and recommend the square or block style as they are somewhat more compact and are available in larger weight ranges.

Medicine balls are another great training tool. Remember to start small as the point with medicine ball training is speed and power so avoid using a ball so heavy that your speed of movement is negatively affected. When shopping for medicine balls you may want to consider the “dead bounce” type of medicine balls over the harder medicine balls with high bounce characteristics. The leather “Dynamax” type are my favorite for chops and throws in small indoor spaces but will still work well outdoors.

So get educated, shop wisely and start pushing, pulling, chopping, and throwing!