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Get ready to FLEXERCISE

Dip-in, dip-out gyms, digital PT sessions and the 'mash-up' regime; here's why the latest fitness movement could make working out work for you

SO WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT?

This summer, it's likely there isn't just one answer to that. Blame it on what A-list personal trainer Christina Howells calls 'the New York effect', with specialised boutique studios spreading like wildfire. Fitness is the new fashion and the on-trend way to exercise right now is to 'flexercise'.

'Familiarity is always the enemy of motivation,' says Ten Pilates founder Joanne Matthews. Flexercising allows you to dip in and out of everything from dance to yoga, to classic gym training or outdoor sports like tennis. Pip Black, from flexible-fitness studio Frame, says it's typical for clients 'to come to two different classes a week and then go running at the weekend to keep things interesting.'

On a physical level, you'll really reap the rewards. 'Flexercising is part of a bigger plan to get the perfect combination of strength-training and flexibility,' points out Lululemon's Amanda Casgar. If that doesn't get you flexercising then the latest fusion classes such as Koga (kick-boxing meets yoga) will. You can even do them online, so you can flexercise anytime, anywhere – and get your best body ever in the process... ▶

Model wears bikini, £325, T By Alexander Wang (net-a-porter.com); sunglasses, stylist's own

TIP: Make like the fashion pack and invest in Rag & Bone's denim-look Miramar sweatpants, £265, as good on the street as they are on the cross trainer – no one will ever know...

YOUR GYM ON YOUR TERMS

Gone are the days of tying yourself down to one gym with a pricey 12-month contract. 'People can train themselves at home now with the help of expert advice supplied through apps and online workouts,' says Lulu Le Vay, a consultant for Gymbox. So gyms have had to rethink their traditional model to keep customers coming back. At Gymbox you can opt to pay month-by-month, while Virgin Active has also introduced a monthly rolling membership. Meanwhile, The Gym Group, whose 44 sites nationwide are open 24-7, offers a no-contract option starting at £10.99 a month. And some smaller studios are getting even more creative – hot yoga chain Fierce Grace has just introduced 'Festival Grace' – offering festival-goers five free days on any studio memberships over the summer.

GET YOUR WORKOUT-GO-OUT BALANCE

'What's interesting at the moment is how many women in London want to go to "fitness events" – even on a weekend evening,' says Pip. This could mean combining a yoga class with a night of gourmet food and live music at one of the Secret Yoga Club's intimate soirées, singalong spin classes at Gymbox, positive affirmations to keep you peddling at Psyche or Juliet Murrell's Voga class (yoga with voguing dance moves). All of which are designed to get you out of the pain room and into a place where exercise = F.U.N.



TRY: FRIDAY NIGHT YOGA

Good Vibes in London's Covent Garden (goodvibesfitness.co.uk) starts the weekend off with an evening of flow yoga to a soundtrack of cheesy pop. What better way to ease away the stress of the working week!

MASH-UP YOUR CLASSES

'People are now aware that mixing up their workouts is going to give them the best results, whether it's for purely aesthetic reasons or to run faster/lift heavier/stretch further,' says Pip. And why not do it in one session? Piloxing, a workout combining Pilates, boxing and dance, is gaining popularity stateside, while Speedflex uses a mixture of machines and auxiliary stations to deliver a full workout that burns up to 700 calories in just 30 minutes.

At Frame, meanwhile, the hour-long Frame Work class is a calculated mix inspired by dance, fitness, yoga and Pilates, while Ten Pilates' Cardiolates uses spin bikes and reformer machines to offer a total body-sculpting, sweat-inducing workout.

And not only does mixing workout styles in one class keep us on our toes, it has also become an essential way for studios and gyms to stay ahead of the game. 'Fitness is a trend-led industry, and creating fun and different ways of getting and staying in shape also generates business,' says Lulu. Nobody does this better than upmarket chain Equinox, who's Inside Out Barre class combines core work, Pilates, yoga, isometrics and ballet.

DO A DIGITAL SWEAT SESSION

'Internet training is becoming extremely popular as it allows people to work out just as easily at home,' says Christina, who developed online training and nutrition program That Girl with sportswear designer Charli Cohen. 'Women are busier than ever but they're also more aware than ever that healthy eating and exercise shouldn't be a choice. That Girl was designed for the woman who wants an effective workout that she can do anywhere,' says Christina. Downloadable videos demonstrate the moves, while the nutrition plan even includes a guide to healthy high-street food choices.

Meanwhile, sister sites Fitnessglo.com and Yogaglo.com both offer unlimited access to a huge selection of workouts and yoga classes for a small monthly subscription fee, while you can do a live barre workout with Mary Ellen Bowers, who got Natalie Portman in shape for *Black Swan*, at her site Balletbeautiful.com.

BEST FLEXI-FITNESS APPS

'Not only do apps help us keep tabs of distances and calories burned, they're also becoming a way to disclose our efforts in the online public sphere,' says Le Vay. Like a personal trainer in your pocket, 30 Day Fitness Challenges lets you chose from a huge variety of workouts. Lifesum lets you design your own workout from a list of over 100 different exercises, for a total flexercise mash-up. Hot5 allows you to customise a five, 10 or 15-minute daily session for the ultimate schedule-friendly workout, while Interval Timer is essential for anybody free-styling with their own workout at home or in the gym. Need a financial incentive? GymPact asks you to make a commitment to work out or your credit card gets charged.

WORKOUT GEAR THAT WORKS HARD

With high-end sportswear all over the catwalks this summer, wearing your kit outside the gym has never been cooler – and brands are lining up to get in on the act. As well as Charli Cohen's fashion-forward collection, Christina swears by her Hey Jo leggings – 'I have five pairs!' Lululemon are leaders in what they call the 'athletic fashion movement', and in New York, women wear the super-flattering Wunder Under yoga pants everywhere – from a business meeting to a fancy cocktail bar. Meanwhile, the high performance leopard-print compression pants from Bondi Beach-based Vie Active look like essential festival kit. Live The Process is another beautiful high-end line, while the new VFiles Sport Plus collection will be stocked at Harvey Nichols and concept boutique Colette in Paris. ▶

Model wears bikini as previous page, and trainers, £45, adidas (adidas.co.uk)

