



Be Well Aware – Health Article



The Evolution of Exercise and Trending Topics Today

Move it, move it!

Our bodies are designed for movement. Our ancestors moved for survival. Finding shelter, chasing down a meal, or running from danger required strength, endurance, speed, and agility. Today, we live vastly different lives. Most of our basic needs are met with far less physical effort. Food comes to us nearly instantly, with the push of a few buttons.

Of course, movement is still required for our survival and health, albeit more often a leisure pursuit. Several points in history have shaped our exercise habits today. Our Hall of Fame includes the introduction of the commercial fitness center, workout video tapes, and home equipment.

Hall of Fame

Modern commercial fitness centers can be traced back to the 1930s when Jack Lalanne, known as the “Godfather of Modern Fitness”, opened the first health club in 1936. Initially, he was criticized for charging people money to exercise. Several decades passed before the trend began to catch on and Joe Gold, a bodybuilder and US Marine, opened the first Gold’s Gym in 1965 in Venice, CA.

Two more decades passed before commercial gyms took hold and multiple chains began opening fitness centers in the 1980s. At the same time, the exercise boom gained traction with workout video tapes and home exercise equipment. The VHS (Video Home System) tapes provided convenience to work out in your home at any time. Fitness gurus such as Jane Fonda and Richard Simmons were sweating with us in our living rooms.

The early 1980s also brought home exercise equipment, which was primarily sold through television infomercials. Everyone wanted to own the latest tools to tone and strengthen, particularly when celebrities began endorsing these products.



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While the 1980s brought the biggest changes to the fitness landscape, these fitness trends have continued to evolve over the last 40 years. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted these trends. Commercial gyms popped up on nearly every corner, but many were forced to close during the pandemic. VHS tapes have given way to live stream and programs on demand. Home equipment has become more technologically sophisticated and includes companion apps.

Back to the Future

Every year, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) conducts a Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends to examine fitness trends around the globe. According to the ACSM, the top three trends for 2022 in the United States are wearable technology, home exercise gyms, and outdoor activities.

- Wearable technology is used by both professional and recreational athletes and includes fitness trackers, smart watches and rings, heart rate monitors, GPS tracking devices and more. These devices track steps, heart rate, activity levels, and sleep. This technology continues to expand, and devices are on the market that can monitor oxygen saturation levels, take blood pressure readings, and even echocardiograms – statistics that previously required a doctor’s visit. These tools allow us to customize our fitness, track our progress, and set and reach goals. The most popular goal tracked is a step goal, or total number of steps taken each day.
- Home exercise gyms continue to become more sophisticated, and celebrities continue to offer

these tools through television and social media. With commercial gyms temporarily closed, many people turned to home equipment to stay fit. Technology has upgraded many of these devices to include an app that provides structure, a sense of community, and coaching. Some companies, such as Peloton, struggled to keep up with demand in the early days of the pandemic.

- Outdoor activities, specifically walking or running, hiking, and cycling, rounded out the top three trends and is also related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions on travel and social contact drove people to get outside and explore their local parks. In addition, more people were working from home and found more time for recreation instead of commuting.

Technological advances will continue to shape the fitness industry and change how we exercise in the future. Modern technology is a great tool, but the most important thing is to move our bodies regularly - even if we are not running for our lives.



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