



Kickboxing

Cardio kickboxing -- a combination of aerobics, boxing, and martial arts -- is one of the most popular fitness trends to hit gymnasiums in recent years. These workouts, which are inspired by martial arts, have motivated many people to start a fitness program.

This intense, total-body workout can improve strength, aerobic fitness, flexibility, coordination, and balance.¹ The American Council on Exercise (ACE), which evaluates exercise products and programs, notes that, during a one-hour kickboxing workout, you can burn from 500 to 800 calories, which is up to twice the calories you burn during a one-hour step-aerobics class.

Kickboxing classes can be a great alternative for people who have become bored with weight-room cardiovascular activities, such as brisk walking or jogging on a treadmill. They also provide an option for people who enjoy the "semi-dance" movements found in aerobics or step classes. However, kickboxing-style fitness programs are not necessarily geared toward the beginner. The beginning cardio kickboxer must have above-average endurance, strength, and flexibility. ACE advises exercisers to keep the following things in mind when participating in this aerobic activity¹:

Class format

At the beginning of each class, the instructor teaches various moves and their names and initiates a slow practice so you become familiar with the format. Next, you warm up for five minutes with some of the moves you just learned. Once your muscles are warm, you stretch them.

Stretching focuses on the major muscle groups, including the hamstrings, adductors, heel cords, back flexors and extensors, and the muscles of the shoulder and neck.

After warming up and stretching, you begin the 40- to 45-minute aerobic section, which includes kicks, punches, speed bag, shadow boxing, jump rope drills, and footwork. These moves usually are done in combination formats (e.g., kick, knee, jab, and jab). You do many repetitions so that you can focus on proper body mechanics rather than on what move or combination is coming up next.

A cool-down period follows the aerobic workout. This period can include strengthening and abdominal exercises. When your heart rate decreases, you stretch for five to 10 minutes. Most classes are between 60 and 90 minutes long.

Cardio kickboxing is meant to be a fun and effective program for achieving your fitness goals. If you follow these guidelines, it can be just that!