

Gym Etiquette

by

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I personally like to train at home. Over the years I have put together a sufficient amount of equipment that allows me to do most of what I want and certainly all I need. I do however, like to go to the gym from time to time in order to use equipment that I do not have. This not only keeps enthusiasm high but also helps encourage progress by hitting muscles from different angles. When I do go to a gym, I try to go during an off hour so I can train without getting in someone's way or having someone get in mine. I have always liked training alone. I can concentrate better and do what I want to do. Independent you might say.

Perhaps like many of you, I have visited all kinds of gyms across the country and I have some friends who own or operate facilities. Years ago, I had my own health club so I know first hand the problems and aggravations associated with owning and running a facility. Don't let anyone kid you, owning or running a gym is no easy job, I don't care how nice the place is or where it is located, it's hard work. Besides, anytime you do something that requires working with the public... you know it can be a real headache.

There are a lot of things that can be said about any gym regardless of what type facility it is; chrome and polish or dark and dungeon like. The thing that really gets to me is the lack of courtesy and respect members and guest have. I believe gym etiquette is more the proper term I am looking for. Of course, a lot of this has to fall on the shoulders of the owners and managers of the facility. It should be a given that the majority of people who join or visit a gym don't know the first thing about working out or using the equipment let alone gym etiquette. Those of us who are in the business should recognize this fact and have action steps in place to handle it. It is also important to point out that

there is nothing wrong with people going to a facility without knowing what to do or how to do it. We all must learn sometime. The responsibility for teaching, informing, and enforcing the rules and use of the equipment falls on the shoulders of the owners, managers, and staff members who are on the front line with the people, **Bless them all!**

Let's take for example the posting of rules and regulations. Almost every facility has them, which they should and they should also be enforced. Consider this one: "No drinks allowed in the gym." Just about every facility I have ever been to has this one posted in their rules, yet, inevitably you will see people drinking in the gym.

Now I'm not going to start the debate over should you drink during a workout or shouldn't you but I am going to start pointing a finger here. If you have a rule and allow people to ignore it, you are not doing your job. Do away with the rule or enforce it, one or the other. As an owner or manager, this is your responsibility. If people see someone violating a rule, ignoring it and getting away with it, why can't they, worse yet, why should they have to follow any of the rules? Enforce the rules, change them, or take them down and let everyone do as they please.

There is simply no excuse for having rules and not making people adhere to them. It hurts the entire operation if you allow it to go on. Part of every staff member's responsibility should be to know the rules and take an active role in helping to enforce them. I realize the front desk personnel are often covered with paper work, telephone calls, schedules, answering questions, tours, etc, but even they should occasionally look around for violators of any rules and require compliance.

Now, in addition, I'm going to list some gym etiquette rules that should be told to every single member or guest before they are permitted to use the facility. Violation of a rule carries a penalty and they need to know this upfront. Every staff member should be on the lookout for violators and take corrective action when they see someone who ignores the rules. If they see a piece of equipment loaded with plates and no one is using it, a staff member should ask those in the gym who was using the equipment still loaded.

Once informed of who left the equipment improperly, run the person down and grab him by the collar. Point your finger in their face – yell at them – make them go back and download the equipment – beat them most severely about the head and shoulders and tell them politely not to do it again or they will be banned from the gym for 98 months, that’s six years and two months.

1. Replace all equipment to its original place as soon as you are finished with it. Do not leave bars and/or equipment loaded with plates; remove them when you are finished. This is common sense, the right thing to do, and a clean up your own mess rule everyone needs to follow. I have frequently seen women who wanted to use a piece of equipment not get to only because it was left loaded with plates too heavy for them to remove. People who do not strip the equipment or replace equipment should be run out of the gym with a stick.

2. Do not take cell phones into the gym. Maybe you don’t care if you get a good workout but a lot of other people do and cell phones are a nuisance and distraction for most of us. If you are going to the gym, go to workout, otherwise stay at home or the soda shop and talk on the phone all you want to.

3. Today gyms have become a social gathering place. Boy meets girl, a place to hang out. Well that’s fine in the front entrance or some other place besides the workout floor area. Some people actually go to a gym to workout you know so take your social events some other place or at least out of the gym floor area. Do you really think anyone appreciates you sitting on a bench, hugging your sweetie, while someone needs to use it for their next set?

4. Wipe off the equipment with a towel as soon as you get off. Do you think someone wants to sit or lie in your sweat? Nasty! You can be a pig in your own home and on your own property but in a gym follow some simple rules on hygiene. Wipe off the equipment between sets and when you are finished.

5. Don't hog the equipment. This is especially important when the gym is crowded. Let people work in. If someone is standing around a piece of equipment, ask them if they would like to work in. Courtesy! Some may not know the meaning of the word, look it up. All I can do is suggest you learn to function in a society that contains more than just one person.

Another point that goes along with this rule is DON'T – DO NOT – DON'T - DO NOT sit around on equipment between sets or while you carry on a conversation. Others would like to get through a workout themselves. Finish a set, GET UP in case someone would like to get a set in.

6. Don't drop the weights on the floor. I've seen people grab the heaviest dumbbells on the rack, perform their movement in a manner so sloppy results are certain not to follow, and then drop them on the floor. STUPID! If the weight is too heavy for you to handle properly, not only in performing the movement but also in handling the weight, use a lighter weight. STUPID! STUPID! How would you like for someone to come into your home and drop a 100 lb. dumbbell on your living-room floor! *“You ain't a big dog unless you can handle the weight in the manner it is supposed to be handled and that includes not dropping it.”*

7. Don't spit in the water fountain. How gross can you get! I see people do this all the time. As I'm writing this I'm starting to wonder where and how did this breakdown of common sense and courtesy take place. Did it happen in the schools, at home, in the churches, where and how I don't know but it has and it's really a shame. I blame everyone for it; parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, neighbors, teachers, preachers, doctors, congressmen, mayors, governors, police and firemen, etc, etc. everyone everywhere is to blame in my book, that way I won't miss the real culprit.

8. Don't wear gym clothing that smells. Now why would I have to tell people that? Wash your clothes once in a while. Who wants to workout next to someone who smells like they died eight weeks earlier? Another one just as bad, some men but mostly some

women, wear so much perfume it makes you dizzy just to be within twenty-five feet of them. Look, you're at the gym to improve your health and body, no need to wear all the fragrance. So this rule is don't stink up the place either by overdoing the smell; one way or the other.

9. Music! Oh, boy... this is a good one. First of all let me say right up front I am a dinosaur. I know it and I admit it. I never liked training in a place that piped in music. Now days however, even the champions are wearing earphones, listening to music as they train. I know I'm out of step here but I don't think music should be allowed in a gym. I've seen some people do more singing and dancing than they do working out.

If music is played in the gym, it should be set up so only the staff can turn the station and set the volume. I know this will cause another problem because if 10 people are working out all 10 will want to hear a different type of music. I've actually had some people tell me they can't train without the right music on. Now what kind of a jerk would say that? Well I can tell you he wasn't a Mr. Olympia contender and I'll bet you the farm he never will be. Heck he'll be lucky to grow into a size 14 ½ shirt in ten years. Mr. Music Man is what I call him.

My point... if your gym does have music in it, leave it alone. You're not in the gym to go to a concert you are there to train. If you want to listen to music, drive to the gym, stay in the car listening to your favorite tune on the radio or CD and hum away those unwanted pounds. When you're finished, drive back home, that way you can say you went to the gym!

10. Nothing to do with gym etiquette just an observation of mine. Why do so many facilities have treadmills in them? I know people who will drive less than one mile to the gym. Get out of their car, sign in, get on the treadmill and run for two miles, get something to drink, get back in their car and go home. Can you believe that! Why would they even want a membership? Why don't they just run to the gym and then back home?

I know some do the same with a stationary bicycle. Is it just me or does anyone else see something wrong with this picture? Anyway like I said, not really a rule rather an observation but one that somewhat indicates the brainpower of some people.

11. Cuts, scrapes, sore's. I've seen people with open cuts, scrapes, and sores actually bleeding on equipment while working out. Why should I even have to mention this is beyond me, especially in the age of AIDS and other infectious diseases! If you have a sore make certain you have it bandaged so it will not allow blood to get on the equipment. I should most likely also mention something about coughing and sneezing as a few idiots will do it without covering their mouth or, they will cover their mouth with their hands and immediately grab a bar or piece of equipment. Hey, brain power! Wipe off your hands first!

12. Language. What I really mean to say is filthy language. Cussing and swearing is out. Watch your language in the gym. Once again, it seems to me like all this stuff should be things people old enough to go to a gym should already know.

13. Don't ask questions of, try talking with, or attempt a conversation with someone who is in the middle of a set. Those who are serious about their workouts know how important concentration is and full concentration does not permit a person to talk while performing an exercise. Serious trainers do not appreciate distractions of any kind during their workouts.

I have had the privilege of training with some top athlete's, celebrities, and bodybuilders. I can tell you from first hand knowledge, these individuals would be more than happy to answer questions, pose for pictures and sign autographs after they finished their workouts but none of them... not one, would appreciate being approached while in the middle of their workout.

In addition to the points presented here, numerous other ones could be addressed but I will not do so at this time because I believe you should be getting the idea on proper

gym etiquette. When all is said and done, it boils down to this: Be courteous, considerate, and respectful of not only the equipment but also the rules and management team as well as the people using the facility.

It all boils down to having some personal pride, common sense, and respect – for yourself as well as others. There will always be those few exceptions to the rules because no matter how hard anyone tries, dummies have a way of slipping in under the radar.

I would close by saying take care of the gym you are going to just like it was your own but I know people who don't even take care of their own things anyway so that would be wasted breath. Just do what you are supposed to do and how you are supposed to do it!

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