

Fitness Club Checklist

Suggested questions to ask when shopping for an age-friendly health and fitness club

This Checklist was developed by Touchmark in conjunction with the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) to help you gather information in order to rate and compare your local fitness clubs. This questionnaire is especially useful for those who are 40 years of age and older.

Directions: To complete this evaluation, check **Yes**, **No**, or **N/A** (not applicable) to the right of each question as you visit a club. When you are through with your visit(s), note the number of **Yes** answers for each fitness club.

For purposes of comparing one club with another, you may want to highlight those questions that are most important to you. For example, a fitness club might have a **Yes** next to “Heated, Olympic-sized Pool,” but if you don’t like to swim, this shouldn’t be considered in your final analysis.

The club that has the greatest number of **Yes** answers next to those amenities that are most important to you should be your best fit.

Before filling out this checklist, feel free to make additional copies for each fitness facility you plan to visit.

Note: Pay attention to your intuition. If there’s anything that makes you uncomfortable, pinpoint it. If it can’t be resolved, then eliminate this club from your list.

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Name of fitness club: _____ Phone: _____

Location: _____

Main contact (name and direct phone): _____

Date I visited the club: _____

Am I interested in joining? Yes! No! Needs further investigation.

Special needs

Do you have special fitness, health, or other personal needs? If so, list them here; then ask each facility if there are certified staff and specialized equipment to handle your unique situation.

My special fitness and/or health needs and goals include:

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
A. Your first impressions			
Do you instantly feel “at home” with staff you meet?			
Do you feel comfortable with the age group and gender mix? (Keep in mind that this mix may change by the day or hour.)			
Do staff and members look like they’re enjoying themselves?			
Would you enjoy spending time here?			
B. Facility and operations			
Location			
Is the facility an easy drive to and from your home or work?			
Is there a good mass-transit system that will drop you near the door?			
Does the facility offer transportation services to and from the center?			
Is the facility in a neighborhood that feels safe to you?			
Parking			
Is there ample off-street parking with generous stalls?			
Is the parking lot and walkway safely lit and close to the entrance?			

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
Maintenance and safety			
Is the facility clean and well-maintained?			
Do classes and workout areas offer plenty of space (neither crowded nor cluttered)?			
Is the facility well lit on the outside and inside?			
Does the facility have nonslip flooring?			
Are signs visible and easy to understand?			
Does the facility have handrails throughout the center?			
Does the ventilation system seem adequate without forceful fans?			
Accessibility			
Does the facility have power-door openers at exterior and interior entrances?			
Are all areas of the facility accessible to wheelchairs?			
Is there elevator access to all floors of the center?			
Is the facility open during the days and hours that best fit your schedule?			
C. Program offerings			
Getting started			
Does the facility offer health and wellness screenings?			
Does the facility offer functional fitness assessments?			
Does the facility offer orientations of equipment and other facility resources?			
Will staff help you with realistic goal setting for your individual needs?			
Will staff create a custom plan to help you reach your goals?			
Physical training programs			
Does the facility offer a variety of training programs?			
Cardiovascular training?			
Strength training?			

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
Flexibility training?			
Balance training?			
Other:			
Educational and motivational programs			
Does the facility offer classes on the following:			
Nutrition and weight loss?			
Specific medical conditions? (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, heart disease)			
Behavioral modification?			
Pain management?			
Stress management?			
Mental acuity?			
Emotional health?			
Other:			
Communication			
Does the facility offer other forms of information?			
Newsletter?			
Web site?			
Bulletin board?			
Newspaper or magazine?			
Special events?			
Personal services			
Does the club offer the following personal service options:			
Free, ongoing general assistance?			
Personal training for one-on-one attention? What are the fees?			
Doctor-ordered rehabilitation therapy?			

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
Licensed massage therapy?			
Other:			
Special needs			
Does the facility offer programs designed to address chronic and age-related conditions (e.g. osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, balance abnormalities, muscular weakness, etc.)?			
Do the classes have different levels of intensity and duration, modifiable to your needs?			
Will the staff work hand-in-hand with your physician if you have a health issue?			
Variety and convenience			
If there is a pool, is there a variety of both water- and land-based activities?			
Are both group and individual activities available?			
Do the hours and program times match with your preferred schedule?			
Does the facility have regularly scheduled events designed to help keep you informed and inspired?			
D. Equipment and amenities			
Condition and availability			
Is the equipment modern?			
Is the equipment clean?			
Is the equipment safe and working properly?			
Are there enough machines to avoid having to wait a long time for your turn?			
Are all of the workout and personal spaces (locker rooms) bright, clean, and uncluttered?			
Are stretching areas or stations roomy and away from traffic?			
Are all areas accessible to you?			
Diversity of offerings			
Do they have the following?			

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
Cardiovascular training machines? (e.g., treadmills, upright and recumbent bikes, steppers, ellipticals, etc.)			
Strength-training machines? (e.g., free weights, weight machines, etc.)			
Flexibility equipment? (for yoga, Pilates, etc.)			
Balance equipment?			
Exercise and/or lap pool (indoor)?			
Spa?			
Open floor space for stretching and workouts?			
Classroom(s) with chairs and tables?			
Showers?			
Lockers?			
Private dressing areas?			
Towel service?			
Comfy social areas?			
Filtered water readily available?			
Healthy snacks and beverages?			
Specific age-friendly features			
Is a significant percentage of the equipment age-friendly?			
Does the cardiovascular equipment have the following age-friendly features?			
Display panels that are easy to read, reach, change, and understand?			
Quick, easy access (mount and dismount) for individuals with a variety of functional abilities and disabilities?			
Slow starting speeds, ideally 0.5 mph?			
Emergency lanyards with belt clip?			

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
Wide and comfortable footrests and seats with armrests?			
Minimal preprogrammed workouts?			
Custom features (seats, arms, etc.) that are easy to adjust?			
Low impact?			
Handrails?			
Does the strength-building equipment have the following age-friendly features?			
Instructional placards with simple diagrams, easy-to-read text?			
Easy operation?			
Range-of-motion adjustments for various body sizes and functional limitations?			
Wider seats and benches to maintain balance?			
Easily adjusted hand, seat, and pad positions?			
Low starting resistance, fewer than five pounds?			
Ability to change resistance from a seated position?			
Small incremental increases in weight?			
E. Staff and management			
<p>Note: If you feel intimidated or otherwise put off by staff, you won't get the full benefit of their expertise or your program. You should always have confidence in staff's abilities and feel comfortable with them as people. Ask about the education, certification, and training specialties of management as well as staff.</p>			
Personal traits			
Are the staff friendly, responsive, and caring?			
Are staff always happy to answer your questions—and do it in a way you can understand?			
Are you comfortable with the staff's average age and gender profile?			

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
Does there always seem to be a sufficient ratio of staff to members?			
Are staff easy to identify and locate?			
Training and qualifications			
Are some or all of the staff trained to deal with the special needs of older adults?			
Are staff properly trained to identify the warning signs of fatigue or distress and to handle emergencies that may arise?			
Do all staff members have CPR and first aid training?			
Are staff knowledgeable about the impact that medication can have on exercise?			
Does the facility have the following on-site or readily available?			
Doctor?			
Registered nurse?			
Physical therapist?			
Trained and experienced staff?			
F. Social integration			
<p>Note: This may be the biggest reason you want to join a fitness club in the first place—and may be the most important factor in the overall success of your exercise program. Studies show that people will benefit more from each session and will continue their program longer when they are in a fun, social setting. If you want to work out with friends, look for a facility that is “friend and family friendly” that offers group activities and comfortable gathering places.</p>			
Do any of your friends already belong to this facility?			
Does this facility encourage and vigorously support group activities?			
Does the atmosphere (decor, communal spaces, music, etc.) seem friendly and inviting?			
Do members and staff easily and positively interact with each other?			
Does the facility give membership discounts or free trials to friends and family?			

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
Do they have areas built-in for socializing, such as comfortable lounge areas with snacks and beverages available?			
Does it have a membership you feel comfortable with (age, gender, interests, etc.)?			
Do you think this is a place that could eventually feel like “home?”			
G. Business practices, contracts, credentials			
Note: Before you sign anything, be sure you fully understand your rights and responsibilities, including the fee structure and any additional costs. You may want a family member, friend, or attorney to look over the contract with you. If you are ever feeling pressured, say you need more time to think it over.			
General			
Does this facility have a good reputation in your community?			
Have they (or their parent company) been in business at least 10 years?			
Do they answer all of your questions completely and patiently?			
Do they have a system for resolving member complaints and other issues?			
Is the majority age of their membership 40 years and older?			
Contracts and fees			
Does the facility offer free trial memberships?			
Are you provided with a written set of rules?			
Are all fees, monthly dues, and other costs in clear, written form and posted?			
Are the contracts and marketing materials available in large print?			
Do the membership fees/costs fit into your personal budget?			
Does the facility have more than one membership option?			
Is there a grace period during which you can cancel your contract and get a full refund?			

Fitness Club Checklist	YES	NO	N/A
Credentials			
Does the organization belong to a nationally-recognized professional fitness association that specializes in older adult fitness?			
Is the club a certified Equal Opportunity Employer?			
Does the club hold other memberships and certifications?			
Does the facility conform to all relevant federal, state, and local regulations, such as:			
Does the club have a good safety record?			
Has anyone ever filed a complaint against the club with the Better Business Bureau?			
Have any fines ever been assessed against the club by a government entity?			
Additional questions and notes:			