

Topic Page: [Kickboxing](#)

Summary Article: **Kickboxing**

From *Health Reference Series: Fitness and Exercise Sourcebook*

Are you looking for a total body workout that totally kicks butt? How about a way to increase your stamina, flexibility, and strength while listening to your favorite dance mixes?

If this sounds good to you, keep reading to find out what you need to know before you take the kickboxing challenge.

What Is Kickboxing?

Although the true roots of kickboxing date back to Asia 2,000 years ago, modern competitive kickboxing actually started in the 1970s, when American karate experts arranged competitions that allowed full-contact kicks and punches that had been banned in karate.

Because of health and safety concerns, padding and protective clothing and safety rules were introduced into the sport over the years, which led to the various forms of competitive kickboxing practiced in the United States today. The forms differ in the techniques used and the amount of physical contact that is allowed between the competitors.

Currently, one popular form of kickboxing is known as aerobic or cardiovascular (cardio) kickboxing, which combines elements of boxing, martial arts, and aerobics to provide overall physical conditioning and toning. Unlike other types of kickboxing, cardio kickboxing does not involve physical contact between competitors—it's a cardiovascular workout that's done because of its many benefits to the body.

Cardio kickboxing classes usually start with 10–15 minutes of warm-ups, which may include stretching and traditional exercises such as jumping jacks and push-ups, followed by a 30-minute kickboxing session that includes movements such as knee strikes, kicks, and punches. Some instructors may use equipment like punching bags or jump ropes.

After this, at least 5 minutes should be devoted to cooling down, followed by about 10 minutes of stretching and muscle conditioning. Stretching is really important because beginners can strain (“pull”) their muscles, and slow, proper stretching helps relax muscles and prevent injury.

Instructional videos and DVDs are also available if you're interested in trying a cardio kickboxing routine at home.

The Basics

Before you decide to jump in and sign up for a class, you should keep a few basic guidelines in mind:

- **Know your current fitness level.** Kickboxing is a high-intensity, high-impact form of exercise, so it's probably not a good idea to plunge in after a long stint as a couch potato. You might try preparing yourself by first taking a low-impact aerobics course or less physical form of exercise and working up to a higher level of endurance. When you do begin kickboxing, allow yourself to be a beginner by working at your own pace and not overexerting yourself to the point of exhaustion.
- **Check it out before you sign up.** If possible, observe or try a class beforehand to see whether

it's right for you and to make sure the instructor is willing to modify the routine a bit to accommodate people's different skill levels. Try to avoid classes that seem to move too fast, are too complicated, or don't provide the chance for any individual instruction during or after the class.

- **Find a class act.** Look for an instructor who has both a highlevel belt in martial arts and is certified as a fitness instructor by an organization such as the American Council on Exercise (ACE). Also, try to start at a level that suits you and slowly progress to a more intense, fast-paced kickboxing class. Many classes call for intermediate levels of fitness and meet two to three times a week.
- **Comfort is key.** Wear loose, comfortable clothing that allows your arms and legs to move easily in all directions. The best shoes are cross-trainers—not tennis shoes—because cross-trainers allow for side-to-side movements. Gloves or hand wraps are sometimes used during classes—you may be able to buy these where your class is held. Give your instructor a call beforehand so you can be fully prepared.
- **Start slowly and don't overdo it.** The key to a good kickboxing workout is controlled movement. Overextending yourself by kicking too high or locking your arms and legs during movements can cause pulled muscles and tendons and sprained knee or ankle joints. Start with low kicks as you slowly learn proper kickboxing technique. This is very important for beginners, who are more prone to developing injuries while attempting quick, complicated kickboxing moves.
- **Drink up.** Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after your class to quench your thirst and keep yourself hydrated.
- **Talk to your doctor.** It's always a good idea to see your doctor and have a complete physical exam before you begin any type of exercise program—especially one with a lot of aerobic activity like kickboxing. This is extremely important if you have any chronic medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes or are very overweight.

Moves You Can Use

Here are a few moves that you can try at home:

- **Roundhouse kick:** Stand with the right side of your body facing an imaginary target with your knees bent and your feet shoulders' width apart. Lift your right knee, pointing it just to the right of the target and pivoting your body toward the same direction. Kick with your right leg, as though you are hitting the target. Repeat with your other leg.
- **Front kick:** Stand with feet shoulders' width apart. Bend your knees slightly, and pull your right knee up toward your chest. Point your knee in the direction of an imaginary target. Then, kick out with the ball of your foot. Repeat with your other leg.
- **Side kick:** Start with the right side of your body facing a target. Pull your right knee up toward your left shoulder, and bend your knees slightly as you kick in the direction of your target. The outside of your foot or heel should be the part that would hit the target. Repeat with your other leg.

Why Kickboxing?

Besides keeping your body fit, kickboxing has other benefits. According to a study by ACE, you can

burn anywhere from 350 to 450 calories an hour with kickboxing!

Kickboxing also reduces and relieves stress. Its rigorous workout—controlled punching and kicking movements carried out with the discipline and skills required for martial arts—can do wonders for feelings of frustration and anger. Practicing kickboxing moves can also help to improve balance, flexibility, coordination, and endurance.

Kickboxing is also a great way to get a total body workout while learning simple self-defense moves. Kickboxing fans say the sport helps them to feel more empowered and confident.

So get out there and jab, punch, and kick your way to fitness.

“Kickboxing,” November 2008, reprinted with permission from www.kidshealth.org. Copyright © 2008 The Nemours Foundation. This information was provided by KidsHealth, one of the largest resources online for medically reviewed health information written for parents, kids, and teens. For more articles like this one, visit www.KidsHealth.org, or www.TeensHealth.org.

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Kickboxing. (2011). In L. Larsen (Ed.), *Health reference series: fitness and exercise sourcebook* (4th ed.). Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, Inc. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/kickboxing>



© 2011 Omnigraphics, Inc.



© 2011 Omnigraphics, Inc.

APA

Kickboxing. (2011). In L. Larsen (Ed.), *Health reference series: fitness and exercise sourcebook* (4th ed.). Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, Inc. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/kickboxing>

Chicago

"Kickboxing." In *Health Reference Series: Fitness and Exercise Sourcebook*, edited by Laura Larsen. 4th ed. Omnigraphics, Inc., 2011. <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/kickboxing>

Harvard

Kickboxing. (2011). In L. Larsen (Ed.), *Health reference series: fitness and exercise sourcebook*. (4th ed.). [Online]. Detroit: Omnigraphics, Inc. Available from: <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/kickboxing> [Accessed 14 November 2019].

MLA

"Kickboxing." *Health Reference Series: Fitness and Exercise Sourcebook*, edited by Laura Larsen, Omnigraphics, Inc., 4th edition, 2011. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/kickboxing>. Accessed 14 Nov. 2019.