

Gym Etiquette

By Jill Evans Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

Q: My New Year's resolution is to spend more time at the gym but I get irritated by people who think they can show up late and cut out early from a class, catch up on their cell phones while on the treadmill, and monopolize the equipment when others are waiting. Is there such a thing as gym etiquette?

A: The casual atmosphere of a gym is not a reason to forget our Ps and Qs. Sweaty, adrenaline-high people trying to exercise in a small space within a certain block of time is often a self-absorbed experience by its very nature. Fitness experts have come up with guidelines that should help the newcomer as well as the seasoned gymgoer feel at home.

Showing up on time for a yoga class is essential so you won't disrupt the flow for others. Enter as quietly as possible if you happen to be late. Skipping beginning and ending stretches is simply rude, especially to the instructor. Inform the instructor if you must leave a class early.

You're at the gym to work out, not "pick up" so steer clear of seductive attire that will make others feel uncomfortable. Keep covered up while bending and don't be tempted to uncover as the heat rises.

Follow the hygiene policy at your gym. It may require you to spray down the equipment after each use. On a personal note; perfume and cologne can be offensive to others so save it for after your shower and for goodness sake, launder your smelly clothes after every workout!

We humans are creatures of habit and when it comes to workouts, eventually someone will take your favorite spinning bike in the corner so it's important to be flexible and not to make a big deal out of it. After all, your reason for working out is to decrease stress.

If the gym is busy and you notice people waiting for your elliptical, cut it off after 30 minutes, which is sufficient time for a good cardiovascular workout. Other gym members are entitled to equipment and space as much as you; therefore, refrain from saving space with a towel. Show consideration and avoid "camping" on weight lifting equipment and benches. Make sure to put everything back in its place.

Stow your cell phone and other belongings in the locker room. Not only is talking on the phone disturbing to those around you, it can seriously distract you from your own workout. Respect the privacy of others by minding your own business and by all means, keep your voice down – no one is interested in hearing about your weekend plans.

Finally, you can easily hurt yourself if you don't know what you're doing on a particular machine. Always ask for assistance. If you're brand new at working out, take advantage of the free session most gyms offer with a personal trainer to get you started on the equipment.

Email your etiquette questions to Jill at: information@DefiningManners.com or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.

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