



The Peloton bike and app give users an in-person class experience with at-home convenience.



High-tech options such as Mirror provide effective exercises with minimal equipment and require very little space for those who prefer to keep their workouts at home.

# The Work(in) Revolution

New options can help you keep fit at home

BY KRISTEN SEYMOUR

If the term “home workout” conjures up images of VHS tapes, leotards and the same exercises day after day, hold on to your leg warmers. Things have changed drastically, especially this year as the COVID-19 pandemic forced many fitness centers to close their doors.

Today, it’s easy to access fresh, new workouts with a subscription to one of the many fitness apps available. Some apps connect with equipment (such as the Peloton bike) and allow users to attend live or on-demand classes; others, like Centr, provide workouts in a planner based on specific goals, along with multi-week challenges.

Most of these apps include a variety of workouts and a selection of world-class instructors to lead them, like Kristin



Peloton instructors lead live online classes.

SHAWN HUBBARD, PELOTON

MIRROR

McGee, a Peloton yoga and meditation instructor who has appeared in more than 100 yoga and Pilates videos. Often, the trainers encourage members to connect with them on social media, offering a level of access that participants who don’t live near a New York or Los Angeles studio might otherwise never experience. “I’ve been holding 10-minute Instagram Live ‘pre-shows’ before my pre-recorded classes,” says McGee. “I can tell them a little bit about my class and see if anyone has a question on alignment or breathing.”

While the home fitness

industry has seen an upward trend in recent years, there has been a huge surge during the pandemic. But are those home workouts truly taking the place of gym classes? And will those users continue to stay home once social distancing restrictions are lifted?

If Jen Exoo, 55, of Cleveland, is any indication, the answer is a resounding yes. Exoo, a passionate cyclist, was already dedicated to her workouts before the pandemic, working with a personal trainer, taking weekly classes at her gym and playing tennis several times a week.

**“Don’t be too hard on yourself, and don’t push yourself too hard, too fast.”**

— KRISTIN MCGEE, Peloton, yoga and meditation instructor

Exoo purchased a Peloton bike in late January, and by the time her area went on lockdown in March, she was a convert. “Not to sound religious about it, but having that Peloton bike and being involved in the community has completely changed my attitude about home workouts,” she says. “I mean, I’d been using the app already for two or three years and thought, ‘How different could having the

bike and touch screen be?’” Completely, as it turns out. She continued to work out weekly with her trainer via FaceTime, but began getting in a workout on her bike almost every day. And that wasn’t all. “Being at home also made me explore ‘not spinning’ activities on the Peloton app, like core work, stretching, yoga, meditation,” she says. “I don’t see myself going back to group classes again.” >



Exoo isn't alone. Centr surveyed the members in its private Facebook group, and 57 percent of respondents say that they aren't planning to go back to the gym, while 35 percent responded that they are likely to incorporate home workouts with trips to the gym when they feel it is safe to do so.

Centr member Gabriela

Tobal, 51, of San Diego was surprised by how easily she adjusted from working out at a local boxing gym to following an online program.

"I never thought I would like doing home workouts as my sole method of working out because I love going to a gym with good classes, but it's been great," she says.

Tobal has tried a lot of other home workout programs and finds that Centr's online community is a key factor in her commitment. "I do miss being with people in a real class," she says, and notes that when the gym is open again, she'll likely do a mix of those boxing classes and her Centr workouts, "but it turns out this program

really does work for me."

As you develop your home workout habit, McGee suggests starting slowly and setting realistic goals. "Don't be too hard on yourself, and don't push yourself too hard, too fast," she says. "Soon, it'll become a lifestyle. You'll crave it — and you'll love it in your home." ■

## Swapping Struggles for Successes

Even the best fitness app will only take you so far. If you're interested in creating a successful home workout routine — and sticking to it — you might have to overcome some of the following challenges:

### LACK OF SPACE, EQUIPMENT OR BUDGET

Small space? No gear? No problem, says fitness instructor Kristin McGee.

"Yoga, Pilates and meditation are all awesome in small spaces — they're portable and you need minimal equipment. And so is strength training," she says, adding that many streaming dance workouts are designed to be done without a huge amount of floor space. Barre work, McGee points out, can be done while standing at your kitchen counter.

Don't assume that you need fancy toys or heavy weights to raise your heart rate and build serious muscle; most apps offer a way to filter strength workouts, allowing you to find those that use just body weight.

If you are tight on space, many high-tech options like Mirror and Tonal require surprisingly little space, and equipment like a TRX suspension trainer or a set of resistance bands can open up a whole new world of workout options.

### LACK OF TIME

Being busy is one of the most common excuses for skipping a workout, but with



TRX equipment can offer space savings.

the right attitude, it's an easy one to overcome.

"A lot of times, less is more," says McGee. "If you try to do hourlong workouts, you might set yourself up for failure because you don't actually have that kind of time, so then you're frustrated that you're not getting it in every day."

McGee suggests starting with shorter workouts done consistently. "Just a 10- or 20-minute strength workout, or a 20-minute full-body yoga flow can give you so many benefits — you move your body, you get your heart rate up, you feel better mentally," she says.

### LACK OF MOTIVATION

Part of the appeal of hitting the gym or attending a class is the fact that it forces

you to leave home and work behind. When you're working out in your living room, it can be distracting to see dirty dishes or be interrupted by a family member or pet. And that's assuming you actually get yourself started on your home workout.

If you find yourself having a difficult time getting going, try these tips:

**Schedule it.** Pick a time for your workout and put it in your planner as you would an important meeting. Arrange your day around it and consider it non-negotiable.

**Find your people.** Many fitness apps offer access to online communities, so if you're looking for people who share your goals (or your struggles), that may be a great place to start. Choosing a live class can also provide an added sense of community.

**Clear your space.** If you need to rearrange some furniture to do your workout or grab a bottle of water, get it all out of the way before you warm up. Having to stop to move a coffee table or find a towel will sap your motivation in a heartbeat.

**Set an intention.** When you walk through the door at a gym, you probably have a plan, a goal and a set amount of time to be there. Treat your home workout the same way, leaving the rest of the day behind for the 30 minutes or so you're dedicating to your health. Think about what you want out of your sweat session and commit to not looking at your phone — or doing anything but exercise — for the duration of your class.