

Take Fitness One Small Step at a Time

I had heard about step aerobics classes for years, but deeming the concept gimmicky and maybe even a bit sissy, I hadn't gone to the fitness center for a firsthand experience.

Then, while on a summer Alaskan cruise, my friend Tess wanted to check out the total body conditioning class held at the ship's fitness center during our first day at sea. Being up for new experiences, and not one to want to lounge around for hours on end, I gladly joined in. As part of the fitness regimen of that day's class, our instructor put us through a short step aerobics routine. Not ever having done this type of exercise before—and certainly not on a ship! —I didn't do too badly. It kind of reminded me of dance class. I like dancing, so I was taken in.

Several months later, I was searching for an inexpensive piece of fitness equipment I could use indoors when the weather wasn't conducive to walking or jogging and I recalled my ship workout experience. I soon found out that the original Step was available for sale to individuals— the same exact style and color I had used at sea. I dashed down to my sporting goods store and bought one.

Mine came with a DVD highlighting a basic cardio workout and an extended cardio workout with weights. The Step ranges in price from about \$50 to \$100, depending on which model you buy, so it's affordable.

The Good Stuff

There are several things about the Step that I really like. First of all, it basically comes out of the box put together. (I mean, how complicated can a step be, right?) With little adjusting, your Step is a very stable piece of equipment. It

works great on any type of flooring—wood, linoleum, or carpet.

I actually use mine on carpet, so that was a key selling feature. It's mobile and can be stashed along the wall or under the bed. This is important if you are concerned about space or general neatness of your workout area. It only takes about 30 minutes to do a workout routine, and you can do it in the comfort of your own home. And lastly, it provides a great workout if done in combination with the included step workout DVD. If you get sick of the original DVD, you can always expand your library later.

You have three step heights to choose from: 4 inches, 6 inches, or 8 inches, depending on your fitness level. And you can choose to use dumbbell weights along with the Step if you wish. I was amazed that just raising the Step height one level really changed my workout. My workout went from fairly easy to a heart-beating, sweating routine in no time.

Consider This

You will need tennis shoes that are conducive to the Step. If the soles grip the Step too much, you won't be able to do some of the turning moves. Aerobic-style shoes will definitely work better than running shoes. You might even be able to find a sneaker specially designed for step aerobics. Ask around or pull out a pair of sneakers and test them out. Don't buy another pair of shoes unless you really need to. Simply be aware that you might need to if you pick up this equipment.

You will also need space. Some moves, like leg extensions, require more space, and several moves might ask you to move around the Step. To be sure you have room on all sides, move the couch, coffee table, desk, etc. out of the way before your workout. Also, if you have a ceiling fan in the room where you are going to work out, be sure that your arm or your head isn't going to hit the pull chain.

The Step can be loud, so be aware if you are trying to do this

workout while someone is sleeping nearby. They are going to hear your rhythmic movements!

If you need folks around to motivate you and/or do this workout with you, I recommend you take a class at your local gym instead of investing in a home Step. But if you are more naturally motivated to do this kind of activity alone, you should enjoy this form of exercise.

Whatever fitness routine you decide to do, make sure it's fun, really works your body, and is something you can do consistently. The Step can be a great workout in itself or a great addition to your regular routine. Try it ... you might like it.