

Beginner Guide to kickboxing: Everything you need to know to get started

Are you new to kickboxing and eager to get started? You're in the right spot! We've put together a comprehensive guide packed with essential insights and tips to support you on your kickboxing adventure. From understanding proper techniques and safety measures to choosing the right gear and workout strategies, we've got everything you need.



What Is Kickboxing?

Kickboxing is a hybrid martial art and combat sport that merges punches, kicks, and footwork, resulting in an engaging and energetic workout. It is commonly practiced for self-defence

purposes and fitness enhancement, providing a complete body workout that improves strength, endurance, coordination, and agility. With its origins in various martial arts disciplines, kickboxing serves as both a competitive sport and an efficient form of cardiovascular exercise.

This sport has gained popularity among those seeking to enhance their fitness, lose weight, or acquire important self-defence techniques. Kickboxing incorporates movements from both the upper and lower body, making it one of the most well-rounded martial arts for total body conditioning. Whether your goal is fitness, personal development, or competition, kickboxing offers numerous advantages.

Now, let's delve into the history of kickboxing and see how it stacks up against other martial arts like Muay Thai.

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The History of Kickboxing

The Evolution of Kickboxing

Kickboxing, as we understand it now, emerged in Japan during the 1960s, but its foundation is much older, influenced by several martial arts, especially karate and Muay Thai. This combat sport was created to merge the dynamic kicking techniques of karate with the powerful striking methods of Muay Thai, resulting in a formidable hybrid fighting style.

Here's a summary of its progression:

Foundational Beginnings (1960s- Japan): The inception of kickboxing stemmed from the intent to integrate the most effective aspects of karate and Muay Thai. Japanese martial artist Osamu Noguchi is often recognized for establishing kickboxing as an official sport. He was motivated by the fierce strikes of Muay Thai and aimed to modify them to suit Japanese spectators. The inaugural kickboxing event occurred in 1966 in Japan, signalling the sport's formal introduction.

International Expansion (1970s- USA): The 1970s saw kickboxing reaching the United States, where it quickly gained traction. American martial artists viewed it as a competitive substitute for traditional karate and Muay Thai. During this period, the sport became more structured, with established rules and regulations for competitions. American fighters began to take the lead in the global kickboxing arena, bringing new techniques and training methods to the forefront.

The Fitness Revolution (1980s- Present): In the 1980s and 1990s, kickboxing transitioned from a combat-focused discipline to a popular fitness regime. The emergence of cardio kickboxing—a non-contact form of the sport—captivated those seeking an intense, full-body workout. Today, kickboxing is practiced in gyms around the globe, serving both as a self-defence practice and a highly effective fitness program suitable for individuals of all ages and skill levels.

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Comparing Kickboxing and Muay Thai: Major Differences

Though kickboxing and Muay Thai share some similarities, they are fundamentally different martial arts with unique histories, techniques, and philosophies. Recognizing these distinctions can guide you in selecting the style that aligns best with your fitness and combat objectives.

Here are the primary differences between kickboxing and Muay Thai:

1. Incorporation of Elbows and Knees

- Muay Thai: Often referred to as the "Art of Eight Limbs," Muay Thai utilizes strikes from elbows and knees along with punches and kicks. This feature enhances its versatility and intensity, particularly in close-quarters combat, where elbow strikes are particularly effective.

- Kickboxing: This discipline mainly emphasizes punches and kicks. While some variations permit knee strikes, elbow strikes are generally excluded from most kickboxing styles. As a result, kickboxing tends to be more straightforward, concentrating on quick, powerful punches and kicks.

2. Clinching Techniques

- Muay Thai: A hallmark of Muay Thai is the clinch—a grappling technique that allows a fighter to control their opponent while delivering strikes, especially with knees and elbows. Clinching is a crucial component of Muay Thai, used to exhaust opponents during close-range exchanges.

- Kickboxing: Clinching is generally prohibited in kickboxing, and referees frequently intervene to separate fighters who engage in it. This regulation keeps the action focused on striking from a distance rather than grappling up close, resulting in a faster-paced, striking-centric sport.

3. Kicking and Striking Styles

- Muay Thai: Kicks in Muay Thai often utilize the shin for power, particularly the roundhouse kick, which is a signature strike. Additionally, the teep (push kick) is employed to manage distance.

- Kickboxing: Kickboxing features a variety of kicks, some inspired by karate. The roundhouse kick is also prevalent, but fighters typically strike with the foot or ball of the foot instead of the shin. This difference creates a unique dynamic in terms of distance and impact.

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4. Fighting Stance and Rhythm

- Muay Thai: Fighters in Muay Thai usually adopt a more upright stance and maintain a slower, more calculated rhythm. The pace is generally more patient, with fighters waiting for the opportune moment to execute powerful strikes.

- Kickboxing: Kickboxers often use a bladed stance, similar to that seen in karate, prioritizing quick, explosive movements. Kickboxing matches are typically faster, featuring a higher volume of punches and kicks.

5. Regulations and Scoring Systems

- Muay Thai: Scoring is heavily weighted towards the damage inflicted, particularly through knees, elbows, and kicks. Clinch control and how effectively fighters manage their opponents in that position are also significant factors in scoring.

- Kickboxing: In contrast, kickboxing relies more on a point-based scoring system, where clean and legal strikes earn points. While knockouts can happen, kickboxing matches are more likely to go the distance, with points determining the victor based on landed punches and kicks.

In conclusion, while both disciplines involve striking, kickboxing emphasizes punches and kicks in a quicker environment, whereas Muay Thai incorporates elbows, knees, and clinching in a more calculated, powerful manner. Both styles provide excellent fitness and combat training opportunities, so the choice between them ultimately depends on personal preferences and goals.

Advantages of Kickboxing for Newcomers

Kickboxing is an excellent way to get fit while building muscle and increasing your confidence. This dynamic workout not only helps in burning calories and toning your body but also improves endurance, balance, coordination, and agility.

Beyond being a fantastic physical activity, kickboxing offers numerous mental and physical health advantages. The cardiovascular aspect of kickboxing elevates your heart rate and enhances lung capacity, contributing to better overall heart health. Additionally, it serves as an effective outlet for pent-up energy and is known to stimulate the release of endorphins, which can alleviate stress, anxiety, and feelings of depression.

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Getting Started in Kickboxing: A Comprehensive Guide

If you're new to kickboxing, the journey ahead may seem intimidating, but it can be a rewarding experience with the right guidance. From selecting the right class to grasping essential techniques, here's how you can embark on your kickboxing adventure:

1. Locate a Kickboxing Class in Your Area

To kick off your kickboxing experience, seek out a qualified class or instructor. Kickboxing sessions provide a structured environment where you can learn safe practices and proper techniques from experienced trainers. Focus on classes designed for beginners, as they will introduce you to the basics and gradually lead you to more complex skills.

You can discover kickboxing classes at local gyms, martial arts centers, or community facilities. Many gyms also offer cardio kickboxing options, which can be ideal for those primarily interested in fitness. If you want to explore both the athletic and fitness dimensions, ensure the class you choose encompasses both facets.

Important factors to consider when selecting a class:

- The instructor's qualifications and experience
- Class size (smaller classes often provide more individualized attention)
- The balance of technique training versus fitness conditioning
- Feedback from previous participants

2. Master the Fundamentals: Strikes, Kicks, and Movement

Before engaging in a full kickboxing workout, it's vital to learn the basic moves that every kickboxer should know. Getting these fundamentals down will pave the way for your success and help prevent injuries during training. Key techniques to focus on include:

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- Jab: A quick, straight punch with your lead hand, useful for measuring distance and setting up stronger punches.
- Cross: A strong punch delivered with your rear hand, often following a jab.
- Hook: A circular punch aimed at the side of your opponent's head or body.
- Uppercut: A punch that ascends, targeting the chin.
- Roundhouse Kick: A prevalent kick in kickboxing, utilizing a pivot to strike your opponent's side or head.
- Footwork: Learning to move fluidly, adjust your weight, and maintain balance is key for both attack and defence.

Devote time to practicing these techniques with an instructor before progressing to more intricate combinations. Prioritize technique and accuracy over speed to help establish solid muscle memory.

3. Take Your Time: Progress at Your Own Speed

Kickboxing can be physically challenging, so it's crucial to ease into it and pay attention to your body's signals. Rushing into intense training can lead to injury or discouragement. Concentrate on mastering the basics and gradually ramp up the intensity of your workouts as your confidence and strength grow.

If you join a kickboxing class, inform your instructor that you're a beginner. They can offer modified exercises and slower-paced drills to help you develop proper form before you increase your pace and power.

Don't be disheartened if your progress seems slow at first; building strength, endurance, and coordination takes time. Remember that kickboxing is as much a mental discipline as it is a physical one, so be patient and persistent.

4. Practice Beyond Class: Developing Muscle Memory

Like any sport, improvement comes with practice. To enhance your kickboxing skills, it's important to train outside of class. Activities such as shadowboxing, using a heavy bag, or sparring with a partner will help you refine your techniques and coordination.

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- Shadowboxing: This involves practicing your strikes and footwork solo, which is a great way to build muscle memory and improve your form while also increasing your cardiovascular fitness.
- Heavy Bag Training: Working with a punching bag allows you to practice your punches and kicks with power, enhancing your striking strength and endurance.
- Sparring: As you advance, sparring with a partner offers a chance to apply what you've learned in a realistic setting, improving your timing, defence, and ability to combine techniques.

By dedicating time to additional practice, you'll speed up your progress and gain more confidence in class.

5. Enjoy the Process and Stay Committed

Most importantly, have fun with your kickboxing training. Whether your objectives are fitness-related, self-defence, or mastering the sport itself, kickboxing should be an enjoyable experience. Acknowledge your accomplishments, no matter how minor, and embrace the journey of learning and improvement.

Consistency is vital in kickboxing. Strive to regularly attend classes, practice at home, and stay dedicated to enhancing your skills. Over time, you'll notice significant improvements in your fitness, strength, and technique.

By remaining consistent and enjoying the learning process, you'll soon transition from a beginner to a confident kickboxer.

Key Kickboxing Gear and Equipment

Boxing Gloves

Selecting the right boxing gloves is crucial for safeguarding your hands and wrists throughout kickboxing workouts. Take your time to choose a pair that fits well and provides sufficient support, allowing you to fully engage in and benefit from each training session.

Hand Wraps

Did you know that properly wrapping your hands is vital for protecting them during kickboxing? This technique not only enhances the support of your gloves but also serves as an extra line of defence against injury.

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and breathable fabrics that facilitate easy movement during kickboxing. Many practitioners prefer wearing kickboxing shorts paired with a comfortable tee or tank top to ensure they can move freely while honing their skills.

Shin Guards

Shin guards are indispensable for shielding your shins from the impact of kicks or punches. Opt for shin guards that offer full coverage, are adjustable for a secure fit, and prioritize both comfort and freedom of movement.

Attire

Choosing the right clothing is essential; go for loose-fitting

Additional Factors to Ponder Before Starting Kickboxing

Nutrition

Keep in mind that engaging in physical activity alone won't suffice in achieving your fitness aspirations. It's vital to integrate a nutritious, well-rounded diet to energize your workouts and facilitate recovery. Make sure to include ample protein, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats in your meals.

Hydration

Staying hydrated is a key component of an effective kickboxing workout. To avoid muscle cramps, ensure you maintain adequate hydration levels throughout your training by consuming enough water both prior to and following your sessions.

Recovery

Looking after your body post-kickboxing is crucial. Remember to cool down, perform stretches, and allow sufficient time for your body to recuperate fully. Emphasize the importance of quality sleep and include rest days to avert injuries and sustain motivation. Effective recovery is vital for your overall health and longevity in your kickboxing endeavors.

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Safety

Prioritizing safety in kickboxing is essential. Whether you are refining your techniques in a gym setting or training at home, make sure the training environment is secure and all necessary precautions are observed. If you opt for home workouts, ensure you have the appropriate gear and strictly follow safety protocols.

