





POWERHOUSE

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The prescription for an efficient workout is simple:

You need a structured program, knowledgeable instruction and supervision and, of course, the right tools. Commercial gyms and fitness centers are filled with the latest cardiovascular equipment, resistance-training machinery and a mountain of free weights. The best clubs resemble university strength and conditioning facilities—complete with college-degreed exercise physiologists and strength coaches to guide you along the path to a strong, healthy physique. Yet occasionally life throws you a curveball and you skip a workout or two. Most people have good intentions—you try to make it to the gym but your progress is plagued by late nights at the office, deadlines and infrequent training.

**How to build the
Ultimate Homegym
for less than \$1,000.**



PHOTOGRAPHY: DAN SIDOR

What if you had the best tools to build muscle and trim your waistline under one roof: yours. A home gym is a place where you can make up a missed workout, sing aloud to your favorite Led Zeppelin song without attracting attention or lift weights in your underwear. Side note: If you find yourself alone in a basement, singing '70s rock tunes without your pants on, you may be insane.

Essential Home Gym Tools for \$1,000

PARABODY RACK SYSTEM

This tough steel cage is a staple for any home exercise room. For the money, it's about as close as you're going to get to a commercial gym-quality model. Adjustable safety supports, when set properly, allow you to perform a bench and squat without the help of a spotter. (We still recommend a spotter, though.) The pull-up bar is an added bonus.

\$529, www.parabody.com

Advanced Exercise Equipment
9500 W. 49th Avenue, Suite D100
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033, Phone: 303-996-0048
Fax: 303-996-0063, Email: acee1997@aol.com



POWERBLOCK ADJUSTABLE BENCH

This adjustable bench from PowerBlock is wide enough to support your shoulders when you're doing a chest press and doesn't wobble on a level surface. Best of all, you can change the angle to perform dozens of exercises. And this means more muscle.

\$220, www.powerblock.com

OLYMPIC BARBELL SET

Unless you're a competitive powerlifter, this 300-pound Olympic barbell set comes with enough weight to perform gym-quality exercise in your basement.

\$120, www.newyorkbarbells.com

LIFELINE JUMP ROPE

The Power Jump Rope from Lifeline is a great cardiovascular training tool for confined spaces (home gyms, prison cells). We like this rope because you can adjust the length for a tailored fit. Plus, you can impress the neighborhood kids on the playground with your skipping prowess. Check out "Hop, Skip and a Jump," on page 62 for a heavyweight champion-caliber jump rope workout.

\$10, www.lifeline-usa.com



D-BALL MEDICINE BALL

This six-pound medicine ball from Dynamax is easy to throw and doesn't bounce—a bonus if you're exercising in the close quarters of your laundry room. You'll be less likely to break the antique Christmas ornaments in storage.

\$55, 1-888-466-6765



DURABALL STABILITY BALL

We like the Duraball because it's university-tested to withstand 1,000 pounds. If punctured, the ball will deflate slowly over 30 seconds. (Just in case you roll over a broken antique Christmas ornament.)

\$35, www.paulchekseminars.com



Purpose of the home gym

Nearly all \$19.95 abdominal devices end up in the cellar under a pile of outdated cardigan sweaters. Not because they don't work (zip-up cardigan sweaters work wonders for Mr. Rogers), but because most infomercial exercise gizmos are difficult to use and will ultimately induce boredom. To avoid turning your home gym into a heavy-duty clothes rack, you'll need the right stuff. We're not suggesting that you drop your health club membership. Instead, keep a few essentials in your garage or basement for those days when you need a good workout without leaving the house. We searched among the blinking treadmills and shiny dumbbells to find a few gym basics—the must-have tools that are literally the nuts and bolts of a quality workout. And for less than the cost of the latest big screen TV, you can complement your commercial gym routine with an occasional home workout session.

Our favorite gym gear

POWERBLOCK ADJUSTABLE DUMBBELLS

If your home gymnasium doubles as a broom closet, you'll appreciate Intellebell's space-saving interchangeable dumbbells. PowerBlocks are a rackful of iron, compressed into two shoebox-sized hand weights. They're easily adjustable, from 5 pounds to 45 pounds in 5-pound increments, and can be stored under your bench when not in use.

\$219, www.powerblocks.com



IGX OLYMPIC BARBELL SET

These plates have built-in handles in case you're short on dumbbells.

\$.82/lb., www.ironrip.com

The seven-foot Olympic bar is built to last. We like the anti-chip chrome finish.

\$210, www.ironrip.com



Home Gym Safety 101

Success through failure. In short, that's the mantra of resistance training. You lift a force for a predetermined number of repetitions, often until you are challenged to maintain proper exercise technique. If you carefully and scientifically introduce the muscle to a stimulus that it is unaccustomed to, it will adapt—thereby creating a bigger, stronger or faster muscle, depending on the program design. On the other hand, forces that are intended to produce muscular failure may cause injury unless you take the necessary precautions. Use these helpful tips in your garage or at the athletic club to avoid a bruised ego, or a more serious wound.

Warm Up

Before you zip up that denim jumpsuit (it's your house, you can wear whatever you please) and start heaving iron, it's important to warm-up properly. "A 5- to 10-minute warm-up will increase the temperature within your muscles and reduce the chance of injury," says Colin Hoobler, M.P.T., C.S.C.S., an Oregon-based physical therapist and author of *The Exercise Practitioner*. It's also a good time to mentally prepare you for the workout ahead, adds Hoobler. So grab the jump rope and skip at a moderate pace for at least five minutes. If the ceiling in your crawl space-turned-gymnasium is too low for a jump rope, jog in place or do jumping jacks.

Scare the neighbors: Walk outside après-workout and ignore the fact that you're wearing a sweaty denim jumpsuit.

Recruit a Spotter

The ideal spotter is someone with resistance training experience who: 1) Can offer enough assistance through the difficult part of a lift, 2) Is strong enough to raise the barbell off of your quivering body. To avoid an ambulance shuttle to the ER, don't perform any movements that involve lifting a weight over your chest or head without proper supervision, says Hoobler.

