

Home gyms rethink the need for heavy equipment

By Lidia Ryan



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In today's world, things that were once considered luxuries are becoming more and more accessible. We now have apps that allow us to basically have private drivers and courier services. And thanks to the changing world and changing trends in fitness, a home gym is now not only accessible to everyone, but can actually be more affordable than a gym membership.

Less is more

The days of heavy equipment are over as treadmills are being replaced with yoga mats. Sabine Schoenberg, a contractor in Fairfield County and Jennifer Hallock, an interior designer working from

Connecticut and New York City, have both found that people are moving away from home gyms filled with machinery to calm spaces geared toward calisthenics and body-weight training.

"I have seen a lot of houses over the years where people would put massage rooms and big steam systems and big saunas in the lower level," Schoenberg said. "Those days are kind of over."

This makes having a home gym much more affordable for the simple fact of not having to buy expensive workout equipment, but also because any room can be made into a makeshift gym – it no longer has to be a large designated space – though

most home gyms are still built in the basement.

“It’s a very exciting. It’s a much more affordable and usable-for-everyone type of a world these days,” Schoenberg said. “[A home gym] is your personal environment. You set it up custom-tailored for you. The home experience now exceeds the health club.”

As with many things, Hallock says homeowners’ eyes can be bigger than their stomachs when it comes to home gyms, but one of her top tips to designing a home gym is for the owner to focus on his or her current workout routine and build around that.

“Only bring in equipment that you need,” she said. “It can be tempting to bring in equipment that looks great and sounds good, but you want to be practical and save space save and money.”

In terms of aesthetic, Hallock leaves it up to her clients to decide how they want their home gyms to look but she recommends keeping the room light and bright; a mirrored wall is also important.

Go high-tech

One of the biggest changes in the fitness space is the use of technology as apps bring any fitness class under the sun into people’s homes. Schoenberg said the top thing everyone needs in their home gym is a smart TV or a space to hook up a laptop.

“You can be canoeing in Egypt, cycling tour de France, running along Great Wall of China,” Schoenberg said. “The virtual side of things is quite fascinating.”

Hallock also advises making sure the room is wired with the proper electrical voltage necessary to keep it well lit and to power all electronics.

Where working out at home used to be a somewhat isolating experience, Schoenberg said technology has allowed the social component of the gym to come into the home.

“I had a client who moved from the West Coast and she couldn’t connect with fitness instructors here; she really liked hers on the West Coast,” Schoenberg said. Instead, she turned to technology. “Via Skype they did their workouts.”

Make it healthy

Of course, working out is all about getting healthy, so Schoenberg emphasizes the importance of making a home gym a healthy environment in itself. This means having a fresh air system and keeping the area well ventilated.

“Ultimately you’re doing this for your health,” Schoenberg said. “Make sure you know what it means to be sweating down there.”

Lidia Ryan is an online producer for the Hearst Connecticut Media Group.

Photo courtesy of KellyDesigns. Kelly Anne Sohigian of Kellydesigns created a home gym in Pound Ridge, NY, by adding rubber flooring, a wall of mirrors, a TV and some equipment. But most of the room was left open for yoga and gymnastics.

