

Fighting fit: **Self-defence fitness classes**

Self-defence fitness classes are taking off, so we spoke to the organisers of three different classes to see what's on offer.

The musical one: **Box 'n' Bass**

With its surreal light show and live DJ playing Drum 'n' Bass, garage, dubstep and grime, it would be easy to think Box 'n' Bass is more fiesta than fitness, but the class is all about combining the intensity and technique of boxing with the energy and environment of a club.

Box 'n' Bass instructor, Henry Weston, has advice for fit pros interested in including boxing in their sessions, "It's very easy to incorporate some shadow boxing with 1kg weights into a circuit, or partner people up with pads and get them to punch fast for 30 seconds, then hard for 30 seconds, then switch. But without learning technique, you might as well just do burpees instead."

While the session is about proper boxing technique and a real fitness blast, it's also about release.

Lightbox, London



Photography: © A Blake



The trendy one: **Flykick**

Grab your gloves and get ready for a workout that's a 'HIIT' with everyone from Chelsea mums to fitness models, and Muai Thai fighters to corporate professionals letting off steam!

Co-founder, Charlie Kemper, explains why Flykick's workout, known as the Flykick Formula, is so potent, "In my opinion, there is no better workout that delivers results than Flykick. We combine HIIT, stretch, and kickboxing techniques that don't intimidate and are easily adaptable to every person's fitness level, all while targeting the same parts of everyone's body: abs, arms, glutes, and core."

Besides the physical nature of the workout, Elyse Moland, another co-founder, sees the mental health benefits of Flykick as a reason for fit pros to incorporate kickboxing into their own classes.

Regent's Place, London

The efficient one: **Krav Maga**

"While it derives from other martial arts, it is not taught as a sport. It is focused on the personal safety of yourself and your loved ones," says Adrian Simam, chief instructor of the Krav Maga system.

The fitness that comes with Krav Maga is entirely functional, with real-world application being the key aspect, and it is much more rooted in the tradition and effective nature of the martial art. Household names such as Angelina Jolie and Jason Statham are said to take up the discipline to get in shape for film roles.

Simam says, "Krav Maga is a self-defence system that combines techniques from a number of martial arts and integrates them with your natural instinctive responses to equip you with skills that are easily learned and used when you are faced with a threat or actual assault."

Toxteth FireFit Hub, Liverpool





MY SESSION

Every session with a client needs to be structured to their individual needs and goals. However, there may be elements of this sample session by Wendy Hall that can be incorporated into your session preparations.

Client goals

Martin's goals have always been to use his legs more, build some cardio and improve his stamina.

He has been working with me in both one-to-one sessions and my FUNction Fitness circuit class since 2015. He has hydrocephalus, a condition with accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain. This can typically cause increased pressure in the skull, often with headaches, vision difficulty and poor balance. He also has other conditions, including a metal support rod in his back, and wears personalised footwear with callipers to help with his feet and mobility. He has oxygen at home should he need it when getting back to his house if walking from the car. Martin is a wheelchair user and can manage a little walking with two walking sticks around the house. We work on balance, mobility, strength, cardio and stamina. Martin has always maintained that his legs 'let him down', as he can't manage as much as he would like to, or used to.

Considerations

I'm always focused on the participant's goals and what they want to achieve. If you look up 'exercise and hydrocephalus', it flags concerns for additional pressure that can be created through extra activity, depending on intensity. Everybody is different and some days are better than others. Martin may have had a fall getting out of the house that morning, so I'm always prepared and thinking ahead for us both. We started with a session that would allow Martin to work through a large range of movements with me that we could plan together, featuring exercises to progress towards his goals, incorporating his lower body as much as possible as he is primarily in his wheelchair.

Martin has appointments and has to monitor his health with his GP, so we regularly change exercises to avoid fatigue. He is a regular gym user and is happy using fixed weight stations to exercise on other days, so the one-to-one sessions always use different items of equipment and keep him challenged.

Rationale

Martin has always wanted to try new exercises. As a wheelchair user myself, I understand how important it is to be able to get out of a seated position as often as possible. When a goal is to work with legs and cardio from a seated position, it's often as demanding for someone to transfer to equipment as it is to

use the equipment. Martin and I worked up from practising the transfers onto gym equipment and then adding exercises to that when he was more confident, which didn't take long. We chat about exercise and how it's progressing, good and bad.

Exercise is important to Martin for lots of reasons but when he said he'd always dreamed of trying one thing (after seeing me do it), we got to work on it. The bench press! Weighted exercise is a great part of cardio and, for Martin, it added a wide range of other challenges, too. The bench press offers a seated support position away from his chair, while also demanding control and strength with balance, co-ordination and endurance. We always start with an empty bar and some days that has been enough; other days we'll go up to a respectable 30kg. He has amazed and inspired others in the gym who didn't even think he could get out of his chair. Martin's health may slow him down as he gets older – he's now in his 40s – but his determination, and love of exercise and people, will inspire new challenges for us to work out.

Session in brief

Warm-up

Sci-fit/hand bikes. 5-10mins with some 30-second interval sprints after 5mins.

Workout

Boxing with bag and gloves. Ladder-style cardio, increasing cardio time intervals and reducing rest intervals over a maximum of 5mins. Returning to short work interval and longer rest interval at the end of the boxing ladder.

Squats. Using TRX bars to support. 3 x 10 reps. Often split-leg squats at 3 x 8 reps using a step with one foot on top of the step to encourage single-leg muscles and balance.

Pull-ups. Using TRX bars. Repeat pull-ups, lifting whole bodyweight away from the chair and without rest through a whole set. 3 x 10 reps. Adding one single-hold pull-up for time. This is a great progress example of FITT (frequency, intensity, time, type) for Martin. He started managing just a few seconds holding himself up and now he can manage more than 3mins straight static pull-up before exhaustion! **fp**

BIOGRAPHY ►

Wendy Hall is a group fitness and gym instructor with more than 20 years' experience, 10 years of which has included her own disability after an accident. She specialises in mixed ability fitness and exercise, and developed her own CIMSPA CPD to improve understanding and the importance of inclusive exercise.

