

So You Want to Be a Group Fitness/Group Exercise Instructor?

Congrats on looking past the great workout that you just had and decide that maybe you'd rather be at the front of the room leading the class instead of being a part of the crowd. Regardless of where you stand in the room, **the number one goal is to HAVE FUN!** Face it, if you didn't like the class in some shape or form, you wouldn't be back! Make enthusiasm a part of your approach and it will carry beyond you and into your future classroom.



Things to Know Before You Get Started

Take the Time to Learn It

There are different ways to become an instructor and each one will take time, some education, and very importantly, *practice* on your part. **It's an investment in yourself**, in your health, and leading a Group Exercise Class is a great skill that you can take with you as an add-on to any full time career. Some people even make Fitness a full time career but don't go there just yet – get your feet wet first before taking the all-out plunge! Some instructors pick things up quickly and are ready to have their own class in about a month after interning. Others need a little more time to be comfortable in front of the class. Be patient with yourself but be persistent if this is what you want to do.



Gotta Have the Moves

One of the unique aspects about Group Exercise is **the combination of music and exercise**. Music does lots of things for us: It picks us up when we're feeling down, calms us when we're stressed out, makes our hearts flutter when attached to a special person, brings back memories of a special time or place. One thing is definite, you as an instructor need to have rhythm in order to lead Group Exercise. You need to be able to find the beat and stick with it. You don't have to have the moves of a trained dancer but you DO have to be able to 'do it to the beat.' Be real, if you don't have rhythm then save yourself from investing lots of time and energy in something that just isn't going to click. Not everyone has the ability to understand physics or paint fabulous paintings just like not everyone can move to the beat. Enjoy your exercise class as a participant if this turns out to be you.

Decide Where to Start

Step one is to decide what type of exercise format do you want to learn? You may want to learn several different styles of exercise (cardio kickboxing, step, Zumba, yoga, etc.) but to start you really should focus on just one at first and learn it really well. What is it that makes you want to

jump right in? What style did YOU like best of the types of workouts you've had? Regardless of which way you go, carefully consider your time commitment and budget.

Music

Music is the responsibility of the instructor. Each instructor purchases their own music and music varies widely depending on the type of exercise you want to do along with it. Cycling music can go from a fast beat to a slow beat with every song where as Step Aerobics, commercially purchased music in steady 125-130 bpm (beats per minute) in a 32 beat format is required. Music sharing is discouraged as it is illegal to do so when you purchase it. Some exercise formats have a type of 'music club' where new releases are sent automatically for a fee. Just realize that purchasing music is an expense that you should be aware of.



Another aspect to the music purchased is the cleanliness of the language. Any of us at any time represent the University, especially if you step in front of a group. Your words and actions not only reflect you but reflect the institution you represent. You may personally find such colorful language acceptable or that it's 'no big deal.' But in front of the crowd you represent more than just you. You are the face of the University and this includes what music you play for a class. So as a review, please note the following:

1. No foul language. Find the clean version of what you want or it can't be used in class.
2. Words in the music must comply with university standards for non-discrimination. From MSU's Human Resources:



"Unlawful acts of discrimination or harassment are prohibited. In addition, the University community holds itself to certain standards of conduct more stringent than those mandated by law. Thus, even if not illegal, acts are prohibited under this policy if they Harass any University community member(s) on the basis of age, color, gender, gender identity, disability status, height, marital status, national origin, political persuasion, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, or weight."

So when listening to and considering a a great song to use in class, ask yourself: Is this honorable? Does it show integrity? Would my mother want to hear this kind of talk? If you can't say yes, then leave it at home.

Communication – Being in Front of the Class

Being in front of a class full of people who are all looking at you can be unnerving. It takes practice to get up in front and be confident in what you do. A positive attitude, a smile, and being flexible are all key. Participants will come to you with questions: Sometimes you have the answer and sometimes you don't. How you handle yourself and how you speak with others can build your own



confidence as well as a connection between you and the class. Open communication with your fellow instructors, being willing to sub (sometimes on short notice), being able to listen to your supervisor and make changes is all part of the job.

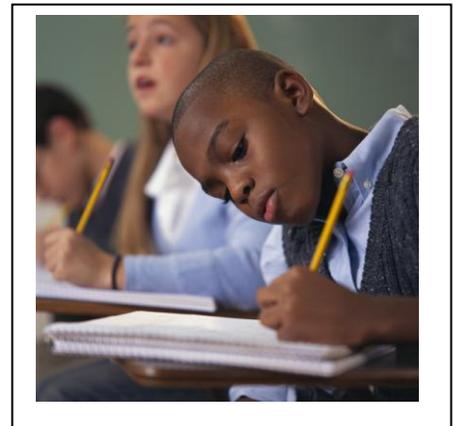
Where to Start – Pick a Route to Your Goal

There are primarily two ways to become trained to Group Exercise classes.

1) Kinesiology 202 is a MSU 3 credit blended class that uses online educational materials combined with face-to-face weekly training and practice. Participants are exposed to different exercise formats over the semester as well as learn to present warm-ups, cardio, cool-down, and strength sections. This class includes basic anatomy, nutrition, safety, legal concerns and a lot more.

2) Take a specific certification class that focuses on just one style of exercise. These types of certifications often lack the depth of knowledge that is the difference between a good and great instructor but has the basics to get you started. Many have written exams (in person or online) and most have practicals where you demo good form, transitions, combinations, and other aspects of ‘performing’ exercise.

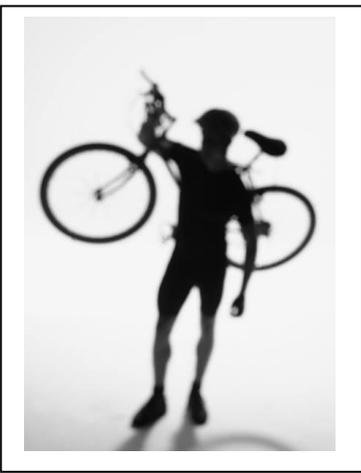
Students have been hired from either of these training methods. There are advantages and disadvantages to both: One teaches you the educational background much more in depth and you get college credit, the other gives you only the basics but you can start sooner. Many times instructors-to-be intern alongside a current instructor to get real life experience in leading a group exercise class. This is individually arranged, is unpaid time and is your investment into learning the job. Successful completion is a solid step towards employment!



Specific Certifications

Each of these organizations handles their own registration and provides the Master Trainer, materials, evaluation, and certification. Each is different so read their website carefully for details. Here are the most popular workout styles:

Cardio Kickboxing certification can also be achieved in a one-day format. Take a look at TurboKick www.turbokick.com for days and times they offer certification – choose a date that works with your schedule. We host these trainings on campus regularly which will save you travel time and expense.



Group Cycling (often called Spinning): Look online for certification/Spinning cert through Madd Dogg Athletics. There are other certs out there but some are online courses which leaves me to wonder how you would learn to ride via a computer! Schwinn has been our provider in the past but in looking through their website there are no events scheduled. Most of the certifications are one

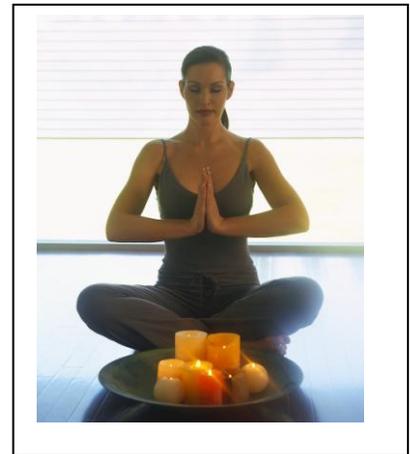
day trainings.

http://www.spinning.com/events_list_view.asp?search=searchexact~e.b_id~7ac51eed5045408db22f97e6cf7c98c6|and|searchexact~e.cert_id~75fa0f85782b4677bd58fc293dc41d8e|and|searchexact~facility_country~USA|and|searchexact~facility_state~MI

Yoga: To become certified as a yoga instructor there is one of two routes I recommend. I am certified through YogaFit www.YogaFit.com and I chose this organization because after looking into yoga and trying a lot of very different styles, this one grabbed me, challenged, me and I walked out feeling tired but great. One of the things that I liked about them is their ability to 'marry' the ancient art of yoga with modern exercise science. I also like the fact that I can spread out my training which is easier on my budget. Level I is where you would start towards a 200 hour training certificate (200RYT). We host these trainings on campus regularly which will save you travel time and expense.

Locally, *Hill Top Yoga in Old Town* is the best local training facility. They also have a training program but it is much more concentrated and you would complete your training in a few months. I don't know the cost but I've been told it is a chunk of change initially out of pocket.

Zumba: Zumba is VERY popular on campus and draws from a more international flavor of music than other formats. To find a class and register for a training, go to www.zumba.com and click on 'instructor training' near the top center of the page. Scroll down a bit to find 'new instructor' and go from there. We host these trainings on campus regularly which will save you travel time and expense.



After reading all this information and you're still ready to get started, then please contact Rebecca Kegler kegler@msu.edu and we'll talk about moving forward towards your goal of becoming a Group Exercise Instructor!