

What's Up With Boot Camps?

You may have noticed a 'boot camp' fitness craze that has exploded on the fitness scene recently, and will continue to grow, especially come the spring. Here's what to watch for if you're considering giving one a try yourself:

First of all, look closely at the qualifications of the instructor. There are unscrupulous instructors out there, misrepresenting themselves to be something they really aren't. If you aren't sure what the qualifications mean, check them out. Call the issuing organization or governing body to verify what the qualifications mean. You should also ask for references. Not all boot camp operators are as qualified as they would like you to believe. As with any other occupation, while the name of the boot camp may have a good reputation, your camp will only be as good as the individual instructor. After all, some one has to be at the bottom of the class, just make sure it's not your instructor! Also, some instructors may be great at teaching another discipline, but may not be certified or equipped to instruct a boot camp style workout. Ask how much experience they have with this type of workout program. Education and experience are paramount.

Some boot camps are military style. Is this what you're looking for? Do you want a drill sergeant yelling in your ear? Many untrained people will not do well in a military style camp as the untrained body can't tolerate the strenuous exercises done there. If a military style boot camp isn't *your* style, find out if the camp offers modified programs and exercises to fit the needs of different clients. Or, explore if the camp you are interested in offers varying levels of programs, which caters to beginner and advanced clients.

As are all first hand witnesses; Calgary has rapidly changing weather. It can change dramatically during your training session. What provisions has the instructor taken if the weather takes a turn for the worse? Is there an indoor option or a 'rainy day' policy in place? You don't want to be paying for classes that are shortened or cancelled due to poor conditions. And if the class continues to run outdoors, in poor conditions, what safety measures are taken? Are you comfortable running on icy sidewalks or in the dark? Make sure the boot camp has made provisions for your safety. Some boot camps neglect to consider these issues. Others make it clear that the classes proceed, outdoors, regardless of weather. This is a 'buyer beware' issue that you should be aware of.

Client safety should be the number one priority of every instructor, whether it is in terms of weather and lighting or with exercise modification. Not all clients are capable of doing all exercises. Boot camp instructors need to have a keen, trained eye to notice and make corrections on exercise form. Will you get this personalized instruction? You are in a group setting, but the instructor should create opportunities to observe all participants and ensure correct execution with all the exercises. The instructor then should be experienced enough to offer exercise modifications when necessary.

The purpose of boot camp is to provide diversity to your fitness regimen. This is one of the main reasons that boot camps are an effective method to enhance your current fitness level. Your body is constantly forced to adapt to the new challenges a good instructor will

offer. What range of variety is offered at the boot camp? The ‘fun’ part of boot camp is the assortment of activities that can be offered in the class. An instructor’s experience and imagination can make or break your camp experience. Make sure that you aren’t enrolling in a ‘running’ class (unless this is what you’re looking for). Some instructors will fall back on long runs if they run out of other ideas. Distance running will not give you the results that a good, diversified, intelligently orchestrated workout will. Ask how much time is spent just ‘running’.

Is there equipment you need to bring or is any provided? These are important questions to ask so that you come prepared for class. Many camps will provide some basic equipment, but most will require that you bring your own mat and hand weights. If there is special equipment, make sure that the instructor is qualified to use it. For example, if there is a kickboxing or suspension training component, find out if the instructor is certified in that discipline.

Undoubtedly, more outdoor and indoor boot camps will spring up in the future. They are a fun and effective way to return to exercise, add variety to a stale routine, or amp up your already high fitness level. Make sure that your boot camp experience is the best it can be by thoroughly checking out the program, and more importantly, the individual instructor, before you enroll in it.

By Shawna Kaminski – [Calgary NW Adventure Boot Camp](#)

Shawna is shaking up the fitness routines of several people in her Adventure Boot Camps. For more information, please visit her website.