

Save £300 this New Year

Are you planning to throw away £300 in January? Of course nobody plans to waste money yet thousands of people join a gym every January and rarely use it after February. If they tried an alternative approach to get fitter and lose weight they would get far better results or spent significantly less.

Dragon's Den investor Doug Richards identifies several business models, amongst which gyms are virtually unique. Their business relies on selling gym memberships that will not be used! They also rely on tying people into a year's contract so they keep getting money from customers who don't use their service. If everyone who signed up in January attended regularly for twelve months the gym would be too crammed to work! What other businesses sell things they don't want you to use?

Gyms don't work for the majority of people. Research from fitness membership experts The Retention People shows that only one-third of members are still paying for membership after twelve months. Common reasons for this high attrition rate include boredom, lack of results, losing motivation and unhappiness with the gym environment. So what are the alternatives?

Most people who join a gym in January will not be going three months later. Therefore it makes sense to try a gym that offers pay as you go (PAYG) training. Although the cost per visit will work out a little higher you will not be committing to (and probably wasting) twelve months of payments. Many council gyms offer PAYG training, have modern equipment and are well-staffed so they can be an economical way to see if you like gyms.

Exercise classes can be a fun alternative to gym training. Many classes are run in local community centres and schools, providing a cheap and varied way to get regular exercise in a safe environment. However you can also train for free in the great outdoors or at home.

Running or brisk walking involves nothing more expensive than a pair of trainers and many running clubs now cater for absolute beginners and welcome people no matter how slow and inexperienced. You can also improve strength and toning with exercises using nothing more than your bodyweight as resistance.

If you want to see real results you can invest in a home Personal Trainer. Once the preserve of rich celebrities, Personal Trainers are now commonplace and surprisingly affordable. Many Personal Trainers specialise in training people at home and provide all the equipment so you can avoid gym fees and the gym environment. It is also a great option for people who lack the motivation to train or feel self-conscious training in public. Find a trainer who offers a money-back guarantee on getting results so that you know you'll make progress.

If your New Year resolution is to lose weight or get fitter then start thinking outside the gym. It will help you save the right pounds and lose the wrong ones!