

LAB TESTS



You could burn up to 270 calories in a half-hour with an elliptical like this Schwinn 470, \$800.

Motivating Machines

Need help working out? The latest treadmills and ellipticals are almost as good as having a personal trainer.

THE BOOM in boutique fitness studios—where a single class can cost \$30 or more—shows just how much people are willing to pay to get exactly what they want—nothing more, nothing less.

Combine that with the trend in wearable technology (wrist devices that track how many calories you burn 24/7 and even how you slept last night), and it's clear that fitness today is all about customizing the workout just for you.

Considering that 64 percent of people who exercise regularly opt to sweat it out at home, according to the market research firm Mintel, fitness-equipment manufacturers are jumping on the personalization bandwagon. We're seeing more “smart” treadmills and ellipticals that can access the Internet, plus more workout apps that communicate with the equipment. “With these programs you might be able to display and follow

your favorite running trail via Google Maps or customize today's workout based on how your routine went yesterday,” says Peter Anzalone, senior test project leader at Consumer Reports. “And Precor, for example, is trying to replace the personal trainer with some of its models that suggest workouts based on your fitness goals.”

Given the modern obsession with information, the Internet, and ourselves, it's a safe bet that almost every home exercise machine will eventually feature some amount of connectivity and personalization. But how well a treadmill or an elliptical does its basic tasks will always matter most—and that's where our rigorous lab tests come in. We put each machine through a series of torture tests—for example, simulating upward of 175 miles of running to make sure the treadmill will hold up over time. Ergonomics is an important factor for ellipticals, so we evaluate how well their pedaling motions will accommodate a range of body sizes and types. Ease of use and solid construction are essential with both equipment types.

Although no piece of fitness equipment can get you off the couch or out of bed, the product picks at right will help you find the machine most suited to your ability and health goals. And that may be the best motivation of all.

Pick the Right Machine for You

FOR RUNNERS

- **A2 NordicTrack** \$2,200
- **B1 ProForm** \$1,250
- **D1 Landice** \$3,600

Long, wide belts and iFit technology that lets you run routes around the world make **A2** and **B1** ideal for logging miles (separate module required for **B1**). **A2** has a larger motor and a deck with multiple firmness levels. **D1**, with adjustable stride length and gel footpads, is easier on your joints, but it lacks a heart-rate program.

FOR FAMILIES

- **A1 Landice** \$3,800
- **A5 Precor** \$3,700
- **C5 AFG** \$1,350

Sharing a machine is easier if each user can set up his or her own profile and save it. **A5** allows for four stored user profiles and has a tabletlike console and 23 built-in programs. **A1** will remember two users, five if you opt for the Executive console, which also comes with a QR-code app that lets you send your stats to fitness-management programs. **C5** remembers two users, and the multiposition handlebars allow multiple family members to get a better grip. It has 14 preset workouts.

FOR WEIGHT LOSS

- **B3 LifeSpan** \$1,800
- **B4 NordicTrack** \$1,500
- **C3 Schwinn** \$800

These machines let you track fitness stats and progress online—directly, through an app, or with a thumb drive—which can spur motivation. **B3's** Intelli-Step system logs every stride, another good way to evaluate daily activity. With a color, Web-enabled 7-inch touch screen and 38 preset workout options, **B4** makes it difficult to get bored. **C3** has 29 programmed workouts, and you can send your info to the widely used website MyFitnessPal.

FOR BEGINNERS/TECHNOPHOBES

- **A3 Sole** \$2,300
- **A7 True** \$3,000
- **B7 Xterra** \$1,000
- **C2 AFG** \$1,700

A3 has a long, wide belt for people with a long stride and six onboard workout programs. It's pricey, but **A7** features a convenient chest-strap heart-rate monitor. **B7** is a well-priced folding treadmill, good for tight spaces. Using **C2's** incline adjustment changes the stride length from 19 to 21 inches. Its built-in ProFile program shows average, prior-workout, and weekly totals without the need for connectivity.

LAB TESTS

Ratings: Treadmills

Scores in context: Of the 33 treadmills we tested, the highest scored 84; the lowest, 44. Listed below are the highest-scoring models, in order of performance in each category. Treadmills marked as CR Best Buys offer a

combination of value and performance, and are recommended. Nonfolding models tend to perform better overall, but folding ones cost less and can help with storage in tight spaces.

CR Best Buy Recommended

● Excellent ● Very Good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

A. NONFOLDING

Recommended	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TEST RESULTS				
					Ergonomics	Construction	Ease of Use	Exercise Range	User Safety
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Landice L7 Cardio Trainer	\$3,800	84	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	NordicTrack Elite 9700 Pro	\$2,200	84	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Sole TT8	\$2,300	83	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	AFG 7.1 AT	\$1,700	81	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Precor TRM 243	\$3,700	81	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	Smooth 9.35	\$1,900	81	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	True PS300	\$3,000	81	●	●	●	●	●

B. FOLDING

Recommended	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TEST RESULTS				
					Ergonomics	Construction	Ease of Use	Exercise Range	User Safety
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	ProForm Pro 2000	\$1,250	82	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Spirit XT485	\$2,000	81	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	LifeSpan TR4000i	\$1,800	79	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	NordicTrack Commercial 1750	\$1,500	79	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	AFG 3.1 AT	\$1,200	78	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	NordicTrack C970 Pro	\$1,000	76	●	●	●	●	○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	Xterra Trail Racer 6.6	\$1,000	76	●	●	●	●	●

Ratings: Ellipticals

Scores in context: Of the 22 ellipticals we tested, the highest scored 79; the lowest, 49. Listed below are the highest-scoring models, in order of performance in each category. Ellipticals marked as CR Best Buys offer a

combination of value and performance, and are recommended. Models with heart-rate programs can help you exercise to your highest potential while avoiding dangerous overexertion.

CR Best Buy Recommended

● Excellent ● Very Good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

C. HAS HEART-RATE PROGRAMS

Recommended	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TEST RESULTS				
					Ergonomics	Exercise Range	Ease of Use	Construction	Heart-Rate Features
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Diamondback 1260 Ef	\$2,200	79	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	AFG 18.1AXT	\$1,700	73	●	○	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	Schwinn 470	\$800	73	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	AFG 3.1AE	\$1,100	72	●	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	AFG 4.1AE	\$1,350	72	●	●	●	●	●

D. NO HEART-RATE PROGRAMS

Recommended	Rank	BRAND & MODEL	PRICE	SCORE	TEST RESULTS				
					Ergonomics	Exercise Range	Ease of Use	Construction	Heart-Rate Features
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Landice E7 Pro Sport	\$3,600	69	●	○	●	●	○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	ProForm 19.0 RE	\$1,000	68	●	●	●	●	○

Treadmills: Guide to the Ratings. Score is based on ergonomics, construction, ease of use, exercise range, and safety. **Ergonomics** is how well the machine accommodates users of different sizes. **Construction** is our judgment of quality and the results of our durability tests. **Ease of Use** is how easy it is to adjust exercise intensity, read the display, and operate monitor functions. **Exercise Range** is how well each machine provides an effective workout for users of various fitness levels. **User Safety** is our assessment of safety and security, including stop-button size and location, safety-key operation, the possibility of striking the motor housing, and the security of the deck when folded.

Ellipticals: Guide to the Ratings. Score is based on ergonomics, exercise range, ease of use, construction, heart-rate features, and user safety. **Ergonomics** assesses pedaling motion and how well an elliptical accommodates people of various sizes. **Exercise Range** indicates available intensities. **Ease of Use** indicates how easy it is to use controls, read the display, and program. **Construction** considers aspects that indicate good construction methods, design choices, and our perception of quality based on operating noise, feel, and ride. **Heart-Rate Features** evaluates the heart-rate sensors, programs, and how heart rate controls the elliptical operation. **User Safety** indicates aspects of safety, including pinch points, materials, stability, and static loading.

Bottom of the Barrel

The following models scored 60 or below.

Treadmills Gold's Gym Trainer 420, \$377; Weslo Cadence G 5.9, \$300; LifeSpan TR200, \$700

Ellipticals Spirit XE395, \$1,800; Kettler Rivo P, \$700; Fitnexus E55SG, \$1,100; Endurance E400, \$2,200; ProForm Smart Strider 535, \$600

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