

sweat

into it. You might want to try enrolling in a less physical form of exercise and slowly build your endurance level. When you begin kickboxing, take it easy and work at your own pace.

2. CHECK IT OUT BEFORE YOU SIGN UP

If it's possible, go for a trial lesson or observe a class to see whether it's right for you. Check if the instructor is willing to slightly modify the routine to suit to participants' different skill levels. If there are classes that seem to move really fast, are too complicated, or don't provide the chance for any personal attention instruction during or after the session, avoid it.

3. COMFORT IS THE KEY

Kickboxing is not a fashion show; you don't have to wear anything fancy. Wear loose, comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement in all directions. You don't want to risk splitting those spanking new \$89.90 shorts. The same goes with your footwear – avoid wearing tennis shoes and go for cross-trainers instead, which allow for side-to-side movements. You might want to give your instructor or fitness centre a call beforehand so you can be fully prepared.

4. SLOW AND STEADY DOES IT

Learn from the turtle (or tortoise, I never learnt the difference!). The key to a good kickboxing workout is controlled movement. Take things at your own pace and don't overexert yourself, which can cause pulled muscles and sprains. Since beginners are more prone to developing injuries, start with low kicks and work your way up.

5. DRINK UP

This is plain common sense: Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after your class to quench your thirst and keep yourself hydrated.

6. TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

It's always a good idea to see your doctor and have a complete physical examination before you begin any type of exercise program – especially one with a lot of aerobic activity such as kickboxing. This is extremely important if you have any chronic medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes or are very overweight.

Kicking at home

So perhaps you're shy to show those spare tires around your waist at the gym after years of permanent residence on the couch. Here are a few moves that you can try at home for starters to get a feel of kickboxing.

Roundhouse Kick: Stand with the right side of your body facing an imaginary target with your knees bent and your feet placed approximately a shoulders' width apart. Lift your right knee, pointing it just to the right of the target and pivoting your body toward the same direction. Kick with your right leg, as though you are hitting the target. Repeat with your other leg.

Front Kick: Stand with feet placed a shoulders' width apart. Place your arms at a 90-degree angle in front of your shoulders. Bend

your knees slightly, and pull your right knee up to your chest. Point your knee in the direction of an imaginary target. Then, kick out with the ball of your foot. Repeat with your other leg.

Side kick: Start with the right side of your body facing a target. Pull your right knee up to your left shoulder, and bend your knees slightly as you kick in the direction of your target. The outside of your foot or heel should be the part that would hit the target. Repeat with your other leg.

Thinking out of the box

Kickboxing gives you a rigorous workout. The controlled punching and kicking movements are carried out with the discipline and skills required for martial arts. These can do wonders for feelings of frustration and anger. You can also improve your balance, flexibility, coordination and endurance through kickboxing. Last but not least, kickboxing is also a great way to completely work out your body and learn some self-defense moves in the process.

Kickboxing allows you to:

- Combine an aerobic workout with a resistance-training workout
- Get total-body exercise
- Gain valuable self-defense skills
- Boost your confidence and self-esteem
- Relieve stress
- Release endorphines
- Increase energy levels
- Improve your productivity level

If you're worried about showing off your not-as-perfect-as-Jessica-Alba body to the opposite sex, head for Amore Fitness. As the leading ladies-only fitness and spa service provider in Singapore, Amore has also won "Singapore Promising Brand Award" for 2005 and 2006. You can enrol for kickboxing classes at any of their 7 branches islandwide, which are located conveniently near MRT stations.

At Amore Fitness, members get to enjoy gym, steam bath facilities and can participate in all exercise classes, including Aerobics, Step workout, Pilates, Yoga, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Body Bar etc. Each week, you'll have more than 300 classes to choose from.

