

The Best Fitness Gear and Gadgets

CookingLight

By Myatt Murphy, CookingLight.com

We tested the most interesting and most effective **fitness gear** for the year so far. Here's our round-up of the exercise tools that are guaranteed to help you reach your fitness goals.



The Ugi

Fitness trends—and all the stuff that comes with them—come and go, but every year there are some standout products that are truly effective. Dive into our top 15 that promise to deliver results (and do more than collect dust).

1. The Ugi

(\$189, ugifit.com)

Why we like it: We've seen **medicine balls** and **stability balls**, but this plush, weighted workout tool (picture a mix of half-beanbag/half-oversized stress ball that comes in 6-lbs, 8-lbs, 10-lbs, and 12-lbs versions) is an entirely unique exercise experience. The Ugi comes with a DVD that runs exercisers through a series of 30 different back-to-back exercises in a single 30-minute workout (there are 5 different workouts to choose from—150 exercises in all—so your body never gets bored of burning fat!).



Nike Training Club App

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2. Nike Training Club App

(It's free; go to iTunes App Store)

Why we like it: Nike's new training app for the iPhone and iPod Touch has more than 90+ drill workouts for getting lean, toned, and strong—specifically for women. All you do is select your fitness goal and fitness level, then the app chooses the best selection of 15-minute, 30-minute, or 45-minute workouts for you to pick from (each designed by a Nike professional trainer). The app offers step-by-step instructions that anyone can follow and lets you listen to songs from your music library and hear the instructor at the same time. But best of all: the more you exercise, the more you unlock rewards, such as additional expert advice, celebrity workout regimes, and body-boosting nutritional recipes.



The SilverSport Silver Towel

3. The SilverSport Silver Towel

(\$20 to \$35, depending on size; available exclusively at allDick's Sporting Goods—or at www.silversport.com)

Why we like it: This baby-soft sports towel is more than just gentle on your skin when you're wiping off perspiration; it's made from a technology that uses nano-silver particles that actually eliminate more than 650 types of surface-borne, odor-causing bacteria. It's also made with a super soft bamboo that's three times more absorbent than cotton, so you'll never need another towel to dry off with, no matter how long you exercise.



Gaiam's Calorie Coach

4. Gaiam's Calorie Coach from Oregon Scientific

(\$39; available at Best Buy stores and us.oregonscientific.com)

Why we like it: Not only is this handy pedometer one of the most accurate monitors on the market for counting how many steps you take each day—and calories you've burned—but we love its discreetness. Unlike most pedometers that have to be clipped to your waist in order to work properly, the Calorie Coach can be placed

anywhere on your body, such as hidden inside a shirt pocket, placed in your handbag, or, even hung from your neck.



Kulae tpECOMat Plus

5. Kulae tpECOMat Plus

(\$49; Yahoo! Shopping)

Why we like it: This comfy eco-friendly **yoga mat** has many of the benefits you might expect from being 100% biodegradable, latex-free to prevent allergic reactions, and sporting a germ- and bacteria-resistant surface (so it always smells fresh). But what makes this mat a cut above others on the market is the simple fact that it's also four inches longer than a standard yoga mat—making it ideal for bodies of all sizes.



Bob Harper's Contour Kettlebells

6. Bob Harper's Contour Kettlebells

(\$24.99-\$99.99, depending on weight; gofit.net)

Why we like them: Exercising with a **kettlebell** may be the latest fitness trend, but most are shaped like a mini-bowling ball with a handle attached to them, making them more uncomfortable on your wrists and forearms during certain moves. This kettlebell is ergonomically-designed with grooves that let the weight comfortably rest on your arms as you exercise. We also like the DVD workout that guides even the exercise novice through an easy-to-follow, full-body 30-minute routine.



Virtual Active Workout Videos

7. Virtual Active Workout Videos

(\$19.99; vafitness.com)

Why we like them: If you've ever felt like a hamster on a wheel when exercising indoors on a treadmill or bike, these DVDs offer an actual "eye view" perspective of what it would be like to exercise along 200-plus of the most scenic jogging and cycling trails throughout North America. Each 35-minute workout lets you choose between being coached by a trainer (who pops up on the screen and tells you how to adjust your workout) or you can go solo and simply enjoy the view as you sweat.



Get Fit with Mel B. Fitness
Program for the PS3

8. Get Fit with Mel B. Fitness Program for the PS3

(\$39.99; getfitwithmelb.com/EN-us)

Why we like it: One of the most distinctive exercise games out there is Get Fit with Mel B. (formally "Scary Spice" of the Spice Girls). The game actually places a mini real-life version of yourself standing and sweating side-by-side the Dancing with the Stars finalist. (You'll need the PlayStation Move with the PlayStation Eye camera—but it's so worth it!) Watching yourself exercise on screen is a great way to check your form as you go, plus, the game lets you incorporate your existing workout equipment (such as exercise and resistance bands) into your workout to make it even more challenging.



The CORE TRANSFORMER

9. The CORE TRANSFORMER

(\$19.99 for the tube/\$29.99 for tube and DVD; coretransformer.tv)

Why we like it: It may look like another overhyped TV exercise product, but this unique—and economical—fitness tool definitely burns calories. The X-shaped stretch cord device straps onto both of your feet and hands, adding resistance to your arms and legs, no matter what direction you move them (forward, backward, to the side, and so on). The DVD offers three intense routines—ranging from 20, 40, to 60 minutes long—but we found it was just as effective at making many yoga, Pilates, and core training exercises a lot more challenging and effective.



Asics GEL-Uptempo and
GEL-Upshot Athletic Shoes

10. Asics GEL-Uptempo and GEL-Upshot Athletic Shoes

(\$85 each; asics.com)

Why we like them: To be able to tackle any type of exercise, you need a training shoe that offers your feet stability from any angle, shock absorption from heel to toe, and a breathable mesh upper that lets your dogs air out as you work out. Both the **Uptempo** and **Upshot** offer a superior mix of cushioning, traction, and support, all in a lightweight pair of shoes with a sock-like fit that almost makes you forget you're wearing them.



Lifefactory Water Bottles

11. Lifefactory Water Bottles

(\$19.99 for 16-oz. bottles/\$21.99 for 22-oz. bottles;lifefactory.com)

Why we like them: The problem with plastic water bottles is that many not only release harmful chemicals such as BPA's, but some are too narrow or difficult to wash properly. Lifefactory's sporty-stylish glass bottles feature a wide mouth (so it's super easy to clean), have a silicone sleeve that protects the bottle from breaking, and, you'll actually notice a fresher taste from your water (compared to drinking from a traditional water bottle). That difference alone can help you drink more—so you always stay well-hydrated as you exercise.

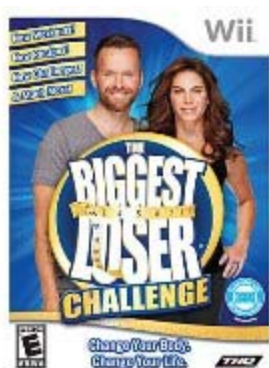


Sportline's DUO 1060
heart rate monitor

12. Sportline's DUO 1060 heart rate monitor

(\$119.99; sportline.com)

Why we like it: The best heart rate monitors require you to wear a belt around your chest, but the DUO 1060 gives you the option of just placing your finger on the watch for an equally-precise readout. What we really love is that it gives you that information in 3 beats or less, making it the fastest, most accurate contact heart-rate measuring device on the market.



The Biggest Loser Challenge
Wii Game

13. The Biggest Loser Challenge Wii Game

(Starting at \$28, Yahoo! Shopping)

Why we like it: One of the best health and fitness video games for the Nintendo Wii, the Biggest Loser Challenge guides users through more than 125 exercise exercises, ranging from warm-ups and cool-downs, core-strengthening moves, cardio boxing drills, yoga poses, and circuit training exercises. You can create your own custom fitness program, or, let the program think for you by selecting from one of ten preset fitness routines.



New Balance's NB439s
2-in-1 Sport Earbuds

14. New Balance's NB439s 2-in-1 Sport Earbuds

(\$39.99; ihomeaudio.com)

Why we like them: Most "fitness" earphones really don't offer anything that's much different than normal headphones (besides flashier color schemes), but the lightweight NB439s thinks of every possible workout dilemma. It's got detachable, easy-to-clean ear cushions, a volume control along the cord, and you can shorten the cord so it's tangle-free when your MP3 player is clipped onto your arm, hat, or anyplace on your body where having too much line can get in the way of your workout.



FINIS's Circuit Trainer

15. FINIS's Circuit Trainer

(Starting at \$104, [Yahoo! Shopping](#))

Why we like it: Doing a circuit training program—where you race from exercise to exercise with little to no rest in between—is one of the most effective ways to build lean muscle and burn fat. The problem is having to watch the clock all the time and doing the math to know when to move onto the next exercise. This lightweight, water-resistant workout timer lets you program in two time periods (how long you want to do each exercise for and how long you want to rest in between exercises). As you work out, a horn lets you know when to move to the next station and rest—and when it's time to start exercising again—so all you have to do is sweat (and not think!).

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