

EVOLUTION OF THE FITNESS INDUSTRY: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC GYM

The health club you are running today with rows of treadmills, weight machines, pumping music and cutting-edge programming has taken centuries to come into being. While not a straight line, there is a long history of public gyms, going back thousands of years to the first gymnasiums of ancient Greece.

An Idea is Born →

Ancient Greece

Greece is the root of the modern health club or gym. The word 'gymnasium' originates from the Greek word "gymnos," meaning naked.

1800s Gyms make a minor resurgence in Germany.

1844

The YMCA is found in London.

1840s

French gymnast and strongman, Hippolyte Triat, opens his first club in Brussels and then adds a second in Paris.

The Concept Takes Shape →

1869

The YMCA builds the first buildings with gymnasiums.

1881

Robert J. Roberts coins the term "body building" and develops exercise classes.

← The Masses Buys In

1965

Gold's Gym first location opens - and sparks the big-box concept of gyms created for the masses.

1939

Jack LaLanne opens the first U.S. health club in Oakland, California.

1982

Jane Fonda's successful exercise videos drive women to clubs to lift light weights and do aerobic dance classes.

1983

24 Hour Fitness and LA Fitness Open, as Jack LaLanne's European Health Spas tops more than 200 locations.

← Technology Blurs Space

2020

Connected technology including both wearables and machines provide instant real-time statistics while monitoring member progress in and out of the gym.

1990-2010

The 90s and 2000s bring smaller health clubs, personal training, Crossfit, and wellness studios that cater to the personal touch.

Future

Clubs within clubs within homes arrive as members workout with their tribe and trainers across digital platforms and in person gym sessions.