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# The Consumer's Guide to Choosing a CrossFit Gym

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There are a lot of choices out there. How do you know if you're making the right one?

In this report you'll discover:

- ✔ How to avoid the #1 most costly mistake people make when choosing a CrossFit gym
- ✔ 5 common misconceptions about joining a CrossFit gym that are keeping you from obtaining the results you deserve
- ✔ The 4 key characteristics of any good CrossFit gym
- ✔ 3 questions you MUST ask when visiting a potential gym (how these questions are answered will tell you if the gym is right for you or not)
- ✔ Why you want good coaching over amenities
- ✔ Why you want an inclusive and supportive community of like-minded people
- ✔ The first thing you should do after reading this report

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# STOP! Read This First...

I want to be completely honest with you. This consumer guide is an educational service, provided in response to the recent influx of CrossFit affiliate gyms in the OKC area.

When I started CrossFit OKC in 2006, hardly anyone knew what CrossFit was. It was a daily struggle to get clients into the gym and I had to work myself to the bone to educate people about the program and build our community.

Today, there are 4 different CrossFit affiliate gyms within just a mile radius of us, 32 in the OKC metro area. The CrossFit Games play on ESPN frequently. Movie stars and professional athletes are doing CrossFit. It's a completely different landscape from 2006, to say the least. And, there are a lot of choices when it comes to joining a CrossFit gym.

Some are great, some are OK, and some are poor. How do you know who is what? As of the writing of this guide, there is nothing out there for you, the consumer, to use as an informed decision-making tool. You're in the dark as to what a good gym looks and acts like.

I feel it's my responsibility to share with you what a good CrossFit gym *does* look and act like, so you don't end up wasting your precious time and money and can make an uninformed decision.

While this publication is written for the people of the OKC metro area, it surely does not end in OKC; these concepts apply anywhere. The insights you'll gain and the knowledge you'll be armed with after reading this will do the most good if you share them. So please, share this guide with anyone you know who might be interested in joining a CrossFit gym.

Sincerely,

Jason Boag - Founder, CrossFit OKC

## Street Credit



**Name:** Jason Boag, Founder

**CrossFit Affiliate Gym:** CrossFit OKC

**Years in Operation:** 9.5

**Square Footage:** 6,000 square feet

**Location:** Edmond, OK

**Certifications:** CF-L1, L2 (first L2 in OK) / NASM, CPT / Maxbells Kettlebell Instructor, USAW, Level 1 Weightlifting / CF Endurance / CF Weightlifting / CF Mobility & Recovery

**Accomplishments:** 2008 CrossFit Games. 38th place / 2009 CrossFit Games, 47th place / 2010 CrossFit Games - Regional Competitor / 2011 CrossFit Games - Regional Competitor Team

# The #1 Most Costly Mistake

## *How To Avoid it*

The absolute #1 most costly mistake people make when choosing a CrossFit gym is to choose the closest gym with the best price.

### ▶ **You Get What You Pay For**

Be wary of any CrossFit gym that is priced considerably lower than others in the area. We are not dealing with a commodity here. This is a service. The level of service you receive is almost always paired with what you're paying to receive it. Location is a factor and convenience is nice, but it's not everything.

Think about it. The reason CrossFit gyms have a higher cost than other gyms is because of the level of service you receive. And, within the scope of CrossFit gyms in the area, this principle applies too.

Who do you think is more willing to give you their time and attention: a shiny new CrossFit that's running a Groupon deal or an established facility that has been training people for years, continually sharpening its program?

You want to choose a CrossFit gym based on value. Gyms that have value are asking a fair price for what they offer you. It comes across in the experience you have at the gym, from the moment you walk in the door.

In the next few pages, I'll show you how to spot value in a CrossFit gym.

# 5 Common Misconceptions About CrossFit

## *Debunking the Myths*

You've probably heard things about CrossFit that make it seem scary - like it's not a program for you. If anything listed here sounds familiar, think again.

### ▶ **I'm Not In Shape Enough**

The beauty of the CrossFit program is that it's universally scalable, and this means you can start wherever you are. Our job as CrossFit trainers is to teach you how to fit the program to your specific needs. A good CrossFit gym can guide you appropriately in doing just that. Movements can be modified or discarded, amount of work can change, and RPE (rate of perceived exertion) monitored so you don't over step your current abilities.

### ▶ **CrossFit Makes Women Bulky**

In order for women to pack on muscle they need an exceptionally high level of testosterone, and very few women have that. If you do know women who CrossFit and are quite muscular, it's most likely because they were muscular already (it's their body type). If you are the type to pack on muscle, and you don't want that, talk to a trainer about how to structure the program accordingly. If there's one thing that CrossFit teaches women about their bodies, it's that they are beautiful and strong no matter how much muscle they do or do not have. So, worry not.

### ▶ **Membership Is Too Pricey**

Probably *the* most expensive membership to a gym is one that doesn't net you any results. It takes an especially motivated and loyal person to see results in the typical

big box gym environment. I mean, you're basically renting out space at the facility and it's up to you what to do when you're there. Again, most people do not do well in this type of setup, going for a few weeks and then eventually forgetting they are paying for a membership.

For the cost of going out to dinner a few nights a month, you can purchase a membership to a CrossFit gym, which usually runs anywhere from \$100-\$200. There are probably things you're spending money on each month that don't coincide with you getting in shape. If you can trim those things down you're that much closer to realizing your goals.

### ▶ **It's Too Dangerous**

If you go to a quality CrossFit gym with a quality coaching staff (which you'll know how to spot after reading this guide), your exposure to risk will be very minimal. Experienced trainers and coaches know how to work with you in a responsible manner, guiding you toward your fitness goals one step at a time.

It can be dangerous to join a CrossFit gym that is reckless and inexperienced, and this is why it is so important to be informed and to make an educated decision regarding where you go.

### ▶ **All CrossFit Gyms Are The Same**

CrossFit is not a franchise; every gym is different. To become a CrossFit gym, one must attend the Level 1 trainer course, pass the multiple choice test at the end, and then apply for affiliation with an essay. This is both a good thing and a bad thing. While it's really cool that it's so easy to start up a CrossFit gym, it can also lead to people who are very inexperienced opening up a gym.

So, it is very important for you to visit local gyms, talk to the coaches, the owner, the members. You could be walking into someone's gym who aced the test and is truly gifted at what they do. You could also be walking into someone's gym that just had some extra money to play with and really likes working out. Who would you trust with your time and money?

## The 4 Key Characteristics

## *What to Look For*

### Here are 4 things you will want to see when checking out a potential CrossFit gym:

#### ▶ **Years in Operation**

Over 55% of service business do not survive past the 5 year mark. This means you'll want to check on how many years a particular gym has been running. CrossFit gyms are popping up all over the place, but the good ones have been around for a while. What's great about a gym that has been around 5+ years is you know they're helping clients reach their goals, you know they're responsible and not hurting their clients, and they have surpassed a milestone that is not easily reached.

#### ▶ **Clean Facility and Professional Staff**

When you visit the facility, take a look around. Are things clean and tidy or is it a hot mess? Equipment should have its place in the gym, and the floor should be kept free of debris. If a class is going on, can you immediately tell who the coach is? You should be able to spot the coach immediately, as they lead the class and provide feedback and encouragement to the members. Are they attentive to the class, or are they looking at their phone? Are the trainers/coaches certifications displayed? How many do they have? These things are very important to consider when you are on site at the facility.

#### ▶ **Structured Program and Classes**

There should be a structured program in place at the gym. One of CrossFit's main tenets is constant variance, but that doesn't mean there's no plan. A good CrossFit gym will have an overlying method to their daily workouts, one that spurs adaptation toward a future goal - decreased body fat, increased flexibility & strength, better endurance, etc. They should be able to tell you WHY they are shaping the training the way they are and what they are hoping to accomplish with it.

#### ▶ **The Vital Nature of a Beginner's Program**

This characteristic almost warrants its own consumer guide but I will try to keep it short and to the point.

CrossFit has 9 foundational movements that it teaches as part of its program. When we try CrossFit for the first time, most of us have had little to no exposure to these movements (unless we're coming from a gymnastic, Olympic Weightlifting, or powerlifting background). These 9 movements are big, whole body movements that take a lot of body control and coordination and pack a big punch.

The rule of thumb in learning big complex movements is this: *mechanics, consistency, **then** intensity*. This means you need to master the execution of the movement first, then become consistent with that execution over more and more reps, and then (and only then) is it considered responsible to crank up the intensity by going fast. This process takes time. How long it takes will vary by individual, but you should have at least 4 weeks inside of a beginner's program before moving into regular classes.

A beginner program is designed to let you go through this process organically, getting to steep in the 9 foundational movements long enough for your body to become adapted. Once you gain the knowledge and adaptation that comes along with that, you're cleared to participate in regular class.

Beware of CrossFit gyms that do not offer a beginner's program. There are usually two reasons they don't: 1) They don't want to ask you to go through it because they are afraid you'll want to leave, and 2) They don't really care about the longevity of your stay at their gym; they want you in today no matter what the cost to your body down the road.

These workouts are high intensity, contain complex movements, and in the group atmosphere, can spur on competition. This is where you can seriously mess yourself up. At the very best, you could be insanely sore for the following week. At the worst, you could end up hospitalizing yourself with a condition like exercise induced [Rhabdomyolysis](#).

So again, to drive the point home, make sure the gym you're checking into has a beginner program...the longer the better. Trust me, you'll be glad you chose to go through it when you're still CrossFitting 5 years down the road, lean, flexible, and strong from having the proper foundation in place.

# 3 Questions You MUST Ask

## *Visiting a Potential Gym*

It can be intimidating going to a gym for the first time. Arm yourself with these questions, know the answers you want to hear, and protect yourself from making a poor choice.

### ▶ **Mission & Vision**

What is your mission and your vision for this gym?

The answer you get to this question will be very telling, and it's really important for you to know this right away, as you'll be buying in to both of these by becoming a member.

**Mission** - why the gym exists, who their core customer is, and what drives their decision making processes. You will want to see that what the mission states is a good reflection on what you're seeing while you visit.

**Vision** - what direction are they taking the gym for the next 5 years with respect to facility, programs, and client base. Do those things sound good to you or worry you?

### ▶ **Structure**

How do you structure your programming and classes?

You are entrusting your fitness goals to the leadership and guidance of this gym. You should know the path they have laid out for you to reach those goals. This path does not have to be specific to you, but it does need to be logical and easily understood by you. Here's an example:

“[Insert Gym Name Here] structures its program as follows: We follow a 3 month cycle for strength training and for the benchmark CrossFit workouts. We have 15 strength exercises we focus on each cycle, 5 per month, and they start with higher reps and distill down to lower reps as your body adapts. There are 12 benchmark

workouts each cycle, one per week. Testing is done on the last week of each cycle. That means that 4 times a year you are getting a good snapshot of the progress you're making.

“Members learn how to move well at relatively low intensity in our beginner's course. After members graduate the course, showing excellent movement execution, we move them into our group classes. In class, we get the body ready to move in the warm-up, we work to bolster the foundational movements in our strength portion, we ratchet up the intensity a bit on the daily WOD, and then stretch out the muscles we've hit the hardest in our cool down.”

This isn't exactly the answer you need or want to hear, but it does lay it out nicely, and there is an obvious plan.

## ► Value

What sets your gym apart from other CrossFit gyms in the area?

This is a question that will get you some very interesting answers. If the person you're asking gives you a blank stare, it's probably a good indication that you should keep looking. If they ramble on about their equipment, amenities, competitive accomplishments, etc., it could be a bad sign as well.

A CrossFit gym that has a clear mission and vision, as well as a structured program and classes, will have a very succinct answer. You want a succinct answer to this question. You want the answer to not only excite you about training with them, but to play a synergistic role in the goals you have set for yourself. Their value could be that they train the highest level competitive CrossFit athletes in the area, or that they are known as the strongman gym, or they do endurance training better than anyone else. It's the reason you should train with them over the guy or gal down the street.

Remember earlier when I said that the biggest mistake most people make when choosing a CrossFit gym is to choose the closest gym with the best price? Choosing based on value is the exact opposite of that, and it's really what you're after anyway. Choosing based on value is the BEST thing you can do when choosing a CrossFit gym.

# The K.E.C. Principle

## *Coaching vs. Amenities*

Your results are directly affected by knowledge, effort, and consistency.

When you start to drill down into why some people will have success with a fitness program and why some people will not, it really comes down to 3 things: knowledge, effort, and consistency. If you take one away, it becomes extremely difficult to see results.

Consider the things you will be doing on a daily basis in your program. Do you know WHY you're supposed to do these? Do you know the desired adaptation from doing these? I will bet that sooner or later if you do not understand this, your commitment to the program will diminish. *A great coach will impart knowledge to you.* Why would you be doing things you do not understand? You can maybe keep it up for a while but sooner or later you're going to get tired of being in the dark.

Effort is extremely important to your results; you have to put the work in and embrace the grind. We all know that putting in poor effort doesn't get you much. *A great coach will be there to help you enhance your effort on a daily basis.* Effort is easy in the short term, but it becomes much more difficult over time, which leads us into the next aspect: consistency.

Without consistency, knowledge of what you're doing and effort in what you're doing will not take you very far. Being consistent is the toughest aspect to seeing results, but if you have the knowledge and the effort to go along with it, you're more likely to stick to it. *A great coach will help keep you consistent.*

Equipment, space, and showers/lockers are all nice things, and they do play into your results, albeit indirectly. But understand, while these things support your consistency with a program, they cannot take the place of knowledge, effort, and consistency, which are all developed by great coaching.

# Community

## *Inclusive Vs. Exclusive*

### One Big Happy Family

When you go in to check out a gym for the first time, what is your first impression? Does someone greet you quickly? Does it seem like the people there are friendly and humble? Or, are you left there standing alone feeling like a fool while elite athletes do stuff you've only seen in the CrossFit Games? What feeling do you get from the gym?

Not all gym communities are the same. Each gym has its own distinctive culture (usually driven by their mission statement). Some gyms are after superstar CrossFit Games athletes and foster a very high pressure and competitive environment, one that might feel exclusive and intimidating to the Average Joe. Some gyms are identical to the meat market situation you'll find at big box gyms, their members and staff more concerned about how they look than they are about the level of mastery on movements. Some focus so much on mastery of movement that they hardly have any fun. This by no means describes all gym environments, but these are pretty common.

The community of a CrossFit gym is like insurance for the K.E.C. principle. Having a group of like minded individuals around you, supporting you, motivating you, and keeping you accountable ensures that you will stick with a program. You sweat together, bleed together, cry together, laugh together. You watch your friends get married, have children, and turn from children into adults. It becomes a family, and you want to align with the focus of that family.

It's important for you to discern what type of community you'd like to be a part of first, then use that as a measuring stick when you go in to visit. Is it inclusive or is there a Cool Kids' Club over in the corner? Are people just off doing their own thing all over the place or is there clearly a class being led by a trainer? Does the gym organize activities for members outside of the gym? These are all good things to think about and ask yourself, or the gym, before making your decision.

# What To Do

## *Moving Forward*

### Go Kick The Tires

You made it! Thanks for hanging in there with me.

So, what should you do now?

Start researching a few gyms in your area. You can find a comprehensive map of CrossFit affiliate gyms by clicking this link: [Affiliate Map](#).

Once you find a few gyms that are within a convenient range for you, go to their website or social media pages. Read through their history, mission statement, class schedule, getting started section, and testimonials. Use the information in this guide to assess what they are offering. How does it all sound? Do you buy in to what they're selling? Narrow it down to a few gyms, and then take the next step.

Contact the gym to set up a time to visit. And now, when you visit, you'll know what you want to see and hear. You'll be going in as an informed and confident buyer.

If you visit a gym that: 1) has a mission that you buy into, 2) has a structured program in place, and, 3) offers unique value that other gyms can't, you've found a potential match. It would be wise to visit all potential CrossFit gyms on your list before making your decision, but sometimes you just know when you're there.

The ultimate takeaway here is that when you're informed about the decision you're making, it's quite easy to make a good one.

I hope this guide helps you in making an informed decision.

We all can elevate the level of training and service in the community by being informed about what we buy.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide, and please, share it with anyone you know who might be interested in joining a CrossFit gym.