



When it comes to a great workout, comfort is the name of the game. An exercise bike offers a smooth, comfortable workout that is very easy to use for any fitness level. Whether you are just starting out in a new exercise program or an experienced cyclist, a stationary bike could be a great option for you.

LIVESTRONG Fitness offers two types of **fitness bikes**: recumbent bikes and indoor cycles. Recumbent bikes offer a little more in the way of comfort, with wide, contoured bucket seats that give users with joint or back pain enhanced lumbar support. They place your feet at the same level as your body, causing even less strain on your joints.

Spin bikes best replicate the style and ride of a traditional road bike, and offer a great cardiovascular workout to challenge any bike enthusiast. A spin bike helps improve posture, as well as increase strength and muscle endurance as the workout utilizes numerous muscle groups, including hamstrings, calves, glutes, quads and abs.

Both recumbent and spin bikes provide an easy-to-use, low-impact workout that places virtually no strain on your joints, builds your cardiovascular endurance and is a very familiar motion for all users—simply pedal as you would on a regular bike!



WHAT'S THE BIKE FOR YOU?

There are several things to consider when shopping for a new exercise bike. Keeping the following points in mind will help you narrow down your search before you step into a store or begin your research online.

1 Budget

How much can you spend? This is the most basic and important way to narrow down your search. In the world of fitness equipment, exercise bikes tend to be quite affordable, with recumbent bikes at lower price points and spin bikes at middle to higher price points.

2 Goals

Are you starting out an exercise program? Is this part of a physical rehabilitation treatment? Are you looking to tone your lower body or train for a cycling event? Your desired fitness level and workout goals will help you target what kind of bike you'll need and what features you'll want to look out for.

3 Space

Where will you use the bike? Do you have a dedicated home gym space or will you need to move the bike around? Size and ease of mobility can be a significant consideration for many buyers. Upright bikes tend to be smaller and more compact.

4 Users

Who will be using the bike? Will it just be you? Your family? The number of users and frequency of use are very important considerations when you look at the durability, frame and warranty of a prospective bike.



SHOPPING FOR A BIKE — WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

As with any piece of fitness equipment, you'll want to test out any potential bike to make sure the feel is right for you, and that you'll feel comfortable and unintimidated throughout your workout. While added features and console extras can be important for staying motivated during your workout (though they are scarcely found on spin bikes), the quality of a bike—the flywheel, comfort and seat structure, and frame design—should be the most important consideration.

1 Resistance

Exercise bikes come with a variety of types of resistance. Most upright and recumbent bikes today will offer a magnetic resistance, which allows for a greater range of resistance levels and more workout options, in addition to quiet operation and less wear-and-tear on the bike itself as it utilizes a no-contact brake system. Magnetic resistance also provides greater ease-of-use, as users will simply need to push a button on the console to increase or decrease their resistance level. Spin bikes use a direct tension resistance operation, which requires a manual adjustment, usually controlled by a knob near the handlebars.

2 Comfort and Design

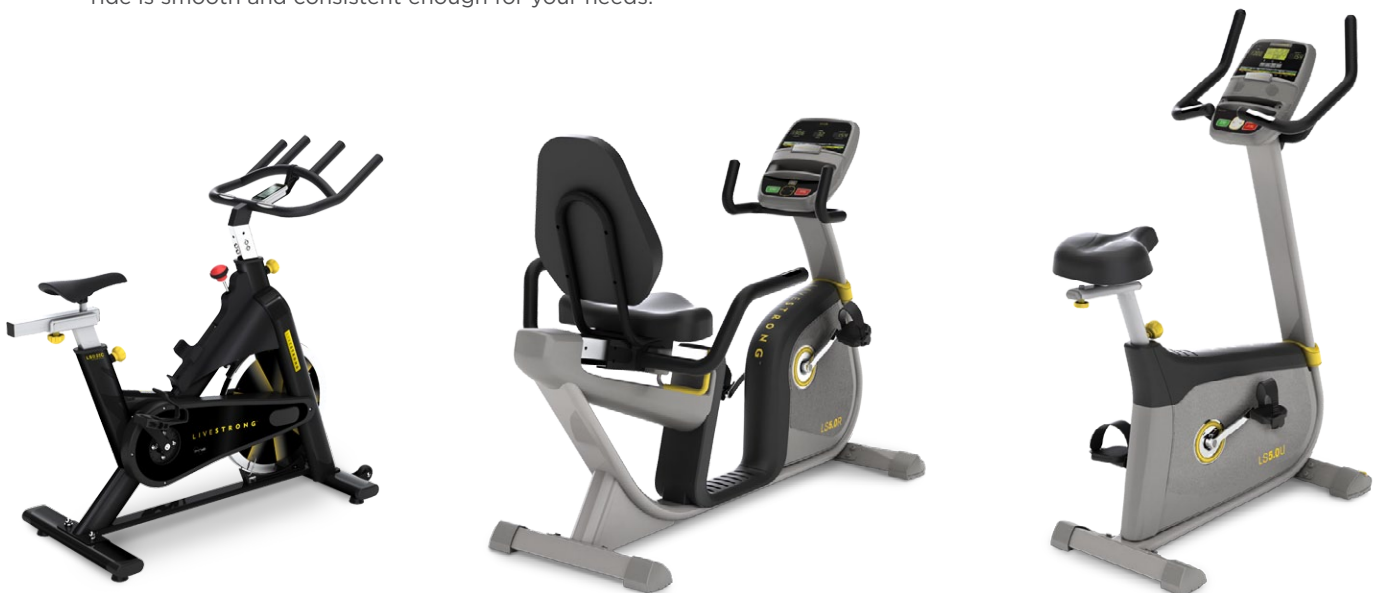
Many users choose exercise bikes for their comfort and ease of use. The more comfortable you are, the more time you will spend exercising and the faster you will reach your goals. Look for a bike that offers several placement options to customize your riding or sitting position. In a recumbent design, you should be able to slide your seat forward and backward enough that you're able to ride comfortably without overextending your legs or feeling cramped too close to the console.

You also want to be sure you get the right amount of support from the seat itself. A wider, higher seat cushion will provide better lumbar support so as to not place as much strain on your lower back muscles during your workout. In an upright bike, be sure both the seat and handlebars offer plenty of adjustability so you can find your ideal riding position.

The frame design of the bike should make it easy for any user to access the seat. LIVESTRONG Fitness offers a unique step-thru frame design that allows the user to step through the frame and sit down, making it ideal for users of any fitness level to simply get on and go.

3 Flywheel

The flywheel controls the bike's resistance and determines how smooth and consistent your ride will be, depending on the flywheel weight. The heavier the flywheel, the more powerful and steadier the movement. For a recumbent or upright bike, look for a 8-pound or heavier flywheel; for spin bikes, the flywheel will be much heavier for a movement that more replicates a road feel. The flywheel is a crucial element of any bike—be sure to test out the bike to ensure the ride is smooth and consistent enough for your needs.



SHOPPING FOR A BIKE — WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

4 Warranty

Look for bikes that are ensured to last and cover parts replacements for at least a year. LIVESTRONG's 7.0B comes with a lifetime frame and brake warranty, as well as one full year for parts and in-home labor repairs. The better warranty, the more durable your bike will be and less maintenance it will require down the road.

5 Console Feedback

On recumbent and upright bikes, look for multiple feedback options that track your workout progress and give you key details in an easy-to-read display. They should at least provide information on speed, distance and calories burned. More advanced bikes will offer a wider range of information, including heart rate, watt output, workout level and more. The LIVESTRONG 7.0B includes an advanced tracking feature called LIVETRACK Interactive which allows you to upload your workouts directly to LIVESTRONG.com, as well as download new workouts from Lance Armstrong's personal trainer Peter Park.

Depending on your goals, you'll also want to look for a variety of workout programs that will keep your routine fresh and train different muscle groups. Programs will emphasize weight loss, endurance, strength, target heart rates and more, and many will recreate a variety of terrains for more challenging workouts.

This level of tracking and programming is less common on upright spin bikes, which often include a smaller console computer that displays more basic information. The LIVESTRONG 9.9IC, for example, includes tracking for RPMs, time, distance and Kcal's burned.

