



Whether you're looking for a low-impact workout or wanting to diversify your exercise routine, an elliptical could be the perfect machine for you. Ellipticals have seen a huge surge in popularity in recent years for their low impact, ease of use and space-saving design.

The motion of an elliptical trainer reduces stress on your legs by mimicking the natural path of your ankle, knee and hip joints. Because your feet remain on the pedals at all times, there is zero impact, making the elliptical a great option for those with sensitive joints or those who might be rehabilitating after knee injuries, or even newcomers starting a fitness program for the first time. An elliptical also offers a full-body workout including quadriceps, chest, back, hamstrings, glutes, triceps and biceps. You burn more fat while getting full lower- and upper-body workouts that keep your metabolic heart rate up and continue to burn calories long after your workout is finished.

Ellipticals are reasonably sized machines that don't require a huge workout space, and require little maintenance for fewer machine parts. Consider an elliptical if you're looking for a fast, easy and space-saving fitness solution.



## WHAT'S THE ELLIPTICAL FOR YOU?

There are several things to consider when shopping for an elliptical. With the growing popularity of ellipticals in the fitness market, it can be tricky to know what to look for and what will work best for you and your goals. Before you begin the shopping process, you'll want to nail down:

### 1 Budget

How much can you spend? This is the most basic and important way to narrow down your search. You can generally find high quality ellipticals at lower- to mid-range price points that give you affordable quality at every level, with added features and benefits the higher the price point.

### 2 Goals

What is your motivation for purchasing an elliptical? Do you want to lose weight? Tone muscle? Is this part of a physical rehabilitation program? How frequently will your goals require you to use the machine? Determining what you want to achieve will tell you which features and type of elliptical to look for.

### 3 Space

Where will you use the elliptical? Do you have a dedicated home gym space or will you need to move the elliptical around?

### 4 Users

Who will be using the elliptical? 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 elliptical.



## SHOPPING FOR AN ELLIPTICAL — WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

There are several things to consider when shopping for an elliptical, but don't get sidetracked by too many bells and whistles, which are often advertised much more prominently than the quality of the machine itself. While the extras are good for keeping your workout fun, fresh and motivating, pay close attention to the following items to ensure you get a high-quality elliptical that will meet your needs. And of course, be sure to step onto the elliptical to get a good feel for its motion and stability. Hands down, feel is the most important part of an effective elliptical workout.

### 1 Frame and Drive System

The drive system determines how smooth, quiet and stable the elliptical machine will be. This is the heart of the elliptical and its quality determines much of the machine cost. Here are the key features to keep in mind:



**STRIDE LENGTH** is the overall distance the pedals travel during the elliptical motion. The length of the stride is an important factor in how the elliptical feels. Proper length depends on the size of the user, but a longer stride generally offers better range of motion. The stride should mimic the feel of walking or jogging, without the impact on your body. Stride length ranges from 12" to 20".

A full-size stride length offers a more natural feel and allows the user to get the full benefit of the elliptical motion.



**FRAME DESIGN** determines how easy it will be to get on and off the elliptical, and how stable it will be during use. Ellipticals are constructed on either a front-drive frame (the flywheel is in the front) or a rear-drive frame (the flywheel is at the back).

**LIVESTRONG Fitness ellipticals** are constructed on a front-drive design only, which offers numerous benefits over a rear-drive frame. Front-drive allows for easy access to the pedals, a straighter, more proper body positioning, and increased stability with the weight of the unit placed under your body.



**FLYWHEEL** is the feature that controls how smooth the elliptical feels. The heavier the flywheel, the smoother and quieter the elliptical will feel because the additional weight helps it spin efficiently. Flywheel weights for most home ellipticals generally begin at around 13 pounds, though **LIVESTRONG Fitness ellipticals** offer flywheels ranging from 23 to 30 pounds.

**DRIVE BELT** is the only link between the flywheel and the pedals. Quality belts use grooves to maintain an efficient transfer of energy between the pedals and flywheel. The more grooves on the belt, the less slippage the user will feel.

All ellipticals offer variable **RESISTANCE**. Typically, the resistance is controlled by a magnetic brake that applies resistance to the flywheel as it moves closer to the steel flywheel. A larger brake provides more contact area with the flywheel for more consistent resistance and a longer lifespan. The brake warranty is a good way to gauge the actual size and durability of the brake.



Be sure to consider the **WARRANTIES** associated with the elliptical, for the frame, brake, parts and labor. The frame and brake should ideally be covered by the same lifetime warranties, which tells you that the product is built to last and will have less need for maintenance down the road. For parts and labor, look for a warranty that offers at least 1 year of unlimited parts replacement and in-home labor repairs. This tells you a lot about the integrity behind the manufacturer and their products.



## SHOPPING FOR AN ELLIPTICAL — WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

### 2 Pedals

The pedal system on the elliptical shapes the fluid, non-pounding motion, and is the user's main contact point with the machine. They should be comfortable and joint-friendly. Be sure you do several test-runs on the ellipticals you are considering. Feel is crucial when choosing the right elliptical for you, so pay attention to these two important factors for a quality pedal system:



**ARTICULATING PEDALS** pivot as you move on the elliptical to support your foot's natural movements. When you move through the elliptical motion, the natural angle of the foot changes. Larger pedals allow more flexibility for comfortable foot positioning. Better pedals use traction strips that are inserted into the pedal to keep your foot from slipping.

Some **LIVESTRONG Fitness ellipticals** offer a specialized **arched pedal design** that utilizes the science of balance training to uniquely recreate a walking or running motion. Your foot flows through the motion just as it does when walking on sand -- your heel contacts first, then rolls up to the toes for push off. This eliminates the "tingling foot" sensation found on other ellipticals, and initiates core activation.



**Q-FACTOR** is the distance between the pedals. When we stand, our feet are far apart to give us balance, but when we walk our feet move toward the center of the body. This helps the body move efficiently and decreases stress on the hips and lower back. Better ellipticals have tighter pedal spacing to mimic the body's natural movement.

**LIVESTRONG Fitness ellipticals** are all SixStar certified in the six key elements needed to deliver the most natural elliptical feel. Learn more about the key elliptical features and the SixStar™ certification [here](#).



## SHOPPING FOR AN ELLIPTICAL — WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

### 3 Electronic System

The electronic console controls all aspects of the elliptical and determines how easy it will be to use the elliptical. There are three key areas that should be considered.



#### BASIC CONSOLE OPERATION

From warm-up to cool-down, operation of the console should be clear and easy to understand. The main function of the console is to control the operation, and higher-quality ellipticals offer more sophisticated features, but also simplify operation with “quick keys.”

The operation should be clear and easy to understand throughout your entire workout. Step on a machine and navigate through the programs and keys to make sure you are comfortable with the console and won't have a problem understanding how to use it.

#### CONSOLE FEEDBACK

The console should clearly display useful information about your workout performance. Higher-quality ellipticals will help monitor your workout progress with various feedback options, such as heart rate and performance data tracking. This information should be easy to view during your workout.

#### PROGRAMMING

Elliptical workout programs provide an opportunity to target specific fitness goals. Higher-quality ellipticals give you more preset workout program options. A console should include at least eight pre-set programs to help reach fitness goals and keep the workout engaging.

Features like iPod- or MP3-compatibility let you connect your audio device to the console and work out to your favorite playlists through included speakers, and workout fans will provide added comfort to help keep you going. For meeting specific, long-term goals, features like workout tracking will allow you to upload your workouts online, so all your data is easily accessible and you can track your progress at any time.