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Here's Why You Should Try Boxing

Sure, you exercise your body in the gym, but what about your mind?

By SAMUEL BLACKSTONE



The Ring Magazine/Getty Images

The great heavyweight champion Mike Tyson once remarked, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." A biting analysis, but as I found in a one-on-one boxing session with [Thomas Baldwin III](#) of [FitCrush NYC](#), you don't need to get tagged with a hook to be put on the floor.

There are a million different ways to exercise, which for a novice makes working out all the more daunting. Amid the obvious choices—running, weight lifting, and playing sports like basketball, baseball, football, and soccer—boxing can get lost in the mix. Once you try it,

though, you realize it may be the most effective exercise out there. The key is in the mind: You might run faster, lift more weight, and perform better in sports when your mind is quiet, but with boxing, your mind needs to be alert, quick, and engaged. You're not only using every muscle in your body to burn through calories, you're training and battling with your mind, and learning some valuable lessons about yourself, and life, in the process.

"You get to use speed, endurance, strength, explosiveness, and mental fortitude in one go," Baldwin says. "You can't get that by doing curls or other isolation movements." Baldwin, who played football throughout college before blowing out both knees, transitioning to boxing, and fighting as an amateur, says it was that experience, and the rigors of the ring, that helped him become the man he is today. "What happens when the person hits back? What happens when you can't knock that person out? You can't substitute. You have to find the will and the way to win. You have to adjust to the obstacles in the ring the same way you have to adjust to obstacles in your life."



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In my session with Thomas, no one hit me back, but by the end of the hour, it felt like someone had. The workout was simple: Focus mitt training: six rounds, three minutes each, one minute of rest between each round. First, the goal was nailing down jabs and crosses. Then, combos, pivots, blocks, dodges, and shuffles were incorporated. At the end, it was a grueling mix of burpees and rapid-fire punches, followed by core work like bicycle crunches, v-ups, and planks. It was the kind of workout that leaves you soaked, sore, and smiling.

Not everyone has a trained boxer to hit, motivate, and teach form. But, if you want to add variety to your workout, learn something challenging and new, and improve your confidence and fitness, there's a host of boxing gyms in most cities, and heavy bags in a lot of more basic gyms. If it's your first time, you'd be smart to seek some instruction, though.

"The best advice I can give to someone looking to incorporate boxing into their fitness routine is to seek out professional training," Baldwin says. "Throwing a punch with improper form could be very damaging; you could throw out your shoulder or hyper-extend your elbow easily. Once you learn proper form from someone who knows what they're doing, you can start to incorporate boxing moves into your regular routine." You'll be fitter, more athletic, quicker, and more explosive and powerful, and you can start saying cool things like "[Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.](#)" Motivated yet?

