

# good manners

## Sweating with Civility

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I recently read a t-shirt that said, “I don’t sweat, I glisten.” This is the month where sweating is on everyone’s mind. No, not sweating because it’s blistering hot outside. Sweating because millions are hitting the gym this month.

Here we are in January. Resolutions are being made to not only eat healthier but to incorporate exercise into our daily routines. January is the busiest month for gyms with membership increasing by about 30%. With over 45 million Americans owning gym memberships, chances are there’s going to be some rude behavior.

So, before you grab your water bottle, gym bag, and head out, consider the following don’ts in order to make working out a good experience for everyone:

- **Leaving sweat on the equipment:** This is the single biggest pet peeve! Just imagine grabbing the weight bar only to find it slippery with sweat. Or, sitting back into a puddle of sweat on a mat. Yuck! Yes, gyms are full of sweaty, smelly people. But, keep it to yourself. Carry a towel and wipe off equipment and weights when you are finished. Some gyms even provide wipe dispensers for your convenience.
- **Hogging the equipment:** We all have our favorite machine, however, if the gym is super crowded, don’t use any machine for more than 30 minutes.
- **Totting around a gym bag:** Some people just love taking their bag everywhere. They plop them right beside them in classes or while working out on a machine. Bags get in the way, take up valuable space, and can be a hazard to others. Most gyms have lockers. Please use them.
- **Arriving late to a class (or leaving early):** It is best to arrive a few minutes early to classes. Sometimes weights, bars, and steps are needed and this will require even more time to prepare for the class. You’ve probably experienced this. The class is crowded, but you found a spot. You are all set up. You can see the instructor. You can see the mirror. You are ready to go. You are about ten minutes into the class and in walks a late comer.



She gathers her equipment which is very disruptive to the instructor and the entire class. And then, she plops right in front of you. Now you must move your things in order to see. One word - Frustrating! Five minutes late to a class is considered rude. More than five minutes late is not acceptable. If you arrive late, skip the class and find something else to do.

- Treating the locker room like your own personal bathroom: Okay, so now we are really getting personal. Yes, there are some folks who have no problem walking naked throughout the locker room. You know what I'm talking about. These are the people who get out of the shower, dry their hair, put on make-up, do a few stretches, and THEN, get dressed. It's a better idea, and considerate to others, to cover up after your shower. This is especially true if you are using a corporate fitness facility where the person next to you is your boss or co-worker. Other rules of the locker room are:
  - Don't take marathon showers.
  - Don't over primp in front of the mirror or use the hair dryer too long.
  - Don't leave a mess on the counters.
  - Don't use too many towels. If your gym provides towels, only use one or two.
  - Don't leave towels lying around. Place them in the laundry bin.
  - Don't spread out over the entire bench. Leave some room for others.
- Talking on cell phones: I've actually witnessed others on their bluetooth or headset carrying on full conversations while running on the treadmill. No one wants to hear about last night's date, dinner, or horrible movie during a workout. Leave the cell phone in your gym bag. If you must take a call, move to a quiet spot.
- Using equipment improperly: If you are new to the gym, ask how to use the machines. Most gyms will offer a free session with a personal trainer. This is the time to learn how the machines work. Also, don't use weights you are unable to handle. And please, don't drop the weights to the floor making a loud noise.
- Leaving weights on bars or floor: This is the next biggest pet peeve to leaving sweat on equipment. No one wants to or has time to look for weights. Place them back in the appropriate spot when you are finished using them.
- Intruding on space: Don't be a stalker! No one enjoys working out with another person circling the machine. Find something else to do until the machine you want to use is free. Also, if your gym has a pool, ask before you share a lane. My husband is an avid swimmer. I frequently hear about other swimmers who jump right into his lane that is already full. It's nearly impossible to swim in an overcrowded lane. My husband equates this to jumping onto the back of a treadmill that another person is using!

Health clubs and gyms also have responsibilities. It is their job to make sure members are aware of the etiquette rules of their establishment. They can easily do this by: 1) posting signs that clearly state their etiquette rules, 2) educating new members during the tour of the facility, and 3) walking around the gym to observe behavior and to make sure rules are being followed.

One last thing: Remember to take a sense of humor to the gym. You'll find it much more enjoyable if you don't take yourself too seriously when working out. So, here's to a new start to a

new year - get to the gym, remember your manners, and have fun. "I decided to take an aerobics class. I bent...twisted...gyrated...jumped up and down...and perspired for a half an hour. But by the time I got my tights on...the class was over!" - Anonymous.

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