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# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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## User Guide: Finding the Right Coach and Affiliate

Choosing a CrossFit coach or affiliate is an important decision. Here are some things to think about when making your choice.

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This article provides a basic framework on how to find a CrossFit coach and an affiliate. It's a set of suggestions that can be used as a road map—not a comprehensive treatise.

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## Your Responsibilities

1. Know yourself: You must evaluate your goals and experience honestly. No one else can do this for you.
2. Educate yourself: Fitness is about capacity; training is about expanding capacity. You must challenge your limits. Think of fitness as a process of learning the physical, mental and nutritional components of functional capacity.
3. Communicate: Ensure the coach knows your limits so he or she can help you expand them.
4. Do the work: Ultimately, you have to put in the effort, manage your nutrition and make sure you rest enough.

## The Process of Getting Fit

1. Mechanics: Developing competency in the foundational movements.
2. Consistency: Developing the habits and patterns that support fitness.
3. Intensity: Pushing the limits of your capacity once mechanics and consistency are established.

## How to Evaluate a Coach

The relationship you have with your coach is key to your success. He or she must understand you physically and mentally, and, above all else, he or she should inspire confidence. Before committing, consider taking a few classes with a prospective coach or ask to watch a class he or she leads. Doing so will allow you to see if your coach has the qualities needed for effective training.

An effective trainer must have capacity in six abilities:

1. Teaching movement.
2. Seeing movement.
3. Correcting movement.
4. Group and/or gym management.
5. Presence and attitude.
6. Demonstration of movement.

An effective trainer recognizes each person has different needs and goals. It is the trainer's responsibility to determine how to relate to and motivate each individual to help him or her reach stated goals. A positive trainer demonstrates interpersonal skills with an ability to interact and communicate with each athlete individually.

As CrossFit founder and CEO Greg Glassman explained in 2006:

Because I want my clients' training experience to transcend the physical realm, I am obligated to understand their jobs, hobbies, families, and goals. Motivating clients to transcend fitness requires that I be involved in their lives. This isn't going to happen without my being both interested in them and interesting to them.

Indeed, I am a personal friend to nearly every one of my clients. This is extremely gratifying work and often emotionally charged, but that's all right because I am an integral part of my athlete's lives, and life is full of laughter, tears, and hope.



***A great trainer can often improve movement dramatically with only one or two well-chosen words.***



***Excellent trainers see movement and know exactly how to make it better very quickly.***

## **Mechanics, Consistency, Intensity**

The three-part charter of CrossFit—mechanics, consistency and then intensity—comprises the nonlinear progression essential for rookies and veterans.

### **1. Mechanics**

Mechanics determine whether the athlete achieves fundamental techniques necessary for performing the movements.

Like Todd Widman, Level 1 Seminar Staff, said in 2009: “For us, this means moving yourself and external objects in the most efficient, effective, and safe manner possible.”

### **2. Consistency**

- A. Consistency determines whether the athlete can perform rep after rep correctly without instruction.
- B. Consistency also determines if the athlete is training frequently enough to garner a tolerance for intensity.

Only after mechanics and consistency have been mastered can a coach safely increase a program’s intensity.

*It’s like Widman explained:* “CrossFit workouts are very potent medicine; too much too soon and you can severely hurt yourself. Luckily, the body adapts quickly, and before you know it, you will be hitting each workout with maximum personal intensity.”

### **3. Intensity**

Defined as power, intensity is the amount of work done per unit time. The pursuit of intensity inevitably leads to performing movements at high speed.

Mechanics *and* intensity can be lost on inexperienced trainers who think only intensity matters. An effective trainer understands the progression. *Coach Glassman noted in 2005:*

There is a compelling tendency among novices developing any skill or art, whether learning to play the violin, write poetry, or compete in gymnastics, to quickly move past the fundamentals and on to more elaborate, more sophisticated movements, skills, or techniques. This compulsion is the novice’s curse—the rush to originality and risk.

## **The Benefits of Training at an Affiliate**

Communities flourish at CrossFit gyms. There, members forge fitness and lifelong relationships. The sense of belonging makes CrossFit unlike any other fitness program in the world.

At CrossFit gyms, you’re not anonymously walking on a treadmill for an hour. Your workout experience is shared with every other person there, and chances are they’re suffering in the workouts more than you are. CrossFitters choose more demanding workouts because they recognize the benefits, both physical and mental, of hard work.



***A great trainer is also a great motivator and will help you find new strength, both mentally and physically.***

Reasons to train at an affiliate:

- Easy to get started and be consistent—everyone there is already CrossFitting.
- Access to coaching for improved mechanics and nutritional guidance.
- Community that will encourage your progress.
- Fosters a system of accountability for continued improvement.

The investment of your money, your time and your effort is paramount when you're trying to get fit; you need to make sure you're doing that at the right place and with the right people. Choosing the right coach or affiliate is an empowering process. Great coaches and gyms will show you just how valuable you are by earning your membership.



### **The Right Fit**

Like all relationships, learning from a coach takes time, patience and commitment. You're often changing decades-old movement patterns—no simple task. Having said that, if it's clear the coach isn't the right fit for you, find one who is. The same goes for the CrossFit affiliate. Both components must work for you.