CQ1 – What does exercise mean to different people?
CQ2 – What are the ways people choose to exercise for fitness?
CQ3 – What influences people’s choice of fitness activities?
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What does exercise mean to different people?

- The reasons why individuals exercise and their understanding of what exercise is will vary from person to person. To many people, the word ‘exercise’ presents them with images of unpleasant, vigorous activities that are undertaken to improve fitness. Others think of exercise as a type of physical activity, encompassing a range of activities, while to others it is a normal part of their daily life. You might consider exercise as riding your bike to and from school, while another student might think of exercise as swimming 2 kilometres each morning or going to a climbing gym. Some people would classify a daily walk as exercise, while others may consider gardening as their regular form of exercise. You might jog to improve your fitness; other people might jog to relieve stress; while others might jog to lose weight. Regardless of the reason why people exercise, many are increasingly realising the benefits of being physically active.
Although the term ‘exercise’ may have different meanings to different people, in broad terms exercise describes an activity that involves repetitive bodily movements. It can be planned and structured or unplanned and incidental. Exercise can involve a wide range of activities, including recreation and leisure pursuits as well as competitive and non-competitive sports.
Although the terms ‘exercise’ and ‘physical activity’ are often used synonymously, exercise is being recognised as a subcategory of physical activity. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines physical activity as ‘all movements in everyday life, including work, recreation, exercise and sporting activities’.

Physical activity can be categorised by the context in which it occurs. Exercise, which is one type of physical activity, can be defined as planned, structured and repetitive bodily movements that aim to improve one or more of the components of physical fitness.
Other types of physical activity

- **Occupational physical activity**, such as landscape gardening, cycling as a courier and participating in sport at school
- **Household physical activity**, such as vacuuming, mowing the lawn and gardening
- **Leisure physical activity**, which includes such categories as competitive sports, recreational activities (for example, bushwalking, dancing and surfing) and exercise training (jogging, gym circuits or spin classes)
- **Transportation physical activity**, such as walking, cycling to school or work and skateboarding.
Physical fitness is defined as a general state of good health, resulting from regular physical activity and a healthy diet. It is the combination of body conditioning and the ability to use the body when performing a range of physical activities.

Physical fitness is often described as the ability to undertake daily tasks with ease and still have enough energy to pursue leisure activities. The attributes of physical fitness can be categorised as either the health-related or skill related aspects of fitness:

- *health-related components of fitness*
- *skill-related components of fitness*

To improve fitness, exercise programs can be designed to develop either one or a combination of the components of fitness.
Who is fit?

When you ask individuals to name a sporting identity who they think is fit, they will usually select someone who is fit in the cardiovascular or aerobic component of fitness. They may name a runner, triathlete, swimmer or soccer player, for instance. They are less likely to name a cricketer or weightlifter, although these athletes may be fit to meet the needs of their sport.
How much exercise do we need to achieve health benefits?

- To improve our cardiovascular fitness we need to exercise in a way that elevates our heart rate to around 70% of our maximum heart rate (MHR), and we need to exercise in that way three to four times per week, for 20–30 minutes. For a 17 year old, this recommended heart rate would equate to 142 beats per minute (bpm). The heart rate can be elevated to 142 bpm with a light jog, bike ride or power walk. The latest research shows that 30 minutes of such regular moderate-intensity exercise is sufficient to gain health benefits. This 30 minutes need not be in one session. It can be achieved in three 10-minute periods, for example, which for most people should be easy to achieve.

- The need to encourage more people to become physically active was recognised officially by the Australian Government when it launched the Active Australia campaign in July 1997. This was a coordinated approach aimed at improving the health and well-being of all Australians by promoting increased levels of physical activity. The campaign message of ‘Exercise—you only have to take it regularly, not seriously’ was initially aimed at adults aged 25–45. It evolved to include the aged and more recently has focused on young people.

- Recent actions have included establishing ‘Healthy Ambassadors’ to raise an awareness of healthy living in youth, the Healthy Spaces and Places program to provide supportive environments for movement, and community and school grants programs to support activity based programs, including ‘Go for your life’.
Certain people must maintain a high level of fitness because of their career. Professional athletes, for example, must have a high level of fitness if they are to successfully compete at an elite level. In some areas of employment, employees need to maintain a certain level of fitness in order to carry out their duties successfully. Examples are professional lifeguards, fitness instructors and courier cyclists. For these people, not maintaining their level of fitness may dramatically affect their career.

Maintaining a certain level of fitness may not be essential for everyone’s career, yet many people value their fitness as it enables them to participate in their chosen sport or recreation. For other people, exercise is seen as a means to achieving a particular goal, such as to lose weight, enter a fun run or feel healthier. Although many people may value physical activity and recognise the benefits of regular exercise, research shows that a large number of Australians remain inactive. Many Australian adults were classified as sedentary or having low exercise levels.

Sedentary behaviour constitutes a physical activity regime that only includes movement to complete daily tasks, such as showering, preparing food or walking to the car. Low exercise levels include basic activity, including walking to complete tasks, and low-impact activity that does not make a significant contribution to health outcomes for the individual.
The technological revolution over the last 30 years has had a major influence on our level of daily physical activity. Labour-saving devices are now an integral part of our daily life. It is possible to go through each day being almost completely sedentary. Car parks make it unnecessary to walk, and stairs are often unavailable so we must take the lift or the escalator.

Also our entertainment is sedentary: movies, videos, interactive games and computers take up the majority of most people’s leisure time. No longer do we spend hours around the home completing daily chores. The impact of computer technology on industry means that few people have jobs involving physical activity. Our leisure time has increased, but so has physical inactivity.

Research that connected physical activity with improved health was first published in the 1950s. Until recently most people did not know about this research, and so it was not called on to counteract the trend towards sedentary lifestyles. In 1978, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) conducted a study to determine the amount of physical activity needed to improve aerobic fitness and body composition.

The study was based on an extended literature review. The ACSM’s findings led to the development of what is commonly referred to as the FITT principles of exercise and helped to trigger the fitness boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s.
The ‘fitness movement’ came to prominence in the 1970s when there was recognition that people needed to pay attention to physical fitness for health reasons, rather than merely to win races and be slim. People began to talk about the ‘aerobic’ concept; that is, that they could improve their general health by improving the endurance capabilities of their bodies.

The result is that, largely because of media promotion, the general public is more aware than ever before that moderate physical fitness can lead to good health. Despite this, approximately 25% of Australians continue to lead sedentary lifestyles, meaning they do little or no physical activity. The challenge that remains is to change many people’s attitudes and behaviour so that they are motivated to engage in physical activity.
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<td>1980s</td>
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<td>The Hawaii Iron Man triathlon becomes an iconic event</td>
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<td>‘Life. Be in it’ campaign</td>
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Since the ‘fitness revolution’ of the 1970s, people have increasingly shown an interest in fitness, leading to a gradual growth in the ‘fitness business’. Initially the fitness boom grew out of aerobics classes, which sprang up throughout the community, in halls and fitness centres. There was growing interest in participating in sporting and recreation activities, either competitively or in social situations.

As the community recognised the benefits of participating in physical activity, people increasingly looked for a ‘quick fix’ to their individual problems. This may have been a desire to lose weight, improve their aerobic fitness, achieve rippling abdominals, tighten their ‘bottom’, build muscle, feel healthier or improve their social life—the wish lists went on and on.

From the ‘fitness boom’ grew an industry. Today a range of products and services is available to the fitness consumer. They include fitness videos and equipment, which are readily available at local supermarkets and sports stores. They can also be ordered through magazines, catalogues, teleshopping and the Internet.

The other major growth area is in the field of commercial fitness centres and businesses, which provide a vast array of activities and services to the consumer. Specialists in personal training and corporate fitness programs have evolved to cater for the needs of individuals and companies who recognise the benefits of improved health and fitness.
fitness as a commodity

- In 2009, *Business Review Weekly* identified the fitness industry as earning $12–15 billion per year in Australia, with that figure expected to be $60 billion per year in 2012.

- The fitness industry employs large numbers of people. Fitness Australia, the peak body for the fitness industry, has over 20,000 registered exercise professionals. Money in the fitness industry is generated through a wide range of commercial transactions related to aspects such as employment, gymnasium memberships, fitness equipment, training services, fitness clothing and nutritional supplements.

- People choose to use, and pay for, fitness facilities and services for a range of reasons. Some reasons include:
  - having access to a wide range of resources
  - having access to specific knowledge and skills of personnel using the membership or service as a source of motivation.
Gymnasiums and fitness trainers enable people to access a range of equipment and facilities that they probably could not afford on an individual basis. As professionals, gym staff and trainers also make the commitment to individuals that the equipment, facilities and activities provided are safe. Exercising carries a degree of risk of physical injury because it involves physical exertion, and so tapping into the expertise and quality assurance of commercial gymnasiums and their staff is an appealing feature.

Some people choose to purchase their own fitness equipment and establish home gyms. This can be a cost-effective approach providing that the equipment is of good quality and is well maintained, and that the individual has the knowledge and skills to use the equipment safely and effectively.

Fitness trainers and gymnasium personnel offer individuals the capacity to maximise the benefits they hope to derive from their training. They promise to help individuals achieve their goals. The knowledge and skills that trainers and gymnasium personnel bring is one of the main reasons that the fitness industry thrives. In a culture where many people are time-poor, having a trainer can provide motivation and help ensure commitment to an exercise program.
REASONS

- time poor
- motivational support
- to lose weight
- help with achieving a specific training goal
- to access knowledge and expertise
What are the ways people choose to exercise for fitness?

- At the beginning of the fitness revolution in the 1970s, people chose from a wide range of options in order to improve their fitness. They included running, swimming, cycling, walking and aerobics, and many people rediscovered team sports. All these options are still popular today, but we now have many variations on these as well as a wide range of new forms of exercise.

- In the 1970s, the focus was on improving aerobic fitness and this influenced the type of activities people chose. Today, people may participate in fitness activities to gain more than just a cardiovascular benefit. They may also want to improve their flexibility, coordination or strength, or gain the general health and relaxation benefits of exercise and physical activity.
Individual fitness activities

- For many people, their lifestyle and personal circumstances will have a strong influence on their choice of physical activity. Some people may prefer to exercise with others but their personal circumstances may prevent them from doing so. For example, someone who enjoys power walking might like to participate in that activity in a class at a gym, but due to work commitments cannot make the scheduled time regularly. As a result, this person may choose to power walk on his or her own at a time that fits in with other lifestyle choices and commitments.

- The convenience of exercising alone influences the choice of activity. An advantage of individual activities is that the person can choose to exercise at a time that fits in with his or her lifestyle. Some people prefer exercising alone, as it enables them to work at their own level. Others find it an ideal opportunity to plan their day or unwind at the end of the day. It can also be time efficient, as such people will often exercise from home or work, saving time on travelling to meet a friend or attend a club or fitness centre.
There are a range of activities that an individual can enjoy alone, whether in their home, their local area or at a fitness centre. Examples are riding on an exercise bike or running on a treadmill at a fitness centre as well as jogging or cycling in the local area. Individuals who exercise alone are not usually concerned with the social benefit gained from exercising with others and may not need other people around them to be motivated to exercise. With the range of individual activities available, it is possible for people to select one or more activities that will help them achieve their desired outcomes. If the desired outcome is improved cardiovascular fitness, they are likely to select activities such as running, walking or cycling.

Some forms of exercise focus on promoting mental and emotional well-being, while still achieving some physical benefits. Tai chi, pilates and yoga may not achieve improved cardiovascular fitness but can develop strength, flexibility and mobility. Devotees of these types of individual activities may also participate in these activities to gain mental and emotional health benefits.

A range of new individual fitness activities have emerged in recent times. These include personal training programs tailored to individual needs and workouts that reflect a mix of cardio, flexibility and strength exercises. There are also express workouts, which fit into a lunch break or set period, and running shoes that pair with iPods and downloadable workouts. A range of new individual fitness equipment and activities are now available, including the Bosu Ball, which increases balance and strength; ramping, where an inclined step bench is used for high-intensity workouts; the Thera-Band, a compact device that builds strength and increases flexibility; and Wii Fit, which allows for self-paced fitness routines.
Power walking involves walking at a brisk pace while accentuating movement of the arms to elevate the heart rate further and generate more energy. Although it is not an aesthetically pleasing movement, power walking has the benefit of enabling the individual to work in the target heart-rate zone that is effective for burning body fat and maintaining good cardiorespiratory health.

Power walking is also a low-impact activity with a low risk of injury. Running requires a higher level of intensity than power walking and thus burns more energy and can help derive significant cardiorespiratory fitness gains. Running has a higher impact and carries with it greater risk of related injuries to the lower limbs and, potentially, cardiac arrest in older athletes or those who have not developed a sufficient training base.
Swimming is a low-impact activity in which individuals benefit from the buoyancy of the water. Swimming requires a fairly high degree of skill and the level of skill can be a factor influencing the amount of energy burned during exercise. An inefficient swimmer is likely to burn up more energy and swim less distance than a more skilled swimmer.

Some evidence suggests that swimming is a less effective form of exercise for reducing fat than running or cycling possibly because of buoyancy-related factors, the performance benefits of slightly higher levels of body fat for endurance swimming performance, and/or the cooling effect of being in the water.
Cycling is a low-impact form of exercise that promotes excellent gains in cardiorespiratory fitness and muscular endurance. Cycling on the road adds a potentially dangerous dimension, with the increased risk of road-related injuries from collisions or falls.

Using a stationary bike allows for controlled measures of time, distance and speed; while avoiding collisions or falls as well as potentially performance-compromising factors such as wind, rain and sun.
Weight training programs

- Weight-training programs are commonly structured to promote the development of fitness components such as muscular strength, muscular endurance, power and speed. Strength-based programs typically involve moving heavy loads with lower repetitions.

- Muscular endurance-based programs use light to moderate loads moved with more repetitions. Power and speed-based programs use moderate to heavy loads moved quickly a moderate number of times.

- As people often use heavy loads in weight training, there is potential for soft-tissue injuries such as strains, sprains and tears. It is important to develop a sound technique using lighter weights before graduating to moving heavier loads, and to be very careful when testing your RM.

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<th>Component of fitness</th>
<th>Load</th>
<th>Repetitions</th>
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<td>Slow to moderate</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Moderate to heavy (60–80% RM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muscular endurance</td>
<td>Light to moderate (40–60% RM)</td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
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Tai Chi comes from Chinese culture and is often observed being practiced in local parks by devotees. Tai Chi has its origins as a form of developing combat and self-defence skills, although equally it has been used for centuries as a way of promoting general health, fitness and wellbeing.

Tai Chi is characterised by controlled, gentle and tranquil movements designed to foster harmony in mind and body as well as improve movement, flexibility and mental alertness. There is an ancient Chinese saying: ‘Whoever practices Tai Chi regularly will, in time, gain the suppleness of a child, the strength of a lion, and the peace of mind of a sage.’
Pilates involves completing a sequence of movements in a highly controlled fashion. Through Pilates, a greater understanding of the body’s ideal position during movement is developed, together with improved core body strength.

Pilates movements can isolate muscle groups for the purpose of strengthening weak muscles and/or lengthening tight, bulky muscles. The aim is to create balance within the body. Common principles focused upon in Pilates are concentration, breathing, centring, control, movement, flow, precision and routine. Yoga takes a holistic approach to wellbeing. It has a strong physical dimension through its poses and movements; focuses on breathing, meditation, contemplation and, sometimes, a spiritual dimension.

There are a number of different styles of yoga, each with their own unique interpretations. For example, Bikram Yoga can be quite intense, burn more energy, and be more likely to make you sweat. Hatha Yoga is more passive and involves holding poses for longer periods and placing greater focus on meditation and controlled breathing. Ashtanga Yoga is the most popular style. It is a fast-paced series of sequential poses and it is structured in six levels of increasing degrees of difficulty, which allows students to work at their own pace and ability level.
emerging individual fitness activities

- Any fitness activity that becomes popular involves people spreading the message of its benefits. In an era of pay TV, the internet and globalisation, it is increasingly likely that new fitness activities will emerge and spread more easily. Similarly, it is possible that there will be a broader range of ‘niche’ activities that appeal to a small but committed number of devotees, rather than the historical attachment of masses of people to traditional activities, which occurred when there were far less fitness options available.

- An example of an individual fitness activity that has emerged, or at least has had a surge in popularity, is stand up paddle surfing (SUP). SUP has been around for more than sixty years, and it is believed to have originated in Hawaii when photographers ventured into the ocean to take photos of tourists. The photographers stood and paddled on their boards in order to keep their camera equipment dry.

- SUP developed into a form of surfing for a short period but is now gaining rapid popularity, as improved technologies have allowed boards to be made much lighter and far more manoeuvrable on waves. In some instances, SUP enables surfers to catch waves that may not be possible with a traditional surfboard.

- SUP can be done catching waves in the surf or exploring the environment on flat water. SUP offers greater visibility than lying on a surfboard or sitting on a surf ski and is therefore well suited to exploring lakes and rivers. Fitness benefits from SUP include improvements in muscular endurance, core strength, balance and cardiorespiratory fitness.
Group fitness activities

- While some people prefer to exercise on their own, many others prefer to exercise in groups, such as in team sports. This may be because it commits the participant to an activity that is scheduled to take place at a particular time on a particular day. Many people who like the structure and benefits of organised group activities would not exercise if they were responsible for planning their own exercise program.

- Group activities are also popular because many people enjoy the social benefits of exercising with others. Some people need the motivation they receive from fellow participants or an instructor to encourage them to exercise.
The concept of aerobics was first developed by Kenneth H Cooper, an air force doctor based at the San Antonio Hospital in Texas. Aerobics, at that time, comprised a series of running, cycling, swimming and walking activities. They were developed initially to help prevent coronary heart disease and, soon after, to train and monitor astronauts preparing for missions. Dr Cooper is renowned in the area of endurance fitness testing and is the man who developed the Cooper 12 minute run and the 1.5-mile run as standardised fitness tests.

Dr Cooper’s book *Aerobics* was published in 1968. In the early 1980s, aerobics gained an international following largely through celebrity workout videos, such as Jane Fonda’s demonstrating how aerobics could be done in your home. Subsequently, a wide range of aerobics variations has evolved including step aerobics, dance aerobics, competition aerobics and aquarobics.

Aquarobics is usually done in a group in a pool with a fitness leader taking the group through a range of callisthenic movements to the sound of music. A major advantage of aquarobics is the cardiovascular benefits that can be derived with very limited impact on muscles and joints, due to the buoyancy effect of the water supporting the body. Research by the Australian Sports Commission estimated that there are over 30 000 adults who participate in aquarobics in Australia with the average age being 45 years.
A key strategy of any commercial gymnasium is to continually update the program of classes they offer. This demonstrates their currency with the latest research and trends in fitness, helps to keep members motivated and enthused by offering new classes, and enables the gymnasium to meet the varying needs of their members.
pump/step/spin classes

Major fitness-class categories that have been added to gymnasium timetables in recent years include:

- **Pump**—this is weight training, using barbells and dumbbells, performed to music. The class promotes improvement in the areas of muscular strength, muscular endurance, muscle tone and cardiorespiratory fitness.

- **Step**—this class involves choreographed movements, which involve stepping in various directions (up down, back, forward and across) to the beat of music.

- **Spin**—this involves group fitness, where participants exercise on a stationary bike to the sounds of inspiring music. The class leader may dictate intensity through calling for different terrain, speeds or pedal resistance. Alternatively, some spin classes encourage each individual to control the intensity of their workout.

- **Body Jam**—this class uses dance-inspired cardio workouts to dance music using low-impact, moderate-intensity movement.

- **Boxercise**—this group fitness session requires participants to use boxing pads and gloves to safely punch, duck, weave, bob and move for extended periods at varying degrees of intensity. The result is a cardiorespiratory workout with other gains in muscular endurance and agility.
circuit training

- Circuit training involves completing a number of different exercises one after the other, with little or no break in between. The intent is to provide a cardiorespiratory workout with some gains in muscle tone and muscular strength and endurance.

- Circuit training can involve the use of different weight-training equipment, medicine balls, fit balls, boxing gloves and other equipment; however, bodyweight exercises are extremely common in most circuit classes. Examples of common exercises used in circuit classes include push-ups, dips, sit-ups, lunges, boxing, skipping, squats, star jumps, step-ups and agility runs.
team games

- Team games appeal to many people because they are based on the principle of working collectively to achieve a common goal. Many team games are inculcated in people from a very young age, and games culture becomes ingrained in the social and cultural background in which people exist.

- Team games also offer an added social dimension, because of the sheer number of people involved and because people want to debrief with one another after a hard training session or competitive match. Team games are resource-efficient because they provide exercise opportunities for a reasonable number of people using a relatively small amount of resources and facilities. For example, a game of soccer provides exercise for 22 people at once on a single field using one ball and a couple of goal posts.
Exercise is highly recommended for all people because of the fitness and general health benefits that stem from it. However, it is important to acknowledge that there is a range of physical factors for different individuals that can affect the nature and extent of exercise and what is suitable for them to attempt. Pregnant women, children and the aged all have physical factors that need to be carefully considered when planning suitable exercise.
Pregnant women

- Exercise is beneficial for pregnant women; it can improve posture, lower body-fat gains, provide stress relief and better sleep, and enhance preparation for the physical demands of motherhood.

- Pregnant women should consult with their doctor, physiotherapist and/or health-care professional prior to commencing an exercise program, and it is advisable if they already currently exercise regularly that the nature and extent of their existing program should be discussed. For women with hypertension, heart disease, multiple foetuses or those who have an increased risk of premature labour, it may be best to avoid exercise during pregnancy.

- Common elements to consider for pregnant women exercising include: remain well hydrated and avoid overheating select low- to moderate-intensity exercise, especially during the later stages of the pregnancy restrict high-impact activities and contact sports have at least two rest days per week and do not exercise on a particular day if not feeling well or not feeling like it.
Children are not little adults and the structure of an exercise plan should reflect this. Children tend to come from a low knowledge and skill base and they are experiencing consistent growth with periodic rapid bursts of growth. These factors dictate that the exercise focus for children needs to be on skill development, variety, enjoyment, participation and good health. It is generally considered inappropriate for high-intensity exercise and excessive specialised activities to be imposed on children because they are not ready to cope physically or emotionally with these demands.

Children can be particularly susceptible to overuse injuries, such as stress fractures, which can be caused by repetitive actions placing stress and subsequent wear and tear on bones, muscles and joint components such as cartilage, ligaments and tendons. Thermoregulation is another major consideration for children when they are exercising, because children do not have a fully developed cooling system and, therefore, they are less efficient at losing heat through sweating. Shorter-duration activities, lower intensities, appropriate clothing and regular breaks for water are important strategies to incorporate when children exercise.
In some respects, the aged have similar needs to children but for different reasons. Whereas exercise modifications for children stem largely from underdevelopment of their physical capabilities, the aged need to manage exercise because they can no longer cope physically with some challenging activities.

The natural loss of strength and flexibility that occurs after middle age can mean that older people need to perform movements at a slower rate and at a reduced intensity. Exercise that requires fast or intense movement can place the aged at heightened risk of tears, sprains and strains, as well as injuries from falls. Many older people have reduced bone density and so consistent participation in high-impact exercises can place them at greater risk of bone injuries such as fractures.

In addition, the duration and intensity of endurance activities need to be carefully monitored because of the stress that these activities can place on the circulatory system when they are performed too long or too hard.
Group fitness activities that have either emerged, or have grown significantly in popularity, in recent years include dragon boat racing and outdoor group fitness activities such as Boot Camp. Dragon boat racing came to prominence when Hong Kong held an international race festival in 1976. Dragon boat racing started out with slow growth in Australia, but participation numbers have grown noticeably.

Dragon boat racing is now the fastest growing water sport in Australia. Dragon boat crews are made up of 22 people and dragon boat racing is an attractive team-building activity for many organisations. A key factor in successful dragon boat racing is paddle cohesiveness among the entire crew. Communication, cooperation and commitment among the entire team are critical to successful performance. Dragon boat racing can be physically demanding at a competitive level and helps develop muscular endurance, core strength and cardiorespiratory fitness.

Boot Camp has been a highly successful initiative introduced by the commercial gymnasium chain Fitness First. Boot Camp is a four-week training program based loosely on military-style training principles. It is conducted completely outdoors, encourages a strong team focus and establishes goals to be achieved and periodic assessments of progress.

The principles of Boot Camp are replicated in a number of other fitness service providers. For example, Step into Life is an organisation that sells franchises to trainers. The Step into Life training model also involves group fitness activities being held outdoors in community spaces, such as parks and beaches.

Participants all wear the Step into Life training apparel that symbolises the sense of team within the group that is training.
A wide range of factors influence people’s choice of fitness activities, including access to facilities and resources, cost, skills, past experiences and other life responsibilities. Each of these factors can influence choice and participation in positive or negative ways.
Settings for exercise

Exercise at home eg, home gyms

- Exercise at home can be the most cost effective way to exercise. It can be done with little or no equipment and for little or no cost. However, a potential disadvantage is that the opportunity to tap into the expertise of others and the social dimensions may be lost. To sustain exercise at home in the long term, it is critical to have a high level of motivation and commitment. Effective strategies to sustain motivation and commitment include setting measurable performance goals, regularly assessing progress and then re-setting new goals that are more challenging.

- For those people who want to exercise at home and are willing to spend some money to make it as effective as possible, a number of options are available. Home gyms range from simple ones at a few hundred dollars to comprehensive ones costing tens of thousands. Designs are available that can fit into a small room or take up the space of a large garage.
Exercise at home eg, home gyms

- The most popular home gym equipment is cardio based and includes stationary bikes, treadmills and rowing machines. Dumbbells, barbells and multi-function weight machines are popular for strength-based training at home.

- A growing market exists for niche exercise aids, such as the ab-cruncher, which are advertised in the media through infomercials and on shopping channels. Often promising great results, many of these niche exercise aids develop only a limited range of fitness. To achieve broad and sustained results, a more comprehensive approach to exercise is often needed.
Community facilities

Community facilities play a significant role in providing equitable access to exercise facilities. In many cases, community facilities are provided and maintained by local councils. Community groups, charities and sporting associations also sometimes provide and/or maintain exercise facilities. Examples of ways that community facilities are used for exercise include:

- Halls belonging to churches, schools and local councils being hired out for a low fee to groups wanting to conduct activities such as karate classes, Pilates and yoga.
- Tennis courts being provided and maintained by the local council on land they own. Hiring fees are usually quite reasonable.
- Public golf courses being leased to a club, which is managed by a committee. The golf club can have members and allocate specific times for member-only competitions, but is also obliged to have significant times set aside during the week for the course to be used by the public. Some public golf courses also build in tracks surrounding the course for walking and running.
- Local councils providing exercise equipment along routes commonly used for walking and jogging.
- Local and state governments developing bushwalking paths through forests and other natural environments.
- The majority of costs associated with developing and maintaining community facilities are borne by the body that owns them, often the local council. In the case of local councils, they mostly use income from the council rates paid by all local residents as well as government grants to meet the bulk of the costs. The fees charged for using some of the facilities or for parking nearby usually subsidise only a small amount of the costs.
Fitness centres and personal trainers

- Fitness centres clearly prefer to have people join as members, rather than pay to attend on a casual basis. As a result, annual membership fees (which are typically charged monthly or weekly) are cheaper than the cost of regular casual visits. It is quite common for a casual visit to a fitness centre to cost in excess of $25, while an annual membership fee can be less than $1000.

- When signing up for an annual membership, it is important to carefully review the contract and seek advice. Fitness centre contracts can be quite complex and often include financial penalties for ending them within the minimum period.
Fitness centres can offer state-of-the-art facilities with highly credentialed trainers on site at your disposal. It can be expensive for fitness centres to provide this level of service and, therefore, the price of membership can also be expensive. Ultimately, the decision about whether or not to join a fitness centre is based around questions such as:

- Is this a preferred form of exercise for me?
- Can I afford it?
- Will I go regularly enough to get value for money?
- Are there any current or likely health issues that might restrict my capacity to go to the gym?
- Which fitness centre best meets my needs?
Exercise clubs eg running, walking cycling

- Exercise clubs are usually built around like-minded people joining to form a club based on a shared interest in a particular form of exercise. Running clubs, walking clubs, cycling clubs and triathlon clubs are quite common. While exercise clubs usually have one specific activity at their core, related dimensions may include priorities that are socially based, training based and/or competition based.

- Generally speaking, many exercise clubs have suffered a drop in membership numbers in recent years. There seems to be an overall trend for people to want more flexibility and to feel less able to commit to the regular participation that clubs often require. In addition, people do not always want to follow the rigid rules and traditions that are sometimes part of clubs.

- Other explanations include the possibility that, in recent years, the work–life balance has shifted for many Australians to the point where work consumes a greater proportion of their time. The changing nature of the workplace also means that many people do not necessarily work in the traditional Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm structure.

- One exercise club that is bucking the trend of falling membership numbers is the Bondi Icebergs Winter Swimming Club. The club began in 1929 as a way for local lifesavers to maintain their fitness and swimming capabilities during the winter months. Membership has climbed in recent years, as the clubhouse has been extensively renovated and membership has become fashionable. Growth spiked in 1994 when women were allowed to join the previously men only club, and it continues to climb in spite of the club’s rigid initiation expectations.

- Different levels of membership are available, but to obtain full membership of Bondi Icebergs Winter Swimming Club applicants must swim in club races three out of four Sundays every month from May to September for five years.
Cultural groups

- Acknowledging that sport and exercise have strong social and cultural factors underpinning them helps us to understand the reasons why cultural groups can demonstrate stronger affiliations to particular forms of exercise and have proportionally greater participation rates.

- Australia has a generally warm climate and according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 83 per cent of Australians, in 2008, lived within 50 kilometres of the coast. It is no surprise then that large numbers of Australians use swimming as a form of exercise. Other water-based forms of exercise, such as canoeing and surfing, also have higher participation rates in Australia than in most other countries.

- There is evidence to suggest that cultural approaches to exercise and sports participation continue when people migrate to Australia. For example, Pacific Islander peoples have proportionally high rates of participation in the rugby codes, while gymnastics participation rates are proportionally higher among Australians with an eastern European family background. In many cases, participating in forms of exercise and sport in Australia that are similar to those in the home country provides a feeling of connection, both to the home country and with other migrants from that country.
Advertising and promotion

- How do you know who to believe?
- Navigating effectively through the volume of advertising and promotion for fitness products, services and facilities requires a relatively high degree of skill. While much advertising is ethical and informative, some techniques that are used and claims that are made can be misleading or even false. Fitness products can also be faulty or potentially dangerous.
- Knowledge is an advantage. However, for those people who do not have extensive knowledge and experience in the fitness area, it is important that they access sound advice from qualified and reliable sources. Some useful strategies to help navigate through the maze of fitness advertising and promotion include:
Critical literacy—

- developing critical literacy skills is valuable
- these skills can be applied effectively to a broad range of contexts, including fitness.
- skills involve analysing images and text with a mindset that questions the key messages being communicated and examines exactly what the person or company putting out the message might be trying to achieve.
- helps people to avoid simply accepting what they are being told without question.

Questioning—

- placing your fitness, health and wellbeing in the hands of a fitness leader, product or service involves a high level of trust.
- The potential for negative outcomes, such as injury, are real.
- it is appropriate to ask many questions and expect them to be answered satisfactorily.
Checking credentials—

- may include asking a personal trainer to provide evidence of their formal qualifications, checking that a gymnasium and its staff are accredited with a reputable professional body such as Fitness Australia, reading research supporting or questioning the safety and validity of a particular product or activity, and investigating by using tools such as the internet and mass media.

Seeking references from reliable sources—

- if you are interested in a particular fitness product, service or facility it can be useful to ask people who have used it, especially family or friends, about their experiences.

- It is important to be aware, that although family and friends are likely to be genuine in their appraisal they may or may not have the knowledge, skills and experience to provide you with an informed view.
promotional techniques, eg direct marketing, limited offer memberships

- The fitness industry has been known to prey on the insecurities of its potential clients. Promises of amazing results achieved in ridiculously short time frames appeal to many people. Despite most people understanding at a cognitive level that fitness gains are experienced gradually over a sustained period of regular physical effort, there is a small part of many people that wants to believe that a product or service exists that can provide instant results.

- The fitness industry uses strategies that have proven successful in other commercial industries. Some examples of these strategies include:

  The free fitness assessment—
  - This promotion provides an opportunity for people to receive personalised health information that will enable them to make informed decisions about what they might need to do to enhance their fitness levels.
  - The provider of this promotion clearly hopes that the person will choose to access support from them in helping to meet these fitness needs.
The free trial—

- this promotion invites people to use the gym for a limited period or receive a personal training session at no cost.
- It is based on the principle of try-before-you-buy.
- One purpose behind this strategy is for the provider to be able to demonstrate the quality of the facilities and service they can provide.

Of equal or perhaps greater importance is the opportunity to engage in a one-to-one sales opportunity with a potential client whom they might not normally have been aware of and to have access to their personal details for future marketing purposes. The free trial nearly always requires the individual to complete an information form and to meet with a sales consultant.
The celebrity endorsement—

- **Celebrities who may hold some appeal for the target audience can be effectively used to endorse a product.**

- **People show an increased willingness to commit to a product or service when a celebrity who they admire, respect, believe or want to be like endorses that product or service.**

- **Infomercials use celebrities to sell fitness equipment, and celebrity fitness DVDs are big business.**

- Perhaps one of the most effective strategies used to increase gym memberships has been the inclusion of childcare services in the gym. Providing this service made it possible, in a practical sense, for a completely new market to tap into the services provided by gyms.

- Many mothers of young children are at home some or all days of the week and they place a high priority on their fitness, health and wellbeing. Without childcare support, it would be next to impossible for them to access the gym. With childcare being available onsite during the time that they work out, usually between 9 am and 12 pm, this niche market has provided a significant revenue stream for gyms at a time of the day when previously they were often unused.
There is a basic expectation that information provided to consumers will be accurate. This expectation is enshrined in legislation and supported in NSW by the Office of Fair Trading, which safeguards the rights of consumers and advises businesses on fair and ethical trading.

All consumers are protected from false and misleading advertising under the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act 1974 and NSW Fair Trading Act 1987. Under these Acts, consumers have the legal right to receive accurate information about products and services they want to purchase without being lied to or misled.

A number of relevant industry-related mechanisms are also in place that promote the provision of accurate information, such as self-regulation through the Advertising Standards Bureau and the Fitness Australia Code of Ethics. The Fitness Australia Code of Ethics provides explicit guidance around advertising under its Professional Integrity section, as shown below.

‘Fitness professionals may advertise in connection with their professional practice if the advertising is not false, not misleading or deceptive or likely to mislead or deceive, is not vulgar or sensational, and does not claim or imply superiority of the fitness professional over any or all other fitness professionals. The advertisement for the fitness professional may contain a statement of the areas of expertise in practice.’

While legislation, self-regulation and codes of ethics are useful strategies for protecting people from false or misleading advertising, individuals also need to recognise the role that they must play in adequately researching and critically analysing advertising.
Ethics are important in any industry. However, it would be naive to assume that all or even most commercial organisations always advertise ethically. In the fitness industry, some gymnasiums have been in the media and in the courts over difficulties that some people have experienced with their membership and unethical promotion tactics.

Problems have included significant penalty costs incurred when ending long-term gym membership contracts, particularly when the penalty was not explicitly advertised prior to signing the contract; hiding information about penalties in the fine print of a lengthy contract and urging the client to sign quickly to benefit from the current sale promotion on offer or to avoid an imminent fee increase.

Another unethical advertising practice is to make exaggerated or unproven claims. Some advertisers sell programs that promise weight loss and fitness while ‘eating all the food you like and not getting hot and sweaty with exercise’.

All providers of fitness-related services and products must meet general business regulations regarding advertising standards. Ethical advertising is encouraged and self-regulation is in place through industry-related and advertising codes of ethics. However, providers are really only obliged to advertise as ethically as the law requires them to.
The Advertising Standards Bureau

The Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) administers a national system of advertising self-regulation through the Advertising Standards Board and the Advertising Claims Board. Using a system of self-regulation is based on the premise that advertisers share a common interest in promoting consumer confidence in and respect for general standards of advertising. The Advertising Standards Board provides a free public service of complaint resolution in which it makes determinations on complaints about advertising in relation to issues such as the use of language, portrayals of discrimination, portrayals of violence, sex/sexuality/nudity, health and safety, concern for children and marketing of food and beverages to children. The Advertising Claims Board provides a complaint resolution service and determines complaints involving issues of truth, accuracy and legality of advertising.

A Code of Ethics prescribed by the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) is used as the basis for making determinations about complaints.
Motivators and barriers to participation

Why is it that some people are able to exercise regularly, while others cannot? People today are generally aware of the benefits of physical activity, and many enjoy participating in physical activity. Yet a large number of these people find it difficult to adhere to a regular exercise regimen because of a range of real or perceived barriers.

They include:

- lack of time
- lack of access to suitable child care
- commitments to household duties
- lack of money
- lack of access to transport
- restrictions due to disability, injury or illness
- lack of facilities
- work commitments
- lack of self-efficacy (belief that one has the required skill or fitness to perform physical activity).
Are these genuine barriers or merely convenient reasons to avoid exercising? Those individuals who place a high priority on exercise would say that there are no barriers to exercise other than illness or injury.

Let’s look at these barriers to see whether they stand up to scrutiny.

Many Australians say they have no time to exercise, yet watch two to three hours of television a day. Is the barrier to physical activity really lack of time or just lack of motivation?

To be motivated to exercise, individuals need to feel that they will be rewarded for doing so. These rewards could include:

- **physical consequences**—perceiving that you look better or are healthier after completing an exercise program
- **extrinsic (external) rewards**—receiving praise and encouragement from others, such as receiving a T-shirt for achieving a goal or when joining a fitness centre
- **intrinsic (internal) rewards**—achieving a feeling of accomplishment or gratification after attaining a personal goal.
Some individuals who are inactive may not even contemplate taking up physical activity or they may be contemplating it but lack the motivation to begin. Recognising the benefits of regular exercise can help to provide this motivation. Inactive individuals need to change their thinking if they are to come to the decision to exercise and put that decision into practice. Once individuals start an exercise program, they need to receive constant rewards and achieve personal goals in order to maintain regular exercise habits.

Often people find it difficult to become motivated to consider exercising without ongoing encouragement. For this reason, many people join a club or fitness centre, decide to exercise with a friend or use the services of a personal trainer to help motivate them to commence or maintain regular exercise.
Figure 15.14  Participation in selected sports and physical recreation activities, persons aged 15 years and over

Relates to persons aged 15 years and over who participated in sports or physical recreation as a player at least once during the 12 months prior to interview in the 2005–06 survey

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Participation in Sports and Physical Recreation, Australia (4177.0), Year Book Australia 2008
access to facilities

- If an individual cannot travel to and from a particular exercise facility, it is highly unlikely that that person will continue to use that facility. Transport is a major barrier for adolescents, who often must rely on parents/carers or public transport to travel to venues. Commercial and community facilities need to be conveniently located to public transport so that the whole community benefits.

- Local councils can have a major role in promoting physical activity by decentralising facilities, developing a network of cycleways close to sporting and recreational facilities and providing pleasant, conveniently located facilities. Facilities also need to be accessible for individuals who have an injury or disability. Disabled parking, wheelchair access and programs catering for minority groups within the community are effective ways to make exercise accessible to everyone in the community.
For individuals who have decided to exercise, fundamental priorities are finding convenient locations and times to exercise. Most people with little spare time will not want to spend an excessive amount of time travelling to a specific location to exercise. The facilities near a person’s home or workplace will have a direct influence on the activities in which that person chooses to participate. It may be that the only fitness centre or facility providing the person’s chosen activity is 20 minutes from home and the person may not have time to travel there to exercise.

Other people may be close to a facility that provides an exercise of their choice, but the times offered do not fit in with their work and family commitments. In these circumstances, individuals might have to choose an alternative activity or exercise at home. They may, for example, set up a home gym. Some parents/carers may be considering attending a gym with their child, but decide to buy an exercise bike so that they and their child can exercise at a time that is convenient to them.

Many people choose to exercise at work in a corporate fitness centre or to run, swim or walk in their lunchtime. Obviously, exercising at lunchtime or before work is only possible if the place of employment offers shower facilities.
Many people base their exercise choice on cost. Although walking may appear to be free, it does require an individual to purchase appropriate footwear. Someone may have swimwear, but may not be able to afford to swim regularly at a local pool that charges an entry fee. If we choose to cycle for exercise, initially we have to purchase a bike and helmet. Many people in the community might like to participate in the range of activities available at fitness centres, but cannot afford to pay the membership fees, or even attend on a casual basis. Even to be involved in many team sports is costly.

The Participation in Selected Sport and Physical Recreation survey conducted in 2005–06 noted that aerobics and fitness activities were the second most popular physical activity for both males and females aged over 15 years of age; walking was the most popular. This survey also found that households spent, on average, $15.70 per week on sports and physical recreation products. This amount was divided equally between equipment costs (such as swimming pools and footwear) and services (such as sports facility hire charges and health and fitness studio charges).
feelings about fitness and exercise

- A person’s feelings about fitness and exercise can determine whether he or she is motivated to participate or discouraged from doing so. Some people prefer to train alone or under the direction of a personal trainer, while others prefer the encouragement provided by a friend or training buddy. What will motivate each person needs to be established at the start of the exercise program.

- Many individuals have a negative feeling about exercise. They may find it unpleasant. For instance, they may regard it as boring or embarrassing. Such negative feelings and attitudes towards exercise could be the result of an individual’s past experiences or they may be associated with the person’s self-esteem and self-efficacy.

- Many people who are overweight or unhappy with their physical appearance or physical abilities will not even contemplate exercising due to embarrassment or concern about how they may be perceived in public. Negative thoughts such as these prevent people from considering exercise, although they may be aware of the benefits of exercise or have been advised to exercise to improve their health. These feelings towards exercise act as a barrier to making a positive lifestyle change.

- Ensuring exercise programs reflect the feelings and needs of individuals will provide a motivation to continue. Negative attitudes can develop if programs offer little enjoyment or are beyond the physical limits of the participant.

- Individuals who dislike or fear exercise need to be supported in their choice of activity and should also be educated about the appropriate way for them to start an exercise program. Understanding that exercise doesn’t have to be an unpleasant experience and that there are a range of activities from which they can select can be the first step to changing negative feelings towards exercise and establishing positive lifestyle habits.
exercise as a priority

- If individuals were asked to write a list of the top 10 priorities in life, some would rate exercise among the top five on their list, while for others exercise would not even make the list. The priority we place on exercise is influenced by a range of factors and may even change throughout our life, as changes in our personal circumstances have an influence on our lifestyle.

- Exercise can become a priority when an individual has a specific goal. A person may want to lose weight after having a child, enter the City-to-Surf race, lower blood pressure or maintain social contacts. For other individuals, exercise is an ongoing priority. They make sure they exercise on a daily basis, regardless of any barriers.

- Many people would like to place exercise high on their list of priorities, but include it in their lifestyle only after all other priorities are met. An individual’s responsibilities in relation to family and work are usually high on that person’s list of priorities. After they have fulfilled these commitments, most people indicate that there is little time left for exercise. Unfortunately, the time that is left for ‘leisure’ is often devoted to watching television, with some studies showing that, on average, individuals watch two to three hours of television daily.
For many individuals, work and family commitments and other responsibilities are reported as being the major barriers to exercise. Work occupies an increasing amount of an adult’s daily life and parents will often place the needs of their children over their own.

Individuals who see exercise as a priority will often attempt to find opportunities to overcome the barriers posed by such responsibilities. These people will set up an exercise program that fits in with their commitments to their work or children. Many people make time to walk or attend a gym after work on a regular basis to unwind after a day at the office. Some parents swim while their child has swimming lessons, coach a child’s sporting team, or exercise while their child is tutored.

Other demands placed on parents include the need to transport their children to various commitments or constantly supervise their young children. To assist parents of young children, many fitness centres now provide child-care facilities to encourage a broader clientele. Corporate fitness programs and facilities are also becoming more popular as employers recognise the relationship between employee productivity and providing employees with opportunities to exercise at the workplace.