

How to choose a Muay Thai Gym (17 Tips)

The art of Muay Thai has gained worldwide popularity for several reasons. 1) Muay Thai is a very realistic ring sport in which most parts of the human body may be used as weapons. 2) It is effective for self defense and hand to hand combat at close, middle and long ranges. 3) It is great way to condition the body and get physically fit. 4) Since Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) has become all the rage it has become accepted as the best method of standup fighting for MMA practitioners. For these reasons and more, gyms and schools that offer Muay Thai are starting to spring up all over the USA and abroad. But, which one is right for you?



Double Dose Training at Sasiprapa in Thailand

1) Authenticity - Is it real Muay Thai? Real Muay Thai includes elbows, knees, punches, kicks and the clinch as well as defenses for all of the above. Make sure it's Muay Thai not Tae Kwon Do or Karate posing as Muay Thai.



Four Generations of Champion Level Instructors at Double Dose Muay Thai

2) Experience - Look for an instructor with at least 10 years of Muay Thai experience. A couple of smoker fights does not make a Kru (instructor). How long have they been in business? A lot of gyms are opening and closing these days. The sad part is they usually take your money then shut down, leaving you high and dry.



3) Affiliation – Is the school an Affiliated in good standing with the World Thai Boxing Association (WTBA) or another well respected organization? If not, where did the instructor learn? A month in Thailand and watching some instructional videos or a weekend seminar does not make you an instructor.

World Thai Boxing Association Double Dose is the only WTBA Affiliate in the Inland Empire



4) Competition - Do they have a fight team and will they train you for Muay Thai competition WHEN you're ready? On the flip side, make sure they won't pressure you to fight full-contact BEFORE you feel ready.

Double Dose Muay Thai Fight Team Champs



5) Beginners - Do they offer beginning as well as intermediate and advanced classes? It's not a good sign if they throw you in the ring with fighters looking for "fresh meat" on the first day. Also, do they offer BEGINNING MUAY THAI classes? If they only have Kickboxing classes on a bag and Fight Team classes, move on. It's kind of a stretch go from working on a bag to sparring with pros.



6) Structured Program - A good program has a complete Curriculum including the drills, combinations and training methods to bring out the best in you. Are there clear-cut requirements for your progression? Do they help you to set realistic goals? If they expect you to run, skip rope, jump on a tire, and do crunches and push-ups while they kick you in the gut for an hour and a half until you puke before they teach you anything, it may be a good idea to find another gym.

Double Dose students showing technique for test



7) Knowledge - Do they have extensive knowledge of Muay Thai and are they willing to share it with you? If they don't teach you anything but the stance and the push kick for the first three months, you may want to look elsewhere.

Ajarn Bryan demonstrates an elbow technique



8) Sparring - Do they offer sparring as well as shadow boxing, Thai pad work, mitt work and partner drills in their advanced classes? Bag work is great for conditioning, but it won't teach you to fight. On the other hand, if you don't want to spar you shouldn't be forced to.

Muay Thai sparring



9) Boxing - Most modern Muay Thai instructors and Thai Camps agree that you should learn boxing as well as Muay Thai to have a good stand up game. If they don't believe in the "sweet science" they're old school Muay Thai and really in denial about what works in a real fight.

Ajarn Surachai Sirisute "father of Muay Thai in the USA"- holding focus mitts



10) Instructor Certifications - Do they offer a path to instructor certifications under the WTBA or another Muay Thai organization? Do they teach you to hold the Thai pads and focus mitts? While it's true you don't have to know how to hold pads to be a fighter, to be an instructor you must learn to hold the pad

Double Dose students graduate and move towards the goal of instructor



11) Wai Kru - Do they teach the Wai Kru (pre-fight dance)? Real Muay Thai fighters and instructors have to know the Wai Kru. You cannot fight in Thailand without performing the Wai Kru first.

Jessie Magusen Performing Wai Kru Ceremony Before a match- Team Double Dose Champion



12) User Friendly – Are the staff and members friendly? When you walk in the door does it feel like they have your best interests at heart? Do they really care about your progress or goals? If members or staff give you an attitude, that's not good because these sentiments usually come from the top down. Also, beware of programs that are eager to take your money but don't care if you ever learn proper Muay Thai technique.

Kru Jessie sharing wisdom with Double Dose kids class



13) Convenience - Do they offer classes at times that are convenient for you? Do they offer classes in the mornings, evenings as well as weekends? Can you choose which classes best fit your schedule? Do they offer fitness classes also? It can be expensive to have a gym membership and a Muay Thai membership.

Double Dose fitness Class uses real Muay Thai and a variety of exercises



14) Introductory lesson- Do they offer one? Value/Price - Compare the monthly dues with the offering. Be sure to look at the total offering. If you have a family, do they offer family discounts? Do they have a children's program? Do you get a student handbook when you enroll? Do they take attendance and keep you accountable if you start to slack off?

Kru Jose undefeated Muay Thai champion Teaching beginning students



15) Facility - How big is the facility? How many classrooms do they have? How many Muay Thai heavy bags do they have? Do they have a boxing ring? Do they have weights and other fitness equipment? Do they have a locker room? A Pro Shop? While the instruction is much more important than the amenities, these fringe benefits are nice to have.

The largest Muay Thai Gym in California –Double Dose Muay Thai



16) Cleanliness - Is the facility clean? Do they clean the mats every day? Beware of gyms that don't clean the mats every day. These places are ringworm central. It's no fun explaining those sores all over your body to your significant other.

Exercise on the mats at Double Dose Muay Thai



17) Following - If they have a lot of satisfied members and students, that's a good sign. They must be doing something right. If it's just a few guys banging around in a garage, there's probably a reason why.

Double Dose Muay Thai class in action

One Final Word of Advice

When choosing a Muay Thai School never be afraid to ask the instructor in detail about their experience. If they say they have 20 years of experience in Muay Thai and the details match, that means they have been in the game a long time and is a very good sign. But, if most of those 20 years are in Karate or Tae Kwon Do turn and run the other way. Many people will also claim to have extensive fighting experience and the same rule applies. If they indeed have extensive fighting experience in Muay Thai that is a positive sign, just make sure they are not including Karate, Tae Kwon Do or Kung Fu tournaments in their records, they are not the same!

Another thing to ask is if they are in good standing with their instructor. It is usually a sign of trouble when a student opens their own school without their instructors blessing. This could be a sign of disrespect and could be bad news for you. Why train with the student when you can train with the master. Find out who they learned from and make sure they are on good terms with their instructor/organization. If an instructor has to pad the truth to convince you they are “real” they are probably just another “wanna-be”. Real instructors with real experience will not have to pad the truth, they will have plenty of real accomplishments to share with you and will most likely do it willingly and humbly.