

Stationary exercise bikes allow you to engage in cardiovascular exercise without high joint impact and from your own home to boot. Kyle Krupa, doctor of physical therapy and certified strength and conditioning specialist (CSCS), says that compared to many other types of cardio machines, exercise bikes allow for minimal stress on the lower back, knees, hips, and ankles.

"Exercise bikes are also versatile in their ability to provide a strengthening workout against higher resistance or longer endurance workouts focused on cardiac output," Krupa says. The ergonomics of the bike, such as seat and handlebar height, can even be altered to minimize stress on the joints, he explains.

Exercise bikes are fairly complicated machines – and countless options are available – so choosing one can feel utterly overwhelming. That's where this guide to the best exercise bikes comes in. U.S. News 360 Reviews contributor Amanda Capritto is a professional fitness gear reviewer, certified personal trainer, and triathlete. Here, she shares her top picks for home exercise bikes.

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## **Best Overall**

## Schwinn IC4 »



### PROS:

- Excellent value for the money
- Comes from reliable, long-standing brand in cycling industry
- ✓ Dual-sided pedals
- ✓ Durable
- ✓ 100 levels of resistance
- Multiple handlebar and seat adjustments
- Compatible with multiple cycling apps

### CONS:

- No integrated highdefinition (HD) display
- Nonadjustable crank arm length

**Buy From Amazon** 

The Schwinn IC4 delivers exemplary value for a stationary bike, and it comes from one of the longest-standing, most reliable brands in cycling. For a list price of about \$1,000 (with monthly financing available), this bike brings a stellar suite of features. It has 100 levels of resistance and is compatible

with many popular cycling apps, including JRNY, Peloton, Tacx, Zwift, FulGaz, TrainerRoad, MyFitnessPal, Rouvy, and Sufferfest. The IC4 also syncs to Apple Health and Google Fit. Though you have plenty of options if you want to join a program, no subscription is required to use the bike. Instead, you can cycle without guidance or set your phone up in the media rack and stream workouts on YouTube.

In addition to the IC4's tech versatility, the machine is highly adjustable. It features multipoint adjustments for the handlebars and seat and dual-sided pedals, allowing riders to choose if they use clip-in cycling shoes or regular sneakers.

Some say the Schwinn IC4's seat is uncomfortable. It's much like a road bike seat, so padded shorts may be ideal for longer rides. Or, for boosted comfort, you can purchase Schwinn's compatible extra-wide seat.

Schwinn offers a generous warranty of 10 years on the frame, three years on mechanical parts, three years on electric parts, and one year on labor.

## **Specs**

List Price: \$999

**Dimensions:** 54.6 in. L x 30.7 in. W x 51.8 in. H

Resistance 100

Levels:

Buy From Amazon »

**Best Budget** 

# Sunny Health & Fitness Indoor Stationary Bike »



### PROS:

- Costs less than \$400
- ✓ Free on-demand workouts available
- Multigrip, nonslip handlebars
- Adjustable seat
- Transportation wheels for easy maneuverability

### CONS:

- Lower weight capacity than other options
- X No clip-in pedal option

**Buy From Amazon** 

Sunny Health & Fitness is a reputable budget-friendly fitness equipment manufacturer, providing some of the best low-cost home gym equipment. The author of this piece, Amanda Capritto, has tested and reviewed several Sunny Health & Fitness products and maintains that the brand consistently offers superb value.

This Sunny Health & Fitness Indoor Stationary Bike (Model SF-B1002) is unique in that it features direct-contact resistance, much like the mechanism

seen on indoor bike trainers that connect an outdoor bike's wheel to a metal flywheel. (The flywheel is the disk connected to the pedals by a chain or belt.) In the case of this bike, the metal flywheel makes contact with a thick leather pad.

You control resistance by tuning the resistance knob on the bike frame. This mechanism offers microadjustments, which typically make the ride feel more akin to outdoor cycling than defined magnetic resistance levels do. It also means you can easily take your workout from a relaxed recovery ride to a Tour-de-France effort in seconds. The downside is that direct-contact resistance mechanisms are prone to break down over time because of friction. Thus, it's likely that this bike will require more maintenance than a magnetic or air bike over its lifespan.

Considering the \$400 price tag – and that high-quality exercise bikes tend to retail for \$1,000 or more – expect to make some concessions with this model. For instance, this bike doesn't have a fancy display or built-in workout programs, although you can stream cycling workouts from any app on your smart TV or computer and position the bike to face it. It comes with all the basics, though, including an adjustable seat, adjustable handlebars, transport wheels, and toe cages for the pedals.

## **Specs**

List Price: \$399

**Dimensions:** 53.94 in. L x 19.1 in. W x 44.49 in. H

**Resistance** Microadjustable (no defined levels)

Levels:

Buy From Amazon »

**Best for Interactive Training** 

**BowFlex VeloCore** »



### PROS:

- Mimics outdoor riding with side-to-side sway
- ✓ Immersive touch screen
- ✓ Built-in JRNY cycling programming
- ✓ Dual-sided pedals
- 100 resistance levels
- Multipoint handlebar and seat adjustments
- Comes with Bluetooth heart rate monitor
- 3-pound dumbbell pair included

### CONS:

- X Short warranty
- **X** Expensive

**Buy From Amazon** 

For cyclists serious about indoor riding and making the most of every session, the BowFlex VeloCore exercise bike is worthy of consideration. It's one of the few stationary bikes that mimic outdoor riding with real-time

lateral leaning – that is, the bike sways side to side in conjunction with the route you're following via the JRNY app, a digital fitness platform that offers personalized classes.

Between the sway feature – which earned a 2021 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) Innovation Award – the mammoth HD touch-screen display, and JRNY programming, cyclists will feel like they're riding alongside coaches in the most scenic locations. JRNY features follow-along rides shot on location in places like Rome.

With a JRNY subscription (two-month free trial for buyers, then \$19.99 per year), riders can stream from various entertainment platforms like Netflix and Prime Video. JRNY also has a unique music component with playlists designed to match your heart rate during a session. There are high-energy playlists for sprint workouts, mellow playlists for recovery rides, and upbeat sets for endurance rides. A JRNY membership also gives you access to studio-esque, trainer-led workouts and a virtual coach. If you need extra motivation, this type of session can help you put forth your best effort in the saddle.

One downside to the VeloCore is its warranty. For such an expensive and tech-heavy bike, its warranty isn't as generous as you'd expect: two years on the frame, two years on parts, one year on the electronics, and one year on labor. However, this device's perks outweigh this drawback for many shoppers.

The bike lends itself to progression with 100 magnetic resistance levels and, with a JRNY subscription, access to progressive workout plans and in-depth data tracking. Your purchase also comes with an armband heart rate monitor to support tracking.

## **Specs**

**List Price:** \$2,199

**Dimensions:** 59.8 in. L x 24.1 in. W x 55.3 in. H

Resistance 100 Levels:

Buy From Amazon »

## **Best for Small Spaces**

# Marcy Foldable Upright Exercise Bike »



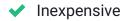
## PROS:

- Upright frame saves space
- Frame folds
- Wheels away when not in use
- Comfortable, padded seat
- Lightweight and easy to move

### CONS:

- X No built-in workouts
- X Lower weight capacity

**Buy From Amazon** 



Stationary exercise bikes aren't exactly known for being small. It can be tough to find one with adequately small dimensions if you don't have a lot of space to spare. This Upright Exercise Bike from Marcy, a well-known brand in the budget exercise equipment arena, is about as small as a bike can get while still providing an effective workout. It's inexpensive, too, costing less than \$200.

The author has tested the Marcy Foldable Upright Exercise Bike and notes that it's ideal for people looking for light cardio. This bike is a good match for beginners, seniors, and individuals. It features eight resistance levels, but even the highest option won't challenge very conditioned individuals.

However, if you don't have a lot of space and aren't concerned with intensity, the Marcy Foldable Upright Exercise Bike could be the perfect fit for your home. It's comfortable with a wide cushioned seat and multigrip handlebars. (The handlebars are fixed but allow for various grip options.) The seat adjusts horizontally and vertically via a single mechanism because the seat post is angled as part of the upright frame.

The upright frame is what makes this bike so small-space-friendly, but it gets even better: The frame folds and, thanks to the front-mounted transport wheels, can be stowed away when not in use.

You won't find built-in workout options on the Marcy Foldable Upright Exercise Bike, but you can stream workouts from an app or YouTube on your smart TV or computer and position the bike to watch them hands-free.

Surprisingly for the price, this bike comes with a two-year warranty from the date of delivery, which is on par with some exercise bikes that are pricier by hundreds of dollars.

## **Specs**

List Price: \$180

**Dimensions:** 34 in. L x 19 in. W x 44 in. H

Resistance 8

Levels:

Buy From Amazon »

## **Best for Beginners**

# YOSUDA YB001R Magnetic Exercise Bike »



### PROS:

- Great starter bike
- Relatively inexpensive
- No subscriptions required
- Heavy flywheel with magnetic resistance

### CONS:

- X No screen
- No clip-in option for pedals

**Buy From Amazon** 

- Media holder allows for workout streaming from any platform
- Adjustable handlebars and seat

This YOSUDA YB001R Magnetic Exercise Bike is a good midrange option for people who want to try cycling but aren't sure if they'll stick with it for the long haul. It's also a good choice for individuals interested in simple cycling workouts with the intent of maintaining cardiovascular fitness. It's certainly not for Ironman trainees or serious road cyclists, but it's excellent for those who don't want to invest four figures upfront.

With a reasonable price tag and a suite of essential features, it's an ideal starter bike. It should last several years, if not more, with proper maintenance, and it's not so expensive that an upgrade would be out of the question later down the line.

This bike has an adjustable seat and adjustable handlebars, flat pedals with toe cages (no clip-in option), and a dial for microadjustable resistance. The belt drive system is virtually silent during operation so you can use this bike in the early mornings or late evenings without disturbing your household.

While the bike has no built-in workout programming, it does feature a basic liquid-crystal display (LCD) screen that projects metrics like distance, time, pace, and calories. You can also place a tablet in the provided media rack to stream workouts from your preferred platform.

## **Specs**

List Price: \$510

**Dimensions:** 40 in. L x 2 in. W x 45 in. H

**Resistance**Microadjustable magnetic resistance
Levels:

## Buy From Amazon »

## **Best for High-Intensity Workouts**

# Rogue Echo Bike V3.0 »



### PROS:

- Air flywheel provides unlimited resistance
- Moving arms for fullbody workout
- Comfortable, cushioned seat
- ✓ Impressively durable
- Leveling feet and transport wheels
- Compatible with Bluetooth and ANT+

#### CONS:

- X No toe cages or clips
- ★ Clip-in pedals cost extra

**Buy From Murph** 

- Vertical and horizontal seat adjustment
- No outlet/electricity required for use

The Rogue Echo Bike V3.0 is for those interested in high-intensity, full-body cardio exercise with low joint impact. This is an air bike, meaning it utilizes a large fan flywheel that provides unlimited resistance. The harder you pedal, the more air the fan intakes and the greater the resistance.

In addition to the unlimited resistance levels, the Echo Bike – like all air bikes – has moving arms, which takes cycling from a lower-body workout to a full-body workout. For comfort, the Echo Bike features a wide padded seat akin to a beach cruiser bike seat rather than the narrow, hard saddles on road bikes. Plus, cyclists can take advantage of the 11 vertical seat post adjustments and five horizontal seat adjustments.

The Rogue Echo Bike V3.0 has a few preprogrammed workout options, including intervals' target time, distance, calories, and heart rate tracking, which requires a compatible heart rate monitor. That said, the console on the newest version as of March 2024 is equipped with Bluetooth and ANT+ connectivity, so riders can connect the console to their favorite cycling app if desired. (ANT+ is a technology that makes it possible for different wireless devices to "talk" to one another.)

This bike doesn't come with many features you commonly see on stationary bikes, such as clip-in pedals or toe cages, water bottle cages, and media racks. These items are available as separately purchased accessories, though.

The author has used the Rogue Echo Bike V3.0 countless times for endurance and CrossFit workouts and can confirm the moving arms make it a totally different experience from standard cycling. Intervals on the Echo Bike are sure to get your heart rate up and make you break a sweat, although the bike can just as easily be used for steady-state, low-intensity cardio.

# **Specs**

List Price: \$895

**Dimensions:** 55 in. L x 29.5 in. W x 53.35 in. H

**Resistance** Unlimited air resistance

Levels:

Buy From Murph »

## **Best Adjustable**

# NordicTrack S27i Studio Bike »



### PROS:

Features SmartAdjust incline and resistance changes

### CONS:

- **X** Expensive
- Subscription required for full functionality

- -10% to 20%
   decline/incline range
- ✓ 24 levels of resistance
- Rotating 27-inch HD touch screen
- Vertical and horizontal seat adjustment
- Vertical handlebar adjustment
- ✓ Gas-shock handlebar lift
- ✓ Dual-sided pedals

**Buy From Target** 

Those with a hefty budget and an affinity for versatility should consider the NordicTrack S27i Studio Bike. This high-tech, immersive indoor exercise bike comes with all the trimmings and then some. If you can swing the cost, you'll get an enormous 27-inch touch screen with an HD display that pivots for use off of the bike. That'll come in handy when you want to do a noncycling workout with your iFIT membership, which is required for the bike to operate to its fullest extent. Other than cycling, your options include strength, yoga, high-intensity interval training (HIIT), and bodyweight workouts.

This bike features hundreds of cycling workouts, from studio trainer-led sessions to scenic mountain biking and road biking workouts. When you stream an iFIT cycling workout, the S27i's AutoAdjust feature will kick in, automatically changing your bike's resistance and incline level to match the terrain on screen. With 24 resistance levels and a decline/incline range of – 10% to 20%, the dramatic changes improve your climbing fitness and descending skills.

The S27i features vertical and horizontal seat adjustments and vertical handlebar adjustments with a gas-shock lift that makes it easy to change your handlebar setting at any time, even in the middle of a ride. Plus, you can choose whether to clip in with cycling shoes or wear regular sneakers and utilize the toe cages.

The primary downsides to this stationary bike include the price tag of nearly \$2,500 and the fact that it's large and heavy. (It may be difficult for one person to move this bike alone.) However, financing is available for those who qualify, and NordicTrack makes professional delivery and assembly available for an extra fee.

## **Specs**

**List Price:** \$2,499

**Dimensions:** 57 in. L x 28 in. W x 65 in. H

Resistance 24

Levels:

**Buy From Target** »

## The Bottom Line

Choosing an at-home exercise bike can be overwhelming considering the number of choices available. Triathlete and certified personal trainer Amanda Capritto, the author of this guide, recommends the Schwinn IC4 as the best overall pick for its reliability, reasonable price, adjustability, and durable build. Ultimately, the best exercise bike for you depends on your needs, budget, and space.

# **Things To Consider When Buying Exercise Bikes**

**Frame Design:** There are three primary types of indoor exercise bikes: upright, recumbent, spin, and air bikes.

- "Upright bikes have a similar seat position and pedal alignment to a mountain bike,
  which is great for those who want a workout to mimic outdoor cycling," says
  Krupa. "They are appropriate for any fitness level. As for physical concerns, the
  upright bike seat can be lowered to decrease low back flexion, but the trade-off is
  an increased knee and hip flexion angle."
- "Recumbent bikes feature an ergonomic design with a recessed seat and full backrest, allowing users to pedal with an upright torso angle," Krupa continues. "This design reduces the strain on the back, hips, and knees [and] is beneficial for older adults or those at a beginner fitness level, providing a safe and effective way to improve cardiovascular health with less risk of injury. However, the seat could be slid forward to increase knee and hip flexion angles and mimic the demands of an upright bike."
- **Spin bikes** mimic the experience of riding a road bike outdoors, typically with your feet clipped into the pedals. This type of exercise bike typically has a heavier flywheel and provides a high-intensity workout that can be adjusted to various resistance levels, Krupa explains.
  - "Spin bikes are ideal for those looking for a challenging cardiovascular workout, including high-intensity interval training," he says. "They are well-suited for individuals at an intermediate to advanced fitness level. As for physical concerns, the spin bike requires the highest degree of lumbar flexion and can cause added stress to those with pre-existing low back pain and stiffness."
- **Air bikes** are another option. An air bike features moving arms, which turns cycling into a full-body workout. This type of bike is best used for CrossFitlike workouts or full-body endurance work.

**Size and Weight Capacity:** Measure your available space before purchasing an exercise bike. Air and recumbent bikes usually take up more space, while upright and spin bikes take up the least space, Krupa points out.

Also, consider how often and to what intensity you intend to use your exercise bike, he says; "It should be sturdy and well-balanced (not wobbling) during regular use. Do your research to make sure you are buying a bike that will last and provide a solid stimulus and training environment. A low-quality bike that wobbles, breaks, or is too loud can become a nuisance, turning you off from using it altogether."

**Resistance:** The main types of resistance among exercise bikes include direct-contact, air, and magnetic resistance.

### • Direct-Contact Resistance

- Noise: Direct-contact resistance is generally noisy since it uses physical contact (usually brake pads) against the flywheel to create resistance. The friction can produce sound, especially as the brake pads wear over time.
- Smoothness: The ride can be smooth, but it might not be as consistent as magnetic resistance because the physical wear on the brake pads can affect the feel and performance of the resistance over time.
- Adjustability: It's manually adjusted by turning a knob, which can be quick and intuitive. However, the range and precision of adjustability might not match that of magnetic resistance systems.

### Air Resistance

- Noise: Air resistance is known to create more noise compared to other types because it uses a large fan to create resistance. The faster you pedal, the louder the noise is, as more air is pushed through the fan.
- Smoothness: These bikes provide a smooth ride because the resistance is progressive, meaning it increases as you pedal faster and closely mimics the feel of outdoor cycling.
- Adjustability: Resistance adjustments are usually minimal, if at all. Instead, it creates resistance through pedaling speed.

## Magnetic Resistance

- Noise: Magnetic resistance is known for being exceptionally quiet because resistance is created with magnets and a flywheel. Therefore, there's no direct contact (friction) that could potentially make noise.
- Smoothness: Magnetic resistance can be easily adjusted, often through digital controls, allowing for smooth, precise, and consistent resistance levels.
- Adjustability: It's easy to precisely adjust resistance levels, making it suitable for users who want to track their progress accurately.

**Display Screen:** According to Krupa, "A clear display that shows workout metrics such as time, distance, speed, calories burned, and heart rate can help track progress." He continues, "Advanced models may offer integrated fitness programs, heart rate monitoring, and connectivity with different fitness apps."

The type of screen you need depends on your preferences. If you want an immersive workout and in-depth tracking, expect to shell out more cash for a larger display with connected fitness options. However, a simple LCD screen that shows typical metrics will suffice for basic fitness tracking.

**Pedal Design:** Exercise bikes either come with flat pedals (usually with toe cages), clip-in pedals, or both. Dual-sided pedals are ideal if the bike will be used by multiple people who don't all wear clip-in cycling shoes. With flat pedals, you can wear regular tennis shoes.

**Comfort:** "Your bike should provide a [strong enough] stimulus for you to see training results depending on your current fitness level," Krupa says. "However, the ergonomic design of the bike should match any injury concern you may have so that you can continue to train safely."

"Upright bikes offer a more traditional cycling experience; recumbent bikes provide extra support and comfort, especially for those with back issues; and spin [and air] bikes are ideal for high-intensity, calorie-burning workouts," he says.

**Features and Connectivity:** If guided workouts and progressive fitness programming are important to you, look for an exercise bike with connected fitness options or, at the very least, a bike with a sturdy media rack where you can place a phone or tablet. High-end exercise bikes typically feature a large touch-screen display that can stream trainer-led workouts, but a subscription is usually required.

An alternative is buying a cheaper bike with a media rack and streaming workouts from YouTube or an app with a lower monthly fee. Some brands, like Horizon Fitness and Sunny Health & Fitness, offer on-demand workouts for free through their apps.

Bluetooth connectivity is essential if you'd like to monitor your heart rate and/or listen to audio through earbuds.

**Warranty:** At a minimum, look for a warranty that covers three years on the frame and one year on the mechanical and electrical parts. More expensive bikes should

ideally come with longer warranty periods, covering up to 10 years on the frame. Note that budget-friendly equipment is usually not as well built and, thus, isn't typically covered by a generous warranty.

## **How We Chose the Best Exercise Bikes**

A triathlete and a certified personal trainer, the author Amanda Capritto began with her personal experience with various exercise bikes and equipment brands. She also consulted with two fitness industry experts for additional insights: Kyle Krupa, physical therapist and certified strength and conditioning specialist, and Pav Bryan, cycling coach with Humango. She considered customer reviews and compared product specifications, warranties, and company policies at varying prices. Other factors including frame build, adjustability, ergonomics, versatility, resistance, progression, workout programming, technology, size, weight, and portability came into play.

### WHY SHOULD YOU TRUST US?

The author of this piece, Amanda Capritto, is a certified personal trainer and a professional gear reviewer with years of fitness equipment experience. She's also an avid cyclist and mountain biker. She has used several of the exercise bikes on this list and many more from various equipment brands, including NordicTrack, Schwinn, Bowflex, Sole, Echelon, Peloton, Horizon Fitness, and ProForm.

## **FAQ**

What are the benefits of using an exercise bike? +
What type of shoes should I wear when riding an exercise bike? +
What are the best practices for using an exercise bike? +

### **About Our Team**



**Amanda Capritto** 

Contributor





Amanda Capritto is a content writer and journalist with extensive experience covering health, fitness, outdoors, and nutrition. She is a certified personal trainer, a sports nutrition coach, and the founder of Smarter Sweat, a fitness coaching business where she focuses on helping individuals reach their full potential in the outdoors.

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**Former Editor** 



Marlo Jappen Porto is a former editor for U.S. News 360 Reviews, focusing on home goods. Prior to joining the team, she was a researcher at NBCUniversal, where she gathered compelling and relevant archival content for live broadcasts. In addition, she has spent years working as an editor and community journalist.

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