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Best Rowing Machines of 2024

By [Amanda Capritto](#)



Reviewed by [Marlo Jappen Porto](#)

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Rowing is a cardiovascular exercise that engages almost all of the body's major muscles. About 85% of them, according to a study of collegiate rowers in [The Sport Journal](#). But, you don't need a boat and oars to reap those benefits: Rowing machines offer an accessible way to participate in this muscle-engaging exercise from the comfort of your home.

In this guide to rowing ergs, the author of this piece, Amanda Capritto, a certified personal trainer, shares her top picks based on years of rowing experience, hands-on machine testing, and consumer insight research. Additionally, we spoke to two rowing coaches for tips and insights.

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Best Overall

Concept2 RowErg »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Impressively durable and long-lasting build quality

CONS:

- ✗ Seat isn't cushioned

- ✓ Displays all standard rowing metrics
- ✓ Minimal maintenance required
- ✓ Includes built-in workouts on console
- ✓ Bluetooth-compatible

- ✗ Frame doesn't fold (but machine can be stored upright)

[Buy From Amazon](#)

The Concept2 RowErg (formerly the Concept2 Model D Rower) is the gold standard for indoor rowing machines. Most competitive rowers, rowing coaches, CrossFit coaches, CrossFit athletes, or anyone else immersed in the world of rowing would concur.

Mark Lance, co-head coach of the Morning Sweep Program at Capital Rowing Club in Washington, D.C. says that the Concept2 rowing machine is the norm in rowing clubs, high school and collegiate programs, and rowing erg competitions. This machine is also the current standard rowing machine in CrossFit competitions.

"It really simulates the feeling of rowing," says Chris Ives, head masters coach at the Pelham Community Rowing Association. He shares that the machine's monitor sets it apart from other models. "It gives you very tangible and reliable information."

The rower's monitor is a simple backlit liquid-crystal display (LCD), but it provides all of the rowing metrics you need: 500-meter splits, projected finish, time elapsed, watts, and more. You can scroll through various screens on the monitor to display the metrics you want to see. Additionally, the console comes with several built-in workout options, and you can program your own workouts into the console. You can also opt to work out in "just row" mode, which gives you the liberty to make your session as simple or complex as you'd like.

The Bluetooth-compatible monitor works with the brand's ErgData app, further increasing your workout and data options. You can also transfer

workouts to Concept2’s global logbook, where you can see how you stack up against other rowers, find training partners, and join periodic challenges.

Simple in nature but durable in build, the RowErg can and will last a lifetime if you keep up with regular maintenance (which is quite simple, consisting only of lubricating the chain with mineral oil every 50 hours of use and a full inspection every 250 hours of use). In fact, Capritto has seen much older models of the Concept2 rowing machine appear in second-hand marketplaces in near-perfect condition.

In addition to its reputation and ubiquity in the rowing world, the Concept2 offers an uncomplicated and top-tier rowing experience. This machine is lightweight (57 pounds) and doesn’t take up an excessive amount of space, yet it won’t wobble when you use it – not even when you perform all-out sprints. It boasts a 500-pound user weight capacity and a 90-inch monorail, which can support users with an inseam of up to 38 inches long.

The nickel-plated chain and air flywheel make for a sturdy adjustable system, though it’s noisier than magnetic rowing machines. The flywheel features 10 damper settings, which effectively act as resistance settings by manipulating the amount of air allowed into the flywheel.

After years of using the Concept2 rowing machine in various settings, Capritto’s only critique is that its seat is hard and can cause chafing at the tailbone, particularly during sprints. The seat is contoured, but not cushioned, so it’s just hard plastic.

Additionally, potential buyers should know that the frame of the Concept2 rower doesn’t fold; however, it can be stored vertically against a wall or broken down into two pieces for convenient storage.

Specs

List Price:	\$990
Dimensions:	8 ft. L x 2 ft. W
Product Weight:	57 lbs.

**Max User
Weight:**

500 lbs.

[EXPAND LIST](#) ▼

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Best Budget

Sunny Health & Fitness Compact Folding Rowi...



PROS:

- ✓ Inexpensive as far as cardio machines go
- ✓ Foldable frame
- ✓ Bluetooth-compatible
- ✓ Cushioned, contoured seat
- ✓ 16 resistance levels

CONS:

- ✗ A bit wobbly during use
- ✗ Short monorail may not support taller individuals

[Buy From Amazon](#)

While the author is quick to recommend the Concept2 RowErg to almost everybody, she recognizes that not everyone is ready to dish out nearly \$1,000 or more on a rowing machine. The Sunny Health & Fitness Smart Magnetic Rowing Machine (model number SF-RW522016) is a budget-friendly machine that serves as an excellent entry-level option for individuals who want to try rowing but aren't sure if they'll stick with it.

This rowing machine comes at a relatively affordable list price of about \$380, yet it offers most of the features that shoppers seek. For instance, this unit is Bluetooth-compatible and works with the SunnyFit app, a fitness app from the manufacturer that offers free rowing workouts (among other types of workouts). You can set your phone or tablet in the integrated device holder on the rower, play the workout video of your choice, and row with instructions from a coach right from the comfort of your home.

Capritto has reviewed this Sunny Health and Fitness rowing machine, as well as many other cardio machines from the brand. Her experience with the Smart Magnetic Rowing Machine model led to a couple of important callouts:

- Individuals with limited mobility should consider the seat height of this machine before purchasing. It sits low, at just 11 inches tall, so it may present a challenge for some people to sit down and stand up from it.
- The weight capacity is 250 pounds, which is below the industry standard of at least 300 pounds. The author found that this machine wobbles slightly during use, especially during hard efforts, and she weighs about 140 pounds (110 pounds less than the stated user weight capacity).
- Though it features 16 magnetic resistance levels, advanced rowers are unlikely to find even the highest level challenging. This machine is best suited for novice rowers and those new to fitness.
- The monorail is short, measuring 53.4 inches. (For reference, the Concept2 has a 90-inch monorail). This means that taller folks may not be able to reach full hip extension on the rowing machine, making workouts less effective and less comfortable.

With all that said, the Sunny Health & Fitness Smart Magnetic Rower is still a good option for the price. When it comes to home gym equipment, the old adage really does ring true: You get what you pay for. When considering budget models, especially for devices like cardio machines, consider how long you’ll want to use the machine. If you’re sure you’re going to continue rowing, you’re better off investing in a higher-quality piece. Otherwise, you’re more likely to spend more on maintenance or a new machine down the road.

One of Capritto’s favorite features of the Sunny Health and Fitness rowing machine is its comfy and contoured cushioned seat. It’s one of the most comfortable rowing machine seats she has sat on and, even during long workouts, users shouldn’t experience any soreness or chafing due to an uncomfortable seat.

People with small home gym spaces will appreciate that this rowing machine folds up to save space when not in use. The magnetic flywheel operates quietly, too, so you won’t disturb anyone in the next room while you’re exercising. This rower is lightweight at just 63 pounds and features mounted transport wheels, making it easy to move.

Specs

List Price:	\$379.99
Dimensions:	81. In. L X 19.9 in. W X 28.5 in. H (assembled); 37.8 in. L X 19.9 in. W X 53.5 in. H (folded)
Product Weight:	62.9 lbs.
Max User Weight:	250 lbs.

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[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best for Beginners

Aviron Strong Go Rower »



PROS:

- ✓ Integrated games make workouts fun
- ✓ Accessible seat height
- ✓ High weight capacity and max user height
- ✓ Quiet flywheel

CONS:

- ✗ Big financial investment
- ✗ Monthly subscription required for full functionality; iPad or iPhone required for streaming

[Buy From Amazon](#)

Starting a new [exercise](#) routine isn't easy. Boring workouts make it even harder. To make exercise a lifelong habit, it's important to find a type of exercise you truly enjoy and are excited about doing. That's why Capritto recommends the Aviron Strong Go Rower as the best rowing machine for beginners despite its steep price tag.

Aviron is a fitness company that makes gamified fitness products and workouts. Rowing on an Aviron rowing machine is like playing a video game;

time flies because you're mentally engaged with the task of the game rather than focusing on how hard your heart is beating or how badly your legs burn.

The author has reviewed the Aviron Strong rower and previous versions of Aviron rowers that are now out of production. Across all of these models, one thing remained the same: The workouts are a good time. Aviron's Strong Go Rower is the newest unit to join the lineup, and it comes at a much lower price point than other Aviron models. Why? Instead of featuring a massive, integrated touchscreen display, users mount their own iOS device (ideally an iPad) on the device holder.

Removing the integrated screen allowed Aviron to bring its interactive workout system to more people for a lower cost. If you already have an iPad or iPhone and are looking for a fun new way to exercise, this system could be the perfect setup for you. With an Aviron monthly membership (\$29/month or \$24/month billed annually), you can enjoy more than 1,000 workout sessions across seven categories in the app.

Aside from being fun to use, the Aviron Strong Go is a durable machine with impressive build quality. The frame is constructed from reinforced aluminum and it was designed with accessibility in mind. The monorail sits 10 inches off of the ground, so it's easy to step over; the raised seat sits 20 inches off of the ground to make it easier for individuals with limited mobility to sit down and stand up. With an impressive weight capacity of 507 pounds and a height limit of 6 feet, 8 inches, this rowing machine is suitable for most users.

One cool trait of Aviron rowers is their dual air and magnetic flywheel system. Aviron has managed to increase the strength training element of rowing, with the highest of the 16 resistance levels on the Strong Go outputting 100 pounds of resistance. While rowing in any form isn't a replacement for a resistance training program, the author, as a certified personal trainer, appreciates the additional resistance for individuals who struggle to find time for both types of exercise.

Finally, the Aviron Strong Go Rower comes with a 10-year warranty on the frame – one of the best in the industry – and a one-year warranty on parts.

Plus, if you’re not sure you’ll like it, you can take advantage of the 30-day in-home trial.

Specs

List Price:

\$1,599

Dimensions:

84 in. L x 27 in. W x 48 in. H (in use); 35 in. L X 27 in. W X 83 in. H (stored upright)

Product Weight:

105 lbs.

Max User Weight:

507 lbs.

EXPAND LIST ▾

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best for Small Spaces

ProForm Pro 750R Rowing Machine »



PROS:

- ✓ Folding frame saves space
- ✓ Can be used with or without an iFIT subscription (free 30-day trial included with purchase)
- ✓ Moderately priced, yet retains smart features
- ✓ Comfortable seat
- ✓ Quiet flywheel

CONS:

- ✗ iFIT subscription required for complete functionality
- ✗ Tablet required for streaming workouts

[Buy From ProForm](#)

For a moderately priced home rowing machine that offers smart features and is compact when stored, consider the ProForm 750R Rowing Machine. This rower offers users the choice between a simple rowing machine and a smart rowing machine, featuring an integrated LCD with 24 levels of digital resistance and the option to subscribe to iFIT, an interactive fitness app with a variety of workout classes.

To clarify: This rowing machine, unlike many ProForm cardio machines, doesn't require an iFIT subscription for use. This is one of the author's favorite things about the machine, as she doesn't like to be roped into subscriptions that she may or may not want to keep down the road.

That said, an iFIT subscription is required for complete functionality, including the use of the AutoAdjust feature, which automatically changes the resistance level on the machine while you're exercising. iFIT is also ideal for increasing accountability and enjoyment; fitness classes take the guesswork out of exercise and can be a lot of fun. Your purchase of the 750R rowing machine comes with a 30-day free trial of iFIT.

For individuals with small home gyms or those who exercise in a shared space, such as the den or living room, the ProForm 750R is a good choice

because it folds up for storage. When not in use, simply release the latch on the middle of the monorail and pull up on the handle. It'll fold, and you can wheel it to wherever you want to store it.

You'll need your own tablet to stream iFIT if you choose to subscribe. The machine includes a built-in device holder for this purpose. While some individuals might be bummed by the lack of a high-definition (HD) touchscreen display, this can be seen as a good thing: There are fewer things to break, and you can trust that the simple LCD screen will last.

As far as build quality goes, the ProForm 750R is run-of-the-mill, according to the author, who has personally tested more than a dozen rowing machines. It weighs 116 pounds yet only supports a maximum weight of 250 pounds, which raises a question as to its durability and longevity. Still, Capritto, who weighs about 140 pounds, didn't experience any wobbling or shaking when using this machine, even during hard efforts. For the list price of about \$700, that's exactly what she expected: Good, but not spectacular.

All in all, the ProForm 750R rowing machine is an appealing mid-tier option that's suitable for small spaces.

Specs

List Price:	\$699
Dimensions:	86.5 in. L x 22 in. W x 45.5 in. H
Product Weight:	116.6 lbs.
Max User Weight:	250 lbs.

EXPAND LIST ▾

[Buy From ProForm »](#)

Best for Quiet Operation

Hydrow Wave Rower »



PROS:

- ✓ Nearly silent flywheel
- ✓ Vivid HD display
- ✓ Sleek, modern design and strong, durable build
- ✓ Comfortable seat
- ✓ Hydrow membership includes a variety of rowing classes and other workouts

CONS:

- ✗ No defined resistance levels; drag setting can be confusing for beginners
- ✗ Hefty price tag

[Buy From Amazon](#)

Capritto has tested more than a dozen indoor rowing machines, and the Hydrow Wave Rower is one of the quietest ones she has tried. The flywheel operates almost silently, and any noise coming from it is drowned out by the

sounds of fitness instructors or relaxing international waters where Hydrow's Live Outdoor Reality workouts are filmed.

The Hydrow Wave rower is the little sibling to the original Hydrow rower, but it meets the needs of most people. It features a stunning 16-inch, full-HD touchscreen display, 3-watt speakers with amplifiers, Bluetooth connectivity, syncing compatibility with Strava (an app that tracks exercise), and a durable frame constructed from aluminum, steel, and anthracite.

Capritto has spent ample time on the Hydrow Wave rower and the original Hydrow rower, and she finds the experience with both to be similar. The Wave costs about \$1,700, which is a much more palatable cost compared to the original model's price tag of \$2,500. The Wave is slightly smaller and lighter in weight, making it more suitable for the average home gym.

What makes the Hydrow Wave so quiet is Hydrow's patented electromagnetic flywheel system. The flywheel utilizes electromagnetic currents to function, so the operation is virtually silent, especially when compared to a rowing machine with an air flywheel.

A unique feature of the Hydrow Wave is that there are no defined resistance levels like the ones you'll find on other magnetic rowing machines. Hydrow uses a drag system to better mimic the feel of on-water rowing; this is in line with their use of Live Outdoor Reality workouts filmed on the water in scenic locations and their featured coaches who are decorated rowing athletes and coaches. A drag system may sound confusing, but it's just a different way to measure how difficult or easy it is to move the flywheel.

The drag setting is automatically set at 104, which Hydrow says best mimics on-water rowing. You can adjust the drag, but Hydrow suggests leaving it at 104 and cautions that increasing the drag is not the same thing as increasing resistance. Don't worry too much about the drag setting or perceived resistance on the Hydrow Wave rower. Instead, focus on perfecting your rowing technique and getting a good workout.

Anyone who has used a Hydrow Wave rower can testify that it's an impressive machine. The build quality is excellent, and the design is sleek and modern. The display graphics will wow you; the author has found it easy

to become immersed in the Live Outdoor Reality workout sessions thanks to the beautiful scenery and HD display. In addition to these scenic sessions, the Hydrow membership, which is required for full functionality of the machine, includes studio rowing classes, strength workouts, and more.

The Hydrow Wave rower is certainly a big investment, but it will prove worthwhile to those who want a near-silent cardio machine that makes exercising feel fun.

Specs

List Price:	\$1,695
Dimensions:	80 in. L x 19 in. W x 43 in. H
Product Weight:	102 lbs.
Max User Weight:	375 lbs.

EXPAND LIST ▾

[Buy From Amazon »](#)

Best for Smart Features

NordicTrack RW900 Rowing Machine »

**PROS:**

- ✓ Stunning 22-inch HD touchscreen display
- ✓ AutoAdjust resistance mechanism
- ✓ In-depth stat tracking
- ✓ Bluetooth connectivity
- ✓ Access to progressive series with iFIT subscription

CONS:

- ✗ Heavy weight (163 lbs.) makes it hard to move
- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ iFIT subscription required for use

[Buy From Amazon](#)

After testing more than a dozen indoor rowing machines, Capritto argues that the NordicTrack RW900 indoor rowing machine is the best for smart features.

For starters, it's equipped with a stunning 22-inch HD touchscreen display, which streams any workout your heart desires, including rowing classes, of course, but also strength training, high-intensity interval training, [yoga](#), and more.

Upon purchase, you'll set up an iFIT account (subscription required, \$39 per month), which grants you access to all of these workout classes. Capritto is particularly a fan of the outdoor rowing classes, which are picturesque and immersive much like Hydrow's Live Outdoor Reality workouts.

The machine itself offers a luxe experience. Sitting on the RW900 makes you feel like you're in a high-end fitness facility because its design is so sleek and modern and the display is massive. The seat slides smoothly along the slide rail, with no catching, shaking, or wobbling during use.

The author's chief gripe with the RW900 is that the weight capacity is just 250 pounds, paltry for the machine's 163-pound product weight. If the Concept2 rower can support 500 pounds while weighing just 57 pounds, it begs the question of why can't the heavy RW900 do the same.

Otherwise, there's not much to dislike about the RW900. It boasts 26 levels of magnetic resistance and it has an AutoAdjust feature, by which the resistance changes automatically during workouts so you don't have to worry about doing it during your session.

This machine features Bluetooth connectivity and access to in-depth workout metrics so you can continually track your progress. An iFIT membership gives you more than just workout classes. You'll also get access to a global community, challenges and competitions, and personalized workout recommendations, as well as the ability to sync with Strava, Garmin Connect, Google Fit, Apple Health, and ActivePulse technology, which uses heart rate data to keep you in the intended workout zone.

With a list price of nearly \$2,000, some may jump back with sticker shock. It's true, the RW900 is not cheap. But, considering its advanced and valuable features, the author believes it's a fair deal. Purchases come with a 10-year warranty on the frame, and the RW900 is a machine that should last a lifetime with proper care and maintenance.

Specs

List Price:	\$1,999
Dimensions:	82 in. L x 22 in. W x 54 in. H
Product Weight:	163 lbs
Max User Weight:	250 lbs.

[EXPAND LIST](#) ▾

[Buy From Amazon](#) »

The Bottom Line

After years of rowing experience, hands-on testing of more than a dozen models, consulting with rowing coaches, and combing through customer reviews on dozens of rowing machines, the Concept2 RowErg stands out as the best rowing machine for home use. It offers the best value for the money, and it has stood the test of time, even in commercial settings. There are certainly other solid choices available, many of which are excellent and satisfy different wants and needs, such as the option for workout streaming. Ultimately, the choice comes down to your budget and priorities.

Things To Consider When Buying Rowing Machines

A rowing machine is a big investment for your health and fitness, particularly if you’re planning to opt for a higher-end model. To help narrow down your options, consider these factors.

Size and Maneuverability: One of the most important buying considerations, aside from budget, is space. Measure the space where you intend to put the rower, both during use and for storage. Measure for accuracy and compare your measurements

to the manufacturer's specifications of the product you're interested in. If you need to store the machine out of sight or in a different location when you're not exercising, look for folding frames or vertical storage solutions. Additionally, consider the weight of the machine and whether or not it has transport wheels. Some rowing machines are designed to be assembled and left where they are, for the most part, while others have purposeful designs that allow them to be easily transported.

Ease of Use and Setup: Before buying any cardio machine, it's a good idea to try and find the assembly instructions and owner's manual online. This will give you a good idea of how difficult or easy it is to set up the machine and how much time you'll need to budget for that. Pre-reading the owner's manual lets you know how much maintenance the machine requires so you can decide whether or not you're able to commit to it. Many higher-end rowing machines offer white-glove delivery available for an extra fee. This service involves professional assembly in your desired location. For larger, more complex machines with electrical components, white-glove delivery ensures everything goes smoothly and you're ready to row right away.

Resistance Mechanism: There are three main types of rowing machines: air rowers, water rowers, and magnetic rowers.

- Air rowers have fewer components and generally don't have defined resistance levels. Instead, they feature a damper that alters the influx of air to increase or decrease resistance. The user's effort level largely influences the resistance, too: The harder you pull, the more air enters the flywheel, and the harder the rowing stroke feels. These models are relatively noisy, considering that the flywheel is practically a big fan.
- Magnetic rowers utilize metal flywheels with magnets to alter resistance. When you change the resistance level on a magnetic rower, the magnet in the flywheel casing gets nearer or farther away from the metal flywheel, effectively creating a change in the resistance. The closer the magnet is to the flywheel, the more challenging the resistance.

- **Water rowers** use a fan flywheel in a tank of water to create resistance. Like air rowers, the resistance on a water rower is largely user-dependent. Some water rowers have dampers but, generally, the harder you pull, the more resistance you'll create. Also, you can alter resistance by changing the water level in the tank. More water means more resistance.

Resistance Levels: Technically speaking, only magnetic rowing machines have defined resistance levels. Air rowers and water rowers are more likely to have a damper setting. Simply put, the damper changes the resistance. At a minimum, look for eight resistance levels on a magnetic rowing machine. The more levels available to you, the more room there is for progression. The standard on air and water rowers is a damper with 10 settings.

Design and Comfort: Consider ergonomics when shopping for a rowing machine. The seat height is one very important factor that is often overlooked. A low seat height makes it more difficult to sit down on the machine and get up. A 20-inch seat height is considered ideal for mobility purposes, but it's common to see lower seat heights on lower-cost machines. Additionally, don't forget to check for features like seat contour and seat padding, adjustable foot pedals and straps, and a padded handlebar, if those features are important to you.

Additional Features: In your search, factor in considerations such as display, workout programming options, and conveniences such as device holders, fans, and tech specs. These days, most rowing machines are Bluetooth-enabled and connect to or stream some form of fitness programming. The more high-tech and interactive the system, the more it'll cost. For the most part, higher-end rowing machines require subscriptions for complete functionality of the machine.

Warranty: You should look for a warranty of at least five years on the frame and one year for parts. Higher-end models may offer longer warranties. Budget rowing machines typically have shorter warranties, with some not offering a warranty at all.

How We Chose the Best Rowing Machines

This guide to the best rowing machines is the product of years of experience with rowing ergs, weeks of hands-on product testing, hours of research and reading

customer reviews, and interviews with Mark Lance, co-head coach of the Morning Sweep Program at [Capital Rowing Club](#) in Washington, D.C., and Chris Ives, head masters coach at the [Pelham Community Rowing Association in Pelham, NY](#).

To select the best rowing machines, the author considered a number of important specifications that can drive customers to make a purchase, including:

- Price and financing
- Assembly and setup
- Size, weight, and maneuverability
- Storage options
- Comfort and ergonomics
- Flywheel and resistance type
- Resistance levels
- Workout programming and streaming options
- Smart features
- Value

WHY SHOULD YOU TRUST US?

The author, [Amanda Capritto](#), is an American Council on Exercise (ACE)-certified personal trainer, an ACE-certified functional training specialist, and a CrossFit Level 1 coach who has nearly a decade of experience with rowing machines. She has coached countless beginners on how to row on a rowing erg (mostly on the Concept2 RowErg) and has personally completed innumerable rowing workouts.

In addition to covering fitness products for U.S. News 360 Reviews (including the [best hiking boots](#)), Capritto is a professional gear reviewer and has spent hours performing hands-on testing of fitness products and exercise machines. This includes various rowing machines, from ultra-budget models to the most high-end ergs.

FAQ

What type of rowing machines are best for home use?



What are the benefits of using a rowing machine?



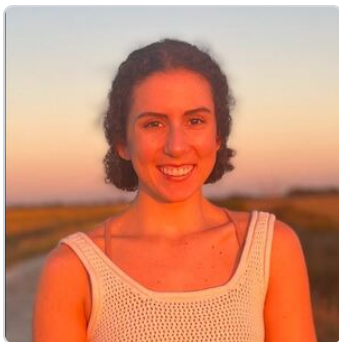
Are rowing machines suitable for beginners?



How do I properly use a rowing machine?



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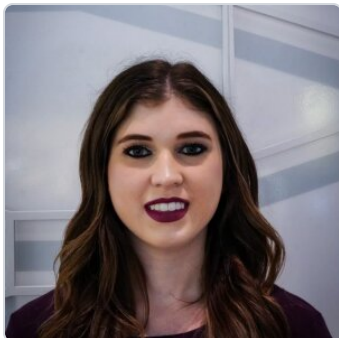
Amanda Capritto

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.

[Read more](#)



Marlo Jappen Porto

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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