

THE GYM BROS

A FULL ENGLISH LESSON PLAN

READING • SPEAKING • WRITING • LISTENING • VOCABULARY



ManWrites.com

The Gym Bros — ManWrites Fantastic Tales

The Gym Bros — Full Lesson Plan

*A Fantastic Tales short story and lesson plan, courtesy of
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Introductory Questions

1. Look at the title “The Gym Bros.” What kind of story do you think this might be?
2. Have you ever joined a gym or tried a new kind of exercise? What was the experience like?
3. Why might someone feel nervous about entering a gym for the first time?
4. How can other people make a beginner feel welcome in a new place?
5. Do you think first impressions of people are usually accurate? Why or why not?

The Gym Bros

Jason had been overweight all his life.

Not overweight, he was fat. That was a much more honest way of describing what he was.

He had always been like this.

Bullied at school. Laughed at in the street.

One time, he had been on the subway and there was a space free to sit down. But he knew the space was too small for him.

He noticed people sniggering and whispering to each other.

It got to a point where he just preferred to stay at home.

At least, if he didn't go outside, there was no risk of anyone openly mocking him.

But one day, he had been online — he spent hours online — and came across a post from someone who had been fat but changed their life.

Sure, he had read so many things like this online. Seen countless videos too.

“I just decided that I had had enough, so I changed my life!”

These people made it look easy.

Jason had tried everything.

All the fad diets.

Intermittent fasting.

Jogging and cycling.

He went to a spinning class once but felt so ashamed he never went again.

Nothing worked.

Every time he tried to make a change to his life, it ended in disaster.

He just felt the best thing would be to stay indoors. Avoid people and avoid the outside world.

But something about the post he had just read was different. This guy wasn't one of these modern-day gurus. He seemed like an ordinary person.

So Jason did something he rarely ever did.

He sent the guy a private message.

"How did you do this? I've tried everything and it all ends in failure."

The next day, he got a reply.

"It took hard work. And discipline. I had to completely change the way I lived. There were plenty of times I wanted to give up. But I kept going. It can be done. You just have to stick with it."

There was just something in the way the man expressed himself that took a grip on Jason.

If this guy could do it, why couldn't he?

The following day, Jason looked online for gyms near his home. He found one about fifteen minutes away.

The website didn't exactly fill him with confidence.

There were pictures of people lifting enormous weights. Men with huge arms and perfect bodies. Women in tight gym clothes who looked like they had never eaten a slice of pizza in their lives.

Jason looked down at his stomach.

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

He was about to close the website when he saw an offer.

FREE TRIAL — COME AND TRY THE GYM FOR A DAY!

He stared at it for a while.

Then, before he could change his mind, he called the number.

A cheerful young woman answered.

Jason explained that he had never really been to a gym before and wasn't sure if it was for him.

"That's what the free trial is for," she said. "Just come in and have a look around. You don't have to do anything."

That sounded harmless enough.

Somehow, by the end of the conversation, Jason had booked a trial for the following morning.

He put down the phone.

His heart was beating faster.

What had he just done?

Yes, he knew going to the gym wasn't enough. He needed to completely change the way he ate and the kind of food he ate.

But as the guy online had said:

"Going to the gym gave me motivation. It gave me a reason to continue."

Jason only had a ratty pair of old shorts and one XXXXL T-shirt. He had a pair of old sports shoes that he had owned for years.

But the following morning, he put them all in a bag.

And went to the gym.

The woman at reception smiled and pointed him towards the changing rooms.

"They're just through there."

Jason thanked her and started walking.

Unfortunately, "through there" meant walking through the entire gym.

He gripped his bag tightly to cover his fat belly and kept his eyes straight ahead.

To his left, a row of people were running on treadmills. Some of them looked like they had been running for hours and could easily keep going for several more.

Beyond them were the machines. Men and women pushing and pulling weights, their bodies moving with the equipment as if they knew exactly what they were doing.

Then came the free weights.

Jason tried not to look.

Big guys lifting enormous barbells. Women doing squats.

Dumbbells everywhere. Mirrors covering the walls.

He became painfully aware of every step he took.

His stomach.

His breathing.

The bag in his hand.

He was sure people were looking at him.

By the time he reached the changing room, his heart was pounding.

He pushed open the door and stepped inside.

For a moment, he just stood there.

He could still leave.

He could turn around, walk straight back to reception and tell them something had come up.

Or he didn't even have to do that.

He could just leave.

Jason looked down at the bag in his hand.

Then he found an empty locker.

He changed into his old shorts and XXXXL T-shirt.

He looked at himself in the mirror.

This was a terrible idea.

For several seconds, he seriously considered getting dressed again.

But he had come this far.

Jason took a deep breath, opened the changing-room door and walked back into the gym.

All the equipment was shining before him.

Some of it he had no idea what it was or how to use it.

There was a row of running machines.

He knew how to use those things. But he couldn't run.

Could he get on one and just walk? Maybe if he walked fast enough that was acceptable?

Then there were all the machines. The weights and racks and benches...

It all looked so intimidating.

And then there were the people.

Just a quick glance around and he could immediately see that most of them resembled Greek gods.

Perfectly chiselled bodies. Gleaming skin and toned muscles.

The men were handsome. The women impossibly beautiful.

Perfect teeth. Bright eyes.

They all looked so happy. So confident. So completely at ease with themselves.

Everything about them was a solid reminder to Jason — clear confirmation — that he had been dealt a very rough hand in life and there was nothing he could do about it.

By the weights section of the gym were three guys with thick arms and strong, toned legs. They all looked — what was the word? — ripped.

Yes, ripped.

Jason tried not to stare.

But one of the guys caught him looking.

For a second, their eyes met.

The guy stared back at Jason with no expression on his face. Then he turned to his friend and said something in a lowered voice.

Jason couldn't hear what he said.

His friend glanced over at Jason.

Then he smiled.

That was it.

That was all Jason needed to see.

He knew how this worked.

Next would come the whispering. Then the pointing and laughing.

Then the comments.

He turned and went back to the changing room.

He unlocked his locker and took out his oversized jeans and his huge extra-extra-large shirt with the food stains on the front.

Then he caught sight of two of the guys from before.

They were standing there, looking at him.

“Dude, what are you doing?” one of them said.

Jason shook his head. He wasn’t in the mood for this.

“Yeah, I know,” he said. “I made a mistake. I’m going.”

The other guy stepped forward.

“Bro...” he said, slowly shaking his head. “No way, bro.”

Jason stared at him.

There was something about the way he said it that made Jason feel even more uncomfortable.

Jason was sure they were making fun of him.

But he had spent so much time avoiding people that he found it hard to tell what they really meant.

“I said I’m leaving,” he said. “So laugh it up. I don’t care.”

The first man shook his head.

“Dude. No. You can’t go.”

His friend joined in.

“Bro, it’s not the way, bro.”

Jason stopped putting his old clothes back into his bag and stared at them.

“What do you want?” he said. “You want to laugh at the fat guy? Make a big joke? Go ahead. I’ve heard it all before. But if it makes you feel better to shame me, just do it.”

“It’s not that, dude,” said the first guy. “But you gotta go back in there.”

“Bro,” said his friend. “You have to do it, bro.”

The first guy gave Jason an encouraging nod.

“And we’ll help you, dude.”

The second guy nodded too.

“Bro. You gotta, bro.”

Jason followed them back into the gym.

They introduced themselves. Their names were Simon and Leslie.

Jason hadn’t expected that.

“We’re gonna take it easy, dude,” said Leslie. “Real easy.”

“Bro,” said Simon. “First day, bro.”

They started him on the chest press, using hardly any weight at all. Leslie showed him how to adjust the seat and where to put his hands.

Then they showed him a couple of other simple exercises.

Nothing heavy. Nothing complicated.

And whenever Jason tried to do too much, they stopped him.

“Easy, dude.”

“Easy, bro.”

“Okay, dude,” said Leslie. “Let’s finish with some walking.”

“Walking?” said Jason.

“Yeah, dude. Nothing crazy.”

“Bro. Nice and easy, bro.”

Jason climbed onto one of the treadmills.

Leslie took the one on his left. Simon got onto the one on his right.

They started walking.

Jason kept the speed low at first, but after a few minutes Leslie told him to increase it a little.

“That’s it, dude.”

“You got this, bro.”

Jason smiled.

Twenty minutes earlier, he had been terrified of these two men.

Now he was walking between them, listening to them argue about something ridiculous that had happened at the gym the day before.

For the first time since he had walked through the door, Jason stopped thinking about how he looked.

He stopped wondering who was looking at him.

He was just walking.

And enjoying himself.

When they finally stepped off the treadmills, Jason was sweating heavily.

But he felt good.

Really good.

Leslie picked up his water bottle.

“You coming back tomorrow, dude?”

Jason looked at him.

Tomorrow?

He had been thinking about surviving today.

Simon nodded.

“Bro. Tomorrow, bro.”

Jason laughed.

“Yeah,” he said. “I’ll be here.”

Leslie grinned.

“See you tomorrow, dude.”

Simon nodded.

“Tomorrow, bro.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the main character of the story?
2. What problem does he face in life?
3. What experiences from Jason's past show how his weight has affected his life?
4. What does he prefer to do now?
5. Why does he prefer this kind of life?
6. What does he see online?
7. How does Jason feel about the weight-loss videos he has seen online before?
8. What methods has Jason tried to lose weight?
9. Have any of these methods been successful?
10. What decision does Jason make after so many failed attempts to lose weight?
11. Why does this particular post seem different to Jason?
12. What does Jason do after reading this post?
13. Does Jason hear back from the guy online?
14. How does the man's reply affect Jason?
15. What does Jason look for online the following day?
16. How does Jason feel when he sees the photographs on the gym's website?

17. What offer does he see on the website?
18. What decision does he make?
19. Who does Jason speak to on the phone?
20. What does the woman tell him?
21. What does Jason book during the telephone conversation?
22. How does this make him feel?
23. Does Jason believe going to the gym is enough to help him lose weight?
24. What clothes does Jason have to wear to the gym?
25. Where does he go the following morning?
26. What does Jason do with his bag as he walks to the changing rooms?
27. Why does he do this?
28. What does Jason see as he walks through the gym?
29. How does this make him feel?
30. Does he think people are looking at him?
31. What is happening to Jason physically by the time he reaches the changing room?
32. What thoughts go through Jason's mind as he stands in the changing room?
33. What does he do after finding an empty locker?

34. How does he feel when looking at himself in the mirror?
35. Does he leave the gym?
36. Does Jason know how to use all the gym equipment?
37. What does he wonder when he sees the running machines?
38. How do all the machines and weights make him feel?
39. Which words does Jason use to describe the people in the gym?
40. Do the people in the gym seem happy to Jason?
41. What does the appearance of the people in the gym seem to confirm to Jason?
42. Who does Jason see by the weights section?
43. What single word does Jason use to describe the three men?
44. Does Jason make eye contact with one of the men?
45. What does the man do after he catches Jason looking at him?
46. How does the man's friend respond?
47. What does Jason assume after one of the men smiles at him?
48. What does he do next?
49. Who does he see standing in the changing room?
50. What does one of the men call Jason?
51. What does Jason tell him he plans to do?
52. What does the second guy call Jason?

53. How does Jason feel when the second guy talks to him?
54. What does he assume is happening?
55. What does Jason tell them both?
56. What does the first guy tell Jason?
57. What does Jason tell the two men?
58. What do the two men want Jason to do?
59. What offer do they make to him?
60. Does Jason take them up on their offer?
61. What are the two men's names?
62. Which exercise do Simon and Leslie start Jason on?
63. What do Simon and Leslie do whenever Jason tries to lift too much?
64. What exercise do they finish with?
65. Where do they do this exercise?
66. Where are Leslie and Simon in relation to Jason?
67. What words of encouragement do Leslie and Simon give to Jason?
68. How did Jason feel about the two men twenty minutes earlier?
69. How does he feel now?

70. What physical reaction does Jason have when he steps off the treadmill?

71. How does he feel?

72. What does Leslie want to know from Jason?

73. Does Jason agree to return to the gym the following day?

The Gym Bros — Story and Reading Comprehension Questions

This is the story divided into clear sections with reading comprehension questions below each section. This format might be easier for certain classes. You can find the model answers for the questions at the end of the lesson plan.

Section 1

Jason had been overweight all his life.

Not overweight, he was fat. That was a much more honest way of describing what he was.

He had always been like this.

Bullied at school. Laughed at in the street.

One time, he had been on the subway and there was a space free to sit down. But he knew the space was too small for him.

He noticed people sniggering and whispering to each other.

It got to a point where he just preferred to stay at home.

At least, if he didn't go outside, there was no risk of anyone openly mocking him.

But one day, he had been online — he spent hours online — and came across a post from someone who had been fat but changed their life.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the main character of the story?
2. What problem does he face in life?
3. What experiences from Jason's past show how his weight has affected his life?
4. What does he prefer to do now?
5. Why does he prefer this kind of life?
6. What does he see online?

Section 2

Sure, he had read so many things like this online. Seen countless videos too.

"I just decided that I had had enough, so I changed my life!"

These people made it look easy.

Jason had tried everything.

All the fad diets.

Intermittent fasting.

Jogging and cycling.

He went to a spinning class once but felt so ashamed he never went again.

Nothing worked.

Every time he tried to make a change to his life, it ended in disaster.

He just felt the best thing would be to stay indoors. Avoid people and avoid the outside world.

Reading Comprehension Questions

7. How does Jason feel about the weight-loss videos he has seen online before?
8. What methods has Jason tried to lose weight?
9. Have any of these methods been successful?
10. What decision does Jason make after so many failed attempts to lose weight?

Section 3

But something about the post he had just read was different. This guy wasn't one of these modern-day gurus. He seemed like an ordinary person.

So Jason did something he rarely ever did.

He sent the guy a private message.

“How did you do this? I’ve tried everything and it all ends in failure.”

The next day, he got a reply.

“It took hard work. And discipline. I had to completely change the way I lived. There were plenty of times I wanted to give up. But I kept going. It can be done. You just have to stick with it.”

There was just something in the way the man expressed himself that took a grip on Jason.

If this guy could do it, why couldn’t he?

Reading Comprehension Questions

11. Why does this particular post seem different to Jason?
12. What does Jason do after reading this post?
13. Does Jason hear back from the guy online?
14. How does the man’s reply affect Jason?

Section 4

The following day, Jason looked online for gyms near his home.

He found one about fifteen minutes away.

The website didn’t exactly fill him with confidence.

There were pictures of people lifting enormous weights. Men with huge arms and perfect bodies. Women in tight gym clothes

who looked like they had never eaten a slice of pizza in their lives.

Jason looked down at his stomach.

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

He was about to close the website when he saw an offer.

FREE TRIAL — COME AND TRY THE GYM FOR A DAY!

He stared at it for a while.

Then, before he could change his mind, he called the number.

Reading Comprehension Questions

15. What does Jason look for online the following day?

16. How does Jason feel when he sees the photographs on the gym's website?

17. What offer does he see on the website?

18. What decision does he make?

Section 5

A cheerful young woman answered.

Jason explained that he had never really been to a gym before and wasn't sure if it was for him.

"That's what the free trial is for," she said. "Just come in and have a look around. You don't have to do anything."

That sounded harmless enough.

Somehow, by the end of the conversation, Jason had booked a trial for the following morning.

He put down the phone.

His heart was beating faster.

What had he just done?

Reading Comprehension Questions

19. Who does Jason speak to on the phone?

20. What does the woman tell him?

21. What does Jason book during the telephone conversation?

22. How does this make him feel?

Section 6

Yes, he knew going to the gym wasn't enough. He needed to completely change the way he ate and the kind of food he ate.

But as the guy online had said:

“Going to the gym gave me motivation. It gave me a reason to continue.”

Jason only had a ratty pair of old shorts and one XXXXL T-shirt. He had a pair of old sports shoes that he had owned for years.

But the following morning, he put them all in a bag.

And went to the gym.

The woman at reception smiled and pointed him towards the changing rooms.

“They’re just through there.”

Jason thanked her and started walking.

Unfortunately, “through there” meant walking through the entire gym.

He gripped his bag tightly to cover his fat belly and kept his eyes straight ahead.

Reading Comprehension Questions

23. Does Jason believe going to the gym is enough to help him lose weight?

24. What clothes does Jason have to wear to the gym?

25. Where does he go the following morning?

26. What does Jason do with his bag as he walks to the changing rooms?

27. Why does he do this?

Section 7

To his left, a row of people were running on treadmills. Some of them looked like they had been running for hours and could easily keep going for several more.

Beyond them were the machines. Men and women pushing and pulling weights, their bodies moving with the equipment as if they knew exactly what they were doing.

Then came the free weights.

Jason tried not to look.

Big guys lifting enormous barbells. Women doing squats.

Dumbbells everywhere. Mirrors covering the walls.

He became painfully aware of every step he took.

His stomach.

His breathing.

The bag in his hand.

He was sure people were looking at him.

By the time he reached the changing room, his heart was pounding.

Reading Comprehension Questions

28. What does Jason see as he walks through the gym?

29. How does this make him feel?

30. Does he think people are looking at him?

31. What is happening to Jason physically by the time he reaches the changing room?

Section 8

He pushed open the door and stepped inside.

For a moment, he just stood there.

He could still leave.

He could turn around, walk straight back to reception and tell them something had come up.

Or he didn't even have to do that.

He could just leave.

Jason looked down at the bag in his hand.

Then he found an empty locker.

He changed into his old shorts and XXXXL T-shirt.

He looked at himself in the mirror.

This was a terrible idea.

For several seconds, he seriously considered getting dressed again.

But he had come this far.

Jason took a deep breath, opened the changing-room door and walked back into the gym.

Reading Comprehension Questions

32. What thoughts go through Jason's mind as he stands in the changing room?
33. What does he do after finding an empty locker?
34. How does he feel when looking at himself in the mirror?
35. Does he leave the gym?

Section 9

All the equipment was shining before him.

Some of it he had no idea what it was or how to use it.

There was a row of running machines.

He knew how to use those things. But he couldn't run.

Could he get on one and just walk? Maybe if he walked fast enough that was acceptable?

Then there were all the machines. The weights and racks and benches...

It all looked so intimidating.

And then there were the people.

Just a quick glance around and he could immediately see that most of them resembled Greek gods.

Perfectly chiselled bodies. Gleaming skin and toned muscles.

The men were handsome. The women impossibly beautiful.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- 36. Does Jason know how to use all the gym equipment?
- 37. What does he wonder when he sees the running machines?
- 38. How do all the machines and weights make him feel?
- 39. Which words does Jason use to describe the people in the gym?

Section 10

Perfect teeth. Bright eyes.

They all looked so happy. So confident. So completely at ease with themselves.

Everything about them was a solid reminder to Jason — clear confirmation — that he had been dealt a very rough hand in life and there was nothing he could do about it.

By the weights section of the gym were three guys with thick arms and strong, toned legs. They all looked — what was the word? — ripped.

Yes, ripped.

Jason tried not to stare.

But one of the guys caught him looking.

For a second, their eyes met.

The guy stared back at Jason with no expression on his face. Then he turned to his friend and said something in a lowered voice.

Jason couldn't hear what he said.

His friend glanced over at Jason.

Then he smiled.

Reading Comprehension Questions

40. Do the people in the gym seem happy to Jason?

41. What does the appearance of the people in the gym seem to confirm to Jason?

42. Who does Jason see by the weights section?

43. What single word does Jason use to describe the three men?

44. Does Jason make eye contact with one of the men?

45. What does the man do after he catches Jason looking at him?

46. How does the man's friend respond?

Section 11

That was it.

That was all Jason needed to see.

He knew how this worked.

Next would come the whispering. Then the pointing and laughing.

Then the comments.

He turned and went back to the changing room.

He unlocked his locker and took out his oversized jeans and his huge extra-extra-large shirt with the food stains on the front.

Then he caught sight of two of the guys from before.

They were standing there, looking at him.

“Dude, what are you doing?” one of them said.

Jason shook his head. He wasn’t in the mood for this.

“Yeah, I know,” he said. “I made a mistake. I’m going.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

47. What does Jason assume after one of the men smiles at him?

48. What does he do next?

49. Who does he see standing in the changing room?

50. What does one of the men call Jason?

51. What does Jason tell him he plans to do?

Section 12

The other guy stepped forward.

“Bro...” he said, slowly shaking his head. “No way, bro.”

Jason stared at him.

There was something about the way he said it that made Jason feel even more uncomfortable.

Jason was sure they were making fun of him.

But he had spent so much time avoiding people that he found it hard to tell what they really meant.

“I said I’m leaving,” he said. “So laugh it up. I don’t care.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

52. What does the second guy call Jason?

53. How does Jason feel when the second guy talks to him?

54. What does he assume is happening?

55. What does Jason tell them both?

Section 13

The first man shook his head.

“Dude. No. You can’t go.”

His friend joined in.

“Bro, it’s not the way, bro.”

Jason stopped putting his old clothes back into his bag and stared at them.

“What do you want?” he said. “You want to laugh at the fat guy? Make a big joke? Go ahead. I’ve heard it all before. But if it makes you feel better to shame me, just do it.”

“It’s not that, dude,” said the first guy. “But you gotta go back in there.”

“Bro,” said his friend. “You have to do it, bro.”

The first guy gave Jason an encouraging nod.

“And we’ll help you, dude.”

The second guy nodded too.

“Bro. You gotta, bro.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

56. What does the first guy tell Jason?

57. What does Jason tell the two men?

58. What do the two men want Jason to do?

59. What offer do they make to him?

Section 14

Jason followed them back into the gym.

They introduced themselves. Their names were Simon and Leslie.

Jason hadn't expected that.

"We're gonna take it easy, dude," said Leslie. "Real easy."

"Bro," said Simon. "First day, bro."

They started him on the chest press, using hardly any weight at all. Leslie showed him how to adjust the seat and where to put his hands.

Then they showed him a couple of other simple exercises.

Nothing heavy. Nothing complicated.

And whenever Jason tried to do too much, they stopped him.

"Easy, dude."

"Easy, bro."

Reading Comprehension Questions

60. Does Jason take them up on their offer?

61. What are the two men's names?

62. Which exercise do Simon and Leslie start Jason on?

63. What do Simon and Leslie do whenever Jason tries to lift too much?

Section 15

"Okay, dude," said Leslie. "Let's finish with some walking."

“Walking?” said Jason.

“Yeah, dude. Nothing crazy.”

“Bro. Nice and easy, bro.”

Jason climbed onto one of the treadmills.

Leslie took the one on his left. Simon got onto the one on his right.

They started walking.

Jason kept the speed low at first, but after a few minutes Leslie told him to increase it a little.

“That’s it, dude.”

“You got this, bro.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

64. What exercise do they finish with?

65. Where do they do this exercise?

66. Where are Leslie and Simon in relation to Jason?

67. What words of encouragement do Leslie and Simon give to Jason?

Section 16

Jason smiled.

Twenty minutes earlier, he had been terrified of these two men.

Now he was walking between them, listening to them argue about something ridiculous that had happened at the gym the day before.

For the first time since he had walked through the door, Jason stopped thinking about how he looked.

He stopped wondering who was looking at him.

He was just walking.

And enjoying himself.

Reading Comprehension Questions

68. How did Jason feel about the two men twenty minutes earlier?

69. How does he feel now?

Section 17

When they finally stepped off the treadmills, Jason was sweating heavily.

But he felt good.

Really good.

Leslie picked up his water bottle.

“You coming back tomorrow, dude?”

Jason looked at him.

Tomorrow?

He had been thinking about surviving today.

Simon nodded.

“Bro. Tomorrow, bro.”

Jason laughed.

“Yeah,” he said. “I’ll be here.”

Leslie grinned.

“See you tomorrow, dude.”

Simon nodded.

“Tomorrow, bro.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

70. What physical reaction does Jason have when he steps off the treadmill?

71. How does he feel?

72. What does Leslie want to know from Jason?

73. Does Jason agree to return to the gym the following day?

Essential Vocabulary

overweight	honest	bullied
sniggering	mocking	countless
fad diet	intermittent fasting	ashamed
disaster	guru	discipline
take a grip on	confidence	enormous
harmless	ratty	reception
point someone towards	grip	treadmill
equipment	free weights	barbell
dumbbell	painfully aware	pounding
locker	intimidating	resemble
chiselled	toned	at ease
rough hand	ripped	lowered voice
whispering	oversized	make fun of
laugh it up	shame	encouraging
chest press	adjust	ridiculous

Vocabulary Practice Exercise

Follow the steps below to help you learn and remember new words and phrases more effectively:

1. Write each new word or phrase in your vocabulary notebook.

2. Look up the meaning of each word in your dictionary. Write a clear and simple definition next to the word.
3. Create your own sentence using the word or phrase correctly. Try to make the sentence meaningful and connected to your own life or experiences.

Examples

Intimidating – *making you feel nervous or less confident because something seems difficult or powerful.*

Example sentence: *The gym equipment looked intimidating at first, but the instructor showed me how to use it.*

Encouraging – *giving someone confidence, hope or support.*

Example sentence: *Her encouraging words helped me finish the difficult exercise.*

Why do this?

Doing this regularly will help you improve all areas of your English — reading, writing, speaking, and listening. By writing definitions and making your own examples, you are actively using the language, which helps it stick in your memory.

Vocabulary Practice Exercise

Match each word (1–10) with its correct definition (a–j).

1. overweight _____
2. sniggering _____
3. discipline _____
4. ratty _____
5. treadmill _____
6. locker _____
7. intimidating _____
8. chiselled _____
9. ripped _____
10. encouraging _____

Definitions:

- a. having very clearly defined muscles
- b. quietly laughing at someone in an unkind or disrespectful way
- c. giving someone confidence, hope or support
- d. heavier than is considered healthy for a person's height

- e. making you feel nervous or less confident because something seems difficult or powerful
- f. the ability to control yourself and continue doing what is necessary
- g. old, worn and in poor condition
- h. a machine with a moving belt used for walking or running indoors
- i. a small secure cupboard used for storing clothes or belongings
- j. having a strong, lean and muscular body

True or False

Read the statements below and decide if they are True or False. If a statement is false, correct it and rewrite it so that it is true according to the story. You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

1. Jason has been overweight only since he became an adult.
2. Jason sends a private message to a man whose online post seems honest and ordinary.
3. The man tells Jason that changing his life was quick and easy.
4. Jason finds a gym about fifteen minutes from his home.
5. The woman at reception tells Jason he must complete a full workout during the free trial.
6. Jason considers leaving while he is in the changing room.
7. Jason believes the people in the gym are looking at him.
8. Simon and Leslie make fun of Jason and tell him to leave.
9. Jason begins with a light chest press and a few simple exercises.
10. At the end of the story, Jason agrees to return the following day.

What is the Correct Synonym?

A synonym is a word of similar meaning. Match each word from the story with its synonym from the box below.

Word Box: *numerous, embarrassed, huge, safe, worn, hold tightly, beating hard, frightening, look like, supportive*

1. countless → _____

2. ashamed → _____

3. enormous → _____

4. harmless → _____

5. ratty → _____

6. grip → _____

7. pounding → _____

8. intimidating → _____

9. resemble → _____

10. encouraging → _____

What is the Correct Antonym?

An antonym is a word of opposite meaning. Match each word from the story with its antonym from the box below.

Word Box: *underweight, dishonest, success, unusual, doubt, tiny, dangerous, full, light, uncomfortable*

1. overweight → _____

2. honest → _____

3. failure → _____

4. ordinary → _____

5. confidence → _____

6. enormous → _____

7. harmless → _____

8. empty → _____

9. heavy → _____

10. comfortable → _____

Words and Meanings

Match each expression from the story (1–10) with its correct meaning (a–j).

1. had had enough
2. ended in disaster
3. took a grip on Jason
4. didn't exactly fill him with confidence
5. through there
6. painfully aware
7. at ease with themselves
8. dealt a very rough hand in life
9. laugh it up
10. take it easy

Meanings:

- a. relaxed and confident about who they are
- b. became very interested in or strongly affected him
- c. go slowly and avoid doing anything too difficult

- d. had reached the point where the situation could no longer be accepted
- e. a short distance away in the direction being indicated
- f. make fun of the situation as much as you want
- g. made him feel less confident rather than more confident
- h. failed very badly
- i. given very difficult circumstances in life
- j. extremely conscious of something uncomfortable or embarrassing

Gym Bro Language

People who regularly go to the gym sometimes use informal words and expressions when talking to each other. Some are humorous and should only be used in relaxed situations.

Exercise One — Words and Meanings

Match each gym expression (1–10) with its correct meaning (a–j).

1. gains
2. gym rat
3. newbie
4. ripped
5. jacked
6. guns
7. boulders
8. bro science
9. spot someone
10. work in

Meanings

- a. muscular arms, especially large biceps and triceps

- b. someone who is new to the gym or to a particular activity
- c. to share a piece of gym equipment with another person
- d. improvements in strength, fitness or muscle size
- e. someone who spends a great deal of time at the gym
- f. having a very muscular body
- g. muscular shoulders
- h. informal fitness advice that may not be supported by reliable evidence
- i. having clearly visible, well-defined muscles
- j. to watch and assist someone while they lift a weight for safety

Exercise Two — What Do They Mean?

Rewrite each sentence in more neutral, standard English.

1. “Look at those gains, bro!”
2. “That guy is completely jacked.”
3. “I’m still a newbie. I don’t know how most of these machines work.”
4. “Can you spot me, dude?”
5. “Do you mind if I work in?”
6. “Simon practically lives here. He’s a real gym rat.”
7. “Check out the guns on that guy!”

8. “Don’t believe everything he tells you. Some of it is just bro science.”
9. “Leslie’s shoulders are like boulders.”
10. “That guy is seriously ripped.”

Exercise Three — Complete the Conversations

Complete each conversation with a suitable expression from the Word Box. You may need to change the form of the expression.

Word Box: *gains, gym rat, newbie, ripped, jacked, guns, boulders, bro science, spot, work in*

1. A: “I’ve only been coming here for three days.”
B: “Don’t worry. Everyone is a _____ at first.”
2. A: “I want to try this weight, but I’m not completely confident.”
B: “No problem. I’ll _____ you.”
3. A: “Are you still using this machine?”
B: “Yes, but you can _____ while I rest.”
4. A: “Simon is at the gym every morning.”
B: “Yeah, he’s a real _____.”

5. A: "Someone told me I must drink a protein shake within five minutes."

B: "That sounds like _____ to me."

6. A: "You've become much stronger since you started training."

B: "Thanks! I'm finally making some _____."

7. A: "That man has extremely well-defined muscles."

B: "Yeah, he's absolutely _____."

8. A: "Look at the size of his arms!"

B: "Those are some serious _____."

9. A: "His shoulders are enormous."

B: "Yeah, they look like _____."

10. A: "He has built a great deal of muscle."

B: "He's definitely _____."

Speaking Practice

Work with a partner. Imagine that one student is new to the gym and the other is an experienced but friendly gym member.

Create a short conversation in which:

- the new member asks for help;
- the experienced member offers encouragement;
- they arrange to share a piece of equipment;

- they use at least three expressions from this exercise;
- the language remains friendly and respectful.

You may also use lines from The Gym Bros, including:

“You got this, bro.”

“Nothing crazy.”

“Nice and easy, bro.”

“Take it easy, dude.”

Gap Fill Exercise

Look at the word bank below. Complete each sentence with the correct word. Not all words will be used.

Word Box: *discipline, confidence, reception, treadmill, equipment, locker, intimidating, toned, adjust, ridiculous, harmless, oversized*

1. Training regularly requires patience and _____.
2. The friendly instructor gave Mia the _____ to try the exercise.
3. Please ask at _____ when you arrive at the gym.
4. I walked on the _____ for twenty minutes.
5. The coach showed us how to use the new _____ safely.
6. I put my bag and coat in a _____ before the class.
7. The heavy weights looked _____ to a complete beginner.
8. Months of exercise had made his arms strong and _____.
9. You can _____ the seat so that the machine is comfortable.

10. They laughed about the _____ argument they had heard the day before.

Discussion Questions

1. Why has Jason become so isolated at the beginning of the story?
2. Why does the online post affect Jason when similar posts have not?
3. Do you think Jason has really tried “everything”? Why does he believe that he has?
4. Why is making the telephone call an important step for Jason?
5. What details make the gym seem intimidating from Jason’s point of view?
6. Why does Jason use his bag to cover his stomach?
7. How do Jason’s thoughts in the changing room show his lack of confidence?
8. Why does Jason compare the other gym users to Greek gods?
9. What mistake does Jason make when he sees one of the men smile?
10. Why does Jason expect Simon and Leslie to shame him?
11. How does the story challenge stereotypes about muscular gym users?
12. Why do Simon and Leslie insist that Jason return to the gym floor?

13. Why is their decision to use very light weights sensible?
14. How does walking between Simon and Leslie change Jason's experience?
15. At what point do you think Jason begins to enjoy himself?
16. Why is "See you tomorrow" an effective way to end the story?
17. Do you think Jason will return the following day? Why?
18. What practical things can gyms do to make beginners feel welcome?
19. Can kindness from strangers create lasting change in someone's life?
20. What is the main message of "The Gym Bros" for you?

Role Play: Jason Meets Simon and Leslie

This is a role play activity.

There are three characters in the role play.

1. Jason
2. Simon
3. Leslie

The Situation

Jason is getting ready to leave the gym because he believes Simon and Leslie are laughing at him. Simon and Leslie must persuade him to stay. Jason explains why he feels uncomfortable and why he expects people to judge him. Simon and Leslie reassure him, offer to help and agree on a simple first workout that Jason feels able to try.

Try to use some lines from the story itself, but you may also create your own lines. Simon and Leslie can use friendly, informal gym language such as “dude”, “bro”, “You got this”, “Take it easy” and “Nothing crazy”. Keep the language encouraging and respectful.

In groups of three, create a conversation that you can present to the class.

Take some time to prepare your role play.

When you are ready, show the class.

Debate: Do Gyms Welcome Everyone?

The Motion

“This house believes that gyms do enough to make beginners feel welcome.”

Option A — Full Two-Team Debate

Divide the class into two teams.

Team A — For the Motion

You must argue that most gyms provide beginner-friendly equipment, staff support, trial sessions and a welcoming community, and that people should not allow fear or assumptions to stop them from attending.

Team B — Against the Motion

You must argue that gym advertising, complicated equipment, competitive behaviour and a focus on perfect bodies can make beginners feel judged or excluded, and that gyms should do more to support them.

Preparation (10 minutes)

Each team should prepare their arguments. Think about:

- What might make a first visit to a gym frightening?

- How important are staff members and experienced gym users?
- Do gym advertisements show a realistic range of people?
- What changes would make gyms more welcoming?

The Debate

1. Team A gives an opening statement (2 minutes).
2. Team B gives an opening statement (2 minutes).
3. Rebuttal round — each team responds to the other's points (2 minutes each).
4. Closing statements — each team sums up their strongest argument (1 minute each).

The Vote

After the debate, the rest of the class votes on which side made the more convincing argument. The teacher can act as moderator and timekeeper throughout.

Option B — Simplified Class Discussion

If a full debate doesn't suit the class, the teacher can instead run this as an open discussion: pose the motion to the whole class, and go around asking individual students whether they agree or disagree and why. The teacher moderates, encourages

disagreement, and draws out different opinions rather than assigning fixed sides.

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

You are going to continue writing the next part of the story.

- Does Jason return to the gym the following day?
- How do Simon and Leslie help him with his next workout?
- What difficulties or doubts does Jason face?
- Does Jason begin to change the way he eats and lives?
- How does Jason feel after one month?

Think about all these questions to help you write the next part of the story.

Now write the story.

When you have finished, read it out loud in front of your classmates.

Or give it to your teacher for review.

Reading Comprehension Questions — Answers

1. Jason is the main character.
2. He has been overweight all his life and is treated badly because of it.
3. He was bullied at school, laughed at in the street and saw people sniggering when he could not fit into a seat on the subway.
4. He prefers to stay at home.
5. Because staying indoors protects him from being openly mocked.
6. He sees a post by someone who had been fat but changed his life.
7. He is sceptical because such videos make change look easy.
8. He has tried fad diets, intermittent fasting, jogging, cycling and a spinning class.
9. No. Jason believes that none of them worked.
10. He decides that staying indoors and avoiding people is best.
11. The man seems like an ordinary person rather than a modern-day guru.
12. He sends the man a private message asking how he changed his life.

13. Yes. He receives a reply the next day.
14. It takes a grip on him and makes him believe that change might be possible.
15. He looks for gyms near his home.
16. The photographs make him feel nervous and lacking in confidence.
17. He sees an offer for a free one-day trial.
18. He calls the gym before he can change his mind.
19. He speaks to a cheerful young woman.
20. She tells him to visit, look around and that he does not have to do anything.
21. He books a trial for the following morning.
22. His heart beats faster and he wonders what he has done.
23. No. He knows that he also needs to change how and what he eats.
24. He has old shorts, an XXXXL T-shirt and old sports shoes.
25. He goes to the gym.
26. He grips the bag tightly over his belly.
27. He wants to hide his stomach.
28. He sees people on treadmills, resistance machines and in the free-weights area.
29. It makes him painfully self-conscious and anxious.

30. Yes. He is sure that people are looking at him.

31. His heart is pounding.

32. He thinks that he can still turn around, make an excuse or simply leave.

33. He changes into his old shorts and XXXXL T-shirt.

34. He thinks going into the gym is a terrible idea.

35. No. He takes a deep breath and walks back into the gym.

36. No. He does not know what some of the equipment is or how to use it.

37. He wonders whether he can walk on one and whether walking fast would be acceptable.

38. They look intimidating.

39. He describes them as Greek gods with chiselled bodies, gleaming skin and toned muscles.

40. Yes. They seem happy, confident and at ease with themselves.

41. It seems to confirm that life has dealt him a rough hand and that he cannot change it.

42. He sees three muscular men with thick arms and strong, toned legs.

43. He calls them “ripped”.

44. Yes. He makes eye contact with one of them.

45. The man stares back, then speaks quietly to his friend.
46. He glances at Jason and smiles.
47. He assumes the men will whisper, point, laugh and make comments about him.
48. He returns to the changing room and starts taking out his old clothes.
49. He sees two of the men from the weights section.
50. He calls Jason “dude”.
51. He says that he made a mistake and is leaving.
52. He calls Jason “bro”.
53. Jason feels even more uncomfortable.
54. He assumes that the men are making fun of him.
55. He tells them that he is leaving and that they can laugh because he does not care.
56. He tells Jason that he cannot go.
57. He accuses them of wanting to laugh at and shame him.
58. They want him to go back into the gym.
59. They offer to help him.
60. Yes. He follows them back into the gym.
61. Their names are Simon and Leslie.
62. They start him on the chest press with hardly any weight.

63. They stop him and tell him to take it easy.

64. They finish with walking.

65. They walk on treadmills.

66. Leslie is on Jason's left and Simon is on his right.

67. They say, "That's it, dude" and "You got this, bro."

68. He was terrified of them.

69. He feels relaxed enough to enjoy himself and stop worrying about his appearance.

70. He is sweating heavily.

71. He feels really good.

72. He wants to know whether Jason is coming back the next day.

73. Yes. Jason says that he will be there.

True or False — Answers

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. True

What is the Correct Synonym? — Answers

1. countless = numerous
2. ashamed = embarrassed
3. enormous = huge
4. harmless = safe
5. ratty = worn
6. grip = hold tightly
7. pounding = beating hard
8. intimidating = frightening
9. resemble = look like
10. encouraging = supportive

What is the Correct Antonym? — Answers

1. overweight ↔ underweight
2. honest ↔ dishonest
3. failure ↔ success
4. ordinary ↔ unusual
5. confidence ↔ doubt
6. enormous ↔ tiny
7. harmless ↔ dangerous
8. empty ↔ full
9. heavy ↔ light
10. comfortable ↔ uncomfortable

Words and Meanings — Answers

1. had had enough = had reached the point where the situation could no longer be accepted
2. ended in disaster = failed very badly
3. took a grip on Jason = became very interested in or strongly affected him
4. didn't exactly fill him with confidence = made him feel less confident rather than more confident
5. through there = a short distance away in the direction being indicated
6. painfully aware = extremely conscious of something uncomfortable or embarrassing
7. at ease with themselves = relaxed and confident about who they are
8. dealt a very rough hand in life = given very difficult circumstances in life
9. laugh it up = make fun of the situation as much as you want
10. take it easy = go slowly and avoid doing anything too difficult

Gym Bro Language — Answers

Exercise One

1. gains = d
2. gym rat = e
3. newbie = b
4. ripped = i
5. jacked = f
6. guns = a
7. boulders = g
8. bro science = h
9. spot someone = j
10. work in = c

Exercise Two — Suggested Answers

1. “Your strength or muscles have improved considerably.”
2. “That man is extremely muscular.”
3. “I am still new here, so I do not know how most of these machines work.”
4. “Can you watch and assist me while I lift this weight?”
5. “Do you mind if I share this equipment with you?”
6. “Simon spends a great deal of time at the gym.”

7. “That man has very muscular arms.”
8. “Do not believe everything he tells you. Some of his advice may not be supported by reliable evidence.”
9. “Leslie has very large, muscular shoulders.”
10. “That man has very clearly defined muscles.”

Exercise Three

1. newbie
2. spot
3. work in
4. gym rat
5. bro science
6. gains
7. ripped
8. guns
9. boulders
10. jacked

Gap Fill Exercise — Answers

1. discipline
2. confidence
3. reception
4. treadmill
5. equipment
6. locker
7. intimidating
8. toned
9. adjust
10. ridiculous

Vocabulary Practice Exercise — Answers

1. d (heavier than is considered healthy for a person's height)
2. b (quietly laughing at someone in an unkind or disrespectful way)
3. f (the ability to control yourself and continue doing what is necessary)
4. g (old, worn and in poor condition)
5. h (a machine with a moving belt used for walking or running indoors)
6. i (a small secure cupboard used for storing clothes or belongings)
7. e (making you feel nervous or less confident because something seems difficult or powerful)
8. a (having very clearly defined muscles)
9. j (having a strong, lean and muscular body)
10. c (giving someone confidence, hope or support)

Credits

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