

C1-C2 Worksheet: Gym Goblin Fashion - 25 June 2026

Article

After years of polished matching sets and carefully edited workout selfies, fitness fashion appears to be loosening up. The Guardian has described the rise of the gym goblin: a deliberately unpolished look built around oversized T-shirts, mismatched layers, old trainers and vintage sportswear. Instead of trying to look flawless on the way to Pilates or the weight room, wearers seem to be leaning into comfort, humour and a just-got-out-of-bed attitude.

The trend did not come out of nowhere. It follows a broader backlash against the clean-girl aesthetic, where every bottle, outfit and morning routine appears curated for social media. Gym goblin style turns that pressure on its head. It says that people can work out without dressing like an advert, and that second-hand clothing can be more interesting than another expensive activewear set. Searches for vintage sportswear and retro brands have reportedly climbed, suggesting that nostalgia and sustainability are also part of the appeal.

Still, the look raises a bigger question about why gyms became stages in the first place. For some people, clothes are a way to show personality and feel confident. For others, fashion rules can put them off exercising altogether. If the gym goblin catches on, it may not transform fitness culture, but it could make room for a messier, cheaper and more forgiving idea of style. In the end, the most radical outfit may be the one that lets someone move without feeling watched.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The article says fitness fashion is becoming less polished and more relaxed.
2. Gym goblin style is described as perfectly coordinated and expensive.
3. The article links the trend to oversized clothes, mismatched layers and vintage sportswear.
4. The writer says the clean-girl aesthetic has no connection to social media.
5. Second-hand clothing is presented as part of the gym goblin appeal.
6. The article says everyone feels confident when gyms become fashion stages.
7. The final paragraph suggests fashion rules may discourage some people from exercising.
8. The writer argues that a more forgiving style could make gyms feel less judgemental.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. loosening up	A. do physical exercise
2. built around	B. appear suddenly without any reason
3. leaning into	C. become popular
4. come out of nowhere	D. based on or organised around
5. turns that pressure on its head	E. feeling that other people are judging you
6. work out	F. completely changes or reverses that pressure
7. put them off	G. create space or acceptance for something
8. catches on	H. becoming less strict or formal
9. make room for	I. discourage them from doing something
10. feeling watched	J. accepting and using something confidently

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. mismatched	A. perfect
2. deliberately	B. tolerant
3. oversized	C. not matching
4. flawless	D. reaction
5. curated	E. eco-consciousness
6. backlash	F. baggy
7. nostalgia	G. intentionally
8. sustainability	H. sentimentality
9. forgiving	I. bold
10. radical	J. selected

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. What do you usually wear when you exercise?
2. Do you prefer neat, matching clothes or loose, comfortable clothes?
3. Have you ever bought vintage or second-hand clothing?
4. What old fashion trend from your childhood would you happily wear again?
5. Do you think people judge each other's clothes at the gym?
6. Which matters more for workout clothes: comfort, price, brand or appearance?
7. Is the gym goblin look funny, stylish, lazy or sensible?
8. Do you own any clothes that are old but still better than newer ones?

Student B

1. Why do fitness spaces often become places where people perform an image?
2. Is gym goblin fashion a genuine rejection of perfection, or just another trend to buy into?
3. Can vintage sportswear make fashion more sustainable, or does it simply create new consumer demand?
4. Why do people often trust old, worn-in clothes more than new branded clothing?
5. Does social media make people more creative with style, or more anxious about being judged?
6. Should gyms try to feel less like lifestyle spaces and more like ordinary public spaces?
7. What does the popularity of messy style say about modern pressure to be optimised?
8. Is personal style most interesting when it looks effortless, imperfect or carefully planned?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=F, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=T

Phrase Match: 1=H, 2=D, 3=J, 4=B, 5=F, 6=A, 7=I, 8=C, 9=G, 10=E

Synonym Match: 1=C, 2=G, 3=F, 4=A, 5=J, 6=D, 7=H, 8=E, 9=B, 10=I

Example sentences with the phrases

1. Fitness fashion seems to be loosening up after years of perfect matching sets.
2. The new look is built around comfort and mismatched vintage clothes.
3. Some gym-goers are leaning into a messier, more relaxed style.
4. The trend did not come out of nowhere; it reflects wider fashion fatigue.
5. Gym goblin style turns that pressure on its head by rejecting polish.
6. People should be able to work out without feeling like models.
7. Expensive gym clothes can put them off joining in the first place.
8. A relaxed trend can catch on quickly if it feels honest.
9. Vintage clothing can make room for more individual style.
10. No one exercises well when they are feeling watched.