Components of an Aerobic Class

Aerobic classes are generally one hour in length. The warm-up segment should last about 10 minutes and be composed of limbering type exercises to provide a core body temperature increase. Warming up the muscles is of prime importance in preventing injury due to the fact that they are more elastic. Lower body stretching should then be done for about 5 more minutes.

Begin stepping using simple moves. The aerobic segment should last about 25 minutes and should increase gradually in intensity and complexity. All moves should be less than full range until full warm-up is achieved. Heart rate can be checked about half way through the aerobic segment and is a good time for a water break. The class should be adjusted according to the results of the heart rate check. A cool-down segment follows the aerobic segment lasting about 5 minutes.

Heart rate should then be checked again to assure a rate of less than 120 bpm. Anyone still at a higher level should be instructed to continue marching or walking around the room. Floor work should then begin and continue for the next 10 minutes followed by stretching for the last 5 minutes. None of these times are cast in stone and may be adjusted accordingly. For example, the instructor can reduce the aerobic segment to 20 minutes and increase the final stretching segment to 10 minutes.

Types of Classes

1. **HIGH IMPACT AEROBICS (135-160 bpm)**: Moves that use large muscles to propel the body into the air, with both feet leaving the ground. Examples include jogging, jumping jacks, hops, traveling kicks, etc. This type is good for challenging the cardiovascular system.

2. **LOW IMPACT AEROBICS (133-148 bpm)**: Moves that stay low to the ground, with one foot remaining on the floor. Examples include walking, marching, lunges, squats, side jacks, heels-up, knees-up, step touches, etc. Offers a high intensity with a reduced risk of injury.

3. **MID-TEMPO AEROBICS (130-140 bpm)**: Moves similar to low impact aerobics but performed at a slower tempo. In addition to low impact aerobic workouts, Mid-Tempo is ideal for slide, aqua or pre-natal workouts and age specific groups.

4. **STEP AEROBICS (120-127 bpm)**: Moves that incorporate up and down movements on a platform (step). Step moves include basic steps, lunges, turn steps, V-steps, over-the-top steps, L-steps and knee-lifts.

5. **SUPER STEP AEROBICS (126-138 bpm)**: Similar to step aerobics but using a faster tempo. Intended for advanced classes, Super Step aerobics revolves around half-time power moves (squats, forward lunges, isolation holds, etc.), as well as the basic step moves.
6. **INTERVAL (Alternating 123-150 bpm):** Alternates high and low intensity movements, which might alternate, step and aerobic combinations to challenge the cardiovascular system.

7. **CIRCUIT (123-126 bpm):** Alternates aerobic activity with resistance activity. The general ratio is 3 minutes of aerobics to 1.5 minutes of resistance training to improve the cardiovascular system and increase muscular strength.

8. **WARM-UP (120-134 bpm):** Moderate movements performed to prepare the body for vigorous exercise. Warm-up movements typically include simple actions of the large muscle groups, starting small and gradually increasing. A warm-up also includes stretching the muscles that will be used in the activities to follow. A typical warm-up is approximately 10 minutes long.

9. **CARDIO (bpm varies with the type of class):** The portion of the class designed to work the cardiovascular system (see 1-7 above). The cardio segment is approximately 35 minutes long.

10. **POST-CARDIO (bpm varies with the type of class):** Movements performed after the cardio (i.e. aerobics, step etc.) segment of a class. These help the cardiovascular system transition from a high intensity workout to normal activity, and bring breathing and heart rate back to normal levels. This portion of the class also includes resistance activities such as abdominal work, free weights, Resist-A-Balls, etc. This segment of class is typically 10 minutes long.

11. **COOL DOWN (Use slow relaxing music):** Movements designed to lengthen the muscles after exercise return to the cardiovascular system to resting levels. A cool down typically combines stretching with slow, deep breathing, and slow rhythmic arm movements. A cool down is approximately 5 minutes long.