



Aqua Studio offers a variety of classes; I decided to sign up for the "restore" one, got dressed in my one-piece swimsuit, and headed to the studio. I checked in and borrowed my shoes from the front desk—think water shoes made completely of rubber so that you won't hurt your toes if they accidentally knock into the bike. I put my stuff in a locker, slipped on my shoes, showered off in the pool area, and stepped into the pool.

(You can sculpt your arms and tighten your tummy with the energizing—and fun—routines from *Prevention's Flat Belly Barre!*)

aquaspin_3.jpg



Photograph courtesy of Amy Schlinger

Being a newbie, I wanted to be able to look at other riders for guidance, so I chose a bike in the middle row. Glancing around, I noticed there were all different ages, sizes, and shapes of people in the class. It was nice to see such a mix! "Because the water makes the workout accessible to anyone, we have all body shapes and sizes—from pregnant ladies to athletes training for a race," Gauthier later told me.

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After the instructor asked who was new and checked to make sure our bikes were set up correctly, we slid our feet into the cages on the pedals and reviewed the different positions on the bike. Similar to a normal Spin class, position one is seated with your hands on the closest handlebars; position two is standing up out of the seat but hovering directly over it with your hands on the closest handlebars; and position three is up and out of the seat, with your hands out as far as they can be on the handlebars, hips pushed back so your knees never go past the resistance knob.

So far, this seemed pretty standard. But then I learned that in underwater Spin there's also a position four! To get in this position, you lift yourself up off the seat, then drop your body into the water behind the seat, feet still in the cages on the pedals, hands holding onto the seat. Apparently it's pretty much everyone's favorite position, according to some of the women who'd taken the class before.

Classical music filled the pool area and class began with some stretches to warm up the body. We used water as resistance to stretch forward and back, from left to right, contracting and releasing certain muscles. Then we started to get into the Spin portion.



Photograph courtesy of Amy Schlinger

Aqua Studio offers classes like "interval" and "power," which are fast-paced. Because I was taking the restore class, there was no pressure to be a speed demon. In fact, several times the instructor said we could go at whatever pace we wanted to—slow if it felt more comfortable or quick if we wanted to raise our heart rates. I decided to go with a mix of paces. ([This 20-minute total-body pool workout will get your heart rate pumping.](#))

Speed aside, I was always pushing myself at least a little. Yes, I was biking in the water, so I didn't feel like I was sweating. But water provides constant resistance on the bike, so I was always working hard to push the pedals. ("The water is a thousand times thicker than air and creates a very intense resistance, so while there's no flywheel on our bikes, you make your own resistance—the faster you pedal, the harder it gets," explains Gauthier.)

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I realized that unlike in a normal Spin class, even as a newbie, I was willing to try the moves because the worst that could happen is I'd go underwater. There's no falling off the bike onto the floor or accidentally unclipping and hurting myself. Sure, my foot could slip out of the cage, but again, I'm in water, so there's nowhere for it to fall and the pedals won't just move uncontrollably without me pushing them.

I thought I was doing great, but then we tried something called "swimming" in position four. The goal is to keep pedaling while taking your hands off the seat and stroking them through the water instead, like you would to say afloat when swimming. While I can swim normally (really!), I just couldn't sort out how to swim while pedaling the bike.

Open up your shoulders and lengthen your spine with this amazing stretch:

As I was trying super hard to stay afloat, the ladies next to me who were about twice my age had mastered it—even though this was their first class, too. Needless to say, my age didn't give me a one-up on anyone. I eventually realized that it was more about slowing down and getting my arms and legs into a steady rhythm rather than trying to be the fastest. (That only leaves you sinking, with really tired hands.)

As the class came to an end, we finished up with some long, deep stretches. You'd be surprised what positions you can get your body into using the water as a tool. I was able to stretch areas of my legs and back that I otherwise can't normally get to on land. (Over 40? [Do these five stretches every week to stay ache-free.](#))

All in all, I really enjoyed the class and the experience at the studio as a whole. It was a welcoming environment, being in the water provided a sense of calm, and the exercise was just challenging enough while still rooting itself in providing some rehab and stretching for the body. If you're looking to try something new, I'd definitely recommend giving underwater Spin a try.