

What's Your "Fitness Fit"?

Sticking with an exercise plan that you actually like can be tough, yet the value of such a plan cannot be overestimated. We know from decades of research that the lifelong benefits of exercise are many, including controlling weight, combating disease, improving mood, and boosting energy. Here are some ways to find an exercise plan that you love, and that you'll stick with. According to Harvard Medical School, the key is to be prepared for challenges that may come your way, so that you can stay on track!

Get to know yourself:

Identify what you think will work best for you. Give some thought to what kinds of activities suit your lifestyle, work schedule, time constraints, budget, and any physical limitations that you may have. Don't forget to think about your actual likes and dislikes!

Come up with an Action-Plan:

Set yourself up for success! It helps to have goals, but they need to be realistic. It may be helpful to set long-term goals, such as walking 30 minutes 5 days a week, and then break them up into what you would like to see happen for each month (perhaps the first week it's 10 minutes of walking 3 days a week); start off slowly if you need to, until you reach your goals.

Make it work:

Think about your schedule for the week, and look for ways to insert exercise into that week without adding any extra stress. Can you wake up 30 minutes earlier every morning to go for a walk, or would it mean going to bed earlier the night before, and is that doable? Be realistic. Don't schedule exercise for a time when you know you need to be giving the kids dinner or putting them to sleep. Or perhaps you would find it more fun to spend time with family or friends *while* exercising: Go for a bike ride, a hike, a swim, or get out onto the tennis courts together. Look for ways to add bits of activity to your everyday schedule (taking the stairs instead of the elevator); every little bit helps.

Keep track of your progress:

Measure your performance by posting a chart on your fridge or writing it down in your daily planner. Seeing accomplishments recorded can be a big boost! There are also plenty of great apps out there to help you keep track of your progress. Check out ones like **iFitness**, where you can choose from over 160 unique exercises with how-to photos and instructions, customize your own workout *and* keep a log. Or buddy up with **Cody**, a virtual fitness coach you can receive encouragement and advice from, as well as log workouts and share them with friends. Users can track their fitness progress via timelines, stats, and highlights. Finally, maybe **FitnessFast** is more for you. This app lets people log workouts, body stats, sleep and more, and is touted as especially accurate, thanks to the capacity to be able to add custom exercises (all available on iTunes).

Mix It Up:

Think of exercising as time that you are dedicating to yourself. Enjoy that time by varying the locations where you exercise, finding new neighborhoods or parks to explore, enjoying nature, or making new, upbeat playlists to listen to.

Reward your efforts:

Meeting your exercise goals, even small ones, is cause for celebration. Find ways to reward yourself for your commitment to improving your health. Make the reward something meaningful and enjoyable!

Thinking outside of the box: Fun ways to exercise!

- Hula-Hooping
- Salsa dancing
- Zumba
- Gardening
- Walking the dog
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Yoga

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