

FAST TRACK GUIDE:

Making Exercise

*a Part of Your
Every Day Life*



Fast Track Guide: Making Exercise a Part of Your Everyday Life

When you make exercise a part of your daily life, you will reap many benefits. You will be more physically fit, feel better, as well as have a happier attitude and outlook. Once you start reaping the many benefits of exercising and being active, you won't ever want to neglect this part of your healthy lifestyle.

Depending on your current activity level, you may experience one or more of these benefits:

- **Weight Control** — Engaging in physical activity helps you burn calories. This will help prevent weight gain and enable you to control your weight. When you pair the exercise or activity with eating healthy, you can lose extra weight and build more muscle.
- **Lower Risks** — Regular exercise reduces your risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, type-2 diabetes, and as a bonus, increases your good cholesterol.
- **Increase Strength and Energy** — Exercise increases the amount of oxygen and nutrients that go to your cells and tissues. When you get more oxygen, you have more energy.
- **Mental Health and Mood Improvement** — During and after each exercise session, your brain releases brain chemicals that are designed to make you feel happier. This helps to decrease depression, anxiety, and stress. These “feel good” chemicals increase your self-esteem and give you a boost of confidence.
- **Better Sleep** — If you avoid exercising close to bedtime, you will notice improved and deeper sleep. This is because your body is stronger, healthier, and less stressed. Note: Exercising gives you energy so you don't want to do it close to bedtime.

Don't let the idea of daily exercise overwhelm you. It may seem difficult at first but it's not as daunting as you might think. Set clear goals. Include daily activities that you enjoy and challenge you a little. You may want to alter your activity, every other day to allow you to build up to your potential slowly and avoid injury.

Setting Goals and Making an Action Plan

When you want to make a change, the first things you should do are set your goals and create an action plan. Goal setting involves identifying what you want to achieve. Action planning is what you do to achieve your goals, including who, what, when, where, why, and how.

This is extremely important because it gives you a clear path to your destination. It sets you up for success from the start. You know exactly what you need to do each day. To set the right goals and create a good action plan consider the following.

Be Realistic

Know what your health level is at this moment and work with it. Set goals that you can realistically reach, given any limitations or issues. If you haven't been exercising regularly, you need to start slowly and work up to your goal. You have to be realistic and honest with yourself if you want to achieve your goals. If you couldn't break the four-minute-mile barrier when you were at your peak, you aren't going to do it now, without a lot of practice and training. Keep goals and expectations real. It's better to go slowly than to risk an injury that can derail your progress. In itself, steady progress is a success.

Work With What You Have

Analyze your overall physical health. If you are obese or have other physical problems, you must work with them to prevent injuries. If you are not sure where to start, contact your doctor. Set up a physical and ask for advice. Seek the assistance of a physical therapist or personal trainer, who has experience dealing with your issues. You'll delay reaching your goal if you injure yourself and delays can be very discouraging.

Start Small

Identify the overall goal for your exercise and fitness plan. Break this down into smaller monthly, weekly, and daily goals. For example, if you want to walk two miles every day, start by finding out what you can do. Let's say that you discover you can only make it to the road. Do that for a few days. Then, increase your distance by 20 steps each day, until you reach your goal. If you feel you can do more, go for it, even if it's just one more step each day. Every small step gets you closer to your daily, weekly, monthly, and ultimate goals.

Be healthy and realistic. Don't overdo things what you can do at this moment. You don't need to be an expert when you are first starting out so be proud of every day you get out and exercise because you are accomplishing those goals and will get there.

Create Your Action Plan

Once you have broken the overall goal into monthly, weekly, and daily goals, use these smaller goals to create your plans. An action plan is a detailed step-by-step guide to how and when you plan to achieve each goal. Add as much detail as you can. Put everything on your calendar to help you keep track.

If you are not sure at any point what you will do to achieve that goal then you are not done creating your plan. Everything should be very specific and straight to the point. Write down when, where, how, and why. Reaffirming the "why" portion helps to keep you focused on success and motivated.

Answer the following questions to help you map out your exercise plan and add details.

- When are you going to exercise each day?
- Where are you going to perform the exercises?
- Exactly, what exercise are you going to do?
- Why do you want to do these exercises?

- Do you have all the equipment you need?

Setting your goals and planning the actions needed to achieve your goals can really motivate you. A clear plan of action makes it easy to get started, as well as follow through. When creating your plans, make each activity and exercise session is enjoyable and fun for you.

Work with Your Schedule

Many people use the excuse that work prevents them from exercising daily. There is some free time in your schedule that you can use to exercise. If you want to be successful, you need to evaluate your schedule honestly. For example if you are watching TV or using social media, you have time to exercise. Use this in your action plan and get moving.

Exercise at Work

You know that sitting for long periods isn't good for your circulation or overall health. Anything you can do to move around more often at work, benefits you, physically. Fortunately, there are some exercises and stretches you can do while sitting at your desk that will help you ward off any ill effects.

Do some leg stretches by simply lifting your legs from your chair. If you have some free time, you can do some knee lifts, jog in place, do a few lunges and even some wall sits. Other ways to get more exercise at work include parking further from the door than you normally do and take the stairs when possible.

Wake Up Earlier

Studies have shown that the best time to exercise is in the morning. It gives you a boost of energy and helps increase your metabolism throughout the day. Also, if you have an extremely busy schedule this is your best solution if you are getting a good eight hours of sleep at night. You might need to adjust your schedule and go to bed a little earlier as well. Getting the exercise out of the way also will make you feel good about yourself because you're going to get the hard part done first thing.

Use your Breaks

If you find yourself at work on a break then use it. Go on a small walk or anything that gets you moving. If you need to, do jumping jacks. Bring a jump rope to work and go outside and jump. Even five minutes of jumping rope can improve your fitness level.

If this is your lunch break then make a lunch you can eat while on the go. It might feel overwhelming at first but this will give you so much more energy to finish your day. Instead of sitting down during lunch, get up and move.

Use Your Commute

Another possibility, if you are not too far from work, is to take advantage of your commute to work. Instead of sitting in your car, get on a bike. Bring along another pair of clothes to freshen up once you get there.

All it takes is a little bit of creativity and motivation. Be honest with yourself and really break down your schedule. Do you get breaks or have more time to wake up in the morning? Do you go home and sit on the couch right away? You can use these times to fit more exercise into your daily life. It might seem contradictory but exercising gives you more energy to do the things you love to do.

Know Yourself and Be Honest

A very common reason to why people don't add exercise into their daily life is because they make the excuse that they can't afford a gym or don't want to go to a gym and therefore can't exercise. Of course, just because you don't have a gym doesn't mean you can't exercise. There are plenty of other options for you. You just need to figure out what you like best and work with it.

Evaluate Yourself

Evaluating yourself and your personality is very crucial to your success and you need to be honest with yourself too. Don't force yourself into a gym if you can't stand being around people or it makes you uncomfortable. The gym doesn't make you healthy your actions do. Exercise at home or go outside.

Make it Fun

Find an exercise that doesn't feel like exercise, such as taking a dance class. Play a sport with some of your friends and family. Participate in exercises that make you happy. Forcing yourself to do exercises that you dread, is not helpful or healthy. Finding exercises and activities you enjoy is important because it sets the stage for success. It's that simple.

Know Yourself

Explore and choose types of exercises that match your personality. Maybe you like walking more than running or dancing more than riding a bike. Think of activities you like doing and incorporate an element of exercise. For example, if you enjoy genealogy, visit and walk in the same areas where your ancestors lived. Imagine them walking the same path. Use your own interests and likes to create exercise opportunities specific to you. When you pair an exercise with one of your more sedentary interests, you have a built-in "excuse" to spend more time on your interest.

Check With Your Doctor

Before you do any exercise, consult a physician and ask for exercise recommendations. You may not be healthy enough to do some things. However, when you share your goals with your doctor, he or she can help you reach your attainable goals, as well as help you with encouragement and accountability.

Focus on what you can do rather than things you can't do. Everyone has their own special limits. However, that doesn't mean you can't work around them. The important thing to remember is that your health and fitness levels will improve, if you stick with your plan. Making progress and avoiding setbacks are your underlying goals. Make it easier

on yourself by listening to your body. Take a break or modify your exercises when your body tells you to tone it down a little. Overdoing things or pushing yourself too hard can lead to injuries.

Use Technology

You are living in the best time right now to get your daily exercise goals in. Technology is more advanced than it has ever has been and there are so many tools to help you along the way. Take advantage of it and use it to accomplish your goals and make things easier and more fun.

- **Applications** — Health related apps are available to help you reach your goals. Some provide notifications and motivation to get you moving. Some apps can even be used to record your daily activities. There are even games you can play while you exercise, such as *Zombies, Run!* This application makes running fun because it adds an element of fantasy/science fiction, where you need to run away from the zombies before they get you.
- **Fitbits** — Fitbits are activities trackers that you wear on your wrist. Fitbits are so popular that they have about twenty-two million active followers. These electronic devices can track your steps, monitor your heart rate, track your sleep and allows you to set social challenges. They are a great tool to use to keep you accountable and motivated to exercise daily.
- **Set Alarms** — If money is an issue, use what you already have. Maybe you have a cell phone, a computer, or an old fashion alarm clock. Set alarms to remind yourself to get out and exercise.
- **Health Bets** — Set up challenges or bets with friends and family or find a challenge online. Beachbody has quite a few. All you need to do is submit some pictures, money, and get to your goal. You can also find great contests at DietBet.com. When the time frame is up and you reached your goal, you get to share the pot of money with the winners. This can inspire you to add in daily exercise. Who doesn't like a little healthy competition?

The possibilities are practically endless with what technology you decide to use. It makes life easier and more fun. It keeps you accountable and more aware of how much physical activity you are getting.

Reward Yourself

Every goal you reach should be celebrated with a reward or recognition, no matter how small it seems. For each goal you set, include a reward. Make the reward related to the goal. It should also be something special that motivates you whenever you think about it.

Find small rewards for small goals and find big rewards for big goals. If you have been exercising daily for six months then this deserves some huge recognition. Write these goals down with your action plan so you have something to look forward to.

- **Fun Rewards** — Reward yourself with something fun and exciting to increase your motivation. Buy a bike, get new hiking shoes, or go to an amusement park.
- **Smart Rewards** — Focus on finding smart rewards. Avoid rewards that will make you go backward. Don't make unhealthy food rewards. Make it active and don't ever skip exercise as a reward.
- **Share It**— Share your success (and/or a reward) with friends, family, and people who support you. You deserve recognition, even if you think it's not worth mentioning. This will empower and encourage you. It is a great feeling to share your success with people who care about you.
- **Don't Abuse It** — Choose one reward for each goal met on the weekly and monthly levels. Plan the reward before you achieve the goal. When you are motivated to reach the milestones, you are more likely to reach your daily goals as well as your ultimate goals. However, keep the reward system in perspective. You don't want the reward to be more important than reaching the exercise/fitness goal.

Every goal deserves acknowledgement and recognition whether it's you patting yourself on the back, "bragging" on yourself a bit, or buying yourself new workout gear. The goal of this system is to motivate you to get moving and keep moving. The more you move the better you'll feel and that's a reward in itself.

Surround Yourself with Support

One of the best ways to change your daily habits is to immerse yourself into that community completely and surround yourself with support. A way to do this is to educate yourself as much as you can with all forms of exercise. The more you know the more confident you will feel too. You might even find some information you never even knew existed or an activity that you enjoy doing.

Online Groups

Join some Facebook groups and follow inspirational people on other social media platforms. If you enjoy watching YouTube, find someone that inspires you and is active. Thousands of people stream live workouts. Find a few you like and bookmark them.

The more you see things related to exercise the more likely you will want to do it. You can even set up your own social media accounts to inspire other people and keep yourself accountable. If you don't want to share it with people make it private so you can look at it whenever you want.

Friends & Family

Try to get your friends and family involved as well. Don't force it; inspire them and show them how much fun it could really be if they all joined in. This will encourage you to go out and exercise more each day. Plus, you won't even realize you are exercising it will just feel like another family or friend outing.

Get Accountability

Find an accountability buddy who you trust for support. This person should be someone you can tell anything to. It could even be a stranger from the Facebook groups you joined. There are people out there looking for support because they don't want to do it alone.

Sharing the same goals with someone will make you both accountable and willing to keep going. Make a deal with each other that you promise to be as honest as possible without judgment and discouragement.

Your accountability buddy could also be your exercise partner. Having a partner will prevent you from ditching that exercise. If you do, you would not only be hurting your progress but there's as well. Disappointment from your partner is the worse feeling and you won't want to let them down.

Make it Fun

Exercise doesn't have to be boring and grueling. It can be so fun you don't even realize you are exercising. Find a form of exercise that keeps you wanting more. This way you are sure to keep up the daily habit. If the sound of running or lifting weights doesn't appeal to you then find something that does.

Here are a few ideas to make your exercise more fun:

- **Workout classes** — **There** are so many exercise classes available that you can find at your local gym or even downtown. Yoga, Zumba, and CrossFit are a few popular ones. There are even spin classes and stepping classes. Go out and give one a try. These classes are full of motivation and are usually affordable. The best part is you don't have to rely on yourself because there are instructors to help guide and push you through it.
- **Swimming/Water Aerobics** — Go to your community pool and swim some laps. You could even invite your friends and family out to make it fun. Just keep swimming and stay active. Find a local aquatic gym and try out some water aerobics. This is a great lightweight activity for older people looking to get in daily exercise as well.
- **Dancing** — Dancing is a great option. You can do it almost anywhere, including at home or in the car on your way to work. You can also vary the music style to match or lift your mood. You can dance alone or with a partner. If partner dancing is more your style, sign up for a dance class or a ballroom dance call with your significant other or a friend. Dancing is the best exercise because it works your whole body and its fun.
- **Listen to music/audio books** — Use music or audio books to your advantage. Exercise to the beat of your music or speed up when you are reaching the climax of a good story. No one wants to hear their breathing

while they are exercising anyways. You will be surprised how fast your workouts go by when doing this.

- **Get Friends and Family Involved** — Find a friend or family who wants to get active with you. Having a support system makes going to the gym or getting out on the track a lot more enjoyable when you don't have to do it alone. Challenge each other to a race and or see who can do the most pushups. Who doesn't like a little healthy competition?
- **Challenge yourself** — Every new day is a chance to make progress and advance. Try to go a little farther on your walk or try something new like rock climbing. Not only will this make it fun but you might find something new you never knew you would enjoy.

All exercise is good for your body. Stop worrying about what other people do. Find something you enjoy and do it. Why dread a workout when you could be counting down the minutes until you get to go out on that hike. Find things you think you might like or have always want to do and give them a try.

Getting Started

Changing your lifestyle by adding in daily exercise is the best thing you can do for your overall health. Daily exercise helps control weight, reduces your risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke. It even improves your sleep and overall mood by reducing stress. It may seem overwhelming and impossible to add in exercise every day but don't fret. You just need to break down this goal and create an action plan.

You also need to consider your overall well-being. Don't over exert yourself because you think you need to be perfect right away or think five minutes of walking isn't good enough. That simply is not true. Getting any exercise is a great start for now. Eventually, you will improve.