

## How to Maximize Your Workout Plan

Getting and staying fit can be a challenge. For many people, the challenge can be just starting an exercise program, but once you have started it is also important to make sure your program is going to provide you with the positive results you are working toward. It is easy to develop bad habits that minimize the effectiveness of a workout, habits that waste time, energy and money. If you are an individual who is committed to improving your overall fitness, it is crucial for you to regularly evaluate your workout habits. Here are some steps that may help.

### Avoid Falling Into a Boring Routine

To maximize your results, avoid going through the motions and take note of your heart rate or perceived exertion level to keep the correct intensity level. In some cases, you may find that a workout partner provides motivation and can help encourage you to pick up the pace. Performing the same workout routine, with the same exercises, for months-on-end is a surefire way to hit a plateau and become bored fast. It's a good idea to change up any workout routine every six to eight weeks. The changes don't have to be dramatic.

### Set Realistic Goals

Keep yourself motivated and challenged by setting new goals and trying new classes or types of exercise. Focusing on only one type of exercise or a single aspect of fitness can cause overuse injury, boredom or plateau. It is important to try a variety of exercises to continually challenge your body and your mind.

### Challenge Your Body

Pick up the intensity by focusing on compound movements while strength training.

Instead of isolating a single muscle like a biceps curl, try focusing on compound movements. This will make multiple muscle groups work simultaneously resulting in greater calorie burn as well as making more efficient use of your exercise time. For example, use dumbbells to perform an upper-body strength movement while you perform squats or lunges. Deadlifts, squats, bench press, good-mornings, and pull-ups are other compound movement exercises.

### Consult a Specialist

Taking the time for a fitness evaluation is an important way to measure your level of progress. Conducting a fitness assessment will give you the opportunity to measure progress that may not be obvious, including changes in body fat, overall strength and aerobic capacity. Performing a fitness assessment yearly is a

great way to keep your motivation up and continue your progress. Keeping a fitness journal is another way to track your progress, continue motivation, keep track of running distance, time, weight lifted, and repetitions. Review now and then to see how far you have come.

## Stay Consistent

No exercise program can offer amazing results if you don't perform the exercise on a consistent basis. Doing the following will help you exercise consistently each week: Exercises first thing in the morning, never skip exercising two days in a row, schedule designated times and days for yourself to exercise, and go through the motions when exercising if you are really tired.

## Fuel Your Body Appropriately

Eat a nutritious meal within two hours or a snack an hour before exercise, making sure you are getting both carbohydrates and protein. Eating prior to exercise will help provide the fuel you need to maximize your energy and power through your workout. Eating balanced nutrition in conjunction with your exercise goals go hand in hand. The best results are seen when eating a properly balanced diet, focusing on whole grains, fiber, lean protein, fruits and vegetables.

## Be Patient

Results can take time to develop. Keep at it; sometimes it can take three to six months before significant changes take place. Don't be afraid to seek assistance. If you are not sure whether you are seeing results within the three to six-month time frame, ask a professional for their assistance and recommendations.

## Resources

- American Council on Exercise: [www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

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