



10 Ways to Start an Exercise Program

1. **Get to Know Your Body** – Every exerciser must have a basic understanding of the human body. This includes: proper identification of the major muscle groups, knowledge about the effects of activity vs. inactivity, distinction between stretching and strengthening a muscle and distinction between “good pain” (muscle burn and fatigue) and “bad pain” (joint pain, lower back pain). If you know nothing about the workings of the body, you may be putting yourself in a dangerous position.
2. **Understand Why You Are Exercising** – Pose questions to yourself such as, “Why did I decide to start exercising?” The proper reason behind exercising can act as powerful and long-lasting fuel.
3. **Know Where You Are** – In other words, know your current fitness level. You will need at least a general idea so you can accurately measure your progress.
4. **Know Where You Want to Be** – To start, create a clear and vivid picture in your mind—what does this look and feel like? When you reach this ideal, what will you be able to do that you aren’t able to do now? The act of creating this picture alone can conjure up positive and pleasant emotions, and reminding yourself of this image can motivate you.
5. **Know How You Will Get There** – In other words, identify the exercise program or activities that will take you to your ideal fitness level. As a rule, never choose an activity that doesn’t interest or excite you. Rather than fit into a generic exercise regimen, try to fit one to your needs.
6. **Develop a Comfortable Routine** – ACSM recommends that adults participate in at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity. With this understanding, find a challenging yet realistic starting point upon which you can build over time.
7. **Write It All Down** – Organize your daily goals, weekly goals, longer-term goals and exercise program/routine on paper. Studies find that those who write down their goals can accomplish up to 16% more than those who do not.
8. **Gather Your Accessories** – What special clothing, shoes or gear does your fitness routine require? You might need to purchase a new pair of athletic shoes or activity-appropriate gear before initiating your program. Having the right exercise clothing and equipment can make the exercise easier and safer.
9. **Create Incentives** – Develop a reward system ahead of time for the goals you accomplish along the way. Be proud of your accomplishments, and don’t be shy about celebrating your successes.
10. **Get Started and Trust the Process** – A common deterrent to exercise adherence is impatience. Many first-time exercisers expect dramatic body-altering results after mere weeks, or even days, of increased movement. But don’t give up if you aren’t immediately seeing the desired physical results. Real change may take up to several months. Trust the process and enjoy the journey.

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