



# HOW TO exercise with passion

Andrew Cate Find an exercise you genuinely enjoy and you'll never need to motivate yourself to be active.

It has been said that if we could put fitness in a bottle, with all the benefits it brings, it would be the most heavily prescribed medication in the world. Boosting and maintaining fitness can make a huge difference in many aspects of your life. Some of the numerous physical and mental health benefits to be gained from participating in activities that boost your physical fitness include the following:

- ▶ improved heart health;
- ▶ weight loss and weight management;
- ▶ improved control over blood sugar levels;
- ▶ improved management of stress;
- ▶ better sleep;
- ▶ improved confidence and self-esteem;
- ▶ increased bone density;
- ▶ reduced risk of lifestyle cancers.

## understanding fitness

Before you can become passionate about fitness, it's worth exploring what it means to be fit. Fitness is a broad term that relates to several aspects of physical performance, including the following:

**Stamina.** Increasing your heart rate during exercise helps to trigger some of the many benefits of exercise. Your stamina (also known as your aerobic or cardiovascular fitness) is improved through activities that make you puff, such as brisk walking, running, cycling, swimming, paddling and fitness classes.

**Strength.** Boosting muscle strength is growing in popularity as a fitness pursuit among both women and men.

It can be beneficial for labour-intensive occupations, sporting activities, injury prevention and weight control. Strength can be progressively improved through resistance training (also known as strength training or weight training), where you lift, push or pull against a resistance.

**Suppleness.** Also known as flexibility or stretching, suppleness involves a series of movements designed to free up your joints, prevent stiffness, promote relaxation and improve posture. Being able to move your joints through a full range of motion also allows you to perform other types of physical activity more efficiently.

## know what you want

It's important to decide exactly what you want to achieve from this new

pursuit of exercise. Do you want to lose weight, prevent illness or just be healthier? Do you want to get stronger or more flexible or boost your cardiovascular fitness? Or maybe you want a little of everything. Whichever way, break it down into specifics rather than relying on a general statement, such as "I want to get fit."

You may find it necessary to incorporate a variety of activities into your exercise routine in order to achieve your goals. For example, it takes different kinds of activities to achieve strength, stamina and suppleness. Often, the best overall exercise programs to get passionate about involve a variety of activities rather than just one.

## what activity is best for you?

While some people enjoy lifting

Activity	Stamina	Suppleness	Strength
Aerobics	High	Moderate	Moderate
Weights circuit classes*	Moderate	Moderate	Very High
Cycling	High	Low	Low
Gardening	Low	Low	Low
Golf	Moderate	Low	Low
Slow jogging	Very High	Low	Moderate
Swimming	High	Low	High
Tennis	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Brisk walking	High	Low	Low
Weight training	Low	Moderate	Very High

\* Weight lifting that involves a variety of exercises

weights or doing aerobic exercises, others enjoy playing competitive and social sports such as tennis or golf. You may prefer to exercise alone or with other people, and you also may like to exercise outdoors instead of in your home. You may also benefit from cross-training, where you participate in a variety of activities for a wide range of benefits.

The table below rates a number of different activities on their effectiveness in achieving stamina, strength and suppleness. The ratings listed are general in nature and will vary, depending on the level of intensity with which you pursue them. For example, swimming is highly rated as a stamina-improving activity, but if you do one lap at a snail's pace, don't expect great results.

## 10 ways to add passion back into your exercise program

### 1 Take your time

Start a new exercise routine gently, with small, easily achievable amounts of activity that you can build upon gradually. Allowing yourself to build a solid foundation of fitness over time helps to prevent injury and soreness, and makes it more enjoyable. For stamina and weight loss, walking is the perfect way to start. The stress on your joints is minimal and it's something you can do anywhere.

### 2 Listen in

Listening to music while you work out is a great way to get motivated, and new technology has made music more portable than ever. Most mobile phones can store more than enough songs to keep you bouncing along to the beat for a very long time. You can also use podcasts and audio books to keep your mind engaged.

### 3 Change constantly

It's important to continually challenge your mind and body with different activities, surfaces, gradients, intervals and time challenges. By spreading the load on your body, you'll be less likely to suffer an injury. There's also a motivational boost, where the constant variations prevent things from becoming stale.

### 4 Track your progress

There's a wide range of gadgets, workout toys and smart phone apps that can make training more enjoyable. Heart rate monitors, GPS devices, online tools, pedometers and fitness bracelets will help you track your

movements and offer great feedback on each workout. These gadgets help you set benchmarks and monitor your progress, making your workouts more effective.

### 5 Keep it up!

Once you get on a roll with exercise and maintain consistency, things will only get easier. For example, exercise will become progressively more comfortable, helping you sleep better and feel more energised, which will motivate you to exercise more. Exercising at least every second day helps to maintain momentum.

### 6 Allow for days off

In spite of your best intentions and efforts, there will be days when exercise won't be appealing. This is normal and worth acknowledging. On these days, do a shorter workout along with some stretches—or even skip a planned training session once in a while. The goal is improvement, not perfection, so don't be too hard on yourself.

### 7 Get outside

Studies have revealed spending too much time indoors may actually trigger a mild form of depression known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which is characterised by low energy levels, longer sleep and weight gain. To counteract SAD, make sure some of your workouts are conducted in the great outdoors. Sunlight will awaken your spirits and the fresh air can help to clear your mind. Activities such as mountain biking, hiking, swimming or paddling can be good for both the mind and the body.

### 8 Join a gym

Health and fitness centres provide a wide range of exercise options, including fitness classes, cardiovascular machines and strength-training equipment. This can add a lot of variety to your exercise routine and it serves as a good fallback on days when it's too miserable to train outdoors.

### 9 Hire help

Personal trainers and exercise physiologists can help you design an exercise program that's individually tailored to your needs. You may like to be guided by them on a regular basis or you may prefer to make a one-time appointment to put a plan into place that gets you in condition for your favourite activities. Use their expertise and knowledge to

## do a SOC analysis

To determine the best form of exercise for you, it's worth doing a SOC analysis, which examines your Strengths, any Opportunities open to you, and the Challenges and barriers you face. Use the information from your SOC analysis to best match activities with your personality and circumstances.

- ▶ **Strengths:** What are you good at, such as walking, tennis or swimming? Think of activities that you've enjoyed in the past.
- ▶ **Opportunities:** Think of the things in your life that could make it easier for you to exercise, such as a gym in your workplace, a nearby cycle path or close proximity to walking trails. You may also have an active friend with whom you could walk.
- ▶ **Challenges:** Do you have any injuries that will rule out certain activities? Have you struggled with motivation in the past? What barriers have prevented you from being active in the past?

Experiment with what works best for you, create an exercise routine and get started! Also, remember that your routine isn't set in stone. In fact, consider dropping an exercise now and then and replacing it with another.

Start working toward getting fitter today!

your advantage, and take a giant leap toward achieving your goals.

### 10 Get a dog

Dogs make excellent workout partners and serve as a great source of motivation to keep you active on a regular basis. Depending on the breed, dogs like to be walked regularly, are always ready to go, provide added safety during your exercise and will rarely wear out before you do. The fitness and weight-loss benefits will also extend to your four-legged friend.