



GBS Health and Wellness

Starting an Exercise Routine: A 4-Step Guide with Tips

➤ 1. Define Your Goal

Write down your training/fitness goals. Consider what motivated you to start exercising in the first place!

➤ 2. Assess Your Current Fitness Level

Assess your current fitness level by recording your starting cardiorespiratory fitness level, muscular fitness level, flexibility, and/or body composition. Here are some helpful suggestions:

- **Cardiorespiratory** - Record your heart rate in beats per minute (bpm) before and after completing 1 mile on chosen cardio equipment or record how long it takes to walk 400 meters, walk/jog 1 mile, or run 1.5 miles. You will aim to decrease your heart rate as your fitness progresses.
- **Muscular** - Record how many half or full sit-ups, standard or modified pushups, and body weight or weighted squats you can complete at one time.
- **Flexibility** - After warming up, record how far you can reach forward while seated on the floor with legs out in front of you, then mark the distance on a ruler or tape measurer.
- **Body Composition** - Measure your waist circumference, get your body fat percentage tested by a professional, and/or calculate your BMI.

➤ 3. Create Your Training Routine

Develop your weekly plan and assess if it will meet exercise guidelines. Include the specifics on training type, workout location, and time of day.

- **Weekly Cardio Example:** 50 minutes of jogging 2x a week at the park after work on Monday and Thursday and a 50-minute cycling class at my gym on Saturday afternoon.
- **Weekly Resistance Example:** Full body strength training routine 2x a week on Tuesday and Friday mornings at my gym before work. This includes 3 sets of 10 reps of 8 exercises involving all major muscle groups.
- **Weekly Flexibility Example:** Static stretching for 5-10 minutes after each workout and 30 minutes of at home yoga on one recovery day.
- **Active Recovery Days Example:** Recover on Wednesday and Sunday. Continue to engage in physical activity such as walking and stretching on your rest days.

➤ 4. Track Your Progress

Track your progress about every 6 weeks.

- Revisit your goals.
- Remeasure your cardiorespiratory fitness level, muscular fitness level, flexibility, and/or body composition.
- Note changes in mood, energy level, etc., and compare it to when you first started your routine. It may be helpful to keep an exercise journal.
- Consider how you are going to progress your routine. Are you going to adjust frequency, intensity and/or time to increase your total training volume?
- Write down what your challenges have been and brainstorm helpful solutions; ex: Challenge: I am usually tired when I get home after work and I am not motivated to workout. Solution: I am going to pack a workout bag and leave it in my car so that I can go to the park to run directly after work.

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▶ Helpful Tips to Follow

- If you are just beginning, start low and progress slow. It's okay if you don't currently meet exercise guidelines! If you have an injury or medical condition, talk with your doctor before beginning.
- Ensure that you have the proper gear to get started, ex: athletic shoes, yoga mat, fitness app.
- Schedule time in your calendar to exercise.
- Write out your exercise plan and commit for at least 30 days.
- Be flexible - things come up, but don't let one bad day get you off track for the rest of the week.
- Be creative - try new activities to figure out what you enjoy. For example, if you're short on time, split up your exercise session into three 10-minute bouts.
- Make it social - get your family and friends involved or join a group exercise class.
- Listen to your body and remember that your body needs time to recover.

▶ Online Tools:

- Physical Activity Guidelines and Tips: <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/index.htm>
- Get Moving Calorie Calculator: <https://caloriecontrol.org/healthy-weight-tool-kit/get-moving-calculator/>

▶ Fitness/Health Apps:

- MyFitness Pal - Calorie counter and diet tracker, daily logs, customizable goals, healthy habits (free)
- RunKeeper - Workout GPS tracking, performance reporting, race training plans, device syncing (free)
- Strava - Workout GPS tracking, performance reporting, new routes & maps, device syncing (free)
- JEFIT Workout - Over 1,300 exercise tutorials, customized fitness plans, tracking (free)
- Sworkit: Workouts & Plans - #1 fitness app for beginners, customizable workouts & programs, tracking (free 30-day trial)
- Nike Training Club - Personal trainer, personal workouts, goal/activity tracking (free)
- Just 6 Weeks - Helps you reach one of seven resistance training goals over a 6-week period, fitness testing, guided workouts (free - \$2.99)
- Yoga Studio - Video yoga classes of all levels, mind-body focus, meditation, tracking (free 7-day trial)
- Tabata Stopwatch Pro - Custom interval training timer, HIIT, voice guide, tracking (free)

Reference:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/fitness/art-20048269>