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# Sticking to an Exercise Program: 25 Tips to Achieve Exercise Success



by Len Kravitz (/resources/author/143/len-kravitz/) on August 02, 2024

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*[This blog was co-authored by the students in my Introduction to Exercise Science course at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.]*

Sticking to an exercise routine is challenging for just about everyone, which is why it is vital to have evidence-based exercise motivation tips and adherence strategies that are proven effective in developing long-term exercise habits. Regular exercise reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, depression, anxiety and obesity. Yet, 80% of adults do not meet the recommended guidelines (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9165469/>) for aerobic exercise or resistance exercise.

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According to the research linked above, the most commonly expressed reasons for not participating in exercise are lack of time (due to family or work obligations), lack of motivation, caregiving responsibilities, lack of a safe environment to exercise and lack of social support. Interestingly, most individuals who drop out of an exercise program do so within the first six months of starting the exercise program. To counter this exercise drop-out phenomenon, research on this topic indicates that health and exercise professionals ought to target the self-efficacy behaviors of the person starting an exercise program to help them adopt a long-term exercise program. This means finding ways to support people in their initial desire for optimal health and fitness and provide them with an exercise program that includes tools to help them succeed.

As a class project, the 64 students in my Introduction to Exercise Science class at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, scoured research articles and internet pages, and selected 25 highly useful tips for achieving exercise success. These tips help target a person's **self-efficacy** (<https://www.acefitness.org/continuing-education/certified/march-2019/7222/how-to-enhance-self-efficacy-and-resilience-in-your-clients/>) to adopt an exercise program and avoid dropping out. As you read through this list, identify those strategies that resonate with you and fit best with your lifestyle, then incorporate those that will make the biggest impact.

**1. Set Realistic Health and Fitness Goals:** Establish achievable and realistic fitness goals (<https://www.acefitness.org/fitness-certifications/ace-answers/exam-preparation-blog/3646/goal-setting-create-a-goal-the-smart-way/>) that align with your abilities, health and lifestyle. Consider posting them somewhere in your house, like a nightstand, as positive reminders for yourself. Break down your short-term (~three month) goals into smaller, achievable short-term (two to three week) targets to keep yourself motivated and on track.

**2. Create a Weekly Schedule and Include Your Exercise Time:** Plan your workouts in advance and incorporate them into your weekly schedule to make them a consistent part of your daily routine.

**3. Start Slow:** Gradually advance into your exercise routine to avoid injury, allowing your body to adapt to the new physical-activity demands.

**4. Discover Workouts You Enjoy:** Choose several different workouts (in the gym, at home and outdoors) that you find enjoyable to increase the likelihood of sticking with your program long-term. You will need to keep progressively

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**5. Mix It Up:** Prevent boredom by diversifying your workouts with different sections, including cardiorespiratory, muscular strength, flexibility and mind/body exercises.

**6. Get the Right Gear:** Invest in comfortable workout attire and appropriate footwear to enhance your overall exercise experience.

**7. Track Your Progress:** Keep a record of your fitness achievements and improvements to stay motivated and to track your journey to optimal health.

**8. Create or Join a Network of Fitness Friends:** Consider engaging in small-group physical activities by creating or joining a social network of exercise enthusiasts (e.g., a walking club).

**9. Reward Yourself:** Establish a non-food reward system (e.g., watching a movie, reading a new book or spending more time doing a hobby) for reaching fitness and health milestone goals to reinforce your positive exercise habits and sustain your fitness motivation.

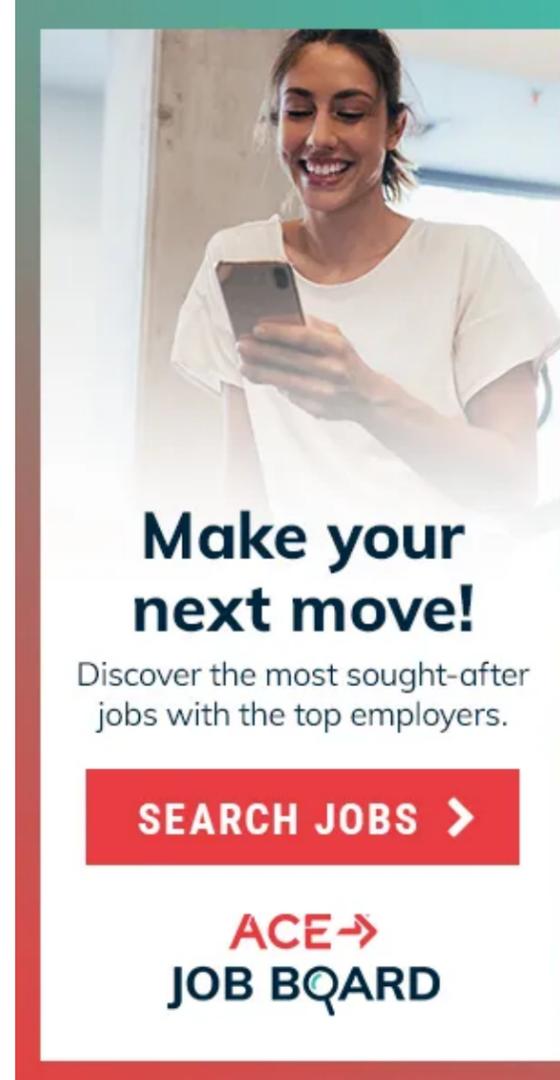
**10. Incorporate Music or Podcasts:** Create a workout playlist and/or listen to podcasts while you exercise to make your exercise sessions more engaging.

**11. Prioritize Consistency Over Intensity:** Focus on maintaining a regular exercise routine rather than pushing yourself too hard in sporadic high-intensity workout sessions.

**12. Seek out the Support of Significant Others:** Let friends and family know your exercise goals so that they can encourage and support you in achieving them.

**13. Find a Workout Buddy:** For some workouts, find a workout buddy. Partnering with someone can provide accountability (<https://www.acefitness.org/continuing-education/certified/november-2021/7964/help-your-clients-build-the-social-support-they-need-to-succeed/>) and make exercising more enjoyable. It helps if your workout buddy is at about the same fitness level as you.

**14. Set Reminders:** Use mobile device alerts or smartphone apps to remind yourself of your scheduled workouts and movement snacks (<https://www.acefitness.org/continuing-education/certified/january-2024/8535/movement-snacks-and-habit-stacks-strategies-for-overcoming-sedentary->



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lifestyles/) to keep you on track.

**15. Explore Some Outdoor Activities:** Weather permitting, take advantage of some outdoor exercises like hiking, biking and walking to add variety and enjoyment to your daily fitness activities.

**16. Monitor Your Body Signals:** Pay attention to your body's internal signals (e.g., energetic, tired or sore) and adjust your workouts accordingly to prevent overexertion and injury.

**17. Fine Tune Your Dietary Pattern:** Match your physical training demands with a health-promoting dietary pattern for optimal performance and exercise recovery. Note, you can't out-exercise a bad diet.

**18. Create a Vision Board:** Compile images, drawings and quotes that inspire you to stay dedicated to your fitness journey. Place in a private area of your living space.

**19. Mini Workouts Count:** On days when you are feeling short on time, try combining a brisk walk, some squats, push-ups and crunches into a 10-minute mini workout. These mini workouts count in your journey to mental and physical health.

**20. Set a Consistent Bedtime Routine:** Ensure you get enough sleep (seven to nine hours) to support your energy levels, health and exercise recovery.

**21. Invest in Professional Exercise Guidance:** Consider hiring a personal trainer to provide expertise, guidance, education and motivation tailored to your fitness goals.

**22. Use Technology:** Utilize fitness apps, wearables or online platforms to monitor your progress and gain insight into how to improve your workouts.

**23. Establish Pre- and Post-workout Routines:** Develop a pre-exercise routine, such as a brisk walk, that signals your body it's time to get active, mentally and physically preparing you for your workout. Design a post-exercise routine that includes some favorite stretches and mind/body breathing activities.

**24. Make It a Habit:** Consistency is key. Stick with your exercise routine until it becomes a habit that you naturally incorporate into your daily life.

**25. Stay Positive:** Maintain a positive mindset, focus on the health benefits of



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exercise and don't let any setbacks keep you from your long-term journey of succeeding with your exercise goals.

### Final Thought

Here's a quote to remember: Your body will achieve what your mind will believe. If you believe you can achieve your health- and fitness-related goals, you're more than halfway there. You've got this!



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