

Chapter 1

Creating Your Workout Plan

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What do you have in common with a world class athlete and a James Bond supervillain? Each of you needs a plan. The good news is that you don't need to draw blood three times a day to check your lactate levels, and you don't need an evil laugh and a world map marking every missile silo to . . . *Ha Ha Hmmm . . . Rule the World!*

Even if you're not after a gold medal or global domination, but you simply want to lose a few pounds, a plan helps in any number of ways. It makes your workouts more efficient and helps you to see results more quickly.

Conversely, if you start a workout program without a plan, you're like that classic Sex Pistols song — don't know what you want, but you know how to get it.

Why Exercise Anyway?

Before you delve into the whats, wheres, and hows of creating your own exercise program, back up and think about *why* you exercise in the first place. You probably know a lot of the

answers, but listing them may just be the difference between getting up for that 6:30 workout or hitting the snooze button.

✔ **You'll be healthier:** By exercising, you can reduce your risk of serious and even life-threatening diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. There's even evidence that exercise can ward off the common cold.

✔ **You'll look better:** Exercising not only burns calories but also boosts your metabolism, which makes it easier to maintain your desired weight without resorting to the celery and ice cream diet.

✔ **You'll be less stressed:** Exercise produces endorphins — the same mood altering brain chemicals that are targeted by everything from chocolate to illicit drugs. Runner's high is more than a myth.

✔ **You'll have fun:** Remember when you used to go out and play after school, running and jumping, riding and skating until you were exhausted? Well, pick the right exercise and that same kind of fun is still there for the taking.



Making Your Fitness Plan

If the road to fitness is a journey, then a fitness plan is your road map. You don't need to be a motivational guru to understand that before you can get in shape, you've got to identify some workout goals and figure out how to get from here to there.

First, you've got to identify your destination, or your goal. In this section, I tell you how to do that. Once you know where you're going, it becomes a lot easier to map out the shortest route there, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Setting your fitness goals

In workouts and in life, goal setting can be both easy and hard. At its most basic level, setting a goal is as simple as identifying something you want. It can be as vague as, "I want to be happy." Or as specific as, "I want to be the executive vice president in charge of marketing by the end of September."

Workout-wise, you've got the same range of choices. Your objective can be as general as wanting to be healthier and feel better and have some fun. Or it can be as specific as saying, "I want to break 50 minutes in the Independence Day 10K." Or, "I want to drop 12 pounds and 2 dress sizes so that I'm looking good for Chris's wedding in August."

The bottom line is that the quality of the goal you set is directly proportional to your chance of achieving it. If your goal is too vague, it can be almost impossible to measure your progress. ("Do I really feel healthier and feel better than I did last week?")

If the goal is too specific, that can be a problem too. If you become too goal-oriented — "I've been exercising for three weeks and my time (or waistline) hasn't come down at all." — it's easy to get discouraged by slow progress or minor setbacks.



The best goals are those that have both macro and micro components. Your macro goal might be, "I want to run the New York City Marathon next year." Your micro goal might be, "I want to run the 5K in town faster than I did last year." In short, your everyday goal should be an easily achievable, bite-size chunk of that larger goal. The short-term goal gives you a reason to work out today — "The 5K is ten days away" is a much better incentive for getting out of bed than, say, "The marathon is ten months away."



More than the standard disclaimer

My lawyers want me to tell you that you should consult your physician before beginning a program of physical exercise. Okay, there I said it. But I'd like this to sink in more than the seat-belt demonstration or an airliner. After all, you wouldn't take a car that's been in storage for five years straight to the drag strip, now would you?

Well, if your car deserves a trip to the mechanic, don't you deserve a trip to your friendly neighborhood physician. A pre-exercise physical exam can uncover some underlying problems — anything from heart disease to a blood sugar imbalance — that could be exacerbated by exercise. So do the right thing — go see your doctor.

And once you achieve that micro goal, you can pat yourself on the back, because you did what you set out to do, and you've also moved a little closer to your big objective. Which makes it easier to set another micro goal.

Finding the time

The world's number-one all-purpose excuse? *I'm too busy*. Do you know anyone who's *not* too busy? I even hear it from my three-year-old son Ethan when I ask him to pick up his trains. "But, Daddy, I'm too busy." So let's find a way past the "B" word, shall we?

The first step is to make exercise a priority. Whether we write things down or not, every day each of us has a giant to-do list — with standing entries ranging from taking a shower to making enough money to pay the mortgage. So what you need to do is add one more thing that you absolutely, positively must do today: Get some exercise.



The best way to make sure that exercise becomes as automatic as brushing your teeth? Make it part of your schedule. Here are a few ways to incorporate exercise into your daily routine.

- ✔ **Do it early:** You remember Murphy's Law, right? Well, one of its axioms is that if you put off your workout until after work, and you go to the DMV, do grocery shopping, and drop the kids off at their friends' house, the following will happen. The DMV line will snake around the block, the baggers at the grocery store will stage a sitdown strike, and you'll get caught in a traffic jam on the way to the play date. In short, everything that can go wrong, will, and you'll be running an hour late, and today's workout will have to wait until tomorrow. If you work out first thing in the morning, you won't have to worry about life's little intrusions.
- ✔ **Multi-task:** Exercising can be tacked on to other chores, if you make it the first task, rather than the last. Stopping at the gym on your way to work, or right after you drop the kids off at school, is a great way to make sure that it gets done.

✔ **Get help:** Families and friends can place demands on you that can keep you from exercising. Or they can help clear your schedule so that you have the time. If you're having trouble finding time to exercise, talk to the people in your life. Whether it's trading chores to get a big enough block of time to go to the gym, or just asking for a little good-natured nagging — “So, lard butt, have you gone running yet or what?” — your significant others can lend a hand in helping you get into shape.

Setting Up Your Workout Schedule

Now that you've identified some goals and carved out some time to exercise, the next step is to make a workout plan. Some of the benefits of having a workout plan are obvious.

If you've made a plan in advance, it eliminates what coaches call “game-time decision-making.” It allows you to glance at the day's schedule and go out and do it, rather than trying to remember what your last workout was, and whether tomorrow's a rest day or not. Which means that you get out of the house and start breaking a sweat sooner.



But the biggest difference between having a workout plan and just going out and exercising is this: When you create a plan, you balance rest and recovery, and every workout has a specific purpose in helping you achieve your fitness goals. It's really about squeezing the maximum fitness benefit out of the minimum amount of time.

Build a smart plan and stick to it, and I guarantee you'll be stronger, fitter, and faster. And if after a month or two you can suddenly fit into a pair of jeans that you thought were two sizes too small, well, so much the better.

The first thing you need to do is determine how many days a week you're going to work out. If you're just starting out, three is a good number. And it's best to balance workout days with rest and recovery days (see Chapter 4 for more about the importance of rest). For that reason, you might start out by working out on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Or Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday if that suits you better.



And if you're doing cross-training — combining two or more activities in your workout plan — then it makes sense to alternate your activities in addition to your workouts. For example, if you're going to ride your bike twice a week, swim once a week, and do one weight training session, your schedule might shake out like the one in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1 A Typical Cross-Training Workout Schedule

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
Rest	30 min	Rest	30 min	Rest	40 min	Rest
	Bike		Swim + Resistance training		Bike	

The specifics aren't as important as the general principles. In Table 1-1, I alternate the rest and exercise days. The two bike rides are separated by two and three days, respectively, to give you ample time to recover. The duration of the workouts increases gradually through the week. And since you're going to the health club to swim, that's a good day to put in a few minutes in the weight room.

Of course, you can feel free to modify this plan to fit your schedule, your level of fitness, and your goals.

What about next week? In general, it's good to keep your schedule pretty much the same from week to week. Schedule the longer workouts and gym sessions on the same day, if possible. And while you should add to the length of the workouts, as your fitness level allows, don't push it too hard. Adding more than 10 percent a week is only inviting injury.

Getting into Training

So you've already been doing this exercise thing for a while? Well, congratulations. Now may be the time for you to move from the land of the unstructured workout to full fledged training.

Training? Don't get freaked out by the "T" word. Yeah, that's what athletes do, but in the end, your goals aren't really so much different from theirs. You want to get as fit as you can in as little time as possible, right? By focusing your training program, you can do just that.

Measuring your fitness

Every good fitness program needs three good measuring tools. You've got one of the essentials right here in the form of this training diary. The other two you can buy at almost any sporting goods store—a watch with a stopwatch function and a heart-rate monitor. They form what a consultant might call a synergy.

- ✔ The watch tells you how long you worked out.
- ✔ The heart rate monitor tells you how hard you worked.
- ✔ The training diary lets you keep track of your progress.

And all three together will motivate you to get out, identify your strengths and weaknesses, and help you get the most out of your training time.



While timing your workout is pretty basic, heart-rate monitoring was something that, until recently, only elite athletes did. At its most fundamental level, your heart rate is really the measuring stick of your cardiovascular fitness. If your speed goes up while your heart rate stays the same, then, congratulations, you're fitter. But even more importantly, your heart rate is the most reliable indicator of how your body is producing energy, which gives you the opportunity to target your training that much more accurately.

And while you can take your pulse by just putting a finger on an artery on your wrist or on your neck while you're exercising, it's far more convenient to just peek at your heart-rate monitor.

"But," you say, "I'm not an Olympic athlete." All the more reason why you need a heart-rate monitor. Olympic athletes actually have sort of a built-in heart-rate monitor, a sixth sense about how hard they're working, developed over years of training. They mostly use their heart-rate monitors to confirm what their bodies are already telling them.



A buyer's guide to heart-rate monitors

A heart-rate monitor should have a readout that's big enough to read while you're exercising. The buttons should be big enough that you can manipulate them while you're on the go. The elastic chest strap, which actually takes the reading, should be comfortable both while you're at rest and while you're exercising. The most important function is the capability to set a target heart-rate range

with an audible alarm that beeps when you're above or below it.

As for the more sophisticated programming options — anything from a post-workout readout of average heart rate to a full record of the workout that can be downloaded to your computer — let your love of gadgetry, or lack thereof, be your guide.

Ironically, recreational athletes, who can benefit most from a heart-rate monitor, are the least likely to own one. Newbies are more likely to judge their workout by speed rather than real workload, so they're likely to overdo it if they encounter a hill and loaf a little when they've got a tail wind.

Do you fall into that camp? Try this test: During your next workout, guess your heart rate. If you're not consistently within ten beats, you need a heart-rate monitor.



Having trouble getting a reading from your heart-rate monitor early in your workout? Try licking the sensor. Most rely on the conductivity of your sweat to work properly, and saliva is the best substitute.

Maxing out — speaking from the heart

One bit of information that you need before you start a training program is your *maximum heart rate*. Throughout the rest of this chapter, different training intensities are expressed as a percentage of maximum heart rate. Here's the simplest way to determine your MHR:

- ✓ Women, subtract your age from 226. (A 33-year-old female would end up with a maximum heart rate of 193.)
- ✓ Men, subtract your age from 220. (A 33-year-old male calculates a maximum heart rate of 187.)



While this number should give you a reasonable ballpark rate, it doesn't take into account factors such as heredity and your present fitness level.

The other way of determining your maximum heart rate is by pushing yourself until you get there. The safest and most accurate way to do this is with a treadmill stress test administered by your doctor. And of course, before embarking on any exercise program, you should consult with your doctor.

The Building Blocks of Training

So what's the difference between a planned workout and just plain exercising? Well, in a planned workout, you build at least one of three things: strength, speed, or endurance.

These are the building blocks of all fitness — whether it's on a bike, a basketball court, or a skating rink. Every sport more strenuous than chess calls upon these three basic qualities in various proportions. But before I talk about how to build your fitness, I need to define the terms.

Endurance

Endurance is a pretty straightforward concept. It's the ability to run or ride or swim a little farther today than you did yesterday. Sure, some part of endurance is mental — it's a borderline obsessiveness that allows people to swim the English Channel or run an ultramarathon. But it's also physical attribute, the ability of your muscles and your connective tissues to keep going . . . and going . . . and going.

And for endurance efforts, your body produces energy *aerobically* — taking in as much oxygen as it's consuming — and uses fat as its primary fuel.

Strength

Simply, strength is the ability to move mass, but it's more than just the ability to move a refrigerator or do 100 pushups. In most forms of exercise, whether it's swimming, running, or cycling, the mass that you're moving is, well, you. And improving your strength gives you the ability to move farther with every stride or stroke, as well as the ability to contend with natural obstacles such as head winds and hills.

For these kind of high-power activities, your body often functions *anaerobically* — you're consuming more oxygen than you can take in — and uses carbohydrates for quick energy.

Speed

Speed is, you guessed it, the ability to move fast. And it's easy to measure, whether against a rival or against the clock. Simply, if you have any thoughts about competing, whether seriously or casually, you have the need for speed.

Speed workouts are usually highly anaerobic and use carbohydrate stores as a fuel source.

The Three Kinds of Workouts

Okay, so you understand what your goals are. Now how do you tailor an aerobic program to increase your abilities? Well for starters, your master plan should incorporate three different kinds of workouts, each addressing one of the three cornerstones discussed in the preceding section.

Long, steady distance

To improve your endurance, you're going to do *LSD* — long, steady distance — workouts. By building endurance, LSD workouts provide a base for your training schedule. They train your body to use fat as a fuel, which is the most efficient way to power your muscles for long-distance workouts. They also allow your body to recover from the stresses that your power- and speed-building workouts place on your body.



LSD workouts seem easy, and in a way, that's the problem. You feel like you should be doing more, and so you push yourself beyond the point at which you're getting maximum training benefit. Discipline yourself to go slowly and keep your heart rate in the target range. Shoot for between 50 and 70 percent of your maximum heart rate on LSD workouts.

Strength training

While you can increase your strength by doing resistance workouts — running in sand, riding up hills, skating with really rusty bearings — the best way to get stronger is to hit the gym. A balanced whole-body program of weight lifting can increase your strength, help prevent injury, and even help you look better in a bathing suit.



It doesn't really matter whether you choose a machine-to-machine circuit or a series of light free-weight exercises. If you've never lifted weights before, ask a trainer at your gym or health club to show you proper form and help you design a workout plan. The key is stick-to-itiveness. It'll take about 12 to 16 weeks, working out two to three times a week, to really build your strength.

Unless your goal is to get pumped up Schwarzenegger-style, you should stay away from heavy weight/low rep exercises. Adding too much upper-body muscle could actually slow you down by adding a little power and a lot of extra weight.

Speed intervals

To get fast, you need to do sprint intervals. The idea is to run or pedal or swim as fast as you can for a short time — between 10 and 20 seconds. Then catch your breath and do it all over again.

In every muscle, there are fast-twitch and slow-twitch fibers. While an individual's proportion of fast-twitch to slow-twitch fibers is largely determined by genetics — Olympic sprinters got there by choosing their parents well — you can increase your percentage of fast twitch fibers somewhat with speed training. Your heart rate should go completely into the anaerobic zone, the place where your body pulls out all its energy trump cards. This corresponds to a reading of between 85 and 100 percent of your maximum heart rate.

Failing to succeed

How hard should you be pushing yourself during a sprint? Harder. No, harder than that. No, even harder. Elite athletes do intervals until “failure.” What does that mean exactly? It means that on your last set, you

can barely stand up, or take one more stroke.

On a micro level, you have tried and you have failed. And on a macro level, you have most definitely succeeded.

Building a Workout Plan

In order to maintain a consistent workout regimen, you need to get out your calendar. What follows is a 12-week training program, divided into three phases, that’s guaranteed to get you in top shape in as little time as possible.

- ✓ Phase 1 of the program focuses on building an endurance base (see Table 1-2). You start out working out three days a week, all LSD workouts. By the end of this phase, you’re exercising four days a week and are doing some strength workouts.
- ✓ Phase 2 of the program focuses on maintaining your endurance while building your power (see Table 1-3). You start out with one weight workout a week and increase it to two, while introducing some speed work by the end of phase two.
- ✓ Phase 3 of the program focuses on maintaining your strength and endurance, while adding some speed work (see Table 1-4).

Table 1-2 Workout Plan: Phase 1

<i>Week</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
1	45 min LSD	Rest	Rest	30 min LSD	Rest	Rest	20 min LSD
2	60 min LSD	Rest	Rest	30 min LSD	Rest	Rest	25 min LSD

<i>Week</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
3	60 min LSD	Rest	20 min LSD	Rest	30 min LSD	Rest	30 min LSD
4	75 min LSD	Rest	30 min Strength	Rest	30 min LSD	Rest	30 min LSD

Table 1-3 Workout Plan: Phase 2

<i>Week</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
5	75 min LSD	Rest	Rest	Strength	Rest	40 min LSD	Rest
6	90 min LSD	Rest	Rest	Strength	Rest	40 min LSD	Rest
7	100 min LSD	Rest	Strength	Rest	40 min LSD	Rest	30 min Strength
8	100 min LSD	Rest	30 min Speed	Rest	50 min LSD	Rest	Strength

Table 1-4 Workout Plan: Phase 3

<i>Week</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
9	30 min Strength	Rest	30 min Speed	Rest	40 min LSD	Rest	110 min LSD
10	40 min Strength	Rest	30 min Speed	Rest	40 min LSD	Rest	110 min LSD
11	40 min Strength	Rest	40 min Speed	Rest	50 min LSD	Rest	110 min LSD
12	50 min Strength	Rest	40 min Speed	Rest	50 min LSD	Rest	110 min LSD

What do you do when you reach week 12? Try the maintenance week schedule in Table 1.5 for a few weeks, which replaces one of the speed workouts with an LSD workout.

Table 1-5 **Workout Plan: Maintenance**

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
90 min. LSD	Rest	40 min Speed	Rest	50 min LSD	Rest	40 min Strength



No, the program isn't carved in stone, and you can feel free to adapt this training plan to your schedule and your level of fitness. However, note that there are some overriding principles in any good training program:

- ✔ You should alternate weight lifting or speed workouts with LSD days or rest days to allow for recovery.
- ✔ Longer LSD workouts fall on a Saturday or a Sunday, which gives you more flexibility in scheduling them.
- ✔ Your aerobic output will increase from week to week, by no more than 25 percent a week during the endurance phase and no more than 15 percent a week during the power and speed phases.