

# Beginner's Guide to WORKING OUT

GOING TO THE GYM FOR THE FIRST TIME CAN BE A PRETTY INTIMIDATING PROSPECT ESPECIALLY AFTER A PROLONGED PERIOD OF STAYING AT HOME. BUT YOU CAN ALWAYS BRING YOURSELF BACK ON TRACK.

By Althea Shah

**W**hen you think of the gym, you think of big bodybuilders, perfectly toned bodies, people in much greater shape than you, and so much more. Then that sweaty body is something that can also put you off. And then topping that is the hard work to be done to achieve your goal. Here is a guide to the correct way to start your fitness journey that will help you be consistent and motivated.

**Find a Partner:** You do not have to do it alone. Drag someone along with you. It could be your family member, a friend or a colleague. You will feel more comfortable as you have someone familiar with you. Not to mention the added bonus of being able to keep each other motivated. You will make it to the gym when you know that your partner is waiting for you in the gym.

**Consult a Professional:** Make an appointment with the Fitness Advisor in the gym. It could be the Manager, Head Trainer or Fitness Manager. They will guide you and make a program for you keeping in mind your fitness level and your goals.

You will need to do a fitness assessment before you start – The trainer will take your body measurements and a few simple tests to analyse your physical abilities. Do not worry if you can not do too much at this stage. Everyone starts this way. Ask for a few sessions with a trainer so you can follow his/her guidance to understand the routines. Ask the personal trainer everything you want to know about the gym. How to use the equipment, how to train properly, the correct form to lift weight or even about nutrition. It is to avoid serious injury in the long run.



**Workout Gear:** Dress so you are comfortable and able to move easily. Avoid an overabundance of material since you will be sweating. Wear tracks, t-shirts, with good supporters, good quality shoes that fit well and socks. Carry a hand towel and a sipper bottle with water. Do not forget to pack your soap or shampoo if you plan to take a shower there after the exercise. Some gyms provide basic toiletries free of charge. Keep sipping water before and through your workouts.

**Do a Good Warm Up:** Always do a good warm up before starting your workouts. Your body is not accustomed to workouts so you will get soreness in your body because of lactic acid build up. Muscles need time to adjust to the new demand's aerobic activity places on them. You could end up pulling your muscles if they are not properly warmed up. Begin your work out with a 10-minute warm up session like jogging on the spot, skipping or jumping jacks.

**Start Slowly:** If you push yourself too hard at first, you may be forced to abandon your program because of pain or injury. It is better to start slowly and progress gradually. Do not step on the scale too often as it is not going to show you immediate results.

**Set Goals:** Fitness is a lifestyle change. Getting fit cannot happen overnight. It takes at least a month to start seeing results. Then you need to continue this for the rest of the year to get even better results and make the results stay. Start with simple goals and then progress to longer range goals. Remember to make your goals realistic and achievable. It is easy to get frustrated and to give up if your goals are too ambitious.



**Strength Training:** Building muscle will give you a toned body and help minimize jiggle. A workout has to be planned targeting all major muscle groups at least 3 times a week. Beginners can start with one set of exercises and build up to two or three. 8 to 12 repetitions of an activity is standard. The weight should be heavy enough to completely fatigue the target muscle by the last repetition. You can do this freehand. For best efforts you should add some resistance by holding dumbbells in your hand. The warm up can be for 5-10 minutes followed by a 30 minute strength training workout.

**Aerobic Activity:** You can start the first month with 10-15 minutes of a cardio workout then increase it to 30-45 minutes in the next 2 months. Do a continuous aerobic activity. For starters – walk or hop on a bike. You can walk outside in the park or in the hallways or just up and down stairs. You can do a cardio workout on alternate days to strength training workouts. You can do your cardio workouts on the same day before you get into your strength training routine if you are pressed for time.

**Track Your Progress:** Exercise for 45 minutes to an hour with moderate intensity for four to five days a week. Any activity will help you burn 50-100 calories in 15 minutes. It may help to keep an exercise diary. Record what you did during each exercise session, how long you exercised and how you felt afterward. Recording your efforts can help you work toward your goals – and remind you that you are making progress.



**Cool Down and Stretch:** Take a few minutes to lower your heart rate and stretch your muscles. This improves flexibility and helps prepare the body for your next workout. This also helps in taking away lactic acid (a chemical by-product of reactions happening in muscles for energy expenditure) built up in muscles and diluting it. It also helps in overcoming the soreness caused by strength training by allowing better blood flow and ability to remove toxins.

**Eat Right:** The pre-workout meal should be focused on protein and carbohydrates. Remember to eat at least 60-90 minutes before exercise to allow the body time to digest and make the nutrients available to the body during exercise. Try a fruit or fruit juice.

The post-workout meal - A sports drink is a good first step in post-workout nutrition. It will act to quickly replace energy stores and replace lost nutrients. The post-workout meal should be heavy on protein and carbohydrates. Whey protein powders are ideal because they can be processed and utilized by the body quicker.

**Reward Yourself:** After each exercise session, take a few minutes to sit down and relax. Reflect on what you have just accomplished. Savor the good feelings that exercise gives you. This type of internal reward can help you make a long-term commitment to regular exercise. External rewards can help, too. When you reach a longer-range goal, treat yourself to a new pair of walking shoes or new tunes to enjoy while you exercise.



# Contributors



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