

Be your own PERSONAL TRAINER!

Wish you had professional help to knock you into shape after the festive blow-out? Here's how to do it yourself!

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With Christmas over and a new year upon us, it's likely you're ready to swap your stilettos for trainers and start a new fitness regime that will help you regain your former svelte shape. But how do you go about it? Your waistline may be larger following the excesses of the party season, but your bank balance is probably smaller – meaning you may not be able to afford to hire a personal trainer to whip you into shape.

But don't despair – there's an expert you can afford who's better qualified than a personal trainer to get you back to peak fitness – you! You know your body and lifestyle better than anyone and, with a little planning, effort and dedication, you can combine it with the following expert advice from top PTs to create the perfect workout plan. It'll help you shed pounds without having to shell out. Are you ready to be your very own PT?

GATHER YOUR DATA

A personal trainer will usually have a consultation with you before you start training, to assess where you're at and decide what you want to achieve. Prepare yourself for your fitness journey by collating the same information.

● **Record your weight and vital statistics**, including your bust, waist, hips, arms and thighs, then measure your stats and weigh in each week,

to monitor your progress. If the scales show no change, or even a weight gain one week, don't be disheartened. A PT would remind you that the muscle you are building weighs more than the fat you're burning, and that you're still taking useful steps to moving towards your goal, so stay positive.

● **Do some self-fitness tests to measure your cardiovascular fitness**, strength and flexibility (see page 116 for examples from *H&F* personal trainer Matt Roberts) and test yourself once a month to monitor improvements you make. Also, take a 'before' photograph of yourself wearing underwear, and take follow-up photos once a month to notice changes in your weight, body shape, skin tone and posture.

● **Set achievable goals: they are essential for long-term results.** It's not enough just to say you want to 'lose weight' or 'get fitter'. Brainstorm goals to get your mind thinking freely, then check they are S.M.A.R.T (that's specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time constrained) and chose ones that can work for you. For example, saying you want to 'lose 11lb a week for four weeks' is all of the above, while wishing you could get back into a pair of jeans next weekend that you last wore when you were 10 years' younger (and 10lbs lighter) isn't. And don't aim for too many goals at once – try to run a 10K, lose half a stone and get a six-pack at the same time and you'll soon be overwhelmed.

H&F TIP
Breathe out
as you sit-up
– for a flatter
tummy.



PLAN YOUR PROGRAMME

There's much more to having a personal trainer than being shouted at for an hour a couple of times a week. A PT will plan an effective programme for you, which will incorporate different training methods to help you reach your goals. But it's not hard to come up with your own plan. Here's what you should consider.

● **Plan to work out three to five times a week for a minimum of 30 minutes**, combining a mixture of cardio exercise with resistance training and flexibility work to get the best results. Once you've established which training methods are best for you from our guides below, schedule workouts in your diary and commit to them as if you were paying to meet with a PT, so you're less likely to cancel. Your weekly plan should allow for one or two 'rest days' to allow your body to recover and repair itself, and you should also aim to up your daily moderate activity by walking more and taking the stairs instead of lifts and escalators.

● **To achieve continued results, you need to completely change your workouts every six to eight weeks.**

This will keep your body guessing so you avoid hitting a fitness plateau. You also need to build your workouts week by week by adding on another minute or two of cardio, using heavier weights or moving onto harder variations of the exercises – to constantly challenge your body.

● **Review your diet and lifestyle for optimum results.** Keep a food and drink diary to see if your nutritional intake can be improved, and assess your sleep patterns and work/social life balance to pinpoint the changes you can make to improve your overall health and energy levels. ➤

YOUR CARDIO WORKOUTS

Walking, running, swimming, dancing and skipping all count as cardio – it's basically any exercise that raises your heart rate. And combining different intensities of training will constantly challenge your body, for maximum fat-burning and fitness benefits. Aim to do three to five cardio sessions a week – of both high and low intensity.

The methods below get you to work within particular heart-rate zones – anything from 60 to 90 per cent of your maximum heart rate (MHR). You can calculate your MHR by subtracting your age from 220.

● Long, slow-duration (LSD) sessions are fairly low intensity, where you keep a steady heart rate throughout. They should last at least 15 minutes and up to two hours. LSD workouts, which can take the form of running, cycling or even fast walking, improve cardiovascular fitness and lung capacity, so you can push yourself harder in interval training sessions (especially if you work at 70-80 per cent of your MHR). But if you train at 60-70 per cent of your MHR, you'll work in your fat-burning zone and burn more calories – 85 per cent of which will be fat. Aim for at least one LSD session every week and increase their length each session in order to improve your fitness levels and stamina.

● High-intensity interval training (HIIT) delivers better results than any other type of workout. It works your body so hard that it can't supply sufficient oxygen to your muscles and you reach muscle failure quickly, so a 20-30 minute session is all you need. Alternate intense 30-45 second bursts of skipping, sprinting, stair-climbing, body resistance exercises and plyometric jumping moves (working at 85-90 per cent of your MHR) with moderate intensity work (reducing your MHR to around 70-80 per cent) for 45-60 seconds. You'll only need to do two HIIT sessions a week, allowing a rest day to fully recover. But don't feel guilty – research shows you'll continue burning calories for up to 72-hours post-workout.

Combining different training approaches will help you burn extra fat

YOUR RESISTANCE WORKOUTS

Resistance training can incorporate free weights, cable machines, kettlebells, medicine balls and your bodyweight. But whichever method you employ, the weight you use and repetitions and sets you perform must stress your body sufficiently to be effective. Never be afraid to use heavier weights for fear of bulking up – women simply don't have the testosterone levels to get 'big.' Instead, weights will help you achieve the toned body you're after.

● **The weights you use need to be heavy enough** so the muscle group you're training is fatigued by the end of each set. To find the right weight for an individual exercise, you need to work out your 'one rep max'. For example, if you're working your biceps with biceps curls, see what the heaviest weight is that you can use to perform one rep only. The weight you then use for doing the reps and sets of this exercise will be a lower percentage of this maximum weight (see the guidelines below).

● **Know your reps from your sets.** Reps, or repetitions, are a cycle of lifting and lowering a weight, while a set is a group of repetitions. Get it wrong, and you won't achieve results. Too many can lead to overtraining, exceeding your body's capacity to recover, which can prevent you from progressing. And too few means you won't stress your muscles enough. How many you complete should be based on your goals.

If your goal is to reduce body fat, perform two sets of six-12 repetitions, using a weight of 70-80 per cent of your one rep max. If your goal is to develop muscular endurance (perfect if you want to get stronger for distance running, swimming or cycling), perform three to four sets of 12+ repetitions with a weight less than 70 per cent of your one rep max. ➤

H&F TIP
Ten minutes of skipping burns a healthy 135 calories.





H&F TIP
Investing in
new kit could
help boost your
performance.

PT WISDOM

Try these motivational tips from some of the UK's top PTs to stay on track and reach your goals.



'Whether you spend a few pounds on a fitness app or £200 on a state-of-the-art heart rate monitor, training tools track your progress and give you incentive to keep going. Many apps allow you to share your results, so your friends can spur you on!' Pilates and fitness expert, Caroline Sandry; carolinesandry.com.



'Have a vision of how you want to look and feel. For three minutes each day, close your eyes, and notice your emotional responses to seeing a slimmer, fitter, energetic and happier you. This will help you make the right diet and exercise choices.' A-list PT Dan Roberts; danrobertselite.com.



'Use a vision board. Cover a pin board with motivating photographs and quotes and put it somewhere you'll see every day. Or use Pinterest and check your smartphone when you need a kick-start.' Fitness performance coach Kim Ingleby; kimingleby.co.uk.

FIND THE RIGHT KIT FOR YOU

Using the right exercise equipment will increase the challenge, stave off boredom and keep you motivated.

● **The great outdoors is all you need for walking and running galore.** But if you want to spice up your home cardio workouts, go for a skipping rope with a counter to tot up your jumps: try John Lewis' Digital Skipping Rope (£14, johnlewis.co.uk). Or you could incorporate a step, such as the One Body Aerobic Step (£19.96, tesco.com), which has adjustable height so you can increase the intensity of your workouts. Also, consider using a heart-rate monitor. Try Polar (for models ranging from £30 to £300, polar.com) to keep track of the intensity of your cardio sessions.

● **Invest in a set of dumbbells,** such as the Jessica Ennis 12kg Dumbbell set, (£29.99, argos.com), so you can build your strength via resistance training. Light and portable

'You'll burn calories for 72 hours after a high-intensity interval training workout'

resistance bands are great for toning up on the go, outdoors and at home, and are highly effective because they provide consistent and constant tension throughout a repetition, to increase the intensity of exercises. Try Fitness-Mad's Resistance Gym, (£16.50, fitness-mad.com), which has three bands with increasing resistance.

● **A foam roller** such as the Elite Foam Roller (£13.49, physioroom.com) will help you ease out muscle tension and knots as you roll your bodyweight along it – pausing on sore areas for extra benefits. And for the ultimate stretching challenge, buy a strap such as the Stretch Buddy, (£10.99, amazon.co.uk), to help boost your flexibility. ■



Want to revamp your workout? Try one of our exercise routines online at tinyurl.com/HFinspiration