

Slim Gym

By Guy Falotico

Here's how to exercise without emptying your wallet

Brad Ranson was a member of his New Jersey high school's swim team. Aside from going to the pool, though, he didn't belong to a gym or own expensive exercise equipment. He realized he had to find other ways to strengthen his body.

"I needed to keep up my work ethic out of season in order to help myself when the season would start up again," recalls Ranson, now 19 and a member of the swim team at Hartwick College in Oneonta, N.Y. "I also found that just stretching generally made me feel better, even though I wasn't working out every day."

Whether you hope to play sports after high school or not, you know how important it is to get exercise. But few teens can afford gym memberships or elaborate home fitness systems. That doesn't mean you're doomed to be out of shape until you've reached adulthood. There are plenty of ways to exercise without blowing your allowance—and many don't even require you to leave the house.

No Gear? No Problem!

First, figure out when you can fit exercise into your schedule, even if it's while you're doing something else. "Instead of sitting on the couch and watching TV, get down and work on your flexibility," Ranson suggests. "You can still get your entertainment and you will be helping your body."

Then, see where exercise can help you do the things you need to do every day. How are you getting to school or to work? See whether you can get yourself there under your own power. That's something Ranson has done for a while, especially when he isn't swimming regularly. "When I was out of season or had some spare time, I'd go for a run and would also try to bike to closer destinations instead of drive," he says.

Basic exercises you've been doing for years— jumping jacks, push-ups, crunches, running in place—are good ways to work out without spending a dime. Hoping to build a little muscle mass with some weight training? Forget the expensive dumbbell sets. Just use some heavy jugs you have around the

house—a gallon of milk, a jug of laundry detergent, or even that huge bottle of spring water.

Maybe you just want to tone up, like 16-year-old Alex P. of Connecticut. Alex has been a dancer since she was 4, participating in a lyrical dance group and a tap dance group. But it wasn't until recently that she focused on getting other types of exercise in addition to dancing. "When I was younger, dance and playing outside were my two forms of exercise," Alex says. "But now that I am in my teens I understand that having an exercise routine is important, and it has helped me tremendously in my journey as a dancer."

Alex has a daily routine that might work for you even if you've never danced a step in your life. Each afternoon she takes a few minutes (five minutes on each exercise, to be exact) to do crunches and something called wall sits. To perform a wall sit, put your back against the wall, then slide your backside down it as if you were going to sit in a chair. Hold this position briefly. "Wall sits tone my legs in places where dance doesn't," Alex says.

Beyond Body Benefits

One key to getting in shape, whether you're on a budget or not, is finding the desire to exercise. Shane Williamson, a certified trainer at Ideal Personal Training in Springboro, Ohio, has worked with teens at every fitness level. "Kids need to be in charge of their own health and can't wait for someone else to do it for them," he says. "The idea is to focus on the importance of being healthy—and what healthy is for them."

Williamson's experience has shown that for teens, getting fit provides benefits beyond healthier bodies. "It changes who kids are as people in terms of self-esteem and confidence," he says. "They need to see the big picture of where they see themselves. Everyone's different."

Ranson agrees. "Exercising regularly can really improve your overall health. I would recommend that all teenagers, athletes or not, get out and exercise on a regular basis if they can."

May Wii Help You?



Yuriko Nakao/Reuters/Corbis

Can motion-based video games such as *Wii Fit* actually get you in shape? According to studies, they won't be replacing regular exercise any time soon. Research has shown that even the most strenuous Wii activities, such as boxing on the original *Wii Sports*, burn only 7 calories per minute, while real boxing burns 10 calories or more per minute. The difference is even greater in Wii golf and tennis. Still, they're a good starting point for those who don't exercise regularly. The lesson: Any movement is better than no movement!

Getting Started

Don't know a leg lift from a squat thrust? No problem—you can exercise just by getting more out of everyday activities. Here are some ideas:



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- **If you live close enough to school, walk, bike, or skate there and back.**

- **Look for TV fitness shows** featuring activities you've never tried.
- **Search for basic workout videos online that fit your needs.** Or learn something completely new—you can practice everything from surfing and kickboxing to jumping rope and using a hula hoop in the comfort of your home.
- **Like hanging out at the mall?** Walk around instead of snacking at the food court. And take the stairs instead of the escalator.
- **Do some household chores.** Gardening, raking leaves, and sweeping the driveway burn calories while making your parents happy. It's a win-win situation!
- **Take the dog for a long walk.** Your pup will love it, and so will your heart, lungs, glutes, and quads.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. In addition to a healthier body, what does Williamson suggest as an important benefit of exercise for teenagers?

- A Exercise gives teenagers more energy to concentrate better in school.
- B Exercise makes teenagers smarter.
- C Exercise helps teenagers make more friends.
- D Exercise develops teenagers' self-esteem and confidence.

2. What is one reason listed in the passage why teenagers might struggle to exercise on their own?

- A Teenagers are lazy and would rather be couch potatoes than get themselves in shape.
- B Some teenagers believe exercising requires expensive equipment or a gym membership they cannot afford.
- C Teenagers have too much homework to have any time for physical exercise.
- D Many teenagers have a job in addition to school and do not have time for physical exercise.

3. What is the most appropriate reason why a regular exercise routine would help increase kids' self-confidence?

- A A regular exercise routine is expensive and will force kids to avoid spending money on junk food and video games.
- B A regular exercise routine will help create big muscles and help kids who are bullied fight off the bully.
- C A regular exercise routine is fun and having fun automatically boosts kids' self-confidence.
- D A regular exercise routine fosters a sense of accomplishment and helps kids feel better about their bodies and minds.

4. Read the following sentence: "Shane Williamson, a certified trainer at Ideal Personal Training in Springboro, Ohio, has worked with teens at every fitness level."

In this sentence the word **certified** means

- A fit
- B inexperienced
- C qualified
- D helpful

5. The purpose of this passage is to

- A argue that most teenagers are not self-motivated and need a personal trainer in order get in shape
- B encourage kids to exercise regularly and to provide several example exercises to get kids started
- C persuade schools to hire personal trainers to work with students on their fitness
- D inform parents of the ways in which their kids could get off the couch and into shape

6. According to the passage, what are two possible exercises you could do in your own living room?

7. Why would having an exercise routine be important for Alex P. and other youth interested in staying in shape?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

_____ stay committed to getting in shape it is helpful to have an exercise routine.

- A Because
- B Even though
- C In order to
- D As a result of

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

If kids understand why it is important to stay healthy they will exercise more.

(if) Who? kids

What? _____

(they will) What? _____

10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: elaborate (e · lab · o · rate): very detailed and complicated.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline the word **elaborate**.

1. The elaborate lace pattern on my sister's wedding dress was beautiful: I couldn't keep my eyes off the floral pattern's numerous twists and turns.
2. In order to successfully execute their plan, the robbers developed an elaborate mission for holding up the bank, involving 75 squirt guns and 100 water balloons!
3. The chef turned a simple grilled cheese sandwich into an elaborate work of culinary art.
4. I wish I hadn't asked my mom why I had to eat my vegetables before dessert. "Because I told you so" would have been enough. Instead, she gave me a 10-minute, elaborate speech about the health benefits of spinach.
5. Even though Jason said he did not want his 16th birthday to be a big deal, his friends threw him an elaborate surprise party that took an entire year to plan!

10b. Which of the pictures represents a more elaborate home?



11. Would you be able to provide an elaborate explanation of astrophysics? Why or why not?
