

Top-10 Ways to Improve Your Workout

The first step in improving your health is finding—or making—the time to exercise. But just going through the motions won't give you the health benefits you're looking for. Doing the same workout over and over can get boring and you are unlikely to see improvements because you are always using the same muscles. Changing your routine can bring amazing results. The American Council on Exercise (ACE) suggests the following Top-10 ways to improve your workout.

1. **Change the mode or intensity of your training.** Altering your routine will help you avoid conditioning plateaus and force your body to adapt to new movements and levels of intensity. Get creative and challenge yourself.
2. **Hire a personal trainer.** Working out with a certified personal trainer allows you to focus on the exercise at hand and let the trainer worry about the routine. A trainer will keep your workouts fresh and always progressing.
3. **Eat properly and stay hydrated.** Without proper nutrition and fluid intake, there is no way you can have a great workout. Your body needs these fuels to build muscle and repair damaged tissue.
4. **Emphasize quality over quantity.** Although it may seem that working out more often would be the best way to get fit, more intense workouts performed less often will actually produce greater results. Your body needs rest to recover and repair damaged muscle tissue and avoid injury.
5. **Incorporate mind-body training.** Mind-body fitness has been associated with improved muscular strength, flexibility, balance and coordination, as well as increased mental development and self-efficacy.

6. **Exercise at the right time for your body.** Work with your body's natural energy level—not against it. Exercise when you usually have the most energy, rather than putting your workout off until a time when you might not feel your best.

7. **Get a workout partner.** Exercising with a partner makes you accountable to someone else for each workout and can improve adherence to a program. A partner can inspire you to push yourself a little bit harder when your energy level is not at its peak.

8. **Emphasize breathing.** When strength training, take full breaths during each exercise, exhaling on the exertion and inhaling as you release. During cardiovascular exercise, full breaths will deliver as much oxygen as possible to the working muscles, making them more efficient.

9. **Use a heart-rate monitor.** A heart-rate monitor is a great tool to gauge how hard your body is working and can help you stay within your target heart-rate training zone.

10. **Listen to music.** Music can make a workout more fun and give you that extra burst of energy you need to work your hardest.

For more information on ACE and health and fitness topics, see website www.acefitness.org.

