

GETTING IN SHAPE



The idea of getting in shape can be a daunting, over-whelming. We know we should get in shape; we want to be in shape; we just don't know where to begin, and we're not sure we can be fully successful.

We can succeed. Every realized achievement begins with an action plan. To get in shape, the plan is a 12 week program that addresses the four areas of fitness: nutrition, cardiovascular health, resistance (strength), and flexibility.

The keys to success are to plan, take action on your plan and stick with your plan. Twelve weeks is a magical length of time for undertaking a fitness plan. You will see significant improvement by the end of twelve weeks, and twelve weeks is the right length of time for you to commit to getting fit. Getting fit is not easy, and you can commit to working hard for the next twelve weeks. Your investment of hard work and time will yield great returns in twelve weeks and for the rest of your life.

Consistency is vitally important to your success. Be consistent in your eating, your aerobic exercise, and your resistance and strength training. You are trying to establish new lifestyle habits, and consistency is key. From time to time, you will "fall off the wagon." It happens – just like in umpiring. Sometimes, in umpiring, you may make a bad call or miss a strike. What do you do when you miss a call? Do you walk off the field, saying, "I blew that call; the whole game is shot. I'm leaving."

No, you do the next right thing. You make the next right call. Your response must be the same when you make a mistake in your fitness efforts. Without thinking, you grabbed a donut at work. So, don't throw in the towel for the whole day. Do the next right thing. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Choose the salad instead of the fried combo plate. Do the next right thing.

Umpiring is an athletic endeavor. Think of yourself as an athlete. Think like an athlete thinks. Be an athlete. Expect the best from yourself and you will get it.

Nutrition and eating

Diets don't work. You may lose a few pounds quickly following the latest fad diet, but you will not necessarily be more fit or healthy, and you will likely "find" those lost pounds when you quit the diet.

Make less dramatic changes in your eating that you can live with. Make better choices of what you eat, how much you eat, and when you eat it. Instead of trying to completely eliminate foods that you love (like French fries or chocolate brownies), consciously

include them as a reward for making great choices throughout the week. Continue to eat the foods you love, and make smaller portions a habit.

Plan for and eat more fresh foods and fewer fried foods. Plan for more fruit and fewer sugar-heavy foods. Plan for more good carbohydrates to be eaten early and fewer bad carbohydrates late in the day. Plan to eat more nuts and fewer chips and fried snacks.

Good carbohydrates that should be included in your daily meals:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Beans
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Whole grain breads
- Whole grain cereals
- Whole grain pastas

As you work toward fitness with cardio and resistance workouts, you may find that you are eating more than did when you were sedentary. Don't be alarmed! You will be hungrier and you should eat more – more better, nutritious foods to fuel your fitness machine.

Drink more water. Have a glass of water first thing in the morning. Drink a glass of water before each of your five or six meals. The water, alone, is good for you, but an added bonus is that drinking the water before you eat will trick your body into thinking you are fuller than you are. You feel as though you don't have to eat as much to fill up.

Eat breakfast. Every day. Studies have shown that people who eat breakfast eat less throughout the day and perform better. If you cannot eat first thing in the morning, plan to take something with you that you can eat an hour later. You can take a piece of fruit, a cup of yogurt, a block of cheese or a breakfast bar. Your choices are limited only by your imagination and planning.

Plan your meals. And, plan several meals. Plan for five or six small, nutritious meals, and you won't be hungry:

Breakfast:	Scrambled egg with whole wheat toast, or Yogurt with granola, or Whole grain cereal with added fruit, or Your choice of high-fiber or complex-carbohydrate food
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Mid-morning snack:	Piece of fruit, or Handful of nuts, or Cereal bar
Lunch:	Salad with egg and or turkey, or Turkey sandwich with whole grain bread, or Bowl of soup and salad or half sandwich
Mid-afternoon snack:	Energy bar, or Piece of fruit, or Piece of cheese, or Handful of mixed nuts
Dinner:	Lean meat; big helping of vegetables; baked potato or steamed rice
Evening snack:	Protein shake, with low-fat milk, or Popcorn, or Cottage cheese and fruit

Your choices are limited only by your imagination and planning.

Cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise

Walk, run, bike, swim, ski, hike, skate, treadmills, elliptical and rowing machines...

If you have been sedentary for more than three months, it is imperative that you see your doctor before beginning an exercise program. Once you are cleared, plan your cardio workouts to be less than you are currently able to do. For example, although you haven't run for a long time, you know you could run a 5K. Well, don't. You want this foray into fitness to be a life-long change. What you don't want is to burn out by the end of the first week.

Start slowly. You can plan to do a brisk 20 minute walk each day for three days. Then, increase to 25 minutes the next couple of days, then 30 minutes, and so on. When you're walking briskly for 40 minutes, you can either increase time or intensity (by carrying hand weights or by jogging).

If you plan to jog or run, your first week is very important. It is okay to walk and run in the same session. In fact, it is a good way to hold yourself back. For the first three or four days, jog for five minutes; walk for one minute; jog for five; walk for one, and so on until you've been working out aerobically for 30 minutes. Over the next days, increase

the running time between walks. You will notice vast improvement, and you will not burn out.

The most important point with cardiovascular exercise is to do something (Anything is better than nothing.) and to do it consistently six or seven times each week. It's best if you can schedule your cardio time. Treat it as an important appointment with yourself (or your training partner) that you cannot miss. You can always make cardio-conscious choices in daily life, like taking the stairs instead of the elevator or walking to the corner store instead of driving. Remember: something is always better than nothing, and you can always do the next right thing.

Resistance

There is no need to join a gym or buy a lot of new equipment to get in shape. You can even do resistance exercises at home - without equipment. If your time is limited, make your resistance training relevant to your umpiring, e.g. work your legs, your chest and your core. Plan a program of repetitions and sets, and log your progress and strength gains.

Umpire Squats: Umpires perform hundreds of squats each plate game. During your twelve week preseason program, do umpire squats. Get into the plate stance and set. Hold for five seconds. Do 8-10 repetitions; 2-3 sets. Strengthens quads/thighs.

Wall Sit: With your back against the wall, get in sitting position with feet positioned under your knees, with your thighs parallel to the floor. Hold for 20 seconds; 2-3 sets. Increase the sitting time to 30 seconds; 2-3 sets. Strengthens quads/thighs.

Push-ups: Start slowly and increase. Start with 5 reps and 2-3 sets. Increase the reps by one or two push-ups each day. Keep your back straight. Strengthens chest and core.

Crunches: Crunches are not sit-ups! Crunches keep continuous resistance on the abdominal muscles. Start with 10 reps, 2 sets and gradually increase to 15 reps, 2-3 sets. Strengthens core and abs.

Plank: Get in a modified pushup position with your forearms on the floor. Keep your abs tight and your body straight for 20 seconds. Two or three repetitions. Increase by a few seconds each workout to 60 seconds. Strengthens core.

Flexibility

Stretch every day to preserve range of motion, maintain flexibility, prevent injury during exercise, prepare the muscles for more vigorous activity, and to promote circulation.

Stretch after your cardio activity and after resistance training.

Breathe normally throughout the stretch, and never bounce. Breathing relaxes the muscles, and relaxed muscles are more elastic.

Hold stretches for 10 seconds, working up to 30 seconds. Perform 3-5 repetitions of each stretch

Quads/thigh stretch: Supporting your body with your left arm against a solid object, grab your left toes with right arm. Pull your heel up to your buttocks until you feel the stretch in your thigh. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Stretch the other side.

Hamstrings: While seated, extend your left leg in front of you. Bend your right leg, placing the bottom of your foot on the inside of the left knee. Place your right hand on top of your left hand. While keeping the lower back straightened, reach toward your left foot. Hold this for 10-30 seconds. During this stretch, keep the foot of the straight leg upright with the ankle and toes relaxed. Repeat for the right leg.

Calf Stretch: While standing, place your left foot near the wall. Bend forearms and rest them against the wall. Keeping the right foot flat on the floor, move right leg back until you feel the stretch in the calf muscle. Hold an easy stretch for 10-30 seconds. Do not bounce. Stretch the other leg.

Pec/Chest Stretch: Place flat palm of right arm against a wall. Slowly rotate forward until you feel the stretch in your chest. Hold the stretch for 10-30 seconds. Stretch the other side.

Dead ball/Side Stretch: Reach hands up, as if calling Dead Ball. Clasp your hands straight up overhead, palms facing the ceiling. Gently lower to the right side until you feel a stretch down your left side. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Switch sides and repeat.

Groin stretch: Stand with your legs wide apart. Shift your weight to one side, bending your knee somewhat. Do not let your knee bend beyond your ankle; in other words, you should be able to look down and still see your toes. You should feel the stretch in your opposite leg, which remains extended. Both of your feet stay flat on the ground facing forward. Hold for 10-30 seconds, then lean to the other side.

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