

# 18 Ways to Maximize Your Workout and Lose Weight Faster

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Ask any runner who's naturally slim: There are a bazillion reasons to exercise that have nothing to do with losing weight. But if weight loss is your main motivator, make sure every minute of exercise counts with these tricks to burn more calories during exercise:

**1. Clock more aerobic cardio.** Any activity that permits you to talk but makes it difficult to carry out long conversations (i.e. aerobic exercise) is a secret weapon for weight loss, says Edward Jackowski, Ph.D., founder of EXUDE Fitness training programs and author of *Escape Your Weight*. Unlike weight lifting or uber-intense, unsustainably difficult activities (i.e. anaerobic exercise), most people can physically sustain aerobic exercise for long enough to burn a substantial amount of calories. It's why anyone trying to lose weight should spend about 60 percent of their gym time on cardio and just 40 percent doing other stuff.

**2. Actually work.** Going through the motions won't help you lose weight — even if you half-ass it for 45 minutes. "From a scientific perspective, it's the intensity of exercise that raises the metabolism," says Jackowski. Instead of worrying about your heart rate, stick with this rule of thumb: If you don't feel winded and you have the capacity to step it up, you should be moving faster. So long as you tax your system, you'll benefit just as much as someone who's more fit and running faster than you on next treadmill.



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**3. Fluctuate between different intensities.** When you change things up, every system of the body has to adapt, **explains Franci Cohen, an exercise physiologist, certified nutritionist, and founder of the Brooklyn, New York-based Fuel Fitness.** If that sounds like an awful lot of effort, that's because it is — and that's good. The more work you give your body to do, the more fuel (calories!) it needs to burn to get the job done.

So, several times throughout your workout, alternate between fast-paced aerobic exercise

and exercises that are way too hard to keep up for more than a minute.

While the hard stuff burns more calories per minute than aerobic exercise and increases your metabolism for hours after you leave the gym, you can't keep up that pace forever. Alternating between four minutes of steady-state cardio in the aerobic zone, and one minute of unsustainably intense cardio gives you the most bang for your buck.



**4. Do *not* fear weights.** While lifting weights won't necessarily burn fat, it will build muscle. The more muscle you have, the more calories your body burns after you leave the gym and plop down on the couch, Jackowski explains. Another thing: Weight training keeps your muscles in shape so they looked toned when you shed the fat that's now covering them up.

**5. Exhaust whatever muscle you're working.** That burning sensation you get in your thighs after doing lots of lunges? That's means you've reached your anaerobic threshold — you've worked as hard as you possibly can, and you've burned more calories because of it.

**6. Alternate between working different muscle groups.** Also known as cross-training, this technique helps you sustain a higher level of intensity for longer than you would if you'd simply stuck with working one area. So move onto overhead presses as soon as your legs are spent from doing lunges. Once your legs recover, you can pick up where you left off with a set of squats, box jumps, or another form of lower body torture toning.



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**7. Stop wasting time between exercises.** Bathroom breaks and other excuses for dillydallying give your heart rate a chance to return to normal. But the longer you keep it elevated, the harder your body will have to work and the more calories you'll burn.

**8. Warm up — especially in the morning.** When you go from 0 (sleeping) to 50 (sweating) first thing in the a.m., you sort of shock the heart, Jackowski explains. People who do intense anaerobic exercise in the morning without a warm-up tend to be more tired (aka lazy) throughout the day. A 10-minute a.m.

warm-up can take the edge off so you're more active after the gym, which will increase your overall calorie burn.

**8. Relax with the marathon workouts.** You might feel like a rock star when you double up on fitness classes or outlast the girl on the next elliptical. But unless you're a pro athlete or you're training for a competition, "no one needs to work out for more than an hour and 15 minutes — more is not better," Jackowski says. Overdo it, and you'll set yourself up for stress fractures, insomnia, and exhaustion, all of which could put an end to your exercise routine and stand in the way of your weight loss goals.

**9. Engage your core during every exercise.** Most exercises involve your core in some capacity — and even more so if you remember to squeeze it. And you burn more calories when you work larger muscle groups (your abs and back) than smaller muscles (like biceps), Cohen says. To max out, engage all these groups at once — and try some moves that involve rotation, such as plank twists. (They're the human version of wringing out a towel — just imagine squeezing out the fat for a narrower, tauter waistline.)



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\*~BoNuS~\*: People with stronger cores tend to get full faster because the abs stop the stomach from expanding indefinitely when you eat, explains Cohen, who likens strengthening the core to a nonsurgical gastric bypass.

**10. Vary your workouts.** If you do the same exact workout every day, your body will get used to it. While it might stoke your ego to perfect specific moves that used to challenge

you, this mastery comes at a price: it makes everything easier, so you burn fewer calories. Instead, perform familiar exercises in a different order, try new moves with equipment you're used to, or incorporate a new fitness prop into your routine.

**11. Stand on something besides the floor.** When you stand on a Bosu ball, trampoline, or balance beam, or step on and off a bench or box, your body needs to adapt by calling on extra muscles to promote stability or resist gravity. All of this results in a greater calorie burn.

**12. Do a HIIT workout once or twice a week.** A HIIT session (or high-intensity interval training) can boost your resting metabolic rate for up to eight days. (Yes, you read that right.) If you do it every day, it's a total waste because your muscles won't have to recover, Cohen says. But a proper HIIT session (like a class, where an instructor can help you perfect the technique and practice it safely) a couple times a week could really make a difference, Cohen says.

**13. Alternate between indoor and outdoor workouts.** Training in an air-conditioned space, and training outdoors in the heat or on real terrain are two very different things, Cohen explains. When you change your environment, you throw your body off, which means you're burning more calories. So switch as often as weather allows.



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**14. Try a different cardio machine.** Your 30-minute cardio session will feel like a 45-er if you choose a machine you're not used to. If you always use the elliptical, try the treadmill. If you always use

the treadmill, try the stair climber. Your muscles won't know what hit 'em.

**15. Rethink your pre-workout snack.** Experts disagree on whether non-athletes should eat before exercise. When you work out on an empty stomach, explains Cohen, there's no food for your body to use as fuel, so you default to burning fat right away. While that might sound ideal, the downside is that low energy often accompanies an empty stomach: If you're starving and lethargic, you won't work out at your full capacity. So you could end up burning fewer calories than you might have had you hit the gym with something in your system.

The best solution is to listen to your body and eat only if you're truly hungry — especially if you work out at the asscrack of dawn, when you still semi-sleepy and your body has been fasting all night. Just don't feel like you have to snack before you sweat — the extra calories could easily exceed the amount you burn off at the gym. And most experts agree that you won't lose weight if you eat more calories than you burn.

**16. Sip water during your workout.** Your body loses steam when it runs out of oxygen (it's why hard work leads to heavy breathing — you need all the oxygen!) Because water contains oxygen, drinking throughout your workout can help you sustain the intensity you need to maximize your caloric burn. Another awesome benefit is that water helps the lymphatic system flush fat from the system during certain movements, such as rebounding on a trampoline, according to Cohen. Bye, fat!



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**17. Plan your playlists strategically.** Assuming you have some semblance of rhythm and the ability to adjust your pace to the beat, songs that naturally cycle through fast and slow tempos can help you keep your body guessing.

When you're on the elliptical or stationary bike, or you're running on the open road, play something like "Right Here Right Now" by Fatboy

Slim, "Ice Princess" by Azaelia Banks, or "Circles" by I See Monstas — three songs that SoulCycle instructor Lily Miesmer likes to play during the interval portions of her classes. With brand new songs, your mind doesn't know what's tempo is coming, so your body won't either. And working hard to keep up when that beat drops will increase your overall calorie burn.

**18. Forget about the scale.** While you might think you want to lose "weight," what you really want to lose is fat. (It takes up much more space as muscle, so it's the real culprit when your clothes feel tight.) But oftentimes, the fat you lose weighs less than the muscle you build. So it's entirely possible to slim down without shedding actual pounds. Don't let that discourage you from sticking with your new fitness routine. If your skinniest jeans fit better than they did before you began working out, you're right on track — regardless of the number on the scale.