

# *Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee*

Researched & Written by Robert J. Bovee Certified Master PPT, RTS, ETS, FTS, LMS, WMS, HWFS, SNS, SSCS, MES, E/FT, PSCS, PRCS

## **Eight Ways to Push Past Fitness & Weight Loss Plateaus**

Have you already exercised and lost the weight you wanted to lose? Are you finding that the benefits of your efforts are becoming less obvious? It could be that you are experiencing a fitness slump. Here are eight ways to blow past plateaus:

### **1. Keep Moving**

First, make sure subtle changes aren't negating the hard work you do in the gym or outdoors or wherever. If you were losing or maintaining weight, but have recently gained a few pounds, do some detective work to discover where the extra calories are coming from. As long as you haven't slacked off or drastically changed your routine, don't blame your workout.

The routine you do today burns the same number of calories that it did a month ago. You have to take a good look at your lifestyle to find possible explanations for the plateau. Calorie-burning doesn't occur during exercise sessions only. Do not rely on things to be delivered; shopping on foot is exercise. Even switching from a backless chair to a more supportive one can mean a hundred or so fewer calories expended per day. In thirty-five days, that adds up to one pound of body weight.

### **2. Skip the Rewards**

If exercising makes you feel virtuous, than perhaps you're habitually rewarding yourself in subtle ways. Larger meals, snacks or a beer after an intense workout can negate the calories you burn. Driving rather than walking or going to bed early are rewards that mean you may burn fewer calories by the end of the day.

### **3. Improve Your Form**

If you're shuffling through the same cardio or weight routine that you did last year and can do it with your eyes closed, you may be using improper form. Form is imperative to the intensity of your workout; they increase together.

Leaning on the bars of a stairclimber instead of supporting your own weight can negatively impact calorie-burning. Some runners simply shuffle along the pavement, barely picking up their knees. You must practice good form and add some variety to your routine. Run off the road, perhaps on a trail, where the terrain variations will force your body to use extra energy to adapt.

### **4. Challenge Your Body**

If your form is still good, you may need to fine-tune your exercise regimen to launch yourself off of the fitness plateau. Your body adapts to a routine by building strength and endurance. Maybe it needs a new challenge.

Overloading your workout will make it interesting and fun. One easy way to intensify the load is to lengthen your current workout or take an additional weekly session. One caution: Adding too much time to your schedule too quickly can overstress muscles and joints.

Add one identical workout per week or add not more than ten percent to your total weekly workout time or distance. For example, if you usually walk on the treadmill thirty minutes, try adding three to four minutes the next time you walk. Do this each week. Always try to tailor your new workout challenges according to your schedule, fitness level and your state of mind.

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## **5. Discover Interval Training**

To increase your fitness level and calorie burn, insert three to six intense intervals into two aerobics workouts per week. If you usually do your workout at seventy to eighty-five percent of your maximum heart rate, the intervals can take you up to ninety percent of max.

You can do a ten minute warm-up at your regular treadmill pace, then speed up for ninety seconds. Slow down until you recover. Use your breathing as a heart-rate monitor as a gauge. After you've recovered, fit in two to five more ninety second intervals. Finish by gradually decreasing speed to cool down muscles and slow your heart rate.

If your current routine leaves you tired or achy, consider adding variety instead of intervals. Substitute fifteen to twenty minutes of your regular activity with something totally new. Shorten your usually cycling workout and use that time to ski on a cross-country simulator, for example. When you use different muscle groups to exercise, you're more likely to work longer and harder. A ski simulator stresses upper body muscles that a bike does not. Plus, variety helps prevent overuse injuries and boredom. You should try to rotate between three or four cardio activities per week.

## **6. Maximize Weight**

If your basic exercise regimen is straight aerobics, such as walking, jogging, aerobics, stairclimbing or cycling, and trains only lower-body muscles, you may not be quite as fit as you feel. To truly round out your workouts, add an abdominal work at least three times a week, and a well-designed upper-body weight routine twice a week. If your routine already involves strength training, try adding new machines or exercises to spice it up.

For the best muscular gains, lift in a slow, controlled manner and never work the same muscle groups two days in a row. To save time, choose exercises that work large muscle groups, such as straight-leg push-ups, bench presses, squats and lateral pull-downs.

## **7. Add a Few Pounds**

To push clients off their weight-loss plateaus, add a few extra pounds to their cardiovascular workouts. To do this, you will need to dig your backpack out of the closet. Place a five to eight pound weight in the pack. Then strap it on your back, adjusting the weight so it does not continually slam into your body, and perform a low-impact, weight-bearing cardio workout: an outdoor hike, or a session on a stairclimber or cross-country ski machine, for example. The extra weight in the pack increases your metabolism, which leads to more calorie-blasting and strengthens supporting muscle groups.

## **8. Take a Break**

If you've been working long and hard, and fatigue is a constant companion, consider taking some time off. A week of total rest and healthy, low-cal eating could be what you need to repair stressed muscles and replenish energy stores. The one thing not to do that week is eat more than usual, since you're not burning as many calories. No exercise is effective if you don't have the energy to complete it or don't give your body time to recover. Sometimes a mini-break is exactly what your body and mind need to push off that frustrating plateau. You'll go back feeling stronger and more motivated than ever.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at (585) 330-0614.