



3 trainers share how you can stick to your fitness resolutions in 2019

Caroline Praderio Dec. 28, 2018, 2:22 PM



'Tis the season for making fitness New Year's resolutions. BERTRAND GUAY/AFP/Getty Images

- INSIDER polled 1,102 people about their **New Year's resolutions**, and nearly 400 said theirs was related to **exercise**.
- Most people said they want to join a **gym**, **work out** more, or work out a certain number of times per week.
- Three certified personal trainers told INSIDER that, in order for them to stick, **fitness** goals need to be more specific than a broad statement like "work out more."
- Other respondents said they want to use activity trackers or standing desks in 2019.
- Activity monitors can be helpful for some people, but experts say the benefits of standing desks are overhyped.

The latest official guidelines for exercise say that Americans should aim for **150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity movement every week**. But according to the US Department of Health and Human Services, about 80% of US residents currently **fail to meet these guidelines**. Come January 1, many Americans will attempt to change that using a New Year's resolution related to fitness.

INSIDER recently polled 1,102 people about their New Year's resolutions for 2019, and 395 said theirs was related to exercise or activity.

When asked how they plan to achieve these fitness resolutions, most gave some variation on the same answer: Working out. Working out three to four times per week was the most popular response, chosen by 32.4% of those planning to make fitness a resolution. It was followed by going to the gym "more often" and joining a gym.

Just over 17% of the 395 respondents said they planned to purchase or use Fitbit activity monitor as part of their resolution. Another 10% said they will buy or use an Apple Watch, and an additional 10% said they'd use some other activity tracking device. Altogether, plans to track exercise with technology accounted for roughly 37% of the responses.

This is how people plan to exercise more in 2019. [Shyanne Gal/INSIDER](#)

About 14% of respondents said they are planning to walk more during their commute, and about 4% said they'll switch to using a standing desk during work.

INSIDER spoke with three certified personal trainers to learn if these popular fitness goals are likely to help people get fitter in 2019. Here's what they had to say.

Workout goals should be specific and realistic

Most of the respondents said their fitness resolution revolved around working out. But all three trainers agreed that broad resolutions like "work out more often," "join a gym," or "work out three to four times per week," lack a crucial component: Specificity.

"Goals need to be quantifiable and they have to be very specific," [Mary Jane Detroyer](#), a registered dietitian and certified personal trainer, told INSIDER. "If someone says, 'I'm going to go to the gym more often,' that person will probably never get to the gym, because they don't have a structure."

Instead, take some time before January first to form a detailed plan. Given all the non-negotiable parts of your schedule, which days of the week can you feasibly work out, and at what time of day? How long will you work out? Do you want to work out to improve your heart health, to build muscle, or to achieve some other type of goal? And what type of exercise will you do during each workout session to reach those goals?

The best fitness resolutions are specific. Sergei Bobylev\TASS via Getty Images

"Be realistic about what your schedule is like and what you are going to do at the gym," certified personal trainer [Noam Tamir](#), CSCS, owner and founder of [TS Fitness](#) in New York City, told INSIDER, "Don't just get there without a plan. Otherwise, you'll get frustrated, you won't feel comfortable, and you won't succeed."

(If you're totally new to working out and have no clue what to do in a gym, consult a fitness professional for help, he added.)

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Fitness goals should also be realistic, all three experts said, and what's realistic for you depends on both your current schedule and your current fitness level. If you're not exercising at all in December, resolving to run seven days a week starting in January is not something you're likely to achieve.

"If you set a goal that's too lofty and too far-fetched, you're more likely to fail, which is going to decrease your motivation to do it and your long-term success," [Gabbi Berkow](#), another registered dietitian and certified personal trainer, told INSIDER.

Pick a workout you like and make it convenient

If you hate running, don't resolve to run more in 2019. Guido De Bortoli/Getty Images

Berkow also recommended that any exercise you resolve to do should be something you actually like.

"Make sure, in an exercise goal, that you are incorporating movements you enjoy," she said. "If you hate running, don't force yourself to run. Find a type of exercise that you enjoy and you will stick to, because consistency trumps everything. You don't want it to be something temporary."

Finally, do what you can to make your resolution convenient for yourself. For instance: On your scheduled workout days, pack yourself both gym clothes and a pre-workout snack, Berkow suggested. Or, if you have your pick of several gyms, choose one that's conveniently located.

"Don't think, 'I'm going to join this beautiful gym, but it takes me 45 minutes to get there and 45 minutes to get back,'" Tamir said. "If it's not near your work, or near your home, then you're not going to do it."

Activity monitors can be great for some people, but you don't need one

Some people love activity monitors, but they're not for everyone. [Charlie Crowhurst/Getty Images](#)

All three trainers INSIDER interviewed also agreed on another point: Activity monitors can be helpful, but not everyone needs one.

"It really depends on the person — they can help, but they don't always," Detroyer said. "In people who have been completely and totally sedentary, [an activity monitor] works because they can see that they're not moving at all."

Tamir also noted that they can be a helpful way to jump start physical activity, but once the novelty wears off, users may find they don't enjoy getting a constant stream of activity-related data.

Read more: [Your fitness tracker is wildly inaccurate at counting calories, study finds](#)

"Sometimes people are tired of the quantitative [focus]. They're tired of the counting," he said. "It can take the enjoyment away from doing it. People just want to go for a run and enjoy it."

Finally, activity monitors that track the number of calories burned may not be a good choice for those with eating disorders or a history of disordered eating.

"In eating disorders, one of the problems usually is obsessing about calories and not allowing yourself to eat unless you burn a certain number of calories," Berkow said. "For people struggling with eating disorders or obsessing about calories burned versus calories in, I wouldn't recommend an activity monitor."

Walking more on your commute is a great choice

In INSIDER's poll, almost 14% of respondents listed walking during their commute as their fitness resolution. Though walking isn't as intense as say, [a HIIT class](#), it can still help you get healthier.

"There are tons of benefits to walking more," Berkow said. "It helps to increase the number of calories that you're burning which can help with weight management if that's a goal. Because walking gets your blood flowing, it can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease. That increase in circulation increases the volume of blood that's flowing to your brain, which helps improve concentration, energy, and focus, and improves your mood."

Read more: [How much you should walk in a week to see a major improvement to your health](#)

But, just as with any exercise-related resolution, specificity matters. You'll be more successful if you plan exactly how much longer you will walk and how often.

You can also work challenges into a walking resolution.

"If someone is walking to work but they want to become more physically active, they could try increasing the intensity of their walk," Detroyer said. "If they walk 20 blocks in 20 minutes, they may try to see if they can do it in 18. That'll actually improve their cardiovascular fitness and strength."

A standing desk won't help you get healthier

Standing desks have been overhyped, experts say. Sam Colt/Business Insider

Standing desks landed at the bottom of INSIDER's poll results, and that's probably a good thing: Recent research suggests that [standing desks are overrated](#) as a way to get improve health, the New York Times reported in November.

"Well-meaning safety professionals and some office furniture manufacturers are pushing sit-stand workstations as a way of improving cardiovascular health but there is no scientific evidence to support this recommendation," Dr. David Rempel, a professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, told the Times. (He did acknowledge, however, that alternating sitting and standing could be a helpful strategy to address neck or back pain.)

And, as Dr. Aaron Carroll pointed out in the Times article, standing is not the same thing as exercising.

"Many health groups [recommend](#) that people at work take frequent walking breaks," he wrote. "Replacing sitting with standing does not fulfill that recommendation and may even mislead people into thinking they're doing enough activity."

SurveyMonkey Audience polls from a national sample balanced by census data of age and gender.

Respondents are incentivized to complete surveys through charitable contributions. Generally speaking, digital polling tends to skew toward people with access to the internet. SurveyMonkey Audience doesn't try to weight its sample based on race or income. Total 1,037 respondents, margin of error plus or minus +/- 3.15 percentage points with 95% confidence level.

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