

*This chapter is dedicated to my  
wife, Lori, and our daughter,  
Alexa, for always believing in me  
and loving me, no matter what.*



**I**n today's health-and-fitness market, there are various organizations, specialists and commercial fitness facilities (or "gyms") that promote and encourage people to become more physically active. Most individuals who participate in an exercise program do so by acquiring a gym membership, usually opting for facilities that offer access to all of the leading technology in resistance and aerobic equipment. Many of today's clubs also offer group classes for yoga, Spinning™ and strength (or resistance) training as well as additional perks such as personalized programs, private instruction and socialization. These amenities have initiated a boom of participants in formalized environments.

Obviously, there's nothing wrong with joining a fitness facility. A potential problem, however, is that the enthusiasm of many individuals tends to wane after a short period of time due to the high costs of membership, time constraints/scheduling conflicts, boredom and lack of progress. As a result, they terminate any and all types of physical activity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 60% of American adults aren't physically active on a regular basis and 25% of the adult population isn't active at all. This is troubling, now more than ever, as 33% of the adult population in America is tipping the scale of obesity with an increase of 60%

within the past 20 years and with child obesity tripling in the past 30 years. Needless to say, these issues need to be addressed – and the sooner the better.

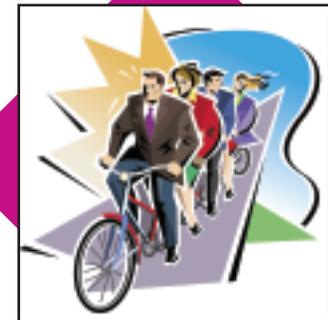
As we all should be aware, exercise is vital to health and fitness. Whether you're enthusiastically pursuing physical activity on a regular basis or would like to get started, you can benefit from some alternatives that make exercise more affordable, enjoyable and productive to your health and well-being.

As the title of this chapter suggests, exercising outdoors offers an informal approach for you to get fit. It can bring new life to working out. Yet, most people hardly do it. Exercising outdoors is inexpensive – free, actually – readily available and has endless applications. Certainly, quite a few people run, cycle and walk outside – sometimes year round – and on a beautiful day, you may see friends, family and others gathering to play and have fun. This, of course, is a great way to take advantage of the outdoors and the resources of your local community while adding to your physical, mental and emotional health. But let's look a little deeper at what's offered in our communities and what can be accomplished outside to encourage more outdoor activity – especially activities that you can do regularly to improve your health and fitness.

## Chapter 8

### Exercising Outdoors: An Informal Approach to Fitness

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## BENEFITS OF EXERCISING OUTDOORS

First, let's explore some of the benefits of exercising outdoors. As mentioned earlier, exercising outside is free. There are no contracts to sign, salespeople with whom to negotiate and no one withdrawing money from your bank account on a monthly basis for something that you aren't using. Statistics have shown that 50% of the people who join some type of fitness facility stop going within six months of their initial registration. If you happen to have a gym membership and are using it religiously, then keep up the good work. But regardless of your membership status, pursuing outdoor activities can be refreshing and quite productive for your health. It's a very empowering feeling to be able to grab a workout at a local park, school or community area that's a short drive from your home or, better yet, within walking distance (which, by the way, is great way to warm-up for your exercise program). More than likely, it won't be overcrowded at your destination and no one will be monopolizing your favorite piece of equipment. So, there should be no waiting and you can probably work around your schedule a bit easier.

Choosing to exercise outdoors allows many additional aspects than most are accustomed to. It enables you to commune with nature and yourself at the same time. It opens doors to decide whether you'd rather train completely alone or "buddy up" with a

friend, family member or group; select a different location at which to train (remember, your outdoor "gym" is endless); or exercise anytime that's convenient for you. Best of all, you're getting fresh air, utilizing your community's resources and improving your health and fitness.

Exercise in and of itself is tremendously rewarding physically, emotionally and mentally as well as spiritually. But when packaged along with nature, these elements can be intensified.

## KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

When you elect to take your exercise program outside, there are a few things that you'll want to check. You may or may not know all of the available resources in your immediate neighborhood. And even if you do, venturing out to other locations is part of the beauty of having nature as your gym. It's suggested that you first investigate your local community and then progress to your surrounding counties. New Jersey has many sites to visit and a simple search on the Internet will yield a host of options from which to choose. A good place to start would be the New Jersey Community and Municipal website, [www.state.nj.us/localgov.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/localgov.htm). This site lists all of the major towns alphabetically, allowing you to filter down through the individual websites to find out information on the locations of parks and recreational sites

and community events. New Jersey has beaches, lakes, mountains, parks, schools and much more. Therefore, expand your imagination and think of all the options that are available to you right outside your door.

Once you decide on the location of where you'd like to exercise, you'll want to try and find out some details of when the better times are to visit. For instance, you may have a high school nearby that has a soccer or football field and stadium stairs that you may be able to use. However, the area may be occupied during school hours or evenings if games are being played. If that is the case, you'll need to make alternate plans during those times. It isn't a tremendous undertaking or time-consuming effort to determine this information and most is fairly evident based on the time of year and the activities that you know are occurring. If you chose to run on a Jersey beach, for example, remember that badges or memberships are required in the summer. In this case, you'd need to run either early in the morning or at the end of the day. A similar consideration must be made when running on a high-school field during the football or lacrosse season. If allowed, you'd need to either wait for practice to finish or run earlier in the day. These are minor – and temporary – issues, however, compared to the number of parks and unrestricted areas that can be utilized. Situations like these shouldn't be a deterrent or an excuse to avoid exercise since there are

countless alternatives from which to choose. You'll also want to take the time to assess the area to see what's available to you so that you can plan your workouts accordingly. For instance, if you want to exercise at the local park, you may find that it has a playground where you can perform chin-ups and dips. Or there might be a fitness trail available for you to use. Knowing this will enable you to build your workout around the available resources that you can opt to utilize. After a while, you'll become more familiar with these locations and more versed at constructing an exercise program that suits your personal needs.

### **FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

Establishing a program is only part of the equation; doing it is a whole different ball game. A great way for you to maintain motivation and dedication is to involve other people in your activities. By doing so, all parties are more likely to be consistent due to their obligation to themselves and the others. This multi-involvement approach enables individuals to pair off and pursue similar goals, encourage others who are lagging behind or strike up a little friendly competition – all in the name of good health and fitness. Let's not forget that it also offers you the opportunity to spend time with your significant other, children and friends. What



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## Aerobic Activities

- Cycling
- Hiking/Backpacking
- In-Line Skating
- Jogging/Running
- Rope Jumping
- Rowing
- Sprinting/Hill Running
- Stairclimbing/Running
- Swimming
- Walking
- Seasonal Activities

## ACTIVITIES AND RECREATION

One of the key elements of any successful fitness program – perhaps only second to safety – is making it enjoyable. Clearly, fun is the cornerstone of continuous effort and using your imagination is vital to your endeavor. As an example, New Jersey can offer up some bitterly cold winters and more often than not, a good amount of snow. Most people view snow as a deterrent to going to the gym let alone getting outside and exercising. But you can don a hat, scarf, gloves and boots and go sledding, build a snowman, pull your child around the neighborhood on a sled, take a walk, ski on a snowboard or do other enjoyable activities. In other words, why not use the snow to your advantage and get moving? In the milder weather, you can shoot baskets, play touch or flag football, throw a frisbee, surf, swim and so on. Any of these activities can be made challenging and beneficial to your health and fitness while, at the same time, allow you to enjoy yourself. The important thing is to pick an activity, safely elevate your heart rate and get fit.

## HOW TO EXERCISE . . . PROPERLY

An integral aspect of any exercise program is the selection and execution of the exercises that are to be included. Individuals should select activities that encourage them to train safely, sensibly and progressively, while being orthopedically sound. First and foremost, it's important to understand that your goal is to increase your health, not jeopardize it. By including movements that are ballistic (explosive) in nature or performing exercises on highly unstable surfaces, you're increasing the chance of injury to the soft tissues – your muscles, ligaments and tendons – and joints of your body. There are far too many “trends” being marketed today – such as exercising or balancing on balls and half spheres – with the intention of making fitness more fun and interesting. But little is being addressed with regards to safety. Remember always: Safety first!

When performing a resistance exercise, the desired effect is for most of the work to be done by your muscles, not momentum. According to Strength and Conditioning Coach Dan Riley of the NFL's Houston Texans, moving a resistance in the weight room shouldn't become a “throw-up and fall-down” but a smooth, controlled execution. For all resistance exercises (bodyweight included), each repetition should be performed with an approximate 2/4 speed. This means that it should take about two

seconds to raise the resistance and four seconds to lower it. This controlled approach minimizes the involvement of momentum, thereby reducing the risk of injury and maximizing the involvement of muscle.

There are numerous approaches to strength training with some being more effective than others. However, the goal of your program should be to have some fun while working as hard as you can in a safe, efficient and progressive manner to become stronger, leaner and healthier. One approach that's very effective is to do each set with a high level of effort or intensity. With this approach, you'll perform a set until you're unable to complete another repetition without compromising your form and safety. If you can exercise with a high level of effort, you'll find that your workouts are short by necessity, yet highly effective. Of course, you don't have to train in this fashion. This is simply one alternative that you can choose. What's really important is the fact that you're exercising.

### HOW OFTEN?

Daily activity is great if you can do it. But you must be careful not to overdo it, either. When you engage in a strength-training program, you should perform no more than three weekly sessions on alternate days. Examples are a Monday-Wednesday-Friday or Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday schedule.

### Figure 8.1:

A Partial List of Exercises That Can Be Done Anywhere with Little or No Equipment

EXERCISE	BODY PART(S)	MODE
Single-Leg Squat	hips, quadriceps and hamstrings	BW RB
Walking Lunge	hips, quadriceps and hamstrings	BW
Deadlift	hips, quadriceps, hamstrings and lower back	RB
Deep-Knee Bend	hips, quadriceps and hamstrings	BW MR RB
Calf Raise	calves	BW MR
Dip	chest, shoulders and triceps	BW MR
Push-Up	chest, shoulders and triceps	BW MR PA
Chest Fly	chest and shoulders	MR RB
Chin-Up	upper back, biceps and forearms	BW MR PA
Pull-Up	upper back, biceps and forearms	BW PA
Pulldown	upper back, biceps and forearms	RB
Row	upper back, biceps and forearms	MR RB
Front Raise	shoulders	MR RB
Side Raise	shoulders	MR RB
Upright Row	trapezius, biceps and forearms	MR RB
Shoulder Shrug	trapezius	MR RB
Bicep Curl	biceps and forearms	MR RB
Tricep Extension	triceps	MR RB
Hanging Knee-Up	abdominals	BW
Crunch	abdominals	BW MR PA
Side Bend	obliques and lower back	RB

#### Mode Codes:

BW = Bodyweight

PA = Partner Assisted

MR = Manual Resistance

RB = Resistance Band

For more information on exercise techniques and descriptions go to [www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org).

#### Notes:

1. In bodyweight exercises, you'll use your bodyweight as the resistance.
2. In manual-resistance exercises, you (or a partner) provide the resistance rather than a barbell, dumbbell or machine.
3. In partner-assisted exercises, a partner helps you to perform an exercise. Using the chin-up as an example, your partner would hold your legs or waist and help you to pull up your body. (Partner-assisted exercises are the opposite of manual-resistance exercises.)
4. In resistance-band exercises, you can use rubber tubing or an exercise band to provide resistance rather than a barbell, dumbbell or machine.



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Obviously, you can structure your days accordingly such that it best fits your agenda. This every-other-day approach will allow your body to recover from your previous exercise session so that you have less chance of overtraining. On your “off days,” you can participate in light activities such as going for a walk or an easy jog, playing a game of basketball and so on. This aids your recovery and keeps you on the fitness track.

**Figure 8.2**  
Sample Beginner Program

<b>Warm-Up:</b>	5-minute walk
<b>Deep-Knee Bend:</b>	2 sets of 15-20 repetitions
<b>Chest Fly:</b>	2 sets of 10-15 repetitions
<b>Row:</b>	2 sets of 10-15 repetitions (each arm)
<b>Walk:</b>	5 minutes
<b>Upright Row:</b>	2 sets of 10-15 repetitions
<b>Tricep Extension:</b>	1 set of 10-15 repetitions
<b>Bicep Curl:</b>	1 set of 10-15 repetitions
<b>Crunch:</b>	1 set of 10-15 repetitions
<b>Walk:</b>	5 minutes

**Total Exercise Time: about 30-35 minutes**

**Note:**

In a beginner program, you should take about 60 seconds of recovery between sets and 90 seconds of recovery between exercises. You should adjust your effort based on your level of comfort.

**Figure 8.3**  
Sample Intermediate Program

<b>Warm-Up:</b>	5-minute walk
<b>Walking Lunge:</b>	1 set of maximum repetitions (each leg)
<b>Push-Up:</b>	1 set of maximum repetitions
<b>Run:</b>	5 minutes
<b>Chin-Up:</b>	1 set of maximum repetitions
<b>Side Raise:</b>	1 set of maximum repetitions
<b>Run:</b>	5 minutes
<b>Side Bend:</b>	1 set of maximum repetitions (each side)
<b>Walk:</b>	5 minutes

**Total Exercise Time: about 30-35 minutes**

**Note:**

In an intermediate program, you should take about 30-45 seconds of recovery between exercises. This will make the overall effort a bit more demanding than the beginner program, thereby preparing you for the Advanced Level.

## RESISTANCE EXERCISES

Figure 8.1 shows a partial list of resistance exercises that you can do with little or no equipment. Note that except for the push-up and crunch, none of these exercises requires you to lie on the ground. Of course, you can perform additional exercises as part of the workout such as calisthenics, back extensions or any other movement that’s effective and safe to use. For the most part, however, consideration for the exercises that are shown in Figure 8.1 is based on outdoor workouts.

## AEROBIC ACTIVITIES

There are many aerobic (or cardiorespiratory) activities that you can do without much in the way of equipment. Of course, additional activities that suit your goals and interests can be performed as part of your aerobic training. The activities include the following:

- **Cycling**
- **Hiking/Backpacking**
- **In-Line Skating**
- **Jogging/Running**
- **Rope Jumping**
- **Rowing**
- **Sprinting/Hill Running**
- **Stairclimbing/Running**
- **Swimming**
- **Walking**
- **Seasonal Activities**

### ESTABLISHING GOALS

Before engaging in an exercise program, it's a good idea for you to create specific goals and map out how you're going to achieve those goals. Often, not having a plan of action will have you aimlessly pursuing an exercise program. This could lead to frustration, lack of progress, disinterest and possible injury. Establishing short-term, reasonable goals – such as doing a certain amount of push-ups, running a particular distance or reaching a certain bodyweight – allows you to focus on progression and have something toward which you can strive.

### TRACKING YOUR EFFORTS

Once your goals are established and your exercise regimen is designed, you must give some thought to tracking your workouts. This doesn't need to be elaborate – you can use something as simple as a spiral notebook or a workout card. But whatever you decide to use, you should be able to record important information such as the exercises that you perform, the resistance that you use, the repetitions that you do, your bodyweight (if you so desire), the length of your workout and any additional comments. Keeping this journal provides feedback and motivation that will enable you to analyze your program and its effectiveness. For instance, if your records indicate that you're able to achieve

10 push-ups, you should strive to increase your push-ups to 11 or more in your next workout.

The information in your records will allow you to intelligently tweak your program and make any necessary adjustments. If you're making progress, it'll be reflected in your

Figure 8.4  
Sample Advanced Program

<b>Warm-Up:</b>	<b>5-minute walk</b>
<b>Single-Leg Squat:</b>	<b>1 set of maximum repetitions (each leg)</b>
<b>Pull-Up:</b>	<b>1 set of maximum repetitions</b>
<b>Dip:</b>	<b>1 set of maximum repetitions</b>
<b>Sprint:</b>	<b>5 repetitions</b>
<b>Upright Row:</b>	<b>1 set of maximum repetitions</b>
<b>Tricep Extension:</b>	<b>1 set of maximum repetitions</b>
<b>Bicep Curl:</b>	<b>1 set of maximum repetitions</b>
<b>Crunch:</b>	<b>1 set of maximum repetitions</b>
<b>Walk:</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>

**Total Exercise Time: about 25-30 minutes**

**Note:**

In an advanced program, you should take a minimal amount of recovery between exercises. This will make the overall effort a bit more demanding on your cardiovascular and metabolic systems.



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records and you'll know that your program is working. But if over the course of several workouts your progress has stalled or you're starting to regress, you probably need to alter some aspect of your program.

The bottom line: Don't underestimate the importance of an exercise journal. Clearly, it's a vital tool that can help keep you heading toward your goals in a safe, healthy and progressive manner.

## STRUCTURING YOUR PROGRAM

Once you understand the fundamentals that have been described, developing a program is quite easy. Moreover, adding variety with all of the outdoor amenities that are available shouldn't be a problem for most people. To get started, refer to the list of exercises that are detailed in Figure 8.1 and choose one exercise for each muscle group and your preferred modality (or equipment). Next, perform the exercises properly as described previously in this chapter. Finally, select 1-2 aerobic activities and you'll have a well-rounded exercise plan that provides approximately 20-40 minutes of healthy activity.

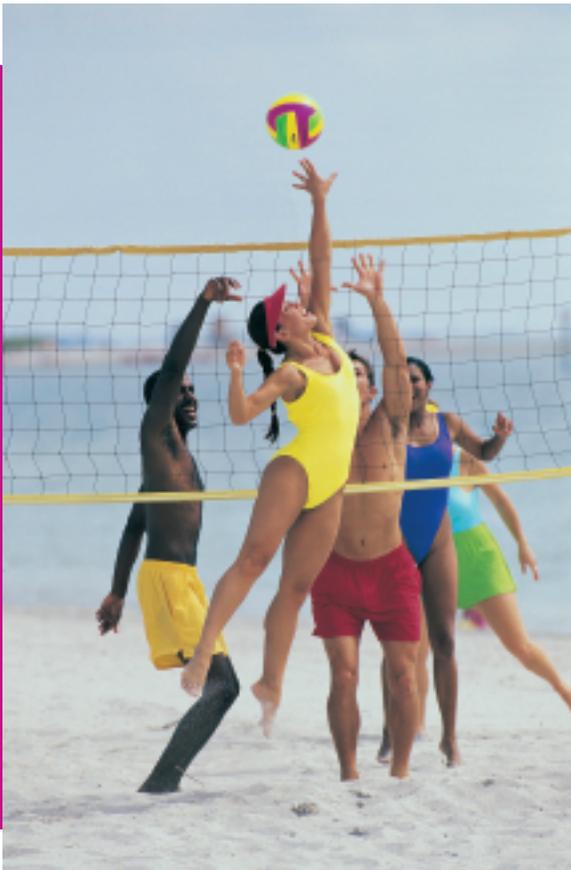
When it comes to exercise, an individual can be grouped into one of three categories (or levels of experience):

- 1. Beginner:** Someone who has been sedentary or working out infrequently but wants to start a consistent exercise program.
- 2. Intermediate:** Someone who has been working out on a regular basis and has an average level of fitness.
- 3. Advanced:** Someone who has an above-average level of fitness and is able to "take it up a notch."

You should determine which of the definitions best describes your level of experience. Then, use one of the sample programs in **Figures 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4** as a guideline.

As you can see, the programs are designed accordingly for each level of experience. To subject a beginner to an advanced program would be a sure set-up for failure – and potential injury. Equally counterproductive would be an advanced enthusiast doing a beginner's program. These workouts wouldn't be challenging enough to elicit improvements in health and fitness.

To reiterate, these are just sample programs that you can use. Select the



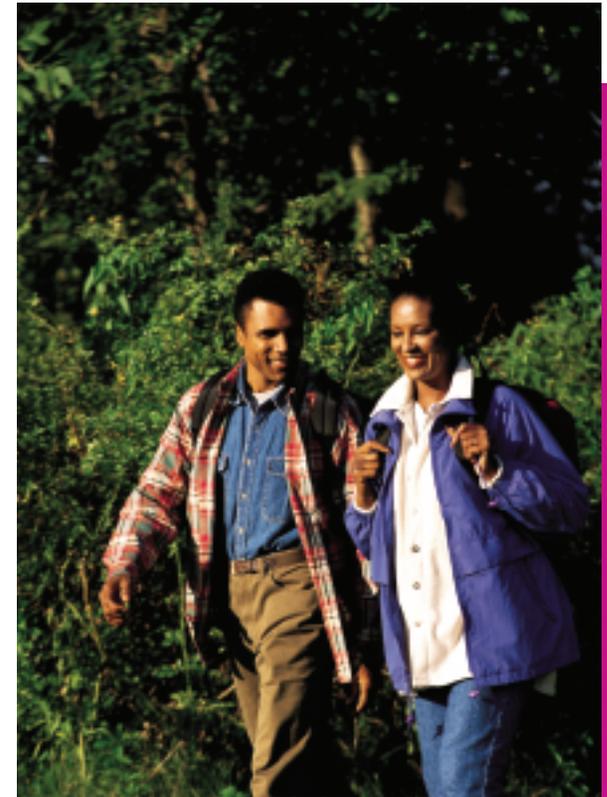
activities that you feel best suit your personality, goals and preferences. This way, you'll make exercising a personalized and enjoyable part of your life.

### DRESSING FOR THE OCCASION

When exercising, there's no doubt that appropriate clothing is very important. You shouldn't wear anything that's too restrictive. But on the other hand, you shouldn't wear anything that's too loose. Also, you should dress a little "lighter" so that you don't become overheated or perspire too much, even on cooler days. Your body needs to "breathe," so don't overdress. Several clothing manufacturers make active gear to match the needs of athletes and this is something that you should explore. As a side note, the old days of wearing rubber (or "sauna") suits and layers of sweat pants and shirts do virtually nothing for weight loss. What it does, however, is cause you to lose a great deal of water and electrolytes. This may produce dehydration and a subsequent heat illness – namely, heat exhaustion or heat stroke – that could result in a loss of consciousness. So don't think sweating more means that you'll lose more weight, because it doesn't. The bottom line: Stick with suitable apparel.

### INCLEMENT WEATHER

Unfortunately, there are times when the weather simply won't allow you to exercise outside the way that you intended. Severe rain, heavy snow and extreme heat/humidity can sometimes put a damper on your exercise schedule. But that's when you need to improvise. For instance, if it's the summer and extremely hot and humid, it'll be safer and more beneficial to exercise very early in the morning before sunrise or very late in the evening after sunset. In the heat and humidity, you can opt for aquatic activities as well. As mentioned earlier, snow offers its own obstacles but – if you choose to venture outside – also allows you the opportunity to engage in unique activities, especially at midday when it's usually the warmest. If and when all else fails, you may be able to utilize the local high school or community recreation center or even walk indoors at the local mall. Obviously, these aren't outside resources. But it does let you take advantage of your community and still enables you to exercise.





## FINAL POINTS

To reiterate four points that have been presented in this chapter, there's an urgent need to (1) perform physical activity on a consistent basis; (2) choose exercises that are

orthopedically safe and enjoyable; (3) take advantage of the outdoors and our state's resources; and (4) strive toward progress. Make an effort to get others involved and encourage the young and the old – and everyone in between – to do some type of activity as often as possible. Remember, it's your body and your health. It's up to you to use it or lose it.



## ONLINE RESOURCES

Manual-Resistance Exercises:  
[www.ucbearcats.com/info/clubs/strength/files/MANUAL%20RESISTANCE.pdf](http://www.ucbearcats.com/info/clubs/strength/files/MANUAL%20RESISTANCE.pdf)

New Jersey Community and Municipal website:  
[www.state.nj.us/localgov.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/localgov.htm)

