

52 ideas to become more fit in 2013

By Rene Lynch, Los Angeles Times

This is the year you will resolve to ditch the diets, the “all or nothing” mentality and the “no-pain, no-gain” fitness goals. This is the year you will resolve to use common sense to eat less junk food, move more – and have fun doing it.

Remember what it was like when you were a kid and you thought nothing of playing tag for hours on end? That spirit still lives. You just need to wake it up. Maybe with a high-energy hula hoop workout or Shaun T’s “Hip Hop Abs,” done in the privacy of your own home. Or by walking your dog while listening to a Dan Brown thriller.

Instead of embarking on yet another diet, why not try to lose roughly 1 pound a week by creating a modest 500-calorie deficit each day. That’s easily accomplished by slashing about 250 calories from your diet (the equivalent of five Oreos) and burning about 250 calories through exercise, such as a brisk 2-to-3-mile walk. You can do that easy.

Here are 52 tips for each week of the year, but we know we’re just scratching the surface.

(1) You “work” all week. No wonder you don’t want to “work out. Find a way to move more and have fun doing it. Take a Zumba class. (Many studios will let you take your first class free.) Even if you never go back, it will redefine your definition of “exercise.”

(2) You know that lazy, sluggish feeling you get when you drink alcohol? That’s your metabolism slowing to a halt.

(3) Adopt an avatar. James Bond? Lara Croft? Put it in charge

of slaying your food cravings. Or pretend you're the Terminator and someone is standing between you and your workout.

(4) Buy a pedometer. (We love the Omron HJ-112 Pocket Pedometer). Slowly work your way up to 10,000 to 15,000 steps a day. Parents can make it a game with kids: The person with the most steps for the day gets out of dish duty or earns more console time.

(5) Gardening and heavy-duty housework, like cleaning out the garage, do count.

(6) Write a loooong list of all the fun, sexy, sassy reasons you want to achieve your fitness goals. ("I want to rock a bikini!" "I want biceps worthy of the cover Men's Health.") Make copies of that list and stash them everywhere. Your wallet. Your car. Your kitchen. Review when weakness strikes.

(7) Recognize: Six packs are made in the kitchen, not the gym. If you have only 30 minutes, you're better off using that time to prep the following day's breakfast and lunch than working out. That's right. We just gave you an excuse to skip a workout, but only if you use that time wisely.

(8) Jump on the boutique gym bandwagon.

(9) Eat all the raw, non-starchy vegetables you can stand.

(10) Exercise while doing household chores. Put in a load of laundry before you press "play" on a fitness DVD, and pause partway through to make the washer-to-dryer transfer. Or plan dinner around a casserole that bakes while you work out in the living room.

(11) Give up extreme thinking. Don't give up chocolate for 2013. How about: Give up bingeing on chocolate in 2013, and instead resolve to enjoy it in moderation.

(12) Ask yourself a magic question: "How can I reach my health

and fitness goals and enjoy the process?" You don't need to answer the question. Let your brain percolate on it. (Credit motivational guru Tony Robbins.)

(13) Got a tablet? Download a movie and prop it on a treadmill at the gym. The average movie should get you through four 30-minute walks.

(14) Stop trying to be Julia Child come dinner time. Store-bought rotisserie chicken + bagged salad = dinner. A corn tortilla quesadilla + bagged salad = dinner. A grilled steak + bagged salad = dinner.

(15) Use social media. Find fitness fanatics to follow, and then draft off their enthusiasm to bolster your resolve. Use Twitter to announce your goals, and ask followers to hold you accountable.

(16) Find more ways to move at work. Stand at your desk or while you're on the phone. Instead of a stuffy meeting room, chat with a colleague during a brief walk.

(17) Home workout DVDs can get expensive. Band together with some like-minded (and trustworthy) friends or co-workers: Invest in a few DVDs and swap them every month to keep things interesting.

(18) You absolutely, positively have no time to work out? How about a 10-minute walk – five minutes in one direction, then turn around – in the morning, at noon and when you get home at night? Be careful, though. You just might inspire yourself.

(19) Register to walk a half marathon. You can download free training programs online.

(20) Don't you wish someone would pay you to get in shape? Pay yourself. Put \$5 in a jar every time you work out. Or every time you bring a healthful, delicious lunch to work. If you work out three times a week and take lunch two times a week,

you'll be sitting on a sweet \$1,300 come the 2013 holiday shopping season.

(21) Your two best fitness buddies: Your kids and your dog. Walk to parks and just have fun. Kick a soccer ball around. Play Frisbee. Tag. Fly a kite. You won't just burn calories, you'll model healthful habits for your kids.

(22) Playing tourist in your hometown – crawling museums, hiking scenic trails, strolling boardwalks – is a blissful way to add steps to your pedometer.

(23) Earn your dessert. Craving ice cream? Make it a single scoop that comes at the halfway point of a four-mile round-trip walk. And then enjoy every creamy bite.

(24) Create a private Daily Mugshot account and commit to taking a picture of yourself every day in 2013. (Men go shirtless, women in a sports bra.) Take a spin through those photos when you need encouragement. And just imagine the photo gallery at year's end.

(25) Read fitness magazines that will inspire you with new workouts (and not depress you with ridiculously skinny models).

(26) Scour the Web for fitness blogs written by people like you, and bookmark them. The next time you feel like skipping a workout, tap into that community for motivation.

(27) Parents: You do more for your children than for yourself. Use that to your advantage! When you find yourself reaching for a doughnut, think of your kids: Do you want to saddle them with a morbidly obese, Type 2 diabetic mom or dad? That's right. Step away from the doughnut.

(28) Do some year-end, rear-end projections. If you slash your Oreo consumption in half from eight cookies a week to four, you'll save more than 11,000 calories and lose nearly 4

pounds.

(29) If you have a salad bar at work, use it. Bring a protein from home – grilled chicken, hard-boiled eggs, tuna – and drop it onto some salad bar greens.

(30) Many people plan weekday meals and go wild over the weekend. Plan weekend meals too. If you are meeting friends for a celebratory dinner on Saturday night, make sure the rest of your weekend meals stick to your program.

(31) Let co-workers take the elevator. You take the stairs. (Pretty soon they'll be following you.)

(32) Keep a food and fitness journal, but don't beat yourself up about the findings. Instead, like a detective, use the journal to spot bad habits and find a way to gently correct them. We like the free tool Lose It!, which also has a smartphone app.

(33) Do not skip meals. Ever. If you miss breakfast, there's an extremely good chance you will end up overeating at some point during the day.

(34) Prepare for the apocalypse. Have healthful snacks, such as almonds or beef jerky, in your desk drawer. In your glove compartment. In your purse. In your gym bag.

(35) Supermarket survival tips: Just don't buy it and don't shop hungry. If you don't put it in your cart, you can't devour it at 3am. And how many times have you purchased chips and scarfed half of them before you pulled the car into the driveway? (Or is that just me?)

(36) When you hear the candy dish at work calling you, ask yourself, "Will that get me closer to my goals?"

(37) One personal trick: I like to download books, especially thrillers and mysteries. But I have a rule: I cannot listen unless I am walking the dog. I'm so eager to find out what

happens next that, more often than not, the dog gets a three-mile walk.

(38) Get a good night's rest. You are more likely to make poor food choices and skip workouts when you're tired and cranky. Plus, your body needs the rest when it's worked out regularly.

(39) Most Americans eat 250 to 300 grams of carbohydrates a day, the equivalent of 1,000 to 1,200 calories. The national Institute of Medicine recommends 130 grams. Look for small, easy ways to cut carbs. Eat the burger with half the bun. Scoop up hummus with cucumber slices.

(40) When you splurge, splurge smart. Example: Those stale, store-bought cookies at the holiday party? Not worth it. Homemade holiday cookies from Mom? Enjoy in moderation.

(41) Don't drink your calories. Reach for water instead of sugary drinks.

(42) Find ways to relieve stress that do not involve food. Pray. Meditate. Exercise.

(43) Take small, steady steps toward slashing your diet of processed food. Read the labels of anything you're considering buying. If you see ingredients you cannot pronounce, or lots of sweeteners, put it down and walk away.

(44) Sugar makes you want more sugar. That has nothing to do with self-control. You're not weak. You're human. And ask yourself: Do you want to control what you eat or do you want what you eat to control you?

(45) Get mad. Get mad at all the ads that bombard you with enticements to eat and drink yourself silly. Get in the habit of noticing those cues, and come up with a mantra to silently repeat to yourself when you see them, such as, "I am not a billy goat. I don't eat trash."

(46) What's your favorite music? That's what you should be

working out to. Turn down the volume on the fitness DVD and workout to your own score.

(47) If you don't like running and weights, don't do them. A perfectly good fitness regimen can revolve around yoga.

(48) Would you like someone to scare you into eating fewer carbs? Read "Wheat Belly" by Dr. William Davis.

(49) If you do a lot of casual or fast-food dining, read the calorie counts. Instant appetite suppressant.

(50) If you tend to watch too much TV, make a deal with yourself: no screen time till the workout is done.

(51) Consider your routines. How can you fit in some "flash fitness"? Can you ride your bike to work one day a week? Get your fruits and vegetables during a long stroll around the farmers market? Park your car two blocks from the dry cleaners?

(52) Realize that maybe the real reason you eat too much junk food is because ... you're normal.

Our lives are filled with more stresses and demands than ever. Sad but true, food is one enjoyable thing we can do for ourselves each day. Maybe the best resolution of all for 2013 is to find a healthy way to bring more joy into your life.

That one should be easy to keep!