

How to Build Up Aerobic Fitness

By Allen Smith, eHow User



One of the most difficult parts about starting an aerobic [exercise](#) program is developing sound training principles so that you'll maintain your [fitness](#) program as a life-long habit. After the initial exhilaration has waned, how do you keep motivated long enough to see real results? The answer is to gradually build your stamina so that you can set goals and watch yourself achieve them. This article will use walking or running as an example, but you can apply the principles to any form of aerobic exercise.

Difficulty: Moderately Challenging

Instructions

things you'll need:

- Quality running or walking shoes Digital stopwatch Car odometer

Building a Sound Exercise Program

- 1 If it's been a while since you've exercised and you're over 40 years of age, your first stop should be at your doctor's office for a complete physical examination. During the exam, he/she will take a complete [health](#) history, ask you about your family's health and conduct an examination of all of your major systems. Chances are, he'll also take an electrocardiogram or EKG to check the health of your heart and identify any abnormalities of your heart at rest. If there are any doubts about your ability to exercise, he may also prescribe a stress test to determine how you and your heart respond to increasing physical demands.
- 2 Take the results of your physical examination and exercise test to a certified fitness expert. If you have trouble locating one, check with your gym or health club for recommendations. The fitness expert will look over your results and write an exercise "prescription" for you. Like prescription medications, your exercise prescription will take into account a number of factors to help you succeed.
- 3 Calculate your training heart rate by subtracting your age from 220. Multiply the result by .70 and this will be your average training heart rate.
- 4 Choose an activity that uses large muscle groups like arms and legs. It should be an activity you enjoy and can sustain for at least 20 continuous minutes. Good examples include walking, running, swimming, cycling, and using an elliptical exerciser. If you have trouble coming up with ideas, ask your fitness expert to suggest something for you.
- 5 Measure a flat walking course using the odometer in your car. One to two miles is a good starting distance. Begin walking at a comfortable pace - enough to challenge you but not leave you breathless. Many experts call this a "conversation pace." The pace should be challenging but you should still be able to carry on a conversation with a friend without having to stop to catch your breath.
- 6 Start your stopwatch when you start exercising and time how long it takes to walk to a "turn-around" point on your course. Alternatively, you can walk for 20 minutes and take note of how far along the course you get. This will be your starting point
- 7 Increase the distance five to ten percent a week after the first week. Once you can walk two miles comfortably, begin increasing your walking pace but do not

increase the distance. Make a note of how long it takes you to complete the two mile course.

- 8 Continue either increasing the distance or shortening the time it takes you to complete the course during the next few weeks. Do not work on both at the same time. Keep notes of your progress in a journal to help keep you motivated.
- 9 Choose a goal in the near future as a training reward. Walking or running a 5K (about 3 miles) race is a good place to start. After you've completed several 5K's, shoot for a 10K, then ultimately a half or full marathon. Goals are a great way to keep your fitness program on track and avoid taking unnecessary days off from training.

Tips & Warnings

- Begin slowly and conservatively. Keep track of your time and distance in a journal. Find a friend to exercise with. Consider buying a good treadmill so you can walk or run in any weather and at any time of day.
- Do not increase exercise intensity and distance at the same time. Avoid increasing your goals in increments that are too large. Always schedule at least one day of rest into your training routine.