

# 10 Tips for Fall Fitness

Fall is a super season for shaping up, experts say.

By Barbara Sarnataro

How many New Year's Eves have you spent sipping champagne and vowing to get more fit in the coming year? And how many times have you failed to follow through?

"December 31 over a drink is too late to [set goals](#) and make promises," says Justin Price, owner of The Biomechanics, a personal training and wellness coaching facility in San Diego, Calif.

Fall, on the other hand, is a great time to start a [fitness program](#) because "you're going to create good habits for the holiday season and the upcoming winter months," says Price.

Chris Freytag, a fitness instructor and fitness expert with *Prevention* magazine, agrees.

"With the change of seasons comes a renewed time to rethink and restart," she says. "What's so special about January?"

Besides, says Freytag, a mother of three, moms with school-aged kids "think of September as the new year."

Here are 10 ways to start making the most of the season. And who knows? This year, you might be in great shape before that New Year's Eve party rolls around.



## 1. Take advantage of the weather.

Fall can be a treat for the senses: the crisp air, apple picking, pumpkin carving, a gorgeous canopy of fall foliage, and the crunch of leaves underfoot. These months are a great time to exercise outdoors and enjoy cooler temperatures.

"Walking, hiking and cycling are all awesome in the fall," says Todd Durkin, MS, fitness coach and owner of Fitness Quest 10 in San Diego, Calif.

Discover park trails and take in some new scenery, whether you're walking, biking, or in-line skating, he suggests.

In places where snow falls early, try cross country skiing or snowshoeing. Or, if you live near the beach, get out and play volleyball, throw the Frisbee around, or play a vigorous game of fetch with your dog.

"It's a great time to do beach activities because it's so much less crowded," says Price.

If you're near a lake, try kayaking or canoeing, for an excellent whole-body workout and a great change of pace.

And remember, it doesn't have to seem like exercise to be a great workout.

"Raking leaves or doing some fall outdoor yard work is a great way to get the [heart](#) pumping, and it's great calorie-burning," says Freytag.



## 2. Think outside the box.

Always wanted to learn to tap dance? Attempt to box? Master the jump rope? Ask any schoolchild: Fall is a great time to learn something new.

Many classes at gyms and elsewhere get started in the fall, so look around and see if something intrigues you.

And with the kids in school, parents have more time to check out those classes, Freytag says

Fall is the perfect time to gain new physical skills, Price says, because you burn fewer calories when you begin a new activity (thanks to the learning curve). If you learn something new now, by next summer, you'll have mastered the skill -- and you'll burn more calories doing it, just in time for swimsuit season.



### **3. Be an active TV watcher.**

Many people get geared up for fall premieres of their favorite television shows, says Freytag. "If you're going to sit down and watch hours of TV, get moving," she suggests. "Make a date with exercise and TV."

While you watch, you can walk or run in place, do standing lunges, do tricep dips off the couch, or lift weights. During commercials, do push-ups or sit-ups. In a one-hour show, you probably have close to 20 minutes worth of commercial interruption.



## 4. Integrate exercise into your life.

You already know the obvious suggestions: park farther away from your destination; take stairs instead of elevators; take a walk during your lunch break. Here are a few that are less obvious:

- If you're spending the afternoon taking kids to soccer practice, instead of reading a book or visiting with another parent, "why not walk around the outside of the field while they practice?", suggests Price. "Or (if you feel comfortable) warm up and cool down with the kids."
- Or try "walking meetings," like those Price and his colleagues at Biomechanics often hold. "We go for a walk, we brainstorm, and we figure out who's going to take what responsibilities," says Price. "Things get achieved much more quickly," he says, and everyone feels better for doing it.
- You can even get moving while you get motivated -- for fitness or other life goals. "Get some inspirational music or find a motivational talk and download it to your iPod," suggests Durkin. Walk while you listen for 30 minutes.



## 5. Rejuvenate yourself.

Fall is the time to rejuvenate body, mind and spirit, says Durkin. Get a [massage](#) after your run. Learn to meditate. Take an art class. Treat yourself not just with exercise but other activities that promote wellness, he says, so you can feel good physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.



## 6. Remember the 30-day rule.

"It takes about four weeks for the body to adapt to lifestyle changes," says Price. That's why people who give up on their fitness programs tend to do so within the first 30 days.

So, when the alarm goes off in the morning and it's darker and colder, don't roll over and hit the snooze button.

"Try to stick with a program for a month," Price says. "After a month, behavior patterns will have adapted and it will be much easier to stick with it after that."



## 7. Strive for the 3 Cs.

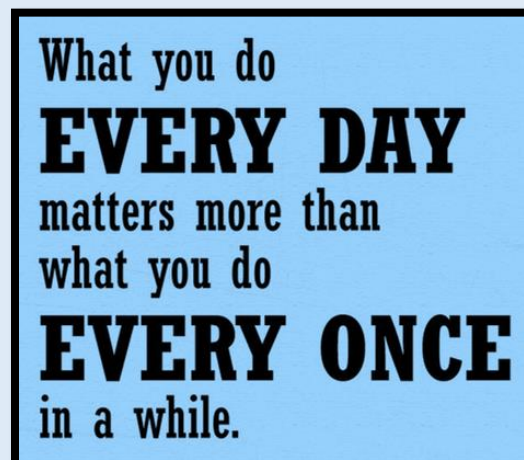
Freytag calls commitment, convenience, and consistency "the three Cs", and says having all three will lead to a successful [fitness program](#).

First, exercise takes *commitment*. When a client complains to Freytag about a lack of time, she responds: "Tell me something I haven't heard before. We're all busy; that's just part of our lives."

"You have to start planning exercise, just like you do everything else," like meetings, dinners, and getting kids to lessons and practice, she says. "Put in on the calendar, because later always turns into never."

*Convenience* means choosing a gym that's close by, or an activity you can do at home, or a time when you're not likely to be interrupted.

Finally, there's *consistency*. "I'd rather see a brand-new client work out for 10 minutes a day rather than one hour every month," Freytag says.



## 8. Deal with darkness.

The best way to enjoy fall is to exercise outdoors. But it is getting darker earlier, and staying dark later in the morning, so be smart and safe.

"Just because it's 6 p.m. (or a.m.) and dark doesn't mean you can't work out," says Durkin. If walking or running outdoors, he says, "wear a reflective vest and carry a flashlight."

When cycling, affix a light to your helmet or bike.

If possible, use trails or a local school track to avoid vehicle traffic. Try to work out at the same time every day, so drivers get used to seeing you.



**9. Dress in layers.** When [exercising](#) outside, layer your clothing. Before your body warms up, you may feel chilled, but once the [blood](#) gets pumping, you'll feel overdressed.

These days, there's no lack of great weather gear. Freytag and Price recommend clothing with wicking, often called "DriFit." This fabric wicks moisture away from your [skin](#) so you're not exercising with wet fabric hanging on you.

Freytag suggests three layers: "The inner layer should be a moisture-wicking fabric, so it wicks away sweat and you're not chilled. The second layer should be a warmth layer, and the third layer should be a protective layer (like a windbreaker or rain slicker, depending on the weather)."

"And don't forget the [sunglasses](#)," she warns. UV protection is important year round. Fall sun can be blinding at certain times of the day.



## 10. Find your motivation.

"People are motivated by different things," says Durkin. It's important to first discover what your individual goals are, whether it's [losing weight](#), strengthening and toning, or preparing for a race or event, says Durkin.

But goals aren't enough to get you there; you have to be motivated by the day-to-day workouts, he says. So choose something you'll enjoy doing and will be likely to keep up, whether it's walking or hiking with a friend, working with a trainer, or taking part in a "boot camp" class.

Creating a challenge for yourself will motivate you, as will encouragement and accountability, he adds. "You want to know when you're doing a good job, and when you're not," says Durkin.

Remember too, that anything worth having takes work.

"Tell me something you can do three times a week for 10 minutes and be great at? It doesn't exist," he says. "If it was easy to be great, everybody would be great."

