

STAYING IN SHAPE



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CHAPTER 1

FREE EXERCISES TO ENJOY WITH THE FAMILY

You don't have to spend a fortune trying to keep the family fit and healthy. While paid classes and gyms can be highly effective, there are plenty of free options available you can utilize.

If you're looking to stay fit and healthy with the family, below you'll discover some great exercise ideas you can do for free.

Go for a Walk

One of the best forms of free family exercise is to go for a walk together. Whether it's a walk to your local park or whether you drive to a beauty spot and walk there, you'll have a lot of different route options to choose from.

Going for a walk doesn't just ensure you and the family get the exercise you need, but it also has great mental health benefits. Exercising outdoors is great for the mind and body.

Family Bootcamp

If you're looking for something a little more intensive, why not set up your own family bootcamp? You can either create a set routine of exercises the family has to follow, or you can set up an assault course.

You can use all kinds of items lying around the home to create an indoor or outdoor circuit. Tailor the exercises to fit the age range of your kids and see how much fun everyone has. This is a particularly great form of free exercise for those who are competitive. Adding a competition element ensures everyone does their best with each exercise they perform.

Exercise-Based Hide and Seek

Why not give your family exercise routine a fun element by turning it into a game? You could make tweaks to the popular game "Hide and Seek" for example.

Write simple exercises down onto pieces of paper. There should be one exercise on each piece. Then, hide the pieces and get the family to find them. When they find a piece of paper, they have to carry out the exercise before looking for the next one.

You might just be surprised by how fun this activity is!

Host a Dance Party

If you want a free activity that doesn't feel like exercise, hosting a dance party is a great idea. Get the family together and throw on some dance tunes. You don't have to follow a specific routine. Just let everyone dance however they want to.

You can also make it more fun by creating your own dance routines. You never know, you may even be able to show off your family dance routines at a party or event in the future.

Jump Rope

Finally, a simple and fun activity you can do as a family is jump rope. This is going to be a particular hit with the kids, but it's super-fun for adults too. You'll just need a jump rope and a little music if you want to increase the fun.

These are some of the best free exercises you can do as a family. You really don't have to spend anything to keep the family fit and healthy.

CHAPTER 2

BEING PURPOSEFUL WHILE EXERCISING

Looking to keep fit and do some good along the way? Exercise through volunteering is a great idea for those who struggle to motivate themselves to get fit. By taking on a project that involves some level of activity, you'll get to exercise without even thinking about it.

So, what types of volunteer work can you do that can help with your fitness goals? Below, you'll discover some great volunteering projects that combine doing good with keeping fit.

Volunteer Firefighter

If you want to do some real good while keeping fit, why not become a volunteer firefighter? This will require a good level of fitness and training to get into. However, you'll get to help save lives while keeping fit.

You'll find rural fire departments are particularly in need of volunteers. There will usually be a set number of hours you'll need to provide each week. It won't be for everyone but if you need a tough challenge and want to really help people, a volunteer firefighter position is ideal.

Physical Outdoor Jobs

Another option is to take on a physical outdoor volunteer placement. You'll find hundreds of options here, helping to get you out into nature while keeping fit.

A great idea is to help build and improve trails. You'll find thousands of miles of trails across the US are in need of improvement. All you have to do is visit your local state or national park to see what help they need.

Other outdoor physical volunteering jobs you can take on include gardening projects, building and clean-up projects.

Home Improvements

If you're great with DIY, you could take on home improvement volunteer jobs. A great scheme to look into is Habitat for Humanity. They help to build and improve houses for people and communities, greatly improving their lives.

You'll find local opportunities, alongside travel opportunities if you'd prefer. The feeling you'll get after helping to complete a new family home for those in need is unbeatable. You'll also stay fit as you carry out a lot of lifting and DIY tasks.

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If you can't find any local opportunities, you could always ask neighbors if they need any help. Elderly neighbors, for example, may need some DIY tasks completing around the home.

Animal Aid Volunteering

If you love animals, you can also combine your passion with exercise. There is lots of animal-based volunteering work you can do. You could volunteer at your local animal sanctuary, for example.

If you were to work at a dog rescue center, you'd get to stay fit by looking after the dogs and walking them. At animal shelters, there are lots of physical tasks that need to be completed. So, combining your love of animals with volunteering and exercise is easy.

These are just some of the ways you can combine your exercise with volunteering. If you take a look at your local volunteering center, you should be able to find a lot of opportunities that will keep you fit.

CHAPTER 3

USING YOUTUBE TO EXERCISE

If you're looking to keep fit, you don't have to step foot inside a gym if you don't want to. Whether you are maintaining social distancing or you simply want to exercise at home, there are lots of affordable options available to you.

YouTube exercise videos are proving particularly popular for keeping fit at home. While some are offered as part of a paid membership, others are completely free. Here, you'll discover more about exercising with YouTube videos and the top things to keep in mind.

What Types of Exercises Can You Do?

You'll find videos covering practically every type of exercise on YouTube. Whether you fancy trying a yoga session or you're looking for a great cardio workout, you'll find it on this popular social media platform.

There are videos to suit all abilities, from beginners through to advanced. So, whatever your fitness level, you'll easily find a workout you can do on YouTube.

The Benefits of YouTube Exercise Videos

There are a lot of benefits of working out using YouTube videos. First of all, they are totally free. This makes it easy for those on a budget to stay fit. You'll find hundreds of free workouts you can partake in.

The variety of exercises on offer is another advantage. You can stick to what you know and love, or you could opt for something totally different. Maybe you've wanted to try a specific type of exercise but you're not sure if it's for you. Following a free YouTube video can help you determine whether you enjoy the different type of exercise.

You'll also get to talk to like-minded people. When you find videos you enjoy following, you can chat with others in the comments section. This can help you find an accountability partner.

Of course, using YouTube videos to work out is also really convenient. You can do it anywhere you have an internet connection. You also won't have to worry about looking silly if you get it wrong when trying something new.

These are some of the main benefits you can expect when you use YouTube videos to exercise.

Things to Keep in Mind

As great as working out with YouTube exercise videos can be, there are some things to keep in mind.

Firstly, it's important to note that the videos may not be hosted by professionals. This means they may not have put together a safe workout plan. Ideally, you'll want to follow personal trainers who know exactly what they are doing.

Make sure you're choosing a workout to suit your ability. Warming up and cooling down after the videos is also important, so make sure the exercise you follow contains a warm-up and cool-down section.

Working out with YouTube videos is convenient, free and easy. For times when you can't head to the gym or get outdoors, throwing on a fitness video on YouTube can help you to stay in shape. You could also use it to try something new; just remember to follow videos from personal trainers and fitness professionals.

CHAPTER 4

5 TIPS FOR GYM MEMBERSHIPS

Going to the gym is one of the best ways to stay motivated to keep fit. However, a gym membership can be notoriously expensive.

If you don't have the funds to pay for a gym membership, there are ways to save money on the cost. Here, you'll discover some of the best ways to get the best possible gym membership deal.

Look for Pay-as-You-Go Deals

Did you know gyms have started to introduce a “pay as you go” system? This means that instead of paying for a full year's gym membership, you simply pay for what you use.

If you plan on going to the gym every day, this might not work out as more cost effective. However, if you find that you often skip the gym during certain times of the year, a pay-as-you-go membership may be a much better value deal for you.

Avoid Sign-Up Fees

Did you know you don't have to pay a gym sign-up fee? Most of the best gyms have completely scrapped their joining fees now. That being said, some do still charge them. So, to save money, it's best to look for gyms which offer memberships without sign-up fees included.

Take Out a Membership Later in the Month

According to gym owners and experts, taking out a membership later in the month can also get you a better deal. This is because a lot of fitness clubs have a quota that they need to meet each month. In order to meet it, they will often offer gym memberships at slightly reduced prices.

You'll particularly find cheaper deals available in summer when people tend to start skipping the gym to enjoy the sunshine.

Compare Prices Online

The internet can prove invaluable at helping you to secure better deals. Most gyms tend to advertise online, so you'll be able to compare the cost of different gyms in your neighborhood.

Spend time comparing at least three local gyms. This will help you to see what the average price is and which gym has the better value deal. You can also use online reviews to find the best local gyms in your area.

Consider Virtual Memberships

The coronavirus pandemic has seen a switch in personal training. Now, gyms and personal trainers are offering virtual sessions. This would only really work if you have the right equipment in. However, if you are willing to invest a little in home gym equipment, virtual memberships can save you hundreds of dollars.

Virtual sessions tend to involve groups of people working out at home. You'll follow the trainer and complete workouts via video conferencing.

These are some of the best ways to get great deals on gym memberships. But remember – not all gyms are equal. So, when you find a cheaper deal, it's important to see what you are getting. It could be that the gym doesn't have the same quality equipment, for example, so this is something to check out before accepting a lower priced membership.

CHAPTER 5

HOME GYM ON A BUDGET

If you want to stay in shape at home, there are a lot of types of equipment you can invest in. No matter how big or small the space you have available, there is cheap and versatile equipment you can use.

To help give you a little inspiration, below you'll discover some of the best cheap and versatile gym equipment you can purchase for the home.

Dumbbells

Dumbbells are one of the best pieces of home gym equipment you can invest in. There are so many different exercises you can use them for. They also come in numerous weight options, allowing you to easily build your strength up.

Another benefit of this equipment is that it's easy to store. Dumbbell kits tend to come in their own carry case, allowing them to be neatly stored away until the next use. The right dumbbells can help you to tone up the body, lose weight and improve your cardiovascular health.

Resistance Bands

Another piece of equipment that's great for home use is resistance bands. Like dumbbells, these are small and easy to store away. They can be used in a lot of different ways, allowing you to stretch and strengthen various parts of the body.

Resistance bands can improve the quality of your workouts, help you develop more focus and they can stabilize the muscles. It is a gentle way to build up your strength and flexibility.

Kettlebells

An alternative to dumbbells, kettlebells are a popular choice for those working out at home. They are known to boost core power, balance, strength and flexibility. When used correctly, they can really improve sports performance.

You'll find a lot of kettlebell exercises online you can follow. If you're looking to improve your strength and cardio, you'll definitely want to invest in this useful piece of home gym equipment.

Jump Rope

If you want to focus on your cardio, a jump rope is a great purchase. You'll find these are a popular choice for boxers to use during their workouts. This is because not only does it boost your cardio, but it can also really help to enhance coordination.

As you jump, it builds up strength in the muscles around the feet and ankles. This can reduce the risk of injury if you play sports. Of course, you'll also be burning a lot of calories with this type of exercise, making it ideal for those looking to lose weight.

Mini Trampoline

Finally, if you have the space, a mini trampoline is an excellent home gym addition. It can help you to lose weight and keep fit. You'll find them really fun to use too.

Studies have shown mini trampolines can benefit the lymphatic system in the body too. So, if you're looking for something fun to do to shed those pounds, a mini trampoline is a great investment.

These are just some of the best cheap and versatile gym equipment for the home. All of the equipment mentioned above is easy to use and offers hundreds of exercise possibilities.

CHAPTER 6

MIXING DOG WALKING WITH EXERCISE

If you're looking for an enjoyable way to keep fit, dog walking is a great idea. There are a lot of benefits that come from owning a dog and exercise is just one of them.

While simply getting out on a dog walk is good exercise in itself, there are other ways to tweak it so you gain even more exercise benefits. Below, you'll discover several more ideas for using dog walking for exercise.

Make Sure You Set a Routine

The best way to use dog walking as exercise is to get into a set routine. Depending upon the breed of dog you own, it is recommended you walk twice a day for 30 minutes. Most people find it best to go early in the morning and then again in the early evening.

When you establish a routine, you'll get plenty of exercise without really thinking about it.

Walking over Different Terrains

One way that dog walking can help to boost your exercise routine, is to walk over different terrains. You might not think about it, but you use different muscles when walking over different types of terrain.

Try to mix up your dog walks. Sometimes you can stick to paths, while other times you can go on grass and even hike up mountains. By mixing up your dog walk, you'll also have less chance of getting bored with the routine. So, pick different places you can go, particularly at the weekends where you can typically travel a little further afield.

Push Your Pace

If you are only going on shorter walks, you can get more out of them by pushing your pace – that is, walking faster and more deliberately than you usually would. With longer dog walks, you can get away with sticking to a gradual pace. However, when time is short, a more intense and faster pace will give you the exercise you need.

Just remember that if you're only just starting out, it's important to build up your pace slowly. Trying to do too much too soon could result in injury.

Combine It with Weights

If you want to give yourself an extra challenge while you're out walking, you can add in some hand weights. With this, you'll need to ensure your dog can walk off lead without any issues. Simply carrying the weights can be enough to give the body an extra workout.

You could also invest in a weighted dog walking vest. However, it is important to discuss this with a veterinarian beforehand. Improper use of these vests could give your dog knee, back, and hip problems. Hand weights are the safer option as they pose no risk to your dog.

These are some of the main ways dog walking can be used for exercise. Just playing with them while you are out can also boost your exercise routine. Studies have shown that dog walkers get a lot more exercise than those without pets. So, embrace going out for your daily walks and watch yourself start to become much fitter.

CHAPTER 7

BEST TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SWIMMING

Swimming is one of the best exercises you can do; however, it can be expensive if you want to do it regularly. If you plan on taking it up competitively, the costs jump even higher.

The good news is, taking up swimming doesn't have to break the bank. Below, you'll discover some great tips for enjoying swimming on a budget.

Try to Find an Ocean Pool

A great way to save money on swimming is to try and find an ocean pool near you. They aren't as common as standard swimming pools, but if you do have one near you, they are often free to use.

As well as saving you money, ocean pools are also much better for the body. They don't contain chlorine and saltwater is much gentler on the hair and skin.

Swim in the Ocean

If there is no ocean pool where you live, you could always head to your nearest ocean. Many beaches boast calm waters, allowing you to swim in them. Obviously, this is a little riskier than heading out to your local pool. However, it's totally free and if you go early, you'll beat the crowds.

Just remember to not swim too far out and keep an eye on the weather forecast before you go.

Don't Waste Money on Accessories

You may be tempted to invest in the latest swimming gadgets. However, the truth is that you only really need a pair of goggles and swim wear. Anything else is a waste of money unless you plan on really getting into competitive swimming. Even then, you can wait until you reach competitive level until you have to invest in better equipment.

Look for Membership Discounts

If you are signing up to your local pool, look out for membership discounts. Many pools offer them, particularly for older members and families. These can save you a substantial amount of money.

You can search online to compare prices of local pools too. Many have their own websites, with some pools even offering special online-only discounts. You should also see if there are different levels of memberships on offer. For example, some may offer discounted rates for those who only plan to use the pool for limited periods.

Don't Go to the Pool during Peak Times

A great way to cut the cost of swimming is to avoid going to the pool during peak times. This tends to be during weekends and early evenings. However, you can check with your local pool to see what their specific peak hours are. Most should tell you on their website, but you can also phone up to enquire.

Swimming can get expensive if you go often enough. However, the tips above can help you to cut back on the cost and in some cases, enjoy it absolutely free. It may also be cheaper to avoid a membership entirely and simply pay as you go. Think about how frequently you'll be going to decide whether or not a membership is right for you.

CHAPTER 8

BUILD YOUR MUSCLES WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

If you're looking to boost your strength, you don't necessarily have to go to the gym. There are lots of affordable ways to partake in strength training elsewhere. You can use equipment from home, or even strength train in your local park.

Below, you'll discover some great ways to enjoy strength training on a budget.

Utilize Dumbbells

Dumbbells are one of the best pieces of home gym equipment you can invest in. They are inexpensive and come in a variety of sizes and weights. You can also use them anywhere, from your front room to your local park.

If you look online, you'll find hundreds of dumbbells exercises you can try. They can also be used by all ages and can prove particularly effective for the elderly and those who are just getting back into strength training. They provide a gentle yet very effective workout for the arms.

Ab Machines

Like dumbbells, ab machines come in a variety of types. This means you are guaranteed to find one to match your budget.

If you're looking for the most affordable type, invest in an abs roller. These are small and portable, and they are surprisingly effective at toning up the abdomen. It's worth noting that you should start gradually with this type of machine. It relies upon your own body weight to tone up and it's easy to overdo it on your first go.

If you do have a little extra money, you can invest in the freestanding ab machines. These will give you a much tougher workout, but they can get expensive if you choose one with a lot of additional features. Search online to find the best price for ab machines in your area.

Using Your Own Bodyweight

If you want a completely free way to boost your strength, you can always utilize your own bodyweight. You don't need a lot of space, you can do bodyweight exercises anywhere, and you won't need any equipment at all.

If you do want to invest in a few pieces of equipment, an exercise ball is a great option. This is inexpensive and can help to maximize your bodyweight exercises. However, you really don't need any equipment to get started. Push-ups, squats, lunges, calf raises, and crunches are all great examples of bodyweight exercises you can do.

Multi Gyms

If you do have a little spare cash, investing in a multi gym is a great idea. While the initial cost may seem high, you'll save a lot of money in the long term. A multi gym provides you with the same equipment you'd find at your local gym. However, they are much more affordable than professional gym equipment and they take up very little space in the home – particularly if you invest in a foldaway variation.

The above are some of the great ideas you can utilize when looking to do strength training on a budget. No matter how much money you have available, there is a strength-training exercise you can partake in.

CHAPTER 9

TOP 5 LEAST EXPENSIVE SPORTS

If you're looking to have fun and get into shape, joining a team sport could be just what you need. However, if you haven't got a huge budget, there are some team sports you'll want to avoid.

Below, you'll discover the five cheapest team sports you can partake in when you fancy trying something new.

1. Soccer

Soccer is one of the most affordable team sports you can join. You don't need a lot of equipment, just a decent pair of soccer shoes and suitable kit. You'll find most areas have their own soccer teams. However, you could also create your own with your family and friends if you're just looking for something fun to do together.

2. Cross Country

If you're a big running fan, cross country could be just what you need. While not strictly a team sport, it does involve doing it with a large group of other runners. There are also cross-country teams you can join.

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You will need to have a decent level of fitness for this one. However, it could be a great competitive sport for you to get into. If you make it onto a team, you'll also get to travel around the country, depending upon how good you get.

3. Basketball

Basketball is a great inexpensive sport you can join. Like soccer, it doesn't need much equipment and you're sure to find a local team you or the family could join. You could start by practicing at your local basketball court or see if there are any beginner classes in your area. As you improve your skills, you'll be able to join a team.

It's worth noting here that there is usually a height requirement. You'll get further in basketball if you're a taller player.

4. Volleyball

One of the simplest team sports to get into is volleyball. The great thing about this sport is you can choose from standard volleyball or beach volleyball. You should be able to find a team local to you, but first you may need to take classes to learn how to play. If you get good enough, you could end up playing on your local team, travelling to competitions across the country.

You need very little to partake in volleyball. You'll just need a suitable outfit as the ball and net are provided.

5. Baseball

Finally, another inexpensive team sport to consider is baseball. Again, you'll need very little equipment to get started. You may even be able to borrow equipment from the class you sign up to. This is a particularly great team sport for kids. However, it's common for younger children to start with T-ball before progressing into baseball.

As you can see, there are a variety of inexpensive team sports you can join. Ideally, you'll want to choose something you or the family are genuinely interested in. If you partake in a sport you enjoy, you'll be more likely to keep it up. For more inspiration, search for local team sports in your area.

CHAPTER 10

TIPS FOR GETTING THE BEST VALUE WALKING AND RUNNING SHOES

Running and walking are undoubtedly two of the best exercises you can do. Even just a gentle walk for 30 minutes each day can help you to stay in shape. One of the best things about running and walking as your form of exercise, is that they are mostly completely free.

All you need to get started is a good pair of walking or running shoes. While these can be expensive, there are ways to reduce the cost. Here, you'll discover some of the best tips for getting the best value walking and running shoes.

Take a Look Online

Typically, the best deals for running shoes can be found online. If you type in a search for walking or running shoes, you'll be presented with thousands of results. This allows you to compare your options to find the cheapest deals.

It would be particularly useful if you had a brand of running shoe in mind. This will narrow down your search results and allow you to find the cheapest deals on the specific shoes you're considering.

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To save the most money, consider buying unbranded shoes. You'll end up paying potentially hundreds of dollars more for branded shoes than you will for unbranded. This isn't always down to the quality; sometimes it's just the cost of investing in a particular brand.

Take Advantage of End of Season Sales

A great way to save money on walking and running shoes is to look at end of season sales. Shoe stores frequently provide sales – whether it is end of season or to celebrate specific holidays.

You can find running shoes reduced by hundreds of dollars in the right sale. Don't forget to look at both online and offline sales.

Consider Buying from Auction Websites

Another way to get the best deals is to shop through online auction sites. eBay is undoubtedly a top player when it comes to finding cheap goods. You'll often find brand-new walking and running shoes at the fraction of the high street price.

You can also save money by buying as-new running shoes from sellers who may only have tried them on. These tend to sell at much less than the brand-new shoes.

Don't Just Choose the Cheapest Shoes

One thing that is important to remember is to not simply buy the cheapest shoes. These won't necessarily provide you with the best value.

This is because cheaper shoes are often made from cheaper materials. The cheaper the material, the easier it's going to wear down as you use the shoes. So, you'll end up replacing them much more quickly than a more expensive pair. If you are buying running shoes, this is a particular point to remember. Running shoes will wear down much faster than walking shoes so you need a decent pair.

You don't have to spend a fortune to benefit from high-quality running and walking shoes. The above are just some of the ways you can get the best deals.