



Workouts for College Students

Between classes, exams, homework and friends, college students can have enough trouble finding the time to sleep, let alone exercise. However, exercise is vital to immediate and long-term health and wellness. Regular physical activity can act as a welcome break from coursework, but even more importantly, exercise can improve the quality of sleep, sexual health, and even reduce stress. Finding the time, space and energy for a good workout can be difficult, so continue reading to learn about all the routines, tips and resources college students need to begin and maintain an exercise habit. College students have unique time, financial and even space-related situations that impact their exercise routines. However, the benefits of working out easily outweigh the time it takes. Always discuss major changes with a doctor for the best individualized plan, but below you will find some great starting places and ideas for becoming a healthier, more active student.

- Routine 1: If You Have 5 Minutes or Less

4-Minute Tabata HIIT Workout

Tabata is a High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) protocol named after Izumi Tabata, a coach of the Japanese speed skating team in the 1990s who was the first to analyze the effect of this type of workout. This workout and other similar HIIT protocols have been shown to improve exercise performance, cardiovascular function and reduce systemic inflammation in both coronary patients and individuals with metabolic syndrome. This workout type is hugely popular with those who are crunched for time, have no equipment and seek a fast path to maximize fitness benefits.

- **Equipment:** None

- **Steps:**

1. Choose an exercise such as sprinting, burpees, jumping jacks, etcetera.
2. Work with maximum effort and intensity for 20 seconds and take an active rest for 10 seconds. Continue this for 8 cycles (four minutes total).

- Routine 2: If You Have 30 Minutes

Know Thyself Workout

This is an aptly named workout because the key is in knowing your body cues and making this workout unique to you, resulting in increasing your enjoyment factor, willingness to “stick with it” and maximizing the physical benefits to your unique body. The key is know thyself, meaning ANY time during the workout and as MANY times as necessary, stop and take “active rest.” Then when you are ready, begin again exactly where you were in the beginning. This is a great workout to perform three days a week.

- **Equipment:** Dumbbells recommended

Note: for the squat to press, lunges to row, and step up with curl, use the dumbbells starting with a weight that is easy and manageable for you.

- **Steps:**

You will go through the following 5 exercises, 15 repetitions each, until the 30 minutes has expired.

1. Set a timer for 30 minutes.
2. Squats to Press: With your feet about hip width apart with your heels firmly pressing in the ground and the dumbbells in your hands by your sides, move into a squat keeping your knees behind your toes and moving down as if sitting in a chair. As you stand back up from the squat, raise the weight over your head with palms facing each other. That is one repetition.
3. Jumping Jacks: The standard exercise. Allow your arms full extension touching at the top above your head.
4. Lunges to Row: Standing with your feet together, with the dumbbells in your hands by your sides take a big step forward with your right leg and drop your back left knee straight down toward the ground. Your front knee should be in line with your ankle and forming a 90-degree angle. Lean slightly forward and pull the weights up, squeezing your shoulder blades together and bending your arms. That is one repetition.
5. Step Up With Curl: Use a step or a curb; be sure that it is stable and safe. Facing the step with weights in your hands and arms hanging by your side, step up with right foot in a purposeful movement with core and glutes engaged, followed by the left foot and perform a curl with the weights, bringing them up in front of you toward your shoulders with palms facing you. Return arms to your side as you stand back up.

- Routine 3: If You Have an Hour

One Hour Workout

This is a simple way to turn a run/jog into a full body workout.

- **Equipment:** None

- **Steps:**

1. Slow your pace to 85% of your average, meaning if you typically run at a 10:00 minute a mile pace, run at a 11:30 pace.
2. Begin the run and stop every .50 mile and do 30 seconds each of two body-weight exercises, such as squats and pushups.
3. Continue this routine, stopping every .50 mile and doing the same two body-weight exercises for 30 seconds each.

Exercises to Try

Exercise can happen nearly everywhere, either intentionally or as part of your day. For example, walking to class instead of driving or taking the stairs instead of the elevator are two easy ways to sneak in some activity. While exercises like that are a good place to start, intentional and regular exercise is important. Here are a few ideas for exercising anywhere, from your dorm to the greater world beyond.

- **In Your Dorm Room**

- **Stairs:** Residence halls are often multi-story and there are a variety of exercises you can do using the stairs including cardio and strength. Men's Journal and Shape both offer stair-based workouts with a range of moves that can be done as a full routine or even for just a few minutes. Use stairs as a free gym right outside your door as part of a morning routine or even to just stay inside during bad weather.
- **Wall Workouts:** These exercises don't need equipment and only require a wall with a few spare feet in front of it. If your dorm room is too crowded for that, then chances are your hallway will do the trick. Self and Women's Health both have detailed wall exercises that can stretch and strengthen your entire body.
- **Yoga:** If you're worried a more robust routine might disrupt your dorm mates, give yoga a try. There are many different types of yoga, but most focus on strengthening and stretching the body through holding different poses. If you're new to yoga, the YouTube channel Yoga with Adriene has a variety of workouts for all experience levels.

- **On Campus**

- **PE & Activity Courses:** Most colleges and universities offer for-credit activity courses. Although these classes don't necessarily help GPA or major requirements, they do give you the opportunity to try new sports and workouts with an instructor and classmates. Additionally, having a class where attendance is noted and with set beginning and ending times can help students who otherwise have trouble fitting exercise into their busy schedule. Different schools offer different courses; for example, University of South Alabama offers everything from Cajun dancing to tai chi.
- **Climbing Walls:** Many campus gyms offer more than tried-and-true weights and treadmills; in recent years rock climbing has become increasingly popular and colleges have added climbing walls to their campuses. In addition to muscle-building, climbing allows you to practice problem solving and critical thinking outside of the classroom as you plan how to approach a climb and which holds to use. University of North Texas and University of Oregon both have impressive climbing gyms and University of Alaska Fairbanks even has a seasonal ice-climbing wall.
- **Intramural Sports:** Intramural sports are a lower-pressure alternative to formal college-sponsored teams. Groups of friends or teams can sign up for various sports and events, allowing you to explore a variety of activities and non-traditional sports as well as standards like soccer and basketball. Intramurals vary by college and even by semester, but University of Iowa and Arizona State University's intramural pages can give you an idea of the wide range of intramurals available.

- **Off Campus**

- **Hiking:** Use free mornings to escape campus and unwind by hiking. Easy trails can be used for low-impact cardio that will still reduce stress and anxiety while improving overall cardiovascular health, and hikers can advance to more difficult — and often more scenic — trails as they become more experienced. The Hiking Project, sponsored by outdoor company REI, is an extensive database of hiking trails and urban walking paths around the U.S..
- **Running, Jogging and Walking:** Walking and running are low-cost and simple workouts readily available to most people. Even walking has significant health benefits, such as reduced depression and increased weight loss. Active has some tips and techniques for this kind of exercise and Under Armour's MapMyRun app lets users find and share routes.
- **Gym Classes:** On-campus gyms may not offer the types of fitness courses you want to take, but they may be available beyond the campus bubble. Although these gyms and classes often cost money, many have student discounts that will help. From intense CrossFit gyms to uncommon martial arts like Bagua, you can explore and find workouts that you enjoy.

Tips for Maintaining Workout Routine

Exercising regularly is important for long-term and everyday health, but between classes, exams and friends, workouts can be hard to schedule. Turning exercise into a weekly (or even daily) routine takes effort and doesn't happen overnight. However, it's possible to start and maintain this healthy habit with persistence. Keep reading to see some tips and ideas for maintaining a workout routine.

- **Make it Fun:** Turn your workout into something entertaining and fun. *Zombies, Run!* is an app that lets you turn your jog or run into a zombie-evasion game. Play *Pokémon Go* while walking on- and off-campus to keep you moving. If your current workout routine becomes too boring try something new and exciting, like jogging new routes or even taking a new dance class.
- **Set Good Goals:** If working out is only about looking good, then it can be easier to become disheartened when you reach a plateau and stop seeing changes in the mirror. Instead, remember that exercise is about health and wellbeing. Make goals that are out of reach but can still be obtained in the near future, like doing more reps or running further.
- **Study Break:** After working on essays or lab reports for too long you might feel stiff and tired. Use your brief study breaks as an opportunity sneak in some yoga. Integrating brief workouts into your study routines will help keep you awake while also helping you get into the habit of exercising routinely, even just in short bursts.
- **Take A Class:** For some students, the structure and obligation offered by a formal class will keep them motivated to go. Workouts are especially hard to skip if people, like your instructor or classmates, will notice that you're not there. Additionally, fitness classes have set times and days, making it easier to schedule.
- **Workout with Friends:** Having a workout buddy will keep both of you motivated and encouraged. Routines can even become light-hearted competitions.

Workout FAQs

- **How much should a college student exercise:** Adults should exercise for at least 30 minutes a day in one form or another. If you want to lose weight or gain muscle faster you may want to exercise more than that. People should generally take around 10,000 steps daily, which equals about five miles. The most important thing, however, is to start exercising if you haven't been.
- **What's the best type of workout for a busy college student:** No two people are alike and there is no one-size-fits-all workout. The best workouts are ones that challenge you without over straining, fit into your schedule and keep you interested. Basketball may be the best workout for one busy college student while hiking is best for another. Explore different activities and keep an open mind instead of sticking with the first routine recommended.
- **I don't have any workout equipment Can I still get a good workout:** Yes. The majority of the exercises outlined here require little or no equipment, and some college campus gyms have equipment available for use. Other equipment, like jump ropes and dumbbells, can be found at low prices online and even in thrift stores. Bodyweight exercises can generally be done without equipment because you use your own weight as part of the workout; Self has a variety of bodyweight workouts with written and .gif examples of how they can be performed.
- **I don't work out. What are some good routines and workouts I can start with:** "Remember the key to transformation is not intensity; it is frequency. Doing less but doing it frequently is a proven path to sustainable change," says Jordan. Short exercises, like Jordan's recommended HIIT routine, can be a good place to start, but even short walks are good for you. Any amount of exercise is better than no exercise.
- **How can I tell if I'm working out too much or too hard:** Long-term overzealous exercising can trigger some of the same issues people use it to resolve, such as fatigue. Also be on the lookout for long-lasting (hours and days) muscle soreness, mood changes and higher resting heart rates. While "the quick answer is only you know," says Jordan, "when you begin to feel as though it's hard to talk, you are breathless and your muscles are burning, stop and take active rest until you feel ready to try again, then start again exactly where you left off." Also be aware of your breathing. Jordan notes, "we have a tendency to hold our breath at various times of increased effort during workout, which works against us. Remind yourself to breathe in and then out on the exertion — breath work will make the experience better."

College Workout Resources

- **Apps**

- Couch to 5K: This app is built to help so-called couch potatoes kickstart a more active lifestyle by training for a 5K race.
- FIT Radio: FIT Radio app gives users soundtracks to their workouts, with a variety of rhythms to choose from and verbal coaching channels. Users can even choose to have the music synchronize to the rate of their run.
- Sworkit: This app helps create workout routines and schedules tailored to your needs. Sworkit includes instructional videos, guides, timers and more to help you get in shape in whatever way works best for you, your fitness level and your schedule.
- Cycle Cast: Cycle Cast gives users on-demand cycling classes that fit their schedules. This app is excellent for users who have access to stationary bikes but still want some instruction and motivation to achieve their best workout.
- Nike Training Club App: The Nike training app tracks and modifies workout routines and schedules to suit your needs. There are also over 100 workouts created by Nike fitness experts with accompanying video and audio guidance.
- PEAR Personal Coach: This interactive app guides users through their workouts using real voices and other audio tools, keeping it hands- and eyes-free so users can focus on their fitness.

- **Instagram Accounts**

- @getfitwithgiddy: Gideon Akande is a renowned professional trainer and he uses his Instagram to share techniques and routines that are fun, intense and effective.
- @kaisafit: Kaisa Keranen's Instagram includes a wide range of workout videos for the home and the gym as well as some inspiring pictures and posts.
- @mynameisjessamyn: Jessamyn Stanley's Instagram is overflowing with body-positivity and yoga routines for plus size fitness.
- @therock: Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson is known for his impressive physique, and he shares some of his methods along with motivational and funny posts on his Instagram.
- @jaycardiello: Jay Cardiello is a professional trainer to the stars (including 50 Cent). Follow his Instagram for tons of motivational and inspiring posts.
- @laurenfisher: Although she recently graduated, the majority of Lauren Fisher's inspiring Instagram is dedicated to workouts and CrossFit competitions she did while in college.
- @progressive_calisthenics: Fitness professional Kenneth Gallarzo uses Instagram to share helpful routines that involve little to no special equipment.

- **YouTube Channels**

- Be Fit: BeFit serves as a hub of youtube fitness with a variety of channels and workouts. BeFit GO is even optimized for mobile devices so you can watch and do the workouts when and wherever.
- SofaBar: This channel offers modified ballet workouts from figure skater Sofie Baranova. She also has videos for beginning figure skating and even stretches for improving posture.
- Cody: This fitness channel focuses on yoga workouts from beginner to advanced, in addition to ask-a-coach Q&A videos and nutrition advice.
- Biogilates: Professional instructor Cassey Ho's channel focuses on a range of pilates and pilates-esque routines with ideas for exercising in small spaces (like dorms!).