



Self-Directed Exercise with Activity Trackers

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We've all heard the excuses: bad weather, finances, and lack of energy. Though one of the most common obstacles to exercise that people note is time. How can we stay motivated and maintain focus during the activities we participate in? This month, we'll explore the top method that fitness enthusiasts have successfully incorporated- the use of Activity Trackers.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have maintained their recommendation that Americans achieve 10,000 steps/day. This equates to approximately five miles/day. While "old-school" pedometers do the trick just fine as far as measuring steps per day, they don't offer much more. Millions of Americans have turned their attention to 'Wearables.' These activity trackers are devices that can be worn on various parts of the body. Typically, they are worn on the wrist or belt line, although I personally use one that can be kept in your pocket.

With the growth of technology and so many more ways to readily access information, we have grown into a "data hungry" culture. There are a myriad of variables to track during exercise, including step count, heart rate, sleep quality & quantity, and caloric expenditure. The key for most consumers is price, amongst other variables such as device comfort and user friendliness. A new study of around 2,000 U.S. and U.K. consumers from Juniper Research reveals just one in five consumers are willing to pay more than \$175 for a fitness tracker.

There are now so many top fitness trackers available that choosing the best one can be difficult. *Jawbone, Misfit, Fitbit, Garmin* and *Apple* are the brands that remain the market leaders amongst fitness enthusiasts. That said, I've incorporated the Fit Bit device into the routines of many of my training clients and groups. They are easy to use, reliable, and fairly priced. Currently, the Fit Bit lineup consists of six different options, ranging from \$59.95 to \$249.95.

The budget-conscious fitness enthusiast would most likely choose those at the lower end of the price range. Personally, I use the least expensive model as it can clip on the waistline of my pants, or simply stay in my pocket. Many women also report clipping them to their sports bra during exercise, but I've found the step count to be most accurate when it's in line with the hip. The model one chooses simply depends on which variables he/she is seeking to track. Higher models offer additional features such as sleep tracking, heart rate, and floors climbed. The highest model incorporates GPS tracking, music control, text notifications, and caller ID. At the end of the day, the choice simply comes down to which features appeal to you most.

Activity trackers remain a top method to help us maintain motivation and focus during our exercise programs. They are typically easy to use, relatively inexpensive, and reliable. Encourage your colleagues, family, and friends to join you in using one and challenge each other with friendly competitions. All of the activity trackers can be synched to your computer and smart phones. Your statistics are saved over time, so it can be quite motivating to see your improvements, also over time! Have fun and get moving!



Paul Connolly is certified through the National Strength and Conditioning Association as a personal trainer and possesses a degree in Exercise Science from UMASS-Boston, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude.