

Resolution time is here! What goals will you be making this time around? Build muscle to fill out some medium-large shirts? Get a grip on your love affair with the office donuts and lose weight? Or maybe transform into an overall healthier, better version of yourself? Whatever your goal happens to be, get a head start now on making a firm resolution *today* rather than waiting for the clock to strike 12 on December 31st. After all, there's no such thing as the "perfect" time to start. What's important is simply that you start! Sure, it's a little cold out, and you'll have some holiday weight to work off, but here are 9 expert tips to warm you up for the coming fitness endeavors ahead.

## **Set Performance-Related Goals**

Set performance goals in the gym, such as getting your first pull-up done or reaching a certain number of push-ups.

A major upshot of knocking out performance and lifting goals is that your physique will typically start to improve, as well. Set goals for your major lifts, mile time, and more—just don't wait until tomorrow, start today!

## **Build Your Foundation**

Instead of concentrating on a massive, far-off goal, focus on smaller changes you can transform into habits that contribute to long-term success.

Examples include eating enough protein to support muscle function and your goals, replacing soda with green tea. Adding more quality food to your diet, taking steps to be more active throughout the day, and making sure your program is tailored to the goal at hand. You can't progress without progression, and baby steps ensure steady progression.

## **Motivate Yourself with Progress Pictures**

While we're on the subject of motivation, one great way to keep motivation high is to take progress pictures, even if you dislike taking pictures of yourself.

You don't have to show anyone; just keep them for yourself. "There's nothing more motivating than seeing how far you've come in the last year," explains bodybuilder Jesse Hobbs. "By taking pictures now, when this time rolls around every year, you can reflect back on how far you've come and how much hard work you've put into changing yourself for the better."

Plus, long-term change doesn't show up in the mirror as clearly as it does in photos. For accurate comparison, aim to take your progress pictures at the same time in roughly the same clothes so that you get a true representation of the changes you've made.

## **Educate Yourself**

When it comes to getting fit, knowledge really is power. Arm yourself with the appropriate knowledge and continually strive to stay atop the latest happenings in fitness. It's a fast-moving industry that regularly comes out with new information.

You can find the best program in the world, but if it's not something you will enjoy and stick with, it's probably not the program for you. There's no one perfect way to approach fitness and nutrition; you just have to educate yourself and find the things that work for you. Find the Plan works for you.

## **Buddy Up**

If you're really struggling to stay committed to your workouts throughout the holiday season because you'd rather be sipping hot cocoa by the fireplace, find a gym partner and buddy up! If you can find someone who's stronger or more fit than you, that's a major bonus because he or she will push you harder.

Having a friend to train with will boost your confidence. Plus, exercise is way more fun when you have someone to train with. If you are married, try training together as a couple and watch your relationship grow.

So grab a co-worker, a friend, the cute supermarket cashier, or whomever, and make a promise to keep each other accountable!

## **Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate**

Perhaps one of the most overlooked strategies for staying on target is to simply make sure you are well-hydrated. Not in the mood for plain water? Try simply adding a slice of lemon or lime, or some cubed watermelon, to a large pitcher of water.

You'll find it more refreshing and a lot more palatable. Soon, you'll be chugging down the whole pitcher! Make drinking ample water a habit right now and practice it every day, all day.

## **Hire a Trainer**

If you've never worked with a trainer before, it's important to find the right trainer for you—someone who sees eye-to-eye with your goals and meets your budget. Some trainers can be more expensive than others, but the right one can be well worth the investment. A good trainer can set you up for success by keeping you motivated, on task, and accountable.

## **Throw Out Your Scale**

You read that right. If you're really frustrated by your weight and have a tendency to weigh yourself frequently, just toss the scale. It's not about how much you weigh, but about how much stronger you feel and where your confidence stands.

Instead of constantly reading the numbers on the scale and sending yourself into a panic attack, use other measurements like body fat, strength, mood, waist circumference, and progress pictures to gauge your progress.

## **Don't Program-Hop**

It's tempting to jump ship when you're 4 weeks into a program and feel like the results are less than ideal. However, strong results often take more time than 4 weeks to start showing. Stay the course rather than hopping around from one fitness program to another.

There are several recipes to make a pretty delicious chocolate chip cookie, and if you follow each recipe until the end, they will most likely turn out perfect. But if you mix recipes together, you will end up confusing yourself and end up with something that doesn't even resemble a cookie.

Trust in the process and try to stick to your chosen plan for at least 6-12 weeks. If you don't get what you wanted, it might then be time to re-evaluate the program along with your overall approach.