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About the Author

Jason Webb started regular walking sessions just a few years ago after his doctor advised him to become more active.

He thought about running but chose walking instead because of the lower level of physical effort required.

Jason's goal was to try to lose a few pounds and walking has helped him to do that.

He believes that many people can benefit from his ebook where he explains how he fits a regular series of walks into his busy schedule, maintains his motivation and achieves his personal goals to be fitter.

Jason says that walking is a better option than gym classes or other exercise programs for many people because it is low cost and you can adapt your program to changes in your personal or professional life.

He feels that walking has also improved his general well-being, helped him to handle the stress in his life much better and improved his enjoyment of life, giving him more energy for activities with his family and friends.

Jason explains everything you need to start walking your way to a better, more enjoyable future in "Walking for Fun and Better Health".

Before you take those First Steps

Walking is recognized as a simple but powerful method which almost anyone can use to improve their general health.

It does not require that you spend much money or that you must make any major adjustments to your daily schedule.

You don't need to sign up for expensive courses or invest in special equipment.

You must keep in mind your current level of physical ability and any medical conditions you have when deciding how much walking you should aim to do and where you will walk.

Consult Your Doctor

Before you start a walking program or any other type of exercise or sport, you should consult your doctor and have a thorough medical examination.

This is good advice for everyone.

But, it is particularly important if you:

- Have any history of heart trouble.
- Suffer from high blood pressure.
- Have had pains in your chest.
- Have any episodes of dizziness or have fainted.
- Have any form of diabetes.
- Have any significant medical condition.
- Have had surgery.
- May be pregnant.
- Are above the age of 55.
- Are overweight, even if you are not obese.
- Have not been doing any regular exercise.

Some medical conditions are not obvious to many people until they are fairly advanced. They may not even be picked up during examinations by your doctor during a casual consultation.

But, if you tell them that you intend to start an exercise program, your doctor can check all factors which might affect your ability to do that safely.

Set Your Goals

People take up walking or other forms of exercise for a variety of reasons.

They include weight reduction, improved fitness and improving your ability to deal with your medical symptoms such as blood pressure.

Set goals for your walking program in line with the advice you got from your doctor.

The biggest hurdles to achieving your goals are likely to be:

Trying to achieve too much in too short a time frame. Some people underestimate the time it will take until they are fit enough to reach their targets.

Many walkers get benefits which they had not thought about as they progress with their programs.

Warm Up before You Step Out

Giving your body some warming up exercises is vital to prepare yourself for the effort of your walking session.

It also is very important because it will reduce the risk of injury during the actual walking.

Your warm up will encourage your body to channel more blood to the muscles so they are better able to handle the extra demands which you put on them.

Your warm up should be at least five minutes long, even if you are just going for a short walk.

You need to do enough gentle exercise to raise your body temperature. Your body will work better when it is warm.

After a day spent mostly in their office chair, some walkers do some gentle stretches. Don't overdo stretches or any other sort of exercise. One friend said that he laid on the carpeted floor or a firm couch for five minutes with his feet slightly higher than his hips.

He says that this encourages better blood circulation in his legs.

I know that all office workers should do some brisk walking about every half hour during the working day to reduce the chance of blood pooling in the lower half of their legs which can lead to serious circulation problems.

Cooling Down

It is also very important to taper off your level of activity at the end of each session so that your body adjusts back to normal.

Suddenly switching from brisk walking to a session in front of the TV can reduce the benefits you got from your session.

Start Walking

Step This Way

We all know how to walk, don't we? After all, we have done lots of it every day since a very early age.

We know the basics but, unfortunately, most of us have developed some bad habits which reduce the possible benefits we can get if we don't adjust our style.

Since we will, after a while, be putting more effort into each step we take, we could risk doing some damage to our feet and legs if we don't learn how to use them better.

This is the way I was taught when I started to walk for exercise. There are various systems and I cannot claim this simple method is the best for everybody.

But, it works for me.

Posture is Important

You probably were told early in your life that good posture is important. Start by standing straight. Imagine that there is a cord attached to your hair in the center of your head (Follicle challenged people: Please just pretend along with the rest of us!).

Pretend that the cord is attached to something out of sight above us.

Imagine that your feet remain flat on the ground as the cord is pulled gently upward so that our back becomes as straight as possible.

Keep looking straight forward.

Relax your shoulders and your legs but don't bend your legs or your back.

Gently pull in your stomach.

Putting your Arms to Work

You can add to the effectiveness of your walking with an appropriate, well controlled arm motion.

Bring your forearms up to be parallel with the ground.

Keep your hands loosely curled but don't clench them into fists.

Keep your elbows close to your body as you swing your arms forward and back. Many people tend to point their elbows to the side which gives the impression they are imitating a chicken trying to fly. This will also reduce the effectiveness of the arm motion.

Swing your left arm forward as your right leg moves forward.

Don't swing your arms too far forward or too high. That will not give you any extra power. Your forward hand should only be raised up to the level of your breast bone.

Swing your arms straight forward and back. Some people tend to swing their arms across their bodies. This sort of motion really is wasted effort.

When you first start moving your arms like this as you walk, you may feel tired more quickly because you are expending more energy. Don't force yourself. Just use the arm movements for, say, five or ten minutes and increase the time as your body adjusts to it.

You are ready to start but, first, I'll make some suggestions about two things we all take for granted and which many of us do not do as efficiently as we could.

Make Each Step the Same

When you lift your foot and push it forward, make sure that the heel is the first part to touch the ground.

Your body moves forward, supported by the forward leg.

Push from your toes of the front leg as you bring the other leg forward from behind.

Your foot will roll forward from when the heel touches the surface until the spread toes power your next step forward.

If your shoes are stiff, you will not get the correct rolling motion.

Repeat Repeat etc.

You will find that your body is most comfortable with a certain stride length. Stretching your forward leg to make each stride longer won't produce better results. It could increase the risk of injury.

If you want to increase your speed (remember that's not the most important factor), take more, shorter steps in the same time rather than trying to extend the length of your average stride.

The leg at the back provides the power for your stride, the front leg supports your body.

Start each session with a few minutes easy walking to help your body adjust before you make greater demands on it.

It's a good idea to have a similar period of lower impact walking to end each session so that your body can start to cool down from the major effort you have been putting in.

Keep Your First Sessions Short

If you have not been exercising for a period before you start to do your walking exercises, it is usually recommended that you begin with walks of no more than ten minutes.

This may seem over cautious but you need to let your body adjust to the new demands you put on it.

There is a significant risk of injury when people go full tilt at whatever sort of exercise program they decide to try without giving their body enough time to safely adapt to it in easy stages.

Stick with the same length walks for at least five sessions before adding five minutes to them. If you are fairly fit and your doctor has not raised any concerns, you might increase the length of your sessions by ten minutes at a time.

You can also increase the potential benefit of each session by walking at a faster, but still comfortable pace, or by walking through areas which include some hills.

But, in the early stages, making your session a little bit longer is better than either of these other possibilities.

Taking your time when you are just in the early stages of your walking program improves your chances of reaching your health and other goals without any problems.

Remember, it's not a race but a journey. Enjoy the journey and you will be more likely to keep your motivation high.

Equipment

Compared to the benefits you can get from a regular program of walking, the amount you need to spend on your equipment is fairly low.

There is little which you require which you will not already have except perhaps for suitable reliable and supportive shoes.

The only other essentials are a hat, light, and comfortable clothing.

Many people don't realize the importance of their feet to their overall health. Your feet support your whole body and are subject to shock at every step you take. They are like the foundations on your house.

Any problems there can cause problems right through the whole structure of your body.

So, choosing the right shoes for your walking is a critical factor in how successful your program will be.

But, that is also true for our regular footwear. Many people will buy expensive and fashionable clothes and then cramp their feet into ill fitting shoes in the name of fashion.

Others will buy cheap shoes that do not give their feet any support and little protection.

This is false economy and can also have serious long term effects on your general health.

Shoes

I will recommend that you spend the money to get a couple of pairs of good walking shoes. Without good shoes, the time and effort which you invest in your walking program could be largely wasted.

Poor quality shoes that lack support and are badly fitted could actually damage your feet!

Some important factors in selecting the right shoe for you include:

Timing: Always try on new shoes in the afternoon when your feet have had some work throughout the day. They will be slightly larger than they are early in the morning after a night of rest.

Take a new pair of the same socks you wear for your walking exercise with you when you try on shoes.

Good fit: Poorly fitting shoes will cause blisters and other problems.

Sometimes, these afflictions lead to the development of more serious foot related problems.

Get a print of each of your feet by dipping them in a bowl of water and then stepping on to a sheet of cardboard.

This will show you the type of arch you have and also let you compare your feet to each other.

Your feet may be different sizes. This surprises many people but is not uncommon. If this applies to you, always choose shoes that are comfortable on your larger foot.

Shoes should not be too tight.

It used to be accepted that you would have to put up with some stiffness and possible discomfort in your shoes until you "wore them in". With the advances in technology, you should be able to buy shoes that are comfortable and supportive when you first use them.

Room for your foot to expand: Your feet, especially your toes, need space in the shoes to expand when absorbing the impact from each step.

There should be enough space to fit your little finger beside your toes when you are standing in your shoes. If the toe box of your shoes is too narrow, you will have problems over time.

Your walking shoes will probably be at least a size larger than your other shoes.

Stand up when you tie your shoes. Do not tie them too tightly as you could cause damage the delicate parts of the top of the foot.

Always walk around in shoes you are thinking of buying. You will not get an accurate idea of the comfort and support they can provide to you from just slipping them on unless you move about in them.

Most shoes will have a layer of gel or other material between the innersole and the bottom of the shoe to help absorb shock. You should examine this area of your walking shoes from time to time to check that it has not compacted to a point where it no longer provides that shock absorption for your foot.

Design: Look for walking shoes where the sole under the heel is about the same height as the sole under the front part of the foot.

Many walking shoes have a notch at the back of the shoe to reduce the chance that the shoe will rub on and irritate your achilles tendon.

Some are cut higher at the back of the foot to help protect the ankle and provide a more snug fit.

Some on the sole of the shoe are probably just for decoration but the manufacturers say the grooves they put on the sole are carefully placed to improve traction between your shoes and the surface which you are walking over though I think some might just be for decoration.

Removable inner soles can be removed for cleaning or replacement. This can extend the life of the shoes and reduce the chance that they will start to smell.

Flexibility: Walking shoes are more flexible than running shoes made for runners because of the different demands they place on their feet.

Appropriate materials: You need to always wear shoes which are produced from materials which support your feet and let them breathe. The manufacturer may change materials for a particular shoe over time so always check any new pair thoroughly when considering buying them.

An appropriate arch support: Your foot prints will show you what sort of arch you have.

A **high arch** will be shown by a large blank area between the print of your heel and the ball of your foot. You will benefit from a shoe which offers plenty of shock absorbing material because your feet will not be able to absorb as much as people with the other types of arches.

A **normal arch** will show as a smaller but distinct gap between the prints left by your heel and the ball of your foot.

Flat feet will leave a print where there is no blank area between the print of your heel and the ball of your foot. This condition may leave you more likely to have problems in your muscles and your joints.

When you find a pair of shoes which fit your criteria and price range, I suggest that you buy another pair at the same time.

Shoe companies change their styles and designs frequently to encourage more sales and it can be very frustrating to find that your favorite type of shoe is no longer available or that some changes have been made in their composition which affect their usefulness for you.

Try on the second pair of shoes before buying them as there can be minor variations between the two pairs of shoes.

Having two pairs of shoes which you are very happy with lets you alternate their use. This gives each pair more time to recover from each day's session and may extend their useful life.

Many walkers stick with their favorite pair of shoes for longer than is wise. It is time to replace your current walking shoes when there are visible signs of wear on the shoes or when you can feel that the shock absorbing material in the shoes has been compressed and no longer can absorb the shock and expand back to its original shape.

Replacing your shoes in a timely manner will reduce the risk of developing foot problems.

Socks

Avoid the temptation to save money by buying cheap socks.

The socks you wear are the first level of protection for your feet. Badly fitting or rough socks can cause or increase the severity of problems like blisters and infections.

Look for socks designed for walking.

Avoid socks with bumpy seams that will chafe your feet when you exert some pressure.

You need socks which will help to remove sweat from contact with your feet. They are more expensive but the comfort and reduced risk of problems is worth the cost.

Clothing

Avoid heavy clothing for your walking sessions.

The best method to remain comfortable and protected from extremes of weather is to think in layers rather than bulk.

The layer closest to your skin should fit more closely than the outer layer. This layer should not be any fabric which holds moisture. You want it to take the moisture away from your body.

The outer layer of clothing can be more loose. The air between the two layers will provide your body with some insulation.

A long sleeved shirt, light sweater, and light, waterproof jacket will probably keep your upper body comfortable.

If possible, ensure that your rainproof jacket has vents so that air can circulate to the inner layers of clothing. This will help you to keep more comfortable.

If you expect to walk fast or far enough to develop a sweat, look for shirts made of materials which take the moisture away from your body.

Track pants, other long pants or shorts are all suitable. You shouldn't wear cotton or denim or anything that is heavy or stiff.

Accessories

Always wear a hat or cap rather than a visor. A visor will not offer any protection to the top or back of your head. Most caps will not protect the back of your head. Your hat or cap needs to have some means of ventilation so that the top of your head does not get too hot.

Always use sunscreen, even if your clothes cover all your body. Some materials do not provide UV protection. Re-apply sunscreen every few hours or after washing.

Get a good pair of sunglasses to protect your eyes from the effects of the sun's UV rays. Your glasses should be shatter resistant and fit snugly onto your nose so there is little risk of them falling off.

Get a good bag to attach to your belt for your keys and other necessities.

I think that you should leave the MP3 player or any other kind of headset at home. They are a safety risk because you will not be as aware of what is happening around you. That might be an angry animal or a poorly controlled vehicle.

Using headphones really does shut us off from our surroundings. An extreme example was reported just a couple of days before I wrote this. A jogger on a beach was stuck and killed by a crashing light plane because he did not hear its approach over the sound from his stereo player.

That was exceptional, but I have heard of several incidents and near misses when walkers and runners were absorbed in the music from their stereo so they did not hear or respond to the rapid approach of cyclists, skateboarders and other rapidly moving hazards.

These players take away what has, for me, become one of the highlights of the walker's experience; enjoying the natural beauty which we often overlook when we drive past it and interacting with other people that we meet on our walks.

Travel light, don't try to fill every pocket in your bag. Always ask yourself, "Do I *really* need it?" before adding another item to the load you hook to your waist.

Carry water with you, especially if you are walking for a half hour or longer, to ensure you have a clean, safe supply. Don't have energy drinks instead of water.

Gloves and a thick cap are advisable if you walk in very cold conditions. That's when your system draws blood from your limbs and the top of your head as part of its defense against the cold.

Walking is for Young and Old

You can start a walking program to help improve your general health and well-being at any age.

Just make sure that you have a thorough check-up by your Doctor before you start your walking program.

Another important factor for your general health is the proper circulation of blood around your body. Walking can help with that too.

Walking your children to school is good for everyone involved. I think that little bit of exercise can help prepare them for the lessons that day. It can also, of course, help to energize your body so that you are more ready for the work you have to perform.

But, it also encourages your children to be active rather than passive.

A walking session will assist your physical health but it also may help to reduce your stress and gently exercise your heart.

Don't look at your walking as a race. Make time to really look at and enjoy your surroundings.

Health Research Reveals the Benefits of Walking

I am not a health professional and my opinions are based on my experience along with feedback from other walkers and the wide range of material which I've read that was based on quality research.

It's important to remember that these reports are about work that is in progress. Some of the findings may be discounted or even discarded after further investigation.

One prestigious group reported that regular walking may help to improve the level of good (high-density lipoprotein) cholesterol and even reduce the amount of bad (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol.

Other claims are that walking on a regular basis can help with:

- ✓ Managing blood pressure
- ✓ Those people at risk, or suffering from, type 2 diabetes
- ✓ Weight management

Many people believe that walking can provide some of the benefits which runners get if you can maintain a rate that safely raises your heart rate.

Slow walking has some benefits but most come from walking faster than the pace which most of us are used to in our daily activities.

There is some research which strongly suggests that walking is likely to help you relax and may improve your ability to handle mental pressure because the aerobic exercise is said to pump more blood to the brain.

Frequently Asked Questions and Simple Answers

I have tried to give enough detail about as many factors which might affect the enjoyment and effectiveness of your walking program in this book.

This section is for some points which I had not covered in the other chapters.

Should I drink plenty of water when I walk?

It's important to keep your body supplied with water at all times, not just when you are exercising.

When you are exercising, you may need to increase the amount of water which you drink to ensure that you replace the amount which you lose through the extra sweat which you produce.

Adjust your intake according to the demands of your body.

If the weather is very warm, you could fill half of your water bottle and then freeze it.

When you are preparing for your walking session, top up the bottle with regular water.

By the time you are ready for your first drink, the water will be cooled and the melting ice will replace the water that you drink.

Could I drink too much water?

But, there is evidence that some people have suffered serious effects from taking on too much water.

This is my understanding, as a lay person, of the reason for the problem:

If you drink more water than your kidneys can process comfortably, or if you do not expel it as sweat or urine when your body needs to, your blood may be diluted and the level of salt in the blood is less than the concentration in the cells of the body.

The water moves into the cells, including those in the brain. When the brain swells, it is put under intense pressure because it is enclosed in a protective bone box.

This can seriously affect the operation of important body functions.

There have been some cases where runners have died because of the effects of drinking too much water.

See <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6263029.stm> for a more detailed explanation.

Should female walkers wear a sports bra?

Many believe that because walking is a relatively low impact activity, then there is no need for the cost of a special bra.

Your doctor will probably advise you to get a professionally fitted sports bra because studies showed that even brisk walking could cause damage to the supporting ligaments over time.

When should I walk for exercise?

There is no ideal time for your walking sessions.

One of the features of walking as you maintain some form of regular exercise is that most people will find it fairly easy to fit a productive session into their day even if their scheduled session has to be dropped because of other demands on their time.

Let's compare the appeal of the various options.

Lunch time: When you are working, a lunchtime walk can help you mentally shift from the concerns and pressures you have in your job. This can have positive benefits for your health and improve your ability to handle your work and the stresses involved.

A brisk walk before your lunch can improve your appetite. You should also make sure that you do some walking every half hour or so if you have a job where you are sitting for most of the day.

It is believed by some to improve the rate of your blood circulation.

If you do your walk with a work colleague or friendly neighbor, you can get some social stimulation which tends to clear your mind of the concerns in your work or your home for a while.

Your time to walk is limited, so you probably won't get as much benefit as you would from a longer session, but the time restriction will encourage you to keep up as brisk a pace as is comfortable to you and whoever is with you. So, you will get the maximum possible benefit from the time and effort you put in.

Morning: You may find it easier to find the time for your walking session because most people can get up a little earlier more easily than they can shift their regular commitments at other times of the day to fit in some walking.

An early morning session will boost your body's readiness to handle the demands through the rest of your day, starting with your commuting.

You will be more ready to start right into your work when you arrive without having to build up to it.

In many areas, there is less air pollution from cars or industry in the early morning.

Late afternoon and evening: Your muscles will probably need less warm up because of the work you have already done. But, don't skimp on your warm up as you will probably be using some muscles which have had little to do through the day. Never omit your warm up completely.

A good exercise session will form a natural and welcome break to get your mind away from the stresses in your earlier activities.

These sessions will hone your appetite for the evening meal.

You will feel more relaxed because you don't have to limit your session to fit in with later business or other commitments that day.

Are sports drinks better than water?

Water is probably the best drink in many circumstances.

But, when you are exerting yourself for some time, a sports drink can help you with replacing materials which are not present in sufficient levels in plain water.

Be aware that sports drinks usually contain some sodium and you should include that amount in your calculations if you are watching the amount of sodium you consume each day.

If you cannot find a sports drink which you like, try adding some fruit juice to your water.

Gadgets to Help Your Walking Sessions

Can wrist and ankle weights improve your results?

Some people use wrist or ankle weights to add resistance when they do their walking sessions. They may be effective when you just use these aids in a series of exercises that have been designed for strengthening your arms or legs.

These may have some value for people that already have a good level of general fitness.

But, people that have a low level of fitness or health problems should probably avoid their use.

That is because using them while you are walking is likely to add to the pressure on your arms and legs and may increase the likelihood of damage to tendons, joints or other parts.

The weights will slow down the rate at which you walk and this could reduce the beneficial effects of the whole session.

What are Pelleres™?

Pelleres™ from <http://pelleres.com/> are claimed to be an advance on regular arms weights. They are "weighted arm sleeves that wrap around the forearm and are scientifically designed to increase the power and strength of an athlete when used during



exercise. By adding weight to the forearms Pelleres™ strengthens not only the muscular structure of the upper body but engages the core which improves the propulsion of large muscle groups like the quads, glutes and hamstrings. This in turn creates greater power for an athlete and enhances overall performance.

The suppliers claim significant advantages over the traditional weights. They say that these sleeves could be useful even for people that are not athletes

but want to improve fitness and/or lose weight. They recommend that they only be used under the supervision of a qualified instructor and after consultation with your Doctor.

Walking Poles

Some walkers need the extra support and stability offered by using one or two poles to be able to do any walking exercise.

But, many relatively fit walkers also use poles and not just when the surface they are walking over is loose or if they need to cross some water.

Another advantage is that a pole can be used for checking whether soft ground will support your weight, pushing aside small obstructions with less risk of cutting your hands or being stung or bitten by any creature that might be disturbed and providing some defense if you are attacked by an unfriendly person or animal you encounter during your walk.



The use of poles has become so popular that some companies have produced specially designed, lighter weight poles for walkers as well as the trekking poles which are intended for use when hiking through rugged bush areas.

You should consider the purchase of a set of poles if you are intending to walk long distances or in rural areas. But, you can use your poles anywhere, even on the streets around your home as long as you don't mind being stared and comments about, "Where's the snow?"

Some experienced walkers say that using poles may relieve pressure on their joints and reduce the risk of other injuries as well as providing extra support.

When you use poles, you exercise your arms and upper body.

This is a great addition to the exercise your legs get from the walking. Also, the poles can take a little off the load away from your lower back and hips.

You need to get poles which suit your particular height.

You may get single piece or collapsible poles which can be packed into a small bag for traveling. The one piece poles are generally stronger and more durable but many people have found the folding or telescopic poles better for their particular needs. Prices, features and accessories vary so be sure to look around before deciding on which type of pole you might buy.



Some poles are provided with rubber tips which can be removed when the type of surface you are walking over changes from asphalt to grass or dirt. You can expect to have to buy replacement rubber tips from time to time. They will wear more quickly in certain spots due to your particular walking style.

Other poles have a plate on the end which contacts the ground set at an appropriate angle.

Walking poles may have a half glove and many are set at a particular angle which the manufacturer believes is the best to minimize stress on your wrists.

Setting Up Your Poles: I recommend that you use a set of two poles rather than one.

Make sure that you poles are exactly the same length.

Various people have different ideas about how long the poles you use should be compared to your own height. I think that you should be able to hold the tips of the poles against the surface when your arms are straight out parallel with the surface you are walking over.

Using Your Poles: Unless you really need them as a support, it is best to only use your poles as an addition to your exercise.

When you put the tip of the pole on the ground, press it against or into the surface. This gives your arms and shoulders a little bit of a work out which will, over time, add to the positive effects of your walking program.

If you just tap the tip of the pole on the ground at each step, you will miss out on that extra benefit and only get a bit of extra support for your walking. This will reduce your total calories burned.

When you use poles, you put one pole ahead of you at the same time as you push off from the opposite foot at the back of you.

Use the grips, which may be half gloves or simple straps, so that you don't have to apply as much pressure with your hands. Squeezing hard on the poles will not improve your results and could encourage the development of blisters over time.

Always clean and dry your poles after use so that they continue to give you good service.

Pedometers can Help You

A pedometer is a device which you can use to count the steps which you take over a particular period.

The devices register each impact of either foot on the ground as a step.

They vary from simple step counters to devices which have more advanced functions. They may have a stop watch function so you can see how long it has taken you to cover the distance.

Some can then transfer the information to your computer. If that is important to you, check that the supplied computer program will work with the type of computer which you have.

Some also are able to calculate and record estimates of the distance you have walked. The accuracy of the measurement depends on the steps all being of about the same length. Many pedometers even calculate the approximate number of calories which you expended during the walking session.

According to the manufacturer's information, some can work equally well whether they are clipped to your waistband, suspended on a lanyard around your neck or even slipped in your pocket!

If your pedometer calculates the distance which you walk, you need to get a good estimate of the average length of your steps when you are walking for exercise before using it.

Find a flat area where you can put a couple of marks on the ground without upsetting anyone. You need somewhere where you can make at least ten steps in a straight line.

Put your first mark on the ground in front of the toe of your front foot. Make sure that it is clear enough to be seen easily.

Then, you take ten steps at your normal pace.

Put your second mark at the front of your front foot (it should be the same one that set the point that you marked the first time).

Now, you must measure the entire distance which you covered with your ten steps.

Divide that distance by ten. That's the average length of your step.

You will probably get a much more accurate figure if you do this exercise three times in succession.

Your first attempt is likely to give a longer step length than you usually do just because you are strongly focused on making each step during the test.

Taking the average of three sets of ten steps is likely to be significantly better for your calculations.

Make sure that you use different color markers or chalk for each attempt. If you only have one color to use, make new start points for each test and then mark the start and finish of the second attempt with a series of small dashes and use dotted lines to mark the beginning and end of the third attempt.

Put that distance into your pedometer by following the instructions which come with it.

The accuracy of the calculations which your machine produces are dependent on the measurement which you entered and, of course, the accuracy of the device itself.

Your pedometer may also require that you enter other information such as your body weight etc.

Each walker has to decide for themselves whether to use a pedometer or not. I think they can give you encouragement to meet your walking goals. For that reason, I recommend that you consider buying at least a basic model. After you have some experience of the benefits you get from walking on a regular basis, you can make a decision about whether investing in a more advanced model is worthwhile for you personally.

You will usually find lots of opinions and some advice of varying quality at your local walking club or other sports related group.

Otherwise, I suggest that you look for un-biased reviews of actual users in forums that cater for walkers online.

Be careful about what advice you follow. Look for people that have verifiable experience as a walker or a coach that have actually used the particular device.

Some researchers have stated that using a pedometer makes it easier for walkers to meet and maintain their goals better than just writing down their goals.

I found that my pedometer helped to motivate me to doing more walking on days when I had completed my set distance but felt that I could easily accomplish a bit more.

For me, that was worth the minimal cost and time taken to set it up.

Treadmills

If you decide that you like walking and the benefits it brings you, you might want to consider buying your own treadmill.

This can be a good option if you want to be able to walk whenever you want to and avoid bad weather or other hazards.



You might want to hire a treadmill for a short period before buying one outright to see if you get the amount of use you expected to and whether the particular model can provide the types of sessions you want to focus on.

The biggest problem that many people have when they get a treadmill or other exercise machine is that they lose the early enthusiasm and consign it to their shed until they are ready to have a garage sale.

If you can maintain your focus on the benefits you get from regular use of your machine, perhaps by also doing some regular walking sessions outside as well, you can make good progress and set your own pace.

Although a motorized treadmill is usually more expensive than a manually operated one which depends on your own foot power, the motorized one will almost always deliver better and more consistent results.

You may find that you cannot get up to the pace required for best results when you are using a manual treadmill.

Many people start to tire from the effort with the manual type and tend to use the handrails for support which reduces the effectiveness of the whole session.

Despite that, I know there are many people who are very satisfied with the results they get with their manual treadmills.

I just want to be sure that you consider these points when you get to the stage of thinking about buying your own machine.

Maintaining Your Motivation

Whether it's walking or any other exercise activity, you will have times where other interests or concerns tempt you to dump your regular session just for one day. Or, you might decide to cut down on the distance you walk or the level of effort you put into that walk.

In everyone's life, there may be personal or business crises which will have to be given priority over your session.

But, I am talking about the other times when you just feel it's easier to avoid the session. We all feel like that at some time. It's very common in the period after you first start walking on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, the results you get will be much lower if you are not consistent with your training sessions.

You may also increase the risk of injury if you try to make up for missed sessions by increasing the length or intensity of the first few sessions after a break.

Here are some of the best tips I collected from friends and other walkers which can help you maintain or regain the spark to keep yourself on track and moving forward toward your goals.

Walking Clubs and

Friends: I think that even the most casual walker can benefit from arranging a regular walking session with friend or work colleague. I've given this subject its own chapter.



a

Joining a walking club can also help most walkers by introducing them to people with similar goals and interests.

Pedometer: Even the simplest kind of step counting pedometer can help you to keep to your schedule. It also shows you that your results are

improving and encourages you to do a little more after you have completed the distance you set yourself.

Walking Diary: You can put the results from your pedometer into a walking diary where you can also record other details of your progress and any interesting experiences during your walks.

You can use either a printed diary or set up one on your computer. Putting your information and thoughts into a computer diary is probably easier and quicker than using a printed diary.

But, I have always used a printed one to this point because I like to take it with me when I go walking in scenic areas so that I can write down my impressions on the spot.

I also like to read through some of the earlier entries when I am relaxing with the computer turned off!

Walk with a Purpose

I find enough enjoyment in the scenery and the interaction I have with people and animals that I see on my walking sessions.

But, you may find that you will enjoy some of your sessions much more if you use them to achieve something else at the same time.

A friend of mine has started to record the different kinds of birds which she sees on some of her walks. She has always had a few birds in an aviary at her home. She says that she is joining a local bird watching group too.

I know many people that take part in events for runners and walkers with the aim of having a good time, meeting some new people and helping to raise money for a charity which they want to support.

Walking with Friends has many Benefits

This is probably one of the best motivators you can have!

I have enjoyed many solitary walks but always arrange some regular sessions with other walkers as part of my program.

Setting up a schedule to walk with a friend, or even a group of them, helps to ensure that you actually do your walks. Making that commitment means that it is harder for you to give yourself a day off unless you have a really good reason.

Having one or more people that share your interest and have similar goals with you will help you stay motivated and their support will be invaluable on days when you are feeling low.

This can be even more enjoyable and motivating if you also share other interests which you can discuss during your sessions together.

People You Work With

You also might be able to find one or more people where you work that share your interest in walking for exercise.

This could be very useful if you commute to work and sometimes find you cannot fit in your regular session before you leave home or after you get back in the evening.

If you can arrange a mutually convenient lunch time, maybe once each week, it could be a healthy alternative to the common rushed sandwich at your desk.

It will also be a great way to learn more about them, but I suggest that you both agree to talk about almost anything except your work.

Find a Good Match

You should try to team up with someone who has a similar level of physical ability and similar goals. If you find that the other person is used to walking much faster than is comfortable for you, neither of you will get the benefit you desire from the arrangement.

There are three types of companions where matching your abilities is not as important; when you walk with your partner, your children or your dog.

Your Family

If your spouse or partner shares your interest in walking or maybe just wants to encourage and support your efforts to become healthier, they can be the perfect person to share some of your walks with.



The shared experience can help to strengthen the bond between you.

It can also give you time and the privacy you need to discuss any issues without being overheard or interrupted.

But, these sessions can also be a good opportunity to reflect on the good times that you have enjoyed together or plan some for the future.

If you have children that are of a suitable age and also interested in walking with you, plan some walks which take you to places in your neighborhood where you can enjoy some fun activity together.

When the children come along, keep the conversation light and focused on things which are of interest to them.

Allow time for toilet stops or just to rest and expect sometimes to get side tracked.

You may need to keep your pace below what you need to get your most effective workout but I guarantee that you'll enjoy those walks more than almost any others and you will all remember them for years to come.

If you have a dog, taking it on some of your walks can be good for both of you.

But, it is important to start with a short distance which is comfortable for your pet and keep the distance well within its ability. It would be wise to ask your veterinarian to examine your pet before taking it on its first long walk.

Rest stops will be needed.

You need to be sure that your dog will not cause a nuisance to other people or animals which you meet during the session. Be sure to have your dog on a leash or harness. It's usual in many areas for some types of dogs to have to wear muzzles in public and for their owners to be responsible for cleaning up any droppings. This is really just part of being a good neighbor.

You should carry some water for the dog unless you check the route before walking with your dog and find some sources of water which are clean and safe for it to use.

Joining a Walking Club

The prime reason that most people join a walking club is to get support and advice from the other members.

Walking by yourself can be fun and should always be part of your program. But, walking with a partner or an enthusiastic group can be even better.

Many clubs have a strong social focus which can make the communal walking more enjoyable as well. You may meet people at the club who share other interests that you have apart from walking.

They are also a great source of usually unbiased advice about every aspect of walking, including equipment, suppliers, techniques and the most suitable areas to walk.

Some clubs are able to organize special deals for their members with local or even national suppliers. If these offers interest you, you may well save more than the cost of your membership.

The club can provide support for people that have just started walking for exercise because the other members have all had to learn to deal with the same questions and concerns when they started their own walking exercise programs.

I have found that the gentle peer pressure and support from other members is a great help to keeping you motivated and active when you need it; and we all do at times.

Some researchers say that up to 65% of exercise programs are scrapped within 6 months, usually because that person loses their motivation. A club can help you through that because the members all understand; they've probably all had the same experience.

Many clubs arrange group walks though some have minimum distance requirements.

If those don't suit your current level or you want to walk at other times and places than the organized events, it's usually very easy to find one or more club members who will join you in a group walk on a casual or regular basis.

If you decide that you want to participate in organized walking events or try out trekking or walking races, your local club will be the best possible source of unbiased knowledge and advice, all based on experience.

They usually have contacts in other clubs elsewhere so that you can easily find contact details of people that will welcome you to their clubs when you are visiting other states or countries.

I have included some National and State Clubs in the Links section at the end of this book.

Comparing Running and Walking

Do you think that walking is only for people that are not fit enough to run to keep fit?

Well, walking is probably a better choice for those people, whatever the reason for their lack of fitness.

But, there are many people that mix running and walking in their exercise program and I've met many people that very fit but choose walking instead of running as their main type of exercise.

Running probably can offer greater benefits if the person has the basic fitness to handle the higher physical demands which it will make on them and they are willing to give the effort and time required.

Here is a brief comparison of some factors which are common to both running and walking.

Calorie Expenditure

Running a mile over the same area that you walked a mile will burn more calories. That's fairly obvious but the actual rate of calorie burn varies with each individual and the level of effort which they are applying at a particular time.

You might burn the same amount of calories by walking fast up hills as you would by running at your normal pace over a level surface.

The best way to check your progress if you are using your walking sessions in part to lose some weight is to check your weight at regular intervals.

If you feel you want to increase your burn rate, you might be better to have longer or more frequent sessions (with appropriate rest breaks so you don't overheat) rather than increasing your walking speed.

Pressure

Running requires greater effort than most casual walkers will expend.

Walking and running both use the lower body more than the upper part. Walkers use their calves and hamstrings to propel themselves forward, usually at a slower rate than runners use the front of their thighs.

Runners put more pressure on their knees because of the deeper bend of their leg.

This explains why there are significant differences in the way shoes for walking and running are designed.

Runners also hit the ground harder with each step. The figures for the relative impact varies with each study that I've read but most seem to put the force which the runner's foot deals with somewhere between twice to four times the impact on a walker's foot when it contacts the ground.

Useful Links and Resources

Please Note: The publisher, author or distributors of this ebook have no commercial connection to the listed sites and are not responsible in any way for any consequences of any use of this information.

The operation, value and safety of any web site may change at any time.

You use this information entirely at your own risk.

These web sites, links and other resources were visited during preparation of the book (March 2010) and included solely because of their likely appeal to walkers of all kinds. The text was either copied or adapted from the web sites for the convenience of our readers.

Tools to Keep You Healthy <http://exercise.fbi.gov/index.html>



This site provides free online tools to encourage you to keep walking, running or cycling. It includes an exercise log to help you track your mileage. You can choose anonymous walking and running partners with your same goals and track their progress along with your own. (If you know your friends ID number you can follow them too). We can send you Emails when you don't meet your weekly running goal and when one of your running partners passes you.

This U.S.A.

Government site

“provides free online tools to encourage you to keep walking, running or cycling. It includes an exercise log to help you track your mileage. You can

choose anonymous walking and running partners with your same goals and track their progress along with your own. (If you know your friends ID number you can follow them too). We can send you Emails when you don't meet your weekly running goal and when one of your running partners passes you.”

INTERNATIONAL

IML Walking Association <http://www.imlwalking.org/>

“The IML Walking Association is a non-political, non-profit organisation whose purpose is to promote walking as a worthwhile and healthy recreation

and to foster international understanding and goodwill by encouraging participation at walking events in other countries through a program of incentive awards.

This is accomplished by promoting international multi-day non-competitive walking events in each of the member countries.

Walk21 <http://www.walk21.com/>

"Walk21 exists to champion the development of healthy sustainable and efficient communities where people choose to walk.



Through the [Walk21 Conference](#) series and the [International Charter](#), Walk21 have a vision to create a world where people choose and are able to walk as a way to travel, to be healthy and to relax."

U.S.A.

American Volkssport Association <http://www.ava.org/>

"Founded in 1976, the AVA is an educational non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation, dedicated to promoting non-competitive physical fitness, friendship and fun through volkssporting events."

"The average volkssporter is a 'baby boomer', in his or her mid-fifties, and usually an 'empty-nester' either approaching or beginning retirement. It is not uncommon to find two or three generations at AVA events. Adults with



children participate as a family while young adults enjoy more extreme hikes and longer distances."

Walk A Block Club America <http://www.walkablock.com/>



"Our Vision: Develop hundreds of local walking clubs across America walking their own neighborhoods and communities.

Our Goal: "America Walking Together as friends" and finding walking partners for members.

Our Commitment: To provide a club which will help average people live above average lives, by encouraging Americans to walk & talk together as friends."

Walk Across America for the Disabled American Vet

<http://www.vetwalking.org/> <http://vetwalking.wordpress.com/>

"Join us or follow our walk from Jacksonville Florida to San Diego California Veterans Day 2009 to Memorial day 2010"

Here is some background to this event: http://www.marine-corps-news.com/2009/12/marine_walks_across_country_fo.htm

Photowalking.org <http://www.photowalking.org/photowalking/>

Photowalking is an organized group walk through an area primarily for taking photos. It has been popular for many years but apparently got its title, photowalking, this century. This site is a blog (web diary) where anyone can post their interest in photowalking in any area. It is focused on U.S.A. but I noticed a Puerto Rico photowalk being organized through it.

I would be careful to get more information about anyone posting there before supplying any personal details, because there is no easy way to confirm that the person posting information about a photowalk is who they say they are.

BRITAIN

British Walking Federation <http://www.bwf-ivv.org.uk/>

"The British Walking Federation's member clubs organise events designed for people of all ages and abilities.



You don't have to be a member of a club to take part, all you need to do is come to an event and register and take the opportunity to have fun, make friends.

Participants walk at their own pace enabling them to improve their personal fitness through regular, non-competitive exercise."

<http://www.getwalking.org/> <http://www.getwalking.org/>

"Walking is an excellent natural exercise that can help you stay healthy and



live longer; control your weight; keep happy; enjoy time with friends and

family; learn more about your local area and even look after the environment.

Start today! Apply for a free Get Walking pack containing your 12-week walking plan, logbook, information, advice AND a step counter. You'll also receive newsletters three times a year.

Join one of our programmes of led walks in Birmingham, East London, South London, Manchester or Sheffield"

JAPAN

Japanese Volkssport Association



<http://www.walking.or.jp/> (Japanese site)

<http://www.walking.or.jp/ENGLISH/index.htm> (English version)

shows Clubs and events.

AUSTRALIA

Bushwalking Australia Inc (BAI)



<http://www.bushwalkingaustralia.org> This is the National body representing the interests of bushwalkers and other recreational walkers.

Bushwalking (also known as hiking, rambling, tramping or simply walking) is enjoyed by those who love the outdoors, and appreciate Australia's unique landscape at close quarters.

Heart Foundation Walking

<http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/sites/walking/Pages/default.aspx>



“Heart Foundation Walking is Australia’s largest network of free community-based walking groups, led by volunteer Walk

Organisers. Heart Foundation Walking makes being active easy, even for those not used to being active.

Joining or starting a Heart Foundation Walking group in your area or workplace is a great way to get active and meet people. Every walking group is different. Everyone is encouraged to walk at their own pace."

Walking For Pleasure (Canberra A.C.T.) <http://www.actwfp.org.au/>

"Exercise in a social atmosphere and enjoy Canberra's network of open spaces, parks, lakes and forests.

There are similar groups in other parts of Australia but I could not find direct web links to them.

NEW ZEALAND

Walkingnewzealand (magazine)

<http://www.walkingnewzealand.co.nz/>

Promotes walking in New Zealand.

Walk Auckland: (www.walkauckland.org)

This group "promotes and advocates for walking as a healthy, environmental-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation."



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