

New Year Motivation: 5 Easy Steps

New Year. Same you.

Wait, that's not how that old saying goes. Let us guess: You'd love to show off a fresh six-pack in 2020, but the thought of fighting your way through a sea of resolutioners to get to a piece of gym equipment is truly nauseating. Fortunately for you, we've got your "new year, new you" action plan, and it requires the least amount of work possible.

At the beginning of the year, the gym is filled with people doing the most for no clear reason or actionable strategy. The first step is changing that. You know your goals. You have some tools. Now it's all about figuring out a way to get there efficiently.

We can get on board with efficiency. Incorporate these five simple tweaks to your everyday routine in 2020 for major gains, both on the scale and with how you feel. This is your year!

1. Get some sleep.

Stop for a moment and think about the things on your to-do list. Pick up dry cleaning. Remember to get Mom a present for her birthday. Shave. We're guessing "sleep" isn't on there. While it's easy to shove shuteye to the backburner in favor of more time with friends or late nights at the office, it's essential for overall well-being. Especially since people experiencing sleep deprivation are more likely to be stressed than those who snag a full night in between the sheets. Plus, a single night of sleep deprivation is enough to up levels of the hunger hormone ghrelin (and, in turn, the urge to snack). Start by establishing a rough sleep schedule like your workout schedule, getting to bed around the same time each night (even

on weekends).

2. Have a gym plan.

Spend a little time outside of the gym figuring out what you're going to do once you get there. This way, you're not loitering around the equipment without a clue. Structure your workout so you use the time well and follow the same general format each time: warm-up, workout, finisher, cool-down, and get out. Limiting these action items to a designated time. It should look like this:

Warm-up: 5 to 8 minutes

Workout: 20 to 25 minutes

Finisher: 5 minutes

Cool-down: 15 minutes

3. Shift your focus to conditioning and strength.

You don't have to work out for 45 minutes a day every day to get maximum results. Improving your "conditioning" (resting heart rate, energy systems, and fuel usage) can typically be done if you start doing two sessions a week. Think high intensity interval training and maybe some tempo work (example: sprinting for two minutes on an incline, then recovering one minute, for five to eight rounds).

When it comes to increasing your strength...that can be done in once-weekly sessions—with the right intention. Your goal? Focus on complex movement patterns that hit all the essential planes of motion: push, pull, squat, hinge, and carry. Make sure to lift relatively heavy, about 65 to 80 percent of the maximum amount of weight you can lift and perform five to eight reps, three to four sets of each exercise—and you'll be able to keep strength or improve it.

4. Hop on the mindfulness train.

Mindfulness is more than sitting down and meditating first thing in the morning. It's bringing intent to what you're doing at that point in time. A review of research out of Case Western University found that mindfulness improved three areas of attention: control, stability (i.e. no mind-wandering), and efficiency. People who participated in a single mindfulness training session were able to pay attention to both listening and visual tasks for longer than those who didn't. Another recent study found that those who practiced mindfulness during exercise specifically were more satisfied with their routine, and in turn, showed up to sweat more often. If you don't want to be lazy, stop thinking about all the other stuff you have to do besides that moment. Actually paying attention to your body is important. That way, you aren't wasting precious time—or putting in more work than you signed up for. Same goes for mindfully eating, put all of your focus on the task at hand.

5. Eat clean(er) and within an established window.

A rule of thumb for anyone trying to get in shape: Stick to the outer ring of the grocery store. That means skipping out on processed items and opting for more greens and whole foods. Once you've got that tactic down, then chow down within the same eight- to 12-hour time window each day. That, and giving yourself two to four hours before you go to bed decreases intake. There's a relationship between growth hormone which helps to regulate muscle growth and ghrelin which controls hunger. This style of eating plan helps to maintain balance, while also keeping the stomach's own circadian rhythms intact.