

## USING TECHNOLOGY TO GET FIT AND STAY FIT

**A**dopting a habit of regular exercise doesn't require special equipment or gadgets. It can be as simple as putting on a pair of shoes and heading out for daily walks. For many people, that's enough. But if you're easily bored or enjoy using technology to enhance ordinary tasks, take your fun and fitness to the next level with electronic exercise gadgets and digital devices.

Designed to inspire and motivate, these products can help keep your fitness program enjoyable and entertaining while giving you objective data about your progress. In most cases, you can also opt in to share your progress on Facebook and Twitter for some virtual high fives.

### Heart Rate Monitors

These devices have been around for years, but some of the latest models are made with the tech-savvy user in mind. They upload workout data to an online training log that may even synch with your smartphone to track your peak exercise heart rate, average exercise heart rate, recovery heart rate and time spent in different training zones.

Some offer a built-in GPS, interval timer, chronograph, calorie tracker and other fun fea-

tures. Manufacturers typically offer free sport-specific training plans that also integrate with the device. The variety is huge, ranging from a simple model that measures only exercise heart rate to tracking all types of data imaginable.

### Personal Coaching Devices

One of the biggest benefits of working with an in-person, certified personal trainer is getting immediate feedback on your performance. It's not quite the same, but several manufacturers offer tools that deploy virtual coaches for personalized mid-workout advice. These devices interface with online coaching programs, smartphones, and MP3 players.

In one case, users download training programs and exercise sessions to the tool, which connects to an MP3 player. Audible workout

instructions are given based on personal data from a clip-on shoe sensor and chest-strap heart rate monitor, so users know when to speed up or slow down. After the workout, pace, distance, and heart rate data is uploaded to the online site or smartphone for viewing and users are given encouraging or constructive feedback based on performance. With a virtual coach in your ear and the promise of praise at the finish line chances are good, that you'll push yourself harder and accomplish more than working out solo.

### Smartphone Apps

Choose from apps that track your workout time, distance, heart rate and calories; exercise animations to help you work out with proper form and technique; workouts for all fitness levels with audio and video coaching; sport-specific training plans; apps that turn your phone into a pedometer, altim-

eter, or GPS; and much more. Configure auto-alerts to jog your memory, choose preset or custom goals or network with like-minded people. Whatever your fitness interest, you'll find an app to support it right at your fingertips.

### Fitness Gaming

Active video games are all the rage from virtual dance contests and river rafting to tennis, boxing, and yoga. Studies show that many of the more vigorous "exergames" can boost fitness in otherwise inactive people. In one study of adolescents, energy expenditure from a variety of active video games was comparable to that of walking on a treadmill at 3 mph, an intensity high enough to promote health and fitness. As long as you opt for products that really get you moving, including fitness gaming as a part of your active lifestyle, you can burn off some extra calories, stay fit, and have a great time with family and friends.

### Additional Resources

[Fitness Product Reviews](#) — American Council on Exercise

[Gaming Your Way to Fitness](#) — National Public Radio

[Exergaming Provides Real Exercise for Kids](#) — Medpage Today

[Selecting and Effectively Using Heart Rate Monitors](#) — American College of Sports Medicine



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