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Fitness Goals You Should Add to Your Bucket List

What's On Your Fitness Goals Bucket List?

Creating a bucket list of things you want to do before you die won't do much good if you're not healthy enough to follow through—so before you make good on your plans to run with the bulls or swim with the dolphins, why not make a separate bucket list of fitness goals?

Each of the following fitness goals examples are challenges that target a different aspect of fitness, from endurance to flexibility and strength. Once you've mastered one, strive to go to the next level by adding intensity, time, or reps. For example, once you finish a 10K, try training for a half-marathon. Read on for fitness goal ideas for women and expert tips on the why and how.



Do 25 Pushups

Mastering the ability to perform 25 pushups is a very reasonable, realistic, and reachable goal for most women, says Timothy L. Miller, M.D., assistant professor at the Ohio State University Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine. Benefits include upper-body strength in the chest (pectorals), shoulder girdle (scapular stabilizers), and arms (triceps).

Pushups require no equipment and can be varied in many ways to train different muscle groups (i.e. a closer grip targets triceps), says Miller. "Aesthetically, pushups develop the pectoralis muscles of the chest, which help to prevent breast sagging as women age."

Start with modified pushups, resting on your knees as opposed to on the toes. Keep your back straight, abdominals tensed, and hips and butt down. Your chest should completely touch the floor without allowing your midsection to drop onto the floor. Gradually increase the number of reps as you build strength until you can hoist yourself up on your toes in traditional pushup form.

Run a 10K (6.2 Miles)

A classic goal for those who want to get into running, the distance is long enough to feel a true sense of accomplishment but does not require the same commitment and preparation time as a marathon, says Miller. "The benefits of training for a 10K are not only physiological but also psychological."

Physiological benefits include cardiovascular fitness, weight loss, and improved upper- and lower-body strength. The often overlooked mental and emotional benefits include not only the sense of accomplishment after completion but also the self-confidence gained from reaching such a goal, says Miller. "These include the bonding and relationships developed through

training. Partners supporting, encouraging, and motivating one another is what many runners enjoy the most about training.” Start gradually, increasing mileage by no more than 10 percent from the previous week, Miller says. Beginners should pick a race about three months down the road and ask others to train with them or look for a running group.

Master 3 Yoga Poses

Yoga requires minimal equipment, provides stretching without stressing the joints, and can improve stress levels and posture, says Maureen K. Watkins, D.P.T., assistant professor in the physical therapy department in the Bouve College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University.

“Individuals new to yoga should begin slowly, ideally with an experienced instructor so poses and postures can be corrected and not lead to injuries,” she says. Many yoga studios offer free classes to new students. Look for experienced, certified instructors. Once you have the hang of a basic flow, test your skills with balancing poses. Three good balancing poses to master: Warrior III, crow, and handstand.

Add Sprinting to Your Routine

Adding sprint training to your running routine has a number of benefits, says Miller. The initial benefit comes simply from the variation in the workout, which prevents boredom. Plus, the American Council on Exercise promotes sprinting as one of the best ways to tone the glutes, and when practiced as intervals, sprinting can also speed up calorie burning. (Just one of the many benefits of HIIT training.)

Although it may sound counterintuitive, sprints also help optimize long, slow distance runs, says Miller. “Your body needs to know what it feels like to run fast in order for it to perform at that level.” By adding one or two high-intensity interval sessions to your weekly routine, your body will develop the fast twitch muscle fibers required for sprinting, as opposed to only the slow twitch fibers most commonly associated with endurance. “This type of training, however, should be added gradually to prevent overuse injuries,” says Miller.

Master a Box Jump

Plyometrics, also known as jump training, is an advanced way to train. “In addition to fat-burning, [plyometric moves] teach you how to rapidly decelerate the body and re-accelerate in the opposite direction,” says Neal Pire, C.S.C.S., F.A.C.S.M., owner at Inspire Training Systems in New Jersey and author of *Plyometrics for Athletes at All Levels*. This ability comes in handy whether you’re chasing a ball to the sideline in tennis then immediately returning to center court, or simply jumping off the commuter bus and immediately jumping over a puddle onto the curb, says Pire.

To make plyo moves into a goal, turn to the mother of all plyo moves: the box jump. It’s killer for developing strength, power, and speed, plus gives you something to shoot for (literally). Here’s a full breakdown of all the benefits of doing box jumps and here’s how to slowly progress to doing a box jump (even if you’re terrified).

Pire recommends incorporating slalom hops (lateral jumps) and speed skaters into your routine to work in additional planes of motion. Like box jumps, do them prior to your workout and after a thorough warm-up. Repeat each for 10 seconds, or five jumps. The good news is, once you’ve nailed it, you already have another fitness goal: Go higher!

Learn to Swim

Swimming can have a positive impact on body fat, insulin levels, and overall health, Watkins says. A 2010 study published in the journal *Metabolism* compared a group of women walking versus swimming for 30 minutes at a moderate intensity

three times a week for one year. The women in the swimming group lost more weight, experienced improved body-fat distribution, and insulin in the short term.

If you're not a natural aqua woman, check out your local YMCA center, Watkins suggests. They offer swim lessons for adults of all levels and various aquatic classes, such as aquatic cross training, water aerobics, aqua jog, and even prenatal water classes. "Group classes can help you to stay motivated, have fun, and be social," she adds.

Master an Unassisted Pull-up—or Five

There's a reason why the military uses pull-ups in basic training: they're tough! "Most women can't do one pull-up," says Pire. Most people do more pushing than pulling moves in our everyday activities, which can lead to weak upper-back muscles and contribute to neck aches and pains. "It can also lead to shoulder weakness, which in turn leads to pain and dysfunction. Pull-ups can help correct that imbalance. Add these to your upper-body workout once or twice a week for a defined back and strong upper body.

The first step is perfecting the fixed-arm hang, says Adam Bornstein, certified trainer and chief nutrition officer at supplement company Ladder. "Stand on a box (or bench) underneath a pull-up bar. Grab the bar with palms facing away from you and jump up. Keep your chest as close to the bar as possible and hang there as long as you can tolerate. When you start to feel yourself coming down, lower slowly for three to five seconds until your feet are back on the box. Then jump back up and do another rep," says Bornstein.

He suggests trying to hold for at least 10 seconds and doing 5 reps, lowering down slowly each time. Once you build up to a 30-second hold for 5 reps, you're ready to move on to step two: band-resisted pull-ups.

"To start, loop one end of a large resistance band around a pull-up bar and then put both of your feet on the other side of the band. Try to perform six to eight reps. If that's easy, then move to just one foot in the band," he says. Perform 3 sets of 8 to 10 reps, and you should be ready to take on that unassisted pull-up once and for all. Already got it? Go for five.

Climb a Rope

Climbing a rope is another great (and fun!) challenge for those who are looking for a good upper-body workout. (Plus, it was one of the Victoria's Secret angels' badass training goals.)

"Rope climbing is a skill that requires upper body/pulling strength, core strength, and flexibility," says Tracey Magee, owner of CrossFit Clan Performance Center in New Jersey. "There's also an element of fear with some people, so building confidence as they progress toward this goal is important too."

Before you attempt climbing a rope, you need to build some pulling strength. Start with inverted rows with rings or a TRX, then, progress to strict pull-ups and chest-to-bar pull-ups. Then try rope pulls from a seated position: Sit under the rope and slowly pull yourself up to standing by "climbing" the rope.

You use your whole body to climb a rope, so you should also add triceps dips to your training as well as pressing exercises, such as push-ups and dumbbell overhead presses. Core work is majorly important too: "Strengthening your abdominals, spinal erectors, obliques, and intrinsic stabilizers will build a strong core," says Magee. Work hollow holds, Superman's, sit-ups, v-ups, planks, and Russian twists.

Depending on strength and skill level these movements/exercises should be included in your training programs at least three times per week with repetitions increasing each week as strength develops.

Once you feel strong, learn a climbing technique: S-hook or J-hook. Consider tapping a CrossFit or other strength coach for a demo. Once you nailed it with feet, go legless.

Hold a Minute-Long Plank

Core strength and planking go hand in hand. Join the ranks of people taking the plank challenge by, first, mastering your plank form and then taking small steps to increase your intervals over time.

“Start with: what’s your baseline?” says Heather Stevens, lead interval and yoga instructor at Studio Three. Hold the plank for 15 seconds, see where you’re at and, eventually when it starts to feel easy, add 10 to 15 seconds at a time. Aim for 30 seconds and go from there, she says.

“Planks require total core strength and shoulder stability, so your workouts should also involve shoulder strengthening moves (ex: overhead presses) and other core movements,” she adds.

If you’ve already mastered the one-minute plank, challenge yourself to hold for your favorite song or up to five minutes. “To get there, you’ll want to incorporate extra core workouts into your everyday strength routine. Try additional Russian twists, reverse crunches, and hanging leg raises,” says Stevens.

Other ways to advance your planks include adding movement and holding three-limbed planks. “Start with your basic plank first, adding toe taps, mountain climbers and shoulder taps. When you feel ready, hold a traditional high plank, then lift your right hand to your left shoulder and hold for thirty seconds. Repeat by lifting your left hand to your right shoulder,” Stevens explains, adding that you should be sure to keep your hips square to the floor and feet wider than your hips, moving them closer together as you progress.

Nail a Backflip

Score Simone Biles status (at least in your own circle of friends) by acing your very first unassisted backflip—specifically, a back tuck.

To pull off a backflip, you’ll need to build a lot of strength and coordination in your body. To start, try a gymnastics-inspired bodyweight workout, practice gymnast-approved handstand drills to get comfortable going upside-down, and develop better body awareness with Pilates.

“Placing the jump-board onto the Pilates reformer is a great way to build agility, leg strength, power and cardiovascular endurance all at once! A jump-board class will help you get the height, power and strength needed in your backflip,” says Sara Grout, a master trainer at Club Pilates. Then take those plyo moves off the reformer: Practice squat jumps and tuck jumps on the floor or even on a trampoline.

Building core strength is also crucial for pulling it off: “The stronger your abdominals are (rectus abdominis, internal and external obliques, and transverse abdominals), the tighter the ball you can make with your body, which means the easier you can flip around while in the air,” she says.

Once you feel strong, enlist the help of a qualified gymnastics or tumbling coach. “It’s important when first learning the steps for properly executing a backflip that there is someone there to coach you through the proper form and, even more importantly, to spot you to make sure that you stay injury-free,” says Grout.

Lift Your Bodyweight

Lifting your body weight is the stuff of professional bodybuilders but, according to Ronnie Lubischer, C.S.C.S., owner of Lubischer’s Burn and Blast Training, all you need is a little programming and consistency.

“You can use this almost exact approach to attack your body weight in any of the five core compound lifts: squat, deadlift, bent-over row, shoulder press, and bench press,” says Lubischer.

To get started, you'll want to train the working muscles two times per week with two to three days in between each workout. For example, if your goal is to bench press your weight, "prior to bench-pressing, you should perform some ancillary movements," he says. Pick two or three exercises—cable face pulls/upright rows (upper posterior strength), front raises/lateral raises (shoulder girdle stability) and press-downs/overhead extensions (triceps strength)—and try three sets of 15 to 25 reps. "Each feeds into to the total strength of the bench press movement," he explains.

Then, you should aim to bench-press 30 percent of your body weight for the first week (so, if you weigh 140 lbs, lift 42 lbs), increasing lift weight by about five percent and varying sets and reps each week. When in doubt, tap a trainer or strength coach for advice, to check your form, or for a spot.

Learn to Bodyboard

Once you've got swimming down, try upping the ante (and reap serious body benefits) by learning to bodyboard, which Christa DiPaolo, co-creator of The Cut at Equinox and founder of Boxing & Bubbles, says is also a great segue to surfing. DiPaolo learned the ropes from her surfer fiancé and was wowed by how much skill and athleticism goes into the sport.

"Start by doing regular laps in the pool until you feel confident you can take on Mother Nature," she says. "Equipment is everything, so you'll also want to make sure you have the correct bodyboard according to your height." Someone at a local surf shop should be able to help you pick one and secure lessons with a pro—which is your best bet for learning.

"First, you'll need to 'read' the waves, so your first lesson will be sitting on the beach and learning about how the waves break. This is crucial so you know whether to go left or right once you're in the water," she says. "Once you've mastered reading the waves (which was the toughest part for me), you'll move on to paddling out and duck-diving and, soon enough, you'll be catching your first barrel like Kelly Slater!"

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