

# 6 SIMPLE WAYS TO REACH YOUR BEST BODY

THE “RULES” OF EXERCISE STAND THE TEST OF TIME,  
BUT THESE STRATEGIES WILL HELP YOU IMPROVE EVEN THE  
MOST TRIED-AND-TRUE ROUTINE.

By Jason Karp, Ph.D. Photography by Chris Fanning

WHILE THE FITNESS INDUSTRY HAS SEEN MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF TRENDS, the fundamentals of exercise have pretty much stayed the same: To get toned, challenge your muscles with heavier weights and new exercises. To burn fat and calories, increase your workout intensity. And to stave off boredom, mix up your routine. That's not to say the basics

can't stand a little updating every now and again. To make sure you're getting your best workout, we tracked down the current thinking on everything from maximizing fat burn to stretching. Try one of these new approaches every day this week and we bet you'll feel stronger, firmer, and more energized. After all, the only thing you have to lose is flab.

STYLING: AMBER SELLERS, HAIR AND MAKEUP:  
LUSINE/ARTISTBYTIMOTHYFRANCO.COM  
ELISABETTA ROGLIAMBRA, CAPEZIO SHOES,  
AVIA SNEAKERS

## FASTER! HARDER!

The more effort  
you put into  
your workout,  
the better your  
results will be





● ● ●  
**ON-THE-BALL BASICS**  
 Use dumbbells, tubing, or a medicine ball to add resistance

WEIGHTED BALL CRUNCH

- OLD WAY**  
Do crunches to tone your belly.
- NEW THINK**  
Get off the mat and add resistance.

“Performing crunches on a stability ball allows a greater range of motion and calls on more muscles to help you stay balanced,” says Stuart McGill, Ph.D., a professor of spine biomechanics at the University of Waterloo in Canada. This is only true if you put the ball in the correct spot, though. A study published in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* found that using a stability ball significantly increased abdominal activity

only when the ball was placed under the lower back. Centering it under the shoulder blades was less effective than doing crunches on the floor. If your middle’s weak, do 4 sets of 20 crunches on a ball [shown, left] with 30 seconds of rest between sets. As you get stronger, increase the number of reps or decrease the rest period. If you want to create firmer, more visible muscles, hold a 10- to 15-pound dumbbell or weight plate against your chest [shown, above] and do 3 sets of 8 crunches on the ball with up to 3 minutes of rest between sets. Finally, add core moves, such as a plank, to challenge your abs and back and help stabilize your spine during daily activities.



STABILITY-BALL CRUNCH

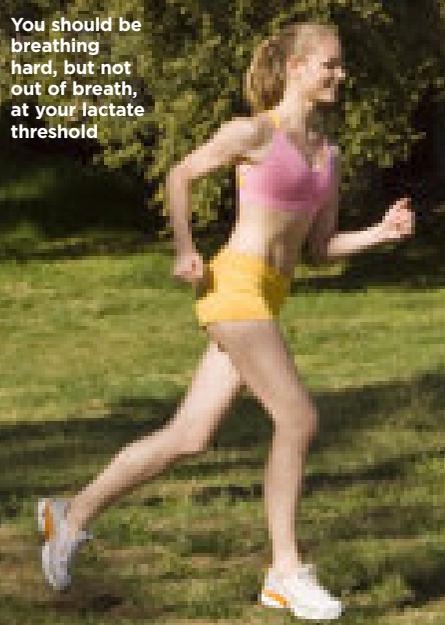
- OLD WAY**  
Perform walking lunges to strengthen your legs and butt.
  - NEW THINK**  
Use jumping and bounding exercises (plyometrics) instead.
- While many athletes rely on plyometrics to improve their power (a muscle’s ability to quickly produce force), incorporating them into your routine can help you tone up faster and ultimately make your workouts feel easier. **Jumping moves are also excellent bone builders**, but do your joints a favor and perform them on a soft surface, such as grass or a mat. For moves, go to [shape.com/plyo](http://shape.com/plyo).



- OLD WAY**  
Do moderate-intensity cardio to burn fat.
- NEW THINK**  
Boost the intensity—but not too often.

While exercising at a moderate level does melt calories, the harder you push, the more calories and fat you’ll blast. But vigorous sessions are physically demanding, so you shouldn’t do them every day. To get a high calorie burn you can maintain, spend most of your workout time at your lactate threshold, or LT, which is your fastest sustainable aerobic speed. Depending on your fitness level, that can be

anywhere from 60 to 80 percent of your maximum heart rate (220-your age will give you an estimate of your max heart rate)—or a rate of perceived exertion (RPE\*) of about 7. Exceed this intensity and fatigue sets in rapidly. Research has shown that **the highest rate of fat burn occurs at or slightly below your LT**. “Exercising at this level teaches your muscles to use more fat during exercise,” says Todd A. Astorino, Ph.D., an assistant professor of kinesiology at California State University in San Marcos. **Here’s how to do it** After a 5- to 10-minute warm-up, exercise for 15 to 20 minutes at your LT. (You might have to experiment to find a level that feels hard but sustainable.) Finish with a 5- to 10-minute cooldown. If you can’t maintain your LT for 15 to 20 minutes, break up your workout into shorter segments with rests: Do 5 minutes at your LT, rest for 1 minute, and repeat 3 times. Build up to 20 solid minutes.



You should be breathing hard, but not out of breath, at your lactate threshold

\*See page tk for RPE chart.



**RRD- PLEASE  
EXTEND IMAGE  
INTO YELLO  
AREA.  
THANKS, AH**

BENT-OVER ROW

- OLD WAY**  
Rack up 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps every time you strength-train.
- NEW THINK**  
Vary the sets, reps, and weight each session.

While the old approach *will* sculpt muscles, doing it day in, day out can get boring for you and your body. **“Any time you add variety to your exercise program, you create a new way for muscles to adapt,”** says Len Kravitz, Ph.D., coordinator of the exercise science program at the University of New Mexico. And as they adapt, they get stronger. A number of studies have shown that periodized exercise programs—those in which you vary the sets, reps, weight, and/or rest times from workout to workout or week to week—yield better results than regular resistance-training routines in which you usually change only the weight as you progress. To create your own plan that challenges your muscles in a new way every day, use the chart below.

**RUT-PROOF YOUR RESISTANCE-TRAINING ROUTINE**

For each exercise, choose a weight that will fatigue your muscles within the suggested rep range (for example, a 12- to 15-rep max means the most weight you can lift 12 to 15 times). After week three, repeat the program, but increase the weight slightly.

	SHOULDER PRESS	CHEST PRESS	SQUAT	TRICEPS KICKBACK	HAMSTRING CURL	BICEPS CURL	SEATED CALF RAISE	BENT-OVER ROW
WEEK 1	4 sets of 12-15 reps with 8-lb. dumbbells (12- to 15-rep max)	4 sets of 12-15 reps with 25 pounds (12- to 15-rep max)	4 sets of 12-15 reps with 10-lb. dumbbells (12- to 15-rep max)	4 sets of 12-15 reps with 5-lb. dumbbells (12- to 15-rep max)	4 sets of 12-15 reps with 40 pounds (12- to 15-rep max)	4 sets of 12-15 reps with 10-lb. dumbbells (12- to 15-rep max)	4 sets of 12-15 reps with 40 pounds (12- to 15-rep max)	4 sets of 12-15 reps with 10-lb. dumbbells (12- to 15-rep max)
WEEK 2	3 sets of 8-10 reps with 10-lb. dumbbells (8- to 10-rep max)	3 sets of 8-10 reps with 30 pounds (8- to 10-rep max)	3 sets of 8-10 reps with 12-lb. dumbbells (8- to 10-rep max)	3 sets of 8-10 reps with 8-lb. dumbbells (8- to 10-rep max)	3 sets of 8-10 reps with 60 pounds (8- to 10-rep max)	3 sets of 8-10 reps with 12-lb. dumbbells (8- to 10-rep max)	3 sets of 8-10 reps with 60 pounds (8- to 10-rep max)	3 sets of 8-10 reps with 15-lb. dumbbells (8- to 10-rep max)
WEEK 3	2 sets of 4-6 reps with 12-lb. dumbbells (4- to 6-rep max)	2 sets of 4-6 reps with 40 pounds (4- to 6-rep max)	2 sets of 4-6 reps with 15-lb. dumbbells (4- to 6-rep max)	2 sets of 4-6 reps with 10-lb. dumbbells (4- to 6-rep max)	2 sets of 4-6 reps with 80 pounds (4- to 6-rep max)	2 sets of 4-6 reps with 15-lb. dumbbells (4- to 6-rep max)	2 sets of 4-6 reps with 80 pounds (4- to 6-rep max)	2 sets of 4-6 reps with 20-lb. dumbbells (4- to 6-rep max)

- OLD WAY**  
Focus on how exercise helps you physically.
- NEW THINK**  
Let your workouts help you mentally too.

While we wholeheartedly recommend regularly working up a sweat and pumping iron to stay fit, so

much of what we do at the gym is focused on outside factors, whether it's the treadmill readout, the person beside you, or your reflection in the mirror. The next time you're putting in your time on the elliptical, **try turning your attention—and intention—inward.** “‘Working out’ sounds hard, but ‘working in’ is energizing,”

says David Yukelson, Ph.D., director of sport psychology services at the Morgan Center for Student Athletes at Penn State University. Think about how your body feels—can you calm your breathing or lose that side stitch—then once you find your groove, brainstorm ideas or meditate on personal issues.

- OLD WAY**  
Stretch after you finish working out.
- NEW THINK**  
Stretch several times during the day.

While those hamstring and quad stretches feel so good when you're done with your run, limiting your limbering up to the end of your workout is a mistake. It's the repetitive activities (or *inactivity*) of your daily life that can lead to muscle tension and tightness, especially in your neck, back, chest, hips, and hamstrings, which is why you should make it a point to stretch throughout the day. “It counteracts stiffness and corrects flexibility imbalances,” says John R. Martinez, a physical therapist in New York City. **“It also helps maintain or improve your range of motion, which will keep you healthier and more active in the long run.”** Try this easy at-your-desk stretch: Place your right ankle over your left knee, and clasp your hands behind your hips; pull your shoulders back. Keeping your chest lifted, lean forward from your hips until you feel a stretch across your right glute [shown]. Hold for 3 to 5 breaths, then sit up and switch sides.



**LIMBER UP**  
Hold stretches for 30 seconds or longer

JASON KARP, Ph.D., is a running coach and writer in San Diego.