



Get fit, with your phone

Your smartphone can track your steps, offer tips, play your favourite tunes and help you share your progress

Fitness bands offer a number of features you can't find on your smartphone, including sleep and heart-rate tracking, but if you're looking to get started with simple step and distance counting, your smartphone is a great place to start.

For iPhone users, that means Apple Health, while Android phones feature Google Fit. Both apps use your smartphone's built-in sensors to track your steps, count how many floors you climb and how many kilometres you've walked or run.

When you're ready to take the plunge and purchase a fitness band, both Apple Health and Google Fit let you connect those devices to your smartphone to give you a central place to see all your fitness and health data. Apple's Health app is available in iOS 9 on iPhone 4s, iPhone 5/5s/5c, iPhone 6/6 Plus and iPhone 6s/6s Plus. Google Fit is available on Android phones running Android 4.0 or higher.



Alex Kinsella

One of the simplest ways to exercise is running and the benefits for both physical and mental health are well documented. The best way to get started is to pick a distance and a race and then start training. For my race, I've decided to run in this fall's "The Running Dead" during Bingemans' Screampark activities.

To begin training, I used the Couch to 5K method originally created by Cool Running (coolrunning.com). With Couch to 5K, you're coached through walking and jogging to being easily able to run five kilometres in just two months. I use an iPhone 6s and RunDouble (rundouble.com) is my choice for training. The app lets you use one of your music playlists for motivation and verbally coaches you through

the Couch to 5K program. I'm motivated by progress, so having the app tell me distance and pace after each interval has been amazing.

A good music list is useless without great sound so I've been using yurbuds headphones from JBL (yurbuds.com). Earbud headphones are notorious for falling out — or being yanked out — while running. The odd, yet comfortable, design of yurbuds keeps them in your ears no matter how much you're flailing about. It'll be interesting to see how they hold up against the grasps of zombie hands. RunDouble is available for both Android and iPhone for free, with in-app purchases available.

When it comes to physical fitness, few things beat the calisthenics you used to dread from back in grade-school gym class. Freeletics (freeletics.com) combines those core movements of pushups, sit-ups, jumping jacks and lunges with a virtual coach to make sure you're getting the

most out of each workout. Freeletics has workouts for people at any level — but I prefer "no equipment needed" routines such as "Morpheus." Activities like this are great for those of us who are motivated to get up 30 minutes early on a weekday and they're also useful when you're at the cottage and feeling guilty about that extra glass of wine or two you've had. You simply tap on the screen to move to the next action as you progress through the workout at your own pace. Freeletics keeps track of your time to help you challenge yourself each time you exercise. Freeletics is another free app on both iPhone and Android devices with additional workouts and analytics available via in-app purchases.

Whether it's the entirety of your exercise regimen or simply a way to relax, yoga is a discipline that everyone should try. After a day of work and an evening of herding the

kids to bed, I do my best to find time to include a class from the Yoga Studio app by Gaiam (yogastudioapp.com). The app has classes ranging from beginner to advanced and even specialized classes such as yoga for runners — which is great if you're starting that Couch to 5K program. Unlike some of the other apps I've mentioned, Yoga Studio is more than just a virtual coach. Each class is downloaded as a full video, allowing you to see how each move is performed and creating an environment where you feel as if you're in a yoga class without the awkwardness of doing the downward dog in front of complete strangers. Yoga Studio is available for \$5.49 in the Apple App Store for iPhone and iPad.

The best way to keep motivated is to share your progress with others — and one of the newer ways to do that is in the fitness communities on Oneset (oneset.co). Oneset

is a local startup created in the University of Waterloo's Velocity program billed as an "Instagram for fitness." You can follow others in communities such as "Ladies Who Lift," "Powerlifting" and "Yoga." Within the app, you can "like" photos and videos, comment and ask questions of the athletes you follow. It's a great way to share your journey and learn from others. Oneset is available for iOS and Android smartphones.

These are just a few of the many fitness apps available for your smartphone. To get the best results from these apps, it's important to set a goal for yourself, track your progress and, after accomplishing each objective, set a new and more challenging goal. Here's to good health! 🍷

Alex Kinsella has been part of Waterloo Region's tech community since 2004 and is always looking for the next great gadget (or tacos, if it's Tuesday). Find him on Twitter at @alexkinsella

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