

How and Why to Keep a Training Log

A training log can help you get more from your workout. It will help you organize and save information about your exercise routine so you can work toward a specific goal.

For example, if you're training for a marathon, keeping a log can help you track how you run under various weather conditions or when you're following a special diet. You can record information about the prettiest routes if you're walking to enjoy the scenery.

Your log also can prod you to work out on those days when you're too tired or you think you're too busy.

What to record

Here's a brief rundown on what data you should record:

- Distance -- in miles and tenths for running, walking or cycling; in laps or meters for swimming.
- Time -- in minutes, seconds or fractions.
- Intensity -- in pounds, for strength training.
- Other details -- such as split times, when helpful.
- Milestones -- on the way to achieving your goals.
- Personal bests.

Depending on your fitness and training level, you may also want to record other information concerning:

Your physical condition

- Pulse rate. Take two readings, one before you begin exercising and one at peak activity. Be sure to stay within your target heart zone.
- Hours of sleep. See how this entry affects your performance.
- Weight. You'll notice regular exercise helps you lose extra pounds and maintain a healthful weight.
- Diet. You may discover certain foods improve your performance.
- Discomforts. Note unusual aches or pains.

Workout conditions

- Day and time. This information gives you a frame of reference and helps you maintain consistency.
- Weather. Hot, cool, humid or pleasant? Noting this information will tell you under what conditions you work best.
- Road surface or equipment condition. Jot down a brief description for future reference.
- Atmosphere. Pretty scenery may improve your performance, while a crowded gym may increase your tension.

Your activity

The route you walked or ran, the training machines you used or the aerobic exercises you completed.

Yourself

- Mood. Record how you felt at the start of a workout, then mention whether the workout changed your mood.
- Thoughts and feelings. Exercise frees many people from everyday worries and helps them use their minds more creatively. Let your thoughts flow from pen to paper.

Things to avoid

Note which house has the loud, crabby dog or what time of day a pool's lap lanes are crowded.

Favorite things

Jot down a route you'd like to run or walk again, or note a pair of really comfortable shoes.