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How to work out without feeling like you're exercising

For those of us who dislike exercise, staying physically fit and healthy can be a challenge. What if you could work out without feeling like you're exercising and without it taking time out of your daily routine?

If the idea of carving time out of your day for [exercise](#) or seeing the inside of a gym fills you with dread, you're not alone. In Britain, [1 in 3 people](#) feel unmotivated to exercise regularly.

We all know how important [physical fitness](#) is to our health, but lack of motivation means many of us are only exercising for one hour a week, or sometimes even less. The trouble is, a lot of us associate exercise with work (and hard work at that). To combat this mindset, we need to make physical activity fun, and choose workouts and fun exercises that we don't think of as exercise.

"Exercises that don't feel like exercise tend to fall into two categories: those that include hobbies, that you choose to do anyway (with improved fitness being an incidental benefit), and those that you can include in your daily routine, without having to schedule in a structured workout," advises personal trainer [Laura Williams](#).

Hobbies that keep you physically fit

Hobbies that incorporate physical activity are a great way of keeping fit and healthy while enjoying leisure time. Williams recommends the following activities.

Walking and hiking

Walking is often underrated as a form of exercise, yet just like running it is a good cardiovascular workout – increasing heart rate as your heart works harder to provide oxygen around your body. This improves **heart health** and helps to reduce the risk of heart conditions, such as **coronary heart disease**.

Walking is also good for your **joints** and posture. Although a workout of relatively low intensity, the calories you burn can help to prevent **weight gain** and associated health complications.

In fact, **research** comparing moderate-intensity walking and high-intensity **running** suggests that the energy used in both results in surprisingly similar risk reductions for several health problems:

- **High blood pressure.**
- **High cholesterol.**
- **Type 2 diabetes.**
- **Heart disease.**

As hiking is more intense, tending to be longer in duration and involving steeper inclines, it will give you all of these benefits and more. Hiking on an incline (uphill) will strengthen your upper and lower leg muscles (your hamstrings, quadriceps and calves) and burn more calories which lead to **larger muscles** and **less fat mass**.

Dancing

If you enjoy dancing, you'll be aware that it uses a lot of energy which burns calories and helps to prevent excessive weight gain and is a fun way to exercise. It can be an effective full body workout, with dance moves of all kinds using and strengthening different muscles.

Regular dancing at moderate to high intensity is also a cardiovascular workout, improves your circulation and lowers blood pressure. It can also be good for your mental health if you're **dealing with stress** because following a dance routine can keep your mind preoccupied.

Gardening

It may not feel like exercise, but gardening qualifies as moderate cardiovascular exercise according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC). If you (literally) put your back into gardening work, you can reap the same health benefits.

Gardening can involve a range of manoeuvres that use lots of energy and strengthen different muscles. They include:

- Weeding.
- Digging.
- Hoeing.
- Lifting.
- Raking.

Just 30–45 minutes of any combination of these moves (depending on your garden's needs, of course) can burn between 150–300 calories.

Skateboarding

Skateboarding is another hobby that provides a cardiovascular workout and [builds muscle](#). The balance required while skateboarding means the body's core muscles (in your stomach and back) are constantly tensed which uses energy.

Certain back muscles, the obliques (along the side of your core), hip flexors, and quadriceps all get a workout during skateboarding manoeuvres and tricks. The more the tricks the better, as many involve a transfer of pressure to the core muscles.

Rock climbing

You can enjoy this hobby indoors as well as outdoors, as many UK cities now have indoor climbing walls. Rock climbing works out your entire body – the muscles in your forearms as you grip, your abdominal (stomach) and core muscles as you lift your legs to new positions, and your whole body as you propel yourself upward using your legs and arms. Alongside [strength building](#), this hobby is also a cardiovascular workout.

Easy-to-include daily exercises

Almost one third of us claim we are too busy to set aside allocated exercise time. Aside from physically active hobbies, there are small exercises that we can incorporate into our daily rituals, from working at our desk to watching television.

"It's worth knowing that the cumulative effects of these easy-to-include exercises really do add up, and can benefit both fitness levels and muscle strength over time if done regularly and correctly," says Williams.

Seated leg raises

What: sit in your chair with outstretched legs, lean back slightly, raise your legs up, and hold for a few seconds before lowering.

Why: strengthens the lower and upper abdominal muscles, hamstrings, quadriceps, gluteal muscles ('glutes'), and hips.

Calf raises

What: stand up straight, push through the balls of your feet and raise your heels until they're off the ground, then lower slowly back to the start.

Why: strengthens your calf muscles (the gastrocnemius and soleus).

Buttock clenches

What: squeeze your glutes (the three muscles in your buttocks), hold for a few moments and release.

Why: strengthens your glutes (the gluteus maximus, gluteus medius and gluteus minimus).

Abdominal contractions

What: tense your abdominal muscles, hold tension for a few seconds, then breathe out.

Why: strengthens the muscles in your stomach.

Interval walking

What: alternate walking at an easy pace with intense short bursts of very fast walking.

Why: works out your heart and burns more calories in a shorter amount of time than regular walking.

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