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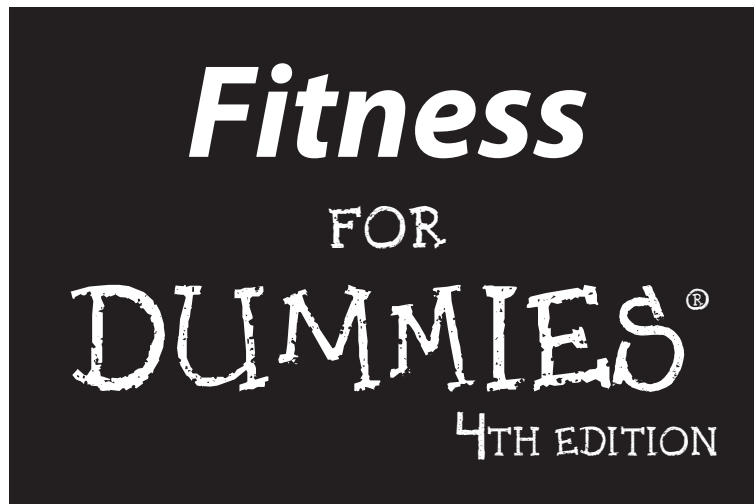
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by Suzanne Schlosberg and Liz Neporent, MA



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About the Authors

Suzanne Schlosberg is a fitness, health, and parenting writer known for her humorous approach to lifestyle topics. A former senior editor of *Shape* magazine, she is the author or coauthor of ten books, including *Weight Training For Dummies*, *The Ultimate Workout Log*, *The Ultimate Diet Log*, *The Good Neighbor Cookbook*, and *The Active Woman's Pregnancy Log*. Her articles can be found on the Web sites of *Fit Pregnancy*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *More*, *Parents*, and *Parenting*, among others, as well as her own Web site, www.suzanneschlosberg.com. An avid cyclist and totally mediocre Nordic skier, Suzanne lives in Bend, Oregon, with her husband and twin boys. She can be reached at suzanne@suzanneschlosberg.com.

Liz Neporent is a columnist and blogger for AOL Health and That's Fit, as well as a regular contributor to many other Web sites, publications, and media outlets. She cowrote *The Winner's Brain* with authors Jeff Brown and Mark Fenske. Liz brings a strong science background, fitness authority, and sense of fun to all her work. She holds a master's degree in exercise physiology from New York University and is certified by the American Council on Exercise, where she served on the board of directors for six years and now serves on the emeritus board and as a national spokesperson. She's a health consultant to Harvard Medical School in the publications division and is president of Wellness 360, a New York City-based wellness management and consulting company. She lives in New York City with her husband Jay and daughter Skylar. Follow her on twitter @lizzyfit or check out her Web site: www.w360.com.

Dedication

To all who are striving to improve their fitness.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

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Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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Acquisitions Editor: Tracy Boggier

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Composition Services

Senior Project Coordinator: Kristie Rees

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Proofreaders: Betty Kish, Lauren Mandelbaum

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Photographer: Matt Bowen

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Robin Anderson, Shawn Cook
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S. R. Gunale, Swati Gunale, Vatsala Gunale,
Deanna Holland, Brandon Hooks, Andrew
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Composition Services

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Introduction

So you want to get fit? You've come to the right place. Though we can't lace up your sneakers and lift you onto a moving treadmill, we can do the next best thing: explain the benefits and basics of exercise, cover the best workout programs and products, and give you some long-distance encouragement.

That's what we've been doing since the first edition of *Fitness For Dummies* was published back in the prehistoric mid-1990s, before you could tweet your bench-press stats or "friend" a fellow swimmer halfway around the globe. So much about fitness has changed since then — the equipment and training theories, the classes and gadgets. So once again, we've overhauled this book, adding chapters and substantially revamping others.

To understand how the field of fitness has been transformed, consider this: The first edition of *Fitness For Dummies* contained exactly four paragraphs about the Internet. Even in the 3rd edition, you couldn't find the word *podcast* or a mention of phone apps. But the book you're holding right now, the 4th edition, is loaded with tips on using the Web to get fit.

If you're a technophobe or just staunchly old-school, don't worry: Some of today's most popular fitness trends are among the most time-honored and low-tech. For example, kettlebells — cast-iron weights that were all the rage in Czarist Russia — have made a comeback. Yoga, dating back thousands of years, is more popular than ever; so is Pilates, developed more than a century ago. And one of today's trendiest and most useful workout gadgets, the physioball, is really just a glorified beach ball.

As always, the fitness field offers something for everyone, from gamers to grandmas — and heck, grandmas who are gamers. (Attention gamer grandmas: Check out *Wii 10 Minute Solution: Knock-Out Body!*) In *Fitness For Dummies*, 4th Edition, we strive to cover fitness from all angles.

About This Book

Fitness For Dummies, 4th Edition, updates you on all the latest — the good, the bad, the totally cool (free workout podcasts) and the totally weird (shoes shaped like feet). But our main mission remains the same as it was the first three times around: to get you jazzed to move, to make you a savvy consumer of fitness products and information, and to help you tackle your

worries, whether you fear the chest-press machine or panic at the thought of attempting a spinning class.

Fitness For Dummies, 4th Edition, tells you the stuff you really want to know, such as:

- ✔ Will exercise really help me lose weight?
- ✔ Which weight-training exercises are best for beginners?
- ✔ What's the difference between yoga and Pilates?
- ✔ Is it safe to exercise in the third trimester of pregnancy or the ninth decade of life?
- ✔ Will diet soda help me lose weight?
- ✔ Can I really get in shape with a phone app or a Wii fitness game?
- ✔ Which brands of home exercise equipment are most reliable?
- ✔ How do I know whether I should join a gym or buy a DVD?
- ✔ Can I actually get a "Rock Solid Bod in 6 Weeks," like the Web sites say?

This book is basic enough for the fitness rookie to follow, but it's also intended for workout veterans who want to brush up on the latest fitness concepts, gadgets, and training techniques.

This is no textbook, so if a particular topic piques your interest, turn right to it; let the table of contents and index be your guides. Also, in every chapter we define terms and point you in the direction of any information that may help you.

Conventions Used in This Book

We use few conventions in this book because we want you to be able to pick it up and start anywhere. But two conventions to keep in mind are the following:

- ✔ New fitness jargon appears in italics, *like this*, along with a brief definition. Use these terms to impress your friends or the trainer you just hired using the guidelines in Chapter 20.
- ✔ Web sites appear in a special font, `like this`, to distinguish them from other text. Jump on over to your computer or smart phone and check them out.

What You're Not to Read

We intended for this book to be a pleasant and practical read so that you can quickly find and absorb the information you want. However, we sometimes couldn't help going a little bit deeper or relaying information that expands on the basics. You may find this information interesting, but you don't need it to understand what you came to that section to find.

When you see a sidebar (a gray-shaded box of text) or text flagged with the Technical Stuff icon, know that the information is optional. You can lead a full and happy life without giving it a glance. (But aren't you curious? A little?)

Foolish Assumptions

Before we could write this book, we had to make some assumptions about who you, the reader, might be. We assume that

- ✔ You're just beginning an exercise program, thinking about starting one, or returning to a healthier lifestyle after a few years in the recliner. Or you may have been working out for years and are looking for advice on how to reinvigorate your routine.
- ✔ You're interested in sorting out all the different options for fitness activities so you can decide which are best for you.
- ✔ You want to get the lowdown on all the latest fitness research, bargains, classes, equipment, and gear — anything that has to do with getting you into shape.
- ✔ You'd like to become more knowledgeable about exercise and fitness so you can avoid mistakes and injuries.

How This Book Is Organized

Fitness For Dummies, 4th Edition, is divided into seven parts, and the chapters within each part cover specific topics in detail. You can read each chapter or part without having to read what came before, although we may refer you to other sections for more information about certain topics. Here's a brief look at the seven parts.

Part I: Getting Your Butt off the Couch

In this part, we give you the tools to start a fitness program. First, we explain the key components of fitness (did you know that being able to balance on one foot is as important as being able to walk a mile?) and offer tips on staying inspired to exercise so that it becomes a habit. Then, we help you evaluate your current fitness level with a series of fun tests; no worries — you can't flunk. We run down the basics of healthy eating so you can stay fueled for your workouts and fit into your jogging shorts. We also explain how to stay abreast of fitness developments through Web sites, blogs, TV, and other media and how to find reliable health and fitness information. Finally, we offer tips on keeping your muscles and joints injury-free and on treating aches and pains that do crop up.

Part II: Going Cardio

This part is devoted to cardiovascular exercise — the kind of activity that strengthens your heart and lungs, burns lots of calories, lowers your stress level, and gives you the energy to chase down your cat for a bath. Walking, jogging, swimming, and cycling are a few examples. We explain terms such as *anaerobic* and *target heart-rate zone*, and we tell you how long, how often, and how hard you need to work out in order to slim down, live longer, or train for a 10K run. We also cover the most popular cardio-exercise options, both indoors and out, including essential gear, proper techniques, and tips for getting started.

Part III: Building Muscle and Strengthening Bone

In this part we explain why everyone — whether you're 18 or 80, male or female — ought to strength-train. We give you the know-how to get started lifting weights, and we answer questions such as:

- ✓ What are the differences between weight machines, dumbbells, and barbells?
- ✓ What are *sets* and *reps*, and how much weight should I lift?
- ✓ Which exercises are most effective?
- ✓ What's a *deltoid*, and why should I care?

We also include a complete strength-training routine you can perform either at home or at the gym.

Part IV: Limbering Up with Flexibility, Balance, and Mind-Body Exercise

In this part we cover activities that typically don't involve buckets of sweat but are deceptively challenging and incredibly important, not to mention fun and relaxing. We're talking about stretching and balance training, as well as activities that usually incorporate both: yoga and Pilates. We show you numerous exercises you can do at home or in a class to make your body more flexible, graceful, and agile. These are all attributes that will serve you well when you work out or train for an event and as you get older and more prone to accidents and injuries.

Part V: Getting Fit in Health Clubs and Home Gyms

This part gives you the information you need to enter a gym with confidence. We explain how to choose a club that suits you, how to snag a membership bargain, and how to demonstrate stellar health-club etiquette. We also tell you how to get through an exercise class when you feel like you have two left feet that are tied together, and we update you on the latest in exercise classes, from Zumba to boot camp to IndoRow.

Fitness clubs and studios aren't for everyone, so in this part, we also help you choose the best home fitness equipment for your budget, your goals, and the size of your living room. We cover everything from space-age treadmills to \$3 rubber exercise tubes and offer tips for designing your home gym so you'll actually use the stuff you buy.

We also help you find a qualified fitness trainer, if you're so inclined, as well as high-quality, low-cost, and motivating digital workouts, on DVDs and online.

Part VI: Exercising for All Ages and Stages

This part covers exercise from the beginning — we're talking in utero — all the way through the AARP years. Research has proven that prenatal exercise is not only safe for Mom but also gives babies a healthy start, lowering their risk for obesity and diabetes throughout life. This section fills you in on what kind of exercise program is ideal for moms-to-be. In light of the country's childhood-obesity epidemic, we include a chapter on getting kids of all ages, from toddlers to tweens, up and moving. For those of you entering your sixth decade and beyond, this part is for you, too. We show you how to get and stay fit so you can continue to stay active and look good in your jeans.

Part VII: The Part of Tens

Every *For Dummies* book has a Part of Tens. These chapters give you a different spin on some of the information already presented in the other parts, along with plenty of new stuff. For example, scattered throughout this book are many reasons to get and stay fit; in Chapter 25, you find a whole chapter of reasons. (Did you know that exercise lowers your risk of developing dementia?) And in Chapter 26, we tell you which fitness products we consider to be most worthy of your hard-earned dollars.

Icons Used in This Book

Icons are small pictures in the margins of this book that flag certain material for you. The following icons highlight information you want to pay special attention to.



This icon flags great strategies for getting in shape, such as testing your fitness every three to six months. We also use this icon to highlight money-saving tips — such as asking your health club to waive its initiation fee — and excellent fitness products, from treadmills to stretching devices to fitness games for your kid's Wii or Xbox.



When information is just too good to forget, this icon helps you remember. This is the stuff you want to jot down and attach with a magnet to your fridge.



We use the Myth Buster superhero to dispel popular fitness myths. For example, in Chapter 7, we explain that exercise doesn't have to hurt to be good for you. (In fact, the vast majority of the time, it shouldn't hurt at all.)



This icon warns you about hucksters who offer false promises, sell bogus products, or try to snare you with slimy sales tactics. We also use this icon to caution you about common exercise mistakes, such as neglecting to adjust the seat on an exercise machine.



We use this icon when we tell a story about our own adventures in fitness or recount the experiences of people we know. The anecdotes range from the wacky to the inspirational to the just plain helpful.



The Technical Stuff icon marks info that's interesting but not necessary to your understanding of fitness.

Where to Go from Here

You can dive into this book in two ways:

- ✔ **If you want a crash course in fitness, read the book cover to cover.** You'll get a thorough understanding of what it takes to get in shape, and you'll come across topics you may not have thought to look up, such as how to practice proper etiquette in the gym, how to judge the accuracy of fitness Web sites and blogs, and how often you need to buy new running shoes.
- ✔ **If you want to find out about a specific topic, you can flip to that section and get your answers right away.** Use the book as a reference every time you boldly enter uncharted territory, like a yoga class or a Web site that sells fitness DVDs.

Whatever your approach, enjoy your journey!

Part I

Getting Your Butt off the Couch

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



“You know, anyone who wishes he had a remote control for his exercise equipment is missing the idea of exercise equipment.”

In this part . . .

This part helps you get going on a fitness program, no matter what shape you're in. Chapter 1 explains what *fitness* really means and helps you devise a game plan. You find out how to set realistic goals, track your progress, and make exercise a habit. Chapter 2 explains the important first step toward getting in shape: testing your fitness. You can either do this on your own or hire a professional. Chapter 3 gives you the lowdown on healthy eating, including how to slim down without going hungry. Chapter 4 tells you how to become a savvy consumer of fitness media, including TV, Web sites, and blogs, so that you can distinguish accurate news reports from misleading fluff. In Chapter 5, we explain how to protect your muscles and joints from injury and what steps to take if you do sprain an ankle or strain a muscle.