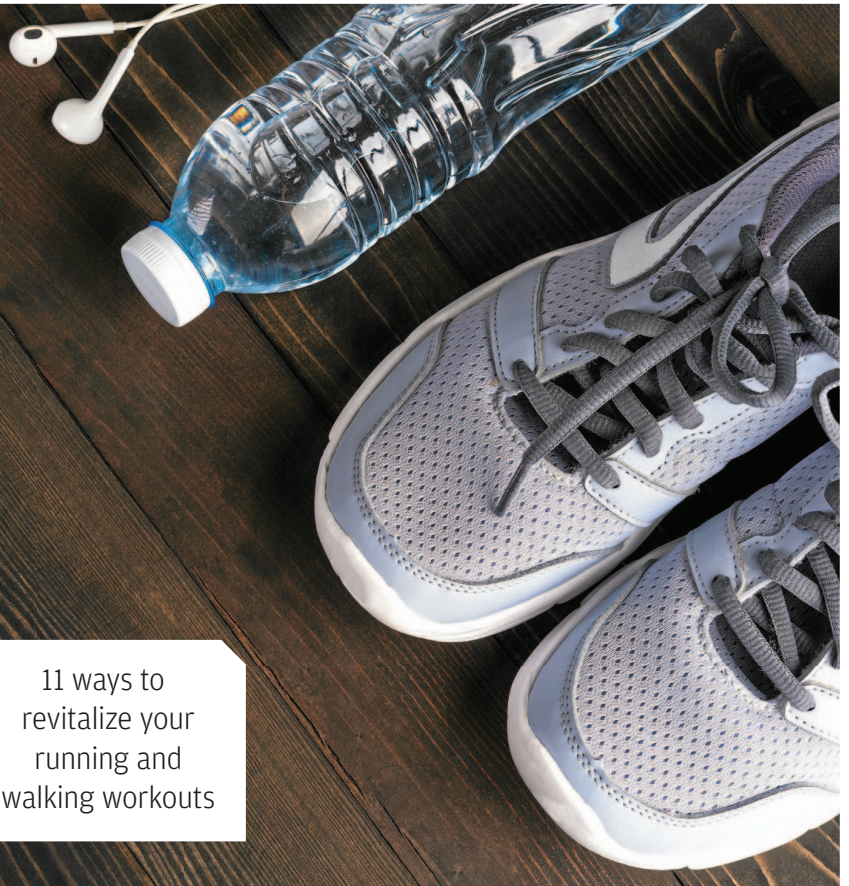


PUT SOME PEP IN YOUR STEPS

11 ways to revitalize your running and walking workouts



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Running and walking are two of the best exercises — not to mention among the easiest to adopt — for almost everyone. But let’s face it: They’re not always fun, and at times they get downright boring. Sometimes you need a nudge to stay motivated.

Here are some suggestions from Dr. Aaron Baggish, director of the Cardiovascular Performance Program at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital.

1 Change locations

It’s easy to get into a rut when you cover the same ground over and over. Explore different locations, and even commit to trying a new route once a week or once a month. “There are loads of websites and apps that map popular routes for runners and walkers with a variety of distances and types of terrain and scenery,” Baggish says.

2 Set regular goals

“People who choose small, incremental, achievable goals and write them down are more likely to get them done,” Baggish says. For example, focus on covering a certain number of miles per week or month or gradually increasing your speed or distance for each workout. “Signing up for a 5K race or similar event also can be a useful carrot,” he says. “You will more likely follow through because you don’t want to waste your entry fee.”



3 Treat yourself

Accessories can make you feel confident. Invest in new workout shirts, shorts, hats, shoes. Treat yourself to a new water bottle, or upgrade to a hydration pack. Walkers also can try using walking poles, which are available with pointed tips for trails or rubber tips for sidewalks. They are readily available online, as are videos on how to use them.

4 Join a club

Besides offering another way to show accountability, walking or running clubs offer organized group runs and walks where you can workout with others at your same level. Inquire about such clubs at your local specialty running store or senior community center.

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5 Listen to an audiobook

Make a rule that you can listen to an audiobook only during your outing. Always keep the volume low and use only one earbud so you remain alert for trouble in your surroundings.

6 Tweak your route

Even making minor changes to your usual routine can be stimulating. For instance, go at an earlier or later time, or walk or run in the opposite direction.

7 Take exercise ‘breaks’

Break up your regular routine with two minutes or so of body-weight exercises. Stop and do 10 squats, walking lunges or push-ups (on the ground or against a tree or bench).

8 Enlist a workout buddy

If it has become easier to blow off workouts, invite someone to join you. “We are 10 times more likely to commit to a workout if we know someone is waiting, as we don’t want to disappoint them,” Baggish says.



9 Race against yourself

A self-challenge also is a great motivator. Try this: Time how long it takes to walk or run for a specific distance, like a mile around your neighborhood or local track. Then try to meet or beat that number. When you have achieved it, reset the challenge and start anew.

10 Create a cue

If you need help sticking to a routine, schedule your run or walk around a regularly scheduled activity, like when you first get up in the morning or before lunch or dinner. “Many daily habits are created when something signals you to do them,” Baggish says.

11 Combine running and walking

Devote a regular outing to a run/walk routine. For runners, it helps break up the intensity by offering a brief recovery period, which may help them run farther with less struggle. For walkers, it’s a great way to increase cardio output. For example, run for one to two minutes and then walk for four to five minutes until you fully recover. (Walkers would speed walk for one to two minutes and then walk at a normal or slower pace for the recovery.) Repeat the pattern five times or until you have covered your usual workout time or distance. Adjust the times to make it easier or more challenging.