

Ultimate Fit or Fat

The classic book on fitness has been rewritten after twenty-five years and is, unexpectedly, better than ever. There's still not a fad in it, and it is still lean, brief, and witty. Now with more attention to aging, more reliance on home testing, and more encouragement for weightlifting, this is still the best overall guide to the how and why of getting fit.

—KK

Fat people who are constantly dieting should worry less about how to lose weight. Instead they should ask themselves. "Why do I gain weight so easily?"

As a person becomes more and more out of shape and the muscles fill up with fat, the arms and waistline become softer and softer. I remember a tall, thin young woman I tested who had never exercised a day in her life. I gripped her arm and said, "Tighten up, Susie."

"Okay!" she said obligingly. I waited a few seconds, but her arm felt as soft as ever.

"Tighten up, Susie," I repeated.

"I am, I am!" she grunted, her face red from the effort.

This woman was so out of shape and her muscles were so soft no amount of flexing made them harder. She looked thin on the outside, but she was fat on the inside.

The underwater immersion test is time-consuming, takes up lots of laboratory space, and is scary for many people, so most testing facilities use less accurate but more convenient methods. Most techniques measure the fat just beneath the skin, on the assumption that the amount of subcutaneous fat increases as total body fat increases. When you consider all the places inside the body where fat can accumulate, such as around the intestines and inside muscles, it's hard to believe that measuring skin fat would reflect total body fat, but we have measured peoples' fat both underwater and with the skin test for years and using our formula, subcutaneous fat measurements are amazingly accurate.

Remember! If you can't exercise exactly by the rules I've given you, just do a lot of it. Quantity can substitute for quality. That's why sports almost always makes people fitter than strict exercise at a health club.

Don't Even Think about Distance

It doesn't matter how far you go. What matters is how many minutes a day you spend trying to change your body into a fit body. Exercise for time, not distance.

Ultimate Fit or Fat

Covert Bailey
1999, 170 pages
\$11
Houghton Mifflin



Covert Bailey's Four Food Groups of Good Exercise



"Before" and "after" snapshots of participants in a contest to see how much they could change their bodies in twelve weeks.

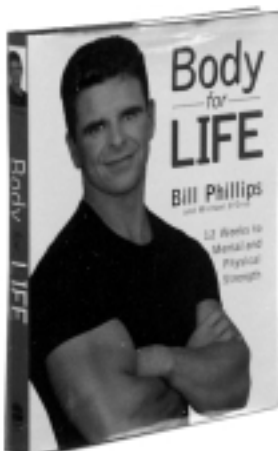
Body for Life 12 Weeks to Mental and Physical Strength

Okay, you are sold on the basic sanity of Fit or Fat, but what do you actually do today? I mean where do you start? The best answer to that question is Body for Life, which pound for pound has more motivating specifics than anywhere else. The catalyst is a simple bargain: you can change the shape and fit of your body in twelve weeks if you are willing to work reasonably hard with a reasonably flexible plan manageable by most busy people. I figured I could stand almost anything for twelve weeks, if it produced results. Well, it worked for me at least, much better than I expected, and it has apparently worked for many others, judging from the photos and the constant friend-of-a-friend referrals this book produces. Most importantly, once your body reshapes itself (this is not about losing weight), the logic of Body for Life (the same as Fit or Fat) becomes habit.

—KK

Body for Life 12 Weeks to Mental and Physical Strength

Bill Phillips
1999, 201 pages
\$25
HarperCollins



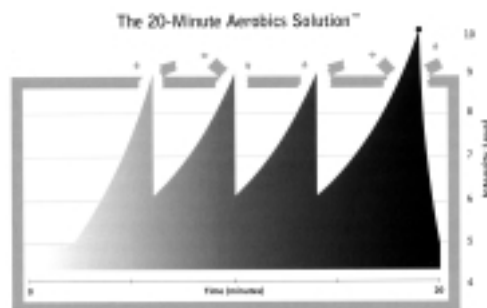
Myth: Muscles grow while you're working out.
Fact: Muscles grow while you are resting and recuperating.

Myth: Lifting a weight is what stimulates muscle growth.

Fact: Lifting and lowering a weight stimulates muscle growth.

Enough evidence now exists to concretely state that lowering the weight is just as important as lifting it. It's true. It turns out that weight lowering causes much of the muscle-cell damage that stimulates an adaptation. You see, when you lengthen the muscle, which occurs during that eccentric portion of an exercise, you literally tear portions of the muscle fibers, signaling a stage of remodeling, or muscle growth. (You'll know when you've experienced this phenomenon because a day or two after your workout, your muscles will be sore. That's a sign that the "earth has moved.")

When you apply the Intensity Index properly to both your resistance training and aerobic workouts, you'll never hit the ceiling. You'll always move up to higher and higher high points. And that means you'll continually be stimulating your muscles while losing fat. You'll become more metabolically efficient. Your body will burn fat at a significantly elevated rate, even while you're sitting at your desk or driving your car or reading a book...even while you're sleeping.



Myth: aerobics is better for shaping up than weight training.

Fact: To transform your physique, you must train with weights.

[This graph demonstrates the pattern of strength-building aerobics. To maximize a twenty-minute workout, you must press toward your maximum effort and "break through" your intensity level.]