6 Fitness Gadgets You Need to Know

Fitness is something many aspire to, but it seems like only a few actually achieve. Let’s face it, not everyone has it in them to be a three-time marathoner or to wake up at the crack of dawn every day to swim laps. On the other hand, too many people (who, me? Never.) get frustrated when they pay for a gym membership that they don’t use. Fitness is something that can’t be bought at any price, but we discovered a few apps and gadgets that can truly make a difference in how you reach your goals.

Whether it’s a social network that keeps you accountable for the workouts you planned to do each week or a scale that tells you the details you need to know about your body to effectively track progress — the following fitness tools are worth a few extra bucks.

If you’ve already tried out any of these, tell us how they worked for you in the comments.

Price: $99.95

What it does: Fitbit [1] tracks your steps better than a pedometer with its 3D motion sensor. City dwellers who walk a lot can finally cash in on all those calories burned just as part of the daily routine. In fact, you might find yourself purposely taking longer routes or opting for the stairs, just to bump up your daily numbers, as Fitbit will record calories burned and distance traveled, too.

With the Fitbit sleep wristband, the gadget will also offer insight into how well you sleep. Be prepared to discover how many times and for how long you wake up during the night -- and if you find your sleep is not satisfactory, you can start working to improve it. Fitbit syncs with maps, and you can chart your progress online.

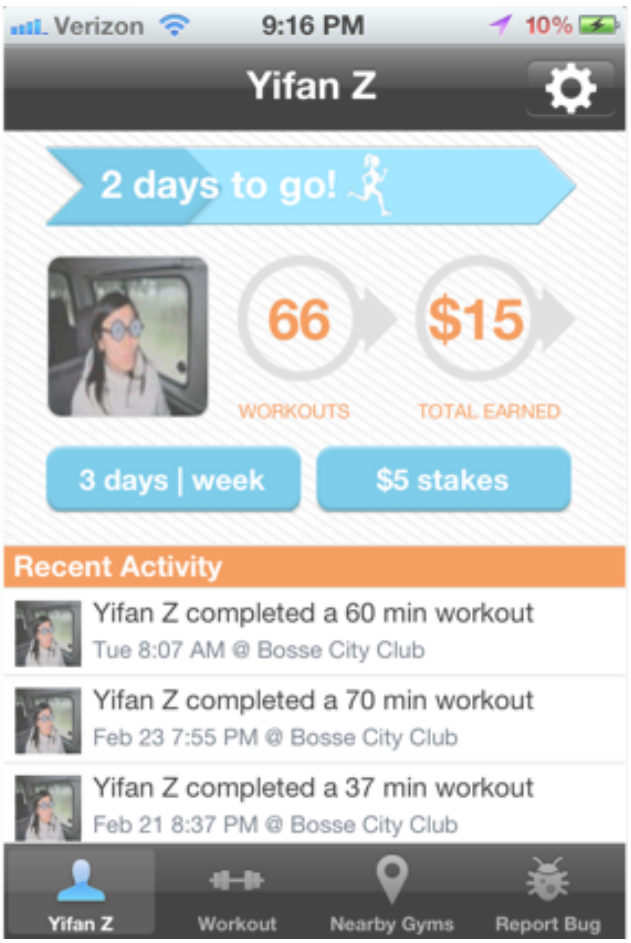
Why it’s worth it: The technology behind Fitbit is still fairly unique. It’s a big step

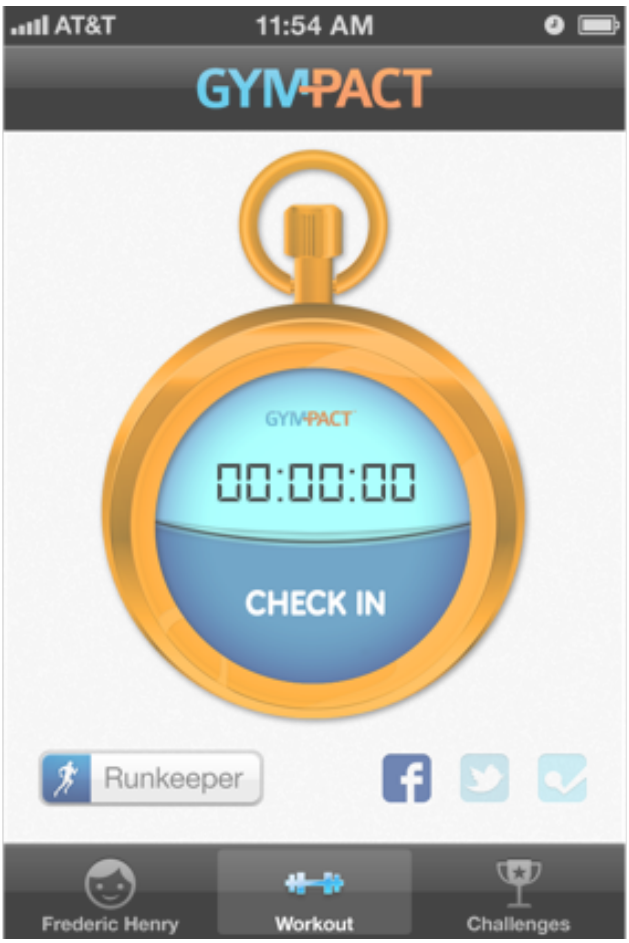
above what's out there already, and since it tracks both movements in terms of workouts and sleep, it gives you a more holistic view of what may be causing fatigue and what you need to change. Fitbit is a good tool for those who want to make healthy choices part of their lifestyle.

Price: Varies based on individual goals

What it does: GymPact [8] holds you to your word -- with your wallet. As a member [9], you can commit to a minimum one workout per week and pay $5 (or more, for those who like to raise the stakes) if you don't check in with GymPact at your fitness center -- and these "donations" are divvied up among the people who did work out. The location-based app just partnered with Runkeeper [10], so if your exercise of choice is outdoors rather than at an approved gym, you can still qualify to earn some cash.

Why it's worth it: For many people, missing a workout is a sunk cost -- the monthly membership is paid for whether you go or not. But for someone serious about getting in shape, putting more money on the table might be just the incentive they need. Behavioral experts say extrinsic motivations [11] can eventually become intrinsic, so you may not need to put cash on the line forever.





Price: $159

What it does: Perfect for anyone who's a combo data nerd and health nut, the Withings Wi-Fi Body Scale [12] tracks weight, body mass index and body fat numbers for up to eight people (i.e. a family), which are wirelessly sent to an online account. You can view your data on either the website or in the Withings app for iPhone, iPad and Android.

Why it's worth it: For too long people have gauged fitness goals by the wrong numbers -- weight alone offers a limited view of how well you're doing. The data from Withings offers a better measure whether you're working with a fitness coach or trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle for the whole family. Plus, it takes away the tedium of jotting numbers onto a spreadsheet, and it's a classy addition to bathroom decor.

Price: $149

What it does: The Nike+ FuelBand, worn on your wrist, is a statement of both fashion and tech savvy. It tracks actions, like dancing, running and basketball -- you name it, the band will log it. The data is sent to your account, which can be viewed in either the iPhone app or the web interface.

Why it’s worth it: For someone who’s goal-oriented, the FuelBand plus the mobile and web interface is sure to keep you engaged with fitness. The FuelBand itself is a nice piece of hardware, but the immersive experience in the iPhone app is what really drew us to this one. Goals become more approachable when you can check in with the app throughout the day and add notes, such as emoticons, to an activity to remember how you felt during each one.

Price: $10 per month

What it does: If you're familiar with Birchbox or Dollar Shave Club, you'll find Pump Ups is the same deal. For a low price each month, you'll get a premium selection of supplement samples delivered to your door. Currently the samples are fitness-focused and from a variety of brands. Each box will include a minimum of six products, but often 8-10 samples total.

Why it's worth it: There are a lot of options for workout enhancements and nutritional supplements -- and the market is growing every day. Premium products can make a big difference in your workout but the search can be more trouble than its worth. Pump Ups allows you to try a variety before committing -- and if you don't like one, you don't have to waste the rest of the package.

Price: $7.99

What it does: Picking between reading that novel and going for a jog just got easier. Well, perhaps it's not a perfect substitute for the latest paperback, but Zombies, Run! was co-created with Naomi Alderman, an award-winning novelist -- on our watch, the first fitness app to blend these vocations. When you start a run either outdoors or at the gym, the narration leads you through a storyline, telling you when to speed up, lay off, go for supplies or escape the undead.

Why it’s worth it: Zombies, Run! brings new life to something that’s tedious for most people -- running. The game was funded by Kickstarter, which is a testamant to its wide appeal. If soundtracks have failed to get you motivated or you find yourself bored in the second quarter mile, this app might be just what you need. Since the app includes 30 missions, you’ll always discover something new around the corner, and more missions coming with each update, there’ll always be a plot twist ahead.

The app is on available on iPhone, Android and Windows Phone.

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