



Exercise: How to Use a Pedometer

What is a pedometer?

A pedometer is a small device that counts the number of steps you take. It is also called a step counter. Some pedometers also tell you how far you've walked in miles or how many calories you've burned. But mile and calorie readings are estimates and may not be accurate. Pedometers may be less accurate for running or walking uphill, because your stride changes. But over the course of a day, a pedometer gives you a good idea of how active you are.

How can a pedometer help you?

A pedometer can help you in at least three ways:

- A pedometer tells you how many steps you take. This can help motivate you to walk.
- A pedometer can help you set specific goals for walking. For example, you can set goals for walking a certain number of steps during an activity or throughout the day. You can easily track your goals and adjust them.
- A pedometer can remind you to walk more. A quick check may show that you need more steps to meet your goal for the day. You may even find it fun to add more steps to such things as grocery shopping or returning a book to the library.

How can you best use a pedometer?

Make wearing your pedometer a habit. Put it on first thing in the morning as you are getting dressed. Leave it on until you go to bed.

A pedometer may be most accurate if you wear it on your side above your hip or directly above your knee. Make sure that it is secure on your belt or waistband and that it is upright. If the pedometer is tilted, or if it does not fit snugly on your body, the results may not be accurate.

Test your pedometer by walking 50 steps. If it is off by more than a few steps, put it at a different place on your waist and try again. Follow these steps to get the best use out of your pedometer:

Find your activity level

- For the first week, follow your usual routine. Don't change how active you are.
- Write down your steps each day in a step diary. This will give you a starting record of how active you are.
- Look at this record for the first week to see where you can add steps to your daily routine.

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Set and track your first goal

- Set a goal for the second week. For example, try to add 300 to 500 steps each day or every other day. Or add 10% to how many steps you walked the first week. Do what works best for you.
- Write down in your step diary how many steps you take every day.

Keep moving

- Check how well you do from week to week.
- Set a new goal each week. One way to set a new goal is to take the highest number of steps you have walked on any day. Use that number of steps as your daily goal for the next week. Each time you add 2,000 steps, you add about 1 mile, or 20 minutes of walking, to your routine. A good long-term goal is to walk at least 10,000 steps each day.

Add more steps

- Park farther than usual from your workplace or a store (or get off the bus or subway before your stop), and walk the extra distance.
- Take the stairs rather than the elevator.
- Walk a lap inside the grocery store before you start shopping.
- Walk instead of driving for short trips. Walk to school, work, the grocery store, a friend’s house, or a restaurant for lunch.

Track your steps

Day	Your goals	Your steps	How you’ll add steps
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

