

The Fat Chick Sings About:

# Finding your Starting Point with the Rock the Block Exercise



Not sure where to get started with your exercise program. Use this tool to help you find your starting point.



The appropriate level at which to begin your exercise program is where you're at.

## Where do I start?

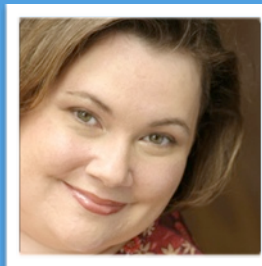
If you have exercised recently (if inconsistently) it's pretty easy to figure out where you should start with your workouts. Pick a recent workout that felt somewhat challenging but comfortable. Figure out how long and how hard you worked out. This is your starting point. But what if you haven't worked out in a while (or ever)? How do you know where to start?

**Testing the Waters.** How do I figure out what my body can and can't do. The answer is by testing your limits. But you need to test those limits in a safe and rational way. It's probably not a good idea to test your skiing aptitude by being dropped out of a helicopter in the Alps. And you probably don't want to test your swimming aptitude trying to escape the jaws of a great white shark on the barrier reef in Australia. You should test your aptitude in a safe environment where it is easy for you to quit at any time. You should begin in an

environment where you can spend time quietly checking in with your body and monitoring for signs of pain or discomfort. You may need to start and stop a lot at first. You need to begin gently and move ahead slowly. Don't forget to watch out for your dashboard indicators (body warning signs like feeling dizzy, light-headed, tightness in your chest, extreme breathlessness, unusual fatigue, nausea, loss of muscle control or blurred vision). Needless to say if you experience any of these, you need to STOP.

**Exercise 1: Body Awareness.** Your first exercise, is find a nice flat block with sidewalks and walk around the block for as far as you feel comfortable. Some of you won't complete the whole block. That is perfectly okay. For some of you this exercise will seem hopelessly remedial. I assure you that it isn't. The point of this exercise is not to see how far you can walk. The point of this exercise is to increase your awareness as you walk.

## Meet The Fat Chick



Jeanette DePatie (The Fat Chick) is a certified aerobics instructor, personal trainer and veteran fitness professional with over 10 years experience training students of all sizes, shapes, ages and abilities. The Fat Chick has appeared in print, and on radio and TV saying and showing anyone can be healthy and fit.

Using techniques gleaned as a teacher, producer, marketing professional, wife, musician, marathoner and triathlete, DePatie specializes in creating fitness programs that allow students to feel successful the first time and every time they participate.

# Rock the Block Exercise



Get a bottle of water if it's hot. Put on some comfortable clothes and nice comfortable shoes. Grab your cell phone—just in case. Before you start, write down the time here\_\_\_\_\_.

Now go for a walk. Walk briskly but comfortably. Walk at a pace that you would take if you saw somebody really fascinating, like George Clooney on the other side of the room and he was getting away—I mean, leaving. As you walk, check in with how parts of your body are feeling. Note your breathing. Is it unchanged? Slightly deeper? Much deeper? Are you panting or significantly out of breath? If you are panting or significantly out of breath, this is one of your dashboard indicator lights and you should slow down or stop until you can catch your breath again.

Check in with your muscles. How do your legs feel? Are you feeling nothing at all? Do you feel slight tension or moderate tension in your muscles? Do you feel pain? If you feel pain, please stop and find a place to sit down. If you feel much better after a rest, you may turn around and head very slowly back for home. However, if you still feel a lot of pain, use that cell phone to call somebody to pick you up. There is nothing to be ashamed about. This is simply where you are, and we all need to start somewhere.

Check in with your other muscles. How does your back feel? How about your arms? Is your posture upright or hunched over? Do you feel any twinges anywhere? How do your feet feel as they hit the pavement? Try not to make any moral judgments about whether things are good or bad. Just open your senses and observe.

Whenever you finish and wherever you finish, right the time down here\_\_\_\_\_.

And the distance here\_\_\_\_\_. (quarter-block, half block, 1 block, etc.).

When you are finished, sit quietly and breathe deeply. Allow your body to come to the same state it was in before you began. Once you feel that your breathing and heart rate are back to normal, write the time down here\_\_\_\_\_.

Now write in your journal about how your body felt during the entire exercise. If you do this exercise correctly you should have at least an entire page of observations about your body and your feelings. Success in this exercise depends on the richness of your observations.

If you did less than a block, that's fine. You have found your starting point. Pick a point in your walk that is just before where you experienced pain or were significantly out of breath. This is your activity target. Write your activity target here\_\_\_\_\_.

# Rock the Block Exercise

## Every step forward, no matter how small gets you closer...

**Checking in. How did it go?** If you did the last exercise and found you needed to stop somewhere in the middle, then you have already found and written down your starting point. However, if you finished the last exercise, and were still raring to go, then you have a little ways to go in finding your starting point. This next exercise is for you!

**Exercise 2: Rock the Block.** This exercise is exclusively for folks who finished exercise 8 and were still raring to go. Once again, find a nice flat block, grab a bottle of water and put on some nice comfortable shoes and clothes. Make sure you are wearing a watch and take note of your starting time. Also, take a look at your starting place for your walk. It might be the mailbox in front of your house, or the sign at the trailhead. This starting point is your home base. Start out walking away from home base around the block at a slow and steady pace. Swing your arms at your sides. Look up and be aware of your surroundings. Breathe deeply. Use the awareness skills you gained in exercise 8 to check in with your body. As you finish your rotation of the block and reach home base, check in carefully. How do you feel? Are you tired? Are you energized? Are you perspiring lightly or sweating like a sinner on Sunday? Are you breathing deeply or panting like a dog in heat? If you are sweating a lot or panting or experiencing any other exercise warning signs STOP. If you feel great, go ahead and go around the block again. Each time you pass home base check in with your body and see if you are ready to go around again. Continue until you are fired, or 40 minutes have passed—whichever comes first.

Now note your duration (how many minutes you've walked) here \_\_\_\_\_. And note your number of blocks completed here \_\_\_\_\_. This is your starting point for duration and distance. Please remember not to judge yourself, this is not a contest. This is not a moral imperative. It's just information. And this information is an essential element in developing a fitness program that you can happily and safely enjoy for life.

**Has the Block Been Rocked?** The round robin exercise does a great deal to help you find your starting point. After this exercise, you should have a good idea of a starting duration and distance. The next step is to get a better sense of your exercise intensity. This is simply a way of describing how hard you are working as you exercise. Getting the right intensity level is critical to fitness success. If you work at an intensity level that's too high, you risk injury and harm. You're also more likely to quit. If you work at an intensity level that's too low, you won't receive as much fitness benefit from your exercise as you could. The next exercise will help you learn about fitness intensity.

**Exercise 3: Managing Intensity** Measuring your distance is one way of determining your intensity, but there is another important method called the Rate of Perceived Exertion or RPE. Now this is a fancy, ten dollar word for what I call the sweat scale. You can think of the sweat scale as monitoring your body to measure the intensity of your effort at any given moment. The sweat scale is a continuum that ranges from 1 to 10. You can think of level 1 as sitting on the sofa eating cheesy poofs. You can think of level 10 as ready to have a heart attack—please call 911. Obviously, you don't want your workout to be at either extreme of this scale. Level 1 is far too little to get any training benefits. And level 10 is likely to land you in a hospital. Imagine level 5 as being right in between these two marks. Ideally you'd like your workout to land at about a 7 or 8 on the scale. At this level you can easily speak in short sentences, but you couldn't sing or recite a poem. You are breathing heavier than when at rest, but you are not short of breath or panting. At five, you feel like you are moving at a pace you could do for a long time. At level seven you're not entirely sure how long you could go for, but you are not begging to stop either. So go back into exercise 2. Do you remember all of those observations you wrote down about how you felt? How was your breathing? How long did you feel you could go on?

Now translate that number into a number on the sweat scale and write that number here \_\_\_\_\_. This was also your intensity. You can use this as a basis of comparison. At this point, you can make a commitment to stay at an intensity of 6-8 on the sweat scale. Now we're going to repeat the body awareness exercise, and walk around the block again (or to the distance you achieved if it was less than a block). Now as you walk, practice speeding up and slowing down. Try to experience how walking

# Rock the Block Exercise



## Okay, so what's the plan?

at a 2 or 3 feels. Now gradually pick up the pace experiencing the levels 4-8. What does a 4 feel like? How is it different from an 8? Try bumping it up to a 9. You may need to jog or run to experience this feeling, or you may get there by simply walking quickly. Whatever you do, don't stay there too long. 15 or 30 seconds should be ample for you to get this feeling. And REMEMBER TO WATCH FOR YOUR DASHBOARD INDICATORS. If you are experiencing any of the warning signs, you need to slow down or stop! When you're finished, pull out your journal and write your feelings in there.

**All about frequency:** In terms of evaluating your starting point, there's one area we still need to calculate, and that is your frequency. Simply put, your frequency is how often you work out i.e. once per week or three times a week, etc. If you are already working out more than three times per week, great! That number is your frequency. If you haven't been working out, then let's aim for three times per week for now, okay? This allows you to have a rest day or even two between each workout, yet is frequent enough to help you maintain your training effects. If you want to aim for more days per week, that's fine. But I strongly recommend that you start out at three days per week, experience success, and then bump your frequency up. In any case, I'd also like for you to have at least two rest days per week. This allows your muscles a chance to rest and rebuild as you ramp up your fitness efforts.

**Exercise Four: Finding Frequency** So based on your current exercise levels and the recommendations listed above, select your weekly frequency here: (circle one)

I will work out 3 4 5 times per week, every week. Okay, now that you've picked how many times per week you'll work out, you need to think about how you will work this number into your schedule. Think about your week and think about your life. What days will work best for you? Is it Monday, Wednesday and Friday Mornings? Is it Friday Night, Sunday Morning and Wednesday afternoon? It doesn't matter which days you will work out, just so long as the rest days and workout days are distributed relatively evenly throughout the week. Just pick a schedule that works for you and stick to it. Circle your Exercise Schedule: S M Tu W Th F Sa

**Okay, so What's the Plan?** So with all this discussion of what you shouldn't do to get fit you're probably wondering, "So what DO I do to get fit? Was there a plan in there somewhere? Did I miss it?" No, you didn't miss it. And believe it or not we had to go through ALL of that other evaluation stuff before we could be ready to formulate the plan. And now that we've done all that evaluation stuff (you DID do it right?) the plan is very simple. Review all the evaluation exercises you've done so far in this chapter. Now collect all the information and fill in the blanks.

**Your Exercise Game Plan** Duration: (copy from exercise 1 or 2)\_\_\_\_\_.

Intensity: Review Exercise 3. Pick between 6 and 8 on the sweat scale: \_\_\_\_\_.

Or

Distance: Review Exercise 2. Write your distance here\_\_\_\_\_.

Frequency: Copy from Exercise 4:\_\_\_\_\_.

And

Schedule: Copy from exercise 4: S M Tu W Th F Sa

So one more time, let's establish your personal plan:

I will exercise for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes at a \_\_\_\_\_ on the sweat scale (or for \_\_\_\_\_ blocks/laps/miles) \_\_\_\_\_x per week on the following days:\_\_\_\_\_.

**That's it! That's your beginning plan. Congratulations! Now get going!**