

5 Fun Ways to

Get Strong Without Spending a Fortune

Green fitness is a way to improve your health while minimizing your environmental impact. These tips combine green principles with frugality: saving money, getting strong, and reducing waste all at the same time.

1. Think of your dog as a treadmill with fur.

Chances are your dog could use an activity upgrade as much as his or her owners! If you are both out of the shape you would like to become, start slowly and take it easy. A couple of shorter, vigorous walks (20-30 minutes) may be more effective and easier to fit into your day. No dog at home? Walk a friend's furry little treadmill or contact a local animal shelter.

2. Become a regular library patron.

While reading is not a fitness activity unless you are also pedaling a stationary bike, your local library is full of fitness information: DVDs, CDs, tapes, books, and magazines which are all free to use and get reused often. To turn a library visit into a serious strength builder, walk or bike to the library with your books and other items in a backpack.

3. Sign up for an Extension or parks department class.

Terrific fitness bargains are offered through university Extension programs as well as parks and community recreation departments. Classes, such as yoga and belly dancing, are often offered for as little as \$20-25 for several weeks. For the current offerings, call, visit, or go to the web site of your parks and recreation department or county Extension office.

4. Turn your home into a thrifty gym.

It's no myth: You can get strong without fancy equipment or expensive club fees. All it takes is a minimal investment in hand weights, a mat, and maybe a stability ball, along with some chairs and stairs. For simple instructions, use the Strong Women program (online at www.strongwomen.com/) or in a library book. Minimal cost, maximum strength!

5. Get good with a resistance band.

Resistance bands are probably the most versatile, flexible, and portable fitness equipment on earth. They use minimal storage space and no electricity. Best of all, they are cheap: less than \$10 for one band or under \$20 for a set with several sizes. Most bands come with simple instructions or you can find dozens of videos on You Tube (www.youtube.com/).