

## Common Barriers to Exercising & Strategies to Overcome Them

Barrier	Strategies
I don't have the time to work out	<p>Students have very busy lifestyles and finding the time to exercise can be challenging.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incorporate physical activity into your daily activities. Walk to class instead of taking the bus, or take the stairs instead of the elevator.</li> <li>2. Plan regular times to exercise each week. After awhile, exercise becomes a habit. Like brushing your teeth, it just becomes another part of your daily or weekly schedule.</li> <li>3. Review your current schedule to see if there are any activities that can be cut back or eliminated. Listing the pros and cons of each activity can be helpful in setting priorities and reducing stress.</li> <li>4. Plan out weekly schedule in advance and make sure to set aside time for physical activities that you enjoy. Use a daily calendar or an online planner to get started.</li> <li>5. Set reminders on your phone calendar so you don't forget your scheduled exercise time.</li> <li>6. You can still be flexible with your time. There will be weeks when you might be able to get more or less physical activity depending on what else is going on. Since exercise can increase energy and decrease stress and anxiety, getting some physical activity during high-stress weeks is recommended.</li> <li>7. Sign up for a class. The commitment and accountability can be motivating.</li> <li>8. Ask a friend to join you so that you can also incorporate some socializing into the experience.</li> </ol>
I am too depressed to work out. I just don't have the energy.	<p><b>Exercise can reduce common symptoms of depression like poor mood and low energy.</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate some amount of physical activity in your day. Walking counts!</li> <li>• Be easy on yourself. It's okay to not exercise as often or as long when you are depressed.</li> <li>• Give yourself credit for taking small steps to exercise. For example, even if you just got your gym clothes on and walked to the gym, that's an accomplishment!</li> <li>• Try shorter exercises. Run for 15 minutes instead of 30 minutes. Do one set of biceps curl instead of three sets.</li> </ul>
<p>I don't know a lot about exercising and don't really know how to get started.</p>	<p>Remember, anything is better than nothing!  Find something you enjoy doing and start slowly.  It is always smart to consult with a professional when you are unsure about the best exercise options for you, especially if you have any health problems. A personal trainer can assess your current health status and make helpful recommendations. UM Rec Sports has personal trainers available at a reduced rate for students.</p>
<p>I'm just not motivated to exercise. I don't think it will help me feel better.</p>	<p>Common symptoms of mental health disorders include low energy, reduced ability to enjoy things, decreased motivation, physical pain, fatigue, and negative thinking. So it is perfectly understandable that exercise would be a challenge at times.</p> <p>Here are some tips to help improve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Consider the possible benefits.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Address your negative thoughts</b> by challenging the belief that you can't do it or that it won't be helpful.</li> </ol> <p>Remember that negative thoughts are a common symptom of many mental health disorders.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. <b>Consider whether your expectations are too high,</b> creating a barrier. If you haven't worked out in awhile or much at all, start slow and easy and increase your activity level over time.</li> </ol> <p>There may be times when you fall short of your exercise goals. <b>Don't get discouraged!</b> Keep going and give yourself credit for what you did accomplish.</p>

	<p>4. <b>Realize you may not have found the right exercise activity for you.</b> Maybe the gym is not the right environment for you, but ultimate Frisbee or fencing is.</p>
I can't afford a gym membership	<p>One of the benefits of being a U-M student is that you have access to the FREE workout facilities on campus while you are enrolled in classes. Students who are not enrolled in the current semester, but have finished a semester or plan to start the next one can purchase the low-cost Continuing Student Membership.</p>
Working out is boring!	<p>Find a type of exercise that you enjoy. Working out doesn't have to mean going to the gym. Walking, dancing, and team sports are just a few of the ways U-M students get moving, have fun and meet other people. With so many options on and off campus, it's easy to find an activity you will find enjoyable.</p> <p>Consider partnering with a friend. Having someone to exercise with can be very motivating and enjoyable. By making a commitment to exercise together, whether meeting for a daily walk or scheduling a weekly racquetball match, you are assisting each other in setting and reaching your exercise goals.</p>
I'm a graduate student and prefer not to work out at the same facilities as undergraduate students.	<p>All of the resources listed in this section are available to both undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, Rackham Graduate School has a separate program for graduate students, including classes, education, health assessments, and more.</p>

**For More Information**

University of Michigan Depression Center  
1-800-475-MICH or 734-936-4400

[www.campusmindworks.org/](http://www.campusmindworks.org/)

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