



## EXPERT TRAINING TIPS FROM PROVIDENCE SPORTS MEDICINE

### Tracking Your Progress with Fitness Technology: How to Put your Smart Watch to Work for You

If your New Year's resolution finds you embarking on a new fitness journey, make the most of it by utilizing fitness tracking technology. Understanding how to track and monitor your fitness with wearable technology can be beneficial, but knowing the right steps to take can help optimize the process.

Fitness, like many other industries, has aligned itself with the times and has adopted advanced technology as part of industry standards. Whether it is the world's most elite athletes or everyday competitors juggling a full-time job, family, and personal schedule with a fitness routine, technology has entrenched itself with users. When you think about it, technology has played a part in fitness tracking for nearly a half-century when some of the first digital watches of the 1970's came onto the scene alongside the jogging revolution. Runners were keeping track of how long their jogs lasted, using early pedometers to keep track of steps, and eventually using some of the first portable heart rate monitors to track their pulse. It was the start of an era! As the years have passed technology has boomed and with it, so have the metrics it can measure. For those wanting to keep tabs on their fitness routines, this new era has unleashed all new possibilities to monitor progress and performance. With these new advancements, however, comes some confusion and leaves many asking: where do I start?

There are a few basic concepts to know when it comes to your Smart Watch or phone-based fitness tracker. One of the most common types of fitness trackers are wrist-worn watches. In many instances, these wrist-worn fitness trackers can fully function on their own without the need of connecting to a smart phone or an app. There are various brands and models that can also be paired with an app on your smart phone to give more detailed information. If you are new to tracking your fitness with wearable technology, it is worth considering starting simple and focusing on the wrist-worn technology by itself. Once you are dialed into your new fitness tracker, consider the types of metrics it can capture:

**Physical or external work rates:** with tools such as GPS and accelerometers, your fitness tracker can help you capture the total amount of work you have achieved in categories such as steps taken, flights of stairs climbed, miles run or walked, and more. These types of metrics are important to consider when you are choosing an activity to partake in or train for. In the example of a runner preparing for their first 5k or half-marathon, metrics such as total miles run or average mile pace can be very useful

to help track the amount of work you have performed. This information becomes valuable when evaluating your running program to help determine when it is time to either bump up the miles or increase the pace of running.

**Physiological or internal work rates:** many wrist worn fitness trackers can either connect wirelessly to a chest worn heart rate monitor or have pulse-sensing technology built in. These types of tools not only allow you to track your heart rate, but you can further assess caloric expenditure, the physiological intensity of a workout, and some fitness trackers can even give feedback on the level of stress you are under! This information is valuable to help you better understand how your body is responding to the work you are doing.

With the help of the information your fitness tracking devices is collecting, you can more effectively navigate through a well-designed fitness program. Think of a training program you have followed in the past, with weeks of training planned out in advance. You might have seen distances and paces prescribed well in advance, and are curious to see how you will respond to the program. This is one of the best examples of how fitness technology can help keep you on track, and that is by offering you real-time feedback on your performance. In this scenario, you have stayed consistent with your training and are attempting a new workout in the program. It is a faster pace than normal, and as you continue your run you periodically check your fitness tracker to see that not only are you maintaining a good pace, but you are also keeping inside of the prescribed heart rate zone as well. You are on track! You can also use feedback from your fitness tracker when things are not going to plan. Imagine following a prescribed workout pace but having your legs feel more tired and seeing your heart rate climb over a desired limit. While you might be able to tough out the rest of the run, your fitness tracker is helping further enforce the fact that you might need extra recovery before your next workout in order to replenish your body to keep training at your desired level. The feedback from your fitness tracker can be more valuable than you first envision.

Remember, wearable fitness trackers can be valuable tools to navigate through a fitness program. Keeping things simple at first as you familiarize yourself with the technology can help keep focus on your fitness program rather than getting lost in the weeds of technology. Let the feedback from your fitness tracker help keep you on track to achieving your fitness goals!

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