

A YEAR IN THE FIT LIFE

365 days of health and fitness and the goals that can be yours—that can start anytime

AH, THE IMPORTANCE of a year. It's been crooned about by Sinatra ("When I was 17..."), gyms create marketing campaigns around it (usually on January 1) and, almost inevitably, you become depressed over it (usually because you fall short of your goals). But the period of a year is just an opportunity to reflect and create real change—and you don't have to wait until you get a new calendar to do it. Still, if you're going to do it right, you need to be realistic—otherwise, you'll quit within a week, let alone 52. Ahead, a quiz on yearly improvements that really are possible—not laughable—and you can start any time.

—Eric Butterman

Questions

1 A realistic amount to add to your bench press in a year is:

- A. 15 pounds for every 20 of your actual weight.
- B. The equivalent of a house (OK, maybe just a tool shed).
- C. 30 pounds.
- D. 50 pounds.

2 You can lower your body fat over a one-year period by:

- A. Three percent.
- B. Sucking in your stomach.
- C. 20 percent.
- D. 30 percent.

3 If you only work out a couple times a week, you could step up your weekly commitment to how many times over the course of a year?

- A. Three times a week.
- B. Four times a week.
- C. Seven times a week.
- D. Seven times a day.

4 If you run regularly throughout the year, how much time can you shave off your current one-mile run?

- A. Two minutes.
- B. Three minutes.
- C. 30 seconds.
- D. Who cares? They invented cars for a reason.

5 If you eat just one less slice of bread each day for 365 days, you can lose how many pounds?

- A. None—it's just a slice of bread and it won't matter.
- B. Two pounds.
- C. Five pounds.
- D. Eight pounds.



Answers

1. Between C and D. The truth is that 30 to 50 pounds is a real possibility, but anything more than that and you may be disappointed. "Though amazing gains do happen, this is a lift that requires a commitment just to have decent results," says Mike Francois, a personal trainer based in Columbus, Ohio. "It's the ones who show up for their workouts consistently over years that eventually get the strength they want."

2. A. Unless you're incredibly obese, three percent is a realistic goal. Another major mistake is that some people who are already in good shape push themselves to unhealthy levels. Take Sylvester Stallone, for example, who went from 14 percent to 2.8 percent for a movie role. As he put it in the book *Sly on Sly*: "At a gaunt 161 pounds, I was leaner than ever but certainly not healthier."

3. B. Four times a week. Hey, go out and prove us wrong with six or seven times a week, but the likelihood is that you'll burn out quickly, suffer from overtraining syndrome and be down to hardly working out, if at all. Health over the long term is about doing something you can keep up for years and love (or, at least, stand).

4. C. Thirty seconds is possible, but if you think you're going from seven minutes to five minutes overnight, it's not happening. Tom Shaw, a former assistant track coach for Florida State University and a trainer who has overseen Tom Brady and Peyton Manning, says that one of the best ways to improve your speed is to work on your running stride. If you can extend it even just one inch, you'll save 100-plus feet over a mile.

5. D. Crazy eights! That's right: You really can lose eight pounds over the course of a year just by taking one slice of bread out of your daily diet. Dan Benardot, PhD, suggests that "targeting unnecessary foods that you can remove from your diet" is one of the keys to long-term fat loss. He goes on to note that bread is not the only option for such great rewards: "One less beer a day can result in a 13-pound weight loss in a year."

Cory Sorensen (running): Cathy Charferton (weights)