

Want to get fit? GET ONLINE!

Always find an excuse not to exercise? Making use of the online community could make all the difference. Three former fitness phobes explain...

Type 'fitness blogs' into Google and the results are endless. Whether you want to know what it feels like to run a marathon, or even how to get over those 'first day at the gym' fears, there's a blog out there in which a real person is sharing their ongoing experience. So how does it help? We had a trawl and discovered how these highly motivated - and motivating - bloggers are helping other women get more active.



The fat girls' guide to running

BLOGGER Julie Creffield, 36, from London
toofattorun.co.uk

THE FAT GIRLS' GUIDE TO RUNNING launched in 2010 when Julie Creffield (aka 'Fatty') decided it was time to up her fitness game. She used blogging to keep her motivated and to chart her improvement. But what began as an open diary for friends and family to read has since attracted a much larger following. Today the blog is a go-to guide and virtual running club for plus-size runners - it has 15,000 followers and gets 10,000 unique hits each month. As well as Julie's candid account of her fitness experiences, there's advice on topics ranging from how to get started when you think you're 'too fat to run', to essential running gear and reaching your targets.

In Julie's words

After finishing a race in last place, I went home, had a bath and started to blog. I thought if I wrote down my thoughts it would encourage me to run more often and improve my speed.

I've always kept a diary, but I knew nothing about the fitness industry or blogging. At first I'd only get five hits for each post (usually people I knew). But when I wrote about running the 2012 London Marathon (which a doctor had told me I was too big to run), the blog really took off. I finished the race, by the way, and I didn't come last.

For the first couple of years I treated my blog as a bit on the side while working, but after the birth of my daughter in 2013, I decided to turn my blog into a full-time business. In June 2014, I secured a £1,500 business loan to pay for web design and merchandise, and turned the blog into a functioning website.

It keeps me fit

I realised from the outset that if I didn't run I had nothing to write about, so my blog motivates me to keep up my training. There's lots of information out there about

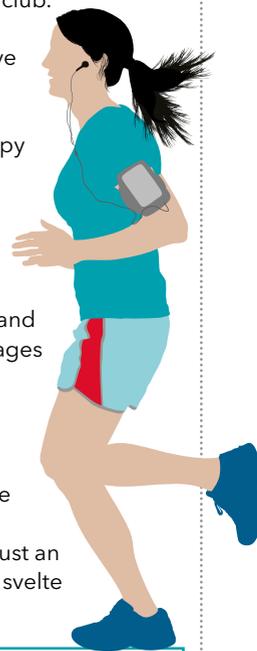
how to lose the pounds if you're overweight, but not how to get fit. I'm of the opinion that being active is far more important than shape. Through my blog, I aim to inspire people to run and get fit, regardless of their size.

My top tips

- Training with other runners will help to spur you on.
- If you're a woman, look for a female running club. Men tend to be more competitive about speed, whereas most women are happy to just run!

On a mission

I'm in talks with Sport England about using images in the media that portray different body shapes, to encourage more women to get active - it's not just an exercise for the svelte and glowing!



NUTRITIONIST AMANDA URSELL'S TIPS...

Be careful when exercising that you don't overcompensate with food or give yourself treats 'just because you've worked out' - especially if you want to lose weight. This is even more important if you have an otherwise sedentary lifestyle. For some people, exercise triggers hunger, so shedding the pounds can be harder, but work out what your body



needs. Make sure you get enough carbohydrates - to fuel your body for exercise you need to get around 50-60% of your energy from this food group.

For an energy-boosting breakfast, try our date and walnut porridge. Oats release energy slowly and steadily to help fuel you to the finish line. Find the recipe at healthyfood.co.uk.



Fitcetera

BLOGGER Georgina Spenceley, 28, from Essex
fitcetera.co.uk

THIS LIFESTYLE BLOG PUTS FUN AND FASHION into fitness, while providing handy information and advice on food, nutrition and the latest fitness trends. Georgina's enthusiastic account of her passion for CrossFit and running attracts 2,000 unique hits a month.

In Georgia's words

I began by writing a running blog for friends who were interested in reading about what I'd been up to. But running wasn't my only hobby - I was (and still am) into fitness, healthy eating and fashion, too. As none of my friends shared the same interests, I wanted to find 'someone' who did. Then one night while driving home from work, the idea of Fitcetera came to me - a website that was something like a magazine, combining my personal experiences with lots of information on fitness, food and fashion. And it had to be fun.

It keeps me fit

Fitcetera launched in 2012, and I try to post at least once a week (I work full time as a business analyst and am also a part-time sports massage therapist). Blogging has made me

accountable. I exercise five to six times a week: three 6am CrossFit sessions, one yoga class, and a run or two at the weekend. If I say I'm going to do something on my blog, I have to do it - if I don't, I've got to confess why.

I'm always honest - if I don't enjoy something, I say so. I got a lot of support when I dropped out of a Half Iron Man Triathlon because I was struggling with the training. Now I've found CrossFit, a varied strength and conditioning programme.

My focus is more on what my body can do, rather than how it looks. And readers get my message: we may not be our aesthetic ideal, but it's not a priority - enjoying training is.

My top tips

- Pick up weights, but do it safely to protect your back. You'll be surprised how liberating it is to lift something heavy.
- Look for a gym with good coaches to help you get results.

On a mission

I want to make good coaching accessible, so people get support and motivation, whatever their budget. For more information on CrossFit, visit crossfit.com.

NUTRITIONIST AMANDA URSELL'S TIPS...

Eat as soon as possible after exercising and within two hours to replenish your energy stores. It's vital to choose the right sorts of food. Aim for a mix of protein and carbohydrates: a banana smoothie made with low-fat milk is a good choice as it hydrates the body, provides protein for muscle repair and slow-release carbs for energy.

Other good post-workout snacks include a bowl of wholegrain cereal with low-fat milk, yogurt with a handful of nuts or seeds, or a wholemeal sandwich filled with egg, lean meat or tuna.

If it's a mealtime, make sure your dinner contains a balance of protein (such as lean meat, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, beans or tofu) and carbs (such as brown rice, wholewheat pasta, jacket potato, couscous or wholemeal bread). Good combos include chill with rice, turkey mince bolognese with wholewheat spaghetti, tofu stir-fry with brown rice, or a jacket potato topped with scrambled egg.



 Make a batch of our banana oat squares, then wrap up and pop in your gym bag for a portable post-workout snack. healthyfood.co.uk



SOPHIE CHARTS THE HIGHS AND LOWS of her cycling, running and climbing challenges. Her aim is to inspire others to try forms of exercise that will help them to feel fitter and exhilarated. Sophie's graphic accounts have netted her four big commercial sponsors, including Adidas and Oakley, as well as 30,000 followers on social media.

In Sophie's words

I've always kept a travel diary, but I started blogging just over two years ago - partly as a personal journal but partly so friends could keep track of my adventures. My blog soon became a platform for me to share what I do and love.

I used to work in business start-ups so I only had time to write one post a week. But my blog became the source of other work, such as professional writing, public speaking and modelling, so now I work on it full time.

Challenge Sophie

BLOGGER Sophie Radcliffe, 29, from Chamonix, France
challengesophie.com

It keeps me fit

Sharing what I enjoy has helped me take bigger and bigger risks. Before I started blogging, I couldn't have imagined doing half the things I've now done.

I'm honest about what I go through. It's not a case of read about my life - it's amazing. I share the downs, too. That way people can relate to me, and see that while these activities can be

NUTRITIONIST AMANDA URSELL'S TIPS...

'We can feel very hungry and tired when we've been active for several hours, but in fact what our bodies really need is iron. Make sure your diet includes iron-rich foods, such as lean red meat, oil-rich fish, nuts, seeds and beans. Dried apricots are a good pre- or post-exercise snack as they're a good source of iron. Make sure you stay well hydrated, too, to get the most from your workout.'

scary, they're also fun. Keeping fit doesn't have to mean doing sport or going to the gym. I want to encourage people to get muddy!

My top tips

- If going to the gym doesn't inspire you - don't go!
- Turn your journey to work into an adventure: Walk or cycle, and take different routes.
- Think about how to incorporate activity into your daily life: go for a walk and explore on your lunch break.

On a mission Brands are getting better at making outdoor kit for women, but there's still room for improvement. Not every girl loves wearing pink or purple.

 **Red meat is full of iron, and we've a tasty recipe for griddled beef open sandwiches on our website.**



GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

Our three featured bloggers favour Wordpress for publishing their posts, as it's free and user friendly. To set up your own blog, register at wordpress.com. The basic version is free, but you can upgrade to the bells-and-whistles version later

if you like (features include alternative designs and email support). There are tutorials to guide you through setting up your blog, but if you're confident using a smartphone or tablet you'll be posting in no time. So what are you waiting for?

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SPORTS NUTRITION, VISIT anitabean.co.uk/sports-nutrition/ OR READ *The Complete Guide to Sports Nutrition (7th edition)* by Anita Bean (Bloomsbury Sport, £18.99)