



# Mobile Fitness & Weight-loss Applications

By Julie DeJean Marks, MEd, LCES

It seems everywhere you go, you see people using their Smartphones in a variety of ways. The saying is true, **“There’s an ‘App’ for that!”** And, this holds true for exercise and fitness as well!

## Where to begin?

I’ve explored so many Smartphone applications (commonly called “apps”) that it made my head spin, only to find that I had not even put a dent in the number of apps that are available today!

There are applications for keeping food diaries and calorie counting, as well as exercise apps that act as personal trainers. These apps function as tools that allow you to set goals and track your progress, instruct you and monitor your activity. And, if that isn’t enough, there are actual people that you can connect with for support and motivation, either through a network of others with the same goals, or through the application organization.

Ranging from very simple to extremely detailed and costing anywhere from nothing (yes, there are free apps) to \$20 for a one time download or \$10/month, the old adage “you get what you pay for” definitely applies to these apps. Apps that do everything except lose the weight for you!

*DISCLAIMER: To develop an exercise program that best suits your needs, please consult with your physician. It is important to talk with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.*

## Useful Fitness Apps

The September 2009 issue of *Oprah Magazine* featured two fitness applications, one for the iPhone called *FitnessBuilder*, and one for the Blackberry phone called *FitDeck Mobile*. *FitnessBuilder* includes more than 2,000 exercises and custom routines just for women, like “Yoga for Weight-loss,” or for men, like “The Dark Knight,” if you want to look like Batman! You will find workouts tailored to your current location (i.e. the hotel you are staying in, a gym, an outdoor location or your own home) and also have the ability to create your own custom workout.

Because I often challenge my clients to purchase an inexpensive pedometer and build upon their average number of steps per day, I recently purchased a pedometer app for my iPhone called *iSteps Pedometer*. When I first tried it, I was delighted with it, as it seemed to accurately monitor my steps; however, I was quickly dissatisfied as soon as I put it in my pocket and it stopped working for no reason.

Once I went back and read the reviews, I began to trust the ratings. Now I don’t buy anything without checking the

ratings and comments. Even when the product has a five star rating, I still read the reviews to see if it sounds like it would be useful for me.

Also in my search, I came across *Walkmeter GPS Walking Stopwatch for Fitness and Weight-loss*. This app can map and store walking/exercise routes that you use regularly through the use of a GPS (your phone must have GPS feature) for use whenever you need it. The ability to track the time, location, distance, elevation and speed of your workouts really sounds interesting. You can see your progress on charts and graphs, as well as hear about your progress through the use of announcements which are heard automatically at certain times.

Another app that claims to be “the best” is *CalorieTracker* by [www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com). This app has all the features and appears to be very good. It claims to have 625,000 food and fitness items in its database. You can keep a food diary which provides not only the number of calories per item, but also the total fat, carbohydrates and proteins you consumed. This is very important if you had weight-loss surgery, but also important in other weight-loss programs, as not getting the right amount of nutrients can slow your metabolism and your progress. It allows you to enter your personal measurements to provide more accurate calorie expenditure during your exercise sessions, set goals and track your progress. You even get free access to an online program called *The Daily Plate* which is a Livestrong product. This app will cost you \$2.99 and with a four star rating, promises to be a good value.

Among the free apps, I found *Body Fitness – ULTIMATE Exercise Journal*, which boasts more than 320 exercises with detailed pictures and instructions and animated videos to guide you through each exercise. It is very user friendly and has every exercise you may need to reach your goal. You can track your weight by adding it into the calendar and you may add it several times a day if you like; however, it does not track any other measurements.

It will let you create and store your own exercise routines from the exercises provided, as well as log your exercise sessions. You may choose pre-designed programs based on your preferences and goals, such as stability ball exercises, abs with weights or abs with no weights, cardio or sculpted butt exercises. For all of its simplicity, it is still a very efficient app for its purpose.

#### **About the Author:**

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## What to Look for in a Fitness/Weight-loss App

Exploring all of the apps available today for the iPhone or Blackberry would take forever. The best way to find what you are looking for is to follow a few simple steps:

- Determine what features you want and will realistically keep track of during your weight-loss program.
- Perform a search with a couple of key words that describe what you are looking for, such as weight-loss, calorie counting or health and fitness.
- Select an app that looks interesting.
- Review the description, cost and rating.
- Read the reviews and consider how many reviews the rating is based on.

When checking out the rating, it is wise to consider how many reviews have been used in producing that rating. If only 35 ratings were used, the app may be new and not really tried and tested enough. On the other hand, 3,421 reviews may indicate a more accurate depiction of the app. Still, read some of the reviews, especially the low-rated reviews to find out if the complaints are things you can live with or without.

Measure what you are getting against the price you will pay as some apps may have more than you really want and come with a high price tag. You may even benefit from trying the free apps first to see if you find what you are looking for and get some experience using this type of app.

In most cases, you really do get what you pay for; however, that really depends on what you are looking for!



# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

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