

# Free fitness iPhone apps fail to meet American College of Sports Medicine exercise guidelines

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App	Overall Quality Score	Quality Sub-scores (points)		
		Aerobic	Resistance	Flexibility
Sworkit Lite Personal Workout Trainer App for Daily Circuit Training Workouts and Exercise Routines	9.01	3.92	4.11	0.98
The 7 Minute Workout by UOVO	5.39	2.53	2.86	0.00
StrongLifts 5x5	4.47	0.99	3.48	0.00
Running for Weight Loss	4.16	4.16	0.00	0.00
JEFIT Workout	4.08	0.47	3.51	0.10
FitnessBuilder	4.04	0.99	2.88	0.17
C25K® - 5K Trainer Free	3.67	3.67	0.00	0.00
Ultimate Fitness Free	3.53	0.00	3.53	0.00
Nike+ Training Club	3.11	1.14	1.92	0.05
BodySpace	2.56	0.00	2.31	0.25
Fitness Buddy Free	2.53	0.50	2.03	0.00
7 Minute Workout - Fitness for Women	2.54	1.13	1.41	0.00
The Johnson & Johnson Official 7 Minute Workout	2.44	1.22	1.22	0.00
Fitness Point	2.05	0.00	2.05	0.00
FitStar Personal Trainer	1.99	0.48	1.47	0.04
7 Minute Workout by Wahoo Fitness	1.72	0.00	1.72	0.00
Instant Abs trainer	1.64	0.00	1.64	0.00
Daily Workouts Free	1.56	0.05	1.44	0.07
Jillian Michaels Slim-Down	1.43	0.11	1.27	0.05
Simply Yoga Free	1.38	0.33	0.33	0.72
Belly Fat Workout Free	1.38	0.00	1.38	0.00
Daily Yoga	1.26	0.00	0.33	0.93
Cardio	0.66	0.33	0.33	0.00
Daily Butt Workout Free	0.55	0.00	0.55	0.00
Strava Running and Cycling	0.49	0.49	0.00	0.00
Workout Trainer	0.44	0.00	0.44	0.00
8Fit - Fitness at Home	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.00
Daily Ab Workout Free	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.00
Abs Workout	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.00
Runtastic Six Pack Abs Trainer, Exercises & Custom Workouts	0.33	0.00	0.33	0.00

Are you planning on ramping up your exercise regimen this summer? There may not be an app for that—at least not a reliable one.

UF Health researchers recently found that only one of 30 popular free fitness apps for iPhones meets the majority of guidelines for physical activity from the American College of Sports Medicine, the world's largest [sports medicine](#) and exercise science organization. The findings were published this month in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

When compared to the guidelines for [aerobic exercise](#), strength or resistance, and flexibility, the top-scoring app was the Sworkit Lite Personal Workout Trainer App with 9.01 out of a possible 14 points. Each app was scored across those three categories, examining to what extent they adhered to the specific American College of Sports Medicine guidelines, including parameters for safety, warm-ups, cool-downs, stretching, intensity, frequency and progression.

While more than half the apps included some of the recommendations for aerobic exercise and 90 percent met at least one criterion for strength and resistance, two-thirds of the apps did not meet any of the flexibility criteria.

"While apps have great potential to give more people access to workouts that could help them achieve a healthy weight and fitness level, we found that the vast majority of apps are not as safe as they could be and do not give users the type of well-rounded workouts known to be most effective," said François Modave, Ph.D., associate professor in the UF department of health outcomes and policy and lead author of the study.

Ultimately, only Sworkit Lite Personal Workout Trainer met more than half of the criteria. Three apps met more than half the criteria in the aerobic category: Sworkit Lite Personal Workout Trainer, C25K® – 5K Trainer Free and Running for Weight Loss. Four apps earned half the possible points in the strength or resistance category: Sworkit Lite Personal Workout Trainer, Ultimate Fitness Free, JEFIT Workout and StrongLifts 5X5. Ultimate Fitness Free was no longer available on the App Store at the time of this release. No app scored above 50 percent in the flexibility category.

"Several of the apps contained high-quality content in one of the three categories, but almost none of them had high-quality content in all of them, especially flexibility" said Heather Vincent, Ph.D., FACSM, assistant professor in the department of orthopaedics and rehabilitation in the UF College of Medicine. "This is a problem because flexibility is important for good exercise form, relaxation and cool-down."

In addition to not meeting the specific criterion for each category, 23 out of 30 apps did not provide an actual training plan, explain how to choose a workout or explain how to organize the workouts through the week. That makes it difficult, especially for beginners, to follow a safe and physiologically sound progression in their [exercise regimen](#).

"The issues with these apps place users at risk for injury because the apps fail to prepare them to take on the exercises, use proper techniques and address safety issues surrounding different types of exercise," said Modave. "Our hope is that this study, which is the first to explore what extent fitness apps are adhering to the ACSM Guidelines, starts a conversation about how to harness apps to give people high-quality, safe and effective workouts."

Provided by University of Florida

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