

Planning A Year of Fitness by Ginny Grupp  
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We are well into 2006. Is that New Year's resolution to get into better shape this year still lingering? You may be thinking, "How is it March already?" Don't write off your plans to begin an exercise program just because you haven't focused on it yet.. There's more to planning than just setting the ambiguous goal of "Getting fit in 2006."

**Step one: Set some specific goals.** Don't set too many of these, but try to narrow the field down to one or two very specific, attainable goals. The idea behind goal setting is not to come up with your ultimate fitness challenge and hope to get in shape for it some day. The idea is to give yourself something tangible to aim for. Think of setting goals as drawing the map to get you to your fitness dreams. For this example, let's say you would like to run a 5k race.

**Step two: Periodize your plan.** Do what to your plan? Periodize it. Simply put, this means take out your calendar and make a plan for your year. The plan will loosely include the following sections, "base-building", "training," "competition," "recovery." Periodizing your plan allows you to see the end of your training plan. It also allows you to escape the boredom of doing the same thing every day and helps you to avoid over training by working hard, and then working in slower, less intense training periods. This doesn't mean that once you have achieved your goal you can now return to old habits. It does mean that after you run your race or achieved your goal, you can turn down the intensity a bit.

The following is not a precise training plan, it's just information to give you a feel for periodization and what it can do for your workouts.

**We begin with "base-building."** Base-building is just what it sounds like. If we've been fairly sedentary, we cannot start out running 3 miles with no training (well, most of us can't). So, we begin by building a base of fitness. For this example, we may walk/run for 20 minutes or so. We steadily increase this effort over the course of 10 weeks. We do this by increasing running time while decreasing walking time. Once we can run consistently for 20 minutes, we extend that time bit by bit until we are comfortable with running for 3 miles three to five times per week.

**Then we transition into our "training" period.** This means working on our speed and strength. This period can last 12-20 weeks. Training days increase to 5-6 days per week. Intensity varies throughout this period, but our goal is to run the race well, so we run longer and harder in training so that on race day, 5k will seem like a walk in the park because we have worked harder in practice.

**Next is "competition".** We ease back on our training a bit...we spend a little less time running, we lower our mileage for two weeks prior to our event so that our bodies and



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our minds can recover from our gruelling “training” workouts. This only lasts about 2 weeks. Then we compete in our event.

**Finally, we have our “recovery” period.** During this time, we have completed our competition and while we do not want to lose everything we have just worked so hard for, we can ease back into a more regular routine. Mileage can increase slightly (not back up to “training” levels, but flattening out and returning to miles we put in during the early days of our base-building) This is also an excellent time to return to some of the activities we may have put off to allow ourselves more exclusive running time. By this time, it should be time to put those skis back on and start praying to the snow gods.