

Why some people who “go to the gym” fail to lose weight.

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With nearly [two thirds of the UK population classed as overweight or worse](#), a very common goal in the gym is to “lose weight”. It is February, and the New Year influx has mostly died away now, but loads of people who joined to “lose weight” have unfortunately failed to do so.

They are coming to the gym 3 times a week, their diet is “[pretty healthy](#)“...so what is going wrong?

Here is one common reason...

To lose weight you need to burn more calories than you consume. So you should be all about maximising your calorie burn. People often make a simple mistake:

Thinking about exercise and calorie burning only when they are in the gym.

Don't make this mistake and isolate and compartmentalise your life like that. Just as our bodies are single complex interacting systems and not just a “bunch of parts”...our lives are a single complex story, not just a “bunch of parts”.

Example

Let me give you an example of 2 hypothetical identical twins. They are *exactly* the same as each other. They have the same lives, same jobs etc. They only differ in their [Peak and Background Activity levels](#).

Person A

- Peak Activity – Train for 1 hour, 6 times every week.
- Background Activity – Because they train hard so often, they just relax and put their feet up the rest of their spare time.

Person B

- Peak Activity – Train for 1 hour, 3 times every week.
- Background Activity – Equal measures of sitting around and gentle walking about.

Remember, other than the above, these 2 people have *exactly* identical lives. So who is going to lose weight quicker?

The simple answer would be Person A, because they go to the gym twice as much as Person B! They must lose weight more easily!

So lets do some rough and ready maths to see if that is the case. First of all, we need to assume:

- There are 168 hours in every week ($24 \times 7 = 168$)
- They both sleep 8 hours a night, or 56 hours per week ($7 \times 8 = 56$)
- They both work sitting at a desk for 37 hours per week
- They both have 75 hours left in the week for training/leisure/sitting/walking etc ($168 - 56 - 37 = 75$)
- They both burn 60 calories per hour asleep
- They both burn 102 calories per hour in work
- They both burn 68 calories per hour when sitting
- They both burn 612 calories per hour when training
- They both burn 224 calories per hour when walking

If I plug all the above info into a spreadsheet and look at the numbers over 1 week, we get the following results...

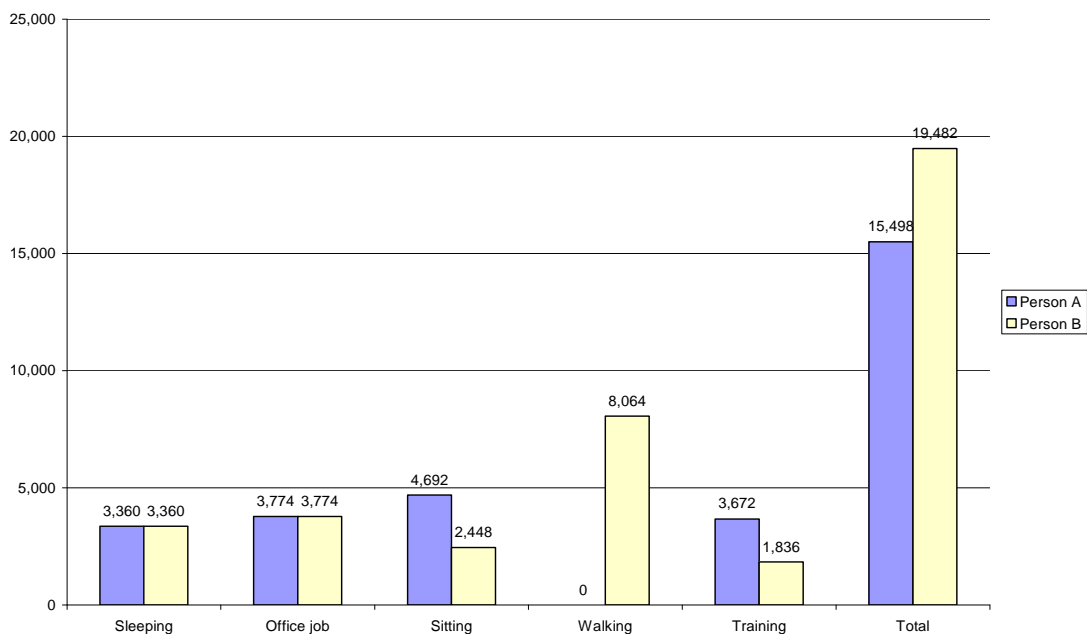


Figure 1 Calories burned over 1 week

(I know the above is not a very realistic example, but it demonstrates the point I want to make very well).

You can see that although Person A has a Peak Activity level twice that of Person B, they are not going to lose weight as quickly because their Background Activity level is so poor.

And this is the mistake made by many people. They think:

“I go to the gym regularly, so I don’t need to bother about anything else”.

For general health and fitness, going to the gym a couple of times a week won’t cut it.

You need to try to *live* and active life.

Our bodies evolved when we were still cavemen to deal with the following Background and Peak Activity levels:

- Background Activity – Walking miles every day, tracking animals, securing territory borders, gathering and preparing food and drink, making and repairing tools and clothes etc.
- Peak Activity – Hunting and killing animals most days, fighting for your life against rival tribes most days etc.

Our bodies are simply not designed to sit around at a desk/computer/TV all day. But this is the habit that most of us have fallen into. And this is why nearly 2 thirds of us are overweight or obese.

So the simple truth is, to improve your health, fitness and bodyweight, [change your behaviours and habits](#) and increase your Background Activity levels. It is very simple to do and there are millions of ways to do it including:

- Use your car *less than you do now*
- Park your car further away from your destination *than you do now*
- Avoid all lifts/escalators
- Sit down *less than you do now*. Get off your arse and walk about a bit every 10 minutes at least!
- Get a backpack and carry more/heavier loads when out shopping for your fresh fruit and veg
- Take a real pride in the fact that you physically *move* more than the people around you.

Put simply, all the above can be boiled down to a simple line:

“Always avoid the easy option”.

Live your life by this rule, and you will have the foundations of a healthy and fit body. And with the right foundations, you can build up to anything!