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## Frugal Fitness

**You've returned the cap and gown, sold back your books, sublet your apartment, and landed your first job. So why don't your clothes fit anymore?**

by Carrie Elizabeth

Sitting through the long and tedious commencement speeches, you no doubt heard a lot about striving to reach your goals and making the world a better place. But the one thing those final lectures failed to prepare you for was the unforeseen weight gain. Above the freshman fifteen, and beyond the poundage that those four (or five) years of binge drinking added, there is still more mass in your future. They are the extra inches I like to call the gradu-eight.

The gradu-eight are those post-graduation pounds that start accumulating the second you receive your diploma. By this time you may be either rocking out in your own place, or possibly living back with mom and dad. You've landed that job, or at least scored some more hours at your college gig. Either way, you have a little extra cash in your pocket, so your level of munchables has gone from the nightly mac 'n cheese, to something with a little more substance. And many of you will be spending upwards of nine hours a day in an office chair, all but motionless. In the end, calories plus inactivity equal bulk, and you, my friend, are now badly in need of gym!

Most private gyms, for a fee of between \$200-1000, grant you complete one-year (or longer) access to their facilities and aerobic classes. And even if this doesn't seem like a lot of money, consider the debt factor: soon the grace period on your student loans will end, your little beater

car may succumb to time and collegiate abuse and before you know it, the landlord will be asking for next month's rent.

But don't fret. Before you file for an overweight disability, check out some budget bodybuilding tips that are a sure-fire way to trim yourself, not your wallet.

## Gym Genius

If you can't live without spinning classes and muscle heads, then the gym is where you belong. Try cutting your costs with a few of the following:

- Find out if your local gyms offer discounts to recent college graduates.
- Check newspaper flyers and mailings for membership coupons.
- Sign up during peak sale periods, which usually occur after the holidays, or just before summer.
- Some health insurance companies offer rebates for a specific amount spent on yearly memberships.
- Peruse the classifieds. People who are moving out of state, or no longer have time to work out, often sell their memberships at a discounted rate (and you won't be stuck with a one-year commitment).
- When all else fails -- beg! It can't hurt to do a little groveling if it means saving a little cash.

## Home Health

Who needs a gym when you can turn your apartment/house into a mini-workout zone? It's cheap, convenient, and it doesn't matter what you look like.

- Use your canned goods as weights. You'll be a lean mean baked bean-lifting machine.
- Who needs automatic stair-steppers or stackable plastic steps when you have the real McCoy right in your home? If you live in a one level with no stairs, pile up some of those huge textbooks that you couldn't resell, and put them to good use for once.
- Got rope? Why not jump it? It's a great total body workout and revenge tool if you live above noisy neighbors.
- Grab a chair -- use the back for balance during leg lifts; use the arms to create terrific triceps; and use the seat to put you feet up on while you lay back for ab and booty crunches.
- Can't bear to tear yourself away from the tube? Try pairing up your favorite show with some good ol' sit-ups and push-ups.

## Community Calorie Burning

- Recreation centers and local businesses offer classes for people who enjoy a good aerobic workout for not a lot of dough.
- Many local park districts have fitness centers that are either free or very cheap. They aren't often outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment, but your body won't know the difference.
- Take a stroll or a jog through your local park or forest preserve.
- When high schools are out for students, they are sometimes open to the public. Call the local school district to find out if their facilities are available for use.

And if none of these work for you, purchase some celery. It's the only snack I know of where you can actually burn more calories chewing than you take in during digestion. Now that's some good eats.

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