

Live better this year

Technology helps you achieve fitness goals

Happy New Year! It's time to reflect on the year just past and resolve to make the coming year better.

I don't want to dwell too much on 2016. It wasn't the best year we've ever had. And I'm not big on making resolutions. It's not that I don't think I need improving — many have told me I do — but it is a good idea to assess your life from time to time to see where you can do better.



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Getting in shape or losing weight is probably the most common New Year's resolution people make. I've been a gym rat for decades, and I see it every year. New faces fill up the gym every January, and most of them are gone by Valentine's Day.

Taking better care of yourself is a worthy goal but a notoriously difficult one to achieve. It's such a common challenge that entire industries — diet books, fitness videos, aerobics classes, gyms, exercise equipment, diet supplements, etc. — have sprung up to cater to it.

Of course the technology industry wants a piece of the pie. There are countless electronic devices, websites and apps devoted to measuring, tracking, logging and otherwise helping you achieve your fitness goals.

At the end of last year, I tried the **MyFitnessPal.com** website and app to track my activity and caloric intake. The site and app, run by the Under Armour clothing company, are free, but you need to register to use them.

When you sign up, you create a profile that includes your weight,

height, gender and age. You then choose the weight you would like to achieve. Finally, you choose the pace that you want to achieve it at; for instance, lose 1 pound a week.

The site calculates what your daily calorie intake should be to meet your goal. As you go about your daily activities, you record what you eat for each meal or snack. You also log any exercise you do. The site keeps a running tally of the calories you're consuming and burning, and it compares them to your daily goal. You can tell at a glance if you're working toward your goal or against it.

Looking at just daily goals can be self-defeating because some days offer more temptation than others. The site also lets you look at reports covering longer periods, such as a week, month, quarter or year. This way you can see if your overall trend is in the right direction.

MyFitnessPal has extensive databases of foods and activities to provide accurate counts of calories consumed and burned. You also can enter your own recipes for calorie counts. An online community lets you share your success — or misery — and there's a blog with fitness tips and articles.

Apps like this are useful because they make you aware of what you're doing. The act of logging what you eat makes you think twice about having another cookie.

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