



# Fitness for Geeks: Real Science, Great Nutrition, and Good Health

*Bruce W. Perry*

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## **Fitness for Geeks: Real Science, Great Nutrition, and Good Health** Bruce W. Perry

If you're interested in how things work, this guide will help you experiment with one crucial system you usually ignore—your body and its health. Long hours focusing on code or circuits tends to stifle notions of nutrition, but with this educational and highly useful book you can approach fitness through science, whether it's investigating your ancestral health or using the latest self-tracking apps and gear.

Tune into components of your health through discussions on food, exercise, sleep, hormesis, and other issues—as well as interviews with various scientists and athletes—and discover healthy ways to tinker with your lifestyle.

Learn to live in the modern digital world and still be physically vibrant  
Examine apps and widgets for self-tracking various fitness issues  
Zero in on carbs, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals  
Find and choose food, and learn when to eat and when to fast  
Reboot your system through movement in the outside world  
Select from more than a dozen techniques for your gym workout  
Fuel fitness by focusing on the science of nutrition and supplements  
Apply lifestyle hacks, such as high-intensity exercise and good stress

## **Fitness for Geeks: Real Science, Great Nutrition, and Good Health Details**

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**Bruce W. Perry**

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# **From Reader Review Fitness for Geeks: Real Science, Great Nutrition, and Good Health for online ebook**

## **Mark says**

If you are looking for a book which presents a systematic model for fitness that is backed by well integrated science, you will be disappointed. Likewise, if you are looking from a book to give you a simple plan to follow, you will be disappointed. This book does cite a number of science studies, and has some broad organizing principles, but nothing I would bet my life on. We still don't really understand a lot about how our bodies work, they are extremely complex systems, so I shouldn't be surprised that this book fell short of my hopes. I have observed contradictory papers on nutrition and exercise in top peer reviewed journals within a few years of each other. Rather than offering a systematic in integrated model with a clear blueprint for an action plan, this book is more like highlights of what you would find visiting some of the better paleo diet and the quantify self movement websites. So if you are looking for a book to give you numerous ideas, techniques, and tools to consider, this would be a valuable book.

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## **Sabin says**

Nice intro on fitness science, complete with resources for further documentation and pointing out some controversies. Common-sense advice for the most part and basic coverage of nutrition data, ways to keep track of your progress, types of exercise and the benefits of different training regimens.

Then it goes into the paleo-diet and intermittent fasting and calorie restriction and stuff which sound either too expensive, time-consuming or more like torture to me than healthy living. I wish there was more grounding and less advocating.

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## **Ann Dulhanty says**

Really a 3.5/5. Some interesting information, I like the general philosophy that our bodies are optimized for a different lifestyle than the one we are now leading. Science seems accurate but didn't go far enough at times. For example, the section about various stages of sleep, along with the apps available to track them, needed more explanation on the relevance. I enjoyed the overview of the various apps, but found the diagrams too small to read (I got the paper version of the book). Also, the text refers to various coloured sections in some figures, which are all in black and white. Well written, an enjoyable read overall.

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## **Nicholas Litzow says**

Some good and useful ideas but overall lacking in scientific rigor. I would have preferred a narrower scope with more thorough research, less anecdotal information and a more formal style.

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## **Craig says**

This is a very good book, that wasn't what I wanted or expected. I was looking for some good information on exercises; which it had, and even had some app and website suggestions.

It also has a LOT of detailed information on everything about fitness, from nutrition to sleep. While I didn't know all the details, I knew enough for what I want (and what I am, as yet, unwilling to change).

If you are a geek, and want good, detailed information on everything about fitness, this book has that for you.

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## **Shawn says**

Having thoroughly enjoyed *Cooking for Geeks* (which I highly recommend), when I saw that a similarly novel approach to fitness was available I was all on board to enjoy this one as well. And...enjoy it I did. Bruce Perry's approach in *Fitness for Geeks* is a comprehensive and quirky walk through a new way of imagining fitness. As the author quickly points out, things such as fitness, diets, etc are ejected from the discussion — not for lack of relevance but simply because they connote some popular distractions from the geeky approach proposed. The approach is unique...get into the mindset of the 'geek' (not the circus type ) and look at a different sort of approach to fitness and well-being. It is probably best summed up in the adage identified early on: if one is aware that they are observed or that the metrics are being compiled one intrinsically tends towards doing that little bit more, to keeping things within the bounds, or the like. It's a bit of a different approach indeed and for the geek in me I appreciated the new and novel ways that the author introduces to looking at taking care of self. It's not just about the gadgets (of which there are many great ones recommended) but about a certain holistic approach that brings together a science and process.

This approach covers a wonderfully diverse series of topics and it's not that the standard aspects of fitness that you would find elsewhere are dismissed — quite to the opposite, they are brought together — the holistic approach as referenced — to appreciate how all pieces fit together. The arc of the book is not linear. I had a sense that you could jump in at any point and stay with the section and gain much as well. I did work through the book as a whole and enjoyed it immensely. The author has a great light and lyrical style. This is probably rather unique in itself in the fitness area as things tend towards being rather didactic and perceived as so. It is the fun of engaging with this topic from this unique way that flavors the book. There are tidbits of things for everyone in this book and I am not quite sure who I would see it directed towards. I would recommend it to all and think that anyone that can approach fitness with a fresh and open mind will appreciate it. It is not trying to provide a programme by way of note, it's more about planting thoughtful ideas in the mind that may take hold and inform your own approach to fitness and well-being. As the author states, 'this is a book about fitness and nutrition for the independent of spirit and irrepressibly curious.' I heartily agree.

A greatly enjoyable read. Highly recommended!

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## **Brian Glass says**

This book is a nice overview of present views on health and fitness with a bent toward geeks. The trouble with writing a book of this nature, is that the information is out of date within a year or two. The author gives a nice overview of several fitness tracking sites and devices, but also covers trending topics like intermittent

fasting. It will be obsolete within another couple years unless updated, but is worth reading as a way of keeping one's finger on the pulse of fitness culture. It is not exclusively for geeks, but caters to data nerds and the like.

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### **Hunter R. says**

Have two words for this book: Horse shit!

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### **Lauren says**

There were some really great sections in this book. I particularly enjoyed the detailed explanations and the nutrition science sections (even showing what macronutrient molecules look like). The strength of the book also comes from the quality sidebars that share interviews with medical and sports professionals , or share recent research findings. I found this particularly helpful in the 'intermittent fasting' section and in interval training section regarding Tabatas, etc. I also liked the Outdoors chapter that mentioned many of the metaphysical benefits to outdoor fitness.

Downside and reason for 3 stars - which is more like 3.5 stars - were that I felt this is another book advocating Paleo diet. While I am in full favor of eating clean whole foods, I think it can be done without going 'primal'. It seems to be en vogue to promote Paleo in every fitness book published in the last year...

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### **Craig Maloney says**

I tried to like this book.

About three chapters in, I decided this book wasn't for me. From indirectly talking about people's auras after working out, to indirectly recommending paleo diets, this book just hit my woo-woo trigger one too many times. I enjoyed the discussion about different sites for tracking fitness, but when push came to shove about nutrition and such, I felt like I was spending more time on the web trying to verify every little piece of information in this book. I felt like I was reading the equivalent of an infomercial for something that will be thoroughly debunked in ten years.

I was really hoping this book would be something I could enjoy reading without having to be too critical, but this book isn't it.

(Note: I received a promotional copy of this book from the publisher, of whom I have enjoyed just about every other book they've published).

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### **Mariano says**

It was a nice, straightforward, easy reading, with useful, practical information, and lots of references to websites and/or other books to get more details about the covered topics.

As for the "geek" part, I think is a bit overrated, and quite a few of the "for geeks" tips & tricks might seem obvious and even kind of silly if you are a computer geek (but maybe for other geeks are ok?).

I picked this book with a lot of reservations, because I was afraid of it trying to "sell" some silver bullet or magic method. Fortunately it doesn't. It's NOT a "do this" book. It just presents several fitness-related topics with some background and tools and small interviews with athletes or scientists. It's up to you to decide what's better for you, and the book kind of encourages you to try different things and experiment a bit. And that's nice.

I enjoyed all the information about nutrition the best.

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## **John Constable says**

I bought this pretty much the day it came out, if memory serves; I think there was an O'Reilly 'deal of the day', or bundle, or some-such, and I'd been meaning to get it anyway. I got about a couple of chapters in and the Hugo Voters Packet descended, and I didn't read much else for a while, but went back to it for something more factual every now and again. Once The Hugo season was over, I got back into it in earnest.

Initially it got off to a good start, with a round-up of some healthy lifestyles, gadgets and so forth, and it was here I was convinced to get a fitbit, and then I hit the chapter on Nutrition.

Nutrition is important, and can underlie a lot of fitness, health and so on, but it was all detail, no relevance. It took almost the rest of the book before nutrition reared its head again, and this time it came with practical advice; it would have been better structured, IMHO, to get the reader interested in all the reasons why they need to monitor their nutrition before wading through fifty pages or so of quasi organic chemistry. That being said, I'm likely to go back to it now that I'm a few months in, and review it, and I suspect it will be of more use on repeated readings. I know the book is in the '..for geeks' series, but this felt like mindless, obsessive trivia rather than useful information. Again, to reiterate, it came good in the end, but it very nearly caused me to give up altogether.

The book definitely hits its stride in the last third of the text; I was genuinely sad when I finished it because I didn't have more to read. It's also done a good job in establishing the fundamentals – I've got a lot to think about, and a lot of places to start looking. I've incorporated a lot of his suggestions into my own regime – I've even tried Tabata Sprints (and as a consequence I now understand more when an athlete says they exercised until they nearly threw up!).

If I have criticisms (other than the nutrition section), it would be around little emphasis on home rolled tools to monitor assorted health/fitness aspects, tie-ing the assorted websites together, open source tools to monitor the devices/get your own data out and so forth, and a lack of physiological information; if he can go on at length on nutrition, surely a section on the muscles and skeleton of the body is worth a mention – my personal biology is poor, so a guide to the assorted muscles, stretches for each and so forth would have been a useful addition and, the more I think of it, a glaring admission.

Well worth the money I paid though, and I'd definitely recommend, although I suspect it's for people already convinced of the need for exercise and health, rather than a clarion call!

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## Susan Visser says

I'm glad I read the book, but it could have been so much better! Here are some things I think could have been improved:

- 1) Nitpick, but it makes a difference: be consistent with your use of measurements. The book was all over the map... metric, imperial, and even really old fashion (pints??). Being from Canada we are well versed in both major measurement systems, but the way most authors handle it is they put one unit in parenthesis.
- 2) Who is the audience? You had me fooled at the beginning. I really thought the book was aimed at IT people who are currently lacking in fitness knowledge and practice. I'm an IT person and very active. I found most of the book WAY beyond anything I'd ever do. I think most of the book is aimed at those who are already extremely active and knowledgeable in nutrition.
- 3) There wasn't a compelling reason to do many of the things mentioned in the book. Fasting? Really? I can't imagine doing so... and wasn't convinced it was a good thing to try unless I had cancer or something. The same for extreme exercise. Reduce my body fat to 5%? Not in my lifetime. I'm not sure why anyone would want to do this... and if they did... how could they find the time.
- 4) Chapters seem out of order... or written by different people. Some of the chapters were really good... and convincing. Then there are the chapters that dive deep into a topic with little leading. Chapters 3 & 4 were too much based on science rather than practice. A sample menu plan may have helped... not sure. I had the biggest problem with chapters 6 & 7. Chapters 5 & 8 seemed to be leading in a natural way, but 6 & 7 were deep dives into the world of extreme exercisers and eaters. Not me, and certainly not a currently inactive IT person.

Here are the notes I kept as I was reading the book:

Just finished the introduction. I like the author and his writing style. The topics in the book seem well thought out and I think I'll enjoy reading the book cover to cover. I've already been talking about it to friends, and now they want to read it as well.

Chapter 1 started with a stereotypical view of a tech person's start to the day. Lack of sleep, commute to the office, elevator, sitting, eating crap food, home to the couch, repeat. It is stereotypical, but unfortunately there are many people who follow this lifestyle.

The rest of the chapter takes readers through the evolution of mankind from caveman days through the agricultural revolution to modern day lifestyle. In that time, our food and exercise habits have changed dramatically, but our DNA has barely changed.

The end of the chapter has two really great sections. First, a stereotypical way we SHOULD be spending our day. Waking up naturally, eating healthy breakfast, cycling to train station, standing on train, walking short distance from train station to work, taking the elevator, eating well, going outside for walks occasionally, standing at your workstation. All pretty much doable!

And lastly, he interviews a former extreme athlete who was a wreck at 29 who transformed his life by changing his eating and exercise habits.

Chapter 2 gives a description of various exercise and food tracking devices or programs. By tracking exercise, you are typically motivated to do more. By tracking what you eat, you typically eat better and lose weight (if that's what you're trying to do). I track, but learned about a few new tools that I'm trying as a result of reading this chapter.

Chapter 3 was pretty tough going. It was biology lesson on carbs, fats, and protein. Good stuff to know, but more science than practical information.

Chapter 4 went into details about vitamins and minerals. Quite a bit was pretty technical, but was very understandable.

Chapter 5 is about where to find food... recommendation: farmer's markets. Advice also given for how to navigate a grocery store in order to avoid being tempted to buy non-food.

Chapter 6 and 7 were tough for me. These two chapters seem to be written for people who are rather extreme both in eating and exercise habits. First there is a discussion about fasting. I've had to fast briefly for blood tests or medical procedures and I'm not a fan. In fact, I find fasting to be quite stressful for me. The author doesn't give any compelling reasons why you'd want to fast, but at one point says you'll want to try fasting. I'm not convinced, but did learn something interesting. There is something called "intermittent fasting" meaning that you can fast for 12 - 16 hours. I do the 12 hour fasting fairly often because I rarely eat after dinner which is normally 6 pm. I do eat breakfast and it can be 8 during the week and later on the weekends. So, I'm fasting, right?

Chapter 7 is about extreme exercise and left me wondering what the goal of the book is. I'm active and see exercise as a way to have fun, stay fit, look good, and feel good. I don't have a desire to run marathons or reduce my body fat to 5%. Sometimes it feels like the author believes in exercise instead of work and to have body fat down to 0.

I've lent the book to someone who I think fits the target audience better than I do and am looking forward to his comments.

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## **Rod Hilton says**

Fitness for Geeks is a cool idea, an O'Reilly book, targeted at geeks, all about staying healthy. As a geek who has lost 100 pounds in the last few years and who wants to lose 40 more, this was the perfect book for me. Or so I thought.

The book is actually very disappointing. Despite clearly being targeted at geeks (it even includes a number of detailed references to programming), it's unsatisfying. A chapter on nutrients goes into extremely "geeky" detail about the chemical makeup of various foodstuffs, but none of it has any apparent practical applications - not much in the way of "do this, do that" kind of advice, just a bunch of "isn't that neat?!" facts.

It also contains a chapter, and many sections within later chapters, referencing available tools and web sites you can "geek out" on, or use to collect statistics and measurements. I understand where this comes from, my ability to closely monitor and study things mathematically was instrumental in my weight loss, but such material inherently dates the book - it's less than a year old, but already many of the tools mentioned have been supplanted by better ones. Material like that needs to be current, which means it's better suited for a blog



post than a printed book.

"Fitness for Geeks" is also full of an awful lot of woo. Part of my geeky nature is my tendency to be skeptical, so a lot of the pseudoscience about the Paleo diet (it has its benefits but it's got a LOT of problems) and the usual "buy only from local farmer's markets and whole foods" crap I found quite irritating. It's one thing to make these kinds of suggestions, but to assert their factual superiority with so little supporting scientific evidence is another matter, and it set my skeptic alarm bells ringing.

Good chapters on exercise routines, decent chapters on food, and a handful of good stuff on sleep were in the book, but were largely surrounded by filler that couldn't be turned into actionable tasks. The book left me wanting much, much more detail in terms of actual things I could do. How does a book like this not include some kind of FAQ with questions like "I've plateaued, what can I do?" or "What are some good snacks for the middle of the day?" How does the exercise section not include suggestions for alternatives to certain exercises for gyms that lack the equipment or for people with common injuries?

One chapter brings up intermittent fasting, but barely goes into any detail about it at all. Why even bring it up if all usable information about it is behind a Google-wall?

The book is also annoyingly written, with constant asides and inline data boxes so numerous that they actually occasionally make it difficult to just read the normal book part of the book. Speaking of which, DO NOT GET THE KINDLE VERSION. The constant formatting changes and layout adjustments make the Kindle version of the book literally unreadable - I had to re-purchase the book on O'Reilly's site to get a PDF version.

Overall, not that great, and inferior to spending a day or a couple lunch breaks Googling around. I wouldn't really recommend it, people who are looking to get healthy if they are not currently will find it sorely lacking in useful information (in favor of pointless factoids), and those who have adopted a healthy lifestyle will find it largely uninformative.

Great idea, weak execution. Perhaps a second edition is in order.

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## **Jessica says**

I got this book for my husband, thinking that he would enjoy it as a geek. I imagined it would clearly lay out the science behind diet and exercise principles in a scientific manner, leaving out the photos of musclebound dudes that I'd imagine would turn off a geek from other fitness books.

What was I not expecting? A thinly veiled piece of Paleo diet propaganda. When I say veiled, I only mean that it was not mentioned on the front or back covers. I'm not saying paleo doesn't work for some people, but I don't appreciate it being described in such smug scientific terms, when the science behind the diet is in fact not as solid as it might appear. Occasionally the author will ask an actual dietitian questions in a sidebar, often including "what do you think of Paleo?" as the final question. It doesn't present options other than paleo, and offers more dubious advice (please note: chocolate is not actually physically addictive. You may have an emotional need for it, but your body does not suffer withdrawal if you stop. Don't compare it to coffee, it is not the same!)

Although called "Fitness for geeks," the diet portion takes up the majority of the book. When we finally get

to fitness the info is cursory at best, and (no surprise) CrossFit is pushed (actually, I don't mind CrossFit, but it's not useful in a book like this - and it's totally expected from the paleo leanings in the beginning.)

At this point it became clear to me that while called "Fitness for Geeks," what it meant was "Fitness for geeks who are also dudes." There are exactly 3 photos of a woman in this section. In all three she is demonstrated using weight machines (except one where she has tiny dumbbells and does hammer curls). The male demonstrator, meanwhile, shows exercises such as back squats with a barbell. I know a fair bit about fitness - I'm geeky and also a weight lifting enthusiast, and one of the most damaging things to women is this concept that they musn't use heavy free weights. Of course, all the text in the book is aimed at men (gee, I wonder why there aren't more lady geeks - maybe we are all bad at math? Or maybe we sense that we are automatically excluded, even from pandering pieces of poop like this book.)

The info on tracking is very detailed, far beyond what I think a beginner geek would care about. Overall the book is poorly organized, and I cannot recommend it. There are many better books on diet and fitness to be found, and they all come without the side helping of condescension.

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