

# FITNESS 50 COSPLAY STARTER KIT

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*By Nick Iandolo — Over 50 Cosplayer, And Proud Of It*

*It is a disgrace to grow old through sheer carelessness before seeing what manner of man you may become by developing your bodily strength and beauty to their highest limit.*

~ Socrates

*Train the body, and the mind will follow.*

~ Shaolin Master Kan

## Table of Contents

<b>COSPLAYERS ASSEMBLE!</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ORIGIN STORY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SUPERHERO TRAINING</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Getting Over Your Inertia</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Upper Body</b>	<b>7</b>
Warm-up – 3 Minutes	7
Workout – 20 Minutes	7
Cool-down – 3 minutes	8
<b>Core</b>	<b>8</b>
Warm-up – 3 Minutes	9
Workout – 20 Minutes	9
Cool-down – 3 Minutes	9
<b>Lower Body</b>	<b>9</b>
Warm-up – 3 Minutes	10
Workout – 20 Minutes	10
Cool-down – 3 Minutes	10
<b>Tips</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>EAT LIKE HULK</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>INFINITY STONES OF FITNESS!</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Advanced Bodyweight Training</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Weight Lifting</b>	<b>14</b>

<b>Pirate Fitness, A.K.A. Strongman Workouts</b>	<b>14</b>
Battle Rope Workouts	14
Brutal Tire Workouts	14
Kickboxing/Boxing	15
Plyometrics	15
<b>Yoga</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>AVOIDING INJURY</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Exercise Regularly</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Spot Yourself</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Go Slow, Take Your Time</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Set Small Fitness Goals</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Take Time To Recover</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>EXCELSIOR!</b>	<b>19</b>

## Cosplayers Assemble!

So, you've decided to steal cable...uh, not that's not right, that's from The Simpsons. Okay, let me start again. So, you've decided to sell real estate and retire to a Caribbean Island, sitting on a beach all day drinking mango margaritas! No, that's not it either but I like the idea!

Okay, so you've decided to start getting back in shape. Also, you're over 50 or pushing 50. You may have felt that your best body days are over; that you're too old to whip that creaky aged body back to a youthful form.

BS!

Your best body days are ahead of you!

In fact, when you commit and push yourself, you will have a body worthy of a superhero actor!

That's what *Fitness 50 Cosplay* is all about.

I am a **proud cosplayer**. I love going to comic cons and dressing up as the *X-Men's Wolverine*, the *Justice League's Batman*, the *Avengers' Captain America*, and the *Guardians of the Galaxy's Star Lord*!

Despite the different comic book and cinematic universes where these character come from, they all have one thing in common: they are all in shape!

I've been to a million comic cons and one of the things that kind of bothers me is seeing guys portraying these svelte superheroes while being totally out of shape. Guys who can physically get into shape. Not body-shaming here, just an opinion.

Don't get me wrong, not everyone can have Chris Pratt's, Chris Hemsworth's, and Chris Evan's bodies. In fact, those aren't even real for them.

Hugh Jackman will be the first to tell you that it is a brutal process getting jacked up to play Wolverine—and after 17 years of it, he had enough. He's thin as a rail now.

Even Gal Gadot has to bust her hump in the gym for hours a day months at a time to pump up to play Wonder Woman. Not every woman has that kind of time or money to do that.

So I'm not talking about that kind of superhero/superheroine actor body physique/figure. Which is not sustainable anyway!

No, what I'm talking about is way more reasonable.

I'm talking about tightening and toning up the waistline, biceps, and thighs. I'm talking about building a strong and healthy heart without hours of useless running and cardio. I'm talking about building stabilizer muscles that will greatly improve your posture so you look strong and confident—and feel confident as well.

Getting into shape to be a superhero cosplayer is not about starring in a Hollywood tent pole blockbuster. It's about looking good for your body type, and feeling good about yourself without pain, guilt, insecurity, or injury at any age—especially for us middle-agers!

That's what I'm talking about.

So where to begin?

## **Origin Story**

Well, let's start with me. I've always had a love-hate relationship with exercise, diet, and fitness. I pretty much squandered my 20s fitness-wise, and a good deal of my 30s was a mad dash to play fitness catch-up to attract a female of my species!

In fact, when I met the woman I eventually married, she was in killer shape so I joined a gym. I told the guy at the registration desk that my new girlfriend is a "real looker" so that's why I was there. He replied with, "I've heard that before!"

Anyway, between work, marriage, and children, fitness seems to go by the wayside. Until one day I got sick.

First let me say that I was actually on a fitness track since 2012—my very first San Diego Comic-Con. Some time before that (maybe 2010/2011) I got the flu and lost like 10+ pounds. One day when I was feeling better, I looked in the mirror and saw a guy in there that I hadn't seen in years.

I decided to keep up the weight loss.

Like everyone else I got on the Internet and looked up info on diet and exercise.

At that point, I also discovered some great fitness apps like *My Fitness Pal*.

And then one day, I walked into a bookstore and saw *Mark Lauren's You Are Your Own Gym*. Long story short, I fell in love with the idea of bodyweight training: no gym, no fees, almost no equipment, no massive amounts of time required, and no excuses!

I got the eBook version of his book and the app for my iPhone/iPad (there's an Android version as well).

The app is really all you need. But I'll get more into detail about Mark Lauren's programs and the app later, plus other great fitness apps.

So for years I went hard off and on with this program—going to comic cons, cosplaying, and even producing/hosting a comic/cosplay/sci-fi/fantasy web show.

Then during an off time, I got some kind of fluke viral infection on Thanksgiving 2015. I was so sick that in the middle of Thanksgiving dinner I told my wife that I needed to go to a hospital right then and there!

After some tests (including a CAT scan) they determined that I had Pericarditis with Pericardial Effusion—in other words, excessive fluid around my heart. Which was why I couldn't breathe!

Anyway, they drained the fluid (in the most god-awful painful procedure ever) and then it took months of medication and doctor's visits to recover.

The final visit with my cardiologist went something like this, "You can either exercise and diet, or I have a nice assortment of medications you can take for the rest of your life." I chose the former!

And that's where I am now.

I will never, never, never allow myself to slide back into un-fitness! I can't afford that in my life. And neither can my family. I have no choice.

So I might as well enjoy my new fitness lifestyle and cosplay as a superhero!

And I've been doing it ever since...

## Superhero Training

Okay, you've got enough background on how I became the vigilante crime fighter that super-villains fear! LOL! Now let's talk about you.

Every superhero trains.

*Batman* did his ninja training in Far East. *Wonder Woman* did her training on the mystical Amazon island of Themyscira. *Captain America* did his at the US Army's Camp Lehigh. And *Star Lord* did his training with The Ravagers under Yondu Undonta's instruction.

Yes, there are superheroes that do not train, whose powers were simply given to them and they're off but that's not you or Bruce Wayne.

So let's get started with your superhero cosplay training.

## Getting Over Your Inertia

Here's what I like to say to friends and family on Facebook when it comes to fitness.

### **Any movement is better than no movement at all!**

That's the motto I live by now. Yes, there are times when I absolutely positively do not want to work out—especially if I had it in my mind to do a huge workout.

So I do a small one instead.

Then I'm back in the mindset to bang out the big one next time.

So what do you do first?

### **Walk! Don't Run!**

Yeah, start walking 10, 15, maybe 20 minutes a day to get warmed up. Do this for a week or two just to get the old juices flowing.

During this time, you'll start to also build your own personal **Batcave**, which will get you psyched for working out.

Here's what you'll need:

- A cheap exercise mat. You can get one from any discount store for under \$10 or less. Cheap here is the name of the game!
- A cheap pair of exercise gloves. Not for lifting weights (that comes way, way later) but for protecting your hands while doing the exercises.
- Light and comfortable workout shorts and t-shirt. I'm so old-school that I use gym shorts and a t-shirt for my workouts!
- A cheap/no-cost water bottle. I don't care where you get it from, even the recycle bin (yuck!) just make sure you have water. Use a plastic cup if you have to.
- A pair of cross-training sneakers. You probably already have these.
- A pull-up bar. Yes, you will need something that you can pull up on—preferably a real pull-up bar but any thing will do. For example: a well-secured pipe in the basement, a bar-like structure at a kid's jungle gym on a playground, a level tree branch, or easiest of all a door. Yes, a door! You can use a towel to wedge in between the door and the jamb to keep it open and another towel over the top so you can grab on to it. They're called *door pull-ups*. Easy-peasy-lemon-squeezy. Of course, you can spend \$20 and get a cheap over the doorjamb pull-up bar—I had one for years before I got my professional grade bar attached to a wooden girder in my basement. But you are way, way far from that right now. You'll get there...one step at a time.
- A cheap HIIT timer app for you cell phone. I recommend *Seconds Pro* by Runloop. They have a free version and a simplified timer app as well (and those are probably fine for your purposes) but the pro version is only \$4—totally worth it. And I know that you have a smartphone. If not, then get a stopwatch, or even just count the seconds if need be.
- If you can afford it, get a fitness tracker with a heart rate monitor like a *Fitbit*.

And that's all you need it to get started.

Down the road, there will be more pieces for your home gym and more apps to use. But for now, all you need is to get moving with as little cost and time as possible.

So next we'll be getting into the specific workouts that will get you started on your kicking cosplay body.

You'll do the following program divided into three *body zones*: **Upper Body, Core, Legs**. These can be broken down further but for now let's keep it simple.

You will do each body zone on a separate day and rest in between on off days. During which time you will continue to walk. So here's what a typical week looks like:

Monday: Upper Body – 20 minutes + 6 minute warm-up/cool down

Tuesday: Rest/Walk – 26 minutes

Wednesday: Core – 20 minutes + 6 minute warm-up/cool down

Thursday: Rest/Walk – 26 minutes

Friday: Legs – 20 minutes + 6 minute warm-up/cool down

That's it. Pretty simple, huh?

If you can't find 26 minutes a day to exercise then you've got to re-prioritize your life because you cannot put a price on your health.

Note: all the following exercises can be looked up on YouTube.

Oh, and it goes without saying: **Please consult your doctor before beginning any fitness program.** My doctor would say, "Get off your lazy ass and exercise!"

Time to "Kick names and take ass..." *Mantis* from **Avengers: Infinity War**.

## Upper Body

Let's start at the top!

Since the Upper Body is the part that everyone focuses on, we might as well begin here.

### Warm-up – 3 Minutes

1. Big Arm Circles – Forward and Backward
2. Full Body Circles – Clockwise and Counter-Clockwise
3. Run in Place – Raise Knees High
4. Jumping Jacks
5. Downward Dog

This should take no more than 3 minutes.

### Workout – 20 Minutes

1. Push-ups on Knees (if too easy then do a traditional push-up on your toes). 6 reps for 1 minute intervals twice. I.e. 6 reps for 1 minute, rest for 1 minute, 6 reps for 1 minute, rest for 1 minute. If you can do more reps then great but stop and rest in between until the full 1 minute plus rest period is up. The more advanced you get, the shorter the rests will be. In the future, the more reps you'll do more reps, more sets of reps, more rests, and a whole lot of different ways to do them! But you're not there yet.
2. Pull-ups Assisted. There is no way around this. And if you're not in shape, then you HAVE TO do them assisted—especially to avoid injury. So get a chair, make sure that you can easily reach the bar and rise over it (while standing on the chair). Put your arms about shoulder width apart, sink down in the chair, and let your legs help you to rise above the bar. Sag and hang on the bar on your way back down. That's the negative: focusing on that will

- really help your back muscles develop for this exercise. BE PATIENT! It will take months before you will be able to do one unassisted pull-up. Let it take time Laddie (as *Scotty* from **Star Trek** would say). You want to avoid injury at all costs (see section on *Avoiding Injury*). Do not over exert yourself. Same timing: 6, 1, 6, 1. **Alternately** – If assisted pull-ups are just too hard right now, then do this: get 2 chairs, straddle a broom stick between them, lie on the floor, knees bent, pull yourself up to the broom stick overhand grip, lower yourself down. Slowly build up to the assisted pull-up this way.
3. Seated Dips. This is for your triceps. Sit down on a low chair, put your hands behind you on the edge of the chair, extend your feet out (bent knees), slowly lower yourself off the chair as far as you can comfortably go. Raise yourself back up on the chair. Do not over exert yourself. Again: 6, 1, 6, 1.
  4. Backpack Curl. Just like it sounds. Put some heavy objects in a backpack and curl them up on each arm. Stand tall, suck your belly button in, and keep your back straight. 6 reps on each arm for 1 minute times 2, rest 1 minute, 6 reps on each arm times 2, rest 1 minute.
  5. Mountain Climbers for 2 minutes to get the heart rate up.

#### Cool-down – 3 minutes

1. Door Frame Arm Stretch (stand in doorway, put arms on each side of door frame, and push, stretching out the chest).
2. Seated Split (only as far as your legs will spread!), Lower Torso to each Knee, Hold for 10 Seconds Each.
3. Lie on Back, Bring Knees to Chest.
4. Lower Knees to Right Side then Left Side, Hold for 10 Seconds Each.
5. Downward Dog.

You will do the Warm-up and Cool-down before and after every workout (respectively). You can do them on your walking days or not. It's up to you.

#### Core

The Core is fundamentally the most important part of your whole body. Without a strong core (such as your lower back muscles) you will never be in good enough shape to do much of anything. Do let time drag you down into assisted walking (i.e. with a cane or walker) and chronic back pain.

You can relieve most back problems by developing a strong core.

However, you must understand that there is no way to target fat loss in your core! You have to lose weight all over your body if you ever want to show some abs and reduce your waistline. Exercise will get you part of the way there (burning calories and building muscle) but diet will have to do the rest. We'll discuss dieting later in this Starter Kit.

For now let's focus on your Core (Abs and Lower Back).



### Warm-up – 3 Minutes

Same as before.

### Workout – 20 Minutes

1. Forget Sit-ups for now, do Leg Lifts, Hands under Butt. 6 reps (or more) for 1 minute, 1 minute rest, 6 reps for 1 minute, 1-minute rest.
2. Supermans. In other words, lie on your stomach, extend your arms and legs out, raise them at the same time, lower them at the same time. 6, 1, 6, 1 like always.
3. Russian Twists. Sit on your butt, raise your legs, knees bent, arms akimbo, and rotate your torso left and right—elbow to opposite knee, extend out the other knee at the same time, and alternate the movement. 6 reps to each side for 1 minute, 1-minute rest, 6 reps for 1 minute, 1 minute rest.
4. Plank Resting on Elbows. Hold for 1 minute, rest for 1 minute, hold for 1 minute, rest for 1 minute.
5. Burpees for 2 minutes to get the heart rate up.

### Cool-down – 3 Minutes

Same as before.

### Lower Body

Legs, legs, legs! Probably the hardest part of any fitness program. By the time you reach 50, if you haven't been in shape your whole life, you might have developed knee and joint problems, which could be one of the reasons why you haven't been training your body in a long while.

Well the good news is that if you are not addled by a serious injury (torn meniscus and such) you can strengthen up your knees by building up the muscles around them.

I certainly wouldn't recommend Pistols to start (look that up and you'll see what I mean!) but the exercises here can get you going to developing stronger legs and consequently stronger knees.

Now I could say: just start running. But I'm **way against that**—respectfully. There are plenty of people who will *respectfully* disagree with me on this but I am a firm believer that the cardio-vascular system is there to support the muscular-skeletal system and not the other way around.

Therefore, I believe running (and any steady state cardio exercise like treadmills) cause more joint and knee problems than they solve. And is actually bad for your heart and vascular health. Look it up, you'll see I'm right.

I'll delve more into the benefits of strength training later—especially for that superhero cosplay body!

But let's get some good all around leg exercises in to build up your Lower Body.

### Warm-up – 3 Minutes

Same as before.

### Workout – 20 Minutes

1. Forward Lunges on Each Leg. Just like it sounds, hands behind head, lunge forward with one leg, go as far down as you can, and come back—do not extend your knee past your toes. Repeat on the other leg. 6 Reps on each leg for 1 minute, rest for 1 minute, 6 reps for 1 minute, rest for 1 minute.
2. Squats. Pretty self-explanatory. Stand with legs spread about hip width, hands behind head, squat down, come back up. Try to keep your back straight and up during the exercise. 6, 1, 6, 1 like always.
3. Side Lunges on Each Leg. Just like the Forward Lunges but to the side. Keep your feet parallel during the exercise, keep your squatting knee slightly internally rotated. 6 on each leg, 1, 6, 1, like always.
4. One-Legged Romanian Dead Lifts. This is a great balancing exercise. Stand up with feet together and parallel. Lift a leg behind you as you bend forward (keeping your back straight) reaching your hands in front of your toes. Repeat with the other leg. Don't be fooled by this exercise! You will learn quickly how bad your balance really is with this one. But it will train you to use more stabilizer muscles as you get better at it. And it works your glutes. 6 on each leg, 1, 6, 1, as always.
5. Jumping Jacks for 2 minutes to get the heart rate up.

### Cool-down – 3 Minutes

Same as before.

### Tips

Note the timing pattern here: 6 reps for 1 minute, 1 minute rest, 6 reps for 1 minute, 1 minute rest. There is a purpose for that. First of all, if you can do more than 6 reps of any exercise then do that but do not exceed 1 minute of repetitions. If you are done with the 6 reps and have say 30 seconds or more left before the 1-minute rest, take that time to rest as well. As you progress, you'll do more reps until you exceed that 1-minute rep cycle.

The last exercise of any of the body zone workouts are designed to get the heart rate up. In fact, the whole workout gets the heart rate up. This is deliberate as it is what is known as **High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)**. This is the secret to strength training success, building muscle, and building a strong heart without the detrimental effects of *Cardio Workouts*.

There's a lot of studies that support this point of view. *Steady State Aerobics*, in other words, Cardio Workouts can damage your joints and ligaments due to overuse and constant bombardment; plus, you will plateau as your body gets used to the cardio strain put on it. The latter will cause you to decrease your fitness level and may even

cause you to damage your heart muscles and vascular system as they never get stronger and the blood flow reduces (thereby not helping to clear out the plaque build up in your arteries).

Bottom line: **Avoid Aerobics.**

This doesn't mean avoiding raising your heart rate. That's what HIIT is for. Short bursts of intense exercises jacks up the heart rate, builds muscles, and reduces the risk of injury and long-term damage due to repetitive overuse. It's a great fitness concept for a cosplayer!

And it has the added benefit of requiring less time and money to implement.

However, if money is not an issue then I highly recommend a *fitness tracker* of some kind, particularly one that tracks your heart rate. I use my **Fitbit Charge 2** for that purpose. Tracking one's heart rate during workouts is a magic bullet when it comes to making progress. Knowing how hard to push yourself can be a real time saver. And the more fit you get the harder you can push yourself while your heart rate actually goes down. It's a blessed miracle that these devices can do what they do! There's a whole bunch on the market but I'm a *Fitbit* fan; they're customer service is excellent!

Also, get some tunes going! Nothing helps with the monotony of a workout than rocking some hard exercises to tunes. I essentially bang out my workouts to 80s and 90s rock like Journey, Bon Jovi, Aerosmith, and Van Halen to name a few.

Do this workout for four weeks (pushing yourself harder each week), take a week off and walk, then do it for another two weeks. Then you'll be ready for the next phase (see Infinity Stones of Fitness!).

## Eat Like Hulk

Exercise is only half the battle. Nutrition is the other half.

Not I'm not going to write an entire diet plan for you—certainly not in this Starter Kit. There's a million diets out there, simply pick one that works for you.

However, I am going to make a few suggestions:

- Eat lots of Protein! You need about 100 grams a day (give or take less for women, more for men). This is not as easy as it sounds. Eating meat to get that amount is next to impossible—unless you like steak and cholesterol! Some red meat, some chicken, some fish (a can of tuna is good for 15-20 grams of protein), and some cottage cheese can help a lot. But the best way to protein-it-up is with protein shakes. Yep! Protein shakes. There's a ton of powders and pre-mixed shakes on the market. Do some research and pick

- one Whey/Casein type and one plant-based. I use the former for post-workout recovery and the latter for a meal supplement. The plant-based one gets blended with a cup of spinach, stevia, and ice/water. It's not that bad. Whatever you do, **DO NOT GET PEA PROTEIN!** That stuff is horrible! There is no way to make it taste good. *Jarrow's Plant Protein Powder* is a good option. I also use *Muscle Milk* and *MetRx Protein Plus*. Find what works for you.
- Next, don't eat junk food! Really, like I was going to suggest something different? A bite of chocolate or ice cream here and there won't kill you but a night of eating Cheetos will. Save the junk food fest for special occasions, which you'll need to keep yourself sane!
  - **Don't smoke!** This should be a no-brainer. Tobacco (maybe even pot but the jury is still out on that one) is the worst. Why give your money and your life-force to a faceless corporation who laughs at you, while you slowly kill yourself. Quit! Get some of those years back, save your money, increase your lung capacity and VO2 levels, and start living your life the way it should be: healthy. You don't see *Tony Stark* lighting up do you?
  - Booze! Particularly beer. I love craft brew beer! I can drink 12% AVB 22 oz beers like there's no tomorrow. Which is why I don't! Except, again, on special occasions. Beer is wonderful, miraculous, and **full of carbs!** If you've got to drink some beers here and there then *Sam Adams Light* or *Yuengling Light* are good hearty beer choices. And then keep the *Victory Brewing Co. V12s* or *Clown Shoes Galactica* for the big soirée with your buddies, or other special occasions.
  - You can never have enough fruits and vegetables. So just eat them as often as you can. I do a "steam fry" where I take a bunch of veggies, steam them in a pot with a steam basket, and add some chicken and light soy sauce, then I place it on Quinoa. It's delicious and healthy.
  - *Don't eat salads everyday!* Seriously. You need protein, you need bulk foods including good carbs and fats! Yes, they exist and for a reason: to help repair your muscles, cells, and other organs as you recover from your killer workouts.
  - Drink lots of water. Add some BCAA (Branch Chain Amino Acid) mix to it—especially during your workouts and walks. BCAAs will help keep you going as you sweat up a storm exerting yourself.
  - Try Intermittent Fasting (IF). I don't eat until 12PM; I stop eating after 8PM. So for 16 hours a day I am fasting. There's tons of research that supports the efficacy of this eating strategy. If you want to look like a superhero, you have to burn the fat. IF helps immensely with that—especially the visceral fat that is the hardest for men to lose. Research IF before trying it.
  - *Forget what the scale says!* It's all about your fitness level. A scale is not going to tell you whether or not you can do that Unassisted Pull-up. Only doing the damn pull-up will tell you that you are making progress. Don't look at the scale, don't track your weight (muscle weighs more than fat anyway), just workout. Period! You'll know how your doing visually when you start slimming down and your cosplay muscles start showing up.

- However, by that same token it wouldn't hurt to get an app to track your eating patterns. **My Fitness Pal** (MFP) is usually the top go-to app for that kind of process. MFP also has the big fitness community that you can engage with and lots of discussion forums on just about every fitness topic there is. Though I'm not a big fan of the parent company Under Armour's branding and promo-ing all over the app, at least it does what you need it to do. I'm sure there are others. Fitbit's app does pretty much the same thing plus the whole activity and heart rate tracking as well but more on that later.
- Get lots of sleep. *Chris Hemsworth* talks about this all the time when he's bulking up for *Thor*. He'll sleep as much as possible. Sleep helps build muscle because muscle is created **after you workout** during the rest phase.

## Infinity Stones of Fitness!

Just like the *Guardians of the Galaxy* a whole fitness universe awaits you—infinite possibilities like the *Infinity Stones*!

Where do you go from here?

Let's recap:

Walk everyday for 20 minutes or more for two weeks while building your basic *Batcave* training center.

Do the Upper Body, Core, and Lower Body workouts for 4 weeks. One body zone each day with a rest day in between (where you will walk on those days).

Take a week off and walk some more.

Do the Upper Body, Core, and Lower Body workout for another two weeks.

That's seven weeks of ramping up...

Then *hold on to your butts* (like in *Jurassic Park*) because it gets way more intense from here!

## Advanced Bodyweight Training

As previously mentioned, I use *Mark Lauren's You Are Your Own Gym* bodyweight training program. I have been using it for over 3 years. I've actually reached the point where I've maxed it out. Fortunately, Mark Lauren has now developed **Bodyweight 2.0** to keep me going forward.

There's all kinds of bodyweight training programs and apps out there like **P90X**. Research them, try out different ones, and pick one you like best that gives you great results.

This Starter Kit will definitely prime you for any one of those.

### Weight Lifting

If you like the gym and you like weights then do it! Take a class, get a personal trainer, get an app, or a book on weights. The only thing that I suggest is that you make sure you're doing *compound movements* (more than one muscle group at a time). *Don't get too dependent on universal machines.*

Throwing around kettlebells as opposed to curling dumbbells will have far more benefits and help to shape your superhero body.

I use weights and kettlebells to supplement my bodyweight and *Strongman Workouts*, not the other way around.

### Pirate Fitness, A.K.A. Strongman Workouts

This is my bailiwick. I love this kind of strength training. The bodyweight training goes hand-in-hand with these kinds of workouts that I affectionately call, **Pirate Fitness!**

They use simple things like tires, ropes, and heavy bags to do amazing things that put my body through massive loads of exercise work, and jack up my heart rate to peak levels. But because they are HIIT, my recovery is quick and the results are amazing!

### Battle Rope Workouts

I love the *Battle Rope!* It's pure Pirate Fitness. There's a ton of videos on YouTube on how to do the Battle Rope, so watch a few of them. I also use the **Seconds Pro** timer to time my Battle Rope workout exercises. I have multiple routines that I follow.

I spent about \$80 on my rope and anchor system and I love it. Worth every penny. I use a stake with a spring hook and some flagstones to keep it in the ground in my backyard, and then I'm off to workout mania!

Do what works for you. They even have Battle Ropes in gyms all across the country.

### Brutal Tire Workouts

Go to a service station, get a used truck tire, drill a hole, put an eyehook into it, get a 26 foot rope, tie one end to the hook, and get a sledgehammer. Beat the crap out of the tire, pull the tire with the rope attached (with the sledgehammer in it), drag the tire up and down the street with the rope around your waist, and throw that thing all over your driveway (or wherever you can) for like 35-45 minutes. My neighbors think I'm crazy but that's what we superhero cosplayers are: Crazy Awesome!

Go on YouTube and look at tire workouts. These are killer old-school Strongman Workouts that will pump you up harder than 3 hours in the gym! And you'll feel like a superhero doing it!

### Kickboxing/Boxing

This is my current favorite workout!

I can't tell you how much I love doing this.

I beat the crap out of a 140 LB heavy bag for an hour. Sure it costs some money to go to *Title Boxing Club* (go wherever you can find a place) but the workouts are ridiculously intense with a great warm-up and an ultra Core body zone workout cool-down.

And you'll feel like *Captain America* when *Nick Fury* came to see him at the beginning of **The Avengers** movie!

### Plyometrics

*Tom Brady* would recommend this. It's an athletic variant of bodyweight training.

I do *Mark Lauren's EFX (Elite Functional Exercise)* plyometrics program.

The workouts are full-body and wicked intense. It supplements all my other programs so I keep things interesting and it never gets boring.

### Yoga

I use Yoga for increased flexibility at my age—especially my back. Also, I use it for recovery from my other intense workouts and for calming of the mind (so I don't *Hulk* out!).

Yoga has some great core strength training components to it as well that should not be overlooked.

*GAIAM* makes a great app for Yoga students called **Yoga Studio**. It's available for iOS/Android and Apple TV. It's the next best thing to going to a studio.

Oh, and get a Yoga mat, any one will do. I got a \$100 *Manduka Black Mat Pro* for \$20 at TJ Maxx!

### Avoiding Injury

One super important thing to note here, so important that it requires its own section, is **AVOIDING INJURY!**

Think about it: when you're in your teens and twenties, you are practically indestructible. Well, really not but it seems that way.

Your body recovers way faster from injuries during those years that you can really beat on it with exercise and sports and bounce right back.

But...as you get older it ain't so easy to bounce right back!

And, when you hit your 50s avoiding injury should be your Number One concern, next to getting in shape and maintaining it.

Certainly, the basic workouts as outlined here in this Starter Kit have a very low injury risk factor. That's obviously deliberate as you are nowhere near ready for the crazier more intense workouts alluded to near the end of this document (like the *Pirate Fitness* workouts).

So what are the best ways to avoid injury and to recover from injuries at this middle-age so that you can keep rocking it hard for years and even decades to come like the immortal Batman?

### Exercise Regularly

Ironically, regular exercise is probably the best way to avoid injury overall. When your body is both muscular and loose (flexible that is) you will avoid injury from everyday things like carrying heavy stuff because it can take the load. Also, flexibility is the best way to keep the back strong and supple.

Years ago, I made the mistake of tamping down soil with the back of my left heel. Stupid I know! The result was acute Achilles Tendonitis. I'm lucky I didn't rupture my Achilles Tendon—then that would have been a world of pain and long recovery!

I had to get physical therapy, take anti-inflammatory meds, and use ice and elevation to recover most of what I lost. I also had to wear a damn compression boot for a few weeks. For a fitness guy like me, that really sucked.

Now I implement a series of heel stretches into my warm-up and cool-down routines to keep the left Achilles Tendon loose. I've got back about 96% of my original mobility with it but at my age, once it's broke it never goes fully back to the way it was.

So avoid stupid things like that!

However, regular exercise keeps all of my body (including the Achilles Tendon) loose and strong so that I can live a fully active life.

If you have bad knees, exercise (taking your knees needs, no pun intended, into account) can strengthen them right up.

Exercise will sure up your core and solve a lot back problems.

Exercise will help you loose weight and solve a lot of health problems overall!



So that's the first bit of advice I'll give you: EXERCISE REGULARLY.

### Spot Yourself

Probably one of the best ways to help avoid injury is always **Spot Yourself**. What do I mean by that?

Well, let me give you an example.

When I work on my Pistols (a very low-to-the-ground one-legged squat), I keep two small kids chairs next to me on both sides so that I can reach out to them the moment I feel my balance and stability going off kilter. I also keep a wall behind me so that if I fall backward I can stop before I crash and injure myself.

I know I won't go too far forward in this movement, so as long as I have three sides of spotting safety, I'm good.

I use chairs, cushions/pads, walls, and just about anything else I can think of to help spot myself. Usually, my workouts are solitary sessions (except for my Kickboxing classes), so spotting myself is vital!

### Go Slow, Take Your Time

Where's the fire?

I know you want to push yourself, and you will. However, you still have to go at reasonable pace and slowly building up to a high performance level. If you go too crazy, you'll blow out a muscle or two and that'll set you back months!

Build up and up and up slowly.

Exercise is a cumulative effort. Unlike Superman or Captain America who got their powers either by alien DNA (and a yellow sun) or science, we mortals need time to get into superhero shape.

Play the long game with your fitness goals.

I start training for cosplay at comic cons six months or more before the event I'm planning on attending. And I still work throughout the year to maintain and improve my overall shape.

### Set Small Fitness Goals

Slow and steady wins the race.

I set small fitness goals for myself throughout the year.

For example: I wanted to reach a level where I could do one-arm push-ups from the floor level. It took a long time (months) but I got there. And when I did, I was thrilled. All that time and work paid off. That was my focus and I slowly worked to get there.

If doing an unassisted pull-up is your goal (and it should be) then you have to build up to it slowly, like thus:

- Use a chair and do the pull-ups assisted (as described previously).
- Focus on the negative movement (hanging down from the pull-up bar).
- Take your time and reach one unassisted pull-up.
- Vary your grip: close, wide, chin-up, neutral.
- Keep at it.

Same for the legs and core. Just follow the basics in this Starter Kit and you'll begin to see a pathway to ever-increasing fitness performance abilities.

Set ever-increasing small goals for each body zone and you will be where you want to be in no time!

### **Take Time To Recover**

This is one of the most misunderstood concepts in fitness for people of any age—especially over 50.

You can't workout every day for hours a day without days off in between. Unless you are a professional athlete, it is just not possible.

You can't run everyday without recovery time or you'll blow out your knees, hips, and heels.

You can't Battle Rope or Kickbox every day either.

You could do Yoga pretty much everyday but even still, time off to recover is also helpful.

What I'm saying is that working out even as little as twice a week sometimes is both better than not working out at all, and good for the body to recover from the more intense weeks.

Getting rest and sleep, eating healthy, and reducing stress all contribute to your Superhero fitness program.

Even The Flash takes a break and spends time with his wife, Iris West-Allen!

Also, eating protein-rich and BCAA foods, drinking lots of water, can help the recovery process and build muscle for the next big series of workouts.

Look to *YouTube* and Internet exercise forums for more info on recovery nutrition.

## **Excelsior!**

And that's it!

Look, I could wax philosophical about how great physical fitness is for your life, your romantic endeavors, your confidence, your resistance to disease, injury, etc. but the real benefit is that *you look good!* Especially good in that *Captain America, Black Widow, Black Panther, Wonder Woman, Superman, Elektra, Wolverine, or Xena* costume!

There's no better feeling than being able to fill out that superhero (or super-villain) costume with real muscles and a fit physique/figure.

When you look good at a comic con, you'll get tons of people wanting to take pics of you.

I'd say that's worth the all the effort!

You spend all that time and money working on your costume, right? Why wouldn't you spend that same amount of time and money working on your body? Your body is just as much an important part of your costume as that Vibranium shield, armor, gauntlet, sword, Elemental Blaster, Ironman repulsor, battle helmet, Adamantium claws, or superhero cape. Therefore, you need to craft and sculpt it just as much.

And remember, comic cons are only a few times a year; your body's fitness is for your whole life, everyday...

Believe in yourself and be the over 50 superhero cosplayer you know you can be!!!

Cheers,

**Nick Iandolo**, a.k.a. *STAR LORD*

[My FanExpo Boston 2018 cosplay character!]