

“Wii Fit”: Dedication Not Included

Written by Luke Hamilton
Friday, 08 May 2009 12:33

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Wii Fit has been a craze for Nintendo Wii since its release in May 2008. The idea that the public took away from the game's announcement was simple: *Wii Fit* is working out made fun and easy. Now that the game is finally in steady stock, I decided it was time to give it a shot.

The key thing I discovered my first day of using it was that even though it's marketed as a game, it's not by any means easy. Do not be fooled by the idea that this is a game that happens to have exercise in it; a 30-minute workout is still a 30-minute workout.

Wii Fit hides nothing in its presentation; the main focus is a user's fitness. Included in the game are approximately 40 training activities, involving yoga, strength training, and aerobic and balance exercises, along with a few balance mini-games such as tightrope-walking and skiing. If you don't want everyone who hops on the game seeing your personal information (weight, body mass index, etc.), these stats can be password-protected. On top of that, each user can set goals to reach (e.g., losing five pounds in two weeks), and the game will document a user's progress as well as give advice on which workouts would help and dietary suggestions.

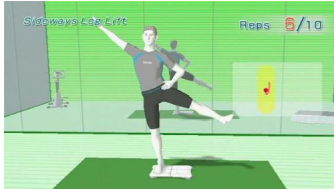
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The package includes the unique Wii Balance Board accessory, which when used with the *Wii Fit*

software can show the user's posture and center of balance when performing workouts, as well as calculate a person's body-mass index based on the measured weight and manually inputted height. The Wii remote is used as a pedometer for the running exercise. Putting a Wii remote in your pocket and running in place is a bit silly, but the motion-sensing remote does a good job noticing your movement. The problem is that any motion does the trick; you could just shake the remote in your hand.

Initially, you have access to roughly half the workouts in the game. After a few, you earn points based on how long you've played, which earns new workouts. Your actual performance only matters when trying to beat records or eclipse other users on your system. I understand the idea of making users play the game to unlock workouts, but the earned exercises aren't very different from the ones you start with, and in some cases they are the same workouts with more reps. It makes more sense to me having everything available from the start so I can choose a focused workout to stick with instead of changing in the middle of my routine.



Players are led by trainers who explain, demonstrate, and perform the workouts with you. This helps a lot when it comes to certain yoga stretches and strength workouts that involve particular movements and holding certain positions, especially for those who are inexperienced. The visuals are bland but are only intended to instruct, so they get the job done. A separate stereo or iPod is highly recommended when getting a workout with the game; the stale drumbeat that plays with every workout doesn't do much for getting someone psyched to exercise.

I generally lack the motivation to work out and don't have the most robust exercise plan in my schedule. I was expecting to be a little tired after a 30-minute workout with *Wii Fit*, but the exercises took more getting used to than I expected. The yoga threw me initially because it's something I'm not used to, but I actually enjoy it now.

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The Balance Board consistently reminds you of your posture and balance during your exercise, requiring you to do the exercise right or face a low score. The idea was a perfect fit for me; because it's still technically a game with a scoring system, I don't want a low score.

It's only been five days, but my posture and balance are getting better and more consistent, and constantly seeing my weight displayed on the screen makes me more aware of my eating habits. I've enjoyed the variety within the exercises and think I'll keep using it.

It is possible to cheat the system into believing you're an exercise guru with perfect balance and rep scores by doing things such as shaking the Wii remote instead of running. But if you're going to drop \$90 on a game designed to help you get into shape and cheat your way through just to get the balance games, it's not worth it. Unless you're looking to get into better shape, *Wii Fit* is not for you.

By no means will *Wii Fit* by itself make you a body builder, but the constant awareness the game gives you of your balance, posture, and weight helps plant the seed of taking better care of your body. For people with the dedication to stick with an exercise program and a real desire to get into better shape, *Wii Fit* will steer them in the right direction.

Wii Fit is available for \$89.95 on the Nintendo Wii. For this review, the author performed a 30 minute daily workout for five days, involving yoga, strength training, and aerobics, and he tested the balance games.

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