Pokémon Go and 10 More Apps That Make You Exercise

July 2016 might as well be renamed, "The Month of Pokémon GO." It's caused a nationwide surge in fitness, but if Japanese monsters aren't your thing, here are ten more apps that will get you moving.

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July 2016 might as well be renamed, "The Month of Pokémon GO." Released to iOS and Android on July 5th, within two weeks the nostalgic 90s game that today's millennials grew up with racked up more than 15 million downloads as enthusiastic gamers hit the streets to capture Ponyta and Caterpie (just a few of the "pocket monsters" you can collect on the go).

An unexpected side effect of all that Pokémon catching was a surprising uptick in the physical activity of gamers everywhere. For instance, Nicole Handler, a runner, CrossFitter and healthy living blogger at Fitful Focus says, "My boyfriend and I have been going on post-dinner walks (something we never did before) just to catch Pokémon. I've also been using it to help hit my 10,000 steps for the day."

Parents are also using the app to help motivate their kids to get outside and rack up exercise. Jennifer Hodgkiss, a full-time traveler, mom of two, and blogger at The Paleo Gypsy notes that, "My kids and I have consistently walked around 5,500 steps a day since we started [using] the app. Before that the kids didn't really want to walk. One of the days we logged 17,000 steps." Lindsey Murray, a mom of two and a creative entrepreneur at Lindsey Skye adds, "As silly as it is, every day since we downloaded Pokémon GO, my kids have asked to go for a walk. They don't have smartphones of their own, but they think it's hilarious and fun when we stop to 'catch' something. We've definitely been more active together!"

It's not just these anecdotal stories that prove the Pokémon GO app is getting people up and moving. According to a report from BuzzFeed News, Jawbone UP, Cardiogram, Withings, and Spire (all apps or activity trackers), each saw an increase in users' activity since the release of Pokémon GO. The most notable is that of Jawbone UP, which isolated the activity of roughly 100 users who mentioned the word "Pokémon" in their activity logs and noted an almost 5,000 step increase in activity between the weekend of the app's release and the previous weekend.

That said, Pokémon GO isn't for everyone. Maybe you didn't grow up in the 90s when Pokémon was first released, or maybe you're not currently under the age of 18, or maybe you're just "too cool for school" and can't fathom jumping on the Pokémon GO bandwagon even though you're secretly dying to try it. It's OK. There are other apps out there that deliver the same gameplay-meets-exercise utility of the Pokémon GO app.
BallStrike

BallStrike App

You may not go on any outdoor adventures with the BallStrike app, but on rainy days, you can keep your fitness journey going strong by punching and kicking your way fit with this virtual workout game. All you have to do is stand in front of your device's camera and watch as the balls appear around you. Your goal? Punch and kick those balls until they explode. You'll be twisting and turning in every direction as you work up a sweat.

Available on iOS for free.
The Walk

Created with NHS and the Department of Health, The Walk is a fitness tracker and game designed to help you... you guessed it, walk more.

Essentially The Walk immerses you in a 500-mile journey where you're the lead character in a mystery thriller. After surviving a virtual bomb explosion, you're given a mysterious box that could save the world... you just have to transport it 500 miles (over the course of three months) to deliver it to its destination. As you log your steps in the app, the storyline and game continue to unfold.

Available on iOS and Android for $2.99.

7 Minute Superhero Workout

Make no bones about it, this is a workout app. Albeit, a fast, 7-minute workout app that immerses you in an augmented reality setting where you're the pilot of the prototype AEGIS One battlesuit, tasked with defending Earth against alien invaders. So maybe not your typical workout app.
The app's motion tracking sensors monitor your progress as you complete bodyweight exercises while "battling aliens" to complete your workout mission.

Available on iOS and Android for $2.99.

4

Zombies, Run!

If you're a runner or a wannabe runner, Zombies, Run! is the app for you. This ultra-immersive running app is designed around 30-minute running routines that encourage interval training as you try to outrun the virtual zombies that are always on your heels. Every run you take with the app is a new mission to collect supplies to fortify your base.

Available on iOS and Android for free.

5

SpecTrek

SpecTrek App
If hunting ghosts sounds like more fun than hunting Pokémon, then SpecTrek is the game for you. Much like Pokémon GO, SpecTrek uses GPS and augmented reality to turn you into a real-life virtual ghostbuster. As you trek around your city, you'll use the game to find and catch virtual ghosts that (who knew?!) live all around you. As you play, you'll rack up statistics, awards, titles, and records.

Available on Android for $2.49; light version available for free.

6

Geocaching

Geocaching is like the original Pokémon GO, and it's actually much more immersive than any augmented reality game. This is because geocaching is all about finding real-life hidden treasure using GPS coordinates and compasses. The official geocaching app continuously updates based on your location to find nearby caches and it connects you with a treasure-hunting community you can turn to when you have questions or need tips.

Available on iOS and Android for free.

7

Real Strike
Real Strike is the first-person shooter app for the augmented reality world. And it's important to note, "first person shooter" should only exist in the virtual world—using real guns isn't condoned. The app store even warns users, "Warning!!!: Do not use real guns in the real world!!! Let guns only exist in the apps!"

So yeah, use the app's fake guns only while turning your real-life neighborhood into the game's military simulation field. You can use the app anywhere, as it integrates your real surroundings with the use of your device's camera with a slew of high-precision 3D weapons.

Be safe out there.

Available on iOS for $2.99.

8

Ingress

Ingress, developed by the same company that developed Pokémon GO, is a bit like Pokémon GO's older brother. Very similar in functional gameplay, it's a more mature game steeped with mystery and intrigue where players are forced to choose a "side."

Like Pokémon GO, you play the game by moving around in your natural environment, using your device's GPS to find objects to aid you in your quest, align with other players, and discover sources of the game's "mysterious energy."

Available on iOS and Android for free.

9

Parallel Kingdom

If you're ready to rule your own virtual world of dungeons, dragons, and monsters, Parallel Kingdom might be the game for you. Like Ingress, SpecTrek, and Pokémon GO, Parallel Kingdom uses GPS and augmented reality to throw you into a new and exciting virtual world. Unlike some of the other games on this list, Parallel Kingdom is heavily focused on role-playing, encouraging you to immerse yourself into the virtual world you create as you participate in new and exciting challenges.

Available on iOS and Android for free.
Goji Play

Goji Play is a little different than the other games on this list. Instead of using GPS and augmented reality for real-world activity, it's a gaming system that uses innovative controllers (you can purchase the controllers for $119 on the BlueGoji website) you attach to any cardio machine to turn your indoor exercise routine into a game.

When you download and use the Goji Play app, your phone integrates with the controllers on your cardio machine, and you can play your way through different games and challenges all while working out. The beauty is that it's a motion-based technology, so the effort you put into your workout actually helps you progress through each game.

Once you have the Goji Play controllers, the app is available on iOS and Android for free.

The Changing Landscape of Gaming Apps

It's important to note that the July 2016 release of Pokémon GO in the U.S, Australia, and New Zealand is shaking up the app world. On July 11, 2016, an article published on Bloomberg noted that app developers are rushing to copycat the game's success, hoping to beat Pokémon GO to new markets. For instance, a strikingly similar app, Citymon Go, was the most downloaded iOS app in China in early July—a market Pokémon GO hasn't yet entered.

As app developers rush to make similar games, the opportunities to combine virtual gameplay and exercise will continue to expand.
Sources:

