Any type of exercise is good. But we wanted to know which at-home exercises were most likely to give you the results you want—in the least amount of time. To find out, we went to the American Council on Exercise (ACE), a nonprofit organization that certifies personal trainers. We surveyed more than 3,000 ACE certified trainers by e-mail, and we got more than 500 responses. Based on their experience, here's what personal trainers rate as tops.

**Best Total Body Workout: Swimming**

To target all your muscles, hop in the pool. Both your upper and lower body will be working, and to maintain proper alignment, your abs and back will get in on it too. Another key reason that trainers choose swimming: It's low impact, so you're less likely to get injured. In addition to an aerobic workout, the water adds resistance, giving your muscles another challenge.

**Note:** If you're going to make swimming your primary form of exercise, complement it with weight bearing exercise such as walking, jogging, tennis, or weight lifting. This will help keep your bones strong.

**Best Ab Workout: Crunches on an Exercise Ball**

This won top honors because it's an intense workout that allows you a greater range of motion. "Balancing on the ball requires the core stabilizer muscles in your back to contract, in addition to the abdominal muscles," said one personal trainer. It takes less time to fatigue, so you don't have to do as many of these as you would traditional floor crunches.

"It's also the hardest exercise to cheat on," said another trainer. Since this is an exercise that ranks high on difficulty, beginners may want to start with crunches on the floor.

**How to do Crunches:** Position the ball so that it's supporting your back. Your feet should be flat on the floor. Start with your arms extended in front of you, then slowly curl up. Hold, then lower. For more of a challenge, place your hands behind your head.

**Best Butt Workout: Lunges and Squats (tie)**
These moves were chosen for many of the same reasons: You can do several variations, you can do them anywhere, and they work your leg muscles in addition to your gluteal muscles.

Here's what one trainer had to say: "Lunges help develop balance and posture." While another chose squats because they "simulate everyday functions such as getting up from your chair. As we age, strong legs become a necessity for balance, hip stabilization, and coordination."

**How to do Lunges:** Place your right foot about 2 to 3 feet in front of you. Keeping your right knee directly over the ankle, bend that knee, at the same time dropping your left knee toward the floor. Your left heel will come off the floor. Don't lean forward. Hold, then press into your right foot to push yourself back up. Repeat with your left leg in front.

For a more advanced move, start with your feet together and step forward or backward into the lunge. Then push yourself back up to the starting position. Note: If you have knee problems, you may want to skip this exercise and do partial squats only.

**How to do Squats:** Stand with your back to a chair and your feet about shoulder width apart. Bending at the hips and knees, lower your butt until it's almost touching the chair. Looking down, you should be able to see your toes as you bend. If all you see are knees, you're bending too far forward; keep your knees behind your toes. Then slowly stand up.

For a greater challenge, hold dumbbells at your sides. If you have knee problems, stick with partial squats-lower yourself only halfway to the chair.

Boost your metabolism and fight over 40 fat with this training plan.

**Best Arm Exercise: Pushups**

Still a favorite of professionals! "If you were to do only one arm exercise, this would be the best for toning and firming," one trainer said. Pushups target mainly the chest muscles and the triceps in the back of your arms.

As another trainer put it, "When the triceps are developed, they add a nice look to the arms." In addition, the core muscles-the abs and back-are stabilizing you, so they're getting stronger as well. More praise: "Pushups are also a fabulous confidence booster. Many women don't think they can do them until they try, and then they see progress-fast!" If you can't do pushups on the floor, try doing them against a wall or leaning on a table or railing.

**How to do Pushups:** Lie facedown on the floor, hands by your shoulders and knees bent. Press your palms into the floor, straightening your arms. Keep your head, neck, back, and hips in line as you lift your body off the floor. When your arms are almost fully extended, hold. Now slowly lower, but before you touch the floor, push back up.
**Advanced move:** Do pushups on your toes instead of your knees.

**Best Calf Exercise: Heel Raises**

"Ten million dancers can't be wrong," said one trainer. For shapely calves, 75 percent of the trainers voted for heel raises.

The advantages of heel raises is that they concentrate specifically on the calves, they're easy to learn, and results are rapid.

**How to do Heel Raises:** Stand with your feet about hip-width apart. In the beginning, hold onto a chair or wall for balance. Rise up onto your toes. Hold, then slowly lower. To make this move more difficult, try doing it one leg at a time or holding dumbbells.

**Best Short-on-Time Exercise: Walking Stairs**

Can't fit in a workout? Trainers recommend that you hit the stairs. "Without taking any extra time, you can take the stairs instead of the elevator—which usually takes just as long to arrive anyway," suggested one trainer. Plus you can do it at work, home, shopping, even when you're traveling.

Walking stairs gets your heart rate up, strengthens your lower body, improves posture, helps prevent osteoporosis (it's a weight bearing exercise, so it helps build bone), and improves stamina. You'll also burn about 45 calories walking up and down stairs for 5 minutes.

**Best Workout When You Don't Want To: Dancing**

The simple reason, according to many trainers: It's fun! "In my house, we have 'dance time' while preparing dinner or washing the dishes," said one. "We all bop around to our favorite CDs. It's a great way to incorporate exercise and quality time into our everyday routine."

"Good music will make your toes start tapping. Soon you'll be dancing—and not even thinking that it's exercise. Dancing lifts your spirits and burns calories," said another trainer.

Lose weight while you work by putting some muscle into your household chores.

**Best Exercise When You're Pooped: Stretching**

If you're going to plop down in front of the TV instead of exercising, at least do some stretches. Said one trainer, "Stretching increases bloodflow without being too taxing, giving you that little boost you may need to get going." Even if you only stretch, it will help you rest better, so your body will be ready to go for your next workout. And most trainers believe that we all need to stretch more anyway.

**Best Exercise for Better Posture: Pinching Your Shoulder Blades**
This move reverses the daylong effects of slouching around and hunching over the computer or steering wheel. "Doing this helps maintain the spine in its erect and neutral position. It opens up the chest area and prevents the rounded shoulders syndrome," said one trainer.

"It activates the trapezius and rhomboids, the muscle groups responsible for holding you in alignment," explained another. Equally important, it's easy-so you'll be more likely to do it.

**Best Exercise for Walkers: Hamstring Stretches**

Trainers are hot on the importance of stretching, but they feel that people aren't getting the message. For walkers specifically, trainers encourage this move because hamstrings are likely to be tight, which can lead to injuries and back pain. Being flexible also improves walking posture.

**How to do Hamstring Stretches:** Standing, place your right heel about 6 to 12 inches in front of you, with your toes pointing up. Put your hands on your left thigh for support. Bending your left knee and leaning forward from the hips, shift your weight back, sticking your butt out, until you feel a stretch in the back of your right leg. (It'll look as if you're half-sitting.) Keep your back straight. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Do two or three stretches with each leg.