

A Group Fitness Challenge
Climbing to the
Top of Mount Everest



A Fun Challenge Using a Stairway to
Improve Health

Climb Mt. Everest Challenge

This fun fitness challenge creates a friendly competition for employees, students, and staff. The challenge can lead not only to reaching goals such as increased use of stairs, decreased time 'just sitting,' and improved health, but can also to creating camaraderie and improved morale among participants.

Included in this packet are instructions on how to start the challenge, how to create units of measurement to climb to the top of 'Mt. Everest,' and suggestions on how to make the use of stairs more interesting and fun.

Also included are templates for the materials needed for this challenge: the wall chart, the cubicle/desk/office posters, the stickers of milestone mountains for tracking personal progress, information on mountains used for elevation milestones, and approximate (minimal) costs of this challenge.

**This material was developed by Iowa Department of Public Health
for our employee wellness with no public funding and is in the public domain.**

Please feel free to customize for your group needs.

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All items below can be located by clicking on the link

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/Portals/1/Files/FitnessChallenge/fitness_challenge_attachments.zip

- Wall Chart (Stair-poster-final.pub) and additional page
- Announcement posters (Stair-poster-final_additionalpage.pub)
- Cubicle Poster - Attachment (CubiclePoster.pptx)
- Stickers – Attachment (MountainStickersLabelsAvery5960.docx)
- Brief information on mountains–Attachment (MountainInfo.docx)
- Sherpa Certificate _(Sherpa Certificate) given to staff that reach
Mt Everest and would like to help others achieve their goal

Introduction

The Climbing Mt. Everest Fun Fitness Challenge was developed by a volunteer planning team (with no public funding) in order to offer Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) employees a simple, fun, and friendly opportunity to increase physical activity and decrease sitting time. This is especially important during the cold winter months and hot, humid summer months in Iowa. By request, it is now being placed in the public domain to share with others.

This project can utilize any available step resource, such as wide and well-lit stairwells, outdoor bleachers at schools, parking ramp stairs, etc., to offer individuals a free and readily-available group fitness opportunity and challenge.

Reasons to start a challenge like this:

- increasing physical activity (especially during the months when outdoor activities may be limited, such as Winter in Iowa and Summer in Florida)
- increasing camaraderie as new and old friends meet while taking the stairs
- increasing morale (particularly across division/classroom lines) by getting to know those in other areas
- demonstrating the workplace/school/church/business 'walks the talk' when promoting physical activity and wellness among employees/student/staff and others
- creating a fun and healthy workplace/school/church/business activity with minimal cost (see box below)

This challenge encourages people to be active and take the stairs in environments where individuals sit for long periods of time. New research has shown sitting for more than two hours at a time is very bad for overall health; in fact, it may be as bad for your health as smoking!

Minimal Costs: Business/School with 30 participants will need the following items:

- Wall Chart 8 ft. X 4 ft. (\$84 heavy-duty, high-quality, color poster paper, printed at local office supply store)
- Permanent marker (\$2 – average price)
- Personal achievement poster (\$15 - average color copy fee for 50 cents per page x 30 pages)
 - Free if you have color printer
- Mountain sticker sheets (\$7, Avery printable address labels, 630 labels; 21 mountains x 30 participants)

Total cost: \$108

Activities to Start the Challenge

At IDPH, a pep rally was conducted to kick-off the campaign. All staff was invited, with the Director of Public Health in a prominent cheerleading role to encourage participation. Small donated give-away gifts were handed out for attending and several staff members were asked to share their personal success stories about using physical activity to improve their health. **(See attachment: Talkingpoints_PepRally)**

Activities to encourage camaraderie and maintain the momentum of the Mt. Everest Challenge should be developed. At IDPH, emails from the Director were sent to encourage staff, especially as the Challenge progressed. Leadership from all levels of the involved institution and buy-in from everyone is crucial to a successful campaign. The IDPH Director and many other division and management personnel not only supported the campaign, but personally participated in it. This type of support showed approval of the campaign, encouraged all staff to participate, and resolved any issues of workplace acceptance.

Announcement and encouragement posters should be placed at the elevator lobbies and at any gathering spots, such as the proverbial water cooler, or the coffee/lunch area. Later, new posters can be placed to help continue the momentum.

(See attachment: SignsForStairs.pptx)

Note: The Department had a number of staff with varying degrees of physical limitations who wanted to participate in the campaign. To accommodate these staff and encourage everyone to be as active as their limitations would allow, a measured distance in an underground walking tunnel was also used and the distance needed in this tunnel was factored for each mountain. They were then able to receive credit for walking tunnel distances rather than climbing the stairs.

Information Offered to Participants

'Climb to the top of Mt. Everest' Fitness Challenge

Example Email to students/staff/others:

"Climb to the top of Mt. Everest" Fitness Challenge

*Over the next several months, participants will be embarking on a journey of epic proportions and [insert business/school/entity] would like to challenge everyone to join us. On this journey we will be **Climbing to the Top Mt. Everest** as well as other mountain tops along the way. No, we will not actually be traveling to Nepal or Tibet; instead we will be climbing the equivalent 29,029 feet in stair-steps in the stairwells of this building.*

Taking the stairs instead of the elevator can lead to many health benefits;

- *Helps maintain healthy body weight or lose excess body weight.*
- *Strengthens lower body and reduces risk of injury and falls.*
- *Lowers blood pressure and LDL Cholesterol.*
- *Increases aerobic fitness.*
- *Can even take less time than the elevator.*

While the idea of climbing stairs to the height of the tallest mountain in the world may seem daunting, the climb is doable by breaking it down into manageable chunks: one floor of stairs, one building of stairs, intermediate goals of smaller mountain peaks around the world, and ultimately, the top of Mt. Everest! Everyone can participate, whether climbing to the top of one of the smaller peaks, or all the way to the top of Mt. Everest.

Next Steps

Place a wall chart at the top of the stairwell or other convenient place where each challenge participant can sign up by writing their name down and keeping track of their progress.

This is how it works:

- First, write the participant's name on the wall chart.
- Second, each participant should print a sign to hang outside their cubicle/locker/etc. to show they are involved in the Challenge, and how many peaks they have climbed.
- Third, start climbing the stairs and accumulating mountain tops.
 - Each box on the wall chart has the number of ticks or checks needed to reach the top of that specific peak.
 - Each time someone reaches a mountain top, they take a sticker from the supply attached to the wall chart and attach it to their cubicle sign so everyone knows how high they've have climbed.
 - Continue climbing until the next mountain top is reached.
 - Keep climbing until the top of Mt. Everest is reached.

Notes:

- 1) Only going up the stairs counts; going down doesn't count - Sorry!*
- 2) If someone prefers to climb elsewhere, it still counts. Just keep track of the number of steps and convert them to the units on the wall chart.*
- 3) If someone cannot climb stairs, they can still participate by walking. The planning group can calculate the equivalent of one stair unit for a flat ground walking equivalent.*
- 4) This challenge can last for several months, so encourage participants to average reaching one mountain top each week; this will help ensure participants will reach the top of Mt. Everest by the time the challenge ends.*

Determining the Unit of Measurement and the Number of Units Needed to Reach Mountain Tops and Ultimately, the Top of Mt. Everest

- 1) Determine how many steps will be in the unit. *(Example: IDPH's Lucas building has eight floors and 157 steps from the basement to the top floor. It was determined that in the Lucas Building, one 'Lucas' unit was the climbing distance from the basement all the way to the top.)*
- 2) Determine how many feet are in the unit. *(Example: each step in the Lucas building is 6.75 inches. This multiplied by 157 steps equals 1060 inches or 88 vertical feet; thus, climbing one 'Lucas' equals climbing 88 feet.)*
- 3) Determine how many units are needed to climb each mountain. *(Example: Diamond Head Mountain is 761 feet high. If one 'Lucas' is 88 feet, a person would have to climb approximately nine 'Lucas' units to reach the equivalent of 761 feet, or the top of Diamond Head.)*
- 4) Determine the number of units needed to climb to the top of each mountain. *(Example: The number 9 was written in the Diamond Head box to show the number of 'Lucas' units a person had to climb to declare that they had climbed to the top of that mountain.)*
- 5) Since the climb is cumulative (the climb to the next mountain starts from the top of the previous mountain), subtract the previous climb(s) units to determine how many more are needed to get to the top of the next mountain. *(Example: The next mountain after Diamond Head is Hawkeye Mountain at 1670 feet or 19 'Lucas' units. Subtract the nine 'Lucas' units already climbed to reach Diamond Head, leaving 10 more 'Lucas' units needed to reach the top of Hawkeye Mountain.)*

- 6) Each box should contain roughly the same number of units required to get to the top of the next mountain. *(Example: Typically about 10 'Lucas' units were needed to reach the next mountain top, but this varied from eight to 26 units.)*
- 7) Different mountains (or other elevation goals) may be used, depending upon the group and what provides the most motivation.

Note: In different situations and/or different populations, this unit could be varied so that it is not a one-to-one conversion. (Example: With younger children, a flight of stairs could be counted as equivalent to 100 or 500 feet of elevation, making it easier to 'climb to the top of Mt. Everest.')

Climbing Encouragement for Participants (Preventing Boredom!)

When developing the Climb Mt. Everest Challenge, the planning group wanted to prevent boredom by using many ways to encourage stair use.

One way used to prevent boredom was the use of trivia questions. A trivia game, which featured eight clues per answer, was utilized. One clue was used per flight of stairs, with the answer to the trivia question at the top of the stair well, next to the wall chart where each person was recording their climb. Plastic sleeves (attached to the wall with Velcro to avoid damage) were placed on each flight of stairs and the clues are slipped into these sleeves at the end of each day (so new clues were available the next morning). (*Note: At IDPH, planning committee members rotated clue-posting duty.*) These trivia clues give climbers something to look forward to and think about as they climb; they also give climbers a valid reason to stop and catch their breath!

Different trivia questions were featured in each of the two Lucas building stairwells each day to promote multiple uses of the stairs each day.

Results of Trivia Questions Use

The trivia questions created a buzz among participants. After climbing the stairs and learning the trivia answer, participants would ask others if they knew the answer yet, or talk in general about the information they learned. Some climbers would challenge themselves to see how fast they could discern the answer (i.e. by the second floor).

Participants also challenged each other to see by which floor they could answer correctly (i.e. how many clues did they need to determine the answer). Friendly competitions between participants began, especially when taking the stairs together. They challenged each other to be the first to discern (according to which floor) the correct answer.

How Others Groups Might Incorporate This Strategy

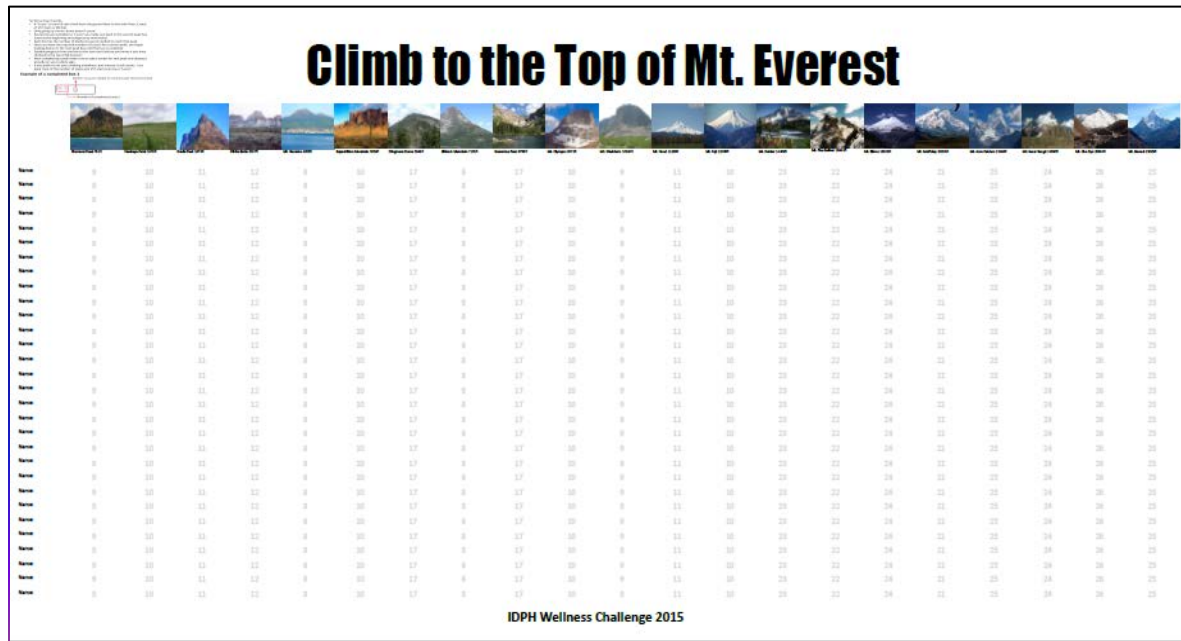
There are different ways to find interesting trivia for this use. Googling for copyright-free trivia, using questions from board games, or checking out books from the library are a few ideas. Information or trivia about the local area, the building/business conducting the challenge, school/class info, or other specific topics could be created. Depending on the participants and location, other games could be incorporated, such as a scavenger hunt (participants look for different clues or information); a card game (playing cards are posted in different locations); or even a simple game similar to the board game 'Clue' (a mystery must be solved and options are ruled out by clues on different floors). Be creative or make it simple. Decide what would work best for you to encourage participants.

Appendix

Wall Chart (we printed it as a 42" X 84" poster) color cost = \$84

2nd wall chart added when participants exceeded 30 (black/white) chart cost = \$30

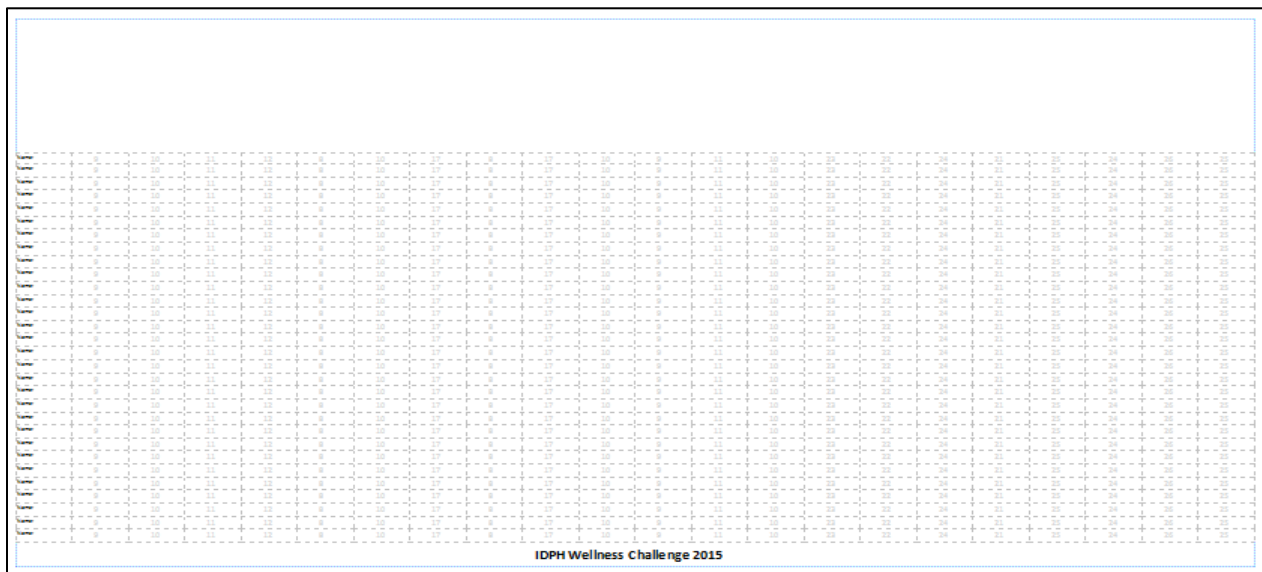
STAIR POSTER WALL CHART



^^^ (See attachment: Stair-poster-final.pub) MS Publisher file

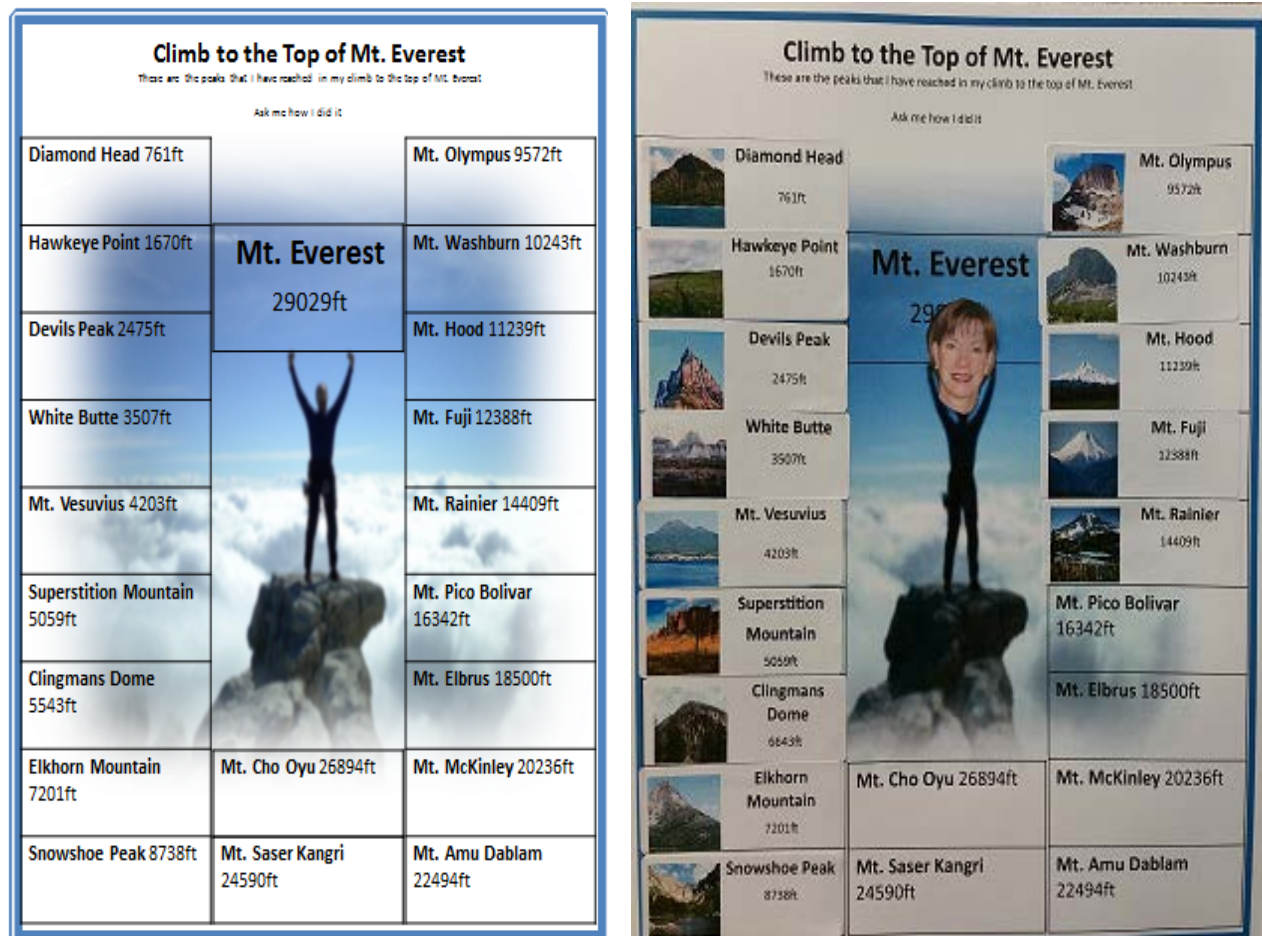


STAIR POSTER WALL CHART ADDITIONAL PAGE



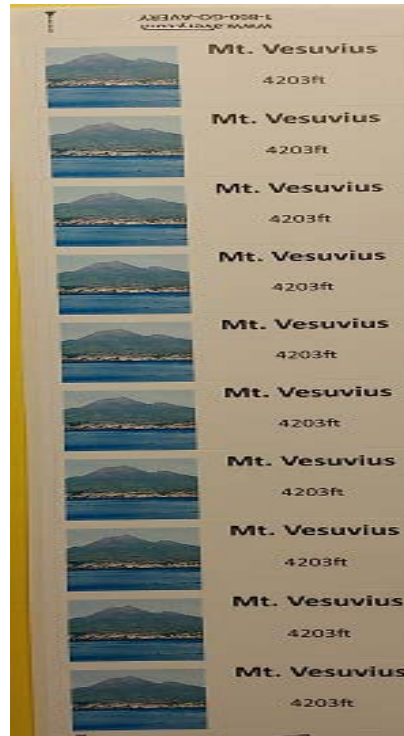
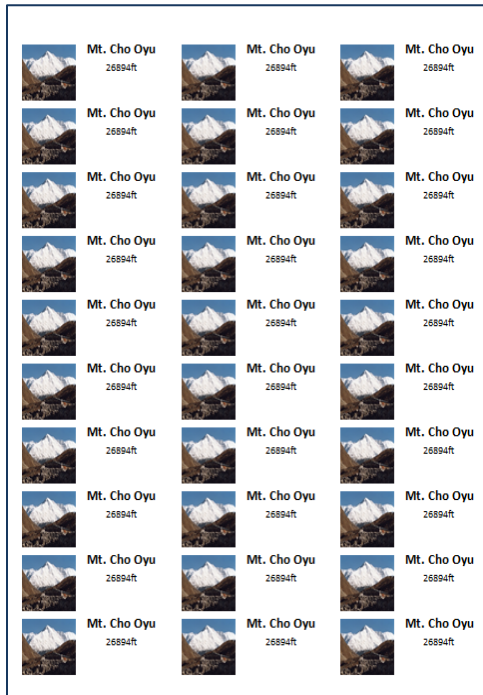
^^^ (See attachment: Stair-poster-final_additionalpage.pub) MS Publisher file

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT POSTER



^^^ Cubicle Poster (See attachment: CubiclePoster.pptx) MS PowerPoint file

MOUNTAIN STICKERS



^^^ Stickers (See attachment: MountainStickerLabelsAvery5960)

We used Avery address label # 5960 – cost for all labels for all mountains = \$6.25