

Super Special Product Review: Wii Fit by Nintendo

By Dr. Boz

Disclaimer: While Dr. Boz the person is an actual doctor, Dr. Boz the author is a pretend doctor who barely made it past the 6th grade and spends much of his life playing Internet poker and uploading YouTube clips of dogs dressed in people clothes doing funny things. Therefore, the following information and recommendations should not be taken as gospel, even though Dr. Boz the author has thus far racked up about 26 hours of Wii Fit credits and is a beast when it comes to athletic prowess.

Disclaimer #2: Please consult a real doctor before beginning any weight loss or exercise program. Just because it is a video game does not mean you cannot get hurt!



I have to admit I was pleased as punch when BB (Bootcamp Bob) and Ka—um, our fantastic super-secret editor—asked me to write another column for the Babble. Imagine my shock, wonder, and awe when I found out I'd be writing about a video game! I mean, talk about writing what you know!!! You may not be aware of this, but I am an amazingly accomplished video game specialist. In fact, I once played Ms. Pacman for 93 minutes on only ONE quarter. I would've played longer, but the robot animal band at Chuck-E-Cheese was playing a set and I totally had a crush on the girl in the band, even if she was a mouse or whatever. Needless to say, when it comes to video games, I'm your go-to guy. Trust me.

The product we will be exploring today is the **Wii Fit** (pronounced "Wheeeeeeee!" and "Fit") from **Nintendo**. I've always been a fan of the Nintendo brand of videogames. I can fondly remember back in the 80's forcing my mother to drive about 90 minutes to a mall outside of Pittsburgh just so I could get the original Legend of Zelda game. Ah—the memories! Anyhoo, the Wii Fit is a product for Nintendo's fairly new **Wii** (still pronounced "Wheeeeeeee!") gaming console, which quite literally IS the greatest invention since sliced bread. The Wii operates on an infrared sensor so that rather than using a joystick, you are making actual movements. In other words, when you bowl — you are literally throwing an imaginary ball. When you play tennis, you make the swinging motion. There are now various accessories such as a golf club, tennis racket, and steering wheel to further enhance the realistic nature of the game. The Wii truly is fun for all ages, as evidenced by the mass hysteria created in nursing homes across the land where octogenarians get into cane fights over who has the superior Wii bowling average.

The Wii Fit is a relatively new game designed to encourage lazy people to exercise by tricking them into playing a "game." Hey, I don't work for Nintendo so I can tell it like it is! I suppose it is also for people who want a new way to exercise, but I think we know the *real* answer. The Wii Fit comes with a "Balance Board" that serves as the controller for the game. The Balance Board is kind of like a "step" one would use in step-aerobics, only it is not three feet off the ground and you do not have to wear spandex to actually use it. The board senses your body position and weight shifting, telling you when you are balanced and when you are "unbalanced." I'd make a joke here too, but c'mon—that's just WAY too easy.

The board also serves as a scale that is, in my experience, relatively and surprisingly accurate. You do need to use it on a flat (i.e., non-carpet) surface, unless of course you want to delude yourself into thinking you are, like, 25 pounds lighter than reality. If that's the case, please go ahead and place it on carpet. I don't know the technical aspects behind how the board works, but it is really an amazing piece of work. It is also fairly sturdy, too, but it does get dirty from repeated use. Fortunately, I live alone and could care less that my balance board has footmarks on it. I'm sure you can clean it if you insist on cleanliness.

The game itself is a combination of several types of mini games and aerobic activities. In addition, there are also yoga and strength exercises one can do to improve balance and coordination and to promote muscle training. An interesting aspect of the yoga and strength exercises is that you pick a "trainer" to guide you through each activity. There is a male and female trainer available. Personally, the female trainer gets on my nerves, so I go with the dude. I've also noticed that his clothes sometimes change and his hair grows . . . for real. Talk about focusing on details! Also, the other trainer once "filled in" for my regular trainer because he wasn't "available" or was "late" or something. Although

this may seem silly, I find it entertaining enough that I often do some of those exercises just to see what happens.

The yoga and strength exercises will grade you on a point scale which then translates into a four star rating. Honestly, I haven't done much with the strength activities, but I can say that the yoga poses score you based on your ability to remain balanced throughout the pose (typically 15-30 seconds). After the activity is complete, you are then provided with a visual reading of your motion during the pose. It is fascinating, to say the least. You get to see this little red dot jump all over the place, serving as a reminder that you are lucky you can stand without falling most of the day. I find that the grading/rating scales are nice because they encourage you to keep doing the exercises to beat your previous score. This is a theme throughout the entire set of Wii Fit games, and is ultimately why I think it is such a successful game, both financially for the company and physically for the customer.

The bang for MY buck comes from the aerobic and balance activities also available in the game. The aerobic section consists of three running activities (of varying lengths and times), three step-aerobic activities (also of varying lengths and times), two Hula-Hoop (yes, you read right) games, and one boxing game. As you progress through the games, you earn access to more advanced levels of each activity. For example, I can now do the Hula-Hoop game for ten minutes. You might say to yourself, "that doesn't sound so hard. It's just a Hula-Hoop for heavens sake!" I dare you—try to do it nonstop for ten minutes and get back to me. But please, don't wear anything nice while doing it. The sweat, er - "glistening" stains are not attractive.

I also enjoy the balance games, and spend the majority of my Wii Fit time playing these games. There are a total of nine games, some of which are athletic in nature (downhill slalom, snowboarding) and others of which are more entertaining (dressing like a penguin and sliding on a glacier trying to eat fish, guiding a bubble down a river with jagged edges and ginormous bees floating around, walking a tightrope across two buildings). With these games, speed and accuracy get you high scores. But again, it can also be quite addictive. I've spent upwards of 45 minutes trying to break my downhill slalom record time. And let me tell you what, even though you are not "really" skiing, you are still in the skiing position for an extended period of time. These may be games, but they are actually exercises, too. You will work!

An additional feature available is called the "Body Test." This consists of two different activities. First, you are asked to stand still for approximately 5-10 seconds to measure your overall balance and weight. Afterwards, you then complete two additional balance exercises, such as walking in place, shifting your weight and holding it, or standing on one leg. The game then combines this information to give you a Wii Fit "age" that tells you whether or not your body is young and spry (like mine of course) or old and decrepit. You also get to see how much you weigh and are told your BMI (which is calculated from information you provide at the start of the game). I try to do this every day just to keep tabs on my weight and balance. The only thing I hate about it is the little balance board character in the game reminds me every day that I am obese. Yes, it actually says it, and does so in a cutesy voice that makes you want to wing your balance board through a window. It also makes my little character fat, which is totally rude, in my honest opinion. Then again, it is also realistic. So I should just get over myself.

I'll admit that you may not get the true impact of how fun the Wii Fit can be without seeing it in action. Perhaps, if there is enough interest, I could set up a demonstration of the game some day. What I *can* say is the Wii Fit is an exceptional piece of work. I've always said I wanted a game where I could exercise, and now I have it. And to be quite honest, it is living up to my expectations. I do at least a little bit of activity on the game every day. Some days I can spend an hour on there. Being competitive by nature, I enjoy trying to beat my high scores or best times, so I can easily spend quite a bit of time "exercising" and not think twice. Seeing as how I hate to exercise, the Wii Fit has been quite helpful in keeping me active.

Well folks, that's all I have for now. Please feel free to share this review, along with my endless witticisms, with friends, family, book publishers, magazine editors, and Oprah. I just know once they get a taste of the "Doctor" they'll be clamoring at my door with development deals and whatnot. Just think, you'd then be able to say "I remember when he wrote an article for our Wellness Newsletter. He was super funny and talented, and I'm pretty sure handsome as well!" I won't forget you when I'm hobnobbing with Brangelina!

Until then, you'll find me on my Wii (still pronounced "Wheeeeeeee!"). Later babblers! Get healthy and stay that way!