NEWS LESSON

Where Did the 10,000-Step Target Come From?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Does a round number make a goal easier to follow?
2. Would you walk more for a score or for somewhere enjoyable to go?
3. What makes a healthy habit easy to keep?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**discovery**	☐	A	finding out something new, often by science
2	**examined**	☐	B	getting better or going forward over time
3	**benefits**	☐	C	looked at very carefully
4	**ordinary**	☐	D	a number that shows how big or how much something is
5	**measurement**	☐	E	at this time, now
6	**progress**	☐	F	good things that you get from something
7	**stress**	☐	G	a worried, tense feeling
8	**currently**	☐	H	normal, not special

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

The 10,000 target came from a Japanese product sold in the 1960s. A 2025 review linked about 7,000 steps a day with real health benefits.

1 Your watch says you have walked 8,000 steps today. You feel quite pleased. Then you remember the famous goal: 10,000 steps. Should you go outside again just to reach the number? The idea of walking 10,000 steps a day is familiar to millions of people. But the number did not originally come from a medical discovery. It became popular through a Japanese step-counting product sold in the 1960s. Over time, it started to sound like an official health rule.

2 In 2025, researchers published a large review in The Lancet Public Health. It examined 57 studies about daily steps and different health results. The review found that walking around 7,000 steps per day was linked with important health benefits compared with much lower activity levels.

3 This does not mean 7,000 is a magic number. Some people benefit from more movement, and the amount of activity someone can manage depends on age, health and daily life. The study also looked mainly at links between steps and health, rather than proving that one exact number prevents illness.

4 Walking is useful because it can fit into ordinary routines. A short walk to the shops, taking the stairs or meeting a friend outdoors can all add up. People who currently walk very little may benefit from taking small steps towards doing more.

5 A person walking to work may collect steps slowly throughout the day. Another person may go for a brisk half-hour walk and still finish below 10,000. Step totals cannot show everything about exercise, such as how hard someone is working or whether they are getting stronger. Sports, swimming and cycling may offer benefits without producing many steps on a watch.

6 For people who use wheelchairs, step counts may not be a useful measurement at all. A daily target is most helpful when it matches a person's abilities and encourages regular movement. Feeling proud of progress can be useful; feeling ashamed of a number should not be the goal.

7 A step counter can help you keep track of your habits, but it should not make every day feel like a test. Instead of worrying about being 2,000 steps short, you might ask a simpler question: am I moving more than I used to? The best target is often one that encourages activity without adding another source of stress.

Sources: The Lancet Public Health. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The review proved that 7,000 steps prevent illness. T F NG
2. The 10,000-step idea became popular through a Japanese product. T F NG
3. Most watch owners reach 10,000 steps a day. T F NG
4. Step totals cannot show how hard somebody is working. T F NG
5. A person who walks fast for half an hour will always reach 10,000 steps. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

brisk **familiar** **manage** **official** **proud** **reduce** **regular**

1. The idea of walking 10,000 steps is _____ to nearly everyone who owns a watch.
2. No doctor made it an _____ rule, but many people follow it as one.
3. A _____ half-hour walk, faster than a stroll, is good exercise.
4. She felt _____ when she walked to the top of the hill for the first time.
5. After her injury, she could only _____ a short walk each day.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. It became popular through a Japanese product _____ in the 1960s. (SELL)
2. In 2025, researchers _____ a large review in The Lancet Public Health. (PUBLISH)
3. Your watch says you _____ 8,000 steps today. (WALK)
4. Walking 7,000 steps a day _____ with important health benefits. (LINK)
5. Last Saturday I _____ 12,000 steps on a long hike. (TAKE)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Think about what the link does: contrast, reason, result or condition.

although	because	despite	however	so	therefore	unless

1. The number sounds like a medical rule. _____ , it began as a marketing idea.
2. She stopped for a rest _____ her feet hurt.
3. _____ 7,000 steps is a useful goal, it is not right for everyone.
4. She walks to work every day, _____ she often reaches 7,000 steps.
5. A step goal will not help you _____ it fits your life.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Would a lower target encourage you or make you do less?
2. Should an activity app celebrate small improvements instead of perfect days?
3. What could make everyday movement easier without turning it into homework?

9 Role-play: the step counter debate

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the step counter fan

You have walked 8,000 steps today and you want to reach 10,000 before bed. Ask your friend to come for another walk. Explain why the number matters to you.

Student B · the tired friend

You have had a long day and you don't want another walk. You have read that 7,000 steps is already good. Give your reasons, then suggest a different plan.

Useful phrases

I'd like to do another walk tonight.
I've only done 8,000 steps today.
That's not really necessary, is it?
The review says 7,000 is already good.
We're both tired, so why don't we go tomorrow?
Could we do a shorter walk instead?

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree on a plan, and who gave the better reasons?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 A · 2 C · 3 F · 4 H · 5 D · 6 B · 7 G · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 F · 2 T · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 familiar · 2 official · 3 brisk · 4 proud · 5 manage

6 Verb forms

1 sold · 2 published · 3 have walked · 4 was linked · 5 took

7 Language focus

1 However · 2 because · 3 Although · 4 so · 5 unless

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