

## Follow my festive plan to look fabulous

The most sophisticated thing Bertie Beetle managed to do was heat my bottom on cold days, of which there were many. Other than that he was a very faithful sidekick who I was quite happy to have many an adventure with.

All will change with Nelly the Mini, named by Finn the Adorable who perhaps without intention has triumphed. Nelly is a perfect name – my Mini is overweight like an elephant and, as a Countryman, she will (I hope!) not mind being caked in mud all year round.

Nelly is a bit too clever for her own good, in my opinion. She tells me how to drive – which gear to use – and it appears that I have been less than efficient in my driving style. Gear 5 and the new 6 were rarely visited – until now that is.

It does trouble me that all this onboard computer wizardry is expecting my attention when I am actually wanting to look at the road ahead. Looking out for cyclists, walkers, horses with people on, all unsuspecting. So it will stop. Nelly can try all she likes, but – call me old-fashioned – I intend to look straight ahead at the important stuff.

So how efficient are *you*? Do you waste valuable time stalling in third or fourth gear and never quite make it to that lovely cruising sixth? Or do you plan out your time with ferocious diligence, linking your day to maximise your time? I would like to say at this point that I have never sat in a meeting where people are taught this and never will. I just instinctively think ahead. Living slightly off-track means that nowhere is 'handy'. It wouldn't do to head off on fruitless journeys – Nelly would get cross. Instead I will plan my animal husbandry around my work around my cycling around my shopping around my rest and stick to it.

It will be difficult to move far without having to wade through baubles in November. It may also be difficult to consider yourself. You want to look your best for the festive season but you are finding it impossible to fit the maintenance programme in.

I have given this some thought on your



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behalf. We are going to call my plan 'Five Minutes to Fabulous'. Each exercise is for one minute and you are doing five – fabulous.

**Exercise One:** Coat Hanger Shoulders (for your festive clothes to hang from). On your knees, toes lifted, weight forward. Finger tips in a triangle shape. Elbows slightly back. Look ahead. Slowly lower and raise your elbows, touching the floor each time. Chest open, shoulders back. Continue until you quiver.

**Exercise Two:** Upper Arms That Do Not Swing (on the dance floor). As above, elbows together. Fingers pointed forward. Body weight forward lower and raise elbows, touching the floor each time. No cheating. Elbows need to stay together.

**Exercise Three:** Bottom Lifter (why not?) Lying down. Feet planted flat to the floor, hip width apart. Raise up until you stop at your shoulders, then stay put.

**Exercise Four:** A Waist (to hold in all that glorious festive food). On your back, knees touching, toes touching the floor. Arms outstretched, shoulders rested. Move knees side to side slowly. Begin to raise your left leg to go right and right leg to go left. When you can do this without lifting your shoulders from the floor, raise and follow the same pattern. Just remember not to go too far each way and move very slowly. Keep your knees over your hips to allow your spine to rest on the floor.

**Exercise Five:** A Middle (see above). Same as above. Stretch your legs towards to the ceiling at the same time as you open your arms out wide. The secret to success here is to lengthen – if you are a bit creaky you must do this gradually. There will be a huge temptation to ping. Pinging is when you raise your lower back to achieve what you believe is a stretch. It is not. Do this slowly and feel your middle support. One last and very important tip – no outward change. This means your middle is not pushing out and your spine is not pushing down. You are in neutral. The only way to a flat and firm centre.

So there it is and with all that spare time you now have you can go shopping for a new festive wardrobe. That fits. 