

Circuit Training

Circuit training is an efficient and challenging form of conditioning. It works well for developing strength, endurance (both aerobic and anaerobic), flexibility and coordination. Training technique that involves moving from one exercise to another, each exercise working a different muscle group until each muscle has been worked.

It can include strength training stations, cardio stations or a mixture of the two. The purpose is to keep the heart rate elevated, although many experts feel that, with circuit training, you're actually getting the worst of both worlds since you're splitting your energies between cardio and strength. It can be a good workout but, like any training method, should be changed every 4-6 weeks to avoid boredom and plateaus.



How Circuit Training Can Be Used

1. For General Fitness

Completing a variety of resistance exercises and high intensity cardiovascular exercises in quick succession can improve both strength and endurance. For individuals short on time, 3-4 brief sessions per week is an effective way to develop all-round fitness.

2. For Basic Strength Development

Athletes embarking on a sport specific strength training program should always start with a phase of basic strength training. This generally occurs during the closed season in the early part of the preparation phase and is used to prepare the body for more strenuous work later on.

Even experienced athletes require a phase of basic strength training to help correct some of the muscle imbalances that inevitably occur with competitive sport. Circuit training is a good choice as alternating exercises allows for maximum recovery of muscle groups. Increased rest intervals between stations are important as this phase of training should not be too intense.

3. For Strength Endurance Development Many athletes require good muscular endurance for effective performance in their sport. A circuit training session can be developed to meet their specific needs. By keeping rest intervals short a cardiovascular element is developed and by alternating exercises and muscle groups, more work can be completed for a longer period. Circuit training for a multi-sprint sport such as soccer will differ significantly compared to circuit training for a marathon runner for example.

Circuit Training Guidelines For General Fitness

Circuit training can be completed 2-4 times per week. As with resistance training at least 48 hours should be left between sessions that work the same muscle groups.

For general fitness a resistance should be chosen that allows the station to be completed for the prescribed period of time (1-2 minutes for example). Resistance may also be governed by bodyweight and the weight of the implements used, such as medicine balls.

Circuit training classes consist of about 8-12 stations. These are usually completed for 30-90 seconds with 30-90 seconds rest between each station. Progression can come through

either increasing the station time or decreasing the rest intervals. Choose only one at a time however. A total of 1-3 circuits is typical with 2-3 minutes rest between each circuit.

Guidelines for Circuit Training for General Fitness	
Load	Variable
No. exercises	8 - 12
Time per station	30 - 90 seconds
No. circuits per session	1-3
Rest interval between sets	30 - 90 seconds
Rest interval between circuits	2 - 3 mins
Speed of execution	Medium - fast
Frequency	2 - 4 x week

Circuit Training Exercise Examples

Dumbbell Squat and Swings (Total Body)

1. Start position: Holding a dumbbell in each hand start in squatted position with dumbbells between legs.
2. Start movement by standing up and keeping arms straight rotate shoulders and trunk towards the left.
3. Return to the starting position and repeat to the other side.
4. Repeat for the prescribed number of repetitions.

Bench Dips (Upper Body)

1. Sit upright on the edge of a sturdy bench and place hands hip width apart, palms down, fingers pointing forward and gripping the edge of the bench. Place heels on another bench with legs out straight in front of you.
2. Start position: Slide glutes off bench with elbows slightly bent.
3. Lower body by bending at elbows until elbows are at 90 degree angle. Return to start position.

Forward Lunges (Lower Body)

1. Start by standing with your feet shoulder width apart.
2. Step forward with one foot and bend your knees into a lunged position. Your back knee should come close to touching the ground and your front leg should be bent to about 90 degrees at the knee.
3. Maintain your upright posture throughout the movement. Return to the starting position and repeat on the opposite leg. 4. If you have them, hold a light dumbbell in either hand.

V-Ups (Core Region)

1. Start position: Lie back onto floor or bench with knees bent and hands extended towards ceiling. Head should be in a neutral position with a space between chin and chest.
2. Leading with the chin and chest towards the ceiling, contract the abdominal and raise shoulders off floor or bench. Also raise legs up towards ceiling and attempt to touch your hands to your feet.
3. Return to start position.