

# What is Interval Training?

Lack of time is the number one reason people give for not exercising. And lack of results once they do start exercising isn't far behind. Interval training is a great solution for both of these common problems.

**Interval training involves alternating short bursts of intense activity with what is called active recovery, which is typically a less-intense form of the original activity.**



The Swedes came up with a term for this type of training: fartlek, which means speed play. Not only is it an efficient training method, fartlek training can help you avoid injuries that often accompany non-stop, repetitive activity, and provides the opportunity to increase your intensity without burning yourself out in a matter of minutes.

Unlike traditional interval training, fartlek training does not involve specifically or accurately measured intervals. Instead, intervals are based according to the needs and perceptions of the participant. In other words, how you feel determines the length and speed of each interval.

## **Interval basics**

Interval training allows you to enjoy the benefits of high intensity activities without having to endure those burning muscles. In its most basic form, interval or fartlek training might involve walking for two minutes, running for two, and alternating this pattern throughout the duration of a workout.

The intensity (or lack thereof) of each interval is up to how you feel and what you are trying to achieve. The same is true for the length of each interval. For example, if it is your habit to walk two miles per day in 30 minutes, you can easily increase the intensity of your walk (as well as up its calorie-burning potential) by picking up the pace every few minutes and then returning to your usual speed.

A great trick is to tell yourself that you'll run a particular distance, from the blue car to the green house on the corner, for example, and then walk from the green house to the next telephone pole.

When you first start fartlek training, each interval can be a negotiation with yourself depending on how strong or energetic you happen to feel during that particular workout. This helps to break up the boredom and drudgery that often comes from doing the same thing day after day.

## A more advanced approach

Despite its simplicity, it also is possible to take a very scientific approach to interval training, timing both the work and recovery intervals according to specific goals. The box, lists the four variables to keep in mind when designing an interval training program.

Consider the following four variables when designing an interval training program:

- Intensity (speed) of work interval
- Duration (distance or time) of work interval
- Duration of rest or recovery interval
- Number of repetitions of each interval

## The Ideal work/rest ratio

The common exercise to interval ratio is 1:1,1:2 and 1:3 . i.e. a sprinter might run faster for 10s and then rest for 30s to train his high phosphate energy system.

Exercise interval followed by an equal rest interval has been found to be very effective for weight loss as it trains the aerobic system better.

## Example of an Interval Training Program- Hills and Sprints

Time	The Workout	RPE
5 Minutes	<b>Warm up:</b> Start with a moderate pace to gradually warm up	3-4
2 Minutes	<b>Baseline:</b> Increase incline/resistance and speed to slightly higher than comfortable pace.	5
2 Minutes	<b>Incline/Resistance Pyramid Up:</b> Increase the incline/resistance 2% every 15 seconds	6-7
2 Minutes	<b>Incline/Resistance Pyramid Down:</b> Decrease incline/resistance 2% every 15 seconds	7-6
1 Minute	<b>Sprint:</b> Move as fast as you can	8
2 Minutes	<b>Baseline:</b> Decrease speed to recover back to baseline	5
2 Minutes	<b>Incline/Resistance Pyramid Up:</b> Increase the incline/resistance 2% every 15 seconds	6-7
2 Minutes	<b>Incline/Resistance Pyramid Down:</b> Decrease incline/resistance 2% every 15 seconds	7-6
1 Minute	<b>Hill Sprint:</b> Increase incline to 8-10%, keeping speed moderate until you reach Level 8 RPE	8-9
2 Minutes	<b>Baseline:</b> Decrease incline to 0% to recover back to baseline	5
2 Minutes	<b>Sprint:</b> Move as fast as you can	8
2 Minutes	<b>Baseline:</b> Decrease speed to recover back to baseline	5
5 minutes	<b>Cool down</b>	3-4
<b>Total Workout Time: 30 minutes</b>		

This interval workout involves both high intensity intervals and lower intensity recovery periods. This type of workout involves changing the settings on the cardio machine of your choice throughout the workout to keep things interesting, help you burn more calories and build endurance quickly. The intensity segments involve both incline/resistance and speedwork so you work the heart and body in different ways. This workout can be done on any cardio machine or outside.

