

Interval Training for All

Do you want to increase your fitness level? Then interval training, also known as interval conditioning, may be for you. Douglas Brooks, MS, co-owner of Moves International and author of *Program Design for Personal Trainers*, describes how to use this method no matter how fit you are. If you have questions or would like a demonstration, ask your personal trainer.

1 Understand the Work-Rest Concept. Interval conditioning utilizes repeated cardiovascular work intervals performed at intensities above your typical exercise levels. To sustain and repeat these higher intensity work intervals, follow them with cardiovascular recovery (rest) intervals performed at a lower intensity. A work interval followed by a recovery interval is called a cycle.

2 Learn the Benefits of Interval Training. Intervals help you build endurance, increase fat loss and calorie burning and/or improve your performance in a sport or activity.

3 Build Your Lactate Threshold. If you are not used to interval training, lactic acid in your muscles will most likely increase and accumulate quickly at 50 to 55 percent of your maximal aerobic capacity, also known as heart rate reserve (HRR). If you are highly conditioned, your threshold may not occur until 80 to 85 percent. When you accumulate too much lactic acid, you will have difficulty breathing and will be unable to continue exercising at the same intensity. You will need an active recovery period to accelerate lactic acid recovery and help prevent muscle cramps and stiffness.

4 Start With Spontaneous Speed Play. If you are new to interval training, try this method during your workout: Speed up a little for 30 seconds, then continue the cardiovascular activity for 90 seconds at an easy effort. Do as many cycles as you desire.

5 Monitor Intensity. For the following models, measure intensity by using the rating of perceived exertion (RPE) scale: One is your easiest effort, and 10 is the most difficult. As your fitness level improves, you can train harder at a given RPE.

6 Use the Fitness Model. More structured than speed play, this model has you exercising cardiovascularly for three to five minutes at an RPE of four to six (somewhat hard to very hard), then recovering for three to five minutes at a two to three RPE. Perform as many cycles as you can comfortably, increasing the number of cycles as you become more experienced.

7 Work Up to the Challenging Fitness Model. To use this model, you should be moderately to extremely fit. Exercise hard for 30 to 90 seconds, then recover for three times the length of the work interval. For example, recover for 180 seconds if you've exercised hard for 60 seconds. Perform work intervals at an RPE of seven to 10 and rest intervals at a two to three RPE. Repeat a number of times.

8 Train for Sports With the Performance Model. If you are a competitive athlete or highly conditioned, use the performance model to increase cardiovascular fitness. Utilize the fitness model explained above, but work at an 80 to 85 percent HRR for three to five minutes before recovering.

9 Advance to the Difficult Performance Model. If you are an advanced athlete who is experienced at interval training, try this workout model. Exercise for 30 to 90 seconds, then recover for just twice the time. Work at an RPE of eight to 10 (extremely intense!) and rest by exercising at a two to three RPE. Repeat for a number of cycles.

10 Train Safely. Precede intervals with a warm-up of at least five to 10 minutes and follow it with a cool-down of at least five minutes. Interval training should be challenging, yet enjoyable. Use common sense. If you need more time to recover after a work interval, give yourself more time! Interval train no more than twice a week. These programs are for apparently healthy adults. If you are pregnant or have special medical concerns, plan a program in conjunction with a physician and personal trainer.



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