

CIRCUIT TRAINING FOR RUNNERS

Circuit training is the effective combination of cardio vascular fitness and resistance training. It is used in particular by a variety of athletes of all ages and ability, targeting core muscles to develop strength, improve stability and improve posture. Exercises are short and intense with timed intervals between each station (usually 6-10 stations). Many of the exercises involve using your own body weight, medicine balls or resistance bands.

How can Circuit Training improve my running?

Circuit training is specifically designed to give the entire body a workout, so it improves cardio fitness as well as enhancing strength, stamina and mobility. This provides a nice foundation of suppleness, power and stamina, to which athletes can add speed and racing skills just before the competitive season begins.

The exercises within each circuit are separated by a short rest period. Circuit Training is extremely popular as part of a running training programme, as many of the circuits are of a high intensity and can be done using no extra gym equipment. Circuit training programmes often take an average of 30 minutes to complete, and offer the same advantages as a one-hour-long regular workout would provide.

What are the body's 'core' muscles?

The 'core' refers to the centre of your body. Your abdominals, back, hips and upper legs are the body's source of strength, power and balance. To build a strong core you need to exercise a variety of different muscles. The 'core' actually consists of many different muscles that stabilise the spine and pelvis.

Adding a Circuit Training session 2-4 times weekly will give a huge improvement to your body's core strength. Strengthening will help create a solid base of support for the entire body. This will help to:

- Minimise the risk of common running injuries, such as plantarfaciatis, ITB pain, runner's knee, and shin splints
- Help maintain a better running posture
- Improve balance and co-ordination
- Improve running technique

Ready to give it a try?



For maximum benefit, circuit training exercises should be performed one after the other with as little rest as possible. Here are three types of training programme designed to improve specific aspects for athletes. Each circuit is designed for 30-60 seconds of work, with a 60-90 second recovery period. The aim is to complete the circuit 3 times round. If any exercise is too challenging, there is no harm in adjusting the time of each exercise. It would be more profitable to complete the circuit than have to drop out half way through.

Aim to build up to 2-3 circuits a week. Increasing the duration of each exercise will help with progression. You can also advance your training by adding in medicine balls, resistance bands, and dumbbells.

Circuit Training For Running Speed

In order to run faster you need to develop your stride length, power and strength. The circuit below involves running 5-6 miles of high intensity speed work, pushing your body to recover faster and reduce fatigue.

- Run 4 sets of 400m dash at race speed
- 20 bench step ups
- Run 800m at race speed
- 20 squats per leg
- Run 8 sets of 200m dash with 1min rest in between
- 20 stride step ups per leg
- Run 8 sets of 100m dash, with 15 seconds rest in between
- 25m single leg forward hops
- Run for 6mins, doing easy paces and race paces every half min
- Plank for 1min
- Run 4 sets of 400m, with 2min rest in between.

Circuit Training Workout for 5k, 10k or Marathon

For long distance runs, muscle endurance is the key to a successful race. This circuit is a combination of strength and endurance routines to help prepare you better for marathon running.

- Jog for 15mins
- 20 squat thrust
- 20 push ups
- 30 crunches

- Run for 800m at race speed
- 20 step ups per leg
- 20 bench dips
- 20 dumbbell lunges per leg
- front plank 1min
- Run 800m at race speed
- 20 squats
- Side plank 60sec on each side
- Cool down with 15mins of jogging

Beginner's Circuit Training Workout

- Squats or medicine ball squat 15 reps
- Crunches 15 reps
- Forward lunges (alternate legs) 10 on each side
- Front Plank 20-30 seconds – or as long as you can
- Glute Bridge 20-30 seconds – or as long as you can
- Side plank (each side 20-30sec)
- Dips 10

Roundup of Circuit Training Guidelines

Frequency: Aim for 2-4 sessions per week

Load: Variable, adding medicine balls, resistance bands and dumbbells

Time per station: 20-90 seconds

Circuits per session: 3-4

Rest time between sets: 30-90 seconds (once circuit is complete)

Speed of execution: med-fast

These are suggested guidelines – as with any type of training, listen to your body. For a training programme tailored to your needs and abilities, you might want to consult a personal trainer or a local gym.