

Cross Train Your Way to Fitness

You've been running four miles a day, five days a week, for eight weeks. You made the track team, but your times aren't improving. Suddenly you can't stand the thought of running. You just want to veg out in front of the TV. Are you burned out at the age of 17?

For many athletes, a loss of interest can mean boredom. Luckily, there's a cure for this that will also improve your overall fitness. It's called cross-training.

What Is Cross-Training?

Cross-training is a way of adding variety to your exercise program by doing two or more different types of exercise in one workout. It's not a new fad. Athletes have been cross-training since the days of the Olympic decathlons and pentathlons of ancient Greece.

At first, cross-training may seem contradictory. You've been taught that the way to improve performance is to concentrate on that area. If you want to be a runner, swimming only wastes your time. Recent research has found, however, that for runners, weight-training can improve performance by 20 percent.

What Are the Benefits?

There's a lot to be said about cross-training.

- *Cross-training reduces the risk of injury.* When you run all the time, you stress the same muscles. If you alternate running with swimming or cycling, you use different muscles, and give the running muscles a rest.
- *Cross-training improves your overall fitness.* Jogging gives you aerobic fitness, but doesn't do anything to develop the upper body. Weight-training increases muscle mass, but doesn't give you flexibility.
- *Cross-training adds variety to your routine.* If you get into a rut, chances are you'll quit your workouts. On the other hand, if you don't have to face that four-mile run every day, you'll have more enthusiasm on the days that you do run.
- *Cross-training allows you to become good at more than one activity.* You spend time with friends who bike ride and friends who swim.
- *Cross-training keeps you improving.* According to fitness trainer Michelle Gagnon, sticking with one activity, your body adapts to your

exercise routine. Pretty soon your body thinks it has to have a four-mile daily run to survive. Eventually, no matter how much you run, your performance doesn't improve. To avoid such plateaus, you need to throw your body off its schedule by including other activities.

One Person's Experience

Alli Rainey was recently named the number-one overall female climber nationwide by the Competitive Climbing Rank. Although rock climbing is her passion, she spends a lot of time cross-training. "All the other sports have a positive impact overall," she says.

"Cross-training helps me to avoid burnout, and to step away from being so serious about rock climbing." Cross-training also gives her a mental break. "I don't push as hard in the other sports," Alli says.

Alli cautions against overtraining. "I still struggle with doing too much. The key to not getting injured is working into a new sport slowly. If you haven't been running, you can't start out running six miles at top speed. Listen to your body. When it tells you it's tired, stop."

Having a second sport helps Alli avoid depression when she's injured. "When I hurt my finger and couldn't rock climb, I learned how to snowboard. I was able to continue exercising, and I could socialize too."

How Do I Get Started?

Cross-training should include activities that challenge the heart and lungs; increase the body's flexibility; and strengthen the muscles. If you've been running or cycling, you need to add a weight-training workout for strength and muscle definition. If you've been concentrating on weight training, pick an aerobic activity such as swimming or jumping rope. If you're involved in competitive sports, ask your coach for suggestions for cross-training activities.

What About Equipment?

Once you start cross-training, you'll have to think about your shoes. Although each sport has a shoe made especially for it, you don't have to have a shoe for each activity that you do. Cross-training shoes have wide bottoms to provide stability for your feet. They have durable soles, so you can wear them inside and outside. When you choose a cross-training shoe, be sure to get one with the most cushioning per square inch.

The main rule to follow when setting up a cross-training program is to choose activities you like. If you hate what you're doing, you'll only get discouraged and quit.

Setting Up a Cross-Training Schedule

Aerobic	Strength Training	Flexibility
running	upper-body machines	stretching
cycling	lower-body machines	yoga
swimming	free weights	calisthenics
kickboxing	calisthenics	
power walking	crunches	
skating	push-ups and sit ups	
jumping rope		
stair climbing		

Write down an exercise plan with times as a guideline:

9-9:15 a.m.--Warm up: 10-20 minutes of slow walking; stretching muscles that will be used in the aerobic part; exercises from column three.

9:15-10 a.m.--Aerobics: 20-60 minutes of an activity from column one; alternate two activities throughout the week.

10-10:20 a.m.--Strength-training (no more than three times a week): 20-30 minutes of exercises from column two.

10:20-10:30 a.m.--Cool down: Slow walking, stretching.

Keep a record of your progress: distances covered, increase in weights lifted, number of push-ups. For fun, join a recreational team--volleyball, basketball, whatever sport you've always wanted to try.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Why would you not want to choose activities that you hate when setting up a cross-training program?

- A You could reduce your risk of injury.
- B You could become good at more than one activity.
- C You could add variety to your routine.
- D You could get discouraged and quit.

2. Which of the following exercise plans would best follow the guideline listed in the passage?

- A cycling, running, power walking
- B stretching, swimming, crunches
- C push-ups and sit ups, free weights, lower body machines
- D stretching, yoga, calisthenics

3. What are the three categories of cross-training activities?

- A running, strength training, stretching
- B aerobic, strength training, flexibility
- C running, swimming, cycling
- D aerobic, free weights, flexibility

4. Read the following sentences and answer the question below: "At first, cross-training may seem contradictory. You've been taught that the way to improve performance is to concentrate on that area. If you want to be a runner, swimming only wastes your time. Recent research has found, however, that for runners, weight-training can improve performance by 20 percent."

In this context, what does the word **contradictory** mean?

- A reliable
- B opposite
- C steady
- D constant

5. The main idea of this passage is that

- A cross-training can provide many benefits to athletes
- B cross-training does more harm than good to athletes
- C cross-training is only helpful to rock climbers
- D cross-training should involve strength training every day

6. How does cross-training add variety to an exercise program?

7. The passage suggests that you keep a record of your progress as you cross-train. How would that be helpful to an athlete?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

According to Alli Rainey, you should listen to your body _____ you don't get injured while trying a new sport.

- A because
- B so
- C but
- D until

9. Answer the questions based on the sentence below.

If they lose interest in their sport, athletes can become bored.

Who? athletes

(can) What? _____

Why? _____

10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and answer questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: adapt (a · dapt): to travel a distance.

10a. Read the five sentences below and underline the word **adapt** in each sentence.

1. When the students got a new, tougher teacher mid-year, they realized they needed to adapt their behavior or they might fail the class.
2. The video game keeps giving new challenges to the player, so that the player must adapt to complete each level.
3. When the ape was moved from the zoo to the wild, he needed to adapt to the new environment in order to survive.
4. Since she had only used a desktop computer, when the girl bought a tablet, she needed to adapt to typing using the touch screen instead of a keyboard.
5. When the family moved from the city to a small town, they had to adapt to a slower lifestyle than they were used to in their old neighborhood.

10b. Which image shows something that you would have to adapt to if you had to use it?



11. If students go from elementary school to middle school, do they have to adapt? Why or why not?

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 830

Featured Text Structure: Enumerative – the writer includes a list, giving examples of something. This text structure is often combined with cause/effect or problem/solution

Passage Summary: “Cross Train Your Way to Fitness” focuses on cross-training as a way to add variety to an exercise program and avoid burn out. A number of benefits are listed, as well as examples of ways to set up your own cross-training exercise plan.

1. Why would you not want to choose activities that you hate when setting up a cross-training program?

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- B You could become good at more than one activity.
- C You could add variety to your routine.
- D **You could get discouraged and quit.**

2. Which of the following exercise plans would best follow the guideline listed in the passage?

- A cycling, running, power walking
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- C push-ups and sit ups, free weights, lower body machines
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- A running, strength training, stretching
- B **aerobic, strength training, flexibility**
- C running, swimming, cycling
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4. Read the following sentences and answer the question below: “At first, cross-training may seem contradictory. You’ve been taught that the way to improve performance is to concentrate on that area. If you want to be a runner, swimming only wastes your time. Recent research has found, however, that for runners, weight-training can improve performance by 20 percent.”

In this context, what does the word **contradictory** mean?

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5. The main idea of this passage is that

- A **cross-training can provide many benefits to athletes**
- B cross-training does more harm than good to athletes
- C cross-training is only helpful to rock climbers
- D cross-training should involve strength training every day

6. How does cross-training add variety to an exercise program?

Suggested answer: Cross-training adds variety to an exercise program because two or more different types of exercise are done in one workout and there are many different types of exercises to choose from. [paragraph 3]

7. The passage suggests that you keep a record of your progress as you cross-train. How would that be helpful to an athlete?

Suggested answer: By keeping track of things like distances covered and weights lifted, you can see how much you improve and what activity seems to be helping you the most. This will also allow you to see how the other activities are helping your main sport. [paragraph 18]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

According to Alli Rainey, you should listen to your body _____ you don't get injured while trying a new sport.

- A because
- B **so**
- C but
- D until

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

If they lose interest in their sport, athletes can become bored.

Who? athletes

(can) What? **become bored**

Why? **they lose interest in their sport**

10. ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

Vocabulary Word: adapt

Step 1: Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (a · dapt)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is adapt. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "adapt."]

Step 2: Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "The word adapt means to change."
- b. Teacher says: "In the passage, the author discusses how your body adapts to your exercise routine if you always do one activity. In other words, your body changed because it got so used to the activity."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "adapt."]

Step 3: Practice the word

Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the 1st sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

- 10a.**
1. When the students got a new, tougher teacher mid-year, they realized they needed to adapt their behavior or they might fail the class.
 2. The video game keeps giving new challenges to the player, so that the player must adapt to complete each level.
 3. When the ape was moved from the zoo to the wild, he needed to adapt to the new environment in order to survive.
 4. Since she had only used a desktop computer, when the girl bought a tablet, she needed to adapt to typing using the touch screen instead of a keyboard.
 5. When the family moved from the city to a small town, they had to adapt to a slower lifestyle than they were used to in their old neighborhood.

Step 4: Check for student understanding

This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

- 10b.** Which image shows something that you would have to adapt to if you had to use it?



- 11.** If students go from elementary school to middle school, do they have to adapt? Why or why not?

Suggested answer: Yes because they have to change in order to handle the increased work load, changing social scene and their own personal growth.

Suggested Additional Vocabulary: variety, contradictory, fad, alternate, enthusiasm, plateaus, passion, impact, burnout, recreational