



University  
of Glasgow | Sport  
& Recreation

# Simple steps to plan your cardio workouts



# What is it and why would you do it?

Getting your heart rate up to certain levels and making your lungs work harder for 20 - 60 minutes, 3 to 5 times a week, will substantially improve the condition of your heart and lungs.

Other benefits:

- improved levels of fitness and stamina
- feel good factor
- lowered blood pressure
- fat loss
- lowered cholesterol
- maintain a healthy weight
- healthy heart and lungs
- and many, many more ...



## How to do it

### 1 Choose an activity

- exercise class
- treadmill running or walking
- cycling
- cross trainer
- rower
- outdoor running or walking
- swimming
- other activities that can increase your heart rate are roller blading, stairwalking, skateboarding and mountain biking.



Book at reception for one of our free gym inductions and check out [www.glasgow.ac.uk/sport](http://www.glasgow.ac.uk/sport) for information on classes, courses and sports.

**2 Make a plan on how often you are going to exercise during a typical week. You can stick to one activity or keep it varied by choosing a few. Aim for an average of 5 sessions per week.**

Examples:

Plan	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	treadmill	exercise class	rest	treadmill	upright cycling	rest	outdoor run
2	rower	exercise class	treadmill	sport activity	cross trainer	treadmill	rest
3	swimming	outdoor run	hill walking	rest	mountain biking	sport activity	rest

**3 Plan how long each session will last. When you're starting out it is important to ease yourself in, so aim for 15 minutes per session for your first week and quickly build this up to 20 - 30 minutes over your first month. Once you're in the swing of things you can then fluctuate the length of your sessions from 20 - 60 minutes.**

Using plan 1 as an example:

Plan	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	treadmill 30 mins	exercise class 30 mins	rest	treadmill 25 mins	upright cycling 35 mins	rest	outdoor run 50 mins

Remember you don't have to do all your cardio training on one machine, accumulating your activity can be just as valuable and also helps to avoid staleness. This could mean that you do 15 minutes of one activity followed by 20 minutes of another.

#### **4 Think about the structure of each workout**

During the first 5 minutes start off slowly then gradually build up the pace every minute to a level that feels fairly hard - on the exertion scale this will be building up from 2 - 6.

During the main section of your workout aim to exercise within the 6/10 to 7/10 intensity level zone. This will form the bulk of your training session. You should be breathing hard, sweating lots, not be able to talk in full sentences, and definitely not able to read a book. Once you've been training for a few months consistently, you can then start to fluctuate this to within the 7 - 9 intensity level zone.

Making these fluctuations for a minute or two at a time can make your workout more intense without increasing the length of the session (look for the interval training poster in the cardio suite for more information or chat to someone in the advice centre).

In the last few minutes of your session decrease the tempo and work rate every 30 seconds bringing your heart rate down gradually. Close to the end of your session your heart rate should have decreased to a point where your breathing is almost back to normal - on the exertion scale this will be cooling down from 6 - 2.

#### **5 Stretch, stretch and stretch again**

It is so important to stretch after exercising, otherwise over time certain muscles will tighten up and shorten and could cause postural imbalances which lead to injury - if you are injured you'll be unable to exercise for a while and you'll be back to square one.

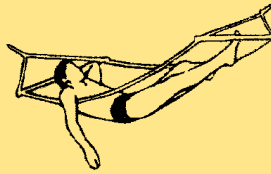


Allocate around 5 - 10 minutes for stretching at the end of each session. Work through all the main muscles of your body, holding each stretch for approx 15 seconds.

For more info on stretches refer to the advice centre for guidance and try out our 'stretch to harmony' classes. Look out for the posters in the 'Core Zone' showing the main stretches to get you started.

# Rate of perceived exertion chart (Effort Levels)

**0 at rest - sleeping**



**1 at rest - awake**

**2 at rest/initial levels of activity - moving & sitting around, minimal effort**



**3 very easy continuous movement - slow walk**

**4 easy continuous movement - between slow & brisk walk**



**5 very comfortable during exercise capable of continuous conversation**

**6 comfortable during exercise - conversation becoming awkward, perspiration increases**



**7 discomfort during exercise may start to appear - noticeable change in depth and rate of breathing**

**8 uncomfortable during exercise - conversation extremely difficult, heavy perspiration & breathing**



**9 extremely uncomfortable during exercise - conversation impossible, burning sensation in muscles, gasping for air**

**10 maximum effort - verging on physical collapse**



The rate of perceived exertion (RPE) scale helps you determine whether you are doing too much or too little activity to gain aerobic benefit

Ideally you should spend the majority of your work out within the 6 - 7 range, however you may increase your benefits by working in the 7 - 9 range for short intervals throughout.

[www.glasgow.ac.uk/sport](http://www.glasgow.ac.uk/sport)

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