

Boot Camp Fitness – Part 1

By Georgette Pann

In the first of a two-part series, I'll explain the various elements that go into creating a boot camp fitness program and then walk you through the process of creating your own. At the end of this article, you'll find two sample battle plans you can use as examples.

Types of Exercise

There are five basic types of exercise, and you may include some or all of them in your boot camp program, depending on what you're trying to achieve. Exercise categories include:

- Resistance Training - Develops strength and power and endurance to a lesser degree. Examples: Push ups, pull ups, sit ups, body squats, any exercise using dumbbells, barbells or resistance bands and tubes.
- Cardiovascular Training - Develops heart and lung efficiency and endurance. Examples: Running, biking, swimming, aerobics, Tae Bo, and any activity done at an elevated heart rate for an extended period of time.
- Agility and Speed Training - Develops fast movement and precision reflexes. Examples: Sprints, running sideways or backwards, running tires and obstacle courses, shuffles, martial arts movements.
- Plyometrics - Develops power in movement and resilience. Examples: Vertical jumps, long jumps, medicine ball exercises, hopping, skipping.
- Stretching - Develops flexibility. Examples: Hurdler's stretch, most yoga poses, toe touches.

Fat Loss and Exercise Types

Cardiovascular exercise does the most to burn fat during exercise. Cardiovascular exercise, like running, quickly depletes the energy stores that muscles prefer to use and forces them to burn fat for energy. Studies show that cardiovascular exercise burns the most fat when done at a moderate pace that increases heart rate but allows the trainee to hold a conversation. Fat burning due to cardiovascular exercise stops soon after heart rate and breathing rates return to normal.

Resistance training burns little fat during the exercise compared to cardiovascular exercise, but it has a longer lasting fat burning effect on the body. An increase in metabolism from resistance training can last for hours, and resistance training increases muscle size and density, which causes the muscle to burn more calories every time it's used. Muscle growth results in a more or less permanent increase in calorie consumption, which is essential to long term fat loss.

Agility, speed and plyometric training can burn fat like cardiovascular exercise when it raises the heart rate high enough for an extended period. They can also spur muscle growth and its resulting calorie consumption, similar to resistance training but not as effectively. Stretching has little impact on fat loss, though when done with enough intensity, stretching can increase metabolism and overall calorie consumption.

For a boot camp program that catches fat in the crossfire, emphasize resistance training and cardiovascular work.

Equilibrium

A major source of problems affecting the skeletal and muscular systems of the body is muscle imbalances. A muscle imbalance occurs when muscles on one side of a joint are significantly stronger or more developed than those on the opposite side. Avoid a program that promotes muscle imbalance by including resistance exercises for all of the following muscle groups:

- Chest, shoulders and triceps - Push ups, bench dips, bench press, military and over head presses
- Upper back and biceps - Pull ups, rows, shrugs
- Abdomen - Sit ups, crunches, leg raises
- Lower Back - Good mornings, modified cat stretch, locust, cobra
- Thighs - Squats, deadlifts, lunges, leg press

- Hamstrings - Straight leg deadlifts, good mornings, lunges

Compound vs. Isolation Exercises

One of the things that separates boot camp fitness programs from typical gym programs is the emphasis on compound exercises. Where many fitness club programs with resistance training emphasize isolation exercises, which involve exercising the muscles for only one joint at a time, the efficiency required of boot camp programs demands the use of compound exercises that utilize multiple joints and muscle groups at a time. For example, the barbell curl is an isolation exercise that works the biceps, while the pull up is a compound exercise that works the biceps, lats in the upper back and the serratus. Nearly all of the exercises included in the next section are compound exercises.

Cadence

Cadence refers to the tempo or speed at which trainees perform repetitions. In the military, recruits do their push ups and other calisthenics to the same beat, usually dictated by the drill instructor. You may wish to do the same with your boot camp platoon, or you may want to let trainees do them at their own speed and tempo. If you are dictating the cadence, you can control the intensity of the exercise by speeding up or slowing down the cadence.

Expect the Unexpected

Another trait that sets boot camp programs apart from the typical fitness club program is the variety of exercises, intensity and schedule. Boot camp programs keep trainees on their toes with program changes from day to day and week to week. This variety prevents the body from getting accustomed to the workout, which cues an internal response to adapt to new conditions and better prepares the trainee to handle whatever life throws at him or her. Here are six ways to add variety to your program:

1. Train different body parts on different days. This works best in a five-day-per-week program. For example, train upper body on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and train lower body on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
2. Train using bodyweight exercises on some days and weighted exercises on other days. This variation strategy works well with three-days-per-week programs. For example, train with bodyweight exercises on Monday and Friday and train with dumbbells or resistance bands on Wednesday.
3. Schedule resistance training some days and cardio on other days. This really works well for five day programs because you can work resistance hard two or three days and rest in between those days by doing cardio instead.
4. Do basic exercises such as push ups and pull ups some days and power exercises like power cleans and vertical jumps on other days.
5. Vary the forms of exercises from day to day. For example, do standard pull ups one day and wide grip pull ups, narrow grip pull ups and commando pull ups on other days.
6. Alternate light days and heavy days (i.e., work with high intensity on some days and low intensity on other days).

Progression

Most boot camp programs are geared for people who, previous to enlisting in your program, have not exercised much or at all. In those cases, you need to start the program at a level your recruits can handle. That doesn't mean they won't moan, groan, wail and cry trying to fulfill the program's requirements. It just means you don't want to over train or injure them so they can't continue the program. Here are a few strategies for making sure new recruits can stick with it:

- Start by asking trainees to only do 85 percent of their maximum reps on the first day and try to add a rep each session. So someone that can only do 10 push ups will do nine the first day, 10 the second and 11 the third day.
- Set a low goal (10 reps) and require trainees to do as many as they can with strict form, like a standard push up on the toes, then allow them to switch to modified forms like push ups on the knees to finish the set. Do multiple sets within each session.
- Set a high goal (25 or 30 reps) and let the trainees use any combination of advanced, standard or modified forms to achieve the goal. You may also want to allow up to three 15-second rests during the

set.

Because this is boot camp and not nursery school, you'll want to progress fairly quickly to a more difficult program. Progression is essential to growth and development. The body adapts and stagnates in ability fairly quickly, so you have to continually challenge it to keep muscles growing and metabolism advancing. Here are six ways to add progression to your program:

1. Add one rep to each exercise each session or five reps to each exercise each week.
2. Increase the percentage of standard or strict form repetitions in a set. For example, if you've set a goal of 30 push ups and trainees on average do standard push ups for half of those, require them to increase that number to 17 or 20.
3. Switch to more difficult versions of an exercise. For example, replace standard push ups with wide grip push ups or push ups with feet elevated. Or let them move from push ups with feet elevated to standard to modified push ups in order to complete the set.
4. Use ladders and increase by one step each week. A description of ladders is later in this section.
5. Reduce the length or frequency of rest periods between sets or exercises (i.e., if trainees are accustomed to two minute breaks between exercises, reduce them to one minute).
6. Increase the cadence or decrease the amount of time trainees have to reach the goal.

Intensity

Intensity refers to how hard the trainee works to do the prescribed exercises. In the early weeks of your program, you'll want to start with a relatively low intensity and progressively increase the average intensity each week. You'll also want to vary the intensity within each daily session because most of your recruits will not be able to maintain anything but a low intensity workout for the duration of a workout session. By including some low intensity portions of the workout, you give trainees an opportunity to recover and prepare for more high intensity work.

For five day programs, you'll want to vary the intensity of workouts within the week. They need the challenge of some high intensity days, but if they're all high intensity, trainees will over train and are more likely to incur injuries.

You can increase the intensity of a workout in three ways:

1. Use more difficult exercises or increase resistance (weight).
2. Decrease the length or frequency of rest periods.
3. Increasing the tempo or speed of repetitions (see Cadence above).

Likewise, you can decrease the intensity of a workout in three ways:

1. Use easier exercises or decrease resistance (weight).
2. Increase the length or frequency of rest periods.
3. Decreasing the tempo or speed of repetitions (see Cadence above).

Exercise Order

When deciding what order to schedule the exercises in a session, consider the following:

1. Start with resistance exercises, which require more control and effort, and work toward cardiovascular exercise, which consumes energy too quickly to do before resistance work. If you include power exercises, plyometrics and speed and agility training, schedule them in that order between resistance and cardio exercises.
2. Break periodically for stretching and allow trainees to catch their breath. If you use low rep sets, schedule rest/stretch periods after every three to five sets. If you use high rep sets, schedule short periods after every set.
3. After a warm up, start with some low intensity exercise before you get into high intensity work. Alternate between high and low intensity periods and end with a low intensity period before the cool down at the end.

Ladders

Ladders are one way of breaking down high repetition sets to make them more manageable by beginning trainees. They are used extensively in military physical training programs. With ladders, trainees start by doing one rep, take a 15 second rest, do two reps and continue on in this fashion until half the set is done or the trainee cannot complete the mini set. Then they work back down the ladder doing one rep less than the last mini set until they reach zero. So a set of 25 reps would be broken down into the following mini-sets: 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 with 15-second rests in between.

Circuits

Circuit training is another way to break down large quantities of repetitions while keeping the intensity high. In a circuit, several exercises are scheduled in rapid succession with only a few reps of each. Trainees are allowed little to no rest between exercises, but they get a rest period after completing all the exercises in the circuit. Then trainees repeat the circuit a designated number of times. Here's an example of a circuit:

- Pull ups - 10 reps
- Push ups - 10 reps
- Sit ups - 10 reps
- Bodyweight squats - 20 reps
- Bench dips - 10 reps
- Good Mornings - 10 reps
- Two minute rest
- (repeat three times)

In Part 2 of this series, I will provide you with the boot camp planning and schedule forms and guide you through the step by step process of using these forms, as well as example boot camp workout programs for both the three-day and five-day fitness boot camp programs.

Boot Camp Fitness - Part 2

By *Georgette Pann*

In Part 1, we discussed the type of exercises to include in your fitness boot camp program as well as progression, variations and intensity. We also looked at daily training strategies including exercise order, example rep schemes (ladders) and circuits. In this article, I will provide you with boot camp planning ideas and give example workout schedules for both three-day and five-day boot camp fitness programs.

Boot Camp Planning

Prior to the start of any successful boot camp program, you must sit down and write out the following:

- **Mission Statement** - Write down your mission statement for your boot camp program and refer to it often to keep your program focused.
- **Sessions per Week** - Write down how many workout sessions you plan to have in a week.
- **Length of Sessions** - Write down the expected length of each workout session. Most three-day boot camp programs are 60 minutes long, though some run as long as 90 minutes. Most five-day boot camps are 45 minutes long.
- **Exercise Ratios** - Decide how much emphasis you want to place on the various types of exercise. Write down the percentage of your program you want to allocate to each exercise category. For example, if you want half of your program to be cardio training, write 50 percent for cardiovascular training. A good mix is 30 percent resistance, 40 percent cardio, 10 percent power, 10 percent speed and agility and 10 percent plyometrics. The total of all your percentages should equal 100 percent.
- **Resistance Distribution and Cardio Distribution** - If you're going to use a mix of resistance equipment and/or cardio exercises, decide how much of each you want to include. For instance, you may decide you want to use dumbbells only one of the days in your three-day program and bodyweight exercises the other two days. So write 34 percent for dumbbells/barbells and 66 percent for bodyweight. If the only cardio you're planning to do is running, just write 100 percent for running.
- **Available Equipment** - Make a detailed list of every type of equipment you have available for use in your boot camp program. You don't necessarily have to use everything that's available, but it's easier to select exercises if you have a quick reference of what's available.

Exercise Selection

Use the below chart to track which exercises you plan to include in your program. The chart is broken down by muscle groups and exercise categories to make it easy to remember to get a balanced program. If each session is going to be identical, you don't have to fill out a column for each session. Three columns are provided so you can give different emphasis to different exercises on each day, if that's what you decide to do. Remember that variation and adaptation are key components to a boot camp fitness program.

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Stretches	_____	_____	_____
Upper Body Resistance	_____	_____	_____
Lower Body Resistance	_____	_____	_____
Abdominal Resistance	_____	_____	_____
Back Resistance	_____	_____	_____
Power	_____	_____	_____
Speed & Agility	_____	_____	_____
Cardio	_____	_____	_____

Exercise Scheduling Form

The below form will allow you to put all of the components together and plan out each session in a week. If you want to vary the sessions from week to week, print out a copy of this form for each week of your program (this form can easily be printed or re-created using Excel). Start by filling in your warm up time, which should be at least 10 minutes long. Then write in the various exercises you plan to use and block out how much time you want to spend on each.

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
<i>Time Activities</i>	<i>Time Activities</i>	<i>Time Activities</i>
00:00-05:00	00:00-05:00	00:00-05:00
05:01-10:00	05:01-10:00	05:01-10:00
10:01-15:00	10:01-15:00	10:01-15:00
15:01-20:00	15:01-20:00	15:01-20:00
20:01-25:00	20:01-25:00	20:01-25:00
25:01-30:00	25:01-30:00	25:01-30:00
30:01-35:00	30:01-35:00	30:01-35:00
35:01-40:00	35:01-40:00	35:01-40:00
40:01-45:00	40:01-45:00	40:01-45:00
45:01-50:00	45:01-50:00	45:01-50:00
50:01-55:00	50:01-55:00	50:01-55:00
55:01-60:00	55:01-60:00	55:01-60:00

For example, if you want trainees to do 50 push ups and you think it will take them five minutes to complete them, write in something like "50 push ups" and darken the lines above and below the five-minute slot where you want the push ups. If you're doing short sets that take less than five minutes, you can write something like "15/15/30 push ups/pull ups/sit ups."

Don't forget to look back on your planning form and make sure you're allocating your time according to your distribution plans. So, if you're using the recommendation we made in the "Exercise Ratios" section above, out of every 100 minutes of workout time, you're spending 30 minutes on resistance training, 40 minutes on cardio and 10 minutes each on power, speed and agility and plyometrics.

Please note: It is important to plan your rest periods. If you block out the entire session with exercise, you'll either wear your clients out too early or run out of time because of rest periods. Rest periods can either be scheduled in separate time slots than exercise, be included in the time allocation for each exercise (i.e., your push ups time includes up to two minutes of rest once the push up goal is reached), or you can write in very low intensity activities between high intensity exercise such as five-minute periods of stretching or easy walking between pull ups and sit ups or between sprints and jogging.

Once you have the Exercise Scheduling Form above filled out, you should be all set to go.

Three-day Boot Camp Workout

This three-day boot camp calls for a day of rest between each workout day and two days off between weeks. Progression from week to week should be increasingly difficult versions of the exercises, such as advancing to strict standard push ups from incline or elevated push ups or doing more jogging than walking. For resistance exercises, the number of reps in each set or the resistance (weight) can be increased. To progress in circuits, do more circuits.

WARM UP

The following power warm up can be performed before each workout: hang from hips for 30 seconds; hula-style hip circles, 10 each direction; shoulder shrugs, 10 each direction; arm circles, 10 each direction; Hindu squats, perform 30 to 50; triangle stretch, hold for five long breaths on each side; windmills, perform 26 to 40; knee hugs, 10 seconds on each side; two-leg ankle hops, perform 30; calf stretch, five slow breaths each leg; quad stretch, five slow breaths each leg; jumping jacks, perform 50; drink water.

DAY ONE

- Perform power warm up
- Push up ladders: 1-2-3-2-1
- Two minute rest
- Pull up ladders: 1-2-3-2-1
- Two minute rest
- 25 crunches
- 25 leg raises
- Two minute cobra stretches
- 50 body or Hindu squats
- 10 to 15 Good Mornings
- One minute water break
- Five modified cat stretches each side
- Two minute back stretches
- 30 vertical jumps
- Two to three minute water break
- 15 minute jogging/walking

DAY TWO

- Perform power warm up
- 15 dumbbell/resistance band overhead press x three sets
- One minute rest between sets
- 15 dumbbell/resistance band chest flyes x three sets
- One minute rest between sets
- 30 dumbbell/resistance band squats
- One minute rest between sets
- 15 dumbbell/resistance band lunges per leg
- One minute rest between sets
- 20 dumbbell/resistance band one-leg deadlifts per leg
- 25 bicycle crunches x two sets
- One minute rest between sets
- Five minutes walking
- Two dumbbell/resistance band clean-squat-press ladders 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1
- Two dumbbell snatch ladders 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1
- 15 to 20 minutes jogging/walking

DAY THREE

- Perform power warm up
- Three circuits: 10 push ups, 10 crunches, 10 pull ups and 10 leg raises
- One minute rest
- Two minutes stretch/rest
- Three circuits: 10 good mornings, five modified cat stretches, 20 body or Hindu squats
- One minute rest
- Two minute stretch/rest

- Two circuits: 20 mountain climbers, 15 burpees, 10 vertical jumps and 20 cycled split squat jumps
- Two minute rest
- 10 50-yard dashes
- Water break
- 15 minute jogging/walking

Five-day Boot Camp Workout

Progression from week to week should be increasingly difficult versions of the exercises, such as advancing to strict standard push ups from incline or elevated push ups or doing more jogging than walking. For resistance exercises, the number of reps in each set or the resistance (weight) can be increased. To progress in circuits, do more circuits.

DAY ONE

- Perform power warm up
- 10 pushups x two to four sets
- One to two minute rest
- 10 pull-ups x two to four sets
- One to two minute rest
- 30 crunches
- Two minute rest
- 20 leg raises
- One minute rest
- 30 body or Hindu squats
- 20 walking lunges x two sets
- Five modified cat stretches each side
- Two minute water break
- Two to three circuits: one minute mountain climbers, one minute burpees, one minute rest, 30 seconds mountain climbers, 30 seconds burpees, 30 seconds cycled split squat jumps and one minute rest
- Three minute water break and stretching
- 10 minute jog

DAY TWO

- Perform power warm up
- Two to four circuits: 50-yard dash, power walk back to start, 15 vertical jumps and five T-test shuffles
- Two minute stretch/water/rest
- 10 minute jogging/walking
- Five minute cool down

DAY THREE

- Perform power warm up
- Three to five circuits: 10 pushups-10 crunches-5 pullups-10 leg raises
- One minute rest
- Two minute stretch/rest
- Three to five circuits: 10 Good Mornings, five modified cat stretches, 20 body or Hindu squats
- One minute rest
- Two minute stretch/rest
- Two circuits: 30 mountain climbers, 15 burpees, 10 vertical jumps and 10 split cycled squat jumps
- Two minute rest
- Five minute cool down

DAY FOUR

- Perform power warm up
- Two to four circuits: 50-yard dash, power walk back to start, 15 vertical jumps and five T-test shuffles
- Two minute stretch/water/rest
- 10 minute jogging/walking
- Five minute cool down

DAY FIVE

- Perform power warm up
- 15 push ups x two to four sets
- One to two minutes rest between sets
- 15 pull ups x two to four sets
- One to two minutes rest between sets
- 30 to 50 crunches
- Two minutes rest
- 20 to 30 leg raises
- One minute rest
- 50 to 75 body or Hindu squats
- 20 walking lunges x two sets
- Five modified cat stretches each side
- Three minutes water break and stretching
- 15 minutes jog

Boot camp fitness programs are gaining in popularity today. The above planning and scheduling advice will enable you to plan an effective, challenging and, most importantly, fun boot camp workout for clients of all ability levels. Good luck.

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