

# Warming up.

## Do's and don'ts of a general warm up.

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# Warming up - Do's and don'ts of a general warm up.

We all know we have to do one before training, but do we all know:

- What they are for?
- Why we should do them?
- How should a warm up go?

## What are warm ups for?

A useful definition of a warm up is:

*“Warm ups are to prepare you physically and mentally for the upcoming activity”*

Note that I wrote to prepare you physically **and mentally**. A warm up shouldn't be something that you go through with your head in the clouds. It is the chance to gather your thoughts and be ready to concentrate on having a quality training session.

To prepare you, a warm up should:

- Raise your heart rate (this gets blood pumping through your body and muscles faster)
- Kick starts your energy systems (long term aerobic, short term anaerobic and instant creatine phosphate systems)
- Warm up the bodies muscles, tendons and ligaments (reducing the chances of strains and tears etc)
- Warm up the joints and allow a full Range Of Movement (ROM)
- Wake up the nervous system and give the nerves a chance to “practice” the moves to be done in the training session
- Get your head in the right frame of mind (so you are focused on training hard, and not on what's happening in Eastenders).

## Why we should do them.

I think the two main reasons we should all do warm ups, is to:

- Reduce injury risks
- Maximise performance

I hope everyone should agree with the first of these reasons, but I bet some of you are thinking “well, I don't care about maximizing performance...I'm not in a competition, I just want to get fitter/lose weight/get a bit toned/enjoy myself etc”.

Well, the way you do all those things is by progressively working harder...and the way you do that is by maximizing your performance.

So everyone should warm up...every time...no exceptions...ever...I mean this!

# How should a warm up go?

Every good warm up should be based on:

*“progressively increasing movement“.*

Or, the start of the warm up should involve relatively small movements that get bigger and bigger as the warm up progresses. Try not to think of it as a separate part of your training, but as a “rolling start”. Ideally, the movements should blend almost seamlessly into your training proper.

Note how I said “*movements*“, not “*stretches*“. The reason for this is that when most people think of stretches, they usually imagine static stretches. These are stretches that are taken to the limit of a joint and held in place for a length of time. There is a time and a place for static stretches, but it is not ideal for warm ups (I’ll do a run down of static stretches and all the other kinds in the future as long as I remember).



**Figure 1 Static stretches - not ideal for warm ups**

Remember we want to prepare the body for the upcoming training...and our training does not involve sitting/standing still for prolonged periods. It involves *moving* in dynamic, complex ways at speed, so our warm ups should be “lite” versions of this.

Because we want to prepare ourselves *for what we are about to do*, warm ups will be different depending on the training session. Here I will give an outline for a “general” warm up that can be used in general fitness sessions. In the future I will give a specific example of one that I have used before Karate training.

## **Step 1 – Joint mobility.**

Walking at a nice, easy pace, rotate wrists and ankles in both directions for about 30 seconds (loosening your wrists/ankles and keeping heart going).

Keep walking but kick your heels to your bum and bend your arms at the elbows or about 30 seconds (loosening your elbows and knees and raising your heart rate a tiny bit).

Keep walking but lift your knees as high as you can and swing your arms back and forth for about 30 seconds (loosening your shoulders and hips and raising your heart rate a little bit more).

Walking normally, then swing your arms in big circles forwards/backwards.

Do the above again, but walking backwards (this needs slightly different movement patterns and a lot of brainwork).

### **Step 2 – Get the blood pumping.**

Break into a light jog and keep your arms moving throughout. Go through the next 3 movements *while still jogging*.

- Kick your heels into bum.
- Lift knees as high as you can.
- Punch your arms in light, *big* movements.

Then, do the above *while jogging backwards*.

Do side step jogging, leading with both right and left sides.

Hopping for 30 seconds each leg.

While still jogging, do about 5 “sit-stands” (sit down then immediately stand up and continue jogging).

Then do about 5 “lie-stands” (the same as sit-stands, but you lie down flat on your back before immediately standing up and continuing jogging).

Then about 5 “single pressup-stands” (do a single pressup before standing straight up and continuing jogging).

### **Step 3 – rehearsal of the training session.**

With a priority on “keep moving”, go through the moves/exercises to be done during the training session to come.

Keep the intensity/speed down but practice the technique and work on “muscle memory”.

Gradually increase the intensity/speed until you have seamlessly started...

### **Step 4 – Training session proper.**

As I said, the above is an example of a “general” warm up for a general fitness session. It can and *should* be adapted to your needs. You need to know what you’re going to be focusing on in your main training session and gear your warm up to that.

If your session is going to be using a lot of leg work, then do more warming up and bigger moves with your legs. The same goes for your arms/upper body.

If your session is going to be a “skills” session, then chances are the intensity won’t be as great so you won’t have to prep the body so much, but you will have to get the mind and nervous system ready with extra “Rehearsal of the training session”.

Next week, I’ll post an example of a “specific” warm up. It will be how I [warm up people ready for a Karate session](#).

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