

Benefits of Cross Training



Having a regular workout routine is vital not only to help lose excess pounds and to keep them off, but also to keep your body in good working order. The old adage “use it or lose it” really applies to the human body. Stiff tendons and joints and weak muscles are a direct result of not putting them through their proper paces on a regular basis. The same goes for your lungs, heart muscles, and circulatory system. Finding yourself gasping for air after dashing for a bus or having to take the stairs when an elevator is out of order is just another warning sign that you’re not providing your body with sufficient physical stimulation to keep it working smoothly.

None of this should come as a huge surprise and hitting the gym or having a [regular walking or jogging routine](#) is becoming more common as people realize the importance of regular physical activity, but there is another piece of the exercise puzzle that often gets overlooked.

Doing the same activity over and over, whether it’s running on a treadmill or lifting weights, can eventually lock your body into a groove that is pretty much all one way. By this, I mean that the direction of your body’s motion and even the pace at which it’s performed are very consistent with little to no variety. Please don’t get me wrong, as just about any kind of exercise, provided that it’s not harming your body in any way, is much better than sitting on the couch watching TV for hours on end. What I’d like to share with you is something that took me a while to discover and something that has made a big difference in both my overall physical conditioning as well as my confidence.

A while back I developed a false sense of security in the

belief that I was in great physical shape simply because I lifted weights several days a week and also threw in some cardio at the end of my workouts if time permitted. My muscles grew and my waistline got leaner and so I thought I was in pretty good shape.

At the time I thought it was all about looking good and little else when it came to being fit. It wasn't until I attempted to participate in some other forms of physical activity such as playing basketball, playing tennis, swimming a few laps in the pool, or simply going for a hike over a hilly course that I got hit with some cold reality: I wasn't in very good shape!

This wasn't only somewhat embarrassing, but also rather confusing. How was it possible that I sweated buckets lifting weights 5 days a week in the gym, but I was severely winded running up and down a basketball court a few times or unable to reach tennis shots just out of my reach? The conclusion I came to was that firstly, I wasn't in very good cardiovascular shape because my emphasis was primarily on weight training. This situation was much more obvious than the other conclusion that I also reached, which was I was just training all one way and had not yet discovered the benefits of employing "cross training" into my physical activity regimen.

Cross training has different meanings depending on the context it's used in, so in order to clarify things for our discussion here, let's define it as performing physical activities outside of your usual exercise routine. And let's define these outside physical activities as being things outside of the gym such as sports as well as social activities involving some kind of physical movement. Listed below are just a few activities that you may wish to explore outside of your usual gym workouts:

- Racket sports such as tennis, racquetball, squash, and badminton
- Baseball and Softball

- Hockey
- Figure Skating
- Martial Arts and martial arts fitness classes
- Soccer
- Rock Climbing
- Surfing
- Skiing and snowboarding
- Golf
- Rugby
- Touch and flag football
- Bowling
- Swimming
- Hiking
- Walking, running, and jogging
- Dancing of all kinds: square dancing, ballroom, hip hop, as well as dance fitness classes such as Zumba.

The activities above can either be competitive or non-competitive and can also involve others or be performed alone. These activities will require that you learn the basics such as rules and movement as well as invest in any necessary equipment, clothing, and gear. You can take lessons if you want to get more serious. The important thing is that you challenge both your mind and your body in different ways and the best way to accomplish this is to begin moving and thinking in different directions.