# Circuit Training and Circuit Training Workouts

## Learn how to use circuit training exercises to improve all-round fitness and prevent sports injury.

Circuit training is one of my favourite training workouts, whether for myself personally, or for clients. I use circuit training as part of injury rehabilitation programs, for conditioning elite level athletes, or to help my clients lose weight. I use circuits for just about everything.

I was introduced to circuit training exercises and routines by an exceptional sports coach by the name of Col Stewart. Col is one of those rare coaches who can take just about any sport, and devise a specific training program that always produces outstanding improvements for his athletes.

Col's circuit training routines are largely responsible for the success of many of his world champion athletes. Including his son, Miles Stewart (World Champion Triathlete), Mick Doohan (World 500cc Motorcycle Champion), and countless others from sports as diverse as roller-skating, squash, and cycling.

Many other coaches are also impressed by circuit training and use it regularly. Brian Mackenzie from BrianMac.co.uk says, "*Circuit training is an excellent way to simultaneously improve mobility, strength and stamina.*"

And WorkoutsForWomen.com state "*circuit training is one of the best methods of exercising as it provides excellent all round fitness, tone, strength, and a reduction of weight and inches. In short, maximum results in minimum time.*"

**So what is Circuit Training?**

Circuit training consists of a consecutive series of timed exercises performed one after the other with varying amounts of rest between each exercise.

For example, a simple circuit training routine might consist of push-ups, sit-ups, squats, chin-ups and lunges. The routine might be structured as follows, and could be continually repeated as many times as is necessary.

Do as many push-ups as you can in 30 seconds, then rest for 30 seconds.  
Do as many squats as you can in 30 seconds, then rest for 30 seconds.  
Do as many sit-ups as you can in 30 seconds, then rest for 30 seconds.  
Do as many lunges as you can in 30 seconds, then rest for 30 seconds.  
Do as many chin-ups as you can in 30 seconds, then rest for 30 seconds.

**What makes Circuit Training so good?**

The quick pace and constant changing nature of circuit training places a unique type of stress on the body, which differs from normal exercise activities, like weight training and aerobics.

The demands of circuit training tend to prepare the body in a very even, all-round manner. I have found circuit training to be an exceptional form of exercise to aid in the prevention of injury. Circuit training is one of the best ways I've found to condition your entire body (and mind).

There are many other reasons why circuit training is a fantastic form of exercise, and what most of these reasons come down to is flexibility. In other words, circuit training is totally customizable to your specific requirements.

* Circuit training can be totally personalized. Whether you're a beginner, or an elite athlete, you can modify your circuit training routine to give you the best possible results.
* A circuit training routine can be modified to give you exactly what you want. Whether you want an all-over body workout, or you just want to work on a specific body area, or you need to work on a particular aspect of your sport, this can all be accommodated.
* Also, you can change the focus of your circuit training routine to emphasize strength, endurance, agility, speed, skill development, weight loss, or any other aspect of your fitness that is important to you.
* Circuit training is time efficient. No wasted time in between sets: Maximum results in minimum time.
* You can do circuit training just about anywhere. One of my favourite places for doing circuit training is at some of the parks and playground areas near where I live.  
  Circuit training is a favourite form of exercise for the British Royal Marine Commandos because they tend to spend a lot of time on large ships. The confined spaces means that circuit training is sometimes the only form of exercise available to them.
* You don't need expensive equipment. You don't even need a gym membership. You can just as easily put together a great circuit training routine at home or in a park. By using your imagination, you can devise all sorts of exercises using things like chairs and tables, and even children's outdoor play equipment like swings and monkey bars.
* Another reason why I like circuit training so much is that it's great fun to do in pairs or groups. Half the group exercises while the other half takes a rest and motivates the exercising members of the group.

**The Main Types of Circuit Training**

As mentioned before, circuit training can be totally customized, which means there are an unlimited number of different ways you can structure your circuit training routine. However, here are a few examples to give you some idea of the different types available.

* **Timed Circuit**: This type of circuit involves working to a set time period for both rest and exercise intervals. For example, a typical timed circuit might involve 30 seconds of exercise and 30 seconds of rest in between each exercise.
* **Competition Circuit**: This is similar to a timed circuit but you push yourself to see how many repetitions you can do in the set time period. For example, you may be able to complete 12 push-ups in 30 seconds. The idea is to keep the time period the same, but try to increase the number of repetitions you can do in the set time period.
* **Repetition Circuit**: This type of circuit is great if you're working with large groups of people who have different levels of fitness and ability. The idea is that the fittest group might do, say 20 repetitions of each exercise, the intermediate group might only do 15 repetitions, while the beginners might only do 10 repetitions of each exercise.
* **Sport Specific or Running Circuit**: This type of circuit is best done outside or in a large, open area. Choose exercises that are specific to your particular sport, or emphasize an aspect of your sport you'd like to improve. Then instead of simply resting between exercises, run easy for 200 or 400 metres. You can even use sprints or fast 400 metre runs as part of your choice of exercises.

**Some Important Precautions**

Circuit training is a fantastic form of exercise, however, the most common problem I find is that people tend to get over excited, because of the timed nature of the exercises, and push themselves harder than they normally would. This tends to result in sore muscles and joints, and an increased likelihood of injury. Below are a few precautions you need to take into consideration.

**Firstly**, your level of fitness. If you've never done any sort of circuit training before, even if you consider yourself quite fit, start off slowly. The nature of circuit training is quite different to any other form of exercise. It places different demand on the body and mind, and if you're not used to it, it will take a few sessions for your body to adapt to this new form of training. Be patient.

**Secondly**, you're [warm-up](http://www.thestretchinghandbook.com/archives/warm-up.php) and [cool-down](http://www.thestretchinghandbook.com/archives/cool-down.php) are crucial. Do not start a circuit training routine without a thorough warm-up that includes stretching. As I mentioned before, circuit training is very different from other forms of exercise. Your body must be prepared for circuit training before you start your session.

And **lastly**, you need to make stretching and flexibility training a regular part of your circuit training routines. The added intensity of circuits requires that your muscles and joints be flexible and supple.

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