

Ultimate Stair Exercises

How to Develop Maximum Strength, Power, Flexibility & Conditioning using Stair Exercises



By Virgil Aponte, MS

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Power, Flexibility & Conditioning using
Stair Exercises.

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Ultimate Stair Exercises DVD Set!

Pictures are a great teaching tool but nothing beats seeing the exercises performed in live action. To purchase your DVD set visit:

www.StairExercises.com

**For questions or comments:
Email: Virgil@VirgilAponte.com**

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Disclaimer:

The exercises and advice contained in this book may be too strenuous or dangerous for some people, and the reader(s) regardless of your current health status should consult with a qualified medical practitioner to ensure that it is appropriate for you to undertake this exercise program. The information contained in this book is for individuals in good health. It is highly recommended that you consult with a qualified personal trainer or coach before engaging in these exercises and programs. Proceed with caution and at your own risk. The producers of this product, its related affiliate's, employees and sponsors assume no liabilities for actions undertaken as a result of reading this book. If you do not wish to be bound by the above, you may return your copy to the producers for a full refund.

Praise for Ultimate Stair Exercises

“I don’t ever have to worry about finding a place to workout when I’m on a road trip. I just use the staircases at my hotel. It saves time, and is just as effective as going to a gym.”

Tari Phillips
WNBA New York Liberty All-Star Center
Member of Team USA

“Stair exercises give you more bang for your buck. There is no comparison!”

Tamika Whitmore
WNBA Los Angeles Sparks Power Forward

“You’ll be so amazed by how simple and effective these exercises are that you’ll wonder why you haven’t thought of it yourself.”

Robert Gunderson
New York City PSAL Champion Softball Coach

“Only Virgil could take something as simple as stair climbing and turn it into a system for improving so many facets of a strength and conditioning program. He’s a genius at simplicity.”

Colleen O’Brien
New York City Personal Trainer

“I didn’t know you could do so much with just stair exercises. The list of exercises is exhaustive and caters to so much. What an excellent product.

Joseph Sierra
NYC PSAL Basketball & Softball Coach

“Forget about not having enough equipment. We have our minds and bodies. And with real stair climbing, we now have it all.”

Walter Jordan
NYC PSAL Varsity Basketball Coach

Dedicated To:

Mami: For Teaching Me Perseverance

Papi: For Teaching Me to be Humble

Brad: For Inspiring Me to Believe in Myself and to Follow All of My Dreams

Lyli: For Always Watching over your Little Brother

My Students at Bushwick High School: Thank you for teaching me how to teach.

All the experts, my mentors and teachers in the field of exercise science. I am an extension of what you are and have taught me.

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This Book Is For You!

This book is for anyone with access to staircases or stairs who wants to improve his or her current level of strength & conditioning. It's for men & women. Whether you are a high school or college student/athlete, a top flight professional athlete, a weekend warrior, a homemaker, a business person and so on the exercises and workouts in this book can help you improve your strength, power, flexibility and conditioning.

Listed Below are some of the many benefits you can expect by learning and using the exercises in *Ultimate Stair Exercises*.

1. Improved Strength
2. Improved Power
3. Improved Flexibility
4. Improved Balance & Coordination
5. Improved Aerobic Endurance
6. Improved Anaerobic Conditioning
7. Reduce body fat, achieve and maintain an ideal bodyweight.
8. Build legs that can go forever and buns of steel.
9. Reduce or eliminate joint pain.
10. Workouts can be done in as little as 15 minutes
11. No expensive equipment is required. (Just access to stairs)

Introduction

I started using stair climbing workouts back in 1998 because of my inability to do any exercise due to a hernia operation. My doctor recommended that I not lift weights, (which I loved) for three months. I foolishly returned to weight training a week later, only to aggravate my condition. During a weight workout, I incurred a serious abdominal pull that took about four months to heal. Because of this, I could not lift weights, run, or even swim. The only thing I could really do was stationary cycling which I hated.

My discovery of stair exercises came when I had to walk up 19 flights of stairs to visit a friend of mine. His elevator was out of service. Anyone who has done this knows how tough this can be. But my big surprise was that it did not aggravate my abdominal injury. After that day, I decided to give stair climbing workouts a try and have been using them ever since.

Because I was so out of shape at the time I used stair workouts just to improve my aerobic conditioning. I started walking 3 to 4 rounds of 20 flights, 3 to 4 times a week. I used 20 flights because that is what I had available. My friend's building was 20 stories high. I wish it was 50 stories high though ☺. I eventually built up to 10 rounds of 20 flights in about four months.

I would start out each workout with a slow walk to the top and then stretch my lower body. I would then take the elevator down and repeat. With each set or round, I would try to pick up the pace to increase the intensity if I could. Eventually I was able to walk up 20 flights of stairs in 2 minutes and 15 seconds. Many people ask why I didn't walk down instead of taking the elevator.

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The main reason was that of safety. I felt walking down with fatigued legs was dangerous (I could fall), it really was not challenging enough to improve my conditioning and it took too long. As I continued to do stair workouts, I began to use walking down steps to improve the eccentric and deceleration strength of my legs, but overall the majority of the workouts were going up the stairs.

After about five months, I was able to begin weight training ☺. The stair climbing workouts allowed me to vastly improve my aerobic conditioning while allowing my abdominal pull to heal. Now the problem was finding time to do both because I now felt stair climbing was so valuable and I needed to keep it in my regimen. I decided to do two stair workouts and two weight workouts a week. As time went by, I became more creative with stair climbing.

- I began using a weighted vest to increase workout intensity
- I used a heart rate monitor to gauge workout intensity and monitor recovery
- I used stair lunges to increase leg strength.
- I walked down stairs to improve deceleration mechanics and eccentric leg strength.
- I used dumbbells to further increase leg strength and upper body strength.
- I added plyometrics to increase lower body power (stairs lend themselves great to plyometrics).

- I added running up stairs to increase my anaerobic conditioning. Besides all out sprinting I have not found an anaerobic workout that wipes me out more than all out, full speed stair climbing. It is also very time efficient. Some of my anaerobic workouts can be done in 15 minutes.
- I added stretching for chronically tight areas of my body, both static and dynamic stretching.

Adding stair workouts also helped me to balance out my total routine. Before my hernia surgery, I mainly focused on weight training (mainly because I loved to lift weights and found most aerobics boring). I was strong but my aerobic conditioning was minimal. Now I have a combination with both. I guess I really appreciated stair workouts for keeping me fit while I was not able to strength train. I actually prefer stairs to running because they are just as tough, but much more forgiving to my joints. They can also address many different strength and conditioning needs.

I decided to write this book in an attempt to share my experience with stair workouts and pass on a valuable conditioning tool. I believe the more conditioning tools you have the more successful you can be in your strength, fitness and health related quests. One never knows when it might be helpful. The more conditioning tools you have the easier it is to adapt to different training situations.

In my experience as a personal trainer, I have used weights, machines, pulleys, bands, stairs, tracks, aerobic equipment, body weight, and weighted vests for myself as well as my students, clients and professional athletes. I found that many times it is not what you think is best, but what is actually available. So when someone shows you a new way to improve a facet of strength and conditioning, do not be narrow-minded. You might be able to use this information at some point. I was resistant about the use of bands, but eventually found them to be very useful in a private personal training setting with a number of clients.

Good examples of this are the female professional basketball players I've worked with. The New York Liberty's Assistant Coach, Jeff House expressed to me that many players were not getting enough conditioning work on the road due to the lack of facilities. I asked him do the athletes have access to staircases and the rest is history.

New York Liberty's starting power forward (Tamika Whitmore) raved about how the stair workouts wiped her out and all she had to do was walk out of her hotel room and into the staircases. Tamika Whitmore told me herself, you cannot compare Stairmasters, stationary bikes, or even treadmills to Real Stair climbing because there is no comparison. The truth is you just get more bang for your buck. In fact, every Liberty player got a stair workout sheet along with their strength and conditioning printout for the rest of the season.

Ultimate Stair Workouts: Jargon, Definitions,

Real Stair Climbing: Real stair climbing is the actual use of stairs and stair cases. I do this to differentiate it from modifications like the Stairmaster™ and Stepmill™. Although equipment like the Stairmaster™ and Stepmill™ can have great value they cannot compare to what Real Stair Climbing has to offer.

Climbs or Climbing: The actual act of walking or running up staircases.

Round or sets: From the first floor to the top floor and back down is considered a round of stair climbing. This is not written in stone. Call it what you like. I also sometimes call it a set. Also in my own workouts, I rarely walk downstairs. I usually take the elevator down for safety reasons, but also keep in mind in the high school I work in we have to use the stairs to get back down, but we make it a point not to run downstairs and just walk down and take our time. It is not going to improve our conditioning, but in this case safety takes the precedent over improvement.

With all this in mind let's take a closer look at what ***Ultimate Stair Exercises*** have to offer:

Ultimate Stair Exercises for Aerobic Fitness:

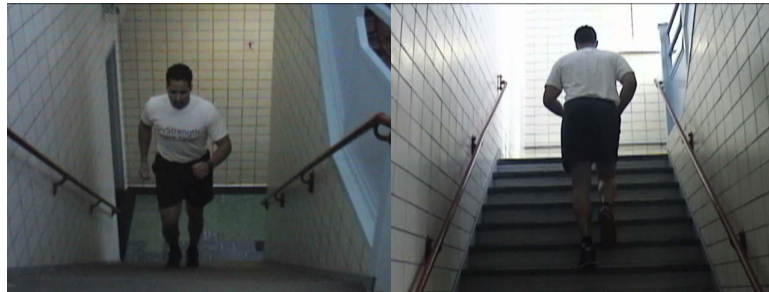
Aerobic fitness can be improved by simply walking up stairs. In my experience I usually have access to 20 flights of stairs. As I stated earlier, I wish I had more. My first round up to the top serves as a warm-up. I walk up slowly and take my time. Twenty flights takes me anywhere from 4 to 5 minutes. When I reach the top I stretch for a few minutes. Initially I started with just lower body stretches, but eventually included upper body stretches. I usually hold each stretch anywhere from 10 to 30 seconds.

In my second round I pick up the pace a bit. One thing to remember is that it does not take much to increase the intensity with Real Stair Climbing. By simply pushing my walking pace to around 3 minutes and 45 seconds, I can easily get into my aerobic zone or even higher.

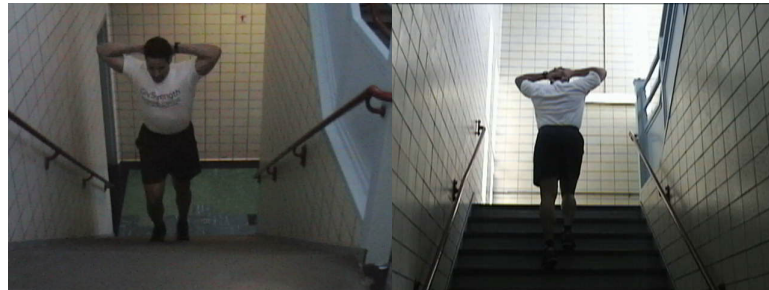
Aerobic Exercise Descriptions & Ideas:

There are many ways one can actually walk up the stairs. To add variation to your workouts here are some ideas. Feel free to create your own ideas as well. Just remember to always put safety ahead of anything else.

- 1. Regular walking:** simply walking up stairs as you would normally do. To adjust the intensity here you simply walk faster or slower. I usually change this from round to round.

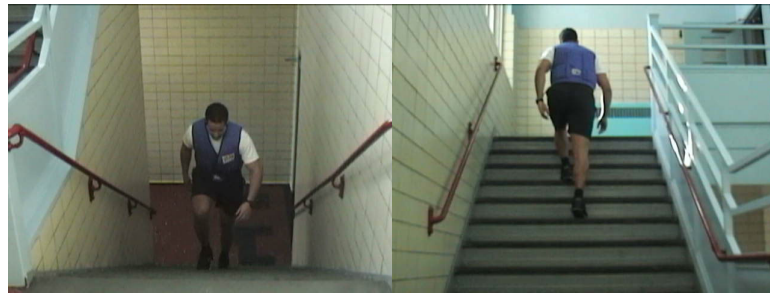


- 2. Hands behind the Head:** Another way to increase the difficulty of stair climbing is to place your hands behind your head. This variation will make walking up the stairs more difficult by challenging your balance and increasing the work demands of your legs.

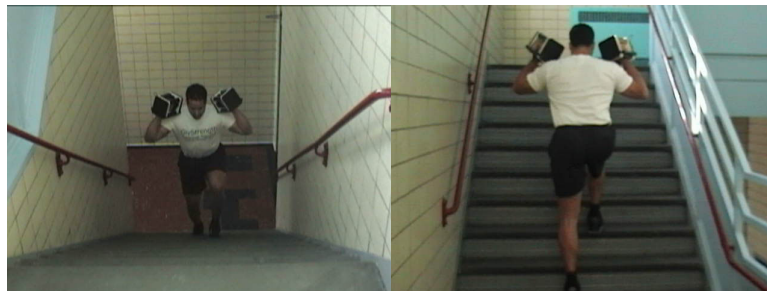


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3. Use a Weighted Vest: Another change is with the use of weighted vest. This will increase your workout intensity by forcing you to carry more weight. It's like trying to exercise with a heavy coat on. If you don't have a weighted vest you can use a coat.

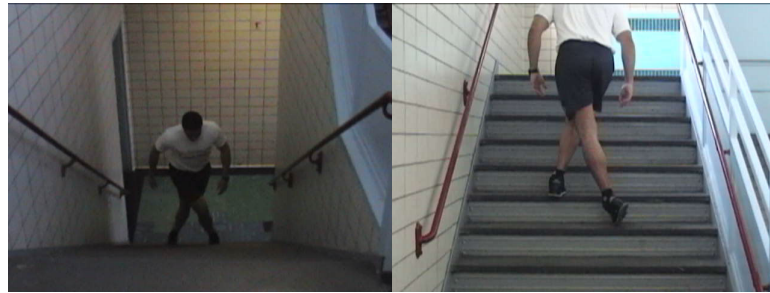


4. Use Dumbbells: Ever walk up the stairs with grocery bags. This is what using dumbbells will feel like. Just make sure to keep the weights light enough to complete your climbs. Using too heavy a weight can turn your aerobic climbs into strength climbs. If you don't have dumbbells you can use grocery bags, or milk gallons. You can also do dumbbell exercises before, after, or between your stair climbs.



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5. Crossover Steps Forward: Walking up the stairs this way will allow for more variation and also addresses training in what experts call the frontal and transverse planes of motion. This simply means moving from side to side and with rotation. Training this way also allows you to improve dynamic flexibility and improve your strength balance. Most people only have adequate strength going straight ahead (sagittal plane) and lack strength side to side (frontal plane) and while rotating (transverse plane).



6. Crossover Steps from Side: Another variation of crossover steps is doing them from the side. The main reason I like this is because it allows you to find which side is weaker. Once you learn which is the weaker side you can begin to focus on it more and improve your overall balance.



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7. Side to Side Steps Facing Forward: This variation is great for improving knee stability and is similar to cutting moves seen in basketball and football.



8. Side Steps from the Side: Another variation of side steps are doing them from the side. Once again it's great for finding which leg is weaker and needs more work as well as improving strength in the frontal plane.



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9. Groin Steps: This variation is one I've used from time to time to target the inner thigh and groin area (a common problem among many athletes).



10. Use of calisthenics or bodyweight exercises: These have proved to be a great addition to stair climbing workouts. You name it: pushups, handstand pushups, jumping jacks, squats, lunges and what ever you can think of. Just remember to always keep safety in mind. For those with access to only a few flights: A combination of calisthenics combined with short stair climbs will give you a great workout.

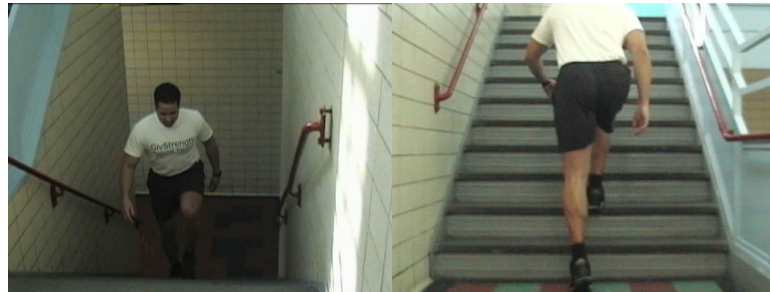


One-arm pushups

11. Use of a Jump Rope: With a jump rope you can increase the intensity of your workout simply by skipping before or after your stair climbs. I have used them before and after my climbs in between flights and so on. The use of a jump rope is also an excellent way to warm up. Also, keep in mind, if you have access to only a few flights a jump rope can really help here. One of clients only has access to 2 flights of stairs. So she jumps for 30 seconds climbs 2 flights and then jumps again for 30 seconds and so on. I really don't understand why many people don't make use of a jump rope. Especially athletes that jump a lot like volleyball and basketball players. I guess because it's so simple many people just dismiss. It's too simple and low tech so it must not be good (not true ☺). Even though a jump rope is a very simple piece of equipment and very affordable, if you really get into it the workouts can be brutal.



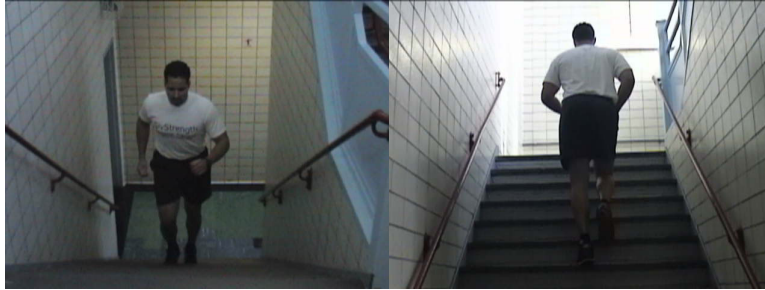
12. Climb every 2 steps: Here's another variation for those who have adequate leg strength. As you will see there is a big difference in walking up 20 flights using every 2 steps. Most people who can easily walk up 20 flights of stairs may find that they can't climb 20 flights going every 2 steps. But for those who can do so it's an amazing workout. Just remember what you're trying to address. For someone who doesn't have adequate leg strength going every 2 steps can make your workout a strength workout or an anaerobic workout. Again, keep in mind what you are trying to address.



Aerobic Conditioning Workouts:

Workout 1: Regular walking (1 or 2 steps at a time)

Round 1: Warm-up: Walk up 20 flights at a slow pace (4 to 5 minutes) and then stretch at the top.



Take elevator down or walk down.

Round 2: Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 45 seconds).

Take elevator down.

Round 3: Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 30 seconds).

Take elevator down.

Round 4: Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 15 seconds).

Take elevator down.

Round 5: Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes).

Take elevator down.

Round 6: Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace. This is usually my last round at my fastest pace (2 minutes and 30 seconds to 2 minutes and 50 seconds). Relax and stretch a few minutes.

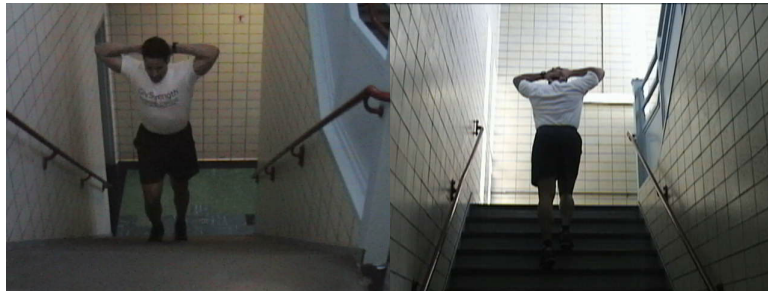
Note*: Keep in mind that in this workout I've walked each round. It doesn't take much to get a great workout by simply walking up the stairs. Also keep in mind that climbing every 2 steps is very difficult and requires adequate strength. If climbing 2 steps is too difficult it can change your workout into a strength workout.

Workout 2: Regular Walking with Hands Behind the head. (1 or 2 steps at a time)

Round 1: Warm-up: Walk up 20 flights (1 step at a time) at a slow pace (4 to 5 minutes) and then stretch at the top.

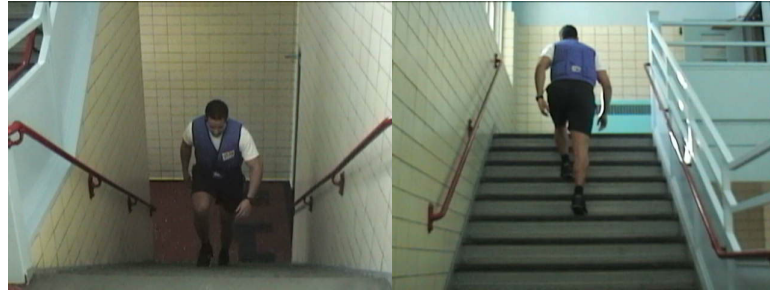
Take elevator down.

Perform the rest of the workout as you would workout #1 except place your hands behind your head. This will increase the work demands of your legs and challenge your balance.



Workout 3: Regular Walking with Weighted Vest (1or 2 steps at a time)

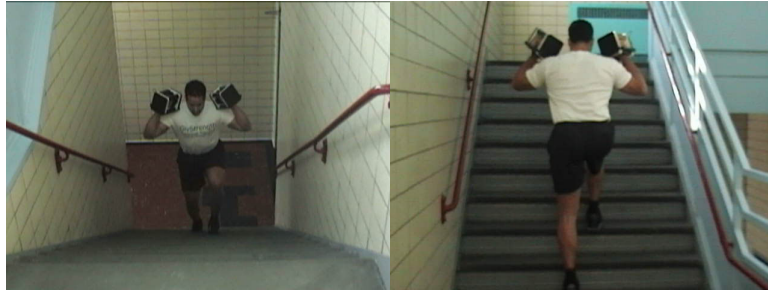
Perform this workout as you would workout #1 except you'll be using a weighted vest.



Note: Since the goal of this workout is aerobic conditioning make sure to use a weight that will allow you to complete your climbs. In other words use a light enough weight so that the workout doesn't become a strength workout. In my experience a 1-10 lbs is more than enough.

Workout 4: Regular walking with Dumbbells (1or 2 steps at a time)

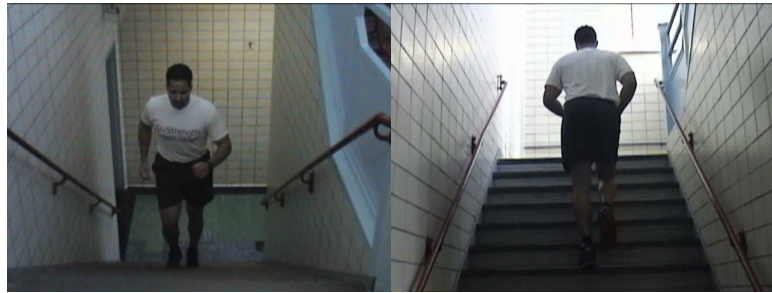
Perform this workout as you would workout #1 except you'll be using dumbbells.



Note: Since the goal of this workout is aerobic conditioning make sure to use a weight that will allow you to complete your climbs. In other words use a light enough weight so that the workout doesn't become a strength workout.

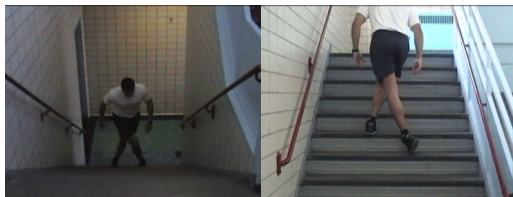
Workout 5: Regular walking with crossovers and side steps. (1 or 2 steps at a time)

Round 1: Warm-up: Walk up 20 flights at a slow pace (4 to 5 minutes) and then stretch at the top.

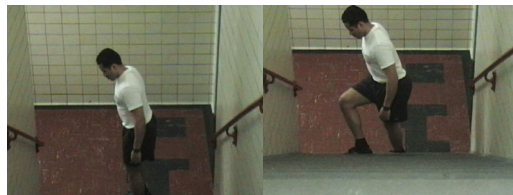


Take elevator down.

Round 2: Walk up 10 flights using the crossover forward
Walk up 10 flights using the crossover from the side



Crossover Forward

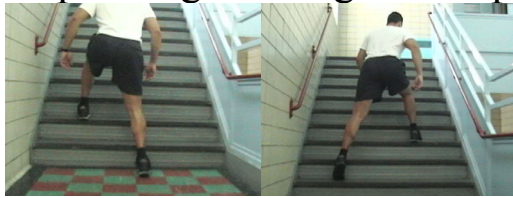


Crossover from side

Take elevator down.

Round 3: Walk up 10 flights using the side to side steps facing forward

Walk up 10 flights using side step ups



Side to Side steps forward



Side step ups

Take elevator down.

Round 4: Repeat round 2 (use a faster pace)

Take elevator down.

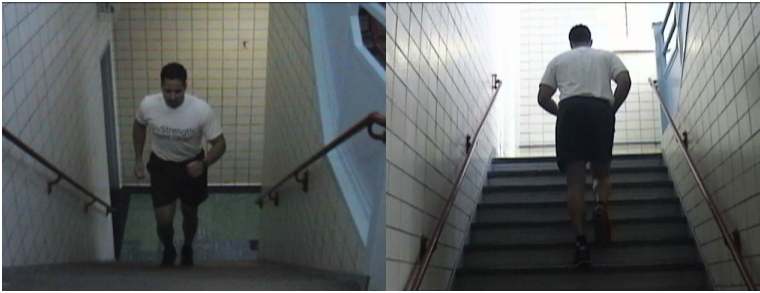
Round 5: Repeat round 3 (use a faster pace)

Take elevator down.

Note*: Keep in mind that in this workout I've walked each round. It doesn't take much to get a great workout by simply walking up the stairs.

***Workout 6: Regular walking (1 or 2 steps at a time)
combined with jump rope***

Round 1: Warm-up: Walk up 20 flights at a slow pace (4 to 5 minutes) and then stretch at the top.



Regular walking

Take elevator down.

Round 2: Jump Rope for 30 seconds to 1 minute
Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 45 seconds).



Rope Jumping

Take elevator down.

Round 3: Jump rope 30 seconds to 1 minute
Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 30 seconds).

Take elevator down.

Round 4: Jump rope 30 seconds to 1 minute
Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 15 seconds).

Take elevator down.

Round 5: Jump rope 30 seconds to 1 minute
Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes).

Take elevator down.

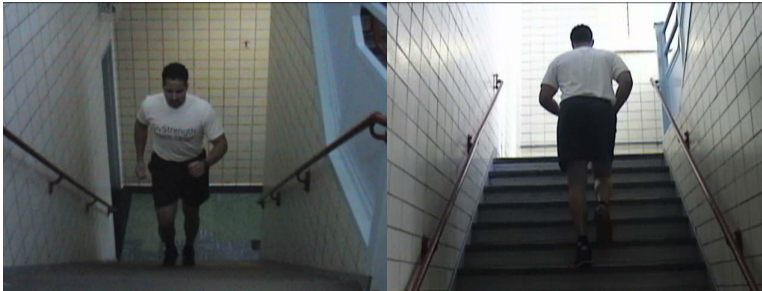
Round 6: Jump rope 30 seconds to 1 minute
Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace.

Usually my last round at my fastest pace (2 minutes and 30 seconds to 2 minutes and 50 seconds). Relax and stretch a few minutes.

Note*: Keep in mind that in this workout I've walked each round. It doesn't take much to get a great workout by simply walking up the stairs.

Workout 7: Regular walking (1 or 2 steps at a time) combined with dumbbell exercises, calisthenics or bodyweight exercises.

Round 1: Warm-up: Walk up 20 flights at a slow pace (4 to 5 minutes) and then stretch at the top.



Regular walking

Take elevator down.

Round 2: One arm pushups (as many as you can)
Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 45 seconds).
One arm pushups (as many as you can)



One arm pushups

Take elevator down.

Round 3: Handstand pushups (as many as you can)

Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 30 seconds).

Handstand pushups (as many as you can)



Handstand Pushups

Take elevator down.

Round 4: Regular pushups (as many as you can)

Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes 15 seconds).

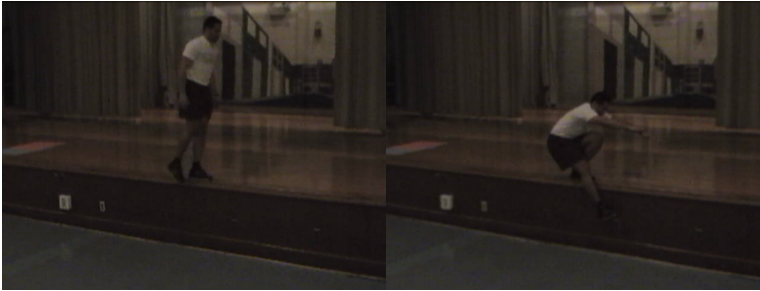
Regular pushups (as many as you can)



Regular Pushups

Take elevator down.

Round 5: One legged squats (as many as you can on each leg)
Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (3 minutes).
One legged squats (as many as you can on each leg)



One Legged Squats

Take elevator down.

Round 6: Strength Endurance squats (50-100)
Walk up 20 flights at a faster pace (2 minutes 45 seconds)
Strength Endurance squats (50-100)



Squats

Note*: Keep in mind that in this workout I've walked each round. It doesn't take much to get a great workout by simply walking up the stairs. Also keep in mind that climbing every 2 steps is very difficult and requires adequate strength. If climbing 2 steps is too difficult it can change your workout into a strength workout.

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Ultimate Stair Exercises for Anaerobic Conditioning:

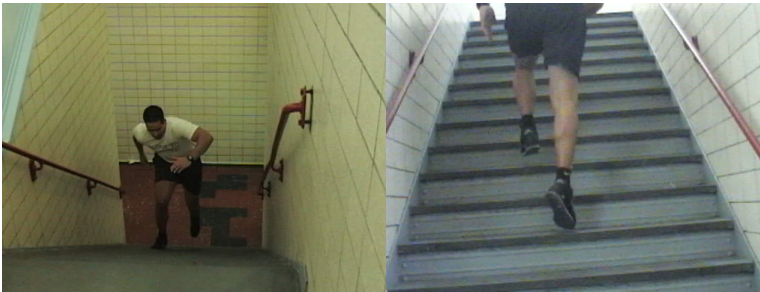
My favorite use of stair climbing is anaerobic conditioning. As with any workout start off with a warm-up and stretching. I suggest you use one round of walking up the stairs and then proceed to the anaerobic work. In my own workouts I prefer to run up the stairs for anaerobic work but you could also walk very fast. I also prefer to climb every 2 steps but you could use every step. Experimentation will help you decide what works best for you. In my own anaerobic workouts I usually climb 6 to 12 flights at full speed and then rest for 2 to 3 minutes. During my rest period I usually continue to walk up a few flights. I find this allows me to recover faster. Experiment to find what works best for you. I usually perform anywhere from 4 to 10 sets.

Anaerobic Exercise Descriptions & Ideas:

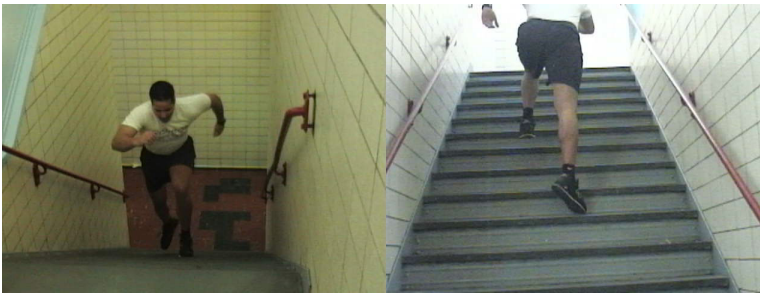
1. Change how many steps you use: You can use 1 step, 2 steps or even 3 steps. Why not 4 steps? In my experience 4 steps were just too much and wasn't worth the safety risk. But if you can run up stairs using 4 steps go for it. The toughest climbs in anaerobic climbs (runs) are using 3 steps. This is very advanced as it requires adequate strength and power just to do them. Many athletes I train can do 3 step anaerobic runs for 10-12 flights in around 30-40 seconds.



One Step



Two Steps



Three Steps

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2. Use larger steps: Besides using 2 or 3 steps you can also make use of larger steps (if you have access of course). At the high school I work at we have access to double size concrete steps that we use to do some anaerobic work, strength work and power development work. Each step is about the size of 2 steps.



Giant Steps (each step is about the size of 2 standard steps)

3. Add rounds: As your conditioning improves you can add more rounds for further improvements.

4. Add flights: Again, as your conditioning improves you can add more flights to challenge you further.

5. Reduce rest intervals: Another way to change your workouts is to change how long you rest between your anaerobic runs. Just changing your rest intervals by 30 seconds can make a huge difference.

6. Use a weighted vest: Another change is with the use of a weighted vest. As with aerobic training this will increase your workout intensity by forcing you to carry more weight. It's like trying to exercise with a heavy coat on. If you don't have a weighted vest you can use a coat.



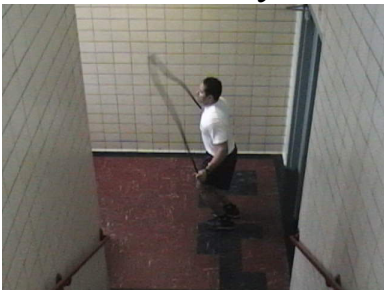
7. All out sprint to the 20th floor: Another great anaerobic conditioning tool is an all out sprint to the 20th floor (that's if you have 20 flights of course). By the 18th floor your legs can barely move. You'll be forced to walk but your body will still be in an anaerobic zone. When I'm pressed for time I use this as a workout. Just do 1 or 2 warm-up rounds of 20 flights and then use the third round as the sprint to the 20th floor.

8. Anaerobic Training with Groups: Another fun way to do anaerobic training with groups (especially athletes) is to race up flights of stairs. One person uses one stairwell and the other the opposite. An all out race to the top will challenge even the best conditioned athletes. With the high school student/athletes I've worked with we had access to 12 flights and racing up those stairs proved to be one of the best ways to condition athletes. They didn't see it as a workout but just a race. So just calling it a race really motivated them. Remember to try and pair people of equal ability.



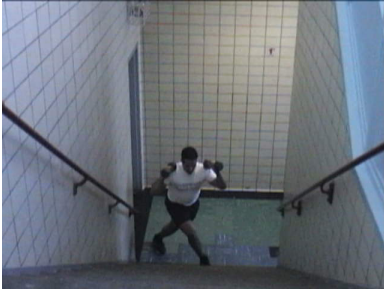
Race up Stairs

9. Mix in Rope Jumping: As stated earlier with a jump rope you can increase the intensity of your workout simply by skipping before or after your anaerobic runs.



10. Make use of dumbbells, calisthenics or bodyweight exercises:

These have proved to be a great addition to anaerobic work. You can use these exercises before or after your runs. Combining traditional exercises with anaerobic runs provides a different training stimulus and can help you save time and give you a brutal workout.



Dumbbell Exercises



Bodyweight Exercises

There are many ways to do Anaerobic conditioning in stair cases. Just remember to be safe and what you're trying to address. Anaerobic work should have you breathless. To get an idea of how you should feel, run a ¼ mile track at full speed and you'll see what I mean.

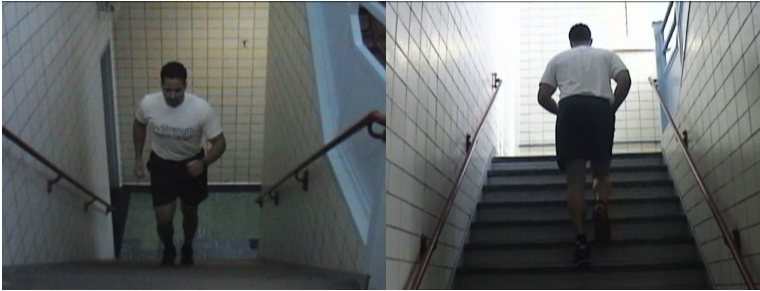
I think the main reason I like anaerobic conditioning so much is because it gives you more bang for your buck. I find that conditioning is a limiting factor in many athletes. Many complain that they just don't have the strength late in games. I think they have the strength it's just their lack of conditioning doesn't allow them to use it. I find myself outlasting many high school students in basketball games and I think one big reason is my conditioning. The only thing I usually have over the student/athletes is strength. They are usually quicker, more powerful, and more skilled. But my teams usually prevail in games because I don't tire easily. It also helps that I've been playing for over 20 years but I certainly notice the difference of how I feel (great) and how they look late in games (gasping for air and bent over) ☺.

Anaerobic Conditioning Workouts:

Workout 1: Running up stairs (1, 2 or 3 steps)

Round 1: warm-up: walk up 20 flights at slow pace (4 to 5 minutes)

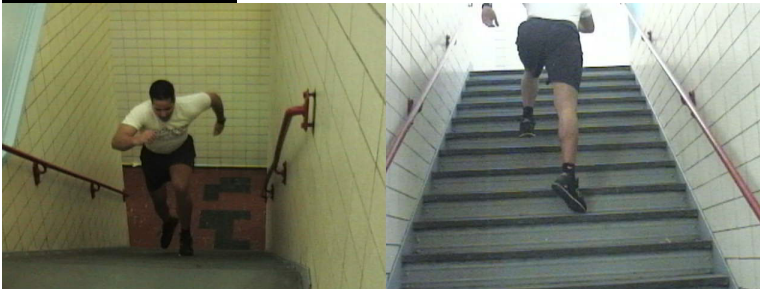
Take elevator or walk down



Regular walking

Round 2: warm-up: Run up 10 flights (go half speed), (1 minute)

Rest 2 minutes



Round 3: Run up 10 flights (full speed), (30 to 45 seconds)

Rest 2 to 3 minutes

Round 4: Repeat Round 3

Round 5: Repeat Round 4

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Workout 2: Running up stairs with a weighted vest (1, 2, or 3 steps)



**Same as workout 2 except use a weighted vest.*

Workout 3: All out sprint to the 20th Floor (1, 2 or 3 steps)

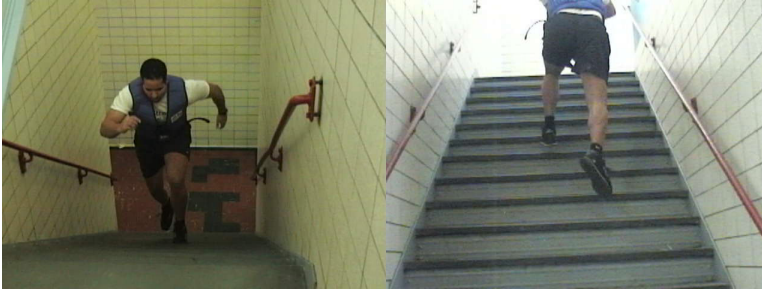
Round 1: warm-up: walk up 10 flights at a slow pace (4-5 minutes)
Take elevator down or walk down

Round 2: warm-up: run up 10 flights at half speed (1 minute)
Take elevator down or walk down

Round 3: run up to the 20th floor at full speed. (2 minutes) Keep in mind that most people will not be able to run up to the 20th floor at full speed. I myself usually tank at around 15 or 16 flights. After that I continue to walk until I reach the 20th floor. Don't let this fool you as it's still tough to reach the top because my legs feel like jelly.

After you recover from this round you can stretch.

Workout 4: All out sprint to the 20th Floor with a weighted vest. (1, 2 or 3 steps)



****Same as workout 3 except use a weighted vest.***

Workout 5: Running up stairs (1, 2 or 3 steps at a time) combined with jump rope

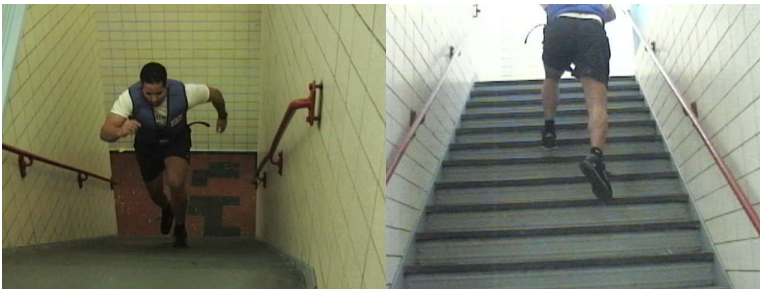
Round 1: warm-up: Walk up 10-20 flights at a slow pace (2-5 minutes)



Regular walking

Stretch at top and then take elevator or walk down

Round 2: Jump rope for 30 seconds to 1 minute
Run up 10 flights (go half speed), (1 minute)



Rest 2-3 minutes

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Round 3: Jump rope for 30 seconds to 1 minute
Run up 10 flights (full speed), (30-45 seconds)

Rest 2-3 minutes

Round 4: Repeat round 3

Round 5: Repeat round 4

Workout 6: Running up stairs (1, 2 or 3 steps at a time) combined with dumbbell exercises or calisthenics or bodyweight exercises.

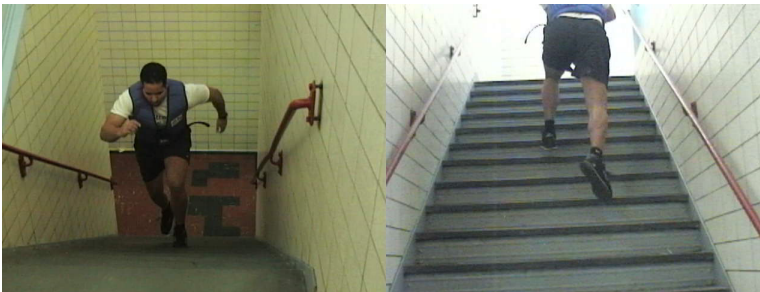
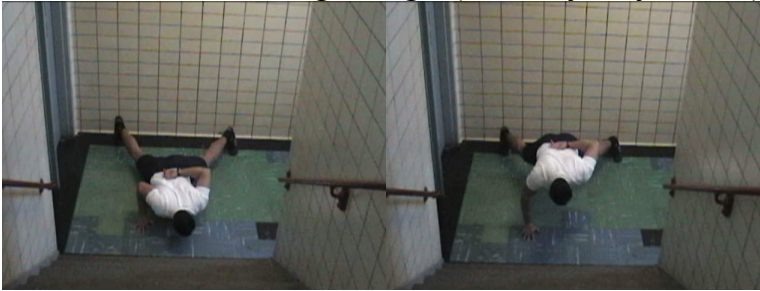
Round 1: warm-up: Walk up 10-20 flights at a slow pace (2-5 minutes)



Regular walking

Stretch at top and then take elevator or walk down

Round 2: One arm pushups (as many as you can)
Run up 10 flights (go half speed), (1 minute)
One arm pushups (as many as you can)



Rest 2-3 minutes

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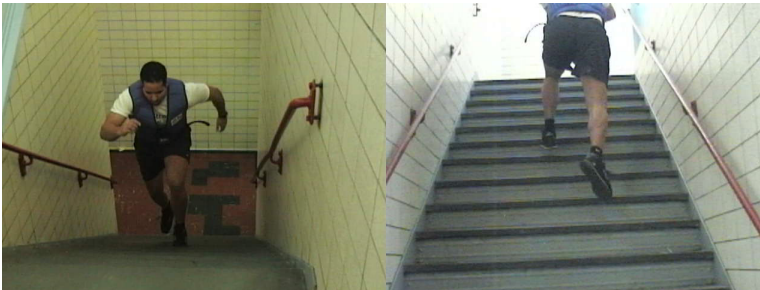
Round 3: Handstand pushups (as many as you can)
Run up 10 flights (full speed), (30-45 seconds)
Handstand pushups (as many as you can)



Rest 2-3 minutes

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Round 4: Regular pushups (as many as you can)
Run up 10 flights (full speed), (30-45 seconds)
Regular pushups (as many as you can)



Rest 2-3 minutes

Round 5: Repeat round 2, 3, or 4

Rest 2-3 minutes

Round 6: Repeat round 2, 3, or 4

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Ultimate Stair Exercises for Lower body Strength

The way to improve lower body strength in stair-workouts is to climb every other step (essentially performing a lunge). Because doing this puts your legs in a mechanical disadvantage your muscles have to get stronger to overcome this disadvantage. I also have certain people climb every three steps to challenge them even further. But this is usually left to very tall people or last people with very long legs. Two steps is usually enough to challenge most anyone.

For the purpose of strength improvement it's only necessary to do 1 to 5 sets of 1 to 30 repetitions on each leg. You can either alternate or use 1 leg at a time. As your strength improves you can either increase repetitions, resistance (via dumbbells, barbells, weighted vests, sandbags etc...), or speed to challenge yourself further.

Although I've done 20 flights of stair lunges totaling around 60 repetitions each leg it's important to remember the goal of the workout (are you trying to improve strength or strength endurance). Strength protocols usually only call for between 1 & 20 repetitions for a few sets. But feel free to experiment as nothing is written in stone.

One day I decided to see how hard it would be to climb every other step to the 20th floor. What a workout that was! Is it really strength training in technical terms? No, but if you're able to do this you will have achieved a high level of strength endurance that many people will never achieve.

Another way to do stair lunges is to use diagonal, cross-over and side lunges. The great thing about using these lunges is they address exercising in different planes of motion. Most people exercise in straight line forward or what experts call the sagittal plane. Most people have plenty of strength in this plane. It's in the side to side (Frontal plane) and the rotational (Transverse plane) that people are weakest in. It's no coincidence that people get hurt in these planes. Most ankle injuries occur in the frontal plane and many knee injuries occur in the transverse plane.

Stair climbing lends itself very well to doing lunges in all planes of motion and can really help someone improve their strength in all planes of motion to balance out their strengths and weaknesses. In my own experience I've went for weeks with just doing stair-climbing in frontal and transverse planes and my knees have never felt better.

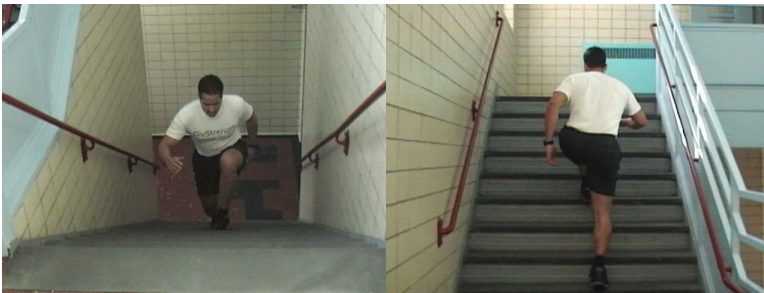
Walking down stairs can also be used to improve eccentric and deceleration strength which is very important in everyday life as well as sports. Always remember to use caution when going down stairs (because of the risk of falling). I prefer to just use the first couple of steps and just work down from there. For obvious reasons one should never run down the stairs (it's too dangerous). Always remember safety first.

Strength Development Exercise Descriptions & Ideas:

1. Change how many steps you use: Normally I prefer to use 2 steps but you can also use 3 steps when doing stair lunges. In my experience this has been possible with taller people or at least those with longer legs. One thing I'll tell you though: That 1 extra step makes a big difference and will challenge almost anyone I know.



2 steps



3 Steps

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2. Lunge in Different Directions: Besides using the traditional straight forward lunges you can also do crossover lunges, crossover lunges from the side, side steps ups and so forth. As stated earlier this will address training in what experts call the frontal and transverse planes of motion. This simply means moving from side to side and with rotation. Training this way will also allows you to improve dynamic flexibility and improve your strength balance. Most people only have adequate strength going straight ahead (sagittal plane) and lack strength side to side (frontal plane) and while rotating (transverse plane).

Crossover forward

1.



2.



Walking up the stairs using this crossover motion is an excellent way to improve your legs dynamic flexibility and will also strengthen you in the transverse and frontal planes of motion.

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Crossover from side

1.



2.



The main reason to use this crossover variation is that it allows you to find which side is weaker and work on strengthening that side.

Side to Side Steps Facing Forward



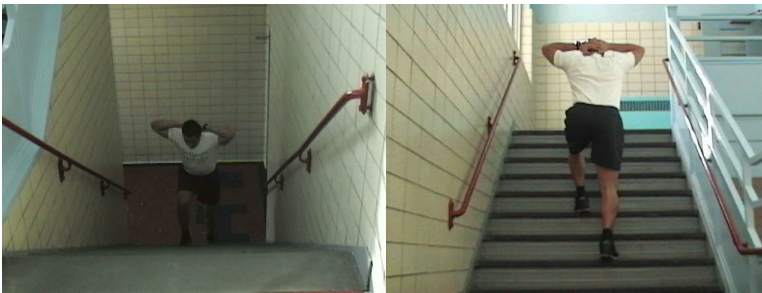
This variation is excellent for improving knee stability and is similar to cutting moves seen in soccer and football.

Side Step ups



Once again this is great for finding which side is weaker and allows you work on that particular weakness. It's also great for improving strength in the frontal plane. By the way most ankle injuries occur in the frontal plane.

Hands behind the head: Another way to increase the difficulty of your strength workouts is to place your hands behind your head. This variation will make walking up the stairs more difficult by challenging your balance and increasing the work demands of your legs.



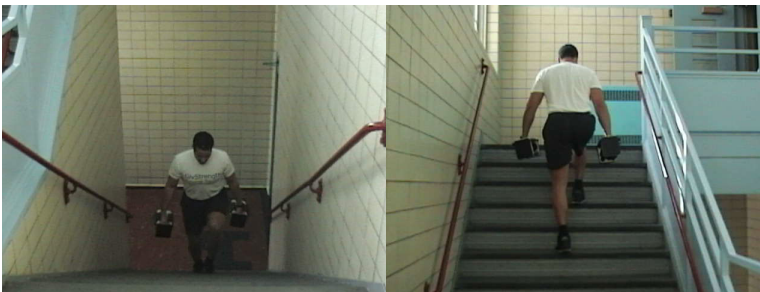
3. Add more reps and sets: As your conditioning improves you can add more reps and sets for further improvements. Just keep in mind what you're trying to accomplish. If you start doing sets of 50 lunges you'll be doing aerobic training as opposed to strength training.

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4. Use a weighted vest: Another change is with the use of a weighted vest. It's a great way to add external resistance when 20-30 lunges start to become too easy.



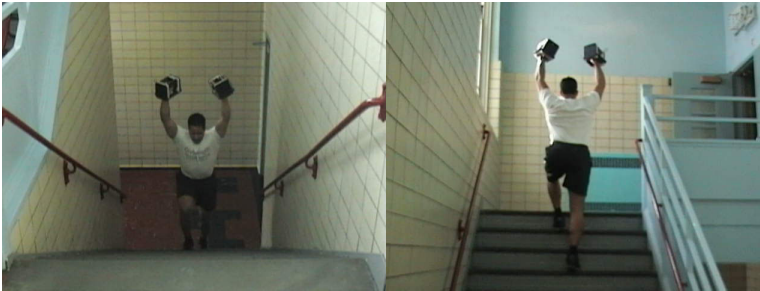
Use Dumbbells: Another way to add external resistance when things get to easy is with the use of dumbbells.



6. Change how you carry the dumbbells: You can carry dumbbells at your side, at shoulder length or with your arms extended. All these variations will have a different feel and add great variety to your workouts.



Shoulder Carry



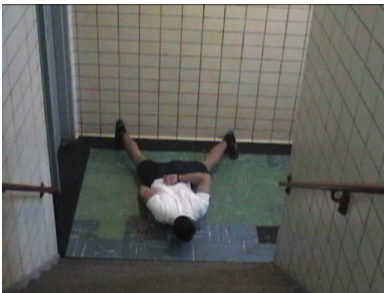
Arms Extended

10. Make use of dumbbell, calisthenics or bodyweight exercises:

These have proved to be a great addition to strength work. You can use these exercises before or after your strength climbs. Combining traditional exercises with strength climbs provides a different training stimulus, helps you save time and can give you a tough workout.



Dumbbell Exercises



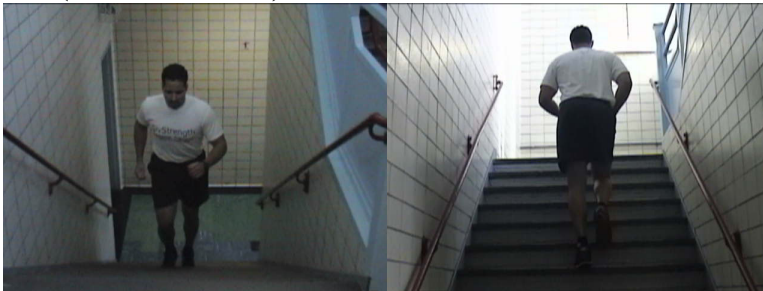
Bodyweight Exercises

Strength Development Workouts:

Workout 1: Walking (stair lunges) up stairs (2 or 3 steps at a time)

Note: in this workout I had access to 20 flights.

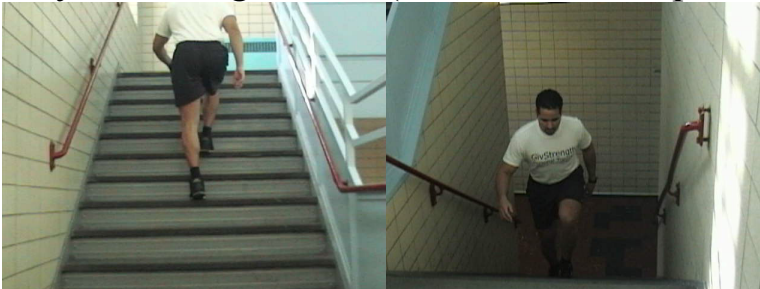
Round 1: warm-up: Walk up 20 flights (using 1 step) at a slow pace. (4-5 minutes)



Regular walking (1 step)

Stretch at top and then take elevator down or walk down

Round 2: Do 30 stair-lunges: 15 on weaker side followed by 15 on your stronger side. (Climb 2 or 3 steps each lunge).



Round 3: Do 30 stair-lunges in alternating fashion. (Climb 2 or 3 steps each lunge).



Round 4: Do 30 crossover-lunges in alternating fashion (climb 2 or 3 steps each lunge).

Note: some people may not have the strength and/or flexibility to climb 2 steps in this fashion. In this instance just climb 1 step each lunge.



Round 5: Do 30 crossover lunges from side: 15 on weaker side followed by 15 on your stronger side. (Climb 2 steps for each lunge).

Note: some people may not have the strength and/or flexibility to climb 2 steps in this fashion. In this instance just climb 1 step each lunge.



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Round 6: Do 30 side to side lunges in alternating fashion. (Climb 2 steps for each lunge).

Note: some people may not have the strength and/or flexibility to climb 2 steps in this fashion. In this instance just climb 1 step each lunge.



Round 7: Do 30 side step ups: 15 on weaker side followed by 15 on your stronger side. (Climb 2 steps for each lunge).

Note: some people may not have the strength and/or flexibility to climb 2 steps in this fashion. In this instance just climb 1 step each lunge.

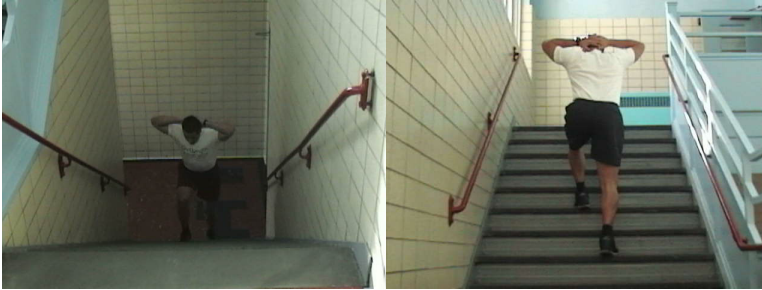


Note: It is also possible that some people will not have the strength to climb two steps in any instance. Simply use 1 step.

In this workout you'll be doing lunges in all planes of motion. Remember that it's very important to address frontal (side to side) and transverse (rotational) planes because that's where many people are weakest and is probably why people get hurt in those planes so frequently. We usually don't address these planes in our exercise routines but constantly use these planes in our everyday lives.

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Workout 2: Walking up stairs (2 or 3 steps at a time) with hands behind the head.



**Same as workout 1 place your hands behind your head.*

Workout 3: Walking up stairs (2 or 3 steps at a time) with a weighted vest.



**Same as workout 1 except you'll be using a weighted vest.*

Workout 4: Walking up stairs (2 or 3 steps at a time) with dumbbells or barbells.



****Same as workout 1 except you'll be carrying dumbbells or barbells.***

Ultimate Stair Exercises for Power Development:

To improve lower body power, plyometrics can be used in stair workouts. To do this you can use single, double, and triple hops with either both or one leg at a time. You can use side hops, side to side hops, transverse hops and so on. You can even use eccentric hops.

The key to any plyometric program is to perform the jumps with excellent form quickness and explosiveness. Remember, you are training yourself to exert force as fast as possible and to improve your power output. Although plyometrics can and will improve your conditioning, its primary purpose is to improve your power.

I have athletes walk upstairs and jump rope to warm up. Then they proceed to sets of 1 to 15 jumps depending on the height of the jump and whether one or two legs are used, and also depending on the surface used. Sometimes we use surfaces on stairs that are more forgiving, but sometimes we use stadium steps which are concrete and also are less forgiving. It is very important to keep that in mind as safety should always be an issue when doing any workout. I usually have athletes perform forward, lateral, side to side and rotational jumps. Another important point to remember is when training single leg jumps to start off with your weaker leg first.

Obviously there are a number of ways to put together a power development workout. Just remember one thing: it is easy to make them conditioning workouts by adding too many jumps. Concentrate on being able to jump with quickness and efficiency and do not jump to complete fatigue. Use form as a guide. If your form is breaking down, then stop the set.

On the other hand, you can use jumps to condition yourself because in sports it is not always who jumps the highest, but who can the jump most moderately throughout a game: Especially late in games. Experiment and find what works best for you and your particular situations. With teams, I usually do power development one day, stressing form and keeping the reps low, and conditioning on a separate day to maximize the goal of each workout.

Power Development Exercise Descriptions & Ideas:

1. Change how many steps you jump: We normally use 1, 2, 3, & 4 steps. Why not 5 steps? 5 steps is usually too much for most people but if you can do 5 steps safely: go for it!

1 step



3 steps



2 steps



4 steps



2. Use larger steps: Besides jumping more steps you can also make use of larger steps (if you have access of course). At the high school I work at we have access to double size concrete steps. Each step is about the size of 2 standard steps.

Oversized steps (1 step at a time)



Oversized steps (2 steps at a time)



3. Use 1 or 2 legs: The great thing about using 1 leg is that you can work on improving the strength of the weaker leg. 2 legs will improve your total body jumping power and is also a great way to improve your conditioning when using a lot of hops.

Single Leg Hops using



Hops using Both Legs



4. Jumping in different directions: We've used straight ahead jumps, side jumps and transverse (rotational) jumps. This will address training in different planes of motion.

Straight Ahead Jumps



Jumps from the side



Side to Side Jumps



Jumps with Rotation



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4. Use a weighted vest: Another way to increase the difficulty of power development is to use a weighted vest. Since using dumbbells or barbells become very dangerous when doing plyo's using a weighted vest becomes the only safe option for adding external resistance.

Single Leg Hops with a weighted vest

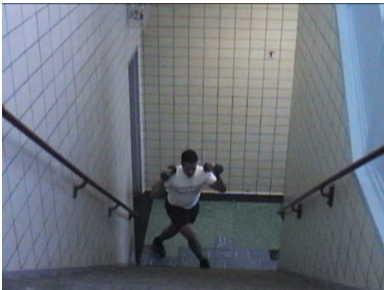


5. Mix in rope jumping, dumbbell, calisthenics or bodyweight exercises: You can use these exercises before or after your jumps.

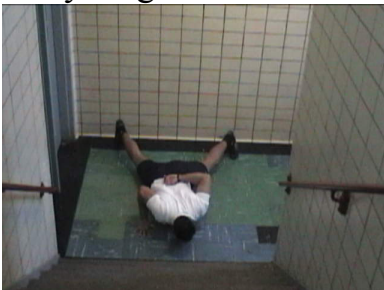
Rope Jumping



Dumbbell Exercises



Bodyweight Exercises



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Power Development Workouts:

** To increase the external resistance a weighted vest can be used with any of these power development workouts*

Workout 1: Regular Plyo Hops using both legs (1, 2, 3 & 4 steps) emphasis on power endurance

Round 1: warm-up: walk up 10-20 flights of stairs at a slow pace (2-5 minutes). Another alternative is to use a jump rope to warm-up (1-3 minutes) or use a combination of both.

Regular walking

1.



2.



Rope Jumping



Stretch at top and then take elevator down or walk down

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Hops using 4 steps: 1-5 times

Rest 1 to 2 minutes

1.

2.



Round 3: Repeat round 2

Note: keep in mind that I have not seen many athletes hop 5 or 6 steps for repetitions. Another thing to keep in mind is the danger involved when adding more steps. Always keep safety in mind first and design your workouts from there.

***Workout 2: Regular Plyo Hops using 1 leg (1, 2, &3 steps)
with emphasis on power endurance***

Round 1: warm-up: walk up 10-20 flights of stairs at a slow pace (2-5 minutes). Another alternative is to use a jump rope to warm-up (1-3 minutes) or use a combination of both.



Regular walking



Rope Jumping

Stretch at top and then take elevator down or walk down

Round 2: Hops using 1 step: 15 x each leg (start with weaker leg first)



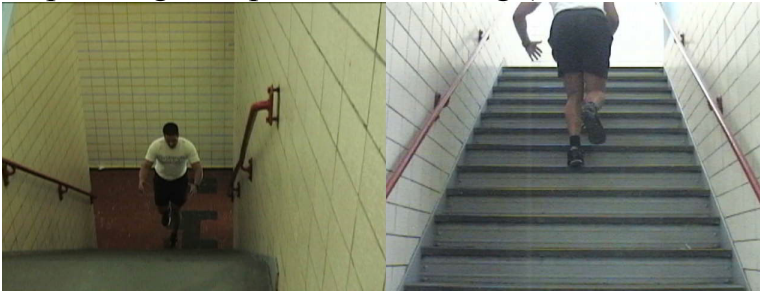
Rest 1-2 minutes

Hops using 2 steps: 10 x each leg (start with weaker leg first)



Rest 1-2 minutes

Hops using 3 steps: 3-6 x each leg (start with weaker leg first)



Round 3: Repeat round 2

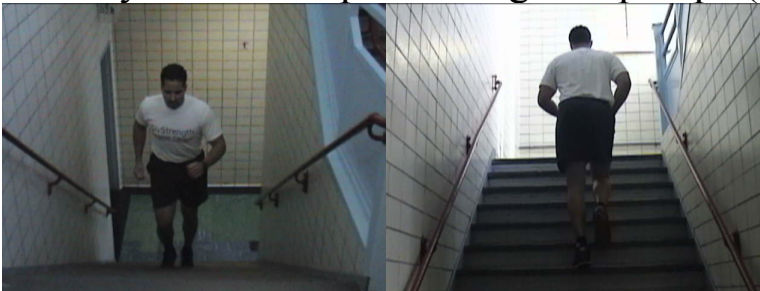
Note: Again, please keep in mind that when working on one leg, two or three steps are very difficult and many people will not be able to do them safely. In this instance just stick with one step. Remember, safety first.

Workout 3: Regular Plyo Hops using both legs (1, 2, 3 & 4 steps) with emphasis on power

Round 1: warm-up: walk up 10-20 flights of stairs at a slow pace (2-5 minutes).

Another alternative is to use a jump rope to warm-up (1-3 minutes) or use a combination of both.

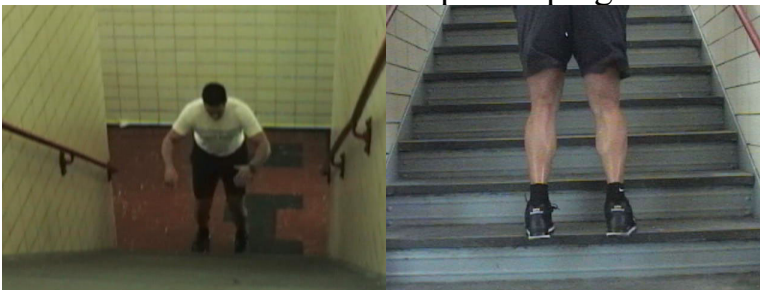
Finish your warm-up with single step hops (10-20x)



Regular walking



Rope Jumping



Hops using 1 step

Stretch at top and then take elevator down or walk down

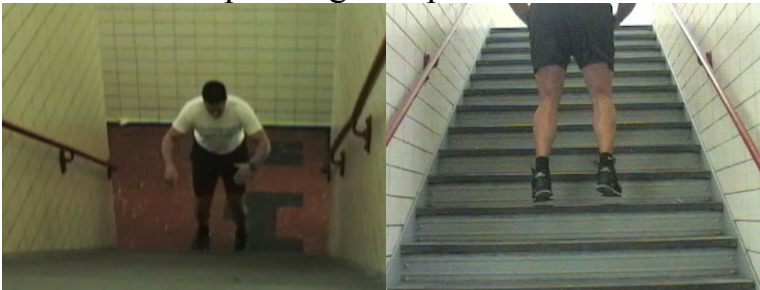
Round 2:

Hops using 4 steps: 1-5x



Rest 1-2 minutes

Hops using 3 steps: 5-10x



Rest 1-2 minutes

Round 3: Repeat round 2

Round 4: Repeat round 2

***Workout 4: Regular Plyo Hops using 1 leg (1, 2, &3 steps)
with emphasis on power***

Round 1: warm-up: walk up 10-20 flights of stairs at a slow pace (2-5 minutes).

Another alternative is to use a jump rope to warm-up (1-3 minutes) or use a combination of both.

Finish your warm-up with hops using 1 step: 5x on each leg



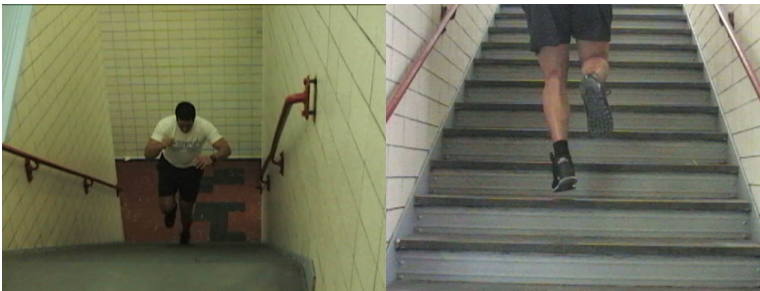
Regular walking



Rope Jumping

Stretch at top and then take elevator down or walk down

Round 2: Hops using 3 steps: 3-10x each leg (start with weaker leg first)
Rest 1-2 minutes

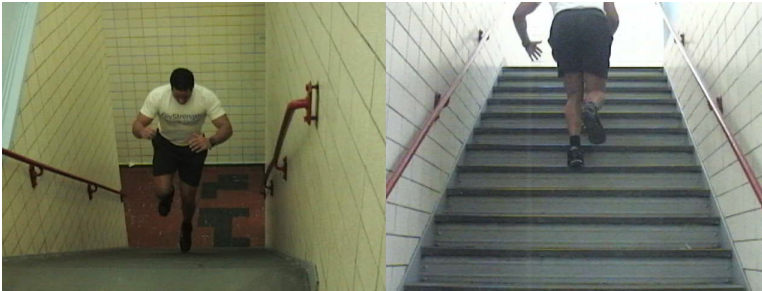


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Hops using 2 steps: 3-10 x each leg (start with weaker leg first)
Rest 1-2 minutes



Hops using 1 step: 3-10 x each leg (start with weaker leg first)
Rest 1-2 minutes



Round 3: Repeat round 2

Round 4: Repeat round 2

Here are other jumping variations you can use with your power development workouts: (You can use a weighted vest with any of these exercises).

Side to Side hops: You can use 1 or both legs and 1 to 4 steps at a time. You can also do these hops on giant steps.

Side to Side Hops on Standard Steps

1.

2.

3.



Side to Side Hops on Giant Steps

1.

2.

3.



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Frontal plane side hops (hops from the side): With this exercise you can only really use 1 leg (standard steps are too small). You can however use both legs on giant steps.

Frontal plane side hops on standard steps

1.

2.



Frontal plane side hops on giant steps

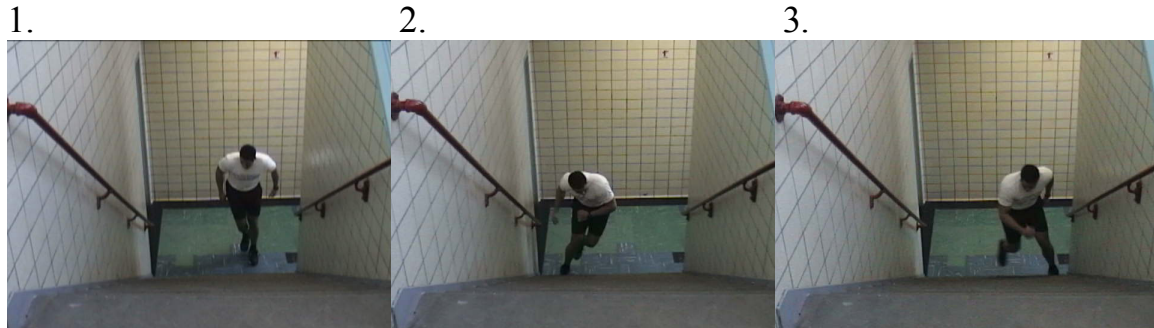
1.

2.

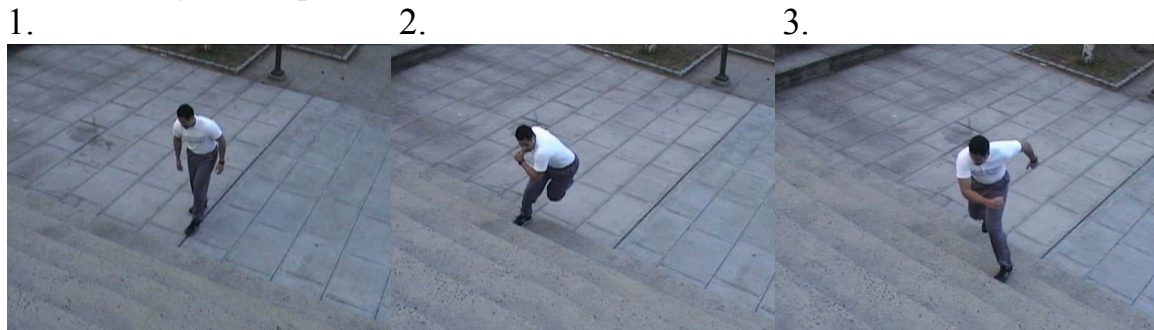


Skaters: These are great for developing cutting strength and power. You can use anywhere from 1 to 3 steps and also use giant steps.

Skaters on standard steps



Skaters on giant steps



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Transverse hops: Because of the space required with transverse (rotational) hops they can only be done on giant steps. An advanced version of this exercise is to use one leg at a time.

1.

2.

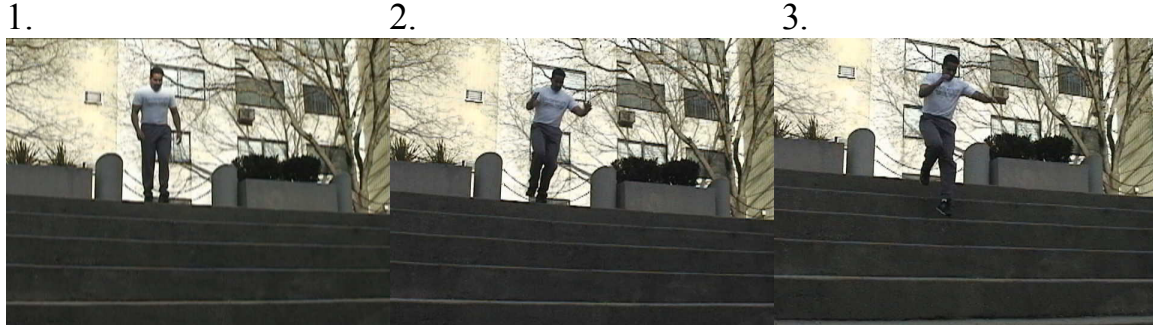
3.



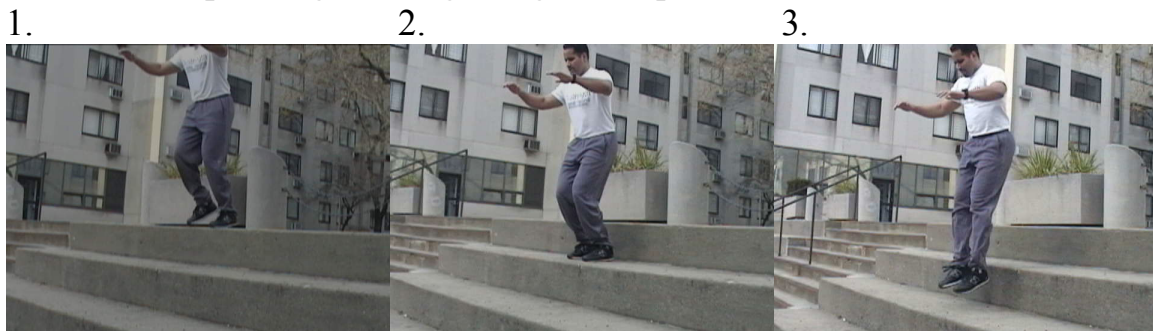
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Eccentric Drops: These exercises can be done on standard steps as well as giant steps. Keep in mind though that on standard steps you can only do them from the side. Also understand that this is a highly advanced exercise and should be done when any only when you are ready.

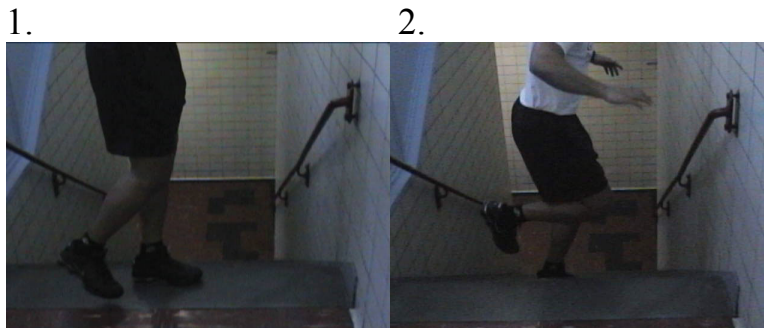
Eccentric drops using 1 leg on giant steps:



Eccentric drops using both legs on giant steps



Eccentric drops on standard steps (from the side of course)



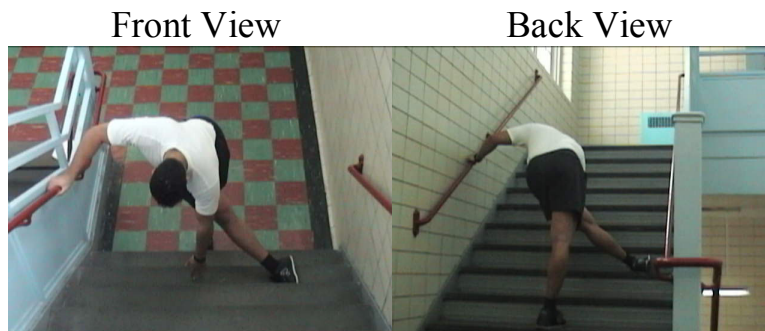
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Static & Dynamic Flexibility:

Many programs can benefit from the strategic use of stretching. I usually stretch my chronically tight areas after my first climb to the top and in between climbs while I am waiting for the elevators. I also do a more complete stretch after my workout is done. Many of the exercises used in stair workouts will also improve your dynamic flexibility. I've also included specific exercises on how to improve your dynamic flexibility at end of this section.

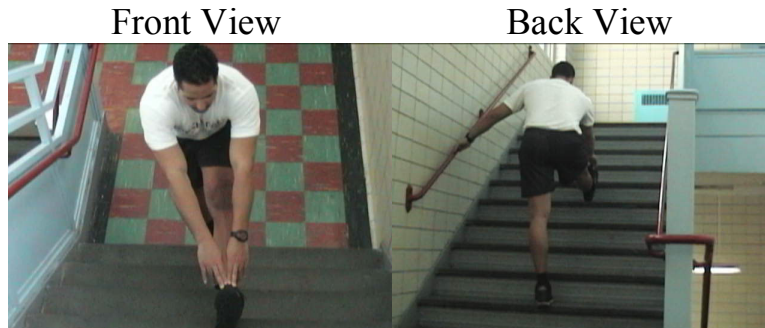
Static Stretching exercises: I usually hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds for 3 sets.

ITB Stretch: This area which runs along side the outer thigh area can be a tight problem area for many people. When there is a problem it can lead to hip and knee problems. I usually hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds for 3 sets.

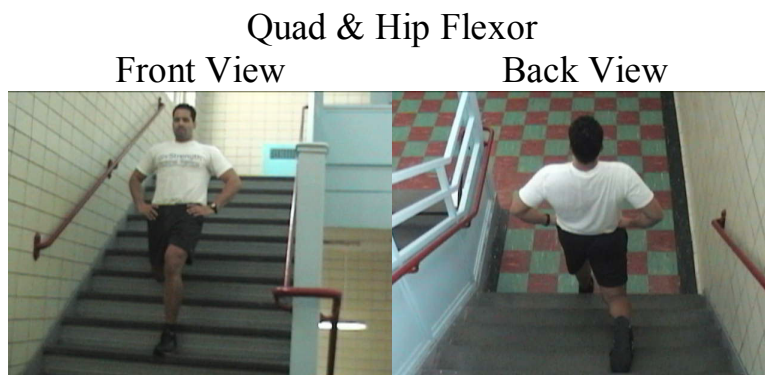


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Hamstring Stretch: Tight hamstrings can be a problem for a number of people which can contribute to back problems.



Quadriceps, Hip Flexor & Abdominal Stretch: A very common problem for many people is tight quads, hip flexors and abdominals. Here's an excellent stretch that can target all these areas. It starts off as a quad and hip flexor stretch but then moves to a stretch for the abs as well by simply extending the arms overhead.



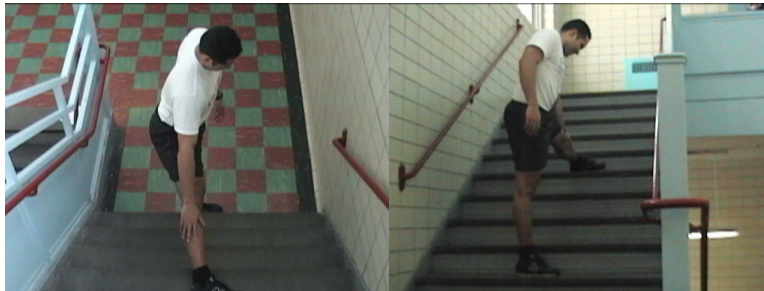
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Quad, Hip Flexor & Ab stretch
Front View Back View



Inner Thigh Stretch: This stretch targets the inner thigh and groin area. In my experience this area is usually weak in most people and requires strengthening instead of stretching. But if flexibility is the problem this stretch can help.

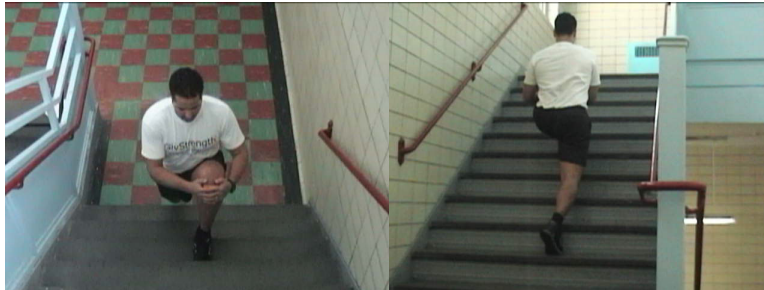
Front View Back View



Glute Stretch: This stretch targets the glutes which are a problem for many people.

Front View

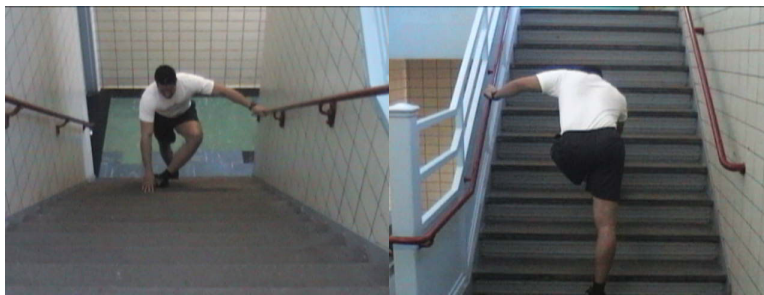
Back View



Piriformis Stretch: This stretch specifically targets the outer hip area which is a problem for many people.

Front View

Back View



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Dynamic Flexibility Exercises:

First of all keep in mind that incorporating sagittal (straight ahead and back), frontal (side ways) and transverse (with rotation) motions in your routine will have an added benefit of improving your dynamic flexibility. These specific exercises can help to take you a step further or allow you to work on any weaknesses you may have.

Reverse crossover lunge using 1 or 2 steps (holding on): Simply walk backwards down the stairs crossing one leg behind the other while holding onto the side rails for balance.

Front View

1.

2.



Back View

1.

2.



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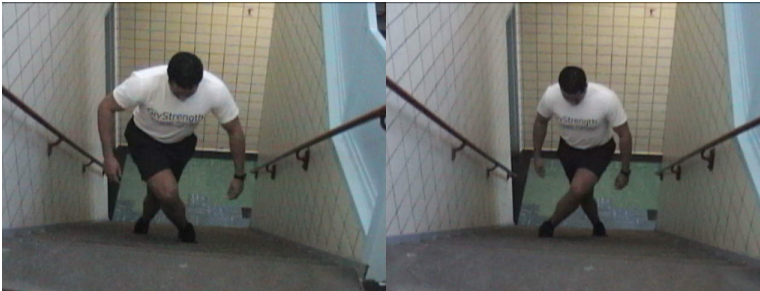
Reverse crossover lunge without holding on: Walk backwards down the stairs crossing one leg behind the other without holding onto the side rails.

This drill is also great for improving your hip flexibility and has the added benefit of improving your balance and kinesthetic awareness. Not bad for just walking down a flight of stairs.

Front View

1.

2.



Back View

1.

2.



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Reverse crossover lunge with floor touch (1 or 2 steps): In this drill you'll add a floor touch between every step. This variation will further enhance your hip and trunk dynamic flexibility.

Front View

1.

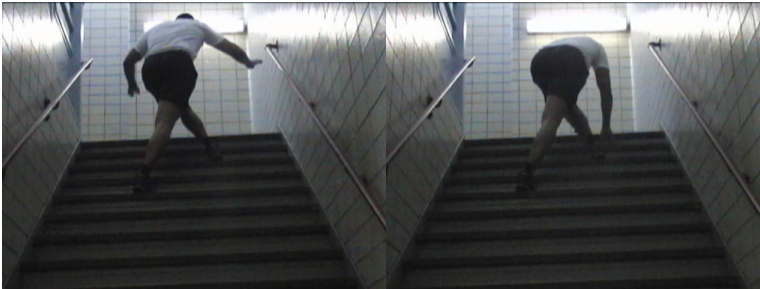
2.



Back View

1.

2.



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Reverse crossover lunge from side with a floor touch (1 or 2 steps): This drill is done from the side: Simply walk down the stairs from your side crossing one leg behind the other and touch the floor (or reach as far as you can) between each step. This drill is also a bit easier as it doesn't challenge your balance as much as the other drills.

Front View

1.

2.



Back View

1.

2.



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What else can be done?

Here are some other ideas that I've come across when using stair exercises.

Walking up the stairs with your eyes closed: We do this drill to help athletes improve their balance and kinesthetic awareness. It's also a great drill to help identify weaknesses and imbalances. You'll move towards your strength when your eyes are closed revealing your strengths and weaknesses.

Eyes closed walking straight



Eyes closed with crossover



One Big Step: Here are some simple ideas you can use on a stage.

Stage Jumps: This a great drill for developing power and jumping ability.



Stage Jumps landing on one foot: We use landing on one foot to increase the eccentric strength demands on the landing leg. It's also helps to improve your focus, balance and coordination.



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Reaching Lunges off 1 or 2 steps: One of my favorite exercises is the reaching lunge off 1 step. Pretend like you are reaching to pick up a piece of paper. This exercise is excellent for improving leg & low back strength. It's also an excellent way to improve deceleration strength.



I hope these workouts and exercises can give you a start on how to use stair exercises. Obviously there are a number of ways to use stair exercises. Also, your situation will be different than mine and the athletes I've worked with. I have access to 20 flights of stairs in one place, 12 flights at the high school I work in and also access to over-sized and stadium steps. Your access to stairs will dictate what you can do. But as you can see it only takes a few flights to get great workouts. Also if you come across other ideas when using stair exercises feel free to share them with me as I may include them in a revised edition of this book.

I can be reached at www.GivStrength.com or virgil@GivStrength.com

Frequently Asked Questions

How often should I use stair workouts? That is always a tough question. It's like asking me how many times should I eat or take a shower. The truth is it all depends on your specific goals and what your particular situation will allow. Stair exercises can be used to improve many fitness goals including strength, power, flexibility and conditioning. You may want to tackle all these areas or just focus on few. In my experience we usually do stair workouts 2-3 times a week combined with traditional strength and conditioning exercise 2 times a week. In each workout we try to incorporate all aspects of fitness but stress on a particular component. For example if we'd like to stress power we'll warm-up and then do a power workout incorporating different types of hopping. After that's done we'll do some anaerobic runs for conditioning and finish off with flexibility. This will all take less than an hour. For my own particular workouts I like to do a strength workout combined with an anaerobic workout on one day and a power workout followed by an aerobic workout on another day. But that's just me. Once you start to use stair exercises you'll get a feel for what to do.

Can I do stair workouts everyday? Sure you can. I myself make it a point to always take the stairs everyday at work. I actually climb at least 20-50 flights on most days. Is it necessary? No. Now that doesn't mean you go and do the more intense and grueling stair workouts everyday because you'll just burn yourself out. Let how you feel dictate what you can do and schedule the tougher workouts accordingly.

How long should my workouts last? How much time you spend on stair workouts will be dictated by your particular needs and goals. On average you can get most workouts done in 30 minutes. But as you've probably read I've talked about workouts lasting as little as 15 minutes up to an hour. It really depends on what you want to accomplish and how much time it will take to accomplish those goal. Another thing is don't let the amount of time fool you. A 15 minute anaerobic workout can be brutal and a 1 hour aerobic workout can be a piece of cake. Figure out what you want and spend the time going after that goal.

What if I have very limited time to exercise? Most people have very little time to exercise unless you are a professional athlete. We all have to make a living, attend to our families and just plain live our lives. Great thing about stair workouts is that many can be done in as little as 15 minutes. You can also do 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes later on in the day. You can also do what I do. I work in a high school with access to 12 flights of stairs. I make it point to walk up to the top floor every time I have to use the stairs. Even if it's just to go up to the second floor, I'll walk up to the sixth floor and then come back down to the second floor. This little practice allows me to climb 30 to 50 flights a day not including my regular stair workouts. And if I happen to miss a workout (which we all do) at least I've done something and it doesn't take much time to do this. Another answer to your question is if you don't have time to exercise: **make time man!** You're worth it and you owe it to yourself.

What if I only have access to a few flights? Not enough flights of stairs will make it harder but not impossible to get sufficient workouts. I think most people can get a great aerobic workout with at least ten flights and that's more than enough to do anaerobic work, strength development, power development and flexibility work. Also, with fewer flights you can incorporate rope jumping, calisthenics, barbell or dumbbell work to make up for the lack of flights. Power, strength & flexibility work can also be done with just one or two flights of stairs. Simply climb up and down the stairs and repeat. Your rhythm will be different but it will get the job done.

Can't I get a better workout at a gym or health club? If you have access to better facilities & equipment then go for it. I myself have been lucky enough to train at the best gyms in New York City as well as the New York Knick's training center in Tarrytown New York. But I've also had to make due with very modest equipment over at Bushwick High School in Brooklyn, New York. And you know what I've learned: It's not the equipment and facilities it's what you put into what you're doing. Getting in amazing condition really has nothing to do with the facilities. It all has to do with consistent hard work and a strong desire to achieve your goals. One thing I will say though: If you access to at least 10 flights of stairs there aren't many training tools that come close to stair workouts for its versatility and results. It's hard to find a training tool that can address strength, power, flexibility and conditioning. These days many professional athletes, personal trainers and strength coaches will even tell you that stair workouts will offer you a lot more than any gym or health club workout.

What about using the Stairmaster™ or Stepmill™? The Stepmill™ offers an alternative to actual stair exercises. Just remember one thing: It can't offer all the benefits that real stairs will give you. I would compare it to real running versus using a treadmill. The treadmill will always take a back seat. As far as the Stairmaster™ goes it really doesn't come close to what real stairs are like. But remember one thing: you always have what's best on paper (real stairs) and then you have reality. If you do not have access to real stairs and you do have access to a Stepmill™ or a Stairmaster™ go ahead and use them if that's all you have. I actually had a female pro basketball player use the Stepmill™ because she hated using real stairs (they were too tough ☺) and would not do it. At least we got her to do something.

I have a hectic travel schedule. Will stair exercise be useful for me?

As long as you have access to stairs there should be no problem. If you stay at hotels then you'll definitely have plenty of access to stairs. If you have very little time many of the workouts can be done in 15 minutes. Another thing is that using stairs is not like going to the gym. With a gym you have to conform to their time schedule. With stair exercises that may not be the case.

Can I combine my regular training routine with stair workouts?

Absolutely. It's no different than someone who runs let's say twice a week and goes to the gym twice a week. They are using different training tools to improve themselves. Many times I'll go the gym twice a week and do stair workouts twice a week. Remember that stair workouts will now represent another tool you can use to improve yourself. It doesn't mean that you now have to exclude other tools you may like or that have worked for you before. World famous strength and conditioning expert Juan Carlos Santana said it best: "Tools not Rules". Stair exercises are just adding another tool to your training tool box.

What can I expect from stair workouts?

Let's see: Improved strength, power, flexibility, balance, coordination, aerobic endurance, & anaerobic endurance, reduced body fat levels, maintain or achieve ideal bodyweight, firm powerful legs, healthy joints, increased confidence and better ability to deal with stress.

I have knee pain when I walk up stairs. Any suggestions?

First thing of course is to check with a qualified health care professional to make sure you are healthy enough to do stair workouts. Make sure you find someone that understands you want to be active. As far as people I've worked that have had knee pain here's what we did: Try doing the crossover and side to side exercises. Many times weakness and tightness in these planes of motion contribute greatly to knee pain. Once you start to build strength and increase your dynamic flexibility in these planes of motion many times your knee pain will disappear or be reduced.

**There is so much to stair exercises? I'm just starting out.
Where should I begin?**

It all begins with what goals you have for yourself. Find out if you'd like to improve your strength, power, conditioning or flexibility and go from there. When I first started stair exercises I was recovering from hernia surgery and a bad abdominal injury. I used stairs just to do aerobic conditioning (only walking up stairs). Later on when I recovered from my injuries I started to become more creative and use stair exercises for other things. My favorite use of stairs became anaerobic conditioning. It really helped with my conditioning for basketball which I love to play. Power development also became something I like with stairs because you can easily do plyometrics on stairs. As many experts agree plyometrics are excellent for improving many aspects of power like jumping ability, speed and quickness.

How long do I continue my workouts: I've been working out for as long as I can remember and plan on doing so for the rest of my life. It's like brushing your teeth. You don't ask how long do I have to continue doing do. Make exercise a part of your daily routine. It doesn't have to be stair workouts but any exercise you enjoy and that is effective for you.

For Your Spirit:

Ultimate Stair Exercise Parallels to Real life:

In my years getting to know the different ways that one can use stair climbing exercises I sort of stumbled on powerful parallels and metaphors to real life. You'll be amazed at what you can come up with in those stair wells. Because I have a strong belief that success in exercise can help you in your professional and personal life I've decided to share them with you.

Step:

A single step: a Chinese proverb reads the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.

In stair climbing just like in real life your paths to your goals all begin with one step. We can't reach our goals without putting one foot in front of the other and taking action. Anyone who's been successful will attest to the fact that one of the keys to success is starting and taking action. Like Nike says: Just do it. Many people fail to achieve their goals simple because they never get started.

It also represents a positive step in the right direction. And remember this: positive steps and positive actions result in positive outcomes. The positive action is also contagious. Once you take steps in the right direction you start thinking of what else can be done to improve. Many clients tell me all the time when they start taking positives steps they automatically start taking positive steps in other areas of their lives. A good example is beginning a new workout program and also deciding to eat better as well. So whatever goal you have and what ever dream you have, make a decision to take action and to take that first step towards your goals.

Flight:

A flight represents sub goals that lead to your ultimate goals. They also represent changes of direction. Remember that the paths to your goals aren't always straight. There can be a lot of turns. But ultimately they lead to once place: Your goals and fulfillment of your dreams.

Patterns of Staircases:

Most stair cases are shaped in the traditional up one direction and then reverse. But there are stair cases that can be different in design. To me this represents the many different pathways in life. I grew up wanting to be a professional baseball player and it was my passion for sports that led me to finding a field that I truly love. After I realized that I wouldn't be a pro baseball player my next goal was that I wanted to train pro athletes. No matter what I always kept that goal. That goal alone has allowed me to experience many wonderful opportunities in the fitness industry. So, set your goals and set up a plan to achieve them but realize that there will some forks in the road.

Reaching the top:

Reaching the top represents an accomplished goal. You should pat yourself on the back and appreciate what you've done. But something happens when you reach a goal. You become a changed person. You learn how to succeed and you develop momentum to achieve new goals. Many multi-millionaires will tell you that making 10 million dollars was not too hard. In fact some will say it was easy. It's that first million that was the back breaker. But after they've made that first million they learned so much that it just becomes easier to succeed in future goals. And remember this: even a small goal like making sure to get up 1 hour early to workout will build momentum.

Another great thing about reaching goals is when you finish you realize there's another goal to accomplish. There's always something to tackle. That's life. Whether it's improving your athleticism, your health, your finances, your social life etc... there's something that can be improved upon. So at the very least those people that set and accomplish goals will never be bored!

Why are Stair Exercises so hard?

The fact that stair climbing is so hard represents to me that any goal worth achieving is never easy. Anyone who is successful will attest to the fact that being so successful is not easy and most times just plain tough. There is always hard work involved. But they will also tell you that the hard work they put in is well worth it and that they'd do it all over again. Hard work also will test your drive and desire. If success was easy everyone would be successful. One thing I've learned in watching and working with professional athletes is that the most successful ones are the ones with the insatiable drive and work ethic. Teresa Weatherspoon, Michael Jordan, Jerry Rice, Roger Clemens, all have that insatiable drive and work ethic. It's no wonder that they are successful.

Why are some Stair Exercises/Workouts so easy?

Some of the aerobic & flexibility workouts can be very easy and that represents a time to take things in and just take it easy. As much as I love sports such as basketball, football, & swimming, I still love to take a nice long walk. I forget where I read that a man who takes a long walk after eating will live to a hundred years. I really enjoy walking to the park and just taking in the day or just getting a good stretch. Easy workouts represent the importance of appreciating life and its beauty. We're not meant to work out hard all the time. We're meant to so both.

Why are there so many variations to Stair Exercises?

I think variety represents that there is usually more than one answer to a given question or problem. For example a high school baseball player once came to me and said: It's not fair how some people have access to better facilities than we do. No wonder they have a better shot. I simply said that the facilities someone has access to have little to do with success. Success comes from perseverance, hard work and determination. You can still improve and be the best you can be because there are a variety of ways to improve your performance that don't require the so-called best facilities. In fact most of the greatest athletes in the world started with less than what you have.

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Variety also represents our innate need to be creative. Creativity it's what makes the world go round. It is how new ideas and inventions get done.

Variety also represents hope? To the kid who thinks he can't improve because he's doesn't have the resources. I just smile and say there's always a way.

And of course variety is the spice of life: I don't know anyone who eats the same thing everyday. And I've never met anyone who does the same workout or program all the time. Any program can't be everything to everyone and everyone isn't for every program, workout or exercise. Variety allows us to navigate all this. In the end it's all the same (you're exercising). Just like with eating, it can be different food but it's still eating!

One Final Note:

Sometimes we forget to use our environment. As a personal trainer, strength and conditioning coach and a physical education teacher I often hear things like I cannot get to a gym or we do not have time or we just do not have the facilities. Sometimes we get caught up in thinking we need the latest high tech whatever to achieve fitness, athletic or any goals related to exercise. In reality we are all blessed with the most high tech equipment available (Our own mind and body). Just take a look around you. A stairwell, a park, monkey bars, and the list goes on and on. Forget about what you do not have and focus on what you do have. In my experience it is usually more than enough to get the job done.

Resources:

1. Where can I purchase a weighted vest?

Perform Better: www.PerformaBetter.com

Power Systems: www.Power-Systems.com

These 2 companies can serve all your fitness equipment needs.

2. Where can I purchase adjustable dumbbells?

Perform Better: www.PerformBetter.com

Power Systems: www.Power-Systems.com

Meet Virgil Aponte

Virgil Aponte received his Bachelor and Masters Degree in Physical Education from Brooklyn College and has been an American College of Sports Medicine Certified Health & Fitness Instructor since 1994.

His love for sports as a youth led to his passion for the strength and conditioning field. Growing up he played baseball, football, basketball and all its modifications. He still plays 3 on 3 basketball, touch football and his favorite game: WiffleBall™. Besides baseball, football and basketball Virgil loves to swim and served as a New York City Lifeguard for 5 years.

Virgil has been a personal trainer in New York City for over 12 years and a high school physical educator for over 9 years. During these years he has helped hundreds of people from all walks of life reach their strength, fitness and health related goals. In 2001 Virgil served as a baseball/conditioning coach with the New York Mets™ Summer Instructional Baseball Academy in Queens New York. Here Virgil got the opportunity to work along side major league baseball coaches and players like Mookie Wilson, Howard Johnson, Bobby Ojeda and Cookie Rojas teaching baseball skills and concepts to kids ranging from 7 to 15 year olds. In 2002 Virgil served as an assistant with the WNBA New York Liberty's strength and conditioning staff. And what a year it was, as the Liberty won the Eastern Conference Finals and played the Los Angeles Sparks in the WNBA finals.

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Currently Virgil continues to teach, train clients, and produce videos and books. He is a big believer in keeping an open mind and using an integrative approach in helping people attain their strength and health goals. He's learned and been exposed to countless training programs and has come to realize that they all have something to offer. The key is knowing when to use them and with whom. His favorite Motto is "Tools not Rules" which was taught to him by author and renowned strength coach Juan Carlos Santana. Keep the knowledge of different training systems in your mental tool box and use them when appropriate. Virgil's number one priority is to teach people to train themselves and hopefully they can pass on that knowledge. His ultimate mission is to give and share knowledge of strength and health with people anywhere and everywhere. Physical Strength, Optimal Health and Mental well being is something that should be experienced by everyone.

Ultimate Stair Exercises DVD Set!

If you liked this book you'll love the Ultimate Stair Exercises DVD set. Pictures are a great teaching tool but nothing beats seeing the exercises performed in live action. To purchase your DVD set visit:

www.StairExercises.com

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Once again I hope the exercises, drills and ideas in this book can help you or someone you know and as Always, Best in Strength, Happiness and Health.

Virgil Aponte, MS
Certified Personal Trainer & Physical Education Teacher

All books have room for improvement. Please provide feedback to help improve this book in a future edition. Let me know of any errors, and feel free to share your ideas on how to improve this book in the future.

For questions or comments please visit www.StairExercises.com
or send emails to Virgil@VirgilAponte.com

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