

Faithful Finish Lines Strength Training Suggestions

Week 4 Bonus Material!

By Jill Csillag

Cardiovascular exercise is wonderful for the heart and lungs, and it definitely helps to build endurance and burn calories. That being said, let's not forget the importance of strength training as well. We encourage you to strength train 1-2 times per week, as this will only compliment your cardiovascular training plan. Regular strength training builds muscle, strengthens bones (very important as we age to prevent osteoporosis) and revs up your metabolism. The human body works harder to maintain a pound of muscle vs. a pound of fat, which essentially means your resting metabolic rate (RMR) increases, and you burn more calories at rest.

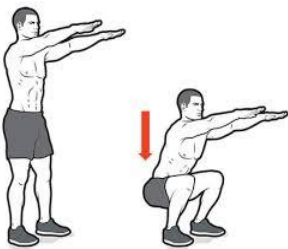
You don't have to belong to a fancy gym to reap the benefits of strength training. Some exercises like squats and walking lunges can be done with bodyweight only and are highly effective. For upper body work, ideally you will have an assortment of various weighted dumb bells (can be purchased at most major retail stores) You can also substitute everyday items such as soup cans, laundry jugs, water bottles, or anything else you can find that is easy for you to grip and offers some resistance. The investment in time and money is small but the health benefits are huge!

The key to beginning a resistance training program is to start slowly, with lighter weights to prevent DOMS (delayed onset muscle soreness) and to keep proper form. Once you are acclimated to a routine, you can either increase your weights OR your repetitions (but don't increase both at the same time). I suggest beginning with 2-3 sets of 12 repetitions, and work your way up to 15 reps. As you grow stronger and the reps become easier, that would be the time to increase the weights you are using.

Remember to keep proper form throughout the exercise - this means to keep a consistent tempo, usually somewhere in the 1-2-3 count for each part of the exercise. If you rush thru an exercise you will not only NOT reap the full benefits specific for that muscle group, but you also risk injury. Take your time, focus on the muscles being worked, and don't forget to breathe!

Here are some sample exercises to get you started:

Full Body Squat:



Begin in standing position. You can extend your arms directly in front of you to help with balance, or place them behind your head for an extra challenge.

Feet shoulder width apart, slowly descend into a squat position, exhaling as you go down. Take care to ensure your knees do not extend out past your toes, rather your glutes (rear-end) should be pushed out to really engage the quadriceps and glute muscles. When you return to start, slowly extend back up, being sure not to lock your knees. Repeat.

Lunge:



Start your lunges by standing straight, feet shoulder width apart. Your back should be straight and spine in a neutral position.

Step forward with your left leg, bending both legs so that all leg angles are roughly 90 degrees, and until your right knee almost touches the floor. Ensure that your knee never extend past your toes on the leg you are lunging with.

Now push off the front (left) leg (push through the heel of that leg), and return back to the original lunge starting position.

Repeat with the right leg.

Walking Lunges:

Just a variation of the traditional lunge. The only difference is with a walking lunge you move forward and travel through the exercise.

Bicep Curls:



Start with two dumbbells or other weighted object.

Hold the dumbbells in your hands, palms up, elbows in against your sides, and let your arms slightly hang down in front of the body (diagram A.)

Slowly lift the weight up until your forearm touches your chest, counting 1-2-3 while doing so.

Once the arms are up towards your chest, slowly move your arm back down in a full extension (counting 1-2-3 again, diagram B) until your arms are extended straight down again.

Repeat.

Overhead Dumbbell Extension:



Start with one dumbbell or other weighted object. While standing upright, keeping elbows close to the head, bring dumbbell down behind the head, counting 1-2-3. As your elbow reaches a full bend, slowly extend back up overhead, again counting 1-2-3. The key to this exercise is to keep the elbows in close to really target the tricep muscles fully (backs of your arms). Repeat.

If you wish to learn more about strength training exercises, one of my favorite online resources can be found here:

<http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/guide/health-fitness-get-strong>

There is a ton of information as well as videos demonstrating various exercises on this website. Of course, if you have any questions at all, please let us know! We are happy to answer any questions you may have!