

Plyometrics

by Marty Gaal

Plyometrics are an excellent way to develop strength and coordination, and add some speed to your run without doing the same old boring running intervals.

The definition of a plyometric is an exercise that involves an eccentric muscle contraction (contract and lengthen) followed by a concentric muscle contraction (contract and shorten). In other words, most involve jumping motions of some sort.

A simple plyometric is jumping rope. A more advanced plyometric is a box jump (from the ground jump up 12 to 18 inches to the top of a box, and then back down).

Plyos are demanding and tough on the body, and you should build into a plyometric routine slowly. Start with a simpler routine like this:

jump rope for 30 seconds to 1 minute
rest break
2 leg hops (jump forward with effort) 5 times
rest break
standing jumps (jump straight up) 5 times

The first time you do this you might do it just once or twice through. Once you are comfortable with a routine like this, include more repetitions (10 reps instead of 5 times) or repeat the series more times (4x through instead of 1 or 2x).

A more advanced routine could be:

1 leg hop forward 10 times (each leg)
rest break
10-20 box jumps
rest break
uphill sprint (run fast uphill 20 seconds)
break

Before starting any plyometric routine, you should consult with a strength coach or your trainer to ensure the routine is designed according to your ability and needs. These are tough and you'll be sore after, but they are a great way to help build strength and avoid injury.

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