

Best Exercise Ever

The Burpee

Once used as an agility test for the Armed Services in WWII by Royal H. Burpee and as punishment for prisoners following the Civil War, the exercise now known as the burpee is accepted as one of the best full-body strengthening moves, particularly for runners. The high-intensity burpee engages the core, chest, triceps, shoulders, back, quads, hamstrings and fast-twitch muscles, explains Woch Graff, trainer and co-owner of Timberline Fitness in Houston. "You will be hard pressed to find an exercise that encompasses as many muscle groups as a burpee and taxes the heart at the same time," Graff said, which is why it's such a great workout for runners. It not only builds muscle strength, but also increases lung and heart strength, all of which are essential aspects of a well-rounded runner.

Many runners make the mistake of sticking to a run-only training program and this limits their potential, explains Jonathan P. Little, post-doctoral student of biology at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan. "When you run, you only call on some of your muscles," Little said. "However, when you do high intensity interval training such as burpees, lots of your muscles are recruited. This is important because in the late stages of a marathon when you typically would be depleted you'll have those muscle fibers to call on."

Burpees can be easily incorporated into a typical run training program. Little suggests adding a set of burpees into training three to four times a week, but notes even once a week will produce benefits. Graff suggests doing 11 burpees after completing a run or adding a set of 11 burpees in between running speed drills. "You'll be surprised by how much more resilient your body will become," Graff said.

—Linzay Logan

1

Begin standing with your feet hip distance apart, squat down and plant your hands on the ground just in front of your feet.



To make the movement **less challenging**, take your legs back one at a time.



2

Jump back with your legs into a plank position with your arms straight underneath your shoulders.

3

Jump your legs back up right behind your hands.



To add a challenge, do a push-up while down in the plank position or hold weights in your hands.

4

Come back to standing, raise your hands over your head and jump as high as you can into the air.