

How to Plan Your Workouts

Your workout plan includes:

- Off Season – 2 different workouts, A & B

- Pre Season – 2 different workouts, A & B

- In Season - 1 workout

Using very basic periodization principles, you must first plan your racquet sports year: do you want to peak for a few major competitions, or are you a year round recreational enthusiast who isn't competing? This can be highly variable since some athletes are playing in leagues several days each week all year long, some have a few major competitions throughout the season, while others are non-competitive recreational hitters. Once you have planned your racquet sports year, you can determine which category of workout to put into place for each time period.

Off Season – Phase 1

If you are new to strength training or are starting up again after a layoff, begin with the off season workouts! The off season workouts are lower intensity and higher volume, which serve as an anatomical adaptation phase as well as a recovery phase. Beginning weight lifters should stay in this phase of training for 8-12 weeks, while seasoned lifters can spend 4-8 weeks in this phase of training. Beginners or those starting up again after a layoff: start with 1 set of each exercise and gradually work up to 2-3 sets over 8 weeks.

Pre Season – Phase 2

Try to begin the pre season workouts at least 8-12 weeks before the racquet season begins. This phase is higher intensity and moderate volume compared to the off season workouts. If you are new to strength training, do the off season workouts for at least 8 weeks before beginning this phase, no matter when the racquet season begins. Rushing through (or skipping) the anatomical adaptation phase will almost guarantee injury for those who are not accustomed to weight lifting! This is especially true for plyometric exercises. It is also helpful to add a relatively easy week (off season phase) every fourth week to avoid overtraining.

In Season – Phase 3

This is during the season, and is designed to complement regular racquet sports activity. The exercises are higher intensity and fewer in number to allow you to maintain strength gains made in the off and pre seasons while saving most of your energy for your favorite racquet sport. Some of the high intensity exercises may not be appropriate for every athlete, especially those with chronic health or orthopedic conditions – check with your Physician. It is also helpful to add a relatively easy week every fourth week to avoid overtraining. Try to begin this phase a few weeks before the season begins.

Rest

This is the most overlooked facet of training, yet one of the most important. Properly timed rest periods are part of training (whether between sets, between exercises, between workouts, or between seasons) and it is during this phase that most gains are made. Training applies stress to the body, rest is when the body actually adapts and responds to the stress by becoming stronger. Too little rest = little (if any) improvement and probably overuse injury. Try to incorporate 1-2 days of active rest into each week, or pay the price. It is also recommended to rest for 1-2 weeks after the season to avoid overuse injuries. You'll probably appreciate the mental break from training too!

Workouts

You can alternate A & B workouts each time you exercise, or by week. For example,
strength training twice per week: Monday – A; Thursday – B
strength training 3 times per week: Mon –A; Weds – B; Sat – A (or visa versa)
week 1- workout A, week 2- workout B, etc.

By varying the A & B workouts and phases of training, you will continue to gain strength while avoiding overtraining or hitting a plateau.

In general, all racquet sports athletes must be able to rapidly change direction, have good hand eye coordination, and take measures to avoid overuse injuries to the spine, lower extremities, rotator cuff, wrists, and forearms. Dominant energy systems are anaerobic lactic and alactic for competitive athletes, although a solid aerobic training base allows for faster recovery during the brief rest periods that occur during matches.

Sample year for a recreational tennis player who competes in a fall and winter league that runs from October to March. The rest of the year involves casual tennis outings, participating in other activities, or offseason crosstraining. Numbers correspond to weeks of training in a particular phase: ie. January do 3 weeks of In Season followed by 1 week of Off Season.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
In 3	In 3	In 3	Off	Off	Off 2	Pre 3	Pre 3	In 3	In 3	In 3	In 3
Off 1	Off 1	Off 1			Pre 2	Off 1	Off 1	Off 1	Off 1	Off 1	Off 1

Remember: Listen to what your body tells you – rest if you need to!

Cardiovascular Conditioning

Again, your specific goals and current level of fitness will determine how you should train. If you are a recreational player who isn't interested in competition, you will probably do fine by primarily engaging in aerobic activities such as biking, jogging, swimming, or rowing. If you are willing and able, you will benefit by adding 1 day of anaerobic interval training to your routine. This should be started at least 8-12 weeks before the season begins. For competitive players, anaerobic training is a MUST, and should begin about 3 months before the season begins. Specific speed, agility, and quickness drills can also be done on the court to improve racquet sports conditioning needs.

Minimal aerobics:

4-6 days/week

20 minutes at target heart rate plus additional warm up and cool down

60-85% HR max

Sample pre-season program for recreational tennis league player:

Mon – 30-60 minutes rowing or jogging@ steady pace (just below lactate threshold)

Tues – 20 minutes anaerobic interval training (court drills, 50-200 meter sprints, jump rope)

Weds – 45-60 min easy jog/bike/cross training

Thurs – off

Fri – Tabata intervals (20 seconds max effort: 10 seconds rest x 8).

Sat – long hike/bike: 2-3 hours @ easy pace

Sun – off

Final Thought

The samples given are to illustrate how to plan your training year and are not intended to be specific recommendations for your particular situation. It is recommended that you consult your Physician **BEFORE** beginning this workout program! If possible, consult with a professional racquet sports coach and/or strength and conditioning coach to make sure you are doing the exercises correctly and that they are appropriate for your current level of ability and specific goals.

Listen to what your body tells you –you may need to add a rest day or two if you are feeling worn out – even if the training schedule doesn't call for it. If you experience pain or discomfort at any time during your training, consult your Physician.

Have fun!

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