

Periodization Basics

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- **1. Set Goals!** When are your key races and how fast do you want to walk in those races? Periodization is a very effective way to plan workouts so that all physiological systems are running at 100% on important race days. To map out an effective training schedule you must have concrete performance goals, and know when those big races are.
- **2.** To begin the periodization process count back 7 to 14 days before your goal race or races--this is your taper period. The idea is to be rested while maintaining high VO₂ and lactate threshold levels. To do so you should cut total mileage and number of intervals by 1/3 to 1/2 at least. Intensity should remain high--you must continue to walk fast and with excellent technique in the days before your races.
- **3.** Count back 3 to 6 weeks before your taper. This is your lactate threshold period. Your main focus should be on raising your lactate threshold walking speed--the speed beyond which high levels of lactate begin to accumulate in the muscles and blood. Training should consist of 2 to 3 LT sessions per week in addition to the usual recovery/technique sessions.
- **4.** 0 to 6 weeks before the threshold phase is the optional VO₂ max period. Raising VO₂ max will increase your ability to take in oxygen while walking at high speed. Steady-state workouts at 87 to 95% of max heart rate and interval workouts at 95 to 100% of max heart rate should be undertaken two to three times per week during this period. Be Conservative--don't even think about using a VO₂ max period unless you've been walking competitively for at least two years.
- **5.** Before your VO₂ max or threshold period count back as long as you have available--3 to 9 months or more. This is your endurance base buildup/economy period. Your main focus will be building general and racewalking-specific endurance, as well as developing solid economical technique. Whereas lactate threshold and VO₂ max improvements constitute primarily enzymatic changes, improvements in endurance represent structural changes--increased capillary supply to the muscles, increases in the size and number of mitochondria within the muscles, strengthening of ligaments and tendons. These structural changes take a great deal of time to develop, as does good technique--and without these changes lactate threshold and VO₂ max work will be counterproductive or damaging.
- **6.** Finally, before the endurance/economy period is the 1 to 4 week active rest phase. After each hard racing season the body must be given a chance to recover. Racewalking should be severely cut back or eliminated. Fitness gains will be maintained by pursuing alternative activities--biking, rollerblading, swimming, hiking. Choose activities that you enjoy that you've neglected during your hard training and racing seasons. Have fun! Give yourself a full physical and mental recovery before embarking on next season's training.

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