

Walking Magazine's 20 Best Treadmill Workouts

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With the cold winds of winter upon us, resourceful walkers will be eschewing the icy roads and bike paths by heading indoors to do their walking on treadmills. They know that with a little creativity a treadmill workout can be just as satisfying as an outdoor jaunt. But too many walkers lose touch with their creative side as soon as they step onto that whirling black belt. To these walkers we offer these 20 alternatives to the same old 30-minute indoor fat burners, as described by a number of indoor walking experts and aficionados. Try a few to rev up your winter walking.

1. The Retro

The Goal: For coordination, balance and strength.

The Workout: Simply walk backwards on the treadmill at an easy pace. Ruth Gersh, a competitive ballroom dancer does the retro on her treadmill a few days a week to keep from tripping when she should be trotting--fox trotting that is.

Total Time: 10 - 15 minutes.

2. The Trail Hike

The Goal: To work a variety of muscle groups, or to train for a hilly hike.

The Workout: Use the treadmill's pre-set programs or manually vary the incline while visualizing yourself on a tough section of the Appalachian Trail, the Swiss Alps or anywhere else you would care to take yourself. If you're good, the whirring of the belt starts to sound like a babbling brook or the wind through the trees.

Total Time: 30 - 45 minutes.

3. The Technique Check

The Goal: To develop efficient walking technique.

The Workout: Walk at various paces with mirrors to the front and sides to check technique; posture, arm carriage, foot action, etc. Stella Cashman, coach of New York City's Park Walkers Club gets real high-tech, setting up a video camera and television for her club members' technique walks.

Total Time: 30 - 60 minutes.

4. The Academy Reward

The Goal: To catch up on classic old movies while getting in a nice long training walk.

The Workout: Training for a marathon? (Or do you just like a good movie marathon?) Jayne Herring of Kenosha, WI dodges the cold winter winds off of Lake Michigan by setting her treadmill for an easy 3 - 3 1/2 mph pace and popping in a good walking-related tape like "The Wanderers," "High Plains Drifter," or Cary Grant's "Walk Don't Run."

Total Time: 2 hours or more--excluding intermissions.

5. The Quick Step

The Goal: To work on foot speed and to prevent boredom.

The Workout: Jo Ann Cole-Hansen, a member of the Treasure Valley Fitness Walkers in Boise, ID knows how important quick, efficient steps are. To check herself, and to keep occupied during her winter workouts, Jo Ann counts her steps for one minute, then rests for two. If she falls below 140 strides per minute she'll pick up the pace.

Total Time: 45 minutes.

6. Sporting Event Fartlek

The Goal: Fartleks--Swedish for "speed play," are workouts that alternate very fast and slower-paced walking for a great cardiovascular workout.

The Workout: David Bickel, a boxing fan from Bismarck, ND walks at a very fast pace on his SportTech treadmill during each round of a boxing match, then slows way down during the 1-minute breaks. If boxing isn't your thing, try basketball--go up and down every time the whistle blows. Soap opera fan? Up and down with every kiss, fight or gun shot.

Total Time: 47 minutes (or less if somebody loses an ear in the early rounds).

7. Rock & Walk

The Goal: Another great cardiovascular fartlek workout.

The Workout: When it's 30 below zero and his Calgary training routes are buried under 10 feet of snow, Canadian Olympic racewalker Tim Berrett takes his training indoors, his 5-CD player setting the pace for one of his favorite treadmill workouts. Mixing classical, soft rock and hard rock CDs, Tim hits the "random play" button to "Mosh Walk" with Green Day and recover to Pachelbel's Canon.

Total Time: Up to 3 hours.

8. The Short Circuit

The Goal: A mix of aerobic and strength training.

The Workout: Walk at a comfortable pace for five minutes, then step off and do 1 minute of circuit exercises. Cycle through crunches, push-ups, side-crunches, lunges and dips.

Total Time: 30 minutes.

9. The Stretch

The Goal: A mix of aerobic training and gentle stretching.

The Workout: Stretching is best done when the muscles are warm, so after an easy 10-minute walk on the treadmill, step off and stretch for ten minutes, then continue walking. Every five minutes jump off again for one minute to do an easy stretch; 20 seconds on each side. Cycle through hamstring, quadricep, calf, lower back and shoulder stretches.

Total Time: 40 minutes.

10. Meditation Walk

The Goal: Total relaxation.

The Workout: Light some candles and incense, put on a relaxing new-age music CD and walk your stress away.

Total Time: 30 minutes.

11. The Buddy Walk

The Goal: "Chew the fat" while burning fat.

The Workout: An easy side-by-side walk with your best friend on a pair of health club treadmills--unless you're Bob Sunman of Fairland, IN, and his best friend John, a basset hound reared in a kennel with doggie exercise treadmills. Now whenever Bob turns on his Precor, John howls until Bob lets him walk for 5 minutes.

Total Time: 30 - 60 minutes.

12. The Great Dictator

The Goal: Be "productive" while your creative juices are flowing.

The Workout: With no distractions and plenty of blood flowing to your brain, walking workouts are a great time to let the mind wander. Capture these thoughts with a hand-held micro-cassette tape recorder. Dictate memos, grocery lists, research papers or the Great American Novel while you walk.

Total Time: 60 minutes.

13. Walk Naked

The Goal: The only way to go if you like your workouts rough, tough and in the buff.

The Workout: Do we have to spell it out?

Total Time: As long as you can go before the neighbors start peeking in your windows.

14. Walk to Eat

The Goal: Weight loss.

The Workout: Are those pig magnets on the refrigerator not working? Instead of useless deterrents, why not "punish" yourself with a fifteen minute trot on the treadmill every time you open the refrigerator door?

Total Time: 15 minutes (100 - 150 calories) per workout.

15. The Breeze

The Goal: A refreshing indoor walk.

The Workout: One of the downsides to indoor walks is that the wind doesn't blow through your hair like it does outside. Why do without? Set up a fan a few feet in front of the treadmill for a cool breeze while you daydream about summer beach walks.

Total Time: 45 - 60 minutes.

16. Pyramid Scheme

The Goal: A lung-searing "interval" session for maximum cardiovascular efficiency.

The Workout: After his walkers do an easy 10-minute warm up, Jeff Salvage, Coach of the Philadelphia Area Striders and author of Walk Like an Athlete really works his walkers by programming the treadmill to their 5K race speed for a "pyramid" of intervals of 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 minutes with 2-minute warm-up pace rests between each fast segment.

Total Time: 40 - 60 minutes.

17. A Hill of a Technique Workout

The Goal: Improving your walking technique.

The Workout: According to personal trainer Sean Hylton, walking in a health club with the treadmill raised to a 3-5% grade is the best way for a walker to work on efficient walking technique. "The incline forces you to shorten your stride in the front and to push more from behind," says Hylton. "And it's easy to watch for tall, erect posture in the mirrors."

Total Time: 20 minutes.

18. Electric Drills

The Goal: Improved walking technique.

The Workout: After a 10 minute warm up with the treadmill set at your easiest training pace, break up your walk with 30 seconds "drill bursts," alternating between long and short stride drills. First walk with a very long stride with your arms swinging like pendulums, palms facing back, to open up your stride and to accentuate the roll off your rear foot, then walk with a very short stride to practice foot speed.

Total Time: 30-60 minutes.

19. USOTC Protocol

The Goal: To induce maximum pain in the shortest period of time possible.

The Workout: The slide rule jockeys at the Olympic Training Center love to inflict this VO2 test on racewalkers: First get yourself a blood lactate analysis spectrometer and a bio-gas chromatograph analyzer with O2/CO2 calibration filters. Then hook your unsuspecting walker up and set him off at 20K race pace. After three minutes, begin increasing the elevation at 1% per minute until he comes shooting off the back end of the treadmill.

Total Time: 10-15 minutes, tops.

20. The Amazonas

The Goal: Planning on an equatorial walking vacation? This'll get you acclimated to even the nastiest of climates.

The Workout: Simply roll a treadmill into your local health club's saua, and let 'er rip.

Total Time: You won't last five minutes...

21. The Stair Master

The Goal: Great for developing quadri-cep strength.

The Workout: If your treadmill's in the basement, this ones for you. Alternate five minutes of treadmill walking with five minutes of walking up and down a flight of stairs.

Total Time: 30 minutes.

22. The Trans-Continental

The Goal: To circumnavigate the U.S. without leaving your treadmill.

The Workout: Monetta Roberts, a walking coach and frequent treadmill walker in Mobile, AL, plots her daily mileage on a wall map with push pins. (At publication, she was somewhere outside of Las Cruces.)

Total Time: Could take years...

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