



Fitness and your preparation

You can take it as read that the challenge you've signed up for is not going to be a walk in the park. We've tried and tested these events ourselves and the challenges are designed to be exactly that, a challenge!

Once you've conquered your challenge you'll know you've been there and done it as your muscles will testify to it for a couple of days after the event. As such your preparation for a GB Charity Event has to be thorough and well-planned. Even if you already lead a healthy, active lifestyle and regularly exercise, it is a good idea to adapt your training and nutrition to reflect the challenge you are taking on.

Training for an event is important so that you can build up the necessary strength, cardiovascular system, stamina and muscle endurance that you will need to complete your challenge. Everyone is different in terms of levels and types of fitness; therefore we don't look to offer you a definitive fitness program.

Although the information contained in this section is aimed at giving you a general guideline on the types of fitness training that you should be undertaking, we recommend that you seek advice from a fitness professional as they will be able to develop a personalised training program based on your current level of fitness and lifestyle.

Before you start

Prior to beginning any physical regime of training for your challenge it is a good idea to consult with your doctor, particularly if you suffer from a heart condition, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, joint or back problems, or if you are pregnant or on any medication.

Please make sure that the equipment you are using (including clothing and footwear) is appropriate for the type of exercise you are doing and that it is comfortable and in good condition.

Training principles

Before you start a training programme it is sensible to establish your training objectives and goals so that you know what you are aiming to achieve. These targets should be realistic but at the same time should be challenging.

Setting goals too high can sometimes be a mistake as if you fail to reach these goals then it is easy to lose morale. It could also lead to injuries which would set your training back.

You should also look at reviewing your training objectives every couple of weeks and measure your progress. If the programme is proving too easy then a readjustment of your goals should ensure that you are still progressing in your training.



The golden rule of training is to start as early as you can. The longer the build-up time in your preparation to an event will mean that you can build up your levels of fitness steadily over a period without having to push yourself quickly and risk the onset of an injury. For the types of events GB Charity Events offer we would recommend a programme over a period of 12 weeks to get you into shape. A healthy body and a strong positive mind will see you through everything that we can throw at you!

The general training programme

When creating your training programme you should be looking to incorporate the following components:

- *The warm up*

With any form of physical training the body has to work hard to adapt to the higher levels of stress that you place upon it. Warming up is essential to raise the heart and respiratory rates gradually. It also helps to raise the body's muscle and blood temperature reducing the potential risk of an injury. The warm up should be related to the main body of exercise you are about to undertake i.e. walking, running, cycling.

- *Stretching*

By building in a good series of stretches before and after your exercise you will increase your flexibility, which will help you complete your challenge. Stretching also leads to a reduced risk of muscle tension and increase your joints' range of motion helping to reduce the risk of injury. It will be important to stretch daily whilst on our challenges.

- *Cardiovascular training*

Cardiovascular (CV) training concentrates on developing and improving your heart and lungs to increase the levels of oxygen that travel to your working muscles. Improvement on your CV will lead to increased levels of stamina and muscle endurance.

Typical CV activities include walking, running, cycling, rowing, swimming and aerobics. Many well-equipped gyms will also have additional CV equipment such as steppers and cross-country skiers. Ask your trainer or someone at the gym to help you if you are not sure how to use them.

- *Training Intensity*

How hard you train is based around your maximum heart beat (pulse rate). The level of intensity that you start your CV training at will depend on your current level of fitness. To calculate your maximum heart rate, use the calculation:

$$220 - (\text{your age}) = \text{maximum heart rate (MHR)}$$

If you have not been exercising regularly for some time, it is a good idea to start training at around 60-65% of your MHR for a period of about 20 minutes each day. As your levels of fitness improve gradually increase the intensity and duration of your workouts until you are able to work at levels between 75-85% of your MHR for extended periods.



- *Cross Training*

Whilst it is important to build your fitness specific to your activity, cross training (i.e. other aerobic activities like step) helps to develop your cardiovascular fitness. Cross training also develops muscles strength, hand-eye co-ordination and an improved range of motion, but more importantly it will relieve any possible boredom that might set in from routine training.

- *Resistance (weight) training*

Cardiovascular exercise should form the largest proportion of your training programme, but resistance (weight) training will help in developing strength and muscle endurance. Resistance training has the benefit of being able to target specific muscle groups that you will be using in your challenge for example, your thighs.

There are different methods of weight training, but for our event purposes you should focus on using light to moderate weights with the emphasis being placed on repetitions rather than the size of the weight. Typically you will be looking to do 2-3 sets of the exercise with 10-15 repetition in each set.

It should be noted that if you are unfamiliar with weights then you should seek the advice from a personal trainer or gym instructor on employing good technique which can lead to improvements in flexibility if done correctly. However, poor technique may lead to injury, so be careful.

- *The cool down*

Just as important as the warm up is the cool down, which is designed to allow the body time to adapt from being physically activity to resting. A brisk walk or gentle cycling for five minutes is all it takes for the body to adjust. The cool down allows the body to keep circulating oxygen, that breaks down the lactic acid in your muscles (a by product of exercising which builds up in the muscles that causes fatigue) and aids a more rapid recovery from your training.

- *The hazards of over-training*

Training is incredibly important for you to be able to complete your challenge, but you will need to get the right balance between training and resting to gain the most from your hard work. Over-training can leave your muscles depleted of energy and working below their full potential. It can also lead to injuries.

It takes muscles a full 48 hours to recover full from an exhaustive work out. You should, therefore, whenever possible, try and work different muscle groups on alternate days. If this is not possible, then after an intensive exercise, restrict yourself to a light workout. Ensure that you take at least one day off a week to allow recovery.

Don't forget walking

You can easily combine walking as exercise with walking for other reasons, like walking to work, visiting a place of interest or even walking the dog. Walking is good for you as it:

- Is free and no special equipment or training is needed
- Safe and low-impact, with a low risk of sustaining an injury or having an accident
- Can halve the risk of a heart attack if it is something you do it regularly.