

# THE RAT RACE URBAN ADVENTURE

Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th September 2010 . Central London



## Your training schedule:

While you'll no doubt have many laughs with your team mates en route, be prepared for some hard work. "Unlike other endurance events, the Rat Races aren't continuous, with lots of stop-start aerobic bursts," says 2009 course designer and race veteran Gary Vallance. "If you're going for the 'Weekender' – which most people do – you'll find the 3 hour Mean Streets event on the Saturday evening does leave you feeling tired ahead of the Nine2Five on the Sunday, which entails 8 hours of constant work, testing every facet of your fitness and endurance."

Because of this stop-start format, Gary, who's competed successfully in more than his fair share of adventure races, recommends a mixture of steady-state and fartlek running and cycling work, with some full-body circuit training thrown in. "You won't know the exact challenges beforehand, but you have to assume you'll be doing activities such as climbing, kayaking and abseiling, which mean you'll need good all-round strength and fitness." The advantage of which being you'll burn even more calories and lose any spare baggage. And don't forget your nutritional strategy, he says. "You'll be burning thousands of calories over the weekend, so need to maintain energy with the right food and drink – the last thing you want to do is 'bonk' halfway through when all the glycogen energy reserves in your muscles have depleted."

Lastly, don't discount the mental aspect. "Unlike fixed disciplines, and marked courses, the unique mental elements of The Rat Race are exhausting," Gary says. "As bodies tire, brains addle, tempers fray. So where possible throw in some mental training, on the go." "It could be following a map, recalling every New Year's party you've been to, or keeping a mental tally of the number of lampposts, red cars and dogs you see on a run or ride," he says.

## Fitness test

"It's essential to gauge your aerobic fitness before and during any new fitness regime," explains Vallance. "As well as acting as a constant motivator, if you're in the 'poor' category in this step test it should ring alarm bells that something needs changing – but with the only way forward being 'up', you should see fast progress."

Stand about 30cm away from a 25cm-high step, stair or bench. Make sure the step is strong enough to take your weight. The step height should be about 25 cm.

Step up and down (right foot up, left up, right down, left down) as fast as you comfortably can for one minute, changing your leading leg halfway. As soon as you finish, sit down on the step, time 30 seconds then take your pulse for a full minute.

Age	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
20s	101+	85-100	75-84	74 or less
30s	101+	87-100	79-86	78 or less
40s	105+	89-104	81-88	80 or less
50s	105+	91-104	83-90	82 or less

## Absolute beginner

While you can choose to walk sections of the Rat Races, you'll get much, much more from them if you run - whatever your level of fitness you should comfortably be able to build from nothing to running continuously for 30 minutes in just two months," Vallance explains. "Make a commitment to run at least three times a week and follow this simple run/walk program that will gradually ease you towards the goal." Repeat each of these three times a week to get you up to speed, allowing at least a day between runs.

**WEEK 1** Run one min, walk 90 seconds. Repeat eight times.

**WEEK 2** Run two mins, walk one min. Repeat seven times.

**WEEK 3** Run three mins walk one min. Repeat six times.

**WEEK 4** Run five mins, walk two mins. Repeat four times.

**WEEK 5** Run eight mins, walk two mins. Repeat three times.

**WEEK 6** Run 12 mins, walk one min. Repeat three times.

**WEEK 7** Run 15 mins, walk one min, run 15 mins.

**WEEK 8** Run 30 mins continuously.

"If in doubt, slow down," he says. "You should be able to hold a conversation while you run. And don't be afraid of dropping back a week – everyone's different." Having completed this, you should be ready for the beginner 8-week program (page 2).

## Take a HIT

To fast-track your fitness, High Intensity Intervals (HITs) hold the answer. Canadian sports scientists at McMaster University in Ontario found just six 15-minute intense interval sessions performed over 2 weeks doubled the time healthy college-aged men could exercise at 80% of their maximal aerobic capacity (i.e. flat out). Try this 20-minute, high-intensity interval routine twice a week.

Perform each sprint described below at the prescribed percentage of your highest possible effort. Then, slow to an active rest at a lower intensity - a light jog, for instance. And mix it up. "Running actually burns most calories, but using the rower, static bike and Nordic ski machine on different days rests muscle groups and activates your core, which helps prevent injury," Vallance says. It also makes any training program more interesting to increase your chances of lasting the distance." On days with more than one HIT session, move from one exercise to another to maintain motivation.

- Warm up for 5 minutes, gradually increasing your intensity to about 50 percent of full effort.
- Sprint for 30 seconds at 85% of full effort.
- Take an active rest for 2 minutes at 40% of full effort.
- Sprint for 20 seconds at 90% of full effort.
- Take an active rest for 2 minutes at 40% of full effort.
- Sprint for 10 seconds at 100% (full sprint).
- Take an active rest for 2 minutes at 40% of full effort.
- Sprint for 20 seconds at 90% of full effort.
- Take an active rest for 2 minutes at 40% of full effort.
- Sprint for 30 seconds at 85% of full effort.
- Cool down for 5 minutes.

# Complete the circuit

Once a week complete this full-body park workout circuit. "You need to keep moving, so do a 3-4 minute jog/run between stations to get real benefits that translate to the Rat Race," Vallance says. Start with one complete circuit, then add more in progressively – and up the intensity of your running sections between each as you do. "Try to train with your team mates – it'll increase motivation, you'll enjoy it more and are much more likely to complete the circuits with someone watching over you. You'll also start to bond more as a team, which always helps on race day"

## CLOSE-HAND DECLINE PRESS UPS

Equipment needed – Low wall or railing  
Muscles worked – Triceps, shoulders, chest

In a regular press-up position, place your feet on a low wall or railing (2-foot high, max). Position your hands so that your thumbs are touching. Keeping your body aligned in one plane (don't let your hips drop or the upper back round) lower until your forehead touches the floor. Drive back to the start position maintaining good form throughout. Do 3 sets of 15-20 reps – or as many as you can manage in three sets, resting for 30 seconds between each.

## LOW BAR CLIMBER'S PULL UP

Equipment needed – Sturdy horizontal bar: e.g. railing, or bicycle rack (about waist height)

Muscles worked – Lats, traps, biceps, chest, core

Hang beneath the bar or railing, with your arms extended. Keeping your chest under the bar, walk your legs out in front of you until just your heels are on the ground, and your body and legs form a straight line at a right angle to your arms. Pull your whole body up as one unit until your chin is next to one hand. Pause and lower back to the starting position and repeat the other side. Do three sets of 12-15 reps on each side, pausing for 30 seconds between each.

## TWISTING LEG RAISES

Equipment needed: Swings  
Muscles worked: Forearms, shoulders, abs, obliques

Reach up above your head and grab hold of the swing chains - wrap them once around the arm to help with grip and use gloves if you have them to protect your hands. Lift your legs off the floor and slowly curl them up to bring the knees in towards the chest, twisting them to one side of the body. Lower slowly and repeat to the other side. As you get stronger, start to extend the legs further from the body to increase the challenge. Do three sets of 10-12 reps, resting for 30 seconds between each.

## PARK BENCH HURDLES

Equipment needed: Park bench  
Muscles Worked – Whole body, with a core focus

Facing the bench, place both hands on the top, your feet together. Keeping the feet together and hands in place, vault over the middle, clearing the bench with your feet, softening your landing by flexing at the ankle, knee and hip. Repeat as many jumps over the bench and back again as possible in 30 seconds. Rest for 30 seconds, then repeat two more times.

## ROTATING SQUAT JUMPS

Equipment needed: Low, wide wall (about knee high)  
Muscles Worked – Core, glutes, quads

Start standing side-on to the wall with feet shoulder width apart. Drop down into a squat, flexing at the hip and knee, but keeping the chest up. At the bottom of the movement, explode upwards and rotate in the air so you land on the wall with both feet, facing forwards. Step back down and repeat. Do three sets of 12-15, pausing for 30 seconds between sets.

# BEGINNER 8-WEEK SCHEDULE

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	Fitness test	3m run	Park circuits	HITs (x1)	Rest	3m run	30 mins active recovery
2	Fitness test	30-min cycle	Park circuits	HITs (x1)	Rest	30-min cycle	30 mins active recovery
3	Fitness test	3.5m run	Park circuits (x2)	HITs (x2)	Rest	4m run	35 mins active recovery
4	Fitness test	45-min cycle	Park circuits (x2)	HITs (x2)	Rest	45-min cycle	35 mins active recovery
5	Fitness test	3m run	Park circuits (x2)	HITs (x3)	Rest	5m run	45 mins active recovery
6	Fitness test	60-min cycle	Park circuits (x3)	HITs (x3)	Rest	60-min cycle	45 mins active recovery
7	Fitness test	4m run	Park circuits (x3)	HITs (x3)	Rest	7m run	60 mins active recovery
8	Fitness test	90-min cycle	Park circuits (x3)	HITs (x3)	Rest	90-min cycle	Race!

# INTERMEDIATE 8-WEEK SCHEDULE

WEEK	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	Fitness test	4m run	Park circuits	HITs (x1)	Rest	4m run	30 mins active recovery
2	Fitness test	45 min cycle	Park circuits	HITs (x1)	Rest	45 min cycle	45 mins active recovery
3	Fitness test	5m run	Park circuits (x2)	HITs (x2)	Rest	6m run	45 mins active recovery
4	Fitness test	60 min cycle	Park circuits (x2)	HITs (x2)	Rest	60 min cycle	60 mins active recovery
5	Fitness test	6m run	Park circuits (x3)	HITs (x3)	Rest	7m run	60 mins active recovery
6	Fitness test	90 min cycle	Park circuits (x3)	HITs (x3)	Rest	90 min cycle	75 mins active recovery
7	Fitness test	7m run	Park circuits (x4)	HITs (x4)	Rest	8m run	90 mins active recovery
8	Fitness test	120 min cycle	Park circuits	HITs (x4)	Rest	Rest	Race!