



Fitness Evolution 2

Getting To The Next Level...Rise Of The Machines

Rowing Machine:

While experts suggest a variety of cardio equipment to stay in top shape for skiing – everything from spin bike to the elliptical trainer to the treadmill – the rowing machine is particularly favored as a low-impact, full body workout. Why do it? Cardio is essential for working out at altitude, where the air is thinner and your heart and lungs have to put out more effort to keep you moving. The rowing machine is a good choice because it targets so many parts of the body. You drive through your hips, knees and ankles and finish the row with your arms; it also strengthens your back. But watch out! Rowing machines injuries are rare, but to be safe, don't arch your back.

What About Free Weights:

If you're looking to isolate a certain muscle – the hamstring, for example – using a machine is an ideal option. But if you want to work more muscles simultaneously – the key to staying strong over the long term, according to experts – free weights strengthen your whole core. Free weights can also work your muscles more completely by allowing a larger range of motion. (With most machines you're locked into a specific, simple movement, such as straight up and down). Trainers say this more complete movement is a great way to work out because it's comparable to how we move on the hill and throughout our daily lives.

Free weights also improve balance, a crucial component for staying strong and upright on the slopes. You have to use balance every time you pick up a weight. But there are drawbacks to free-weights. Because they're more complicated to use than machines, you need more training to learn proper form. It's also easier to get hurt with free weights, and when you use them you usually need a spotter. For the best-rounded workouts, incorporate both free weights and machines into your weekly routine. The two are complementary and, used together, can keep you primed for the slopes.

Get Solid To The Core, Tighten Up Your Energy Package!

The core is often the most neglected muscle group of the body. What's worse, building it up requires more than simply hopping on a fitness machine. Your torso muscles are most challenged in movements where they have to balance and keep the body upright – often while the upper and lower body are reacting independently of each other. Unlike bench presses or curls, which work one or two muscles in isolation, core-strengthening exercises recruit your legs, back, hips, and upper body all at once to simulate what your body is actually doing while skiing. A core prescription includes drills for skiing's three basic planes of motion. Forward bending and straightening, sideways bending and straightening, and twisting combinations of the two. The thick necks in the gym might look at you funny, but these exercises will improve your skiing a lot faster than knocking out hundreds of single-planed crunches and plan old sit-ups. Once you've warmed up for at least 10-20 minutes, approach the core workout itself as a three-part assignment: sideways movements, twisting exercises, and fore and aft work. If you only have time to do three exercises, do one from each group. While performing each exercise, suck in and tighten your abs to bolster your spine. Be sure to bend from the hip rather than the gut when doing forward-bending movements and lead with your pelvis rather than with your shoulders in rotational movements. Because it's harder to overwork the core than it is your quads, you can hammer the area more often with higher reps than you can other larger muscle groups – three sets of 20, four days a week, all years long.

When you hit the gym for the first time, trying to figure out which weight to start with can be the most intimidating factor. The key? Start with a light weight, and work up to where you burn out after each set of 20 reps. When the burn dissipates, notch it up in three to five pounds intervals.