

Working out your exercise schedule

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(HealthDay)—The number of weekly recommended workout sessions can really add up.

With five or more periods of cardio, and two or three each of [strength training](#), [flexibility](#) and [motor skills](#) for balance and agility, it's inevitable that you'll need to do more than one type of [exercise](#) on any given day.

To make the most of every session, know the right sequence to follow. A Western Colorado University study sponsored by the American Council on Exercise (ACE) tested the variables and found definitive results.

First, on days when you're doing cardio, you should typically start with this workout, whatever aerobic activity you choose. You'll not only get the maximum benefits by doing it first, but you'll also warm up your body for the second exercise.

If strength training is also part of that day's plan, do it next. If you're piggy-backing all types of exercise, flexibility and motor skills should follow strength training, in whatever order you like.

The research found that this sequence had psychological as well as physical benefits.

However, experts add that it's fine to personalize these findings based on individual goals. For instance, if you need to focus on one type of exercise in particular, like flexibility to help with [low back pain](#), start a multi-discipline session with that workout so that you're fresh when doing it. Or if building muscle is your top goal, start with strength training.

Another [approach](#) is to devote certain days of the week to your primary area of focus, and then double or triple up on the other fitness disciplines on different days. Here are two sample plans.

Plan A:

- Monday and Thursday: Strength-training.
- Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday: Cardio, flexibility and motor skills.
- Sunday: Swimming laps at a community pool.

Plan B:

- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday: Cardio.
- Wednesday and Saturday: Strength-training, flexibility and motor skills.
- Sunday: Family cycling trip.

As you progress in one area, it's easy to move around the various exercise blocks to suit your changing needs.

More information: Read more about the sequencing study along with additional ways to [optimize exercise results](#) on the ACE website.

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