

## Flair

### Fitness: Tabata interval training

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Barbara Bandeira, director of Next Level Fitness in Richmond, leads a Tabata boot camp class in Forest Hill Park.



By: [MARIA HOWARD](#) | Richmond Times-Dispatch  
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Have you tried Tabata?

The latest take on interval training is based on the premise that short spurts (20 seconds at a time) of high-intensity exercise (think of giving 100 percent or more) will provide better results than maintaining steady, moderate intensity over a longer period.

So you might be able to get the same fitness benefits in 30 minutes that would normally take you an hour or more to achieve. Sounds good, huh?

But you have to be willing to put in maximum effort during those 20 seconds.

Under the Tabata method, you spend 20 seconds doing high-intensity exercise followed by a 10-second rest. Then, you exercise hard for another 20 seconds, then take a 10-second rest. The cycle repeats for four minutes, for a total of eight sets of exercise.

You don't necessarily need equipment. So this could be a great option for family vacation or times when you can't get to the gym.

Tabata has been touted for its ability to burn fat and increase aerobic capacity.

The format was developed by Izumi Tabata (pronounced Tah-BAH-tah) of Japan in the mid-1990s. Its popularity has spread, with the format now used in exercise classes and training sessions worldwide. It can be applied to running, cycling, weight-lifting, military-style workouts or most any other form of exercise.

If you're doing a 30-minute workout, for instance, you might warm up for five minutes, and then do five, four-minute training periods in a row (20 minutes worth) before cooling down for five minutes.

That was the format used recently by Lynne Deane, medical director at the University of Richmond student health center, who got in a Tabata workout during a work retreat in Sandbridge.

"The weather was iffy so I wasn't sure if I would be able to get in a walk or a run outside later in the day," Deane said.

So she rose early for a 30-minute Tabata session and was showered and ready for the day's meetings at the same time as her colleagues.

"You don't really need any equipment," she said, adding that she did exercises such as push-ups, squats, mountain climbers and jumping jacks. Following notes from a Tabata boot camp class she had attended, Deane clicked through the exercises with high intensity.

"I felt like I got a good workout," Deane said.

Even if you don't put the Tabata sessions back-to-back in your workout, they can be sprinkled in to provide a beneficial boost in intensity.

Barbara Bandeira, director of Next Level Fitness in Richmond and a certified Tabata boot camp instructor, said the method is "great for people who don't have a lot of time."

Most anyone can benefit from a workout that includes high-intensity surges, she said. "It speeds up your metabolism. ... After the workouts, you keep burning calories."

Research has shown that high-intensity exercise tends to increase metabolism and burn more calories. In addition, those bursts of steam can help your brain function better, according to John Ratey, a Harvard researcher and author of "Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain."

Ratey has long touted the benefits of exercise in stimulating the brain. In his most recent findings, he advocates short periods of more intense work — sprinting, cycling quickly, doing power squats with jumps — to maximize the benefits to the body and the brain.

So the next time you need a good workout but are running short on time, think Tabata.

Try out Tabata

The Tabata training format can apply to lots of different exercises, many of which do not require equipment. You should pick exercises that you can do at maximum intensity without risking injury. This template will give you some ideas on how to set up a 30-minute workout with no equipment.

**First five minutes:** Warm up with large movements of the upper and lower body.

**Next 20 minutes:** Follow a written line-up for your interval sessions. Plan to complete five four-minute sessions. Some exercises may be repeated. An example of a Tabata line-up follows.

**Session 1:** Push-ups on intervals 1 and 3; squats on intervals 2 and 4. Each interval is one minute in length, with 20 seconds on and 10 seconds off, done twice. Remember to push the intensity — give it everything you've got — during the 20 seconds of exercise.

**Session 2:** Mountain climbers on intervals 1 and 3; jumping jacks on intervals 2 and 4.

**Session 3:** Burpees on intervals 1 and 3; high knees on intervals 2 and 4.

**Session 4:** Crab walks or bear crawls on intervals 1 and 3; speed skaters on intervals 2 and 4.

**Session 5:** Elevated planks on intervals 1 and 3; football drills on intervals 2 and 4.

**Last five minutes:** Cool down with walking (in place, if necessary) and stretching.

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Maria Howard is a group exercise instructor for the YMCA of Greater Richmond. Her column runs every other week in Sunday Flair.

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