

Sample Aerobic Activity Plan for Beginners

This is a sample 12-week plan to help meet a goal of 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most days of the week.

- The best types of activities for this plan are ones that use large muscle groups (arms, trunk, legs), such as walking, dancing, cycling, swimming, or jogging.
- Remember to begin each session with a brief, 5–10 minute warm-up and end with a 5–10 minute cool-down.
- Using the Borg Scale below, rate how hard you feel you are exercising. Aerobic activities, like walking and cycling, should be done at level 13. Strength activities, like lifting dumbbells and pushups, should be done at levels 15–17. You can gradually make activities harder as you become more fit. Activities that used to be hard will become easier over time and earn a lower score compared to when you first started. For example, slow walking on level ground may be a level 13 effort for you in the beginning. As your fitness improves, it may take brisk walking up a slight hill to get to that same level 13 effort.
- When exercises start to become easier on a regular basis, try to up the ante and increase the effort!

THE BORG CATEGORY RATING SCALE

Least Effort

6	
7	very, very light
8	
9	very light
10	
11	fairly light
12	
13	somewhat hard
14	
15	hard
16	
17	very hard
18	
19	very, very hard
20	

Maximum Effort

Aerobic Training Zone

Strength Training Zone

You can adjust the days of the week on this plan to better fit your schedule.

WEEKS 1 THROUGH 3: GETTING STARTED

	Day	Effort/Intensity Borg Scale	Total Duration
Week 1	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Saturday	Rest	
Week 2	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Saturday	Rest	
Week 3	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	10–15 minutes
	Saturday	Rest	

WEEKS 4 THROUGH 7: INCREASING DURATION AND FREQUENCY

	Day	Effort/Intensity Borg Scale	Total Duration
Week 4 and Week 5	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	11–13	20–30 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	7–10 minutes at 11–13 7–10 minutes at 13–16 7–10 minutes at 11–13	20–30 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	20–30 minutes
	Saturday	Rest	
Week 6	Sunday	14–15	20–30 minutes
	Monday	11–13	20–30 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	7–10 minutes at 11–13 7–10 minutes at 13–16 7–10 minutes at 11–13	20–30 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	20–30 minutes
	Saturday	Rest	
Week 7	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	11–13	20–30 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	7–10 minutes at 11–13 7–10 minutes at 13–16 7–10 minutes at 11–13	20–30 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	20–30 minutes
	Saturday	Rest	

WEEKS 8 THROUGH 12: INCREASING DURATION

	Day	Effort/Intensity Borg Scale	Total Duration
Week 8 and Week 9	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	11–13	30 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	10 minutes at 11–13 10 minutes at 13–16 10 minutes at 11–13	30 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	30 minutes
	Saturday	10 minutes at 11–13 10 minutes at 13–16 10 minutes at 11–13	30 minutes
Week 10	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	10	30 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	14	30 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	10	30 minutes
	Saturday	14	30 minutes
Week 11	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	11–13	30 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	10 minutes at 11–13 10 minutes at 13–16 10 minutes at 11–13	30 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	30 minutes
	Saturday	10 minutes at 11–13 10 minutes at 13–16 10 minutes at 11–13	30 minutes

Week 12	Sunday	Rest	
	Monday	11–13	30 minutes
	Tuesday	Rest	
	Wednesday	10 minutes at 11–13 10 minutes at 13–16 10 minutes at 11–13	30 minutes
	Thursday	Rest	
	Friday	11–13	30 minutes
	Saturday	Rest	

WEEK 13 AND BEYOND: MAINTENANCE

- 30–60 minutes of aerobic activities
- 5–6 times/week
- 13 or higher on the Borg Scale

For even more help with controlling your weight, consider increasing the duration, frequency, and/or intensity of your activity.

This sample plan was adapted from: *How to Write an Exercise Prescription* by MAJ Robert L. Gauer, MD and LTC Francis O'Connor, MD, FACSM, Dept of Family Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.