



SPEED RULES

Be faster than you ever imagined

IT'S A POPULAR dream for any guy who is even moderately involved in fitness or sports: to be the fastest guy in the group.

When you sprint, you tap into those fast-twitch (type IIb) muscle fibers that produce explosive power. These fast-twitch fibers use anaerobic metabolism to create energy and produce quick, powerful bursts of speed.

A HUNDRED FOR HUMANITY

The reigning world champion of the 100-meter sprint usually carries the title of “fastest man in the world”—and with good reason. This distance is the benchmark for adenosine triphosphate (ATP) energy being expended to its maximum threshold. In other words, if you run as fast as you possibly can for 10 seconds, you reach the point where you completely deplete your phosphocreatine (PCr) energy system. During this time, you're attempting to tap into this system to expend the greatest power output possible.

How difficult has it been to make great strides in sprinting (pun intended)? Back on June 20, 1936, American Jesse Owens set a new world record in the 100-meter dash in Chicago as the first human ever to be clocked at 10.2 seconds. At press time, the current world record over this distance is 9.69 seconds, set by Jamaica's Usain Bolt at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. So, it just goes to show that in spite of new technologies, better training equipment, more educated coaching and tremendous improvements in supplementation, it has taken mankind 72 years just to shave half a second off the 100-meter sprint—talk about a challenge.

RESISTANCE TRAINING FOR SPRINTING

“Using specific exercises to develop power in your legs and strength in your torso is critical to sprint success,” says Olympic hopeful Steven Benedict (shown in the accompanying exercise photos). “Not only do you want repeated rapid firing from your quads and hamstrings but you also want a strong core, as you hold your breath for the entire distance of the sprint.”

Make no mistake that every single one of the world's fastest sprinters relies heavily on resistance training. No matter what your current level of running speed is, you, too, can benefit greatly from key moves to produce great power, develop those type IIb muscle fibers mentioned above and get you from A to B a helluva lot faster.

—Tim Righy, MA

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Front Squat

4 sets of 8

Benefits Explosiveness out of the block and initial momentum

Targets Quads and hamstrings

Set-up Stand next to a bar supported on the squat rack at collarbone height. Wrap your hands under and across the bar so that you're grasping it with your hands crossed in front. Take a step backwards, keeping your torso erect and your head up. Position your feet so that they're just slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Inhale.

Action Keeping your head up and your breath in, squat down to a level just before your quads are parallel to the ground. Make sure that your back doesn't round (keep it straight throughout the move). Press with your legs as you're rising up and exhale before you return to the starting position.

MaxFit Tip To hit your quad muscles, which are key to sprinting even harder, try this move with a narrow stance. Practise with lighter weights first.



Reverse Barbell Lunge

3 sets of 10



Benefits Intense power, longer strides and improved balance

Targets Quads, hamstrings and glutes

Set-up Stand on a platform with your toes pointing forward and a light barbell resting behind your neck. Support the bar using a wider than shoulder width grip. Keep your head up and your back straight, with your knees slightly bent. Inhale.

Action Drop your right leg behind you and below you to the ground—your chest and head should remain up. After you've extended your back leg, your front quad will be below parallel to the ground. Keeping your back straight and head up, use your front quad to power your lower body back onto the platform and up to an erect position. Exhale as you pass the midway point of the forward motion. Pause for a split second for control and repeat the process with your other leg extending backwards.

MaxFit Tip Develop the ability to keep your head up without looking down at the platform. If you start with a very light weight, you can build muscle memory so that the step up becomes second nature.

Oblique Weighted Twist

3 sets of 15

Benefits Improved speed with which you can rotate your trunk and pump your arms alternately

Targets Oblique abdominals

Set-up Stand erect with your feet shoulder width apart, back straight and head up. Grasp a weight plate of 35 to 45 pounds and hold it in front of your abs, with your arms at a 90-degree angle and your hands positioned at three o'clock and nine o'clock on the weight. Inhale and hold.

Action Rotate from your obliques to your left, keeping your legs motionless and your head up. After you reach the point where you can't twist any further, hold for a count of one and return to the starting position while you exhale. Repeat this process, twisting to your right side.

MaxFit Tip As you perform the last few reps of a set, the weight may become heavier. Take care not to slouch forward, which will strain your back. Always keep a straight back and use suitable weights.



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