

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A TRAINING PROGRAM

If you have any medical issues or concerns, you should consult with your health care provider prior to starting a new program.

Muscle imbalances

Probable causes:

1. Lack of or inconsistent dry land training during dragon boat season.
2. Primarily paddled on one side of the boat.
3. Age
4. Strength / flexibility issues
5. Posture
6. Balance / Movement limitations

Solutions:

1. Seek advice from a professional (Physical Therapist or Certified Athletic Trainer) to assess and assist in moving forward with a personalized program to address weaknesses.
2. If you are a member of the Wellness Center, seek a free evaluation from Kaitlin Blankenship with TN Orthopaedic Alliance (TOA).
3. Other facilities that paddlers use for fitness training include Orange Theory, CrossFit, and Flexx Fitness Personal Training.

Professional Trainer or Self Directed

1. Utilize a certified professional trainer

Pros: licensed expertise in assessment, individualized program to track progress, builds progression into program. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** for at least two months for beginners and gym rats alike.

Cons: expense but most have payment plans

2. Subscribe to mobile apps. There are a lot of no - no's and a lot of mis-information out there. If this is the route you want to go, be critical and use more than one single resource.
3. Self directed can be a tough go for both beginners and for gym rats. There are **NO** quick fixes and science is ever involving and theories changing.

Training at Home or Gym

1. Benefit of Home Workouts no travel time; strength program can be accomplished using body weight; cardio accomplished with power walking, running, jumping, etc.
2. Benefit of Gym workout includes variety of equipment available such as dumbbells, machines, or body weight; cardio accomplished with treadmills, rowers, bikes etc.
3. Go slow. It is normal to take six to eight weeks or more to get oriented before you begin a reasonable progression. More on this below.

Commitment

1. Establish consistency by planning a schedule - what you will do on what day of the week and at what time, and stick with that.
2. Plan out at least six weeks in advance to develop "the habit". Plan to spend about an hour a day dedicated to training.

Importance of Progression

1. Accept that you start where you start. Everyone's starting point is different.
2. Keep in mind that the whole point of exercise is to cause enough stress to your muscles and cardiovascular system that your body adapts, becoming stronger in the process.
3. As your body adapts to stress over time it is important to increase the stress to keep making desired gains.
4. Progression is all about listening to your body. If something starts to feel more doable it may be time to increase the load.

Recovery

1. Don't be surprised if within 1 - 2 days after a demanding workout you feel sore. This is known as Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (DOMS).
2. This is normal and will improve as you recover and your muscles adapt and grow.
3. Stay hydrated.

DRAGON BOAT DRY LAND TRAINING

Dragon Boat is considered a full body workout in that it uses all of the body's muscle groups and cardiovascular system. The critical components can be made up of a combination of activities:

Warmup and Cooldown

Strength Training

Aerobic Training

Anaerobic Training

Active Rest

Each of these are explained more fully below, along with the recommended sessions per week for each. Plan to spend about an hour a day for training.

TRAINING PLAN COMPONENTS / EXAMPLES WARMUP AND COOLDOWN (every workout)

1. BOTH critical components to a successful training program for performance and minimizing the risk for injury.
2. *Warming up* ensures your muscles are ready to perform and joints lubricated; accomplished by low intensity version of your workout

WARMUP EXAMPLES: jump squats, jumping jacks or even 10 minutes on a bike, treadmill or rower.

3. *Cooling down* aims to re-establish the natural length of the muscles used and to help them begin recovery after the stress of training. It also aims to gradually bring down your heart rate/returning your body to a rest state/recovery. If

you ran for your workout you will want to walk to bring your heart rate down and then stretch muscle groups in your legs. If you did strength training - you will want to stretch all muscle groups.

COOLDOWN EXAMPLES: Yoga stretches like the warrior series or a couple of sun salutations, and/or static stretches held for 10 to 15 seconds for each muscle or muscle group worked.

STRENGTH TRAINING (3-4 days per week) Dragon boat paddling engages the following muscle groups:

Core (Abdominals, Obliques, Hips): Essential for torso rotation, stability, transferring power from legs to upper body, and maintaining posture throughout the stroke.

Back (Latissimus Dorsi, Rhomboids): The primary pushing muscles, engaged during the catch and press phase to move the paddle through the water.

Shoulders (Deltoids): Stabilize the paddle, assist in the catch, and help keep the paddle vertical.

Legs (Quadriceps, Glutes, Hamstrings): Provide the powerful leg drive by pushing off the footboards, initiating the stroke and generating power from the ground up.

Chest (Pectorals): Help maintain your upper body frame and support the pressing motion.

Arms (Biceps, Triceps): Used for gripping the paddle, controlling its entry and exit, and extending the arm during the stroke.

Effective paddling uses these muscles in a sequence producing the power that propels the boat forward.

There are a number of different approaches and strategies to consider when planning strength training. It is perhaps the most flexible and most complex of all training components.

Unfortunately, with so many options available it can be confusing about where to start, what to do, how often, how many reps, what weight, and so on. Then there is progression to consider. **The progression component of training truly deserves spending some time with a professional that can assess you and build a program for your needs.**

Strength Training Options

1. Train with free weights/machines

Pros: free weights fit everyone and can be used to improve overall stability and functional strength. Machine weights can help beginners with their form

Cons: Downside of free weights is they don't force good form. Downside of machines is they don't fit all sizes and shapes of users

2. Train without equipment (using body weight)

Pros: Better than machines and less expensive regarding equipment cost. Benefits of using body weight is efficiency of hitting muscle groups at the same time and helps with functional strength.

Cons: Downside is that body weight exercises are usually more difficult to perform particularly for beginners.

Important Notes:

Form: Always use good form and posture to prevent injury. Do not use full

body momentum (cheating).

Weight: If using dumbbells or machines start with a weight that challenges you. Your last repetition should be the most challenging (you could likely not do one more) but one that you can do with good form. (i.e., start pushups on a wall, then a countertop, then a bench, and then the floor).

Reps & Sets: Beginners using dumbbells or machines typically start with low weight and say 15 reps for 2 sets. As you increase the weight you will progressively lower the rep count to 12, then 10 and increase to 3 sets. Ideal for muscle gain is high weights where the most challenging rep count is 6.

Body weight exercises (plank) are typically done by time. Start with 30 secs or less and increase to 1 minute.

Rest between sets: Rest as needed. This too is variable but for single set exercises you would rest 30 secs to 1 minute between sets.

Progression: You start where you start and it is important you do not overdo this. Listen to your body and it will tell you when its time to up your game.

SAMPLE MUSCLE GROUP EXERCISES:

1. *Core* : Crunches / Bicycle Crunches, Russian Twists, Planks, Side Planks, Wood Chops, Paylof Press, Bird Dog * The core is strong enough to be done daily. Consider adding Pilates.*
2. *Back* : Single arm dumbbell row, Straight arm overhead lat pull down, Pull-ups, Inverted Row, Superman hold, Prone pull, Plank pull, Upside down snow angels
3. *Shoulders* : Lateral dumbbell raises, Front dumbbell raises, Plank shoulder taps, Bear Crawls, Superman I.Y.T positions
4. *Chest* : Chest Flys, Press, Bench Press, Push up
5. *Triceps/Biceps* : Bent over triceps kick back, Overhead tricep extension, Tricep Pulldowns, Tricep dips on a bench, Plank ups from elbow to alternating straight arm, Bicep curls, Hammer curls
6. *Legs* : Goblet Squats with dumbbells, Wall sit, Leg Press, Leg Curl, Step ups, Hip bridges with leg raise (good substitute for lunges), Clam Shells, Side steps with band, Deadlifts, Kettlebell swings, Heel raises.

ANAEROBIC ENDURANCE TRAINING (1 day per week each – alternate OR add on to a Strength or Aerobic day). More familiar terms for anaerobic training may be **HIIT** (high intensity interval training) or **SIT** (sprint interval training). HIIT and SIT are different.

You can use a bike, treadmill, rower for HIIT and SIT. If you don't have machines, you can also use an activity like running or jump rope, jump squats, jumping jacks - basically anything that gets you to the intended intensity.

1. **HIIT** is sustained high level of effort (80-90%) followed by short periods of active rest. HIIT is good for building endurance.

HIIT EXAMPLES: An example might be 30 secs to 1 minute of work followed by 1 minute to 90 secs of active rest for 8 rounds. For dragon boat working up to 2 minutes of work, followed by 1 minute of active rest works well when considering 200m and 250m races. Rest in HIIT is active - keep moving just decrease the intensity.

Progression Example: Start with 30 secs work and 1 minute active rest for 3 rounds. When you can easily recover in less than 1 minute, increase the work to between 45 secs and 1 minute. If you can complete 3 rounds and still have some left, increase the rounds. You can also increase the number of rounds. Listen to your body!

2. **SIT** is short spurts or sprints of all out maximal effort (90-100%) followed by longer periods of active rest. SIT builds explosive power.

SIT EXAMPLES: Work 20 secs followed by 2 minutes rest for 3 rounds. SIT work should never exceed 30 secs and 5 is the usual maximum number of rounds. In SIT the rest period is active with substantial decrease in intensity.

Progression Example: Start with 10 secs work and follow with 2 minute rest for 2 rounds. Add work and rounds as it becomes more doable. It is not recommended to exceed 30 secs work or go beyond 5 rounds. This should be 100% effort!

AEROBIC ENDURANCE TRAINING (1-2 days a week)

Aerobic training is a rhythmic activity, which uses oxygen to fuel muscles to maintain a steady state of mild, moderate to high intensity. Running, rowing, biking, swimming, brisk walking are all examples of exercise that build the capacity of your heart, lungs/ cardiovascular system through a sustainable increase in heart rate. The level to which you should increase your heart rate is individual.

A long standing rule of thumb is to find your maximum heart rate by taking 220 minus your age. Exercise intensity is then considered mild at 60% of your maximum heart rate, moderate at 75%, and high at 85%. It is important to note that as your body adapts to exercise and becomes more efficient you will be able to do higher intensities at a lower heart rate.

Sometimes the best gauge of effort is perceive rate of exertion (PRE) – how hard are you working on a scale of 0 to 10. At 0 you are probably lying on the sofa, at 10 you are probably at high intensity. Yet another way to gauge is your ability to speak. If you can speak a full sentence you are likely at low intensity; a choppy sentence with breathing between every couple of words you are likely at moderate intensity; and if you can barely speak at all you are likely at high intensity.

AEROBIC EXAMPLES: You should include 10 minutes of aerobic activity with your warmup routine and more during active rest periods when you do HIIT and SIT sessions. On dedicated Aerobic days you will want to do or work up to 30 - 45 minutes at your target heart rate between 60% - 85%, and PRE of between 4 - 8, or maintain the ability to use choppy sentences.

Progression Example: Say you start with 15 minutes. Once you find that doable (feeling like you could do more) gradually add 5 minutes increments as you are able.

ACTIVE REST (1-2 days per week)

Planning for rest in your training plan is as critical as any other component. Without rest your body doesn't have time to recover from the stress that exercise has caused. Active rest means doing another activity through varying your workouts so you don't stress the same muscles or body systems day after day. It also means taking a day off training. So your training program might contemplate 3 whole body strength training days, a day apart with 2 aerobic exercise days alternating HIIT & SIT, and an active rest day. There are many different combinations.

Good examples of active rest are brisk walking, light yoga, stretching, and Tai Chi.

Sample Weekly Workout Plan

Includes: Beginner & Advanced Versions + Warm-up & Cooldown for Every Workout

Structure: 3 Full-Body Strength • 1 HIIT • 1 SIT • 1 Cardio • 1 Active Rest

Beginner vs Advanced Guidelines

Beginner Version

- Strength: 1–2 sets • 10–15 reps • Light–moderate weight
- For hold positions like planks or Superman poses hold for 15-20 secs.
- Rest: 60–90 sec between sets
- HIIT: 4–6 rounds
- SIT: 2–3 sprints (sub-max effort)
- Cardio: 20–30 min easy–moderate
- Goal: Learn form, build consistency, protect joints

Advanced Version

- Strength: 2–3 sets • 6–10 reps • Moderate–heavy weight
- For hold positions like planks or Superman poses hold 30 secs to 1 min.
- Rest: 60–120 sec between sets
- HIIT: 6–8 rounds
- SIT: 3–5 sprints (near-max effort)
- Cardio: 30–45 min moderate
- Goal: Progress strength, power, and conditioning

Sample Weekly Schedule Overview

Day	Workout	Duration	Focus
Monday	Full-Body Strength A	35–45 min	Total-body strength
Tuesday	HIIT (Low Impact)	20–25 min	Metabolic boost
Wednesday	Full-Body Strength B	35–45 min	Strength & balance
Thursday	Moderate Cardio	30–45 min	Heart health
Friday	Full-Body Strength C	35–45 min	Muscle & bone density
Saturday	SIT (Sprint Intervals)	10–15 min	Power & mitochondrial health
Sunday	Active Rest	20–40 min	Recovery & mobility

Workout Details

Warm up before every workout. Cool down after every workout.

Beginners: keep warm-ups gentle and cooldowns longer.

Tracking: Use the check boxes to mark completion. Record weights used and notes (energy, soreness, modifications).

Full-Body Strength A

Warm-Up (5–8 min):

- March or walk in place
- Arm circles
- Hip circles
- Bodyweight squats

Workout:

- Squats or sit-to-stand
- Dumbbell chest press
- Bent-over rows (one arm at a time)
- Glute bridges
- Shoulder press
- Plank or dead bug

- Superman (I.Y.T. Positions)

- Russian Twist

Sets/Reps: _____

Weights Used: _____

Notes: _____

Cool Down (5 min):

- Chest stretch
- Hip flexor stretch
- Hamstring stretch
- Deep breathing

Full-Body Strength B

Warm-Up (5–8 min):

- Easy walking or cycling
- Leg swings
- Shoulder rolls
- Glute bridges

Workout:

- Reverse lunges or split squats
- Romanian deadlifts
- Side Steps with band

- Lat pulldowns or band rows (straight arms)
- Step-ups
- Lateral raises
- Bird dogs

- Bear Crawl

Sets/Reps: _____

Weights Used: _____

Notes: _____

Cool Down (5 min):

- Quad stretch
- Calf stretch
- Upper-back stretch
- Relaxed breathing

Full-Body Strength C

Warm-Up (5–8 min):

- Marching or light cardio
- Dynamic hamstring stretch
- Arm swings
- Bodyweight lunges

Workout:

- Goblet squats
- Clam Shells
- Wood chops
- Incline push-ups or chest fly
- One-arm dumbbell rows
- Hip thrusts or bridges with leg raises
- Triceps extensions
- Biceps curls

Sets/Reps: _____

Weights Used: _____

Notes: _____

Cool Down (5 min):

- Shoulder stretch
- Seated forward fold
- Spinal twist
- Breathing

HIIT (Low Impact)

Warm-Up (10 min):

- Easy cardio (walk, bike, row)
- Gradual speed increases

- Completed HIIT Session

Workout:

30 sec hard to 1 minute / 90 sec easy × 6–8 rounds (Beginner: 4–6)

Modality: _____

Rounds Completed: _____

Notes: _____

Cool Down (5 min):

- Slow movement
- Calf & quad stretch
- Deep breathing

SIT (Sprint Interval Training)

Warm-Up (10 min):

- Easy cardio
- Short accelerations (not sprints)

- Completed SIT Session

Workout:

10–20 sec sprint / 2–3 min recovery × 3–5 rounds
(Beginner: 2–3 rounds at sub-max)

Modality: _____

Rounds Completed: _____

Notes: _____

Cool Down (6–8 min):

- Slow walk or spin
- Gentle stretching
- Calm breathing

Moderate Cardio

Warm-Up (5 min):

- Easy pace
- Completed Cardio Session

Workout:

20–45 minutes steady cardio (Beginner: 20–30)

Activity: _____

Duration: _____

Notes: _____

Cool Down (5 min):

- Slow pace
- Light stretching

Active Rest Day

- Easy walk
- Yoga / Pilates
- Mobility / Stretching
- Balance work

Duration: _____

Notes: _____