

FAQs about Fitness for Sailors

By Harry Legum, Annapolis Sailing Fitness

How many times a week should I lift weights?

Two to three times a week is great, total body workout is ideal. The routine should take approximately 50 minutes. Many options do exist as far as frequency but depends upon time management. Some studies have shown that once a week, doing high intensity training, works just as well. Weight training can be done five to six days a week practicing what's known as a *push/pull routine*. Make sure that the same muscle groups are not repeated two days in a row.

I want to do a campaign, how do I start a fitness program?

First thing; have an evaluation of your current fitness level and set some goals. Focus on a yearly plan (Periodization), including endurance training, strength building, races, sailing practices etc. Create a balanced routine including time management, nutritional planning and any other concerns such as rest days, stretching, and physical therapy. You may want to hire a personal trainer, join a gym or purchase a bike. Financial considerations should be taken into account.

I don't have a gym to use, what can I do?

The good news is that many options are available and will only require some goal setting and ingenuity. I would recommend a set of Exer-Bands. They are very inexpensive, light weight and can be thrown in your suitcase. For now, if you don't have a set, you can do exercises such as push ups, static squats, calf raises, walking lunges, tricep push ups, leg lifts (while in a push up position), mountain climbers, burpees and a host of other options. Yoga and Pilates are both fantastic as well. Some exercises may be more suitable for you than others. A great site for ideas is www.myfit.ca.

I'm 38 and want to race my Laser again, what exercises would you recommend?

Most Laser sailors would recommend Leg extensions, wall sits, Hiking Bench, core training, flexibility and a strong upper body. Don't forget about a healthy dose of endurance. First things first, you must evaluate your current level of fitness, regardless of sailing, getting into a solid routine which includes nutritional planning, stretching, weightlifting and cardio. Then focus on sailing specific exercises and plenty of time on the water sailing your Laser

I've got to cut weight for a big regatta, what do you recommend?

One thing I see all of the time which I don't recommend is hitting the sauna for a week and sweating your butt off to drop weight at the last moment. The down side is that your energy will be shot and you won't be performing to your best ability. The regattas are posted well in advance in which a common sense approach of calories in/calories out can be practiced with plenty of time to stay strong. Cardio training at a base level, minimum of 20-30 minutes, will be a great way to start as well as avoiding a few foods and drinks

that are detrimental. Eating small portions every 3-4 hours will stimulate your metabolism as well as drinking plenty of water.

What should I eat and when?

A great book on nutrition and eating like an athlete is by Chris Carmichael titled “*Food for Fitness*”. I recommend eating one hour before exercising or a race with enough time to nourish the body and move it thru your system. Eating the night before a big event is equally important and a solid game plan will need to be established. Sometimes you may not have the best of food choices but eat something or at the very least have a power bar or equivalent because you will “*bonk*” out if you don’t. The last thing that you want to do is give yourself a temporary fix like Red Bull or something loaded with sugar. You will be jacked for a bit then crash hard. Drink plenty of fluids and plan ahead by having a sandwich or something nutritious available in between events.

What about hydration?

One of the single most important things to do! You should be hydrating every 15 minutes and drinking water before you even get thirsty. Your muscles are 70% water and crave this. Proper hydration will help with your performance, help with dissipation of lactate acid and assist in preventing over heating. Have a water bottle with you onboard.

Is clothing critical while sailing?

Absolutely! Many clothing manufacturers promote their line of clothing by emphasizing the benefits to your athletic abilities as opposed to style. What are the Concerns? Heat stroke, heat exhaustion and hypothermia. Most clothing lines such as Gill, Musto, Henry Lloyd, as well as many other quality lines offer great options and materials to choose from. Never cut corners on purchasing quality gear.

What will help me hike harder?

Other than spending time on the boat and having a coach teaching proper technique, you can work the muscles that are directly affected. First and foremost will be the quadriceps. Some options are leg extensions, wall sits, walking lunges, step ups and leg press while pushing with the toes. Shins and calves must be exercised as well as the core and upper body. I usually have my dinghy sailors pre-exhaust the legs, abs and upper body before moving on to the hiking bench. *Supermans* are a great option for your lower back. Doing this on top of a Bosu ball will add additional tension. Practice one arm rows while seated on a hiking bench adjacent to a cable machine. You can also work your core by adding a medicine ball routine while hiking.