Conditioning Work: Weight Selection

Training Guide · https://www.fitnessacademy.com/help-center/conditioning-work-weight-selection/

If your workout includes a specific weight recommendation (like "BB Weight: M 75-95lb / F 55-65lb"), use that. This guide is for when you need to choose on your own, and for understanding the thinking behind weight selection in conditioning.

Some conditioning workouts use only bodyweight movements and don't require weight selection at all. On those days, your focus shifts entirely to pacing and movement quality.

The General Rule

For most conditioning workouts, choose a weight where you can complete each movement in 1-2 sets during your first round.

If a movement calls for 8-12 reps, you should be able to do all of them without putting the weight down. If it calls for 15-21 reps, breaking it into 2 groups (like 11 and 10, or 8-7) with a quick breath between is fine. If it calls for 30 or more, plan to break it into manageable groups from the start.

The weight is too heavy when you're breaking a movement into 3 or more small sets in the first round. If you can only do 3-4 reps at a time before needing to rest on something written as 12 reps, go lighter.

Starting Weight Ranges

Use these as starting points. These are general averages, not hard rules. A lighter person or someone newer to training should start at the lower end. A stronger or more experienced person can start higher. Use whatever end of the range matches your current strength, regardless of gender.

- **Dumbbell** M 35-50lb (16-22.5kg) / F 20-35lb (9-16kg)
- **Kettlebell** M 44-53lb (20-24kg) / F 26-35lb (12-16kg)
- **Barbell** M 75-95lb (34-43kg) / F 55-65lb (25-29kg)

- **Wallball** M 14-20lb (6-9kg) to 10ft (3m) target / F 10-14lb (4.5-6kg) to 9ft (2.7m) target
- **Box Height** M 20-24" (50-60cm) / F 16-20" (40-50cm)

When in doubt, start at the lighter end. You can always go heavier next time. One workout at a lighter weight teaches you more about your capacity than one failed workout at too heavy a weight.

A Note on Weight Units

In your daily workouts, we display weights in pounds (lb) only to keep the screen clean and easy to read. Adding both units to every movement would create long, cluttered text that's hard to scan mid-workout.

Use this page to find the kilogram equivalent for your weight range, and note it down for the equipment you use regularly. After a few sessions, you'll know your go-to weights without needing to check back.

Quick conversion: 1 lb = 0.45 kg. Or roughly: divide the pound number in half and subtract 10%. For example, 50lb: half is 25, minus 10% is about 22.5kg.

Weight Selection by Pacing

Every conditioning workout has a pacing label that tells you the intended effort level. Use it to guide your weight choice. For a full explanation of each pacing label and what it means for your effort, see our Conditioning Work: Pacing guide.

- **Forever** (conversation pace, long duration): Choose the lightest weight in the range. You'll be moving for 25-35 minutes. If the weight feels "too easy" in minute 3, that's correct. Check again at minute 20. The duration creates the challenge, not the weight.
- **Steady** (controlled effort, consistent pace): Choose the middle of the range. You should be able to complete every round at the same pace. If you slow down significantly in later rounds, the weight was too heavy.
- **Push** (hard effort, you manage the pace): Choose the middle to upper end of the range. It should feel challenging but not cause your form to break down. You'll want to rest but you shouldn't need long breaks.

- **Sprint** (short bursts, built-in recovery): You can go toward the heavier end of the range since the work periods are short and recovery is built into the format. The weight should challenge you within each short window.

Before You Start

During the transition between your strength work and conditioning, do a few reps of the heaviest or most complex movement in the conditioning piece at your chosen weight. Does it feel manageable? Can you see yourself doing this for the full workout? If not, drop down before you begin.

Breaking Up Reps

In longer conditioning pieces, you don't always have to do all the reps in one go. Breaking reps into smaller groups with quick transitions is smarter than pushing to failure and then needing a long rest.

For example, if the workout calls for 21 KB Swings, you could do 11 then 10 with one quick breath between, or 7-7-7. Both are better than doing 15, hitting a wall, and resting 20 seconds before finishing the last 6.

The key: plan your rep breaks before you start, not in the middle of a set when you're already tired. A quick plan like "I'll break the 21 into 11 and 10" keeps you moving with purpose.

Priority Order

When choosing weights and planning your approach, keep this order in mind:

1. **Movement quality comes first.** Never let the weight compromise your form. Bad reps at heavy weight don't make you fitter. They just increase injury risk.
2. **Pacing matters more than weight.** Hit the intended effort level for the piece. A Steady piece done at the right pace with a lighter weight is better training than a Steady piece done at Sprint pace with heavier weight.
3. **Consistency beats a fast start.** Aim for the same output in every round, not a blazing first round and a crawling last round. If your last round takes twice as long as your first, you started too hard.

4. **Weight is the least important factor.** Use whatever weight allows you to achieve the three priorities above. Nobody in the gym is checking what's on your bar or dumbbell. They're focused on their own workout.

When to Go Lighter Mid-Workout

Sometimes you start a workout and realize the weight isn't right. These are the signs:

- Your form is breaking down and you can't correct it even when you try
- You're resting 10 or more seconds between individual reps within a set
- You can't maintain the pace the workout is asking for
- Something doesn't feel safe

Drop the weight and keep moving. Don't think of this as failure. A lighter weight at the right pace gives you a better training effect than a heavy weight you can't sustain. Smart adjustments mid-workout are a sign of good training, not weakness.

Common Questions

The suggested weight feels too light. If it's a Forever or Steady piece, it should feel light early on. The duration and consistency are the challenge, not the weight. If it's a Push or Sprint piece and it feels genuinely easy after a full round, go up next time.

I don't have the exact weight suggested. Use the closest weight you have. If you're between two options, choose the lighter one.

Should I use the same weight for the whole workout? Yes, unless the workout specifically tells you to change weight between rounds. Pick one weight and commit to it for the full piece.

How do I know if I picked the right weight? After the workout, ask yourself: did I maintain my form throughout? Did I hit the intended pacing? Were my rounds consistent from first to last? If yes to all three, the weight was right. If any of those broke down, go lighter next time you see a similar workout.

I'm much stronger (or lighter) than the suggested ranges. The M/F ranges are starting points based on general averages. If you're a strong woman who can comfortably use 40lb dumbbells in conditioning, use them. If you're a lighter man who needs 30lb dumbbells to maintain good pacing,

use those. The right weight is whatever lets you follow the priority order above.