

TABATAS INTERVALS

The Tabata protocol is a high-intensity training regimen that produces remarkable results. A Tabata workout (also called a Tabata sequence) is an interval training cycle of 20 seconds of maximum intensity exercise, followed by 10 seconds of rest, repeated without pause 8 times for a total of four minutes. In a group context, you can keep score by counting how many lifts/jumps/whatever you do in each of the 20 second rounds. The round with the smallest number is your score.

Credit for this simple and powerful training method belongs to its namesake, Dr. Izumi Tabata and a team of researchers from the National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Tokyo, Japan. Their groundbreaking 1996 study, published in the journal *Medicine and Science in Sports & Exercise*, provided documented evidence concerning the dramatic physiological benefits of high-intensity intermittent training. After just 6 weeks of testing, Dr. Tabata noted a 28% increase in anaerobic capacity in his subjects, along with a 14% increase in their ability to consume oxygen ($\dot{V}O_{2Max}$). These results were witnessed in already physically fit athletes. The conclusion was that just four minutes of Tabata interval training could do more to boost aerobic and anaerobic capacity than an hour of endurance exercise.

Although Dr. Tabata used a mechanically braked exercise cycle machine, you can apply this protocol to almost any exercise. For example, a basic Tabata workout can be performed with sit-ups. The more muscles used the better, so use full knees-bent sit-ups. Sit-up non-stop for 20-second intervals, followed by 10 seconds of rest. Repeat for a total of 8 cycles.

How effective can just 4 minutes of exercise be? ... Very. You will be amazed at how intense the four minutes of exercise will feel. The intervals tax both your aerobic and anaerobic energy systems. To be clear, this isn't "eight sets of eight," although the goal of doing eight reps in each of the 20-second clusters is about right. Instead it's "as many reps as I can get in" during the twenty seconds, followed by ten seconds rest.

It helps to be able to see a wall clock with a second hand during your four minutes of fun. Stop at twenty seconds, rest ten seconds, and go again. Watching the clock helps with your focus and also in keeping count of the eight cycles...

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Note the 10-second rest periods in the Tabata workout are important, both physically and mentally. Not only do they allow partial recovery, they also provide psychological relief. Switching back and forth from work to rest makes the workout go quickly. Plus, it allows you to train at a higher level of intensity, which what intervals are all about.

Pretty much any form of cardiovascular exercise that uses a large number of muscles can be tailored to fit Tabata interval workouts, so feel free to be creative. In addition to the exercises mentioned above, use them with sprints, burpees, a jump rope, the heavy bag, treadmill or rowing machine. Lessen the likelihood of injury by choosing a rate of intensity suited to your level of conditioning - be conservative.

Incorporate variety into your Tabata workouts. A few sessions per week will offer plenty of intensity.