

TRAINING GUIDE

# The Cardio Guide

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*How much you actually need, and whether it kills your gains*

Cardio gets a bad reputation in strength training circles, mostly from bad advice. Done properly, it supports fat loss, heart health and recovery without undoing your training progress. Here's how to do it right.

8 Cardio Options

How To Apply It

Key Principles

Do's & Don'ts

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PT · Dad of 2

## WHY CARDIO STILL MATTERS FOR STRENGTH TRAINERS

Beyond fat loss, cardiovascular fitness improves recovery between sets, supports long-term heart health, and genuinely makes you feel better day to day. The idea that cardio 'kills gains' is generally overstated when it's programmed sensibly.

## THE NUMBERS

### ● GENERAL HEALTH

150 minutes of moderate cardio per week, or 75 minutes vigorous. The standard health guideline.

### ● FAT LOSS SUPPORT

2-3 sessions per week of 20-30 minutes, alongside a calorie deficit, accelerates results without overdoing it.

### ● AROUND STRENGTH TRAINING

Keep harder cardio sessions away from your heaviest lifting days if possible, to protect performance.

## THE FOUNDATION RULE

*Walking is your baseline, not high-intensity intervals. Most dads chasing fast results overdo intensity and burn out. Daily steps and a couple of moderate sessions beat sporadic brutal ones.*

## 8 CARDIO OPTIONS WORTH USING

### Walking (incline or outdoor)

LOW IMPACT

Daily

Genuinely underrated. Sustainable, joint-friendly, highly effective for daily calorie burn.

### Cycling

LOW IMPACT

2-3x/wk

Low impact on joints, easy to fit in, great for dads with knee or back concerns.

### Rowing Machine

FULL BODY

2-3x/wk

Full body cardio with less joint impact than running and good time efficiency.

### Swimming

LOW IMPACT

1-2x/wk

Extremely joint-friendly and works the whole body, great recovery-friendly option.

### Stair Climber

LOWER BODY

2x/wk

Genuinely tough cardio that also builds lower body endurance.

### Interval Training (HIIT)

HIGH INTENSITY

1-2x/wk max

Time-efficient for busy schedules but demanding. Use sparingly, not as a daily default.

### Jump Rope

HIGH INTENSITY

2x/wk

Cheap, portable, and surprisingly effective for both cardio and coordination.

### Sled Push/Pull

FULL BODY

1-2x/wk

Builds conditioning and strength simultaneously, great crossover for lifters.

## HOW TO APPLY THIS AROUND YOUR TRAINING

*How much and what type of cardio depends on your primary goal, pick the approach that matches yours.*

### Priority: Strength/Muscle

2-3 low intensity sessions per week (walking, cycling), kept well away from your heaviest lifting days.

### Priority: Fat Loss

3-4 sessions per week mixing walking with 1-2 moderate intensity sessions, alongside a calorie deficit from nutrition.

### Priority: General Health

Daily walking plus 2 moderate sessions per week easily covers the standard health guidelines without much planning.

## SAMPLE WEEKLY CARDIO PLAN (FAT LOSS FOCUS)

Daily: 20-30 min walk

2x per week: 20 min cycling or rowing

Optional: 1x short HIIT session

# KEY PRINCIPLES FOR COMBINING CARDIO WITH LIFTING

How you structure cardio alongside strength training determines whether it helps or hinders your progress.

- 1

**Separate hard cardio from heavy lifting days**

Doing intense cardio before a big lift day compromises performance and recovery.
- 2

**Start conservative, add gradually**

Add cardio volume in small increments rather than jumping straight to daily HIIT.
- 3

**Prioritise walking as your foundation**

It's the most sustainable, lowest-risk form of cardio for long-term consistency.
- 4

**Match intensity to recovery capacity**

If your lifting performance is dropping, your cardio volume or intensity is likely too high.
- 5

**Track total weekly activity, not just workouts**

Steps, incidental movement and cardio sessions all add up. The total matters more than any single session.

## EXAMPLE: 4-WEEK WALKING PROGRESSION

| Week | Daily Target       |
|------|--------------------|
| 1    | 6,000-7,000 steps  |
| 2    | 7,000-8,000 steps  |
| 3    | 8,000-9,000 steps  |
| 4    | 9,000-10,000 steps |

## DO

- ✓ Use walking as your baseline. It's the most sustainable form of cardio for most dads long term.
- ✓ Match cardio intensity to your recovery capacity, more isn't automatically better.
- ✓ Keep some cardio separate from strength sessions where your schedule allows.

## DON'T

- ✗ Don't believe cardio 'kills gains'. Moderate amounts support recovery and heart health without hindering strength.
- ✗ Don't do excessive high-intensity cardio while also trying to build muscle, this creates a recovery deficit.
- ✗ Don't skip cardio entirely for heart health reasons just because your focus is strength or aesthetics.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

*Cardio and strength training are not in competition when programmed sensibly. Walking daily plus 2-3 structured sessions covers almost every goal without threatening your gains.*

## WANT THE FULL SYSTEM, NOT JUST ONE PIECE?

This guide is one piece of the puzzle. The Fit Dad Challenge brings training, nutrition and mindset together into one 6-week programme built around a dad's actual life.

**[Join the Fit Dad Challenge — £99](#)**