EPTI Certificate in Instructing Circuits

EUROPEAN PERSONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

LEARNER MANUAL

Certificate Structure

This Certificate is made up of two units:

Unit 1 – The Theory of Circuit Training
Unit 2 – Planning & Instructing Circuit Training

Overall aim of the qualification: to train learners to deliver safe and effective circuit training sessions.

CONTENTS

UNIT 1 : THE THEORY OF CIRCUIT TRAINING

- Aims and learning outcomes
- The history of Circuit training
- The benefits of Circuit training
- The variables within the planning of Circuit training
- The role of the Circuits instructor
- The use of audio equipment in group exercise

UNIT 2: PLANNING & INSTRUCTING CIRCUIT TRAINING

- Aims and learning outcomes
- Planning and designing a circuit training session
- Preparing the participants for a circuit training session
- Instructing a circuits session



Use this manual, alongside the online theory session to:

- Learn & understand the theory behind Circuit training
- Enable you to answer the assessment questions
- Prepare yourself for the practical training day
- Prepare yourself for the practical training assessment

UNIT 1: THE THEORY OF CIRCUIT TRAINING

Aim: To provide you with an understanding of the theory of circuit training, and the knowledge required to plan, prepare, and deliver a circuit training session.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit you will:

- Understand the history of circuit training
- Understand the benefits of circuit training
- Understand the variable within circuit planning
- Understand the role of the circuit training instructor
- Understand the use of audio equipment (music/microphone) using music in group exercise

1. Overview and History of Circuit Training:

1.1 Introduction to Circuit Training

Circuit training is…

"a form of athletic training in which a number of exercises are performed in turn." (UK Collins Dictionary)

"a method of physical conditioning in which one moves from one exercise to another, usually in a series of different stations or pieces of equipment" (American Heritage Dictionary)

A circuit normally consists of between 8-12 stations. Stations consist of an exercise that is usually resistance or aerobic based. If general fitness is the aim, the circuit would have a combination of resistance and aerobic stations, with the resistance stations providing a balanced workload for all major muscle groups. A variety of equipment is often used, which may include barbells, dumbbells, resistance bands, stability equipment, steps, benches, skipping ropes, mats, medicine balls, battle ropes, etc.

Although circuit training can be performed by one person, sessions are typically run as group exercise, with the maximum number of participants dictated by the space and equipment available.

Participants perform each exercise for a prescribed time period or, number of reps, before moving on to the next exercise station. The training session continues until all exercises have been completed. Multiple rounds of the circuit are often completed, depending upon; the number of stations, the work/rest times, and the total duration available.

1.2 History of Circuit Training

Circuits were developed in 1953 at the University of Leeds in England by R.E. Morgan & G.T. Anderson. The classes were originally made up of 9 - 12 stations.

They decided to create a circuit method of training, so that people with different fitness abilities were able to workout together at different levels and intensities.

2. The Benefits of Circuit Training

2.1 The Non-Physiological Benefits of Circuit Training

There are a number of non-physiological benefits to both the instructor and participants of the circuit training class.

Benefits of Circuit Training for the Instructor

Relatively easy to plan, prepare and orchestrate

A well balanced circuit can be put together quickly and easily and will achieve the goals of your clients by incorporating a variety of equipment (and can be just as effective with no equipment).

Less physical to teach than some other forms of group exercise

Because you don't have to workout yourself, you can teach a relatively high number of classes without the danger of suffering from "instructor burnout".
Because of this you can also have a lot of fun. You have plenty of opportunity to circulate around the class to encourage and motivate people.

Can teach large numbers at one time compared to other group exercise options

This depends on the equipment needed and available. But as long as you have the space and/or use of an outdoor venue if necessary, you can initially teach a bodyweight circuits/ bootcamp to a large number of people for a minimal investment in equipment.

Many venues/locations can be used

Circuits are a very versatile form of training. Circuits/bootcamps can be held indoors & outdoors, and on the other extreme, a relatively small space can be used for an individual to train e.g. in a home environment.

Good income from a single session

Gives an extra income to 1:1 PT and it's a great way to showcase yourself to pick up new PT clients from the classes. It's possible to earn more from a Circuits session than a 1:1 PT session.

A great marketing campaign if you are also a 1:1 Personal Trainer

By instructing group exercise classes, you are reaching out to large numbers of people, showing them your knowledge, skills, personality, professionalism, and encouragement & motivation. If any of that group were looking for a PT, or know someone looking for a PT, they are far more likely to approach you for information.

Benefits of Circuit Training for the Participants

High levels of co-ordination are not required!

Compared to other exercise to music classes, such as aerobics, step aerobics, or Zumba, or martial art-type classes like 'Body combat' and 'Taebo', circuit classes don't need a lot of co-ordination. Not everybody is co-ordinated and circuit classes can quite basic in terms of the movements required, avoiding a steep learning curve and possible embarrassment!

Variation
The exercises used in a circuits session are sometimes limited to what's available and the space being used. Other than that, the limit is the instructors imagination. There are many different exercises, and variations of exercises that can be utilised, meaning the participants are kept interested without getting bored. Add to that the variations in circuit types, layouts, timings etc, participants can be kept interested and stimulated through variety.

Social Interaction
Group training can be great fun, and participants will bond as a group. They will all be striving for a similar goal; trying to achieve their personal health & fitness goals, and all going through the same 'challenges' at each station. Add in an inspiring instructor, some motivational music, and an element of competitiveness within the group, it can become a great social, training atmosphere.

Enjoyable
When you add up the benefits of the previous three points, it can make for a very enjoyable experience for participants. Enjoyment is a key element to any long term health and fitness goal; if a person enjoys their fitness sessions, they are more likely to adhere to them long term, making it a lifestyle change rather than short-term fix.

Can address all fitness goals
Circuits are very good at working across all of the energy systems. They can be geared towards aerobic or anaerobic training outcomes and/or strength or endurance based. It obviously depends on how the circuit is set up, but in the majority of circuit classes you will work both aerobically and anaerobically at different points throughout the session.

Full body workout
So as long as it is planned properly, a general fitness circuit should be a full body workout. It should provide for muscle balance and muscle group rotation.

Motivational
For a lot of people, classes are great because they don't have to think for themselves. They just come in, get told what to do and they do it. They can switch off and focus on working hard. You don't have the problem of coming in to the gym at peak time and fighting for the machines to complete your workout because it's so busy.

Instructors must ensure that their sessions do not become predictable. They must therefore keep sessions varied, fun and challenging to keep people coming back.

Affordable
Circuit training sessions are of a lower cost to Personal Training (1:1 or small group), and therefore makes it accessible to a large number of individuals who cannot financially commit to personal training.

2.2 Physiological Benefits of Circuit Training:

Decreased body fat %
If participation is regular, circuits are designed effectively, and nutritional intake is implemented appropriately with an overall calorie deficit, then circuit training can help to reduce body fat.

Increased lean body mass & increased bone density
Both muscle mass and bone density can be increased through the resistance part of the circuit class. By performing a balanced workout, participants posture can also be enhanced.

Increased muscular endurance
The majority of circuit classes concentrate on the muscular endurance aspect of training, because in general, most circuit stations will last from between 45-60 seconds. In that period of time you are going to complete upwards of 15 reps of any given exercise.

Increased muscular strength
Most circuits are designed with timings that allow 15+ reps on each station, however, that doesn't mean that participants are not going to get stronger. Muscular strength gains will be most prevalent in the initial stages of participation (first few months), but small strength improvements can continue long term, just not as much as if the participants were training with much heavier weights and lower rep ranges.

Increased cardiovascular fitness
Due to the nature of circuit training, with one exercise following another with little to no rest between stations, the heart and lungs are being challenged to deliver oxygen to different working muscles. Additionally, the inclusion of cardiovascular exercises are going to aid these improvements further. Both aerobic and anaerobic fitness can be improved.

Lower blood pressure
This is a long term benefit if blood pressure was above normal prior to commencing participation. However, remember to stick to the guidelines for blood pressure with regards to participation and/or referral.

Improved energy levels
Again, if everything is in check, like their diet and their sleep, people will benefit from better energy levels if they are exercising.

Higher basal metabolic rate (BMR)
If, over weeks and months, participants build lean muscle from doing resistance exercises, and their muscle mass is generally more active, then their resting metabolism will greater. This results in the total calories being expended daily, to increase, aiding further long terms improvements in body composition.

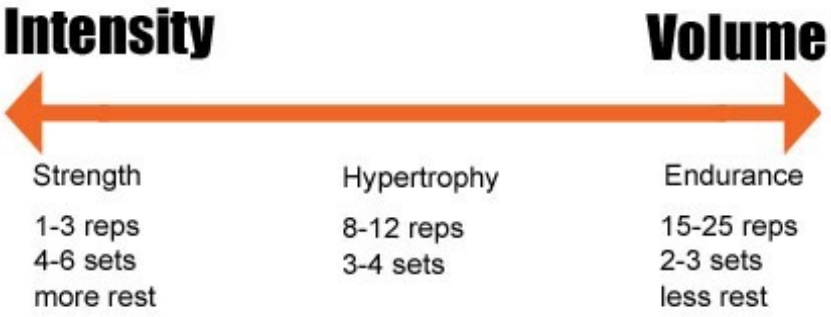
Improved mood
All exercise helps to improve mood. This is an important reason for a lot of people to exercise, particularly if they've had a stressful day. Escaping for an hour to workout and release some stress may well be one of the major goals for many people that come to train. It may also help them to achieve a better or more restful sleep.

3. Variables within the Planning of Circuit Training

3.1 Recommended Work and Rest Times

Resistance

The amount of resistance used can alter the training effect just as it does in traditional resistance training programmes e.g. strength benefits are increased as weight is increased. The amount of resistance used will depend on the type of equipment, the desired training effect and the abilities of the participant.



For each individual, an increased resistance (%1rm) will lead to a decrease in the number of reps performed thus shortening the station duration.

The recommended work time for resistance training usually varies between 15 - 60 seconds, depending on the training outcome required.

Rest

The rest/recovery period is the length of time between stations. This will depend on the intensity/volume at which the participants are required to work. The higher the intensity during the work sets, the longer the rest period will have to be to accommodate the next intense exercise set. Where recovery periods are of a short duration, the overall intensity of the class will be lower but more volume will be performed . With long recovery periods, the overall intensity of the workout will be higher with less training volume.

The following are suggested recovery periods:

0 - 30 seconds for general conditioning & cardiovascular conditioning
20 - 60 seconds for deconditioned or older participants
60 - 120 seconds for strength and power

Work:Rest Times for Circuit Training

Although there are no exact times that should be used for work and rest, below are some guidelines to aid the decision making process.

Class Emphasis	Work Time	Rest Time
Aerobic Endurance (Beginners)	60 seconds	10 - 30 seconds
Aerobic Endurance (Advanced)	60 seconds	0 - 10 seconds
Aerobic & Muscular Endurance (Beginners)	30 - 45 seconds	30 seconds
Aerobic & Muscular Endurance (Intermediates)	45 - 60 seconds	15 seconds
Muscular Strength & Power	15 - 30 seconds	60 - 120 seconds

The following factors should be considered when deciding on the work/rest times:

- Participants training experience
- Overall, general training outcome
- Number of planned rounds of the circuit & total duration
- Ambient temperature
- Any specific population (sports team, older participants, younger participants etc.)

3.2 Active Recovery

It may be appropriate to include an active recovery in between stations for intermediate or advanced sessions. Active recovery should comprise of rhythmical exercises that utilise the major muscle groups, particularly if the aims of the class are to improve cardiovascular fitness or muscular endurance. On completion of the station, or sometimes at the end of a round of circuit stations, the entire group performs an exercise together before moving on.

If included, the instructor must make the group aware that participation in the active recovery is optional, so as to allow less capable members of the group to use the time to rest.

Active recovery will ensure that the participants' heart rates are maintained at a higher level to prevent too much cooling down between work intervals and add to the overall training effect of the circuit.

3.3 Types of Circuit Training Sessions

Timed Circuit

A timed circuit is the most common circuit for general fitness classes, because it is the easiest method of keeping control of large groups of exercisers, with every participant starting, stopping, and moving on, at the same time. The "work" time will generally be

between 15 and 60 seconds, and the “rest” time will be the time between stations. Work and rest times can be adjusted during the session to suit the class needs and can be manipulated over a period of time as the group progresses.

Circuit groups designed for less fit participants, would require a shorter work time and a longer rest time and as participants progress, the times can be manipulated to allow for longer work times and shorter rest times to maintain the challenge of the sessions.

The timing can be controlled using a stopwatch, Gym Boss® timer, or specialist interval-based music (e.g. Number Circuit Circus), that has been designed for circuits with specific work and rest periods. The music gives a chime at the start of the interval, then gives a warning bell with 10 seconds to go, before decreasing in volume for the rest period. It will then kick in again for the beginning of the next “work” time.

Note, if you’re using your phone for timing, it can look like you are texting, which could come across as unprofessional.

In the absence of timing equipment, the instructor can make use of a timing station in the circuit. This is generally a cardiovascular station e.g. the participants perform 10 shuttle runs and then shout “change”. In the event of there being less participants than stations, the instructor will need to take control of the timing when the ‘timing station’ is not occupied.

Repetition Circuit

The circuit cards used in this circuit training session would display an option regarding the number of reps, e.g. 5, 10, 15, 20 and once completed, participants move onto the next station. This method allows the participants to perform the reps/load that is specific to their desired training outcome.

If you’re using reps to determine the length of the stations, then you need to ensure that there is enough weight so that everybody is able to achieve overload at the given rep ranges that you have planned.

A challenge can occur with this method if participants are spending varying amount of time at stations. If someone performing 10 reps per station is following someone who is performing 20 reps per station, a “traffic-jam” can occur and this is very difficult to manage.

If congestion occurs at the stations the instructor will need to be aware of this and add a ‘holding station’ in the centre of the room to keep everyone active until they can move on to the next station.

It’s also harder to give well-timed motivation as people will be at different stages of their set and you won’t know how many reps each person has completed at any one time.

Command Circuit

This type of circuit doesn’t require any circuit cards as it is performed on the instructor’s commands, with all participants in the session performing the same exercise at the same

time. Each exercise can be performed for a predetermined period of time, or can be based on a number of repetitions. Using reps is more challenging as the instructor will have to carefully control the tempo of the exercise to ensure all participants are finishing each exercise at the same time.

Bodyweight Circuit

Complete circuits can be conducted without any equipment, using the participants body weight for resistance. The instructor and/or participants can select the appropriate intensity levels by manipulating the following variables of an exercise to make it easier or harder:

- lever length
- unilateral vs. bilateral
- dynamic vs. stationary
- tempo

The main challenges associated with this type of circuit, are the limited ability to provide variation through different exercises, and the difficulty of performing bodyweight, upper body, compound pull exercises.

The benefits are mainly associated with the ability to deliver this type of circuit in many locations.

Sports Specific Circuit

Circuits can be designed as sports specific by taking the actions or movements within the given sport and mimicking them, incorporating them into individual stations within the circuit.

To plan this, the instructor will need an understanding of the participants' sport. With this knowledge, a circuit can be created to include a variety of skills and specific training outcomes required for that sport. This might relate to strength, endurance, cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, power, speed, agility, reaction time, or specific skills.

Circuit Weight Training (CWT)

Using fixed gym equipment such as resistance machines, free weights and cardiovascular machines as circuit stations, you can apply the same principles that are used as in a general circuit to achieve the aims of the session. Numbers are placed on each piece of equipment to indicate the sequence of stations.

Two-Thirds Workload Circuit

This circuit is excellent for monitoring progress over set training periods. Prior to the circuit, participants complete as many reps as they can do with good form of each exercise over a 60 second period and the total achieved is recorded. This can be carried out in pairs to add a competitive edge which also creates a motivational atmosphere.

The individuals then complete the circuit using a rep range of two-thirds of the maximum achieved for each exercise. During the circuit training sessions, the exercises are against the clock for the recorded number of repetitions, usually for 3 circuit laps.

After a set period of weeks later, the participants will be re-tested. An increase in the number of repetitions will clearly demonstrate progress.

Progressive Colour Circuit

This type of circuit is ideal for a dedicated circuit training room, allowing individuals to train at their own convenience. Individual cards are placed on the walls of the room adjacent to each exercise station describing the exercise using pictures or diagrams and giving clear teaching points. Each card will show between three and six colours, each representing a progressive level of difficulty. In each case a set number of repetitions and circuit laps/ rounds will be shown for each colour.

Each participant will need to be previously inducted, so that they can confidently complete the circuit exercises alone to ensure good technique and safety.

Here is an example of how the progressive colour circuit could be carried out:

Colour	Circuit laps	Reps
White	2	10-12
Green	3	12-15
Blue	3	10-12
Red	4	8-10

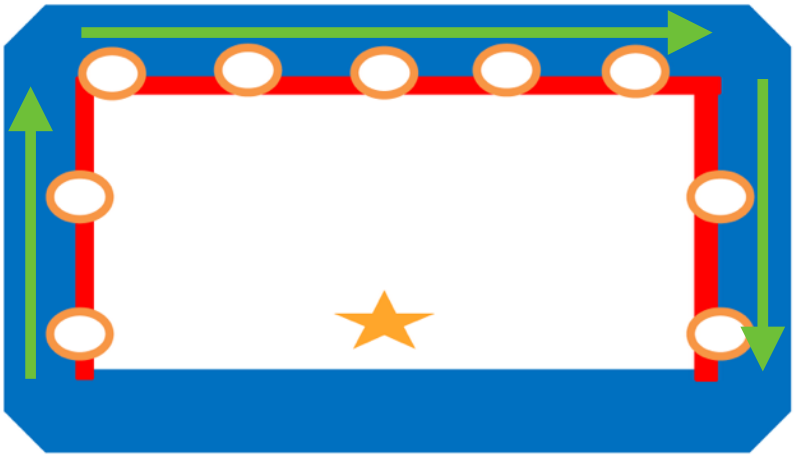
3.4 Circuit Training Layouts

The following are examples of different ways to set out your circuit. Your choice will depend on the space and equipment you have available, the number of participants, their skill/fitness level and the type of circuit you want to perform.

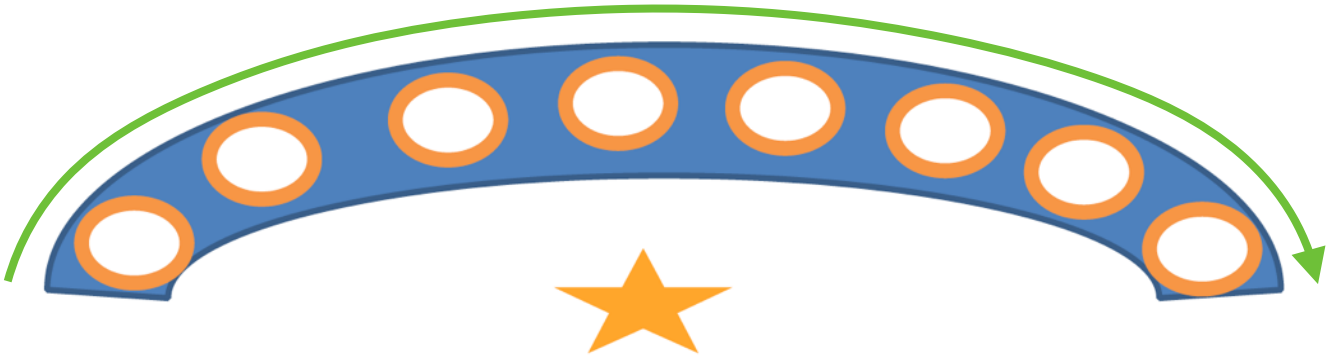
Satellite Square & Satellite Circuits

Participants start at any station and move to the next station in a clockwise direction until they have completed all stations. Stations can be aerobic, muscular strength and endurance or a combination of both.

The most commonly found layouts are a typical square or rectangle:



or a semi circle:



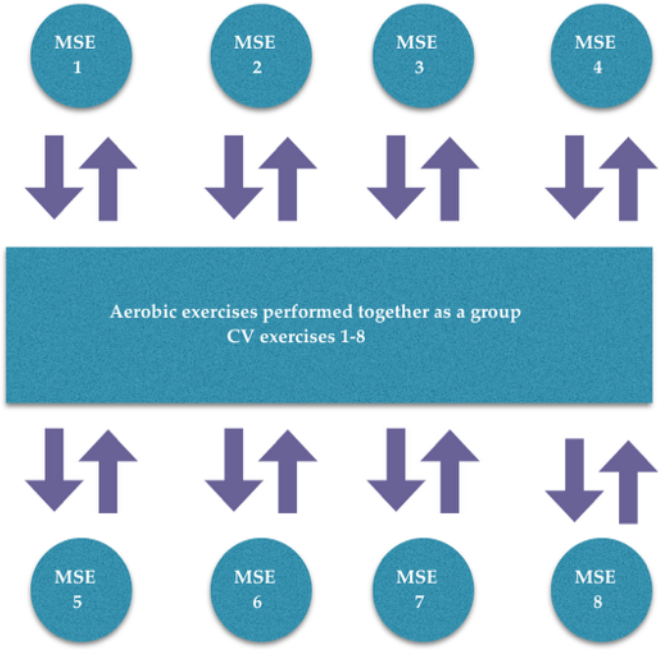
This is a great way to set your circuit up as you are able to see all of the participants, all of the time, from a central instructing position.

By keeping one wall free of exercise stations, you will be able to see everybody even when you're moving about to help, correct and commend. The only time that it would be acceptable to have a exercise station behind you, would be if it was something like a shuttle run that is basic, requires little to no observation & corrections, and requires a length of empty space.

MSE Satellite Circuit (Aerobic Unison)

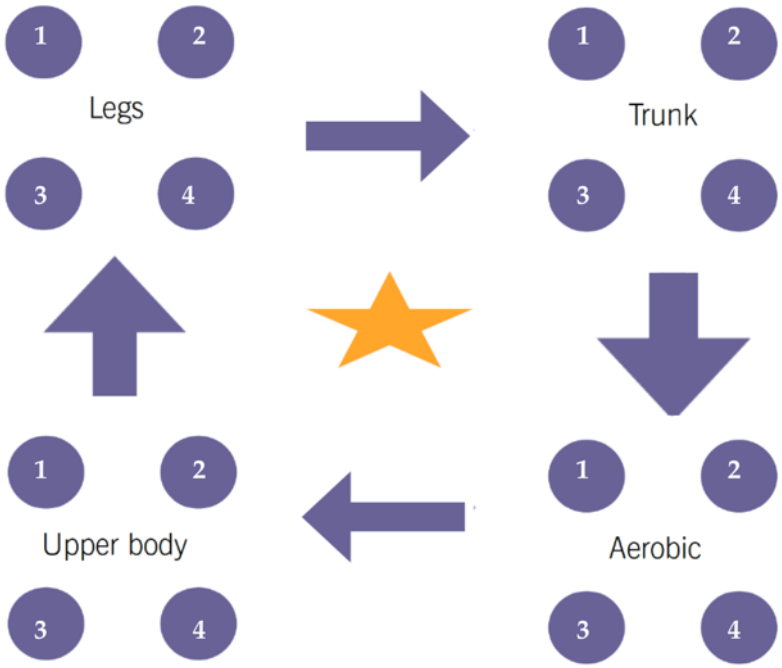
This type of circuit has muscular strength endurance stations (MSE) along the periphery and a central area for performing aerobic exercises as a group. This circuit can also be reversed with aerobic satellite stations and MSE exercises performed together in the middle.

Participants would each complete a station, then all participants would move into the centre to all perform the same aerobic exercise, before moving onto the next station. The aerobic exercises in the centre can be varied in between each station.



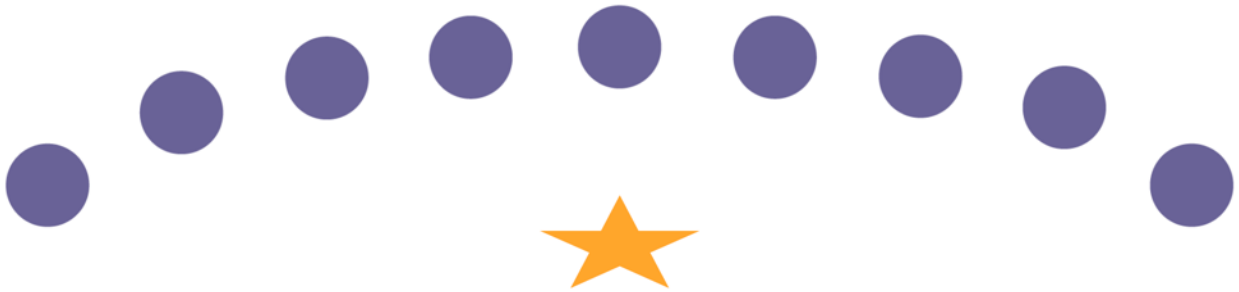
Corners Circuit

Complete one corner and move on to the next corner. Each corner can focus on one area of the body with an aerobic activity in the final corner. You have the option of completing all stations in each corner before moving on to the next corner, to achieve overload of a muscle group, or you can complete 1 station at each corner in turn for four rounds.



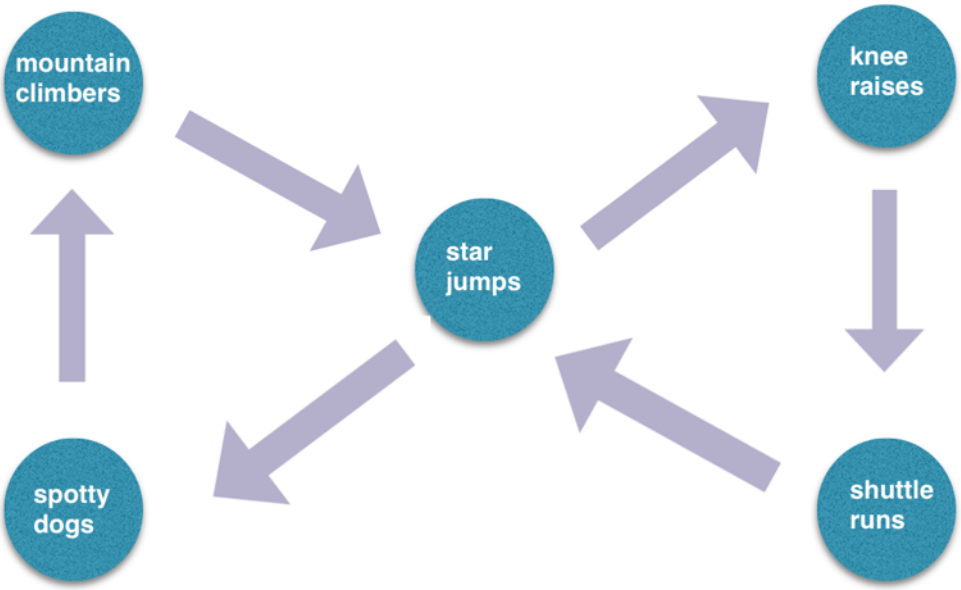
Follow the Leader Circuit

Suitable for small classes where the instructor performs/demonstrates an exercise and the group follow. Ideal for use as a command circuit and easy to manage as the instructor only has to coach one exercise at a time.



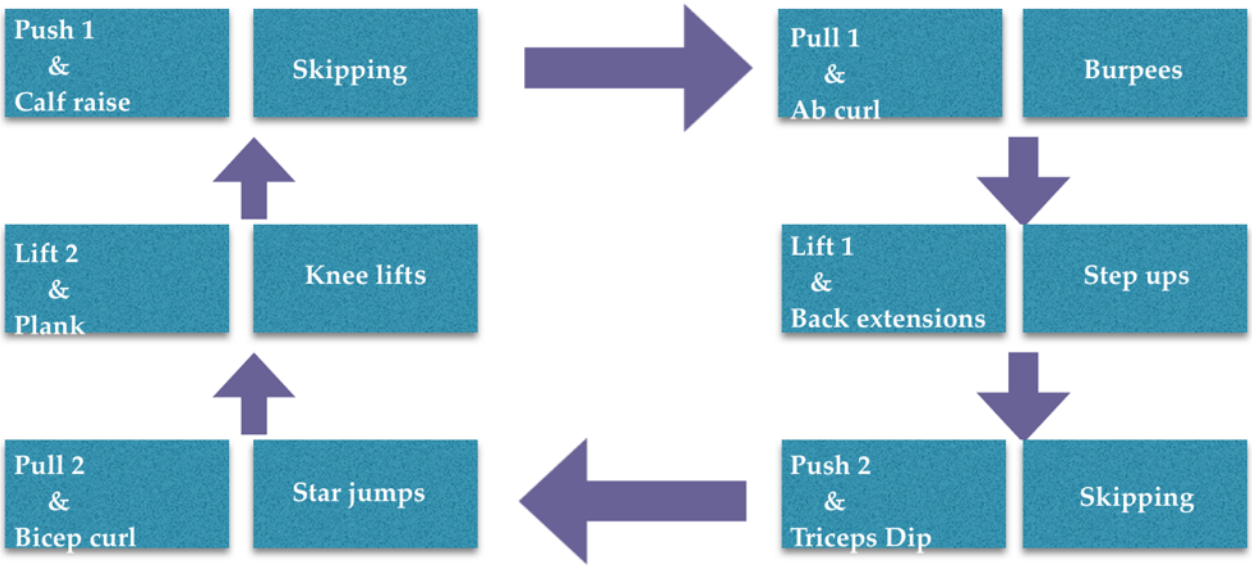
Bow-tie Circuit (Aerobic)

The central station provides the emphasis in this circuit layout as it is completed twice per circuit lap.



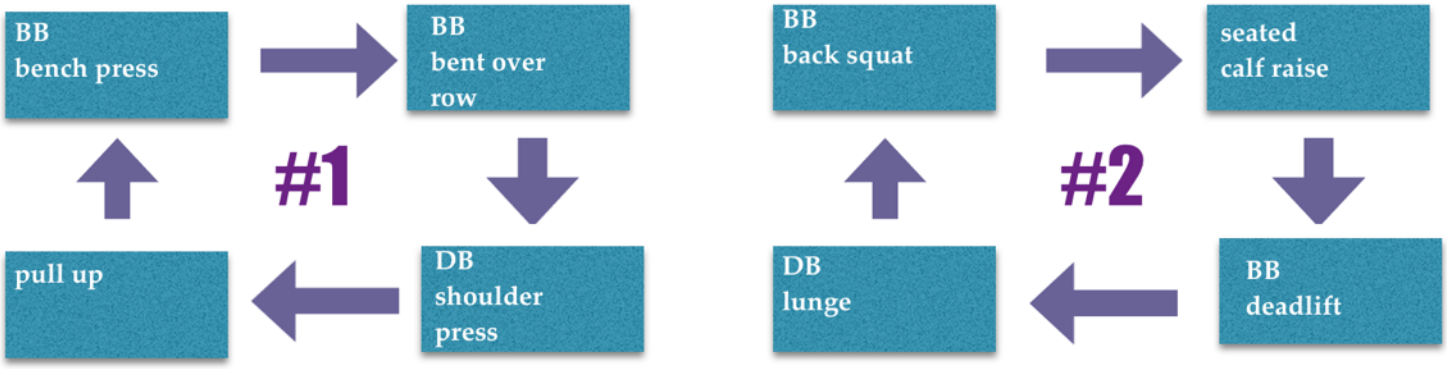
Pairs MSE/CV Circuit

The aim of this circuit is to perform two MSE exercises and then one CV exercise before moving round to the next station. The example below shows how to plan this with muscle balance in mind.



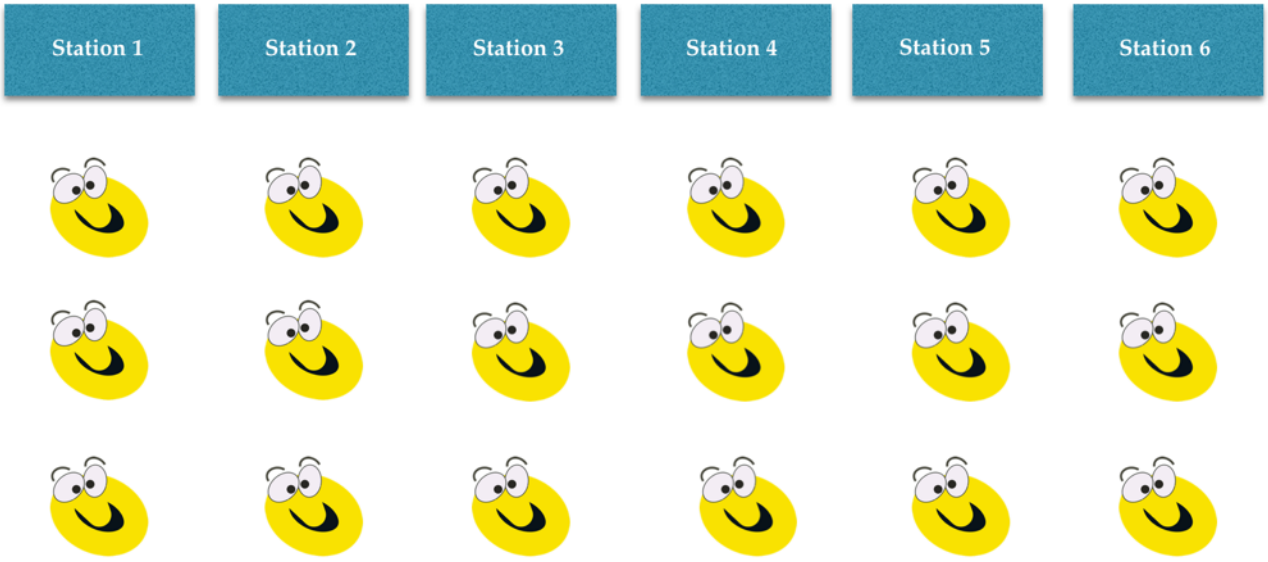
Squares Circuit (Strength)

With the layout below, participants perform all exercises in square #1 before moving on to the square #2. In a strength circuit, each exercise is usually performed using a resistance that will achieve overload within eight to twelve repetitions.



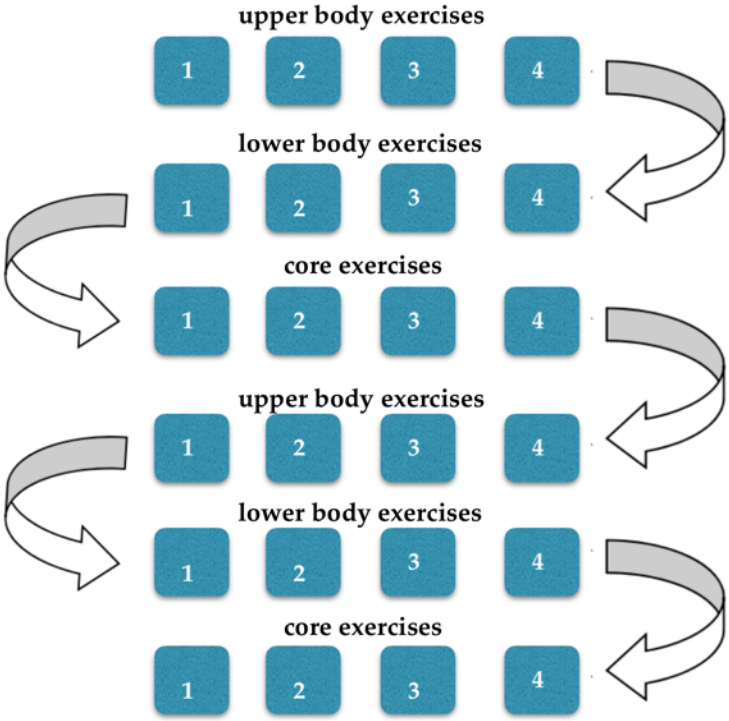
Lines Circuit

Participants work in small groups and complete each station together before moving on to the next one. Groups complete all stations for a programmed number of rounds. When planning this layout, the instructor will need to ensure there is enough equipment at each station for each small group.



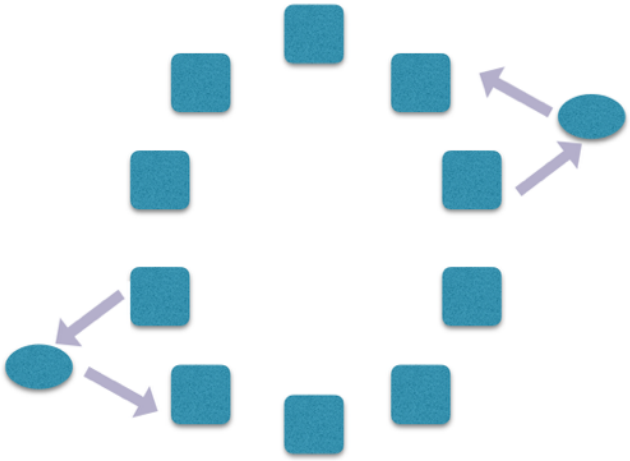
Once Through Circuit

This circuit has six stations laid out in rows and in each consecutive row, four different exercises focusing on the upper body, legs and core. Participants pass through each row in turn and once through the round, the circuit can then be performed again with four new exercises in each row. The circuit allows recovery of the various muscle groups used.



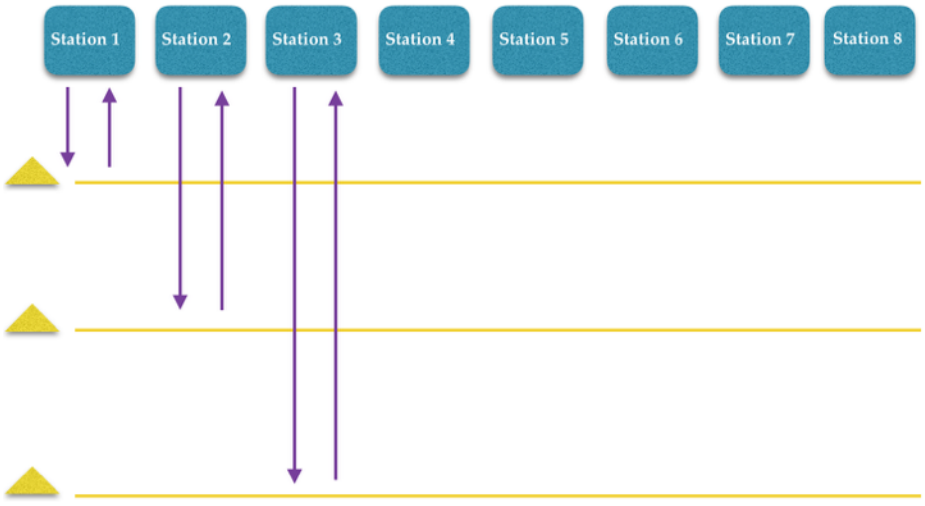
Radial

Set the circuit stations in the middle of the room and aerobic group exercise stations on the outside of the circle. They can be used as active recovery or, to alternate the emphasis of the class e.g. to make the circuit more challenging run around the outside of the circuit at trigger stations.



Shuttle

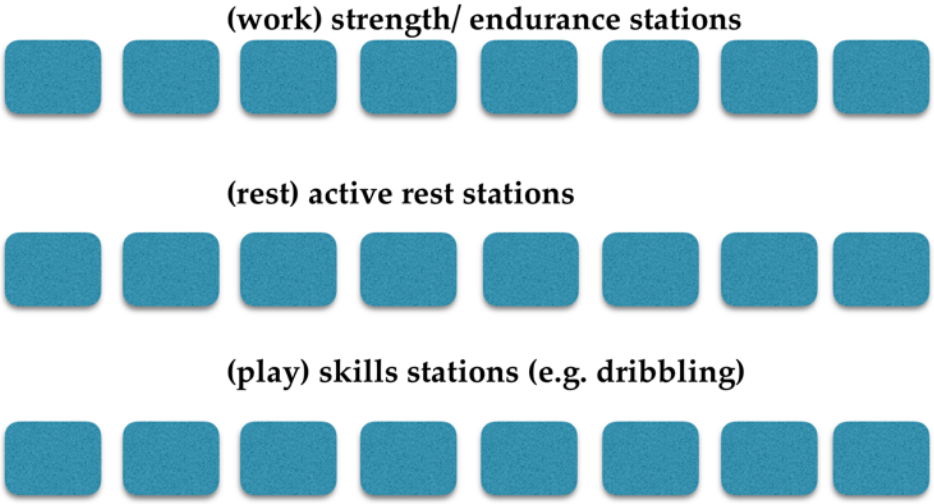
Incorporates a shuttle run before moving onto the next exercise. This option has an effective cardiovascular training effect and participants of all fitness levels are able to work to the best of their own abilities. You can set out cones to provide different shuttle distance options for your participants or programme different distances at different stations. You may give a regression (walk) or progression (sprint) in this circuit.



Work, Rest and Play

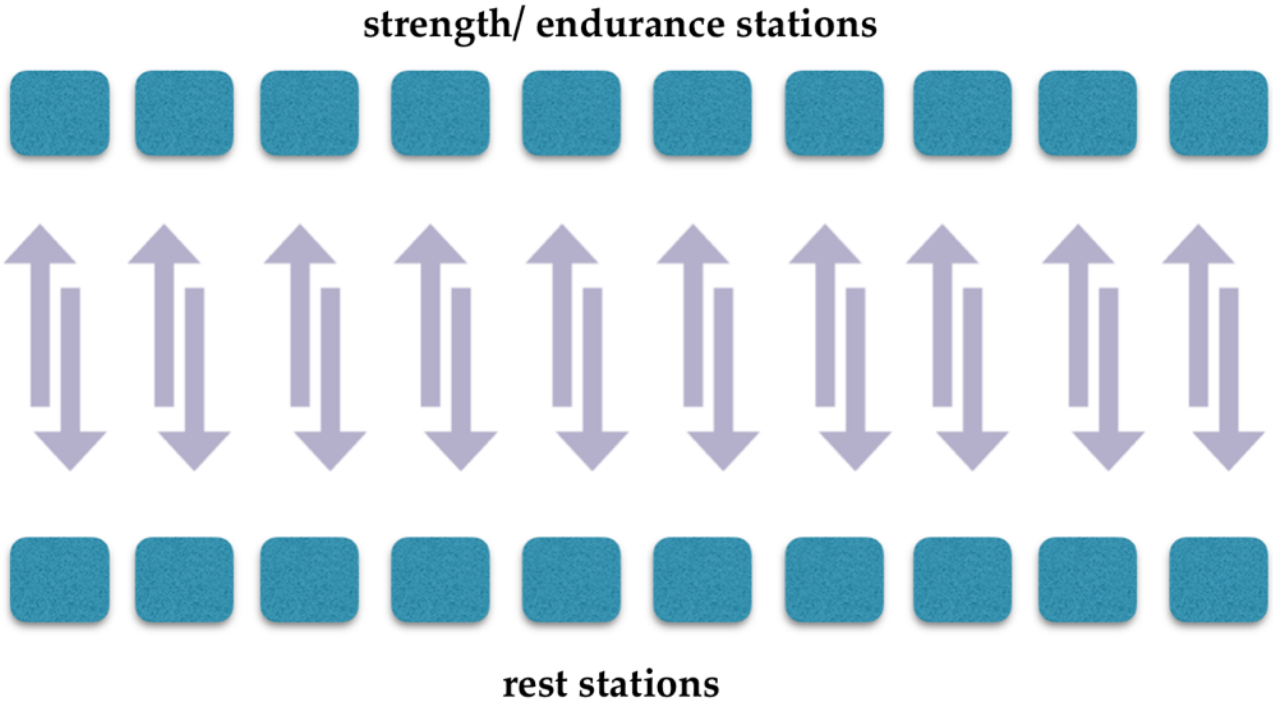
Each line has a different function. This can be a fun option to introduce on an occasional basis or can be used to start developing sports specific skills such as rugby, football or basketball. Each line serves to develop a different fitness component e.g. strength/

endurance, cardiovascular fitness or motor skills. The circuit therefore, provides an entire body workout.



Tonne Up

This is a partner circuit. 10 exercises are listed on a board. 10 reps of the first exercise are performed by partner 1, while partner 2 recovers, then partner 1 returns to the rest station and swaps with partner 2. Partner 1 then completes 10 reps of the second exercise and so on, until all stations have been completed and 100 reps have been performed.



4. The Role of the Circuit Training Instructor

4.1 Characteristics and Professionalism of the Instructor

A circuits instructor does not need to have a specific personality type. Regardless of your instructor style and personality, you will end up with long term participants who enjoy your classes, feel inspired, motivated, and comfortable in your classes. Despite this, there are some characteristics and qualities that instructors should strive to possess in order to be a fitness professional.

- Be prepared
  Preparation is key to a successful circuit. Ensure your session is planned, the venue booked, and you have all the necessary resources.

- Be reliable
  Reliability is fundamental to building healthy numbers in your sessions. Cancelling sessions at the last minute or not showing up at all, is a sure way to lose clients and build a poor reputation as a 'fitness professional' within the area.

- Be punctual
  Always arrive at the venue with plenty of time to set up, and meet & greet your participants. Start and finish the class on time. If a gym/fitness studio is being used as the venue, back to back classes are likely to be scheduled in peak times. You must respect both the time of your class participants and of these other classes (and the instructors) by not running into their class time.

- Dress appropriately
  As a professional, you should dress accordingly. Wear clothes suitable to the workout you are teaching and appropriate footwear as an example to participants.

- Be focused
  There may be times when the instructor is having challenges in their home life. As soon as you arrive for the session, it's imperative to switch off from these challenges, 'get in the zone' for giving your paying participants a great workout, giving them 100% of your focus and attention.

- Educate
  Educate your participants. Explain why they are doing an exercise, invite them to join your social media group or mailing list. Aim to be the 'go-to-person' for advice, it may lead to 1:1 clients, more class participants, or some other opportunities.

- Be aware of hygiene
  It's natural that the fitness industry is a 'sweaty business', and instructors may be intermittently very active throughout a day. If cleanliness and hygiene are not considered, instructors and their clothing may become smelly, which can be very off-putting for participants, and can jeopardise the instructors' professionalism. It's also important to consider the cleanliness of any equipment such as floor mats, as these can become saturated in sweat. Always encourage participants to utilise their own fitness towels as a barrier.

- Review and evaluate regularly
  By performing a self-evaluation on a regular basis, the instructor is giving themselves the opportunity to identify any strengths and weaknesses, as well as being aware of their consistency in maintaining their standards and professionalism. Gaining participant feedback will help you to review your performance.

- Remain educated and up to date
  As new research influences exercise and nutrition trends, it is your responsibility to stay up-to-date with the latest findings. Stay current and ensure you know all the latest trends. Attend CPD courses and workshops to develop your fit-pro skills.

- Encourage a healthy lifestyle
  Fitness instructors are role models healthy living for many people in the general population. As a professional, you should lead by example and encourage a healthy lifestyle.

4.2 Importance of Correct Instructor Demonstrations

Participants will aim to mimic the instructors demonstrations. Demonstrations must be competent to reinforce correct exercise technique, which will help participants to…

- obtain better results from their training
- reduce the risk of getting injured

Ensure that demonstrations are executed with good posture, correct technique & a desirable tempo. Include key teaching points for participants to remember and implement, without overloading them with minor details. Further tweaks to technique can be added during the class.

4.3 Motivating the Class Participants

One of the most important roles of a circuit instructor is to motivate the class and inspire them to work harder than if they were training alone. The following factors will help you to achieve this:

- Being prepared
  Fail to prepare, prepare to fail! When thoroughly prepared, instructors don't have to concentrate on the moves or their cues and can therefore put more focus into motivation. When you are poorly prepared, your focus is on everything but your participants.

- Be yourself
  Act naturally and allow your personality to come out when instructing. Participants relate better to a 'real' person, rather than someone who's pretending to be someone they are not.

- Give timely encouragement
  Group encouragement is usually most-needed at the beginning and end of a work period. At the beginning, the participants will have just had a short rest period and moved onto a new exercise. They need a 'pick-me-up' to get them going on the station they are now on. As they approach the end of the work phase, fatigue will start to kick in and they will again, need some encouragement to 'bring it home' for the final 5-10 seconds.

- Empathise with participants
  If you notice a participant struggling, gently encourage them but also try to empathise with them. Offer them a regression so that they can continue. You can show great customer care by speaking with them after the class and offering some supporting words.

- Enjoy yourself
  If the instructor is enjoying the class, this positive energy carries across to the participants. If you are not enjoying yourself then this will carry over to the class through your non-verbal communication and body language. If you are unable to motivate yourself to enjoy your own class then you can't expect others to become inspired by your instruction.

- Take notice of your participants
  Take notice of your participants' progress. If you notice one who has lost weight or is now co-ordinating the exercises better, let them know you have noticed. This helps to build their self-efficacy, and exercise adherence amongst your class participants.

5. Using Music and Audio Equipment in Circuit Training

5.1 The Use of Music in Circuit Training

Music motivates participants and facilitates exercise performance by reducing the sensation of fatigue, increasing psychological arousal and improving motor coordination.

Within the UK, and other countries, there are licensing requirements to use music publicly, and legally, within the copyright laws.

Most recording artists and record companies have signed up with Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL), a non-profit making organisation. PPL was set up specifically to administer broadcasting rights and public performances on behalf of its members.

A PPL licence is required when recorded music, within PPL's repertoire is played in public. Therefore, if instructors are freelancing, they will either need a PPL license to use music in public, or they can use PPL-free music that can be purchased online. If you are working in a gym then they will have a PPL license and instructors are able to work under that.

5.2 Working with a Microphone

A microphone with headset is a valuable tool that can have a number of benefits for both the instructor and the participant. Benefits include:

- Participants can easily hear instructions over the music being played
- Instructors can use their voice intonation/volume/pitch more effectively
- Allows specific instructions to be given immediately, rather than having to move to a position where the target participant can hear before giving instructions
- Adds to the atmosphere of the class, potentially allowing for a greater volume of music whilst still being able to be heard
- Prevents any long term damage to vocal chords

Most fitness facilities will have a microphone available for use by their group fitness instructors. If freelance instructors are planning on running their own classes from locations not specifically designed for fitness classes (outdoors, church hall etc.) then it would be beneficial to invest in a combined speaker, receiver and headset, to benefit from the points above.

UNIT 2: PLANNING & INSTRUCTING CIRCUIT TRAINING

Aim: To provide you with the skills required to plan, prepare, and instruct a safe and effective circuit training session

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit you will:

- be able to plan and design a circuit training session
- be able to prepare participants for a circuit training session
- be able to instruct a circuit training session

1. Planning and Designing a Circuits Session

1.1 Safety considerations for circuit training sessions

It is of paramount importance that safety is respected at all times, to ensure participants feel secure and comfortable with their training environment.

The following should be adhered to, to ensure safety is upheld at all times:

- Equipment
  Regularly inspected and well maintained. Furthermore, the equipment should be s et up for exercises in an appropriate way and used in the correct manner for which they were intended.

- Environment
  Unused equipment is stored away from the workout area so that it does not create a hazard e.g. loose dumbbells rolling around in the middle of the circuit, skipping ropes left out in line of shuttle run station, etc.

- Temperature
  Need to ensure adequate temperature and ventilation. Be careful not to over-cool the room with air-conditioning.

- Water
  If water is not available where the circuit is being held, advise participants to bring their own.

- Hygiene
  Participants need to bring towels in order to wipe sweat from themselves and equipment after use. During the workout, immediately wipe any wet patches from the floor to prevent slips.

- Intensity
  Monitor intensity to ensure that participants are not working too hard and putting themselves at risk of possible injury. In this case, always provide regressed options of exercises to allow exercises to be completed with good technique.

- Teaching
  Correct technique with exercise demonstration is essential to guard against injury as well as maximising results. The instructor must correct participants' poor technique.

- Class management
  Always explain the circuit format to new participants and everybody must be clear where they are starting and which direction the circuit is moving in. You must be assertive in order to remain in control at all times.

- Verbal screening
  In addition to a PAR-Q that would have been completed previous to attendance, it's essential to verbally screen the participants for injuries and contraindications prior to each session commencing.

- Appropriate exercises for circuit training
  Circuit training was originally created to allow people with different fitness levels to train together in the same class. It is important that alternatives and adaptations are offered to meet the individual needs of all participants. Regressions for the unfit and inexperienced, and progressions for those with more capability and training age. Ensure specific adaptations/alternatives are provided if a participant presents a specific

- The number of participants and exercise stations
  8 - 12 exercise stations should be enough to achieve a total body workout for most general conditioning circuits. The amount of equipment will depend on the number of participants that you have in the class.

1.2 Considerations When Planning a Circuit Training Session

Venue/Location

The format and design of the circuit training session will depend on the space and equipment available at the particular venue. This will determine how many participants you can safely include in the class.

Indoors, circuit classes can be enjoyed in studios or halls that provide enough space. They can also take place on the gym floor, however the provision and location of fixed training equipment will have a significant impact on the circuit design and sequencing.

Circuit training can also be enjoyed outdoors in a "boot camp" style set up, in an appropriate open space such as a park, sports field or beach, etc.

Health & Safety

- Emergency information (fire exits, nearest telephone, first aid)
- Suitability of the venue
- Written/verbal screening of participants
- Adequate heat & ventilation of venue
- Floor is clear of slip and trip hazards and obstacles
- Water available for participants

Target group

- Type of circuit - general fitness, sports specific, etc.
- Training experience of participant group
- Fitness level of the participant group
- Average age of the participant group

- Male / female split of participants
- Approximate number of participants

Aims & objectives of the session

- Aims - are outcome based (the what), i.e. what you want your clients to achieve by the end of the session.
- Objectives - are process based (the how), i.e. address each aim with how you will achieve them.

Session Specifics

- Time and duration of the session
- Equipment needed
- Appropriate warm up & cool down
- Is the training session balanced? (push vs. pull; resistance vs. cardiovascular training)
- Are there any special arrangements or adaptations in response to the equipment or facilities available?
- Alternative exercises/adaptions of exercises selected i.e. appropriate regressions & progressions for each exercise

1.3 Warm Up and Cool Down Activities

The Warm Up

The purpose of the warm up is to raise the pulse, mobilise the joints & prepare the muscles for the workout ahead. It should include simple aerobic moves to work the major muscle groups that will be targeted in the main circuit component.

Warm up activities are usually body weight in nature and involve little to no impact to increase the flexibility of muscles, tendons and ligaments and mobilise the joints. This is a good time to introduce some of the movements that are relative to the circuit. This will allow for a full range of motion later in the session while minimising the risk of injury.

As the circuit itself requires minimal co-ordination, the warm up should compliment this approach. The exercises used should be simple and easy for participants to perform safely and effectively.

Once the body has been generally warmed, a total body dynamic stretch routine should be done prior to the conditioning component (main circuit).

Dynamic stretches that mimic movements that will be performed in the main circuit would be appropriate, and addressing common postural issues would be beneficial.

The warm up should last between 5 - 10 minutes, based on the participants and other factors. We could extend the warm up to around 10 mins if we had older clients, or people

that are very sedentary, or if environmental factors outside dictate – such as a cold temperature.

Here's an example of a warm up routine, including a progressive pulse raiser blended with early upper body dynamic stretches, and ending with lower body dynamic stretches

1. Walk with shoulder roll
2. Walk with chest opener
3. Brisk walk with push/pull
4. Light jog with jab/crosses
5. Side steps
6. Carioca
7. High Knees
8. 'Butt kicks'
9. Straight leg swings
10. Walking lunges
11. Single leg touchdowns
12. Side Lunges
13. Hip Openers
14. Glute Bridge

The Cool Down

The aim of the cool down is to gradually reduce the heart rate and facilitate venous return, thus preventing blood pooling. It also aids the removal of lactate from the blood and muscles, allowing for a quick recovery from oxygen debt.

To achieve this, it is important that you reduce the intensity by decreasing the intensity gradually as the group recovers. The music should also reflect this reduction, and promote relaxation and highlight the fact that the session is coming to an end.

Dependent upon the group and intensity of the main component, 3-5 mins regressive cool down should be performed to lower heart rate, followed by static stretches of the main muscle groups that have been used during the main component. Stretching post-workout helps to release muscle tension, improve recovery, reduce muscle soreness, and prevent risk of injury.

The instructor must decide the duration of the individual stretches, based on whether a maintenance or developmental stretch is required. Dependent upon the group, it may be beneficial to perform developmental stretches on the hip flexors and chest to combat common postural problems.

The cool down and stretch should last up to 10 minutes in total.

1.4 Exercise Selection & Order - The Main Conditioning Component

The exercises selected for the main component will be dictated by the target group. For example, it is likely that you would select very different exercises for a class involving

sports people requiring improvements in power, speed, and agility, when compared to a class involving participants hoping for weight loss and general conditioning. Despite this, there are some general guidelines to follow with regards to selection and order of exercises.

Although a circuit can be made up of varied station numbers and content, for the benefit of providing sound exercise selection & order principles, we'll make the assumption in the following examples, that there are 8 stations, 4 of which are resistance stations and 4 of which that are CV stations.

Resistance Stations

Compound vs Isolation

Compound exercises (more than 1 joint moving) generally recruit larger muscle mass to overcome the given load. This increases desirable hormonal release, aerobic demand, functionality, and metabolic rate, as well as aiding the prevention of bone density reduction and being safer, when compared to isolation exercises. This suggests that compound exercises should be the main focus of resistance stations in circuit design.

Muscle Balance

To avoid having a negative impact on posture, it is important to consider the equality of work performed by opposing muscle groups. This is particularly important when selecting compound 'upper body push' exercises and compound 'upper body pull' exercises. If the circuit includes one upper body push, it should also include one upper body pull. If two pushes are included, two pulls should be included.

In an 8 station, general conditioning circuit, with 4 resistance stations, it would be appropriate to have 2 lower body compound lifts, 1 upper body compound push, and 1 upper body compound pull.

Complexity

Participants cannot receive the same level of attention from the trainer/instructor than in 1:1 sessions. The circuit will be safer, and run more smoothly, if the exercises you select are relatively simple for the group to perform. The complexity can always progress as the participants progress over weeks/months. If all exercises are too complex, the risk of injury increases, and the instructor will have to put too much attention to correcting technique, resulting in timing, control, and motivation being neglected. If complex exercises are selected, it's important to restrict it to 1-2 stations. We will later refer to these as 'focus stations', where the instructor can focus much of their attention, knowing that the other, 'peripheral', stations are simple and safe.

Equipment

The exercise selection could be limited by the equipment available. For example, if there is only one step available, you can only have one station that requires a step, and even then, the adaptations/alternatives maybe restricted. It's good practice to have some bodyweight stations if equipment is limited, as this will free up various alternative barbell and dumbbell weights, step heights etc. for other stations.

Cardiovascular (Aerobic) Stations

When selecting CV stations, the focus is on raising the heart rate as much as possible throughout the work time. Although many (skeletal) muscles may be used, the emphasis is on improving the efficiency of the heart and lungs.

The exercise selection process is not as complex as it is for resistance stations, however, keeping them relatively simple will allow the participants to focus on working hard as opposed to the technique. This is beneficial since the aim is to work the heart and lungs as much as possible. The higher the complexity, the lower the intensity is likely to be. This will also allow the instructor to concentrate on correcting technique on the resistance exercises, whilst simply providing encouragement for the CV stations.

Other factors that should be considered when selecting CV exercises, include:

- Specificity (if appropriate to the group)
- Variety
- Equipment available
- Space available
- Surface (level? non-slip?)

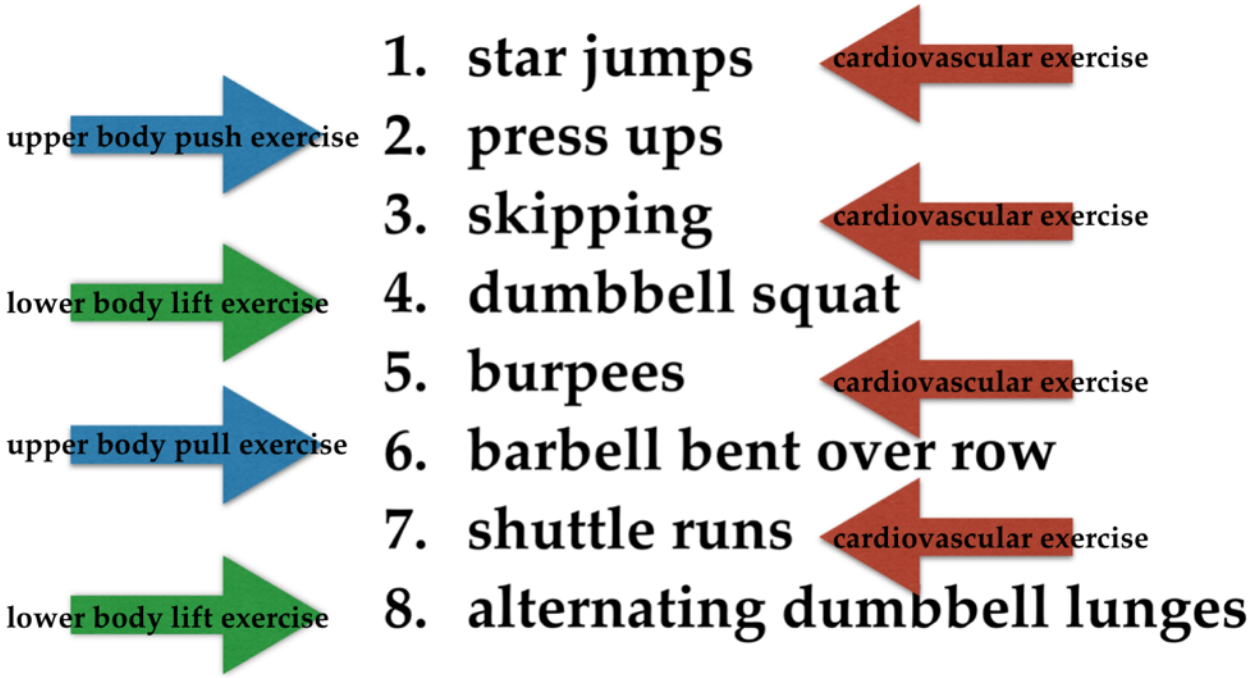
Sequence

In an 8 station, general conditioning circuit with 4 resistance stations and 4 CV stations, it would be logical to alternate between resistance stations and CV stations. This will allow for recovery for the relevant body systems, allowing greater input from participants at each station.

Resistance exercises within the circuit, should be sequenced to enhance Peripheral Heart Action (PHA) as much as possible. Peripheral heart action is ‘blood shunting’ caused by alternating between upper body and lower body resistance exercises. When the upper body muscles are working during a circuit, they demand oxygenated blood supply from the heart. If the next resistance exercise is a lower body one, those muscles then demand the oxygenated blood, followed by an upper body resistance exercise causing upper body muscles to demand the blood supply once again. This causes ‘blood shunting’ between the upper body and lower body, enhancing the cardiovascular benefits of the circuit.

Alternating the resistance stations between upper and lower body exercises will also allow the participants recovery time between working muscle groups.

Example 8 station circuit showing the sequencing principles of alternating between cardiovascular and resistance stations, and the resistance stations alternating between upper body and lower body exercises:



These principles apply to many circumstances, but with sound rationale they can be discarded. For example: If the group is advanced, the aim of the circuit may be to overload an area of the body or select muscle groups. In this case, the same prime movers may well be utilised in several consecutive exercises. Consideration must then be given to providing adequate recovery periods between stations when planning this type of session.

Core & Abdominal Exercises

It is a well established training principle, that core and abdominal training should be performed at the end of the main conditioning component of a training session. This is so these relevant muscles have the ability to stabilise the lumbar spine throughout the preceding exercises, rather than being fatigued too early in the session.

It is not possible to put core exercises as the last 1-2 stations in a circuit, as some participants will start at these stations causing them to fatigue the core muscles, jeopardising their ability to stabilise the lumbar spine during further exercises.

For this reason, it is suggested that, if the instructor wishes to include core and abdominal training, that they plan to execute a separate or group core component after the main circuit has been completed.

1.5 Exercise Adaptations and Alternatives

All participants within a circuit session will have varying fitness levels, training experience, and health. It is therefore important to cater for these variations by providing adaptations and alternatives to each station. The main purposes of adaptations and alternatives are:

- Provide a greater challenge to the participant (Progression)
- Provide a lesser challenge to the participant (Regression)
- Avoid a negative impact on minor health issues and/or minor injuries

A station could consist of all 3, but often the instructor may decide on which is most appropriate. Aim for the main exercise to be a 'middle-ground' in terms of difficulty, enabling a regression and progression as options. If the instructor has attempted to progress the group by selecting a particularly challenging exercise, ensure an appropriate regression is provided.

Progressions

Progressions should be provided as a general option for the participants to make the exercise harder. A progression can simply be making a weight heavier, step higher, or do a CV exercise faster, or it could involve making the exercise more complex.

Regressions

Regressions should be provided as a general option for the participants to make the exercise easier. A regression can simply be making a weight lighter, step lower, or do a CV exercise slower, or it could involve making the exercise simpler. It's important to avoid making participants feel inferior by taking the regression. When providing the regression in the demonstration, avoid statements such as "If you're not strong enough to do this then…", "If you're too weak to do this then…", "If you're not fit enough to do this then…", "If you're too lazy to do this then…".

Adaptation/Alternative due to injury/illness

During the PAR-Q and verbal screening process, the instructor will learn about specific conditions that may be negatively affected by some exercises. During the demonstration, the instructor can then provide specific adaptations or alternative to not exacerbate the condition.

Common adaptations or alternatives would include eliminating high impact from any exercises for those participants will lower body joint problems or who are overweight. Lower back pain could also be brought on by exercises such as the Bent Over Row, so an adaptation or alternative may need to be provided for those individuals.

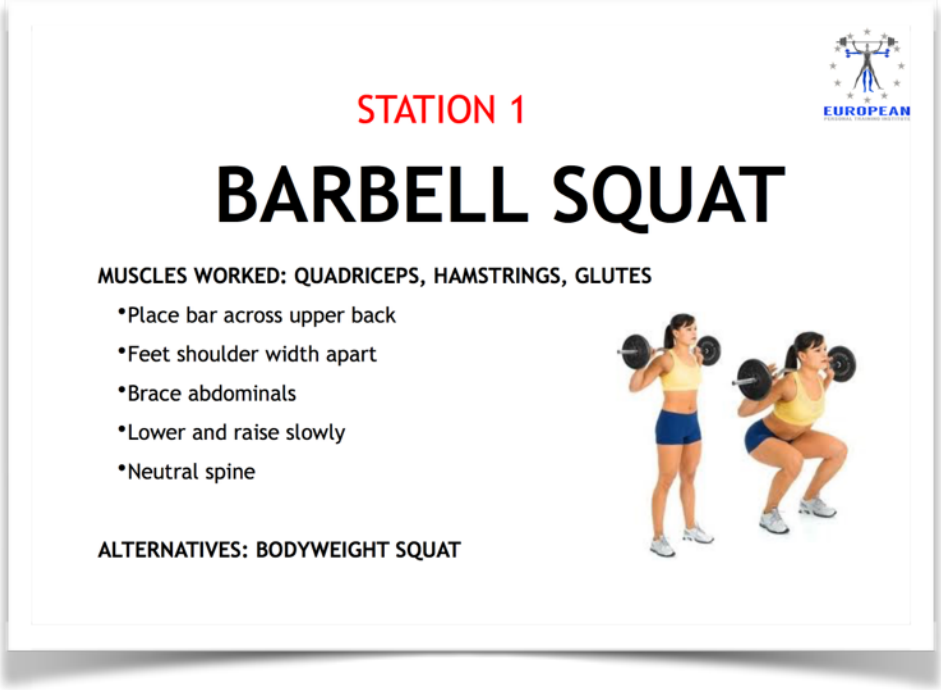
The instructor should always try to educate themselves on common occurrences and the solution to those occurrences, to ensure an appropriate, on-the-spot adaptation can be given.

1.6 Designing Circuit Training Station Cards

Circuit cards should be used as a visual cue for all participants and not as a replacement for effective instruction and reinforcement of teaching points. They should be used to identify the station position, illustrate the exercise and alternatives and to support your verbal instructions.

The example circuit card below clearly displays all the required information. The station number is at the top so the participants know the sequence of the exercises. The exercise name is formatted in large font so it stands out. There's also a pair of diagrams to give the participant a visual cue, alongside concise but specific teaching points. Information is provided showing the main muscle groups being worked by doing the exercise. Finally, we have an alternative. This card shows a bodyweight squat, which would be a regression.

Example circuit card:



Circuit cards should therefore include the following information:

- Station number
- Name of the exercise
- Muscle groups worked
- Diagram of the exercise
- Key teaching points
- Exercise alternatives (progressions and regressions)

1.7 Planning a Circuits Session

In summary, planning a circuits session should include the following considerations, planning and design elements…

Consider:

- Venue/location details
- Health & safety factors
- Target group

- Aims & objectives of the circuit
- Session specifics

Plan:
- Layout of the circuit
- Warm Up activities
- Balanced, appropriately sequenced, main component
- Cool Down activities

Design:
- Circuit layout & details (direction of travel, work/rest timings, number of rounds etc.)
- Station cards

2. Prepare Participants for a Circuit Training Session

2.1 Set Up the Circuit

If possible, it's important to set up the circuit before the participants arrive. This will mean the instructor is free to meet and greet the group and build some rapport before starting. Setting up the circuit includes performing all health & safety checks & procedures, preparing the audio equipment (music and microphone), positioning the station cards in the planned layout, and setting up the equipment required at each station, including those needed for regressions/progressions.

Once the instructor gains responses to the verbal screen, it might be possible that some additional equipment may need to be made available.

Picking up, moving, and putting down heavy equipment must be done in a safe & effective manner to keep the instructor fit and healthy for future sessions, and to set a good example to any participants who may be present.

2.2 Welcome the Participants

It is best practice to welcome all participants individually as they arrive, and also briefly as a group when you commence the session. First impressions are very important, so making sure everyone is welcomed equally, with a smile, will create a great start to the session. Ensure any new participants are made to feel welcome; introduce yourself, ask them their name and use it regularly during their first session. Verbal screen them 1:1 in case they do not wish to disclose any injuries/illnesses to the whole group.

The session should not commence until verbal screening has been completed on all participants. Ask new participants 1:1, invite others to speak to you whilst you are making final preparations to equipment and music, and ensure you have asked everyone by verbal screening to the whole group once they are gathered around you ready for the demonstration.

Brief the group on the location of fire exits, first aiders, and first aid kit as necessary.

2.3 Outline the Planned Circuit Training Session

It's important that participants are aware of what's ahead of them! Once the group has been welcomed and verbal screened, it is good practice to give them an outline of the planned session. Include details such as the aims & objectives of the session, the timings of work/rest and between rounds, and the sequence that the circuit should be completed in.

Example outline of the session:
"I've planned a full body circuit aimed at improving general conditioning; great for CV fitness and body composition. It's a full body session consisting of four resistance stations and four CV stations. Each station will consist of 45s work followed by a recovery and transition to the next exercise of 15s, with a total of 3 rounds to complete. We've got a horseshoe shape circuit and we will be moving in a clockwise direction. Before we get warmed up, I'll demonstrate each station and provide any options you have; if you'd like to follow me…"

2.4 Demonstrations - Name & Purpose of the Exercises

Demonstrations should take place before the warm up. This will ensure that the group do not 'cool down' whilst the instructor takes the group through the circuit demonstrations.

When introducing each station within the circuit, start by naming the exercise and the purpose - the benefit of the exercise. It's important for participants to relate to an exercise with a name so you/they can reference it and it will also act as a trigger for them remembering technique involved. The purpose will help them to relate to the exercise, to understand why they are doing it, and gives them motivation to work hard on it if they have a specific goal related to that exercise and the muscles it works.

2.5 Demonstrations - Instructor Technique

It is vital that the instructor provides a demonstration of the exercises, with technically correctly technique. Visual learners will see what the instructor does and attempt to replicate it. 4-5 repetitions of an exercise should suffice. Correct technique during demonstrations will:

- obtain better results from their training
- reduce the risk of the participants getting injured

Teaching points should be used to complement the instructor demonstration. Give teaching points in a simple manner, do not over-explain, and provide 2-3 important points that can be remembered and implemented. Too much information on 8 different exercises, will cause information-overload.

2.6 Provide Adaptations and Alternatives

As mentioned previously, these can consist of progressions, regressions, and/or specific adaptations. General progressions/regressions should have been pre-planned and provided on the station cards. Demonstrations of these may or may not be needed. Increasing/decreasing weight will not need another demonstration, whereas more significant adaptations may need a demonstration. If any participants presented a specific condition during the verbal screen, specific adaptations can be directed towards them in an appropriate manner.

2.7 Confirm Participant Understanding

Once you have provided the necessary information for the participants to safely and effectively perform a station, the instructor should then check that the group understand what is required. A simple *"is everyone ok with that station?"* before you move onto then next one should suffice.

Once all demonstrations have taken place, give the group the opportunity to ask any questions before you start the warm up. This will ensure nobody is left guessing, and they are all fully informed of what they need to do during the main component of the circuit.

3. Instruct a Circuit Training Session

3.1 Voice Projection

The whole group need to be able to hear your instructions. The benefits of using a microphone were outlined earlier, but if this is not possible then this becomes more important. When addressing the group as a whole, the instructor should aim to be positioned in their planned 'instructor position'; approximately equal distance from all stations. If a microphone is not available, it becomes even more appropriate to avoid having any stations positioned behind the 'instructor position'. Look up and out towards the group, giving clear and concise commands. Keeping commands concise will remove unnecessary words, increasing the chance of the participants comprehending the instructions over the music and general noise from the session.

3.2 Group Management & Timing

Be the dominant individual within the group. The instructors cues and instructions are the most important within the group, therefore an air of dominance will need to be exuded.

One of the roles of the instructor is to manage the work/rest times and cue these to the group. Not only do they need to be told when to start and stop each station, they will also want these times to be cued prior to them actually happening. When the work time is coming to an end, it is good practice to give the group a 5 or 10 second warning. This will

allow participants to 'inject' some energy into the last 5-10s if they were holding anything back prior to this.
Cuing start times will allow the participants the time to prepare, pick up any necessary weights etc. so they start on time.

Despite the timing of the work/rest times being important, they must not become the dominant focus of the instructor. There are other roles of the instructor that will be discussed in this section, and if the instructor becomes 'stopwatch-dominant', they will lose the ability to provide other important information to the group.

3.3 Instructor Positioning

The planned 'instructor position'; a position approximately equal distance from all stations whereby the instructor can view all exercises, is an appropriate position to be in, particularly at the beginning and end of a work phase and also during the rest phase.

During other times, the instructor should move amongst the participants, viewing their technique from appropriate angles and providing some 1:1 correction, encouragement, and praise. This will ensure that exercises are being performed safely and correctly, and each individual will receive some quality 1:1 time, making them feel like a valued member of the group.

If a microphone is being used, it is good practice to move the mouthpiece away from the mouth when coaching individuals. This will make sure the whole group is not confused about who the instructions are directed at, and also avoid everyone being made aware of any individual corrections that have been made. It makes it more personal.

3.4 Improving Participant Performance

Instructors should always look to improve the performance of their participants. The manner in which this is done is important. When attempting to improve the performance of participants, there are four main 'rules' to work with to keep the group positive and safe…

1. Prioritise technique that may cause injury over minor tweaks in technique. On many exercises, keeping a neutral spine is key to avoiding lower back injuries.
2. Use positively-worded corrections, rather than negatively-worded corrections. This will keep the group in a positive mindset and make them realise that the instructor is striving for quality rather than looking to criticise. For example, *"Keep a slight bend in your knees"* is the positive version of *"Don't lock out your knees"*. Try to avoid using "don't" as much as possible.
3. Provide the participants will a solution to the problem, rather than informing them of the problem. For example, telling them to *"keep a neutral spine"* or to *"keep a straight back"* has told them that their back is rounded! They need to know the solution to the problem to enable them to correct it. The solution could be *"lift your chest, relax shoulders, tighten through the core"* resulting in a neutrally aligned spine.
4. "Sandwich" corrections. Commend - Correct - Commend. This will also be a more positive experience for the participant, rather than just receiving a correction. For

example, *“Sarah, you’re doing great, just add a little squeeze between your shoulder blades….that’s it, well done!”.*

Even if participant technique looks good, they could still benefit from some minor cues to aid their performance…”*drive through your heels”* (e.g. Squat), *“Squeeze those shoulder blades”* (e.g. Bent Over Row), *“Keep that core tight”* (e.g. Press Ups) are all cues that could reinforce how to get the most out of the exercise, without changing anything. If said with a encouraging tone of voice, then this can also be effective motivation for them to keep going until the end.

3.5 Focus Stations & Peripheral Stations

Focus stations

You need to pay particular attention to ‘focus stations’. These are complex, new, or challenging exercises that require the instructor’s immediate attention with most participants. As soon as the instructor has set the group off for a work phase, it’s the focus stations that should be checked first, to see if any corrections are needed.

Usually, more focus is needed on these stations during the first round of the circuit because that’s the time when participants are performing the exercise for the first time. The more rounds that are completed, the less focus will be required.

Focus participants

It’s also possible to have ‘focus participants’ who need a little more attention from the instructor. Again, these participants need to be checked on early in each work phase to ensure they know what they are doing, and are doing it safely. Example ‘focus participants’ include new attendees, young peoples, older people, those with minor injuries & illnesses, less fit individuals, and anyone else who the instructor feels requires more focus. These participants do not need to know that they are ‘focus participants’, and the instructor may need to be subtle in their approach.

Peripheral stations

‘Peripheral stations’ are simple exercises that have a low risk of injury, and require little coordination and technique, e.g. shuttle runs, .step ups, star jumps.
The priority is to look at the safety aspect of the exercise. A shuttle run does not have as many potential risks as say, a barbell back squat, and therefore requires less of the instructors immediate attention.

The instructor should decide what the focus stations are during the planning process, and ensure that there are only 2-3 focus stations, maximum. It is also beneficial to position focus stations relatively close to each other in the circuit. This way, the instructor can look one direction as soon as the group have started the work phase to see which exercise is their priority.

3.6 Appropriate Adaptations & Alternatives

Adaptations and alternatives will have been decided upon in the circuit planning stage, and included on the circuit station cards. Further to this, the instructor will have gathered any additional information from the verbal screening, and provided any specific adaptations/alternatives during the circuit demonstration. However, instructors must have the ability to recognise when a participant needs to adapt or change what they are doing, during the circuit.

A participant may look like the exercises are too easy, they may be unable to finish the full work phase, they may consistently perform an exercise with poor technique, or they may be struggling with a specific element of the exercise, such as balance. If any of these occur, or any other reason, the instructor must have the ability to 'think on their feet' and provide that participant with an adaptation or alternative to suit the scenario.

The instructor must decide whether to interject immediately to make a change, wait until the rest period, or wait until the end of the round. If the change is required due to poor technique, assuming verbal and non-verbal corrections haven't solved the problem, then an immediate fix is required. If the participant is finding it easy, the instructor may encouragement them to take the progressions, and if further intensity is required, they can speak with them after the round has finished to ensure the proceeding rounds are effective.

3.7 Effective Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication consists of what the instructor says, when they say it, and how they say it.

What the instructor says…

Some of the key components of verbal communication from a circuits instructor include:

Information: Clearly inform the group of what's happening. Avoid leaving them guessing, and keep them informed at all times. When do they start? When do they stop? When do they move on? How long is left? How many stations do they have left?

Teaching points: Look to change poor technique for the better, and cue key aspects of exercise technique to improve performance.

Encouragement: Circuits is challenging. Push them to dig a little deeper, and work harder than they would do on their own.

Praise: Give general praise to the group, tell them they are doing great. When participants improve based on the instructors corrections, follow up with praise. If the instructor notices a participant has improved over the last few sessions - praise them for it!

Ask questions: Interact with the group, gain feedback, ask if they're ok, ask how they are feeling.

Use their names: Make everyone feel like a valued member of the group, use their names regularly.

Timing of communication…

The timing of communication needs to be considered. There is little point going 'all out' with motivation and encouragement right from the outset, and then correcting poor technique at the end of a work phase.

Once the group has started a work phase, a little boost of **encouragement** to get them going is needed, then early teaching points to focus on **technique correction,** to maximise the amount of work time is performed with correct technique.

Once the instructor has done some corrections, they could **inform** the group when they are approximately half way through the work phase, offering **encouragement** and **praise**.

Providing some 1:1 **correction, encouragement** and **praise** will add a personal touch to each participant, rather than solely focusing on group communication.

Inform the group when there is 5-10 seconds left and offer a huge amount of **motivation** and **encouragement** to keep them going until the end.

When the work phase is over, **praise** them, **tell them** to move on, **interact** with them, **encourage** breathing/recovery and water intake, **cue them** for the next work phase…

How it's communicated…

The instructor needs to consider their voice volume, intonation, and pitch. When addressing the group, the instructor needs to be loud, when they are addressing someone 1:1, they can be, and sometimes should be, quieter. Changing the tone and pitch of the voice to show meaning and emotion to what is said, is a powerful tool. Think about how tone and pitch would need to change depending upon whether you are showing empathy to a participant, encouraging an individual, encouraging the group, correcting an individual, informing the group when to start vs stop.

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication can be as effective, if not more effective than verbal communication. "An image can say a thousand words". Instead of just saying what your want an individual to do, show them what you want and the resulting change may come more quickly.

Examples of non-verbal communication include:

- Mimicking a technique or showing a body position
- Using a hands-on approach to encourage scapula retraction (finger tips between scapulae on bent over row)
- Showing them the ROM required on an exercise (Pushing all the way up until their back touches the instructors hand on a press up)
- Placing a hand where you want the participant to look, when trying to encourage good neck alignment
- Giving a hand gesture to speed up or slow down

Three Stages to Great Instruction

The implementation of verbal and non-verbal communication within a circuit training session, can be summarised using the '3 Stages to Great Instruction'.

We can split each station (work phase) into three phases of instruction. If we apply this to a 45 second circuit station, it would look like this…

Set up (0-10 seconds)

Give a boost of encouragement to get the group going. Look at the focus stations as a priority and scan the group for exercise technique. Focus on those that have the highest risk of injury.

Circulate to Facilitate (10-35 seconds)

Move amongst the group. Continue with 1:1 corrections, encouragement and praise. Add in non-verbal communication as needed. Use people's names. Add some general group encouragement and give an idea of when they are half way through. Aim to improve the performance of individuals and as a whole group.

Final Push Home (35-45 seconds)

The group have come to your circuit class to get a result, so in that last 10 seconds you are trying to take them to that point of intensity where they are going to achieve results and move them towards their goal.

Become louder and more motivational, thinking less about teaching points and more about encouraging the group to work harder.

3.8 Motivation & Encouragement

Motivation can be thought of as the inspiration that causes an increase in determination, willingness, and eagerness to perform at a higher level, to achieve the desired outcome that the participant is looking for. Encouragement is the persuasion to do something, keep

doing something, or to increase the intensity of what is being done, to get to the desired outcome.

Motivation is challenging for an instructor to provide, unless they get to know their participants. Take time out to learn about each individual…why are they attending circuit training sessions? What result/outcome are they striving for? Why are they striving for it? How will it change their lives if they achieve it? When do they want to achieve it by? What are their barriers to achieving it? Gaining this information will empower the instructor to provide appropriate motivation to an individual.

Encouragement is easier to an instructor to implement within their circuit training session, and does not require the same level of understanding of individuals.

Encouragement is an important element of the instructor role, and should be used at the beginning of a work phase to inject some energy into the station, but it is particularly relevant in the 'Final Push Home' when the participants are tiring and need a little assistance to keep going until the end. As previously discussed, encouragement is not just about the words that are used, but also about the volume, intonation and pitch of the instructors voice.

3.9 Health & Safety Factors

Considerations for health & safety should always be factored in to the best of the instructors ability during the circuit planning stage. However, it is vital that instructors remain aware of any occurrences that may impact health and safety during their circuit training sessions. Factors to be aware of may include:

- Compulsory verbal screening prior to commencement
- Appropriate spacing between stations
- Participant technique corrections
- Trip hazards including equipment
- Damaged or broken equipment
- Water intake
- Water spillages
- Appropriate participant attire
- Changes in temperature and ventilation

3.10 Feedback and Self-Evaluation

Participant Feedback

It's important to provide participants with feedback on their performance as and when necessary. When a round of the circuit has finished, use this time to feedback to individuals on anything you noticed during the first round. This will help them to improve on their performance in the following rounds.

At the end of the session, it's good practice to give the group the opportunity to speak to you, to give their feedback, and answer any questions they might have. Try to get

feedback from a number of the group; be mindful of an individual who may be particularly vocal (and often critical) as they may not speak for the majority of the class.

Self-Evaluation

Self-reflection is a key skill for an instructor to develop in order to grow and progress as a professional. If the instructor evaluates their performance after every session, they are more likely to recognise their strengths and weaknesses and develop to become a more accomplished instructor.

Important self-evaluation questions would include:

- What went well?
- What didn't go well?
- How could the session be improved next time?
- Did the session meet the participants needs?
- What action plan is there for future sessions?

All evaluations should be recorded in order to help you progress and develop and action plan to improve your teaching technique.

Student Check List:

Do you...

☐ Understand the history of circuit training?
☐ Understand the benefits of circuit training?
☐ Understand the variable within circuit planning?
☐ Understand the role of the circuit training instructor?
☐ Understand the use of audio equipment (music/microphone) using music in group exercise?

Are you…

☐ able to plan and design a circuit training session?
☐ able to prepare participants for a circuit training session?
☐ able to instruct a circuit training session?

Have you…
☐ Completed the circuits theory assessment?
☐ Completed the Unit 2 Planning & Design Worksheet?
☐ Prepared for your practical training day by…
Printing out your 8 circuit cards and circuit layout for the practical assessment?
Practicing the demo technique, and adaptations/alternatives for your 8 stations?
Learning the key teaching points associated with each station

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