



DIMM+ANDES
DIPLOMA IN MOUNTAIN MEDICINE OF THE ANDES

Physical Training

Training Blocks

In order to start training properly, first figure out how many weeks/months you have left to train and break those weeks/months into appropriate training blocks. If possible, plan on at least 3 months of solid training (provided you have a good base level of fitness).

In the first block (roughly 3-4 weeks depending on how much total time you have before your trip) you will be establishing a foundation or baseline on which future training will be built.

The focus in block 2 (roughly 3-4 weeks) will be to increase aerobic endurance and build suitable strength to prepare for the heavier loads to come.

In block 3 (roughly 3-4 weeks) shift your focus to increasing strength endurance and building mental stamina.

Your final training block will take place ~7 days before your trip begins, allowing you to taper and peak as you start the course.

Such a periodized approach will ensure you are not building too quickly, thereby helping to avoid injury, but will also ensure that you have each building block in place before you attack the next phase of your training. If you don't have 3 months prior to your trip to train, calculate the time remaining before your trip and determine which blocks you can trim down.

For example, if you already have a good fitness baseline, you might consider beginning with block 1. If you do not have a good fitness foundation, concentrate on building a solid baseline and consider trimming phases two and/or three.



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Cardiovascular conditioning

Suitable activities include running, walking on an inclined treadmill, doing stair-stepping or stepmill training, trail running, working out on an elliptical machine, walking up and down hills, or participating in step aerobics classes. While biking, rowing, and swimming are cardiovascular options for the off-season or earliest stages of your training, be sure that as you get closer to your expedition you include predominantly spinal-loading cardiovascular exercises such as any of the activities mentioned above.

In the early phases of training, work on building a foundation for longer bouts of exercise. Add no more than 5kg per week to your long-distance training until you are comfortable doing 3-5 weekly aerobic sessions of sustained effort for at least an hour.

Be sure to include a 5-10 minute warm-up before working at your target heart rate for the day and cool down with 5-10 minutes of appropriate active-stretching of the muscles you use most in your activity, including upper and lower back, calves, hamstrings, gluteus, hips, and quadriceps.

Training focus will vary from month to month so duration, intensity, type of exercise, and frequency will also vary.

Strength conditioning

Training with free weights, a backpack, or gym machines will help you build overall strength, particularly in the core (lower back and abdominal wall), upper back, arms, shoulders, and legs.

Developing strength in your upper back and shoulders will help you with such tasks as carrying a pack. The calves, hips, quads, hamstrings, and glutes are all involved in ascending and descending glacier and ice routes, and strength endurance is required in all areas of the legs and hips.



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Repetitions, sets, and weights will vary according to what phase of training you are in. Training primarily with free weights will give you the functional, mountaineering-specific strength that will help you most in the mountain.

Mountaineering conditioning

Hike steep outdoor trails, gradually increasing your pack weight with each outing until you are at your target climb pack weight.

A reasonable goal would be to ascend roughly 1,500 vertical feet in an hour with a 15-18 kg pack.

Start Light and for each hike try adding no more than 10 pounds per week (about 3-5 pounds) until you are comfortable with the goal pack.

Flatland Training

If you do not have ready access to mountains or cannot get to sustained hikes of more than 1000' elevation change, you will need to include incline machine training (such as on a high ramp treadmill, elliptical trainer, step mill, or stair master); beach or gravel bed walking (such as you might find near empty train yards or river beds) for varied terrain to challenge your ankles; repeats on hills that supply 50-75 feet or more of sustained uphill (great for interval training); or stadium stairs may also be good options.

Instead of doing any of these for hours at a time (which invites psychological boredom and overuse issues) combine them creatively on your long endurance days looking for any terrain changes you can find and linking them together.

Record your training

An effective way to have a real sense of how many hours you are training is to have a training log. You can create your own or you can download and print a [training recorder](#).

Further Reading and Information

Training for the New Alpinism: A Manual for the Climber as Athlete - Steve House