Underground Stair Training for Freak Conditioning and Power Development!

Find yourself a nice flight of stairs and you’ve got yourself a brutal workout staring you straight in the eyes. Take the challenge to work on conditioning, power and muscular endurance for 10 - 15 minutes and the results will prove themselves worthy!

Stairs can be used for much more than sprinting. You can also use stairs for upper body training as you’re about to see. Take a look at some of my favorite stair movements and then test yourself with a stair workout! You can always intensify the workout by adding a 20 – 40 lb. weighted vest!

You’ll find the movements are explained and pictured below. I have taken these workouts to various locations since my high school wrestling days all the way to present.

I used to run stairs at the local park, a nearby high school and yes, at Rutgers University. Back then it was the OLD Football stadium, and I would climb the fence around midnight with a friend and run laps around the stadium mixed with stair sprints.

It was a crazy feeling with the lights on and being just my buddy and I training when we knew everyone else was probably sleeping!

If you’re ready to learn some advanced stair training movements, let’s go!

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Leaping / Bounding and Band Pummeling – Bounding up stairs means you are skipping several stairs as you explosively leap from one stair to another. This requires extreme power throughout the entire set of stairs. At the top of the stairs you will have a pair of bands hooked to the hand rails and crank out 20 – 30 seconds of hand fighting, pummeling and snap downs. You can also leave a sandbag, kettlebell, dumbbell or just perform a bodyweight movement at the top of the stairs. This is a great way to mix training modalities together which has a great carry over to your conditioning on the mat or in the ring / cage.
Above, sprinting up stairs, leaping over 2 – 3 stairs at a time. Excellent for power!

Bands are waiting at the top of the stairs as you work rows, snaps, hand fighting or any other push / pull movement you want to incorporate.
**Bear Crawls Down and Reverse** – Who ever would have thought of going reverse up the stairs on bear crawls? My buddies from The Diesel Crew showed me this and I have been sold ever since! Dan Gable had his wrestlers do these with partners on their back while going up the stairs but it is when going down the stairs which really hammers your upper body. You can add a weighted backpack or weighted vest for an extra challenge. Dan Gable was probably one of the few who trained his athletes the way Shaolin Warriors trained! This movement will improve hip mobility which is great for BJJ players and improving ground game. In addition, your upper body will get a serious workout from pushing away on the stairs!

Above, bear crawls down the stairs, excellent for upper body strength.
Above, bear crawling BACKWARDS is very intense and especially rough on the upper body.

**Plyo Jumps** – Very simple to execute yet very effective. Simply perform squat jumps all the way up the stairs, jumping as many stairs as possible on each rep. At the top you can perform another drill or movement with a training tool or you may have a partner awaiting you at the top for pummeling, or a partner strength lift. The choice is yours! Through experience I have found this added movement at the top of stairs is great for improving overall work capacity.
Above, catching air while jumping up several stairs at a time.

Here is your **stair workout** to be performed for two rounds of 5 minutes non stop. Rest 1 – 2 minutes after your first round.

**Round 1:** Perform all movements in a circuit as many times as possible within 5 minutes

1A) Bounding up stairs
1B) Band or partner pummeling x 30 seconds
1C) Bear crawl down stairs
1D) Reverse bear crawl up the stairs
1E) Burpees x 30 seconds (squat – sprawl – push up – squat jump)

**Round 2:** Perform all movements in a circuit as many times as possible within 5 minutes

1A) Plyo Jumps up Stairs
1B) Band Rows x 20 reps
1C) Alternate Band Punches x 20 reps
1D) Bear Crawl down stairs

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1E) Bounding Up Stairs
1F) Partner or Band Pummeling x 30 seconds

One note I would like to add is that the partner pummeling drill can also be a sumo drill where you try to push your partner out of a boundary. The hand fighting / pummeling / sumo drills should be VERY intense and aggressive, do not slack here!

All athletes can benefit from sumo drills. It teaches athletes to use their entire body. I’ve seen athletes trying to push tires over with upper body alone, or sumo drills without using legs. This is because isolation training has caused them to learn motor patterns that are isolative in nature. NOT GOOD!

Yes, this combat stair workout will require a bucket but screw it, train the mind AND train the body, go where you’ve never gone before. You’re a Gladiator and you’re expected to go further than the normal human being, you expect it of yourself and so do your fellow Gladiators. Keep the spirit alive. Train hard or don’t train at all!

Zach Even – Esh is a Performance Coach for Combat Athletes located in NJ. For the most hardcore and innovative training information go to http://UndergroundStrengthCoach.com

Want to use the bands shown in this article? Click HERE to get your own pair!