

Erging for Newbs

An 8 week introduction

2 short workouts a week leading up to a baseline 2000m in the final week.

Designed for someone who has never used a rowing erg before.

Designed to be used as an adjunct to resistance training (see Notes at the end).

Unless noted, set the flywheel damper to between 3-6. If you will be using the Erg Data app, try to find the setting that gets you a drag factor between 110-120.

Stroke Rates will be provided.

Remember to focus on technique each and every stroke.

Technical Primer:

- 1) Starting from the Catch, Drive with your legs,
- 2) then open your hips,
- 3) then snap your hands to your sternum.
- 4) Release your hands,
- 5) Close your hips,
- 6) And bend your knees until you get back to the Catch position

The Catch Position:

1. Heels down, feet flush against the foot stretcher
2. Knees bent
3. Back tall
4. Chest and hands forward

Keep a loose overhand grip on the handle, thumb around, at the ends of the handle.

Breathe when you need to! If you're looking for an easy to remember cadence is to breath out at the Catch and at before you release your hands.

Let's get to the workouts!

Week 1

Day 1

2-4 rounds of 5 minute easy pieces, with 2-5 minutes recovery between rounds.

Between rounds, get up off the machine and walk around. This should not be very challenging. Stroke rate should be whatever feels rhythmic, somewhere between 16 and 24. Don't worry about any kind of precision.

PM settings: Just Row.

Day 2

3-5 minute easy warm-up PM settings: Just Row

1-2 pieces of: 4 minutes @ 16, 3 minutes @18, 2 minutes @ 20, 1 minute @ 22. (if you do a second piece, rest 3 minutes between pieces). This is 10 minutes continuous, but the time is broken up by rate.

PM settings: Select Workout > Single Time > 10 minutes (if doing two, rest, and then Select Workout > ReRow)

3-5 minutes easy cool down.

From now on, all workouts will start with and end with the warm-up and cool-down.

Week 2

Day 1

This builds on last weeks' first workout.

4 pieces of 5 minutes, 2 minutes rest between pieces. Each five minute piece is broken up as:

2 minutes @ 20, 2 minutes @ 22, 1 minute @ 24. In the rest period, just keep paddling, without applying much pressure to the stroke.

PM settings: Select Workout > Intervals > Intervals: Time > 5:00 work + 2:00 rest.

Day 2

1-2 pieces of 10 minutes continuous, rate between 20-24. Easy paddle for 3 minutes in between pieces if doing both pieces.

PM settings: Select Workout > Single Time > 10 minutes (if doing two, rest, and then Select Workout > ReRow)

Week 3

Day 1 :

10x 1 minute on + 1 minute off. First 4 rounds @ 20. Next 4 rounds @ 22. Last two rounds @ 24.

PM settings: Select Workout > Intervals > Intervals:Time

Day 2

20 minutes continuous. 5 minutes @ 16, 5 minutes @ 18, 5 minutes @ 20, 5 minutes @ 22

PM settings: Select Workout > Single Time

Week 4

Day 1

10x 1 minute on + 1 minute off. First 4 rounds @ 20. Next 4 rounds @ 22. Last two rounds @ 24.

PM settings: Select Workout > Intervals > Intervals:Time

Day 2

500m test. Whatever your average split was on this week's day 1 for the last 2 rounds - that's your target for the entire 500m piece. You want to rate between 26 and 32 and you do not want to go out too hard in the first 100m. I repeat, do not Fly and Die!

PM settings: Select Workout > Single Distance > 500m

Week 5

Day 1

Inverted Pyramid

4 minutes @ 22 + 4 minutes off + 3 minutes @ 24 + 3 minutes off + 2 minutes @ 26 + 2 minutes off + 1 minute @ 28 + 1 minute off + 2 minutes @ 28 + 2 minutes off + 3 minutes @ 26 + 3 minutes off + 4 minutes @ 24

PM settings: Select Workout > Intervals > Intervals:Variable > through the above.

Day 2

21 minute countdown - 6 minutes, 5 minutes, 4 minutes, 3 minutes, 2 minutes, 1 minute.
Just a neat trick to break up the work. Rate between 18-22.

PM settings: Select Workout > Intervals > Intervals:Variable > through the above. Use 0:00 as the rest periods.

Week 6

Day 1

20 rounds of 30 seconds on; 30 seconds off.

Try to keep the first 5 at an easy split, the next five about 1-2 seconds faster, the third five about 1-2 seconds faster, and the last five about 1-2 seconds faster than before. Example:

1-5: average split 2:00

6-10: average split 1:58

11-15: average split 1:56

16-20: average split 1:54

PM settings: Select Workout > Intervals > Intervals:Time

Day 2

2 rounds of 12 minute pieces, 3 minutes rest between each. First piece: 6 minutes @ 18, 6 minutes @ 20. Second piece: 4 minutes @ 18, 4 minutes @ 20, 4 minutes @ 22.

PM settings: Select Workout > Intervals > Intervals:Time > 12 minutes work, 3 minutes rest.

Week 7

Day 1

5 rounds of 1000m. First 2 pieces @ 20, Third and fourth @ 22, last @ 24.

PM settings: Select Workout > Intervals > Intervals:Distance

Day 2

25 minute continuous piece; every 5 minutes alternate between 20 and 22.

PM settings: Select Workout > Single Time

Week 8

Day 1

2000m Benchmark. I want you to focus on rating 26, nice, easy and steady for the most of this piece. The first 1000 should feel easier than you expect. The third 500 will still be very, very hard. In the last 150-250m or so, you can open up the rate and try to finish as quickly as possible. Aim for a pace that's 10 seconds slower than your 500m pace. E.g. if your 500m was 1:50, you'd aim for a 2:00 pace here.

PM Settings: Select Workout > Single Distance

Day 2

30 minute continuous piece - broken up like this: 5 minutes at 20, 3 minutes at 22, 2 minutes at 24.

PM settings: Select Workout > Single Time

NOTES:

Do not start this or any exercise program if you have not obtained clearance from a medical professional. This is meant to be done alongside resistance training and other physical activity as part of a whole exercise regimen. The rowing above represents between 50-100% of the vigorous aerobic exercise recommendation from The 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans from The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. The same recommendations also include resistance training at least twice a week.

2018 Physical Activity Guidelines:

Adults should do at least 150 minutes to 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes to 150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. They should also do muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week.

The only important factors in resistance training are that you become consistent, that the exercises you select train all of the major muscle groups of the body, and that there is progressive overload over time.

Your body doesn't really know the difference between a barbell, a kettlebell, a machine, a resistance band, or anything else. However, you will likely find that certain movements lend themselves to one implement or another. In other words, the more important thing than what you exercise you select is how you will progress it over time, in order to present the needed challenge your body requires.

You will want to expose your body to a variety of movement patterns and rep ranges; it can be a lot to try to figure out. Below is a table of exercises that will work all the major muscle groups. This is not an exhaustive list, merely one to get you acquainted with the major exercises.

There are no magic exercises - if barbell back squats scare you, start with leg presses instead. If barbell deadlifts frighten you, you might try kettlebell deadlifts or romanian deadlifts or landmine deadlifts or back extensions instead. The point is that the exercise you will do consistently is more important than the exercise you won't.

If you already resistance training (as in, at a competent Crossfit affiliate), the rowing program should complement that.

Movement pattern	Barbell	Machine	Dumbbell/ Kettlebell	Other
Squat	High Bar Squat, Low Bar Squat, Front Squat, Safety Squat Bar	Leg Press, Belt Squat	Goblet Squat, "Belt" Squat,	BW Squat, Squat to Box, Jump Squat, Various med ball throws
Hip Hinge	Deadlift, Romanian Deadlift, Stiff Leg Deadlift, Trap Bar Deadlift, Clean, Snatch, Landmine Deadlift	Back Extension machine,	One arm Clean, One Arm Snatch, Swings, Single leg Deadlift, Romanian Deadlift, Single or Double KB Deadlift	Back Extension (bench, 45 degree bench), Superman, Superman with medicine ball, All glute bridge and hip thrust variations
Push	Bench Press, Incline Press Press	Chest Press, Shoulder Press	DB Presses (any angle, standing or seated), KB one-arm press	Push-up (hands or feet elevated for leverage, adding bands or chains for resistance, TRX), Various med ball throws
Pull	Barbell Row, Landmine Row	Seated Row, Lat Pulldown	One Arm Dumbbell/KB Row,	Horizontal Row, Chin-ups, Pull-ups
Lunge	Split Squat (front or rear foot elevated, Straight or Safety Squat Bar)	Leg extension, Leg curl, Single Leg Presses	Split Squats, Lunges (Walking, Fwd, Reverse, Laterally)	Split squat, lunges, duck walks, low crawls
Twist	Bar rollouts	Crunch machine	Half Get-ups	Hollows, Arches, Planks, Crunches, Leg Raises

This is a sample weekly schedule I've found to be very manageable, but you can, of course, set things up any way that fits your schedule. I prefer family time on the weekends, so I find this works for me.

Sample weekly schedule:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat & Sun
Row 1	Lift 1	Active rest	Row 2	Lift 2	Rest

What do I do after Week 8?

Great question!

Anything you want to do. You're an adult.

But seriously, the world is your oyster. Hopefully going on this journey has given you the tools you need to start or continue the long term process of training. Simple consistency in exercise and training is akin to deposits in your 401k. It isn't sexy, but it absolutely is worthwhile and will help make your later years a higher quality than otherwise.

If you continue with rowing, there are literally dozens of challenges and a fabulous community on the Concept 2 site. If you decide to get more into resistance training, Barbell Medicine is my recommendation for you.

Whatever you want to do fitness wise, there's a community out there waiting for you to come along to. That's one of the better things about the internet.

Whatever you choose, I just hope you continue to train, and I hope that you continue to row because it's a great choice that I find enjoyable and like to talk about it with people. I think the sample weekly schedule above is a good long term solution too. I tend to make my first rowing session of the week a shorter, faster, interval session and the second session of the week a long, slower, steady effort. I also generally find that twice a week is the minimum I need to continue improving on the erg, and generally more time on the erg = more improvement. Since I'm not a competitive rower, and neither are you, there is the consideration about good use of time, however, and that's up to you to figure out.