

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

A Better Warm-up

Greg Glassman

Introduction

In commercial gyms everywhere, warming up constitutes little more than spending fifteen or twenty minutes on a bike, treadmill, or stair climber. While better than nothing, this approach to warming up is largely a waste of time in that it will not improve flexibility, does not involve the whole body or major functional movements, misses an ideal opportunity for reinforcing and practicing some critical exercises, and poorly prepares an athlete for rigorous athletic training.

We need a warm-up that will increase body temperature and heart rate, provide some stretching, stimulate the entire body and major biomechanical functions, provide practice for basic movements, and finally, prepare for rigorous athletic training.

We offer here a favorite CrossFit warm-up and compare the advantages that it has over riding a stationary bike for fifteen minutes. The CrossFit warm-up satisfies our needs whereas the traditional warm-up only leaves us with an elevated body temperature and heart rate.

The essential features of our warm-up are that they include a stretch and major hip/leg extension, trunk/hip extension and flexion, and pushing and pulling movements. The combinations are limitless and might include more challenging movements like good mornings, hollow rocks, rope climb, or handstand push-ups in place of back extensions, sit-ups, pull-ups, and dips. The movements used will largely depend on your athletic development, but over time the more challenging movements can be included without being a whole workout.

CrossFit Warm-up	Traditional Warm-up
Samson Stretch Overhead Squat Sit-up Back Extension Pull-up Dip	20 minute bike



The Samson Stretch

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A Better Warm-up (continued...)

Benefits	CrossFit Warm-up	Traditional Warm-up
Elevates body temperature	+	+
Elevates cardiorespiratory rate	+	+
Incorporates stretching	+	-
Develops critical functions/movements	+	-
Works whole body	+	-
Prepares for rigorous athletic movements	+	-

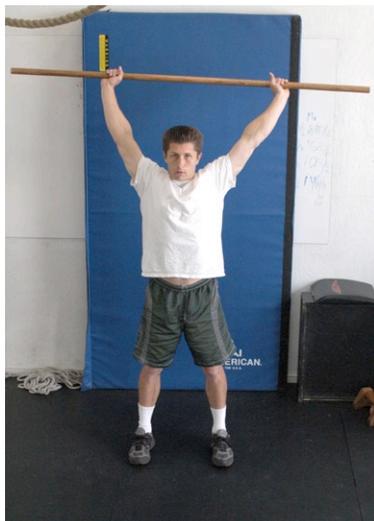
A warm-up like the one we are describing can quite easily become more than a warm-up. In fact, it can serve as a workout for any athlete if so constructed. The idea is to compose the essential features into a fifteen-minute circuit that challenges but does not unduly tax. Over time the regimen can be toughened to the point where three rounds of squats, sit-ups, back extensions, pull-ups and dips, even at 15 reps requires similar exertion to riding the stationary bike casually for fifteen minutes and produces a similar heart rate.

If initially you need to use the Gravitron or some similar device to assist the pull-ups and dips, fine. Over time you'll give yourself less and less assistance until you can do the pull-ups and dips without assistance and still find the work load consistent with a warm-up. It may be that you want or need to start with one pull-up and one dip per round and add a rep every other week in order

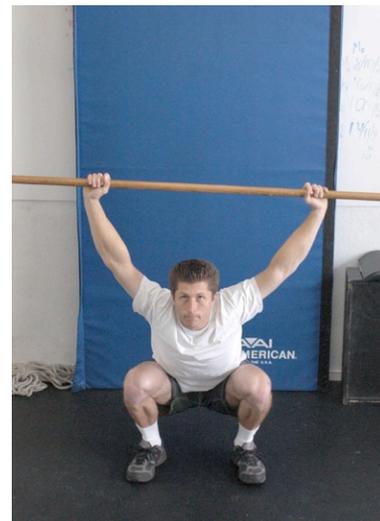
to get used to the load. Incrementalism, patience, and practice will make the basic calisthenic movements as easy as riding a bike and provide wildly greater benefit.

One consequence of a warm-up like this is that bigger numbers of pull-ups, push-ups, sit-ups, and other calisthenic movements will ensue. Before anyone gets 25 pull-ups, three sets of 10 will have to be a breeze. Your max set of pull-ups, sit-ups, push-ups, dips, rope climb (fastest climb/most consecutive trips), and handstand push-ups will be a multiple of the number that doesn't tax you beyond a warm-up. Some coaches have called this "synaptic facilitation", Pavel called it "greasing the groove"; we call it "practice". (It is our contention that all exercises have a stronger neurological component than is commonly recognized.)

In any case, success with high-rep calisthenic movements like the pull-up, squat, dip, and sit-up will make you



Overhead Squat Stretch



A Better Warm-up (continued...)

stronger, improve your stamina, and won't come to be without regular practice. Not all of that practice need be max rep but it will need to be regular and the warm-up is the perfect place for that practice.

The "Samson" stretch:

1. Lace fingers and turn palms outward locking arms
2. Push arms and hands out to horizontal
3. Push hands forward and head back getting nose as far away from hands as possible
4. Keep gaze straight ahead
5. Push arms to overhead
6. Push hands hard towards ceiling
7. Keep arms perpendicular to floor
8. Keep palms turned to ceiling
9. Close space between head and arms by raising shoulders
10. Lunge as far forward as possible with one leg
11. Let trailing leg's knee settle to ground
12. Push hips forward feeling stretch in front leg and back
13. Maintain push to ceiling, perpendicular arms, closed arm-head gap, gaze forward
14. Hold for 30 seconds
15. Repeat with other leg



Greg Glassman is the founder (with Lauren Glassman) of [CrossFit, Inc.](#) and the publisher of the *CrossFit Journal*.