

YOUR workout routine may be highly effective, but it's not going to stay that way for long. Unfortunately, with any exercise routine, you stand to benefit only in the initial stages, after which you are likely to pound your fists

in frustration. First, the body gets used to the regime and then immune to the additional stresses and strains of your workout. And unless you overload, progress and vary your routine, you gain nothing; you just plateau.

Cross train

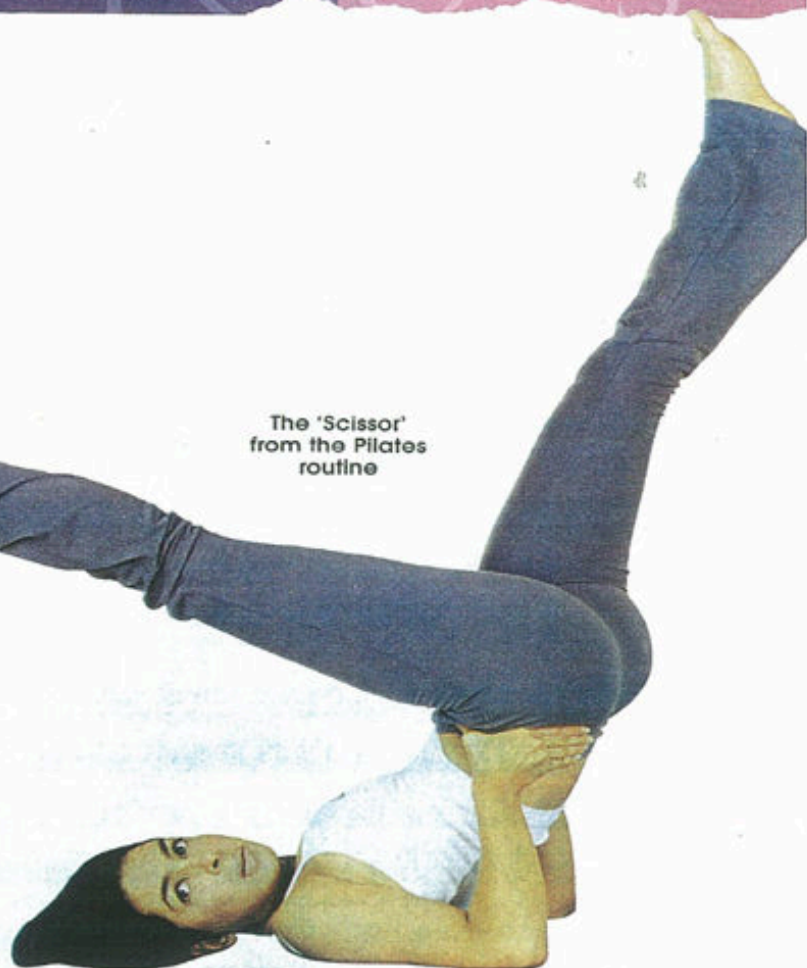
In order to enjoy a regular rush of adrenaline, it is important to continuously challenge the body by engaging in a wide variety of activities. This is known as cross training, the key to long-term success. Cross training includes just about everything — walking, swimming, aerobics, rope jumping or skipping, weight or resistance training, skiing, mountaineering, racket games, yoga, roller blading, skating, jogging, cycling, and so on. Both aerobic and anaerobic activities should be included. If you want to take up a class at a fitness centre, cross training may also include circuit training, step workouts, boxercise, Swiss Ball training, hi-low fusions, slide training, calisthenics, callanetics, new body format, pilates, body sculpting, spinning or indoor cycling, trampoline workouts, weight training, yoga and more.

The need of the hour is to address all the major aspects of physical fitness and look to incorporating them in your exercise programme. Work at your body composition (lean body mass versus body fat), flexibility, strength and endurance (both cardiovascular and muscular) levels.

Get circuiting

Circuit training is all of the above. It includes the use of various circuit stations placed around a room. Mentioned below are just some of the circuit equipment you might see

The 'Scissor' from the Pilates routine



TRACK RECORD!

Good fitness training is all about alternating exercise routines, says Nawaz Modi Singhania

in an exercise class:

Boxing pads and gloves, steps, resistance bands, dyna bands and X-er tubes, Swiss balls (marketed under names such as fit balls, flexaballs, resist-a-balls), body bars, punching bags and speed balls, wrist grips, slides, trampolines and skipping rope, hip 'n' thigh toners, etc.

You short circuit your way from one station

to the next in an orderly manner, stopping at each for about one to three minutes. This is best done with a partner — for instance, in the boxing circuit one person is the boxer and the other the pad person who calls the shots. At times, ball training, too, requires a partner. Like with everything else, here, too, you have to exercise your individuality. Which implies that the intensity of your workout be determined by your age and your level of fitness. Besides, some necessary adjustments need to be made for those with certain health problems or physical ailments.

Circuit, at home

You can circuit train at home, too!

Here's how:

- Running or briskly walking up and down the stairs of your building (take up to a floor or two at a time) and/or wall-to-wall touches make a great cardio workout.

- Calf raises are possible — you just need a low bathroom stool. Place the front half of your feet on the stool, keeping the back half on the ground. With your legs straight and an erect upper body, rise up on the ball of your feet or the toes. And then lower back down.

- Push-ups are great for strengthening the torso and to build up endurance levels.

- Throw in some free squats and lunges for the lower body.

- It's a great idea to keep a pair (or two) of light dumbbells (around one to three pounds) handy.

That way you can include a lot more variety in your exercise regime, like bicep curls, tricep extensions and

kick-backs, lateral raises, upright rows, overhead lifts, the dead lift, squats, lunges, calf raises and other such.

- Play musical chair — sit on it and lift and lower one leg continuously, without allowing the rest of the body to rock. Lift, keeping your legs straight, to feel the strain on the front of the thigh.

Sit down on the floor, behind the chair, with your legs completely straight. Put your legs in-between the chair's legs and from this position, push your legs outward against the legs of the chair to target the lower limb muscles, particularly the outer thighs.

In the same position, but with your feet on the outside of the chair's legs, push inward to work the lower limb muscles, but on the inner thighs.

- Play ball — get either a cricket ball, a basketball or a football — and bounce it off a wall and play catch to shape the muscles of your upper body.

These are just some basic ideas, with nothing structured or regimented about them.

Feel free to chart out a routine that suits you.

Safety first

- Never skip your warm up and cool down segments. They play a vital role in injury

prevention. They help the body to adjust to the new demands being made on it.

- When warming up, aim at stretching all the large muscle



groups of the body.

- Cool down to gradually lower your heart rate to near pre-exercise levels by decreasing range-of-motion exercises.

- Watch your technique. Make sure you maintain good alignment and body form throughout to avoid injury and to get the maximum mileage out of your workout.

- Start with easier options and gradually move onto the tougher ones as you get fitter and stronger.

- Your breathing pattern is important. A general thumb rule to follow is to breathe out during the most difficult part of an exercise and breathe in during the easier phase. Never hold your breath.

Still reading this? Looks like you're well on your way to an awe-inspiring body!

Ball training can give you a great upper body and cardio workout while improving hand-eye coordination

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