

Conditioning or Weight Training: Which Comes First?

Conditioning before resistance training will warm up your muscles, joints, tendons, and ligaments so that your resistance training is smooth and you are less prone to injury or symptoms of muscle overuse. This is a popular method of cross-training that also minimizes the time you spend exercising during the week.

On the other hand, weight training before conditioning also offers a few more benefits. Because it is an anaerobic workout, lifting weights depends mainly on carbohydrates to fuel the muscles. And since carbohydrates are in limited supply in the body, you want to make sure you have enough to make it through the entire workout. Without carbs, your muscles won't want to work, especially during anaerobic exercise. Running and other aerobic activities depend primarily on fat for fuel, but they also burn some carbs, too. Since fat fuel is always in great supply, you rarely have to worry about running out of it.

By conditioning after you lift weights, you will be more apt to burn fat instead of carbs. With an already lower level of glycogen (stored carbohydrates) after weight training, your ability to stay above your target heart rate is lessened, and by default you are more likely to maintain your target heart rate or pace by utilizing your fat stores to maintain aerobic metabolism. Push too hard on the treadmill with a dwindling carb supply and you won't be able to run for very long.

Take it easy, breath steadily, and your fat stores will help you complete your cross-training session. Aerobic exercise after anaerobic will also reduce certain metabolites and minimize soreness. The low intensity exercise and consistent breathing will ensure the proper removal of carbon dioxide and lactic acid buildup from resistance training.

Whichever order you choose though, it is always important to warm up before lifting weights to prevent injury and maximize the benefits of your workout.