



SWS Mountain Guides

P.O. Box 988

Mt. Shasta, Ca. 96067

mail@swsmtns.com

www.swsmountainguides.com

Phone: 888.797.6867 / Fax: 877.797.6867

Physical Conditioning

The type of course and seminar you are signing up for will determine the level of conditioning needed. Give us a call if you have questions. You should be in good to excellent physical condition, as all our seminars occur at altitude and in the mountain environment. It is very important to train or do some type of physical conditioning prior to your trip. For advanced level courses or with altitudes above 14,000 ft., a conditioning and training program is required. The idea behind any conditioning program is to do some aerobic activity at least 3-5 times a week. Sitting at a desk or behind the steering wheel obviously does not add to your physical health or overall conditioning. We have found that some of our best-conditioned clients do a lot of walking. Walk whenever possible. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Ride a bike or walk to work or to the store. Park your car at the farthest point in the parking lot at the office or the store and walk! The more walking that you do, the better trained you will be.

Warning: Before embarking on any exercise or conditioning program, please consult your physician.

Aerobic: It is known that walking 30 minutes each day is a good way to condition for all ages. It is easy, accessible and relaxing. Walking, speed walking or jogging with a pack of 20-25 lbs. is an even better way to condition. To approximate carrying a pack, it is a good idea to work with lightweight (20-25 lbs) in your pack at least once a week while training. According to researchers, running steadily for 20-30 minutes each day, keeping the heart rate up, is far more beneficial than running for speed. The same holds true for all aerobic activity – be it swimming, jogging or bicycling. The idea is to train your heart and lungs to increase your ability to efficiently use oxygen. You should train at least 3 times a week for moderate courses and 4 to 5 times a week for strenuous courses, with at least 30 minutes of exercise each session. It is good to include some hill work, either walking, running, or bicycling. Also good is soft sand walking or running with a pack. Popular aerobics classes are also excellent conditioners. Use of a Versa-climber or Stairmaster is also appropriate.

Flexibility: This is an important factor in any outdoor activity. Stretching exercises are very important and should be added to any conditioning program. A few minutes each day of bending and gently stretching will add to your overall conditioning. Training Levels

Level I Conditioning: Backpacking/Survival courses; Plan to exercise at least 3 times a week for at least 30-40 minutes each session. Plus, plan to hike or walk with your pack a couple of weekends before the trip. Include walking on hilly terrain once a week.

Level II Conditioning: Basic Winter Mountaineering, Shasta Climbs/ Sierra Nevada Mountaineering, Tech Ice & Rock; Plan to train at least 3-4 times a week for at least 30-50 minutes each session in one of the following categories or a mixture of each: running, bicycling, swimming, stair or elliptical machines. It is also a good idea to include in your workout some type of flexibility training 3 times a week (stretching for at least 10 minutes). Plan on including hikes or walks on hilly terrain with your pack weekly for overall conditioning.

Level III Conditioning: Shasta Climbs/ Sierra Nevada Mountaineering, Ski/ Snowboarding; Training at least 4-5 times per week for at least 40-60 minutes each session in one of the following categories or a mixture of each: running, bicycling, swimming, stair or ski machines. Include in your workout some type of flexibility training 3 times a week (stretching for at least 10 minutes). Plan on including at least 2 hour weekend training hikes and climbs with your loaded pack for overall conditioning. Running or walking stairs or stadium bleachers is excellent training for climbing and mountaineering.

Level IV Conditioning: Expedition Training; Level IV training required 5 times per week for at least 3 days at 40-60 minutes each session, 2 days at 60 -120 minutes each session, in one of the following categories or mixture of each: running, bicycling, swimming, stair master, ski machines, or other aerobic activities. It is also a good idea to include in your workout some type of flexibility training 3 times a week (stretching for at least 15 minutes). Plan on including 4-hour weekend training hikes and climbs with your loaded pack for over all conditioning (can count as a 60-120 minute session). Other activities which will improve your conditioning for the expedition include; weight training for strength, versa-climber, jogging with a light day-pack, and running stairs or hills.

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