Buddy Boot Camp

Gather a group and make major gains in your fitness levels in just six weeks.

BY SELENE YEAGER PHOTOS CAMERON SADEGHPOUR

Never mind misery—it’s really exercisers who love company. Women are happier and more likely to stick with their fitness program if they’re part of a group, says Monica Neave, certified fitness therapist and editor at FreeWorkoutsGuide.com, who helped create elements of our program. “You tend to push yourself a little harder when you’re working out with friends. Plus the time flies,” she says. Our six-week boot camp program emphasizes maximum toning in minimum time, so pick a handful of friends—all at roughly the same fitness level—and get started.
Step by Step to a Fitter You

1. **SUPER CIRCUIT**
   Warm up with a five-minute walk. Do this circuit on grass or mats—it may be hard on knees and elbows. After each exercise, move immediately to the next to burn more calories. This is a boot camp so it's going to be hard at first. Appoint one person to lead the exercises. Ask another to time them. She’ll do the workouts, too, and yell “Switch!” when time is up. Times are suggestions only. Increase or decrease them freely.

1. **TUMMY TONER**
   Lie face down with your upper body propped on your forearms, elbows beneath shoulders, toes tucked under. Lift your torso off the floor so your body is in a straight line, supported by your forearms and toes. Your back should not arch or droop. Hold this position. **Time:** 20 seconds

2. **SQUATS**
   Stand with arms straight out in front of you, palms down, feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Bend knees and hips and sit back as though into a chair, keeping knees behind toes, until thighs are nearly parallel to floor. Return to start. **Time:** 60 seconds

3. **COBRA**
   Lie face down, feet together, toes pointed, and hands on the floor just in front of shoulders. Lift your chin and gently push into the floor, lifting upper body as far as comfortably possible. Hold this position. **Time:** 60 seconds

4. **MERMAID**
   Sit on your right hip with legs extended to the side, knees slightly bent. Cross your left foot in front of the right. Place your right hand on the floor directly beneath your shoulder. Place your left hand on your left leg. Lift hips off the floor, extending left arm overhead, so your body forms a diagonal line. Without bending the right arm, lower hips and left arm back to start in one smooth motion. Repeat and switch sides. **Time:** 30 seconds
5. TUG-OF-WAR Pair up with someone of equal size. Cross your wrists, grabbing your partner's forearms as she grabs yours. Lean away from each other and slowly start pulling as if you were having a tug-of-war. Keep your arms bent a little to reduce strain on your joints and to work your biceps. *Time: 60 seconds*

6. BIRD DOG Kneel on all fours, keeping your back straight. Simultaneously raise right arm and left leg, extending them so fingers are pointing straight ahead and toes are pointing back. Return to start. Repeat on opposite side. *Time: 60 seconds*

7. DOWNWARD DOG Begin on hands and knees. Place feet hip-width apart with toes tucked under. Place hands shoulder-width apart. Press into palms and straighten legs, lifting tailbone up while pulling navel in, so your body forms an inverted 'V'. Hold. *Time: 60 seconds*

8. REVERSE CURL Lie on your back and pull your knees toward your chest, keeping hips on the floor. Extend your arms down at your sides, palms facing up. Contract your abs to lift hips off the floor and bring your pelvis toward your lower ribcage while pulling knees toward chest. Hold then return to start. Repeat. *Time: 60 seconds*

9. BODY TONER Stand with your arms at your sides. Drop down and place hands on floor on either side of your feet. Hop or step backwards into a push-up position. Bring feet back toward hands and stand back up. Repeat. *Time: 60 seconds*

10. PUSH AND ROTATE Assume the push-up position (either from the toes or knees). Perform a push-up. In the up position, lift your right hand out to the side and rotate your torso to extend right arm toward ceiling. Return to start. Repeat on opposite side. *Time: 60 seconds*

11. BRIDGE Lie on your back, knees bent and feet flat on the floor hip-distance apart, arms at your sides. Contract your glutes and lift hips up high, trying to form a straight line from shoulders to knees. Straighten right leg and extend it outwards, keeping toes pointed. Return to start. Repeat to the opposite side. *Time: 60 seconds*
GREAT PYRAMID INTERVALS
You'll need to rate your exertion levels on a scale of 1 (lounging under a tree) to 10 (gasping for air). At level 5, you should be working fairly hard but still able to carry on a short conversation.

- EASY PACE
  (Exertion level 4-6)
- RECOVERY
  (Exertion level 5-6)
- HIGH INTENSITY
  (Exertion level 8-9)

FAT-BLAST WALKS
The key to greater calorie burn is adding bursts of effort called intervals. "Interval training builds your aerobic engine and busts the boredom in your workouts," says Leigh Crews, founder of Dynalife Fitness Services in Rome, Georgia. Do two interval workouts each week—the one called "Great Pyramids" on Tuesdays and the other one called "Blast Off!" on Thursdays.

GREAT PYRAMIDS
This speed-building, calorie-scorching workout, left, lasts under 30 minutes, but you shouldn't underestimate its effectiveness. It begins with short bursts of speed, then builds until you hit the peak. Because of all the rapid-fire changes in pace, write it down or copy this page for the person who's acting as the timer.

"Pyramids are one of my favorite interval training techniques," says Crews. "Be sure to cheer each other on. It's tough going up the pyramid, but you can psyche each other up so that the last half of the workout will be the easiest."

BLAST OFF!
These high-octane intervals, below, are great for building speed as well as endurance. Just pick up the pace in small increments until you're moving at full effort. Recover and repeat. Over time these workouts will help you walk faster without feeling like you're putting in more effort, says Crews. "So, you are burning more calories with every workout and it doesn't feel harder. How great is that?"