

Old School Training Equipment

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Part Two

The Sledgehammer

Did you know that log chopping is actually a sport in some countries? It's quite popular in New Zealand – often the competitors are professional lumberjacks – you'd think they would be sick of it huh? The guys look like they are hewn from granite, thanks to years of swinging a heavy axe at high velocity.



If you need to stock up on firewood for winter, then you should definitely volunteer to get on the end of an axe. Kill two birds with one stone – keep warm in winter and burn huge amounts of fat. Here's a tip, picturing the boss's face on every log helps to keep the intensity high.....

But wielding an incredibly sharp object in the pursuit of fitness is perhaps not the smartest method, so a sledgehammer is a great alternative. Knowing you aren't going to lose a foot from a bad rebound will allow you to push the limits of your

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strength and endurance further. But despite being nice and blunt, I don't recommend letting a sledge come in contact with your body either.....

Forget about the abdominal machines in your local gym, or the junk that you see for sale on late night TV. If you want to get abs that look like they were chiselled into your body, think about doing more sledge hammer work. Not only will you strengthen and increase the musculature of your abdominals, you'll rapidly realise just how great the metabolic effect is too. A sledgehammer workout will have you breathless in minutes, and incinerate fat for hours afterwards.

How to make it

Just like the tire from Part One, a sledgehammer comes ready to go, requiring no construction or labour on your part to prepare. It's highly likely you will be able to hunt out a sledgehammer around your own home, or someone else's. If not, it shouldn't cost more than \$10-20 from the local hardware store. If you can, avoid the wooden handles, as wooden handles are more prone to breaking than the synthetic handles (although the chances are very, very slim).

A good all round weight is about 5-8kg (11-19lb). With time, you can work up to heavier sledges, and collect an assortment of different weights for different exercises and repetition schemes. Use a light sledge for high rep sets, and muscular endurance work, and a heavier implement for strength or short duration interval training.

Exercises

Overhead right shoulder



Overhead



Lateral right



Single arm right



With all of the sledgehammer exercises, it is important to put your whole body into the movement. Don't try to do the work with only your arms, as all that will happen is either: early fatigue in the shoulder, not enough of a total body conditioning effect, a joint injury, or even all three!

At the start of the movement, choke one hand high up on the handle, near the head, to allow you to get better leverage on the sledge. Place the sledge into position (whether that is overhead or out to one side) with a coordinated movement of the torso and arms. Weight should be on the back foot if in a staggered stance. As you initiate the strike, slide your high hand down the

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handle for maximum torque and put all your weight behind the strike by dropping into a half squat, or (for a lateral strike) switching weight to the front foot. Don't try and resist the rebound, rather, just go with it, and let the momentum carry into the ready position for the next strike. In the above photos, I'm just using an old car tire to hit, but I recommend using a truck or tractor tire, as it doesn't move when you hit it. The car tire allows a little more range of motion though, so is still a good option.

Sample Workouts

Workout A

10 x right overhead strikes
10 x lunges, holding sledge overhead
10 x left overhead strikes
10 x lunges, with sledge overhead
Repeat circuit 4 times.

Workout B

Tabata Intervals

20 seconds of striking, 10 seconds of rest. Repeat for 8 sets.

Tabatas are the ultimate short and sweet workout. 4 minutes is all it takes to get completely worked over. Do 8 sets of one particular strike, or change strikes every set for a more rounded workout. As your fitness improves, add a second round of 8 sets, resting a couple of minutes between rounds, and then a third.

Try these examples:

Beginner – 8 sets of 20/10, alternating left and right overhead strikes.

Intermediate – 8 sets of lateral strikes, alternating left and right. Rest 2 min and then 8 sets of alternating left and right overhead strikes.

Advanced – 8 sets of vertical overhead, 8 sets of single arm overhead left and right, and 8 sets of lateral strikes left and right, resting 2 min between each round.

If you've never done Tabata intervals before, you might be thinking that it doesn't seem that hard. But trust me, it is, especially if you are putting everything you have into every strike. In fact, if you haven't been exercising regularly, I recommend starting out with 10 sec work and 20 sec rest. Then try 15 sec work, 15 sec rest, before switching to the full 20 sec work and 10 sec rest.

Here's a short video of [Tabata Sledgehammering](#).

Enjoy your new piece of Old School equipment. Now you've got a tire and sledge to play with – I'm sure you can already see the workout possibilities with even just these two toys. The third part in the mini-course will be in your inbox very shortly.