HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR WARMUPS

Spend 10–15 minutes preparing for your next workout with **this simple, evidence-informed warmup.**

How do you typically warm up before workouts? Do you jump straight into your first exercise, spend several minutes stretching, or hop on a treadmill without a plan?

A warmup should have a **purpose**. The goal is to prepare your body for the demands of your workout by gradually increasing activity, rehearsing the movements you will perform, and building toward the loads you plan to lift.

One way to structure your warmup is the **RAMP method: Raise, Activate, Mobilize, and Potentiate**.

Below, we'll break down each phase and show you how to apply it before your next workout.





WHAT IS THE RAMP METHOD?

RAMP is a four-part warmup framework designed to prepare you for physical activity. Each phase has a specific purpose:

- **Raise**: Increase heart rate and body temperature through light activity.
- **Activate**: Prepare the muscles involved in your upcoming workout.
- **Mobilize**: Move through the ranges of motion needed for your exercises.
- **Potentiate**: Gradually increase the intensity and specificity of your movements before your working sets.

Let's look at how to put each phase into practice.

RAISE

Goal: Increase heart rate and body temperature.
Start with **3–5 minutes** of light cardiovascular activity. This helps you transition from rest to exercise and prepares you for the work ahead.

Choose an activity you enjoy and can perform comfortably.

- Brisk treadmill walk
- Rower
- Assault bike

Keep the intensity relatively light. You should feel warmer and notice a slight increase in your breathing without feeling fatigued.
You want to be ready to train, not tired before your workout begins.

ACTIVATE

Goal: Prepare the muscles involved in your workout.

The activation phase uses simple exercises to rehearse movements and prepare the muscles you'll use during your training session.

Keep the movements controlled and use a resistance level that allows you to maintain good technique.

These exercises are options, not mandatory prerequisites for a successful workout. If your training session has different demands or you have specific limitations, you can adjust your exercise selection accordingly.

Lower Body Examples:
- Banded side-steps
- Banded monster walks
- Glute bridges

Upper Body Examples:
- Banded A's, T's, Y's
- Incline Push-ups
- Banded Thoracic Rot.

MOBILIZE

Goal: Prepare the ranges of motion you'll use during your workout.

Mobility work should help you access the positions required for your exercises. For a typical lower-body session, that may include movements involving the hips, knees, ankles, and trunk.

Rather than performing every mobility drill you know, choose a few movements that are relevant to your upcoming workout.

Lower Body Examples:
- Lunge with Rotation
- Hip 90/90s
- Quadruped Hip Circles

Upper Body Examples:
- Bench Thoracic Ext's
- Wall Slides
- ½ Kneeling TTNs

POTENTIATE

Goal: Bridge the gap between your warmup and your first working set.

You've raised your heart rate, prepared your muscles, and rehearsed the movements you'll use. Now it's time to **gradually** increase the demands placed on your body.

Start with your first primary exercise, such as a squat, deadlift, or bench press. Perform progressively heavier warmup sets before beginning your working sets.

Example: Preparing for a squat
If your working weight is 225 pounds, your progression might look like this:
- Empty bar: 10 repetitions
- 95 pounds: 5 repetitions
- 135 pounds: 3–5 repetitions
- 185 pounds: 2–3 repetitions
- Begin working sets at 225 pounds

COMMON MISTAKES

1. **Doing too much before the workout begins.** Your warmup should prepare you for training without creating unnecessary fatigue. You don't need a long list of exercises to have an effective warmup.
2. **Treating mobility as a one-size-fits-all solution.** Not everyone needs the same mobility drills. Choose movements that address your individual needs and the demands of your workout.
3. **Skipping progressive warmup sets.** A few band exercises and bodyweight squats do not replace practicing your primary lift with gradually increasing loads. Specific warmup sets help you prepare for the movement and intensity ahead.
4. **Using the exact same routine for every session.** A squat-focused workout, a deadlift-focused workout, and a plyometric session have different demands. Keep the RAMP framework, but adjust the details to match the session.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A good warmup doesn't need to be complicated. It needs to prepare you for the work you're about to do.
Remember the four phases:

- **Raise** your heart rate and body temperature.
- **Activate** the muscles involved in your session.
- **Mobilize** the ranges of motion you'll need.
- **Potentiate** by progressively preparing for your first working set.

Start with this routine, make adjustments based on your needs, and use your warmup to transition into training with purpose.

Need help building a training program around your goals? At ADAPT Performance and Training, we combine physical therapy expertise with performance-focused training to help you move well, build strength, and keep progressing toward your goals.

SQUAT DAY WARMUP

PHASE	Exercise	Dosage
RAISE	Treadmill, Rower, or Bike	3-5 minutes
ACTIVATE	Banded Side-steps, Monster-Walks	x10 each way
ACTIVATE	Glute Bridges (single or double legged)	x10 reps
MOBILIZE	½ Kneeling Thoracic Rotations	x10 each way
MOBILIZE	Knee-to-wall Ankle Rocks	x8 per side
MOBILIZE	Deep Squats	x10
POTENTIATE	Progressive Barbell Squat Warmup Sets	3-5 as needed

Focus: Prepare the ankles, hips, and trunk for the squat pattern, then progressively expose the body to the loads required for the working sets.

DEADLIFT DAY WARMUP

PHASE	Exercise	Dosage
RAISE	Treadmill, Rower, or Bike	3-5 minutes
ACTIVATE	Birdogs	x10 each side
ACTIVATE	Banded Squats	x10-15 reps
MOBILIZE	½ Kneeling Thoracic Rotations	x10 each way
MOBILIZE	Dowel Hip Hinges	x8 per side
MOBILIZE	Quadruped Rock Backs	x10
POTENTIATE	Progressive Deadlift Squat Warmup Sets	3-5 as needed

Focus: Rehearse the hip hinge, trunk control, and starting position needed for deadlifting. Adjust the mobility work to the specific pull, whether conventional, sumo, or Romanian deadlift.

CHEST OR SHOULDER DAY WARMUP

PHASE	Exercise	Dosage
RAISE	Rower, Assault Bike, or Ski Erg	3-5 minutes
ACTIVATE	Resistance Band Series (ER/IR, As, Ts, Ys)	x10 each
ACTIVATE	Pushups (elevated hands if needed)	x10-15 reps
MOBILIZE	½ Kneeling Thoracic Rotations	x10 each way
MOBILIZE	Bench Thoracic Extensions	x8 per side
MOBILIZE	Wall Slides	x10
POTENTIATE	Progressive Bench or Overhead Press Warmup Sets	3-5 as needed

Focus: Prepare shoulder elevation, scapular movement, and thoracic positioning for pressing. Select the potentiation exercise based on the first primary lift of the session