

# CHEER CONDITIONING PLAN

*brought to you by*



## Dear Cheerleader, coach or parent:

Welcome to the #BodyBeforeSkill club. You're one step closer to understanding how to achieve your full athletic potential by getting the most out of your most important asset: your body.

As our sport grows, the physical demands placed on our bodies also increases. Passes are getting more creative, complex skills are being strung together and the INTENSITY™ of training is only going up. Cheerleading is a sport, and as such you should be training like an athlete in every way.

As a cheerleader, you are putting your body through a lot but with the right training and maintenance, not only you can prevent injury but you can also unlock a performance level you didn't even know you had.

There are 3 factors that can almost eliminate the possibility of injury and as a consequence, boost your athletic success:

### 1. Spending time on proper technique

This can be handled by listening to the corrections your coaches give you, and spending time on the basics. Check out [this article](#) on tumblingcoach.com to learn the importance of these basics. You can also look at the entire collection of INTENSITY™ workouts to develop the right muscle memory to build a strong foundation for your cheer skills.

What is important to understand about the term 'muscle memory' is that it is not a memory stored in the muscles themselves, but they are a *procedural memory* stored in the brain.

Building *procedural memory* happens as we repeat a certain sequence over and over again. Given that the body does not differentiate between a correct and an incorrect action when it's stored in our procedural memory we need to ensure that skills are drilled with good technique. This type of automatic memory sequence is extremely difficult to reverse, so to save your time you need to ensure you have drilled solid technique before doing extended amounts repetitions. Check out the article [10 mistakes All-Star Cheerleaders Make](#).

### 2. Avoiding energy crashes during practice, which avoids dropping stunts or landing a jump or tumble badly

This can be accomplished by optimizing your nutrition based on everything discussed in *The Cheer Diet*. Knowing what to eat, and when to eat it can have a big impact on how well your training session will go and significantly reduce our risk of injury.

3. **Have the strength, power, endurance and flexibility to handle the demands of a competitive athlete**

This last point is what this conditioning plan, as well as the INTENSITY™ program, is all about. While most gyms have some type of conditioning plan in place, there are obvious benefits of doing a workout that has been *specifically* designed to help to develop and maximise all of the physical requirements for cheer. The aim is to train your body first, so that the learning and development of any skill becomes easier and more successful than ever before.

The exercises may be different to anything you've ever tried or are used to, so it will take some time for your mind and body to adjust. For this program to be successful, keep an open mind, work hard, and we promise you will love the results.

Get ready to maximise your potential, and reach for GOLD.

This conditioning program was created by Coach Sahil M, author of The Cheer Diet and founder of HardCore Training solutions, and Jessica Zoo - author of *Body Before Skill: Sports Performance for Cheerleading*, founder of Cheerobics® and producer of the INTENSITY™ cheer conditioning program.

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## Getting Started

This conditioning plan was designed to combine a sample INTENSITY™ workout (which does not need any equipment) with a training regime by Hardcore Solutions, which takes strength training to a higher level. For this, you will need access access to a free-weights room and additional equipment:

- Pair of dumbbells\*
- Resistance Band(s)
- A chair or training block
- Skipping rope
- Cheer or running shoes
- Bottle of water
- Yoga mat (if you can't do exercises on cheer floor)

*\* Dumbbells that are selectable or having access to multiple pairs would be preferred.*

### How The Workout Is Structured

The combinations target to important elements: INTENSITY™ targets the development of skill through muscle memory by isolating and drilling moves you use in cheerleading every day. It programs your body to develop power, speed, strength, endurance and flexibility as well as playing an important part in developing your joints to become more injury-resistant.

The weight training takes things a step further. Once you have mastered the basics, weight training is essential for athletes to develop the size and strength of lagging body parts, but also helps increase bone density and strength which is a huge factor in preventing injury. Having a well-balanced body is crucial to athletic development: for example if you have over-developed biceps and under-developed triceps, then this imbalance can lead to injuries later on. Worse, is that it can interfere and prevent great technique!

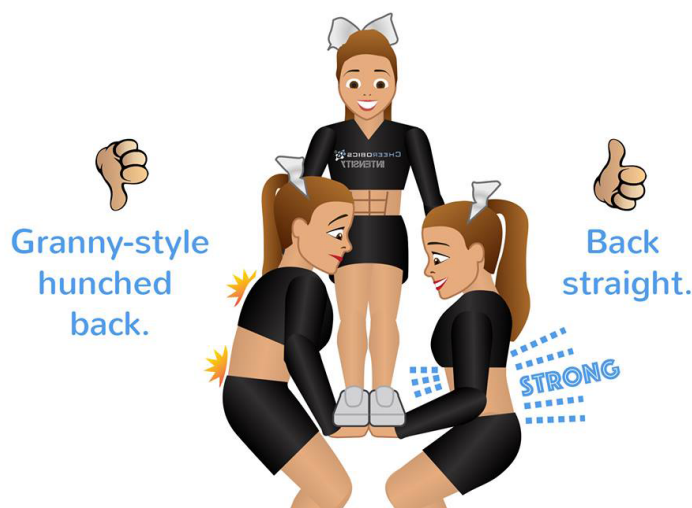
So yes, you will need access to free-weights and there is no exception to this rule. And if you're a parent, do not worry - free weight training doesn't stunt growth and isn't dangerous. In fact, according to real-world data, Golf has been shown to have a greater number of injuries than weightlifting.

## Before You Start Working Out...

For some of these exercise, instead of having the explanation written out in full, we have filmed the athletes in action to demonstrate these for your. Links to individual videos will be given for each workout. Before we begin, let's look at the Universal Exercise Principles. These can be applied to almost *any exercise* you come across (now and in the future) to keep yourself safe, and ensure that your workouts will be as effective as possible.

### Universal Exercise Principles to stick on your refrigerator

- Just because an exercise is working a specific muscle group (quads for example) does **not** mean you should relax and ignore the other parts of the body.. Regardless of the primary muscle that's being worked, keep everything else tight and squeezed, especially your *core*.
- If you're doing an exercise which requires the use of weights (barbell or dumbbells), the amount of weight you use should depend on the quality of your technique. If your technique starts to look sloppy *before* you can hit the recommended rep range, you're lifting a weight that is too heavy. In this case, decrease the weight for now and increase it when you get stronger. Remember you're not in competition with anyone else, just yourself.
- Always stop one repetition before failure (ie you just can't physically do one more rep). If you train to failure, you're training to fail. Contrary to what most coaches think, training to *absolute* exhaustion is completely counter-productive. It eats **MORE** into your needed recovery phase than it does in providing a beneficial stimulus of increasing strength.



- Unless the exercise technique calls for it, always maintain a neutral spine posture (this means you shouldn't be hunched over, nor should you be too arched. Think: no "grannies" or "ducks" in cheerleading). If you keep a neutral spine posture and squeeze it in place, you drop your chances of injuring your back to close to zero. This is especially important during weight training as well as when you're basing. Below is a more practical example: the deadlift. What Sahil is demonstrating here is putting something straight on the athlete's back (here he uses a foam roller but you can use anything straight such as a PVC pipe, broomstick etc.) and waiting until the athlete adapts to the correct position. Then the foam roller is taken away, and the athlete performs the deadlift WITH that neutral spine position. As you can see in the picture below, the athlete's posture is close to being correct but her head



position is incorrect (she needs to drop the chin. **Note:** The lower back *naturally* has a slight curve to it, so don't expect yourself (or anyone else) to get a back that's 100% straight. Another great way to practice the neutral spine posture is to lie down while keeping your feet up on a chair. You know you're doing it right when everything is flat against the floor, but you can just barely slide your hand under your lower back - where the natural arch should be.

- Soreness is **not** an excuse to skip a workout or training session. Studies done on muscles have shown that when someone is sore, it doesn't affect performance as long as that person spends some extra time warming up and fuelling themselves with proper nutrition. If, however you feel that your muscles, joints or overall body stability is compromised, be very careful not to cause yourself injury by not pushing yourself too far.



- Always prioritize doing an exercise with full range of motion over doing more reps with half-baked technique. The perfect example of this is the squat. 95% of athletes only squat half way: you may as well not be doing them. If your calves aren't nearly touching your hamstrings, then you aren't squatting deep enough, and you are also compromising your knee joint. Studies have shown that athletes with the most stable knee joints are ones that can squat the deepest (Olympic lifters specifically). Also, studies have shown that the most amount of strength and muscle growth occurs with FULL range of motion. Doing 15 high quality squats versus 20 half-squats makes a significant difference.
- Always warm up before doing workout. The reality is that most cheerleaders and teams in general don't know how to warm in a way that's actually useful. Light jogging followed by flexibility is NOT a warm up. Firstly, light jogging or star-jumps alone won't get your muscle temperature or oxygen flowing around your body. A warmup needs to get your heart pumping hard enough that it gets oxygen flowing to your body and your joints loose. Warmup INTENSITY™ should be gradual (so you shouldn't be panting heavily) but you it should be hard enough that it's not comfortable to speak normally. Secondly: stretching. A warmup should loosen the joints, but NOT work on flexibility as you are compromising joint stability. Flexibility should be kept for the end of the session. More info about when / how to stretch [HERE](#). A good warmup will help you make the most of your training session and help prevent injury.
- Listen to your body. If you tweak something, or anything feels off, just stop. As an athlete you'll learn the difference between good pain (muscles burning during conditioning) versus bad pain (sharp pain in joints, muscle pulls etc.) The key is to know that good pain is the one you want to push through, and bad pain is the one where you need to stop and recover/ figure out what's wrong. Luckily with conditioning, most of the pain is usually the good kind, but you still need to watch out.
- Don't rush. If you have to complete 20 reps, make each one count. This is similar to performing the exercise with full range of motion, and going full range at maximum speed to leave the gym quicker is a pretty dumb idea. Firstly, you increase your chance of injury. Secondly, you're only getting half the benefits because you're not going to fully engage the muscle groups. Instead, if you take your time and do things right, those "precious" 5 minutes will transform into a lifetime of results!

These principles should be your MANTRA. Read through them again, again and again. Stick them on your refrigerator or even better, hang them behind the door of your toilet. We all need something to read when nature calls and this is a perfect way to remind yourself. Without taking these in, you're wasting your time and effort.

## Fitness Testing

**You cannot improve what you don't measure.** Before you start, and then once a month or every two months, instead of doing a regular warmup you can give yourself an overall checkpoint to test how many of these FULL exercises you can do in one minute. You will need:

- The INTENSITY™ Fitness Tracker (download & print [here](#) or buy a pad of 50 [here](#))
- A pen or pencil
- A stopwatch
- A buddy to count / ensure you're keeping full range and technique

**CHEEROBICS INTENSITY** **ATHLETE FITNESS TRACKER** \_\_\_\_\_

**HOW MANY OF EACH EXERCISE CAN YOU DO IN ONE MINUTE?**  
FORM IS KEY. MAKE SURE EACH EXERCISE IS PERFORMED WITH THE CORRECT TECHNIQUE. 2MIN REST BETWEEN EACH STATION.

<b>DATE</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>PUSHUPS</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>BURPEES</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>SITUPS</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>SPRINTS</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

**CHEEROBICS INTENSITY**

**WWW.CHEEROBICS.NET**

With your buddy, take turns in counting how many of each exercise you can do in one minute. Do this back-to-back, resting as you take turns to count each other. You have TWELVE minutes in total to complete the 10 sets of 1 minute. Keep check on the technique and that you're going with full range of motion each time, or start all over again!



# Cardio Training

Date of workout: \_\_\_\_\_ Heart rate: \_\_\_\_\_

**TUTORIALS:** Catch Squats / Rebound Jumps / Jump Kicks tutorial [HERE](#)

These are just 4 out of the 80 exercises taken from the INTENSITY™ home conditioning program, and when performed together they can give you a great cardio training warmup. Even just doing this twice a week for 10min straight will vastly increase your cardiovascular fitness. Not only this serves to warm up your body before any training session, but in the long-run it will train your heart to work more efficiently and to pump more oxygen around your body. This means more resistance, full-out routines become easier and better resistance to injury.

For this workout you will need music to a good beat: around 142bpm. **Here is an example** of a great song that will get you pumping (there's a ver long intro, so skip ahead towards mid-track)

The secret to this workout is going FULL OUT, hit every count by contracting your muscles and breathe. In a 10minute session you should not stop moving, take a break or have a drink: follow the plan exactly as it's laid out. If you're feeling dizzy and need to stop, walk for 1minute with your hands over your head before sitting down:

- **16 x Clap HV Clap Low V**
- **8 x CATCH SQUATS**
- Repeat 3 more times (4 in total)
- Walk on the spot for 32 counts
- **8 x REBOUND JUMPS**
- **16 x JUMP KICKS** (4 left, 4 right, 4 left, 4 right)
- Repeat 3 more times (4 in total)
- Walk on the spot for 32 counts
- **16 x Clap HV Clap Low V**
- **8 x CATCH SQUATS**
- **8 x REBOUND JUMPS**
- **16 x JUMP KICKS** (4 left, 4 right, 4 left, 4 right)
- Repeat 3 more times (4 in total)
- Walk on the spot for 32 counts and lower your heart rate before having a drink or going to the next workout.

# Weight Training Workouts

## Legend

**DB** = Dumbbells

**BB** = Barbells

**RB** = Resistance bands

**BW** = Bodyweight

Exercises listed in **bold** are **AMAP** (this means as many as possible) per set

## Weight Training Workout 1

Date of workout: \_\_\_\_\_

[www.thecheerdiet.com/links/exercises](http://www.thecheerdiet.com/links/exercises) - search exercises from all the videos

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Weight / Duration
DB Thruster	4	15	
<b>BW Yoga Pushups</b>	4		
BW Split Squats (Jumping)	4	20 <sup>1</sup>	
DB Bentover Row	4	15 <sup>2</sup>	
Back Roll Pushups	3	12	
<b>V-Snaps</b>	3		
Handstand Holds	4	1	60 seconds
Skipping Rope		1 <sup>3</sup>	60 seconds

**Rest:** 45 seconds between sets

Date of workout: \_\_\_\_\_

1. For split squats, that would be 20 **per** leg. Also note that in the video, it starts off demonstrating the basic variation, then shows the jumping (advanced) variation near the end.
2. For the bent-over rows, that's 15 **per** arm.
3. *For the skipping rope, you're basically doing it continuously for 60 seconds, which equals 1 rep. After that, rest 30 seconds and repeat 2 more times for a total skip time of 3 minutes. If you want a greater challenge, try putting on ankle weights.*

## Weight Training Workout 2

Date of workout: \_\_\_\_\_

[www.thecheerdiet.com/links/exercises](http://www.thecheerdiet.com/links/exercises) - search exercises from all the videos

Exercise	Sets		
RB Pull Parts	2	15	
BB Overhead Press	4	15	
DB Plank Row <sup>1</sup>	3	20	
<b>Switch-Kick Pushup</b>	4		
BW Single Leg Jump Ups	4	12 <sup>2</sup>	
Tuck Jumps <sup>3</sup>	3		
<b>DB Leg Raises</b>	3		
Skipping Rope	3	1	60 seconds

**Rest:** 45 seconds between sets

1. *If you have DB's with round heads, make sure to find somewhere to anchor them or you will be very unstable. Ideally, find DB's that are square or have hex heads.*
2. *For the single leg jumps, that's 12 reps **per** leg.*
3. *Jump as high as possible & grab shins. Try in a resi pit if possible.*

## Weight Training Workout 3

Date of workout: \_\_\_\_\_

[www.thecheerdiet.com/links/exercises](http://www.thecheerdiet.com/links/exercises) - search exercises from all the videos. Search for "Leg Murder Workout" because... yes, your legs will be crying but you will be thankful in the long run!

Exercise	Sets	Reps	
<b>BW Deep Squats</b>			
BW Lunges		20 <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Sumo Squat</b>	3		
DB Split Squat		15 <sup>2</sup>	
DB Bentover Rows		15 <sup>3</sup>	
BB Overhead Press	4	15	
<b>Shoulder Pops</b>			
Skip Rope	4	1	45s

**Rest:** 60 seconds between sets **Date:**

1. One set of lunges is finished once you do 20 per leg
2. One set of split squats is finished once you do 15 per leg For bent over rows, that's 15 per arm

## Core & Stability Workout

The headstand is the staple exercise in the INTENSITY™ program. The inverted position aids all aspects of cheer and helps train a strong hollow position without needing to balance on hands. Start with a friend or against the wall, and stay as long as you can, over a 10min workout.



**TUTORIALS:** See the video tutorial [HERE](#) (last exercise).

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Start in a pike position with all your weight in your elbows. Push against elbows, and use core, not momentum, to lift yourself into a ball. Squeeze in and point your toes, find your balance before making yourself as long as possible. Add variations by doing splits and tripods: touch your feet to the floor, and then bring them back up.

## Some Final Notes

Firstly, we suggest you print out multiple copies of this plan so you can keep track of your progress. Numbers don't lie, and you need to visually if you're getting stronger or not.

Remember, **you cannot improve what you don't measure.**

So what exactly should you be tracking (apart from the initial fitness test, of course). For exercises where the reps are pre-determined, you want to track how much weight you (safely) managed to use. Every week, you should be able to add just a little more weight and see if you can do the same number of reps... even if it's for just ONE of the sets.

For exercises that are AMAP (as many as possible) style, you want to make sure that you're increasing the amount of reps you do per set, every week.

Cardio: you want to record your heart rate. [Here is how you can calculate it.](#)

For skipping rope, the idea is to just get faster and faster. Remember, skipping rope **itself is a skill**, so the more you do it the better you'll get. I'm sure you've seen boxers that go crazy doing super fancy footwork while skipping so fast you can barely see the rope. Aim to get on their level (seriously!)

## Recovery

While these workouts are listed as “1,2,3...” they are not meant to be done back to back, even though you can mix the cardio with one of the strength training workouts. They are designed to be done on days you don’t have cheer practice, so below is an example of what your week could look like...

**Mon:** Cheer

**Tue:** INTENSITY™ + Workout 1 + Flexibility

**Wed:** Cheer

**Thurs:** Workout 2 + Flexibility

**Fri:** Flexibility Only

**Sat:** INTENSITY™ + Workout 3 + Flexibility

**Sun:** Cheer

You can also stack these workouts on days you have cheer, **if you have the energy for it**. My recommendation is to separate your workouts and practices by at least 3-4 hours. So if you know you have cheer in the evening, try and get a workout in during the morning time.

It’s impossible for me to know every athlete’s schedule so you’ll have to try and fit the workouts in where you see fit. If I had to give you a golden rule, it’d be to add a day in between the workout days, even if that day is cheer practice. Under no circumstance are you to do these workouts back-to-back.

The workouts given in this plan are only a taster of the multitude of workouts you can get with INTENSITY™ and Hardcore Training Solutions. For conditioning to be effective, it needs to be varied, otherwise your body just becomes good at doing what it’s used to doing, rather than improving the fitness in itself (a phenomenon known as **the SAID principle**)

As for the nutritional aspect, if you’re on phase 3 of *The Cheer Diet* then you can consider these workout as training days. Try and find a cheer practice where you know you won’t be pushed as hard (low RPE) and make that your rest day instead (such as on days you do choreo/dance/basic stunt work without any tumbling). If you need more clarifications, go through *The Cheer Diet* or tweet **@TheCheerDiet**



## Workout Adaptations & Progressions

We won't lie to you, this plan is not easy. Nor is it designed to be. If you're not used to conditioning hard, it will whoop your butt. **But, that's why you need to stick with it!**

The first 2 weeks are hardest, after that you'll start to get into the groove. Cheerobics® and Hardcore Training Solutions designed this plan to keep world-level athletes strong, safe and looking fierce, so if you can get through these workouts and push yourself, you'll instantly be ahead of 99% of cheerleaders out there.

Problem	Solution
Can't get through the recommended reps	Break down the total reps into more sets. For example: if you can't do 3 sets of 20 (60 reps total) try doing 4 sets of 15. <b>Under no circumstances</b> are you to <i>reduce</i> the total amount of work that needs to be done.
During weighted exercises (e.g. overhead press) my first 2 sets are good and my technique is solid. But then I can't lift that weight for the final sets.	Then don't. It's totally OK to vary the weight per set as long as you're working hard. So for example, if you have to do 4 sets, it's cool to do 40lbs for the first two sets, then drop to 30lbs for the last two. Just don't cheat yourself by using <i>really</i> light weights.
Some of the exercises (like the switch kick pushup) are too advanced and I can barely get through a few reps.	No problem, just use an easier variation. If you can't do the switch kick pushup, try the yoga pushup. If that's too hard, switch to a knee pushup. Just don't dumb it down to a point where you're barely working. <b>It should still be a challenge.</b>
I've watched the videos but still not sure if I'm performing the exercises correctly.	Either get someone to film you so you can compare yourself or work out next to a mirror. Some of these exercises are skills in themselves so they will take time to master. Otherwise, as a personal trainers or coach for assistance. Show them the video and say "I want to do it like that or better." Just be careful if they want to modify the workout/exercise/try or even sell you a different coaching plan: this means they're more interested in helping themselves than helping YOU. This plan was designed in a specific order for a reason!
I don't feel like doing exercise X before Y, can I change things around?	No. Well, mostly. The only time this would be allowed is if you have NO CHOICE in the matter - for example if you choose to work out in a busy gym and all the barbells are being used. For your own sake, avoid re-arrangement at all costs.

Having said that, if you're really suffering (or in the rare case, not being challenged enough), we have provided some solutions depending on the issue you're facing. See the problem and solutions table on the next page.

## What's Next?

We truly hope you have enjoyed these workout and the results it brings - it's proven to do so, and exercises have been fully competition tested. We would love to hear about your experience with it, so please post your progress on Instagram by tagging @Cheerobics.Fitness and @TheCheerDiet - use hashtags #TheCheerDiet #BodyBeforeSkill #ThisIsINTENSITY

If you're looking for more workout ideas, you can purchase the full INTENSITY™ workouts [HERE](#) on DVD or online streaming. For coaches, we also offer an INTENSITY™ Coach Certification that will enable you to fully immerse yourselves in the world of sports performance and conditioning for cheerleading. [FIND OUT MORE.](#)

Finally, if you know a friend that could use this conditioning plan, remind them to purchase a copy of The Cheer Diet + Body Before Skill book bundle [HERE](#)

Here's to a stronger, leaner and more fierce you!

**Coach Sahil M.** Author of *The Cheer Diet* and founder of **Hardcore Training Solutions**

**Jessica Zoo** - Author of *Body Before Skill* and creator of **Cheerobics®**

