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Home > Calisthenics > Train like a Spartan with the Spartan Warrior Workout Spartan enthusiast, Joe de Sena, wrote a book called Spartan Fit, and it's all about how you can integrate Spartan fitness into your everyday life. He tells you how to get healthy using Spartan workouts and eating healthy. Joe even got his seven-year-old to run a marathon with designated pizza and bagel stops in 5 hours. He also does 300 burpees per day. We are not sure he is human. Anyway, he preaches about how your fitness is attainable, but it is up to you to leap. Want to be a Spartan warrior? You are the only one who can hold yourself back. Get out there and show them how it's done! Written by the Hybrid Athlete team: real coaches, real training, real results. Built on science and lived experience. The ferocity, fighting prowess, and athleticism of the Spartan warrior is the stuff of legend. So much so, that "Spartan" has become a synonym for words like "brutal" and "challenging." In this post, we're looking at Spartan training. By this, I don't just mean "tough" training – I mean training that is genuinely inspired by what we know of these legendary warriors. SuperFunctional Training is an eBook and training program designed to help you train for real functional performance. Strength, agility, brain power, endurance, mobility, and more. Just like a Sportan! Click to read more! We'll discover why Spartans trained barefoot. What type of resistance training they used (if any). And which traits they valued most. At the bottom of this page, you'll find a full "Spartan training routine" that you can try for yourself. Myth vs Reality But do the real Spartans really live up to the hype? It is true that a single Spartan Warrior at the time was considered to be worth "several men of any other state." And it is "true" that 300 Spartan Warriors managed to face off against thousands of Persians and humiliate those armies with their superior combat skills. (I use inverted commas because the details get a little blurry. Leonidas led 300 Spartans alongside 7,000 Greeks, but after the majority of those armies retreated, only 300 Spartans remained with some Thespians and Thebans.) That said, there are also some common misconceptions and myths surrounding Spartan Training and it likely isn't quite what you imagined. So, the question is: how did they train and what can we learn from Spartan training? What We Know About Spartan Training Unfortunately, we actually know relatively little about the specifics of Spartan training. There are a few things we hold to be true though. It is commonly believed that newborn children considered too weak for combat would be discarded at birth to either die in the wilderness or demonstrate their ability to survive. We also know that training began around the age of seven. At this point, Spartan men would be entered into a kind of Bootcamp called the Agoge. From then on, they were required to live and train among their peers. A culture of competition and teasing was encouraged. At age 12, the boys would graduate and be considered youths. Thus the Spartan training routine intensified. Training in the Agoge Spartan youths were required to train barefoot. This would not only toughen them up but also develop superior athleticism and agility. I've discussed the benefits of minimal footwear on this site many times before; freeing your feet allows you to tap into greater proprioception, to anchor yourself to the ground, and even to increase flexibility by massaging the fascia. See also: How to Run With Perfect Form Like the Tarahumara Tribe – Posture, Breathing, and Footstrike Explained Spartans had only single, thin cloak to wear (called a Phoinikis) regardless of the weather. Again, this was intended to toughen them up psychologically, but it would also help them to adapt to extreme temperatures. Spartans could fight in the bitter cold or sweltering heat. Again, the benefits of cold exposure have been discussed on this site previously. It is said that they made beds by pulling reeds out of revers by hand – no doubt great grip training. Spartans would only be given a small amount of food each day. The aim was to keep them lean and hungry – and sufficiently motivated. Moreover, if they wanted more food they were encouraged to steal. The punishment was brutal if you were caught, but this taught cunning and foraging skills. This was part of the Spartan training! The crime was not the steeling; it was not doing it well enough! The food they did receive was also unappetising and included the likes of "black broth" which was made from pig's blood (though did also contain some actual pork for protein). We can safely assume then that Spartan warriors would have been a particularly ripped and lean bunch. Perhaps the abs in 300 are historically accurate! Lifestyle and Epigenetics At the age of 20, these young students became full-time members of the syssitia and Spartan army. They continued to live in barracks however and were not permitted to marry and become full-time members of Sparta until age 30. We also know that Spartan women were encouraged to exercise in order to encourage the birth of strong children. There's actually some scientific basis for this if we consider epigenetics. See also: How your diet, exercise, and psychology affect your genes Likewise, men were encouraged to choose women that would offer strong genetic stock. A quote from Plutarch's Life of Agesilaos reads: According to Theophrastos, Archidamos was fined by the ephors for marrying a short woman, "For she will bear us," they said, "not kings, but kinglets." This likely contributed to the notion that Spartan's were particularly massive. And this illusion of greater size was also encouraged by growing long hair. Who Were the Spartans Really? All this paints a picture of an elite warrior culture of men, whose training began even prior to their conception. The focus of this Spartan training was to build tough fighters who could thrive under any conditions. This was arguably more important than any specific physical training. Sound familiar? This is very similar to the way that Navy SEALs are trained today! See also: Mental Toughness: Think Like a Navy SEAL / Spartan Warrior! The competitive and mean-spirited atmosphere ensured testosterone was high. The harsh conditions made them physically and mentally bulletproof. It has been said that for these warriors, going into battle was relatively more comfortable than their Spartan training! Sets and Reps – The Minutia of Spartan Training So that's the ethos and the spirit of Spartan training. What about the actual practical application? We do have reports of the physical training that Spartans underwent from sources such as the Greek biographer and writer Plutarch, but these are generally regarded as being unreliable. Plutarch, for instance, was born during the mid-1st century AD, a little late in the day (Sparta ceased to be as we know it by around the mid 4th century BC). Strategy vs Force Successes following the battle at Thermopylae may be explained by the Spartan army's reputation, along with tactical decisions. This was the only Greek army known to be subdivided into platoon-sized units with their own officers and to march in-step to flutes. Spartan generals understood manoeuvres such as wheeling and countermarching, and commands could be passed down through the ranks. And they were decked in matching red and bronze uniforms that made them appear as a singular mass on the battlefield. These seemingly "basic" features set the armies apart moreso than physical prowess. A modern "Spartan training program" that focuses on resistance training, HIIT workouts, and weapons training wouldn't be particularly accurate then! Spartan Workouts vs Athletic Training From age 12 onwards the youths would learn survival skills such as foraging and camping. We might also presume that a Spartan training program would incorporate weapons training and calisthenics. However, there is no concrete evidence to suggest this. Ancient Greeks made a sharp distinction between Athletic training and warrior training. According to the historians over at the AskHistorians subreddit, Ancient Greeks made a sharp distinction between Athletic training and warrior training. An athlete requires a moderate amount of stress exposure to trigger an adaptation, but must then rest and recover. Without this recovery period, they will not experience optimum performance benefits. The Ancient Greeks knew this. The Ancient Greeks knew of the importance of protein for building muscle. Thus, the diet and regimen of an athlete should be highly strict and consistent. A warrior on the other hand needs to be able to survive on little food and endure extreme sleep deprivation. From Plutarch's Life of Philopoimen: They told him (and it was the truth) that the habit of body and mode of life for athlete and soldier were totally different, and particularly that their diet and training were not the same, since the one required much sleep, continuous surfeit of food, and fixed periods of activity and repose, in order to preserve or improve their condition, which the slightest influence or the least departure from routine is apt to change for the worse; whereas the soldier ought to be conversant with all sorts of irregularity and all sorts of inequality, and above all should accustom himself to endure lack of food easily, and as easily lack of sleep. On hearing this, Philopoimen not only shunned athletics himself and derided them, but also in later times as a commander banished from the army all forms of them, with every possible mark of reproach and dishonour, on the ground that they rendered useless for the inevitable struggle of battle men who would otherwise be most serviceable. Agility, Gymnastic Ability, and Arduous Physical Labour The training that Greek warriors actually underwent appears to have been more focussed on gymnastic ability and on agility. Here is a quote from Nepos describing Epameinondas, the Theban commander. Credit to the Reddit user Iphikrates for digging this stuff up: After he grew up, and began to apply himself to gymnastic exercises, he studied not so much to increase the strength, as the agility, of his body; for he thought that strength suited the purposes of wrestlers, but that agility conduced to excellence in war. He used to exercise himself very much, therefore, in running and wrestling, as long as he could grapple, and contend standing, with his adversary. A quote from Aristotle's Politics explains meanwhile that the Spartan training incorporated "laborious exercise" in the belief that it would "make their boys animal in nature" and contribute to "manly courage." This may have helped to develop the extremely functional "farm strength" that comes from using the body in a highly dynamic manner for long periods. Sports Training for Spartans Some sports might have been incorporated into a warrior's training, but specifically those that built agility and an "all-rounder" body. Many warriors and athletes, including Bruce Lee, have made the connection between dance and improved proprioception. Wrestling is a likely candidate (according to some sources, though not others) and dance. This shouldn't be a surprise as many other warriors and athletes, including Bruce Lee, have made the connection between dance and improved proprioception. It's also more than likely that Spartan training utilized drills and challenges that directly related to the skills they'd use in combat – such as climbing and marching long distances to build immense stamina. Conclusions So, we know very little of Spartan training but we know just enough to draw some basic conclusions. Spartan's did not train to build large muscle. Raw strength was actually considered relatively unimportant. One report (Xenophon's Agesilaos) suggests that the hoplites – the civilian units – actually had the superior physiques. Their workouts did not in any way resemble those of modern athletes or Crossfitters. Instead, what really set Spartan's apart was their military training. Their psychological and physical resilience. And their agility and proprioception. They were agile, fierce, and unyielding. Training in the cold, barefoot; ripping weeds out of the ground with your hands… that will turn you into a truly formidable opponent. Throw in some gymnastic training, undying loyalty to your troops, and a never-say-die attitude and it's no wonder that the Spartans were feared for so many years! What Can We Learn From the Spartans? There are definitely things we can learn from this type of training. Our modern lifestyles have made most of us incredibly "soft" by comparison. The Spartan's focus on stamina and agility may have explained why only the young Spartans were able to catch Iphikrates' peltasts on food, even encumbered as they were by their equipment (Xenophon, Hellenika). See also: How our modern lifestyles affect fitness That said, there were also clear deficits in Spartan training. It has been suggested that the Thebans' victories of the Spartans in the 4th century BC may have been a result of the greater time that the former spent in the gymnasium, wrestling and exercising. So, as Bruce Lee would say, we should absorb what is useful and disregard the rest! A Short Spartan Workout/Spartan Training Program For fun, and as an example of a workout that will test your mental toughness, I have written out a short "Spartan Workout" for you to try or to incorporate into your routine. This workout is full-body. Exercises have been selected for their functional value. The order has been chosen in to increase blood flow by alternating between upper and lower body moves. Bodyweight movements have been selected to build explosive agility, as well as to challenge the grip and stamina. This workout is designed to be performed outdoors, topless or wearing very little, even (particularly!) in bad weather. Be sensible though – don't attempt this if you are unwell! It should also be completed barefoot. If you have no experience with training barefoot, then I recommend using minimal shoes (or sandals for authenticity) to start with and building up to this – incorrect running technique while barefoot can do more harm than good as you are likely conditioned to run with a heel strike after years of shoe-wearing. Likewise, don't train topless in the rain if you have a compromised immune system. Keep in mind though that if you are healthy, cold exposure does not cause illness. In fact, regular exposure to this stimulus is likely to strengthen your immunity. Performing This Routine The only equipment you'll need for this is a pull up bar, so I recommend finding a trim trail or playground where you can perform the routine. A tree branch will do the job just as well, or even better thanks to its rough texture and inconsistent width/angle. A punch bag or set of battle ropes are optional extras. This circuit should be repeated three times with a two-minute rest between each circuit. You can do more if you are up to it. All exercises are to be performed AMRAP style – As Many Reps As Possible. Occasionally there's a bit of a hand balancing in there to help build that gymnastic strength and agility, while also providing a short break from the resistance cardio. Like my Batman program, this Spartan Training routine is not a routine for beginners – build-up to it. If you want to make this your main program, then start by doing the circuit twice a week with one run a week. It goes a little something like this: The Spartan Training Program Optional: 4-6 mile run 2 Minute Rest 1 Minute High Knees 20 Second Rest 1 Minute Explosive Push Ups (Clapping push ups to failure, then fast push ups) 20 Second Rest 1 Minute Tuck Jumps 20 Second Rest 1 Minute Muscle Ups to Failure, then Pull Ups 1 Minute L-Hang to Failure, Followed by Bodyweight Hang 1 Minute Handstand Push Ups to Failure (Followed by Pike Push Ups, or All Pike Push Ups if You Can't Do Any HPs) 20 Second Rest 1 Minute Pistol Squats (30 seconds each side) OR Jumping Squats 20 Second Rest 1 Minute Bicycle Sit Ups 1 Minute Battle Ropes if You Have Them, Shadow Boxing If Not (Fast) 20 Second Rest 1 Minute Tuck Planche/Crow Pose 20 Second Rest 1 Burpees 2 Minute Rest Repeat X 3 Of course, this Spartan training routine probably nothing like what the Spartans did. But it also doesn't contradict anything we know. Moreover, it will build up the same kind of stamina, agility, and mental toughness as a Spartan training program. Good luck! Image created with Dall EImagine standing on a battlefield, shield in hand, muscles rippling under the relentless sun, ready to take on the world—or at least a massive set of squats.That's the Spartan mindset. These ancient warriors didn't rely on fancy equipment or endless curls for glory.They trained their entire bodies for battle, embracing simplicity, grit, and strength that could topple armies.Let's dive into the principles of full-body training and compound lifts to unleash your inner Spartan.Spartans focused on efficiency—getting the most out of every single movement.That's where full-body training comes in.By targeting multiple muscle groups in each workout, you not only save time but also build functional strength that translates to real-life badassery.Think of your body as a team: why train just one player when you can make the whole squad stronger?Compound lifts—like squats, deadlifts, bench presses, and pull-ups—are your secret weapons.These moves engage multiple muscles and joints at once, making them the cornerstone of any… - | / Save up to % Save % Save up to Save STACK & SAVE Coming Soon In stock A Spartan physique isn't about bloated muscle or beach-ready aesthetics—it's about power, resilience, and the ability to dominate in any environment. The original Spartans trained for war, not looks. Their bodies were forged through hardship, discipline, and movement that mattered.Today, the Spartan ideal still holds up: lean, muscular, explosive, and unbreakable. And the best part? You don't need a fully stocked gym to build it. You need intention, intensity, and the right tools.What Is a Spartan Physique?A Spartan physique is built on three pillars:Functional Strength: The ability to lift, carry, sprint, and fightLean Muscle Mass: Built through resistance, maintained through disciplineGrit & Endurance: Mental and physical toughness that can outlast fatigueThink of it as a body made for battle, not for the mirror. It's about performance first. Everything else is a byproduct of the work.Key Training PrinciplesTo build a Spartan physique, your training must follow these timeless rules:Train With PurposeForget isolation and endless fluff. Your workouts should be built around strength, power, and utility.Focus on Movement PatternsPush, pull, squat, hinge, carry, rotate. These are the core movements Spartans would've trained, whether through combat drills, shield work, or natural terrain challenges.Minimal Equipment, Max EffortSpartan-style training is gritty. Kettlebells, sandbags, maces, and body weight are enough to sculpt an elite physique.Conditioning = Combat ReadinessSpartans weren't just strong—they could move, endure, and recover. Add jump rope, loaded carries, and high-intensity intervals to push your limits.The Spartan ToolkitHere's what you need to train like a modern-day warrior:KettlebellsSwings, cleans, snatches, goblet squats, presses, and carries are significant for power, grip, and full-body control.SandbagsShouldering, bear hug squats, carries, drags, and ground-to-overhead lifts. Perfect for awkward load training and raw strength.Mace or Gada10-to-2s, rotational swings, offset lunges, and presses. Build rotational power and shoulder durability.CalisthenicsPush-ups, pull-ups, dips, pistol squats, planks, and crawls. Control your own body before trying to control anything else.Jump RopeQuick conditioning, footwork, and rhythm. Use for warm-ups, intervals, or brutal finishers. "Marker Art" by the author using ChatGPT.Let's kill the lie right now: you don't need a gym membership, a $200 pair of sneakers, or a hyper-optimized training app to get in shape.What you need is a reason. A standard and a fire burning within.We may think that strength is built in perfect conditions, when everything is just right. But it's forged in the middle of chaos. That's why this story is for the guy with a 9-to-5. The man in the office who's tired of watching himself get softer while his calendar fills with meetings and his fridge fills with garbage.You want to be dangerous? You want a body that demands respect? Then train with an attitude that's raw, ruthless, and minimalist — like a Spartan.Don't think of this idea as just another fitness trend. Think of it as a war, and the battleground is your time, your body, and your mindset. You don't need more convenience either. You need more conviction. You need to stop looking for motivation and start becoming someone who doesn't need it.This guide is for the man who's ready to strip away the fluff and return to the fundamentals. The 9–5er who's ready to use his body the way it was designed, with movement, power… The Spartans are legendary, and for good reason. Hailing from ancient Greece and famous for their red cloaks and bronze armaments, the Spartans were masters of war and seldom defeated, even when vastly outnumbered. From the tender age of 7, Spartan boys were enrolled into a military school called the "agoge" for a rigorous training program that lasted until they were 20. Taken from their families, they lived in communal barracks, facing numerous physical and mental challenges designed to mold their minds and forge their bodies into unbreakable weapons. Physical training was relentless. Strength exercises, endurance runs, tactical drills – all were essential components of their regimen. But it wasn't just about individual prowess. The Spartans placed immense value on teamwork and strategy. As the saying goes, a single stick can be broken easily, but a bundle? That's a different story. The Spartans were more than just formidable warriors; they stood as timeless symbols of strength, discipline, and unwavering determination. To train like a Spartan is no small feat, but then again, the Spartans themselves were nothing short of extraordinary. In this article, we discuss what it takes to be a Spartan warrior and provide you with a Spartan-inspired workout plan to try. If you think you're tough enough, that is! The Spartan Mindset Arnold Schwarzenegger "The mind is the limit. As long as the mind can envision the fact that you can do something, you can do it, as long as you really believe 100 percent." – Arnold Schwarzenegger. If you want to train like a Spartan, you must learn to think like a Spartan. Your mindset and spirit are the key to reaching your warrior fitness potential. Real-life Spartan training was unrelenting, and there was no opportunity to quit. With your shield or on it, as the old Spartan saying goes. Mental fortitude is as crucial as physical strength in Spartan training. So, before diving into our program, it's essential to grasp the unbendable spirit that fueled every Spartan warrior. Only then can you truly understand and embrace Spartan training! Unyielding Discipline There was an unbreakable chain of command in the Spartan army. From their rigorous upbringing in the agoge, Spartans were conditioned to follow orders without question, and disobedience was not tolerated. Despite their military might, battles invariably resulted in heavy casualties. Spartan warriors never knew if their next skirmish would be their last. Facing battle against unfavorable odds, especially when the outcome was uncertain, demanded incredible discipline and mental fortitude. They followed orders or died trying. That was the Spartan way. While you'll probably never need to use your discipline to overcome abject fear, adopting a similar mindset—forged from the same principles that guided the Spartans—will ensure you stick to your workout schedule and complete the prescribed workout. Failure is not an option, and nor is quitting. Mental Toughness The Spartans were trained almost from birth to be determined and tough. While they felt pain, cold, tiredness, and hunger, they were conditioned to push through discomfort and keep moving forward. Modern-day special forces adopt a similar mindset, and the Navy SEALs have a famous saying, "The only easy day was yesterday." There will be times on your own training when the going gets tough, and you'll want to quit. You'll be hot, sweaty, and tired, and your muscles will burn as your heart pounds and lungs heave. Why train and suffer when you can Netflix and chill? However, if you want to reach your goals, you cannot give up! Remember, thousands of ancient and modern warriors have pushed themselves past their perceived limits. Their spirit is a testament to human endurance, and if they could rise to the challenge, so can you Honesty and Integrity While Spartan children were encouraged to steal food to make up their meager rations, they were honest and forthright in all other things. They despised deception and believed in acting and speaking honestly, even if doing so caused offense. Adopting the same mindset in your training is also beneficial. For example, when acknowledging your strengths and weaknesses, setting realistic goals, and not deluding yourself about progress. It's about recognizing when you're pushing your limits and when you're slacking off. Integrity means staying committed to your fitness goals, even when faced with temptations or distractions. Someone with integrity remains dedicated to their fitness regimen, even when it gets tough or no one is watching. It's about consistently doing the right thing for your body and health, not just when it's convenient or easy. Determination and Perseverance Sparta wasn't built in a day. And just as building a legendary city-state took many years, it'll take time and consistent effort to transform your body and develop warrior-level fitness and strength. If you're searching for a quick fix or a six-pack-in-30-days program, this isn't it. Spartans trained for 13 years before they took their place in the army, and training didn't end when they graduated from the agoge; it was a lifelong commitment. So, like the warriors you're planning on emulating, you need to knuckle down and be prepared for the long haul. Determination and perseverance are keys to your long-term progress, so always keep your end goals in mind. However, remember also that every workout you successfully complete takes you one step closer to your destination. Celebrate every win. Adaptability and Flexibility No battle plan survives first contact with the enemy. While we've provided you with a training program to follow, there will be times when you simply cannot stick to it. Maybe you're going on vacation, working late, or don't have access to the necessary equipment. While you could skip a few workouts, that's not the Spartan warrior way. Instead, they'd find an alternative path to the same goal. Improvise, adapt, and overcome. You need to adopt the same adaptable, flexible mindset if you want to be successful. For example, train before work if you know you'll be too busy after, go hiking with a heavy backpack if you cannot go for a run, or run stairs if you cannot do hill sprints. And remember, the only bad workout is the one you didn't do. Improvise as needed to stay on track. However, always listen to your body. If you're ill or injured, it's not only okay but essential to rest and recover. Spartans knew that power of the tactical withdrawal. Gather your resources and attack again. The Physical Regimen While the Spartans are often depicted in movies as pretty-boy CrossFit/bodybuilder hybrids, their all-encompassing fitness regime meant that, in reality, they were the ultimate functional athletes. They didn't train for aesthetics, and the size of their arms or the definition of their abs was a non-issue. Instead, they trained for the demands of combat, which, in ancient Greece, meant fighting with swords, spears, and shields, often after marching for many days to reach the battle site. Conflicts could last many days, with rest only allowed when the sun went down. Spartans were also prodigious runners and often attended the ancient Olympic games. However, they were usually banned from boxing and wrestling events, as they tended to kill their opponents. As far as Spartans were concerned, there was no point fighting for fun. Spartan fitness training involved several separate but overlapping disciplines: Strength Training Strength is the foundation on which all other fitness components are built. Being strong means you can rise to almost any physical challenge, including handling heavy weapons and overpowering an enemy in hand-to-hand combat. Strong bodies are also more robust and injury-resistant. However, the Spartans weren't muscle-bound or bulky, as excess muscle mass uses a lot of energy, demanding more food, and is hard to carry around. Instead, the Spartans were the epitome of "lean and mean." They were typically built more like middle-weight MMA fighters than bodybuilders or powerlifters. Strength training was a crucial part of life in the Spartan agoge, but they didn't have weights as we know them. Instead, they did bodyweight exercises or calisthenics, which is actually a word with Greek origins, and lifted and carried rocks, logs, and each other to develop strength without excess mass. Needless to say, Spartan strength training was immensely intense and functional and designed to improve their performance in battle, not get them ready for beach season. Endurance and Stamina While Spartans needed strength, they could not afford to get tired, so endurance and stamina were also highly prized. Spartans were prolific runners and could cover long distances at astonishing speeds. They could also march many miles and then immediately engage their enemies. For example, the Spartans marched over 130 miles/210 kilometers from Sparta to Thermopylae to face an overwhelming force of Persians, as famously depicted in the story of the 300. The Spartans always ran barefoot and marched wearing very basic sandals, so it's no exaggeration to suggest their feet were as tough as weathered leather. The need for endurance and stamina meant that Spartan training featured daily cross-country runs and frequent long-distance marches. They also did sprints and workouts that resemble modern-day circuit training. Armed and unarmed combat training also tested and developed their endurance and stamina. Gymnastics and Dance Strength and fitness were critical to the Spartan way of life. Still, these ancient Greek warriors also valued agility, grace, coordination, rhythm, and poise. These "softer" fitness components created more skilled fighters. Without things like balance and coordination, even the most powerful fighter can be brought down by a weaker, smaller opponent. Spartans wouldn't have wasted time using stability balls and BOSU to develop their agility and balance. Instead, they practiced gymnastics and, most surprisingly, dance. Teamwork Spartans were trained and assessed individually but also needed to operate as part of the army, so teamwork was also critical. After completing their training, young Spartans were expected to slot seamlessly into their units, which were usually manned by veterans of many conflicts. Their signature formation, the phalanx, required immense discipline and coordination, and each warrior was responsible for protecting the man by his side. This mutual support meant that, together, the Spartans were almost unbeatable. So, while training alone can be rewarding, exercisers often do better when they're part of a fitness community. Consider working with a training partner if you feel you'll benefit from some additional support and accountability. Spartan-Inspired Workout Plan Strength and conditioning were full-time occupations for the Spartans. Whether they were still in the agoge or had graduated to their fighting units, Spartans spent much of their day engaged in physical training. Needless to say, such a full-on workout schedule is impractical for most people. Even professional athletes have to balance training with their home and family life, which were not priorities in ancient Sparta. So, here is a workout plan inspired by the demands and ethos of Sparta. It's designed to improve your functional strength and fitness and prepare your body for whatever challenges you are likely to face. We've embraced a minimalistic approach to training for this program, so you won't need any fancy equipment to follow the plan. In fact, armed with little more than a pull-up bar, dip bars, and a few other readily available tools, you won't even need to go to the gym. Weekly Schedule Here's an overview of your Spartan Warrior Workout week. It's a seven-day plan, and, like the Spartans, you won't be getting any days off. However, day seven, Sunday, is an easy day where you can choose what activity you do. As such, you can make this an active recovery day if you wish. Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday Strength training Endurance training Mixed training Strength training Endurance training Mixed training Free choice day Warm-Up and Cool-Down Every good workout begins with a thorough warm-up. Warming prepares your body and mind for what you're about to do, enhancing your performance and reducing your risk of injury. So, never skip your warm-up! To get your body ready for training, begin with some light cardio, e.g., jogging or jumping rope, and then do some dynamic mobility and flexibility exercises for your major joints and muscles. Finish your warm-up by practicing a few of the movements you're about to do to ensure you know how to do them correctly. At the end of each workout, spend 10-15 minutes stretching all the muscles you've just been training. This will help ward off post-exercise muscle soreness, may speed up recovery, and will help improve your flexibility. Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds, starting at your calves and working up. Monday: Strength Training Spartans didn't spend much time lifting weights, so nor will you. Instead, the focus of today's workout is calisthenics. You'll be training your entire body using compound bodyweight exercises. Push each set to within a couple of reps of failure, striving to increase your rep count as the weeks pass. This is shown as AMRAP (as many reps as possible) on the chart below. # Exercise Sets Reps Recovery 1a Pull-ups 2-4 AMRAP 90 seconds 1b Bulgarian split squat 2a Parallel bar dips 2-4 AMRAP 90 seconds 2b Nordic curls 3a Push-ups 2-4 AMRAP 90 seconds 3b Inverted rows 4a Ab wheel rollout 2-4 AMRAP 90 seconds 4b Side plank/leg lift The exercises are arranged in pairs called supersets. Do the first exercise, designated 1a, and then the second exercise, assigned 1b. Rest for 90 seconds and repeat the pairing 1-3 more times before moving on to the next superset (2a/2b). Tuesday: Endurance Training Your workout today is all about building low-end cardiovascular fitness and mental stamina. Spartans did this by running long distances, and you will, too. After your warm-up, head out and run at a comfortable pace for 40-60 minutes. If running for so long is beyond you right now, you can alternate between running and walking. Simply run until you feel you have to walk and then walk until you feel ready to run. As you get fitter, you'll naturally be able to run more and walk less. Ideally, your heart rate should be around 60-70% of your maximum. You should still be able to talk at this pace, albeit with pauses for breaths. It's always okay to slow down if it means you can keep going. Ideally, this will be a cross-country/off-road run, not on roads or a treadmill. However, do what you must and embrace Spartan adaptability and flexibility. If you are unable to run, you can cycle, swim, or ruck. Increase the duration as you get fitter and more accustomed to your workout, building up to 90 minutes. Wednesday: Mixed Training Spartans had to be fit for anything, which is the premise of today's workout. It combines many different exercises to challenge and develop multiple fitness characteristics. This workout should feel a little chaotic and not balanced or highly structured like most training plans. Storm through the following list of activities as fast as you can. The reps are kept purposely low to ensure you can complete each exercise and quickly move on to the next. Complete the entire list, rest for three minutes, and then repeat the sequence twice more. Feel free to change any exercises you cannot do, replacing them with something similar but more accessible or convenient. # Exercise Reps 1 Squat jumps 10 2 Push-ups 10 3 Wall squat 30 seconds 4 Sit-ups 20 5 Jump rope 100 6 Handstand against a wall 30 seconds 7 Medicine ball slams 10 8 Plyo push-ups 10 9 Leg raises 20 10 Medicine ball thrusters 10 11 Diamond push-ups 10 12 Jumping jacks 50 13 Mountain climbers 10 per leg 14 Crunches 20 15 Burpees 10 If you cannot complete the specified number of reps, break the set into smaller chunks, only moving on to the next exercise when you have completed them all. Thursday: Strength Training Today's strength training session follows the same format as Monday's, but the exercises are different. Switching exercises from one workout to the next will help alleviate boredom and prevent overuse injuries. However, the muscles trained are the same. As before, push each set to within a couple of reps of failure, shown as AMRAP (as many reps as possible) on the chart below. # Exercise Sets Reps Recovery 1a Chin-ups 2-4 AMRAP 90 seconds 1b Sissy squats 2a Straight bar dips 2-4 AMRAP 90 seconds 2b Single-leg hip thrust 3a Decline push-ups 2-4 AMRAP 90 seconds 3b Ring/TRX rows 4a Oblique crunches 2-4 AMRAP 90 seconds 4b Hanging knee raise Friday: Endurance Training Today's workout will build speed and endurance. Simply head out and run for 10-15 minutes until you find a hill. It should be moderately steep and quite long – ideally about 100-150 meters. After stretching briefly, set a timer for 20 minutes and then sprint up and walk down your hill as many times as possible until the time is up. Jog back home, and you're done! Saturday: Mixed Training Today's workout places your fitness in the hands of the gods. And, like a Spartan warrior, you'll just need to deal with whatever comes your way. You'll need a six-sided die and a deck of cards… Write six upper body, six lower body, six core, and six cardio exercises on a piece of paper. For example: Upper body: Push-ups, pull-ups, dips, etc. Lower body: Lunges, squats, step-ups, etc. Core: Sit-ups, crunches, bicycle crunches, etc. Cardio: Jump jacks, burpees, jump rope, etc. Throw your dice to pick one exercise from each group. Take what you are given; no swaps! You should now have four randomly selected exercises. Next, allocate a suit of cards to each of your four exercises, e.g., clubs equal push-ups, hearts equal lunges, spades equal crunches, and diamonds equal burpees. Shuffle your deck of cards and place them face down. Turn up the top card and do the exercise the suit represents for the indicated number of reps. So, if you turn up the seven of hearts, using the above example, you'd do seven lunges – per leg, of course. Do your reps, turn over the next card, and repeat. Continue on through the deck until you have completed all the cards. Aces are worth one, all numbered cards are worth their face value, and all picture cards are worth 12. Jokers are to be ignored. Depending on how the cards are shuffled, you'll probably turn up runs of the same suit or several high-value cards in a row. Tough luck! Keep plugging away until you have completed the specified number of reps, and then move on. Use this same process whenever you repeat this workout, so the exercises are always different. Sunday: Free Choice Day While today is not a rest day, you are free to do anything you want so long as it gets you up and moving, ideally outside. Good options include: Go for a hike or bike ride. Try wild swimming. Do yoga. Go surfing, kayaking, or paddleboarding. Play a sport. Do some gardening. Chop wood or shovel snow. Whatever you do should get you sweating lightly and breathing faster, but it should not be tiring or overly challenging. Think recreational physical activity rather than structured workout. The Spartan Diet So, what did the real-life Spartans eat? Unsurprisingly, the Spartan diet was basic, functional, and designed to fuel intense training rather than please palates. Staples of the Spartan diet included: Barley Figs Cheese Fresh fruits Vegetables Olive oil Wine (usually watered down and only in moderation) Meat (occasionally, primarily from hunting). Despite living such active lives, the Spartans rarely overate and practiced mindful eating combined with periodic fasting. They valued hunger, believing it made them tougher and less reliant on food during battle. They seldom feasted, rarely drank alcohol to excess, and food was generally thought of as a necessity and not a luxury. The Spartans also consumed a dish known as "black broth," which was a concoction of pork, blood, salt, and vinegar. Black broth was a Spartan diet staple and infamous throughout ancient Greece. The perceived benefits of black broth included: Nutritional Value: The broth was believed to be highly nutritious, providing the essential nutrients required by a warrior. Sustenance: It was a hearty meal that could sustain a Spartan warrior for a long time, especially during campaigns or rigorous training. Health: Some believed that the ingredients in the broth had specific health benefits, contributing to the overall strength and vitality of the Spartans. Hydration: Black broth was a rich source of minerals and hydrating fluids. Greece is a hot place, and Spartans would have lost a lot of fluids and electrolytes through sweating. Black broth was the original Gatorade! Simplicity: Consistent with the Spartan mindset, black broth was a simple meal without any luxurious ingredients. Toughness: Consuming such a basic and unpalatable dish was seen as a testament to Spartan toughness and disdain for luxury. Unity: Sharing the same meal fostered a sense of unity and equality among the warriors, regardless of their age, status, or rank. Not surprisingly, many other Greeks found the idea of the broth repulsive. A famous anecdote tells how a non-Spartan, having tried the black broth for himself, remarked that he now understood why Spartans were willing to die in battle – to avoid having to eat their infamous broth! While the Spartans undoubtedly got a lot right about nutrition, the good news is that modern exercisers have easy access to a wide range of nutritious and delicious foods. While you are free to create your own black broth, we don't recommend it. However, adopting a more Spartan mindset about the food you eat could be helpful, especially if you are struggling with your weight. Intermittent fasting and cutting out sweets and treats are great ideas, and being mindful of hunger and satiety could help prevent overeating. The Mediterranean diet contains many of the foods consumed in ancient Sparta. As one of the healthiest diets in the world, it could be an excellent choice for modern-day Spartans. Spartan Workout FAQs Do you have a question about our Spartan workout plan? No problem, because we've got the answers! 1. Is this really how Spartans trained? Training like a true Spartan is unrealistic in the modern world. Spartan training was incredibly tough, often cruel, a full-time occupation, and started when children reached the age of seven. Even the most intense modern-day military training schools are not this harsh. That said, the types of training included in our plan are representative of some of the things that Spartans would have been required to do, albeit with a modern twist. It would be impossible to accurately replicate authentic Spartan training, and given its brutal nature, that's probably no bad thing! 2. Will this workout plan help prepare me for the military? While modern military life is not typically as strenuous as in ancient Sparta, there are similarities. Today's soldiers still need strength, endurance, agility, and an unstoppable mindset. Bootcamp, like the Spartan agoge, is a fully immersive experience designed to turn soft civilians into hardened soldiers. Related: Army PRT Exercises – The Army Physical Readiness Training Drill So, if you are thinking about joining the military and want to get in shape for bootcamp, this workout plan will undoubtedly help. 3. Is this program suitable for women, or is it only meant for men? Women were not eligible for military service. That honor was reserved for males. That said, fitness training was part of life for Spartan women, and it was believed that strong women produced strong children. Women were encouraged to exercise and participate in sports, especially running and athletic events like throwing the javelin. Thankfully, we don't live in ancient Sparta, and our program is suitable for men and women. In fact, people of all genders should find this program challenging, effective, empowering, and fun. 4. Is this program suitable for beginners? While Spartan training was undeniably tough, it was also progressive. It began when children reached the age of seven and entered the agoge. Then, over the next 13 years, they learned the skills of warfare and developed their incredible mindset, fitness, and strength. Our program is not as progressive and starts at quite a high level of intensity and volume. As such, it's probably not ideal for beginners, and we recommend you build a basic level of fitness and strength before attempting this workout plan. Related: Beginner's Calisthenics Plan That said, you can certainly borrow elements from this plan to create your own beginner-friendly Spartan workout program. For example, you could shorten the workouts or reduce the number of training days. 5. Will this program help me lose weight? Weight loss is largely dependent on your diet. To lose weight or, more accurately, burn fat, you need to create a calorie deficit, meaning you consume fewer calories than you burn. This will force your body to use stored body fat for energy. The workouts in this plan will burn plenty of calories, but if you continue to overeat, you may not lose any weight and could even gain fat. But, if you adapt your diet and reduce your calorie intake, you should lose weight. 6. How can I tell if I'm overtrained? Overtraining occurs when your workout routine exceeds your ability to recover. The symptoms of overtraining include: Increased resting heart rate Decreased grip strength Lack of energy Reduced motivation for exercise Poor workout performance Disrupted sleep General aches and pains Frequent minor injuries Frequent illnesses Mood swings Changes in appetite You can lower your risk of overtraining by increasing exercise volume and intensity gradually, following a nutritious diet, getting plenty of sleep, and including easy and rest days in your training program. You can read more about overtraining here. 7. Are there any supplements I can use during this program? While you don't need supplements to develop Spartan-like fitness and strength, even the Spartans had their infamous black broth to fuel their workouts and enhance recovery. Supplements that could help you on your modern-day Spartan quest include: However, you should be able to get all the nutrients you need from a healthy, balanced diet, and supplements should be viewed as precisely that – supplementary to regular healthy food. Closing Thoughts The Spartans had an incomparable reputation for strength, discipline, and toughness. They lived for war and trained full-time to perfect their military prowess. It was often said that Sparta had no walls because its soldiers were the only walls they needed. However, even the mighty Spartans eventually "modernized" and built fortifications to keep their enemies out. It would be impractical, if not impossible, to replicate the Spartan agoge in modern times, and even elite special forces soldiers would struggle to survive in such a harsh environment. Spartan started at the age of 7 and lasted 13 years, and every day was a struggle for survival. That said, adopting the mindset and some of the training methods of the Spartans could help you achieve an incredible transformation, turning you from soft and weak to sculpted and strong. Needless to say, such a transformation won't be easy, but with a Spartan mindset, nothing is impossible. "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." – Aristotle, ancient Greek philosopher. Facebook Twitter Reddit Flipboard LinkedIn Pinterest It doesn't matter where you are with your