

Tabata Physical Activity Break



Use this guide to take a physical activity break at your desk or with a group in an empty conference room.

What is Tabata?

Sensei Tabata of Japan developed this cardio workout, which is done in 4-minute segments. It will get your heart rate up and help you strengthen your muscles, but can also be modified for limitations or injuries. To do a 10-minute physical activity break, you can do 2 Tabata sessions followed by a cool down/stretch.

Getting Started

Prior to your break, select a total of four exercises from the list on the next pages. Two of the exercises you choose will be used for the first Tabata session, and the other two will be used for the second Tabata session. This way, you'll only have to remember two exercises at a time.

Each Tabata session is four minutes long. You'll do one movement for 20 seconds, rest for 10 seconds, and then switch to a different movement for 20 seconds, and then rest for 10 seconds. Here is a timing chart showing how to alternate the two exercises:

Tabata A – 4 minutes

Cycle	Time	Exercises
1	20 seconds	Exercise 1
	10 seconds rest	
2	20 seconds	Exercise 2
	10 seconds rest	
3	20 seconds	Exercise 1
	10 seconds rest	
4	20 seconds	Exercise 2
	10 seconds rest	
5	20 seconds	Exercise 1
	10 seconds rest	
6	20 seconds	Exercise 2
	10 seconds rest	
7	20 seconds	Exercise 1
	10 seconds rest	
8	20 seconds	Exercise 2
	10 seconds rest	

Tabata B – 4 minutes

Cycle	Time	Exercises
1	20 seconds	Exercise 3
	10 seconds rest	
2	20 seconds	Exercise 4
	10 seconds rest	
3	20 seconds	Exercise 3
	10 seconds rest	
4	20 seconds	Exercise 4
	10 seconds rest	
5	20 seconds	Exercise 3
	10 seconds rest	
6	20 seconds	Exercise 4
	10 seconds rest	
7	20 seconds	Exercise 3
	10 seconds rest	
8	20 seconds	Exercise 4
	10 seconds rest	

When the first Tabata is done, take a moment to review the other two exercises that you've selected for the second Tabata. Then begin the second Tabata as shown in the chart on the right.

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Materials Needed

Timer: If you have access to the internet during your activity break, you can go to www.tabatatimer.com. You can also use the stopwatch feature on your cell phone or watch, or purchase a stopwatch from a sporting goods store.

Music: Playing background music is an optional, but fun, addition to your Tabata exercise break. Consider playing about 3 to 4 upbeat songs during your 10 minute break.

For each Tabata session, select two of these exercises.

Exercise	Cues	Photo
Running in Place	<p>With your arms bent at your sides, pump your arms as you run in place as fast as you can. Be sure to pick your feet up off the floor.</p> <p>To modify: keep your toes on the ground and alternate your weight from right to left as you lift your heels and bend your knees.</p>	
Hindu Squats	<p>Stand with your feet a few inches apart, bend your knees while keeping your chin up, and lower yourself down into a squat. See if you can touch your shins with your hands while keeping your heels flat on the floor. Then rise up to standing, keeping your knees pointed over your toes.</p> <p>To modify: only bend enough to touch your knees, or as far as you feel comfortable. Then rise to standing.</p>	
Jacks	<p>Standard jumping jacks with arms raising overhead.</p> <p>To modify: for a shoulder or neck issue, do a “seal jack” with the arms moving from the sides of the body to the center of the chest. For low-impact, do an alternating side-touch step paired with either arm movement.</p>	
Lunges	<p>Step one foot out in front and raise the rear heel. Bend your knees to lower your body down, not forward. When both legs are at 90 degrees, jump up and switch the foot positions, then lunge down again. Continue alternating the legs with each jump.</p> <p>To modify: step into the new lunge position instead of jumping.</p>	

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<p>Scissors</p>	<p>Step one foot out in front, then jump and switch the foot positions. Continue jumping and alternating, legs straight in the air like scissors, then bending the knees on each landing.</p> <p>To modify: step into the open stance instead of jumping, trying to move your feet as quickly as possible.</p>	
<p>Imaginary Jump Rope</p>	<p>Stand with your feet a few inches apart, arms bent at your sides holding an imaginary jump rope. You can choose to jump on two feet, or hop on one foot at a time, as you circle your arms to turn the rope. To best work your biceps, circle forward on the first two cycles, then backwards for the second two cycles.</p> <p>To modify: do heel raises instead of jumps, but continue turning the jump rope to work your biceps.</p>	
<p>Bunny Bounce</p>	<p>Stand with your feet a few inches apart, then jump on two feet as you travel forward four times. Next, jump backward four times to your starting position. Continue with 4 jumps forward, then 4 jumps backward.</p> <p>To modify: step forward and together to close the feet instead of jumping, trying to move your feet as quickly as possible.</p>	
<p>Skier Moguls</p>	<p>Stand with your feet a few inches apart, then jump side to side (right to left), landing on two feet. Imagine a line on the floor that you must jump over each time. Allow your knees to bend on each landing and stay as low as possible.</p> <p>To modify: step side to side instead of jumping, and bend your knees as you feel comfortable.</p>	
<p>Mountain Climbers</p>	<p>Place your hands on a table, desk or wall and walk your feet back into a plank position; the more horizontal your body is, the greater the challenge. Step one foot forward, then jump to switch the foot positions. Continue to stay low and switch feet.</p> <p>To modify: for neck or shoulder issues, do the exercise standing upright. For low-impact, hold the plank and step to switch the feet into the open stance instead of jumping.</p>	
<p>Ice Skaters</p>	<p>From a standing position, take a small leap to your right, landing on your right foot with the left toe balancing on the floor behind you. See if you can touch your right shin with your left hand. Now use your left (rear) foot to leap to the left side, placing the right toe behind you and reaching for the left shin with your right hand. Continue leaping and lowering from side to side.</p> <p>To modify: take a large side step instead of a leap; touch knee, not shin.</p>	

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<p>Merengue</p>	<p>Standing tall, walk in place as fast as you can while twisting your hips inward with each step. Add fun arm movements to spice it up!</p> <p>To modify: instead of twisting, simply walk in place on your toes.</p>	
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Make sure to cool down with these stretches.

<p>Quadriceps</p>	<p>Use your right hand to hold on to something for balance, then grab your left foot or ankle with your left hand. You can also rest your shin on your chair if it is uncomfortable to grab your foot. Make sure your knee is pointing downward, and you're standing tall. Hold here and breathe deeply for 10 seconds. (Pause and count.)</p> <p>Gently lower that left leg and repeat on the right side. Point the knee downward and stand up tall while holding. (Pause and count.) Gently lower the right leg.</p>	
<p>Hamstrings, Back and Neck</p>	<p>Stand with feet a few inches apart, toes pointing forward. With a flat back and long spine, fold forward at the waist, leaning towards the floor. Stop as soon as you feel the pull on the back of your legs. Keep your back straight and relax the neck. Hold here and breathe deeply for 10 seconds. (Pause and count.)</p> <p>From here, relax and round your back as you fold to the floor. Allow your head to hang as you stretch your neck too. Hold this position for 10 seconds. (Pause and count.)</p> <p>Now bend the knees slightly as you slowly roll your spine up to a standing position. (Pause for a moment.)</p>	
<p>Chest</p>	<p>Stand up as tall as you can, with your best posture, pressing the shoulders down away from the ears. Clasp your hands behind your back and press your hands towards the floor behind you.</p>	

Let's bow and say "Arigato!" as we thank Sensei Tabata for his wonderful workout plan!