

The 5-Minute Workout

by Matt McWilliams

15

Quick exercises to get your
busy day jumpstarted



This guide isn't designed to:

- Get you in the best shape of your life.
- Rip your abs.
- Help you fit into your high school prom dress/tuxedo.

Those kind of things come from much longer workouts. They come from hard work. They come from sweat, a disciplined diet, and getting the proper rest and a myriad of other factors.

What it is designed for is to get you through those busy days, when it seems you have no margin. You can't possibly make a trip to the gym. You can't run a mile or lift weights for a half hour. You can't even pop in a hip hop workout DVD. You honestly aren't sure you have five minutes, but if you'll give me five minutes, I'll get your day off to a better start. Yes, in five minutes.

All or nothing.

I used to think of exercise as all or nothing. If I didn't get my 90 minutes of running and weight lifting in, I'd pout about life's circumstances and do nothing. I'd crack open a bag of cookies, devour the whole thing and then curse myself in the morning. Sixty pounds and eight pants sizes later, I felt hopeless.

One day, for no apparent reason, I made a decision. I wish I could say it was the result of some great epiphany or that angels hovered overhead and sang to me, but it wasn't like that. It just sort of happened. I couldn't go workout at the gym because my cell phone powered off and my alarm didn't go off. I had precisely one hour to get to the office.

But I was stiff as a board, lethargic, and I hadn't worked out in days. I needed to do something. So I spent five minutes doing the routine I'm about to share

with you. There's nothing magical about this routine. Honestly, you could make it up yourself. I only suggest it because I know it works for me. It hits all the major body parts, gets the blood flowing, and stretches your limbs a little.

As with all exercise programs (if you can truly call it that), I'm required to tell you to consult your physician, etc. etc. So do that. (Full disclosure written by an attorney to cover my butt at the end)

If this routine is all that you do seven days a week, you're not going to get in great shape. You're not going to perform at optimal capacity. You're going to feel like crap long term.

But...for those crazy days, this will get your through.

This simple workout is focused on making you feel better. It's meant to jumpstart your day, body and mind, and give you a little boost of energy on the days you clearly need it most.

I hope that you don't need to use it too often.

Each exercise should be performed as quickly as possible, while maintaining proper form. If you are unable to perform an individual exercise or you want a little more variety, I've listed a few alternative exercises at the end.

Each exercise is performed for 20 seconds. Remember, the point is to get your heart racing quickly and to send a little jolt to your muscles. It's only five minutes, so give it everything you've got.

Basic Five Minute Routine

Exercise #1	High knees
Description	Lift your knee as high as possible (think of driving it into your chest). Alternate legs, moving them as quickly as possible.
Reps	12-40
Muscles worked	Hip flexors, calves, abs

Exercise #2	Butt kicks
Description	The name says it all. Lift your foot to your butt. As you advance, lean slightly forward and run in place this way. Feel your quads stretching and hamstrings contracting with each rep.
Reps	12-40
Muscles worked	Quadriceps, calves, hamstrings

Exercise #3	Karate kicks
Description	Kick your leg forward, alternating legs. Feel the hamstring stretch.
Reps	8-24
Muscles worked	Hamstrings

Exercise #4	Side bends
Description	Hands at your side, bend to touch each hand as far down your leg as possible.
Reps	12-40
Muscles worked	Abs, hips

Exercise #5 Arm circles, forward
Description Move your arms in a forward moving circle.
Reps 20-50
Muscles worked Shoulders, triceps

Exercise #6 Side bends, with arm extension
Description Again, bend to the side but this time extend the opposite arm above your head (if you bend to the right, lift your left arm). Alternate sides and arms.
Reps 8-30
Muscles worked Hips, abs, trapezius, shoulders

Exercise #7 Arm circles, backwards
Description Move your arms in a backwards moving circle.
Reps 20-50
Muscles worked Shoulders, triceps

Exercise #8 Toe touches with back bend
Description Bend and reach to touch your toes as many times as you can. Focus on stretching your hamstrings and lower back. On the way up, extend your back in an arching motion and reach up.
Reps 8-24
Muscles worked Hamstrings, lower back, hips

Exercise #9 Squats
Description There is a proper technique. Lower yourself to the point where your knees are 90 degrees. If that is too far for you, don't go so far. Lift yourself up using your butt and quads.
Reps 8-24
Muscles worked Butt, quadriceps, hamstrings, hips

Exercise #10 Pushups
Description Do them in whatever way is most comfortable and allows you to get in the most reps in 20 seconds. I'm not ashamed to admit that I started doing them "like a girl" at first so that I could do 15 or more in 20 seconds.
Reps 6-28
Muscles worked Chest, shoulders

Exercise #11 Jumping Jacks
Description Remember when you did them as a kid? They're the same today. Go fast and if you're lacking range of motion, don't worry about touching your hands at the top.
Reps 15-35
Muscles worked A lot

Exercise #12 Lunge sprints
Description Standing upright, feet together, and keeping your back straight, quickly lunge your right foot forward and your left leg back. Switch sides. If you are new to this, go slowly. Form is more important than speed, but over time you will be able to quickly switch legs and get a quick, deep lunge in.
Reps 4-20
Muscles worked Quadriceps, hamstrings, calves, inner thighs, hips

Exercise #13 Side twists
Description Holding your abs tight, simply twist from one side to the next.
Reps 12-40
Muscles worked Abs, hips

Exercise #14 Windmills
Description Think of each arm as a helicopter propeller. Make giant arm circles with each arm, similar to a swimming motion.
Reps 12-40
Muscles worked Shoulders

Exercise #15 Your choice
Description What is one area you struggle with during the day? Is it a tight back? Then get in a good back stretch. If it's bad upper body posture, consider some Standing Supermans (described on the next page). You pick this one.
Reps As many as possible
Muscles worked Depends on the exercise

Additional and Alternate Exercises

If you are unable to perform an exercise listed above or have special physical needs (i.e. a particularly troubling part of your body), or if you simply want some variety, here are a few additional and alternate exercises.

Exercise	Standing Supermans
Description	Stand with your feet together and extend your left leg back and your right arm forward. You are now flying like Superman! Alternate left leg/right arm with right leg/left arm.
Reps	4-20
Muscles worked	Back, shoulders, hips, quadriceps, abs, butt

Exercise	Side lunges
Description	Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and extend your left leg out to the side while lunging into your right leg.
Reps	6-20
Muscles worked	Inner thigh, hips, quadriceps, hamstrings

Exercise	Side to side squats
Description	Stand with your feet together and imagine you have to move to the side under a bar. Squat down and move to the right side. Then repeat to the left.
Reps	6-20
Muscles worked	Butt, quadriceps, hamstrings, hips

Exercise Log jumps
Description Stand with your feet together and pretend there is a log to your right. Jump over it with feet together. Jump back over it to the left. Hold your abs tight.
Reps 10-40
Muscles worked Butt, quadriceps, calves, hamstrings, hips

Exercise Squat jumps
Description Add a little *oomph* to your squats with a jump. Squat down as normal and then explode into the air.
Reps 6-20
Muscles worked Butt, quadriceps, calves, hamstrings, hips

Exercise Shadow boxing
Description Have you ever punched as fast as you can for 20 seconds? It's one of the quickest ways to get your heart rate up. Do it.
Reps A lot
Muscles worked Arms and shoulders

A note about hand and feet placements.

On the pushups, vary the width of your hands to emphasize different muscles. Shoulder width works the chest more. Narrow works the triceps. Very wide works the shoulders.

On squats, turn your toes in or out. In works the hips and quads more. Out works the inner thighs.

Add a little variety to each exercise, especially if you have to use the routine more than once per week.

5:01

It's now the 5:01 mark. You're sweaty, your heart is beating faster, blood is flowing to your brain. That's what this was designed for.

So...

Stop making excuses when you can't go to the gym.

I'll repeat what I said in the opening. This quick workout isn't designed to change your life. It's a last resort. It might be your go to kickstarter on days when you have a 6:00 AM flight or when one of your children is up all night with a tummy ache.

It won't change your life. But it will change your day.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I do this routine for longer?

Of course. Five minutes is an arbitrary number when that is really all that you have. If I have ten or fifteen minutes, I do a modified version, often focusing more intensely on one or two body parts.

If you have fifteen, I suggest just cycling through the routine twice or perhaps doing each exercise twice as long (forty seconds). Then spend the last five minutes stretching.

I am unable to do any high impact exercises. Can I still do this?

Yes. Just do low impact versions of the high impact exercises.

For example, do high knees lying on your back (in fact, I occasionally do them that way if I ran the day before and my knees are sore).

For the butt kicks, lay face down on the floor and do them. Or just don't do them so fast that you are running. Instead of karate kicks, lie on your back and do rapid leg lifts, stretching the hamstring with each one. And for jumping jacks, just don't jump. March in place and lift your arms over your head as fast as possible. Or squat down instead of jumping.

The key is to find something that works for your body.

Can I do this in addition to my regular workout that day?

Yes. I often do just that.

I'll do this routine first thing in the morning before I start working. Later my family gets up and I'll spend time with them before putting in my "regular" workout.

I'm not the type that does well with a 5:30 AM full workout. I usually bonk out by 6:10. I'm hungry and low on energy. But I also don't want to get out of bed and immediately hit the computer. My brain is not up yet either. But my body can stand the five minutes and my body knows that it's getting in a good workout later.

The five minutes I spend getting my blood flowing and loosening up makes for a more productive morning work session. I'm more alert and get a lot more done. For me, it's a small investment in getting more done.

About the Author

Matt McWilliams writes about business and family leadership, business strategy, and personal development at MattMcWilliams.com.

He is a follower of Christ, a family man, and a student of all things business. He has worked in small business and online marketing for more than ten years since starting his first business out of necessity at the age of twenty-two, when his father fired him.



His consulting business has clients all over the country in various industries ranging from educational courses to consumer goods and the financial industry.

As a political consultant, marketing manager, small business consultant, author, and podcaster, he has a unique viewpoint on the ever-changing worlds in which we live. Most of all, he admits to failing at nearly everything he has tried the first time.



The good news is that he has learned from those mistakes.

In 2007, he helped his company win the Best in Business Award from the Nashville Business Journal.

In 2010, the Affiliate Summit Pinnacle Awards recognized him as the top Affiliate Marketing Manager in the world. He has won numerous other awards in that field as well.

He lives in Indiana with his wife Tara and daughter Aracelli.

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