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1-5 up-chain circuit

An up-chain circuit is a great way of increasing your strength and fitness because as you progress through your reps, each exercise will get more challenging, and then once you have done the highest number of reps in your chain, you go back to the start and it gets more manageable again. Working in this way means that you cycle through varying levels of intensity and this makes the workout more achievable but also more challenging overall.

Here's an example to show how it works:

- If you were doing a squat and shoulder press as a continuous pattern of 1 rep of each, for a total of 2 minutes, you might gradually tire (& get bored?), but the exercise itself doesn't become more demanding on your body
- If you use those same two exercises as an up-chain you would do 1 x squat, 1 x shoulder press, 2 x squats, 2 x shoulder press, 3 x squats, 3 x shoulder press, 4 x squats, 4 x shoulder press, 5 x squats, 5 x shoulder press, and then start again with 1 x squats, 1 x shoulder press, and so on which would create more muscle overload in the same period of time

Once you have understood the basic principle, you can tailor your workout to suit your needs and there is no limit to what you can include in your workout:

1. you can include high impact moves if you want to, or keep it low-impact, or have a mixture of both
2. you can pair up any exercises in an up-chain, or you may simply add an up-chain of pulses to increase the muscle overload (eg. 1 x squat, 1 x squat with 2 pulses, 1 x squat with 3 pulses, etc)
3. you can pair up exercises which work the same muscle group (eg. squats & lunges) or choose exercises which work different areas of the body (eg. lunges & push-ups) and depending on your exercise selection you will get different training effects
4. you can incorporate any equipment that you have available or use body-weight exercises if you don't have any equipment
5. you can up-chain both exercises or only one of them (eg. 1 x squat, 1 x sprint there & back, 2 x squats, 1 x sprint there & back, 3 x squats, 1 x sprint there & back, etc)
6. you can vary the time on each up-chain but bear in mind that you really want to experience the overload cycle so if the time is too short you may not get to that point; it will also vary with the exercises you are doing (eg. 5 x squats will take less time than 5 x sprint there & back)
7. you can make your chain as long as you want – I like going from 1-5 and then back to 1 again, but you might decide 1-8 is better for your workout – either way, it really doesn't matter



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OK, enough of the theory stuff, here's an example workout based on the HI-LI circuit class last week:

Warm-up before you start

Exercise #1:

wide // narrow push-ups – full, $\frac{3}{4}$ or incline with hands on windowsill (1 x wide, 1 x narrow, 2 x wide, 2 x narrow, etc up to 5 then start again at 1 rep each)

Exercise #2:

squat // shoulder press – using whatever weight you have (DB, KB, barbell, watermelon!)

Exercise #3:

abs curl // shoulder bridge

Exercise #4:

deadlift // upright row – using whatever weight you have (DB, KB, barbell, heavy book...)

Exercise #5:

sumo squats (wide feet) with up-chain pulses (1 x squat, 1 x squat with 2 pulses at the bottom, 1 x squat with 3 pulses at the bottom, etc, up to 5 pulses then start again at 1)

Perform each set of up-chain exercises for 2-5 minutes, depending on the time you have available

Cool-down and stretch at the end of your workout

This is a great way to vary your home workouts and I hope you have some fun with up-chaining. As always, find exercises which are suitable for your body & please ask if you have any questions at all Jx

(this workout is aimed at regular tmf clients but it is generally suitable for everyone; however, if you are new to exercise or have any health concerns please seek medical advice or professional guidance before embarking on a new exercise routine)