



Basic Racewalk Warmup Drills

This set of warmup drills is suitable for preparing the walker for all types of competition and also for workout preparation. The entire warmup routine will take about 20 minutes. While you're doing this routine please remember that this is not the race, take it easy and give your body the time it needs to adapt to the workout you're about to give it.

The Setting

Ideally the warmup will be done on a track. On the track use one of the straights and pick a line to walk on. The reason that you use a line is to give yourself a visual cue for where your foot needs to land on each stride. When you racewalk each foot placement should be directly in front of the other, not unlike the way the front wheel of a bicycle is directly in front of the back wheel. Also like a bicycle this will make you tippy at slow speeds but very stable and fast at high speeds.

If you're not at a track then try to find a straight, flat, level section of pavement about 50m long to do the following drills.

The Warmup Routine

The warmup consists of 8 different exercises that use the principles of dynamic flexibility conditioning to prepare each one of the major muscle groups and most of the minor muscle groups involved in competitive racewalking. But, it's not really as complicated as that sounds. Each exercise is simple and most are very easy to master, even for a beginner. Do each exercise in the order given, here is the routine:

Basic Walk – hands behind you back

By putting your hands behind your back you have eliminated all other body action. For this exercise you put your hands behind your back and focus on two things. The first focus is on getting your heel on the ground and rolling on to your toe as you move forward. The second focus is making sure that you have a straight leg from the time your heel touches the ground until your foot is behind you.

Using your 50m path go from one end to the other, pause for a few seconds to relax and then do the same exercise on the way back.

Basic Walk – arms folded in front

Having your arms folded across your chest now allows you to bring your hips into the walking action. Your focus is the same as for the first exercise but add a bit of hip action to each stride.

Using your 50m path go from one end to the other, pause for a few seconds to relax and then do the same exercise on the way back.



Basic Walk – fingers on your shoulders

This is probably the trickiest of the exercises. To do this one you need to put the fingertips of your left hand on your left shoulder and the fingertips of your right hand on your right shoulder. While you won't forget about your focus from the previous exercises you need to add a new focus on your shoulders and upper body. The idea here is to get your shoulders rotating in a clockwise (backward) direction to mimics the shoulder action of the racewalk movement. You do this rotation by making your elbows go in clockwise circles and you do this while you walk. It's actually not as hard as it sounds. With this exercise we're warming up the upper body and getting it ready for our workout.

Using your 50m path go from one end to the other, pause for a few seconds to relax and then do the same exercise on the way back.

Cross overs

With this exercise we really want to focus on hip action. To do this you want to have your feet cross over the line that you are using to warm up on rather than lading on the line. If your feet are crossing over then your hips must be moving to allow your leg that kind of lateral movement. You need to do this exercise at a bit quicker pace than the first ones otherwise you'll be really tippy.

Using your 50m path go from one end to the other, pause for a few seconds to relax and then do the same exercise on the way back.

Wide legs

With the previous exercise you crossed over the line. Now with this exercise you will walk with each foot landing on its own side of the line. This will make your walking stance quite wide and you'll notice that all of your core muscles are getting used to walk like this. For this one you may need to slow down a bit compared to the last one.

Using your 50m path go from one end to the other, pause for a few seconds to relax and then do the same exercise on the way back.

Long arms

You are now going to focus on your stride length and the push off of your toe that gives you your speed. To do this exercise you need to keep your arms straight instead of bent as we would normally do. By straightening our your arms and focussing on pushing off with your toe you will have a very long stride that will drive you forward quite forcefully, almost like leaping from rock to rock if you were to cross over a small stream without getting your feet wet.

Using your 50m path go from one end to the other, pause for a few seconds to relax and then do the same exercise on the way back.



Short and Quick

With this exercise you will work on your turnover. There are only two possible things that can make you go fast as a racewalker. One is stride length from the previous exercise and the other is turnover, the number of strides that you make in a given period of time.

To do this exercise you simply take the shortest strides that you possibly can as quickly as you can. Try to picture a cartoon character who is trying to quickly get from one place to another and their legs are spinning so fast it's just a blur, that's what you're aiming for in this exercise. To get this one right your legs and feet move fast but you move slow because the stride is so short.

Using your 50m path go from one end to the other, pause for a few seconds to relax and then do the same exercise on the way back.

Accelerations

This is the final exercise and we're going to put together everything that we've done up to now into a few quick bursts of pure speed, well, pure and controlled speed. For this one you will walk at a normal, easy racewalk pace for half of your 50m distance and then when you get to the halfway point you start to speed up and you continue gaining speed all the way to the end of the 50m stretch. You will need to gradually slow down at the end and it may take you another 20-30m to come to a stop.

Do three repeats of this by doing the acceleration in one direction and then returning with a normal walk to give yourself time to recover and be ready for the next one by the time you return.