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WARMING UP FOR ROCK CLIMBING

As many of us are aware, warming up is important before any physical activity, including rock climbing. This article is meant to help you understand exactly what the goals of warm up are, so that you can adapt your warm up for your goals of the session and to accommodate for injuries. Warmups are done to improve range of motion, muscle flexibility, force production, increase muscle temperatures, increase tissue extensibility, enhance motor recruitment, improve joint proprioception, increased muscle oxygenation, etc. Although warm ups can help prevent risk if muscle injuries, warm ups are mostly effective at improving performance.

To start, you first want to think about the requirements of the session and what you normally struggle with. Climbing requires the whole body and should therefore include that in the warm up. Many climbs require moves in extreme range of motion, balance moves, and power moves. Again, all of these things should be included in the warm up. If you have a particular move you struggle with or tight area in your body, you will want to also include that in your warm up.

As for the order of warm up, it is best to start with some light cardio to get your body temp up and help warm up all the tissues. Strength and mobility work can then be done once you are a bit warmer. Power should be trained later in your warm up and should be less repetitions than you do for other exercises. Balance can be trained in any order of your warm up. For warming up the fingers it is beneficial to do some hang boarding before your climb to help warm up the fingers. Easy climbs can also be done to help warm up, but a controlled isometric hold on a dead hang is beneficial. A good way to check if your hands are warm enough to climb is to touch the back of your fingers to your face. If they are warm to touch, you are warm enough to start climbing hard.

A dynamic warm up is preferred over static or no warm ups. This means addressing mobility with movements like leg swings, arm circles, spinal twists, etc. instead of holding a stretch for something like your hamstrings. Static stretches can reduce performance in the short term, and are generally not recommended until after your session. There may be a slight caveat to this with some injuries, but in general keep your static stretches until after your session.

In general, try to mimic your sport in your warm up and make sure you think about the types and speed of moves.

Components of Warm Up:

* Cardio
* Finger training
* Upper body
* Lower body
* Mobility (dynamic)
* Balance