

A Mountain Guides Prospective.

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I work with hundreds of climbers each year on Mt. Rainier, Denali and elsewhere, and have been able to see first hand what training regimens prepare folks well for their climbs, and where some fall short. Couple that with my own training - whether my goal is preparing for Everest or simply keeping this middle aged body together - I think I have 'the best' plan for training for climbing big mountains. And it's simple:

In training, we want to mirror, as best we can, the conditions we'll encounter on the mountain. We want to develop the strength and stamina to go up and down steep slopes with a heavy pack. In a nutshell, this requires us to build up our legs, lungs and back. I feel the best way to accomplish this is to hike and run up and down steep slopes or stairs. Although carrying a backpack is one of the least attractive aspects training, it is also one of the most important. That being said, we should try to train with the pack at least 2-3 times a week, increasing the pack weight as we get stronger to approximate the weight we expect to be carrying on the climb.

The intensity of the workout should reflect the level of effort we anticipate climbing those last thousand feet to the summit. That is, we should push ourselves. Training for mountain climbing should be neither easy nor comfortable because mountain climbing is neither. Many people make the mistake of centering their training on long, slow efforts when mixing up the regimen with interval training where speed is worked on will greatly increase ones strength.

The steepness of the hills or slopes we tackle should reflect the mountains we plan climbing. Generally, slopes over 25 degrees build our leg strength much more than flatter terrain. Stairs, too, work fine for training, especially if we can find a taller multiple storied buildings or stadium steps. When confined to working out in a gym, then stair stepping machines are certainly better than nothing, particularly when coupled with a heavy pack. Additionally, treadmills cranked up to the full 15 degrees will be better than running on relatively flat terrain.

I add some other forms of exercise to my training to keep it fun including running and cycling. But when I'm preparing for a climb I push myself to keep my heart rate and

respirations elevated. If I can easily carry on a conversation I'm probably not pushing quite hard enough.

These suggestions will hopefully focus our training efforts towards mountain climbing. It is helpful to recognize that our training efforts may be different and more difficult than that of our friends, family or colleagues. After all, we're training for the mountains, and not just to fit into our old blue jeans.