

Interval Training for Fat Loss

By Doug Jackson, M.Ed.,CSCS

What is interval training?

Interval training is a form of cardiovascular training that provides maximum benefit in minimal time. The concept is simple: alternate periods of high intensity activity with periods of low intensity activity within the same time period. This allows for the exerciser to receive both the benefits of high intensity training, along with the benefits of lower intensity, longer duration exercise. Interval training has been shown to:

- Burn significant calories in as little as 16-20 minutes
- Significantly increase aerobic capacity
- Substantially increase EPOC (excess post-exercise oxygen consumption) over traditional steady-state cardiovascular activities. Higher EPOC means a higher metabolic rate after exercise has been completed.

Is interval training right for everyone?

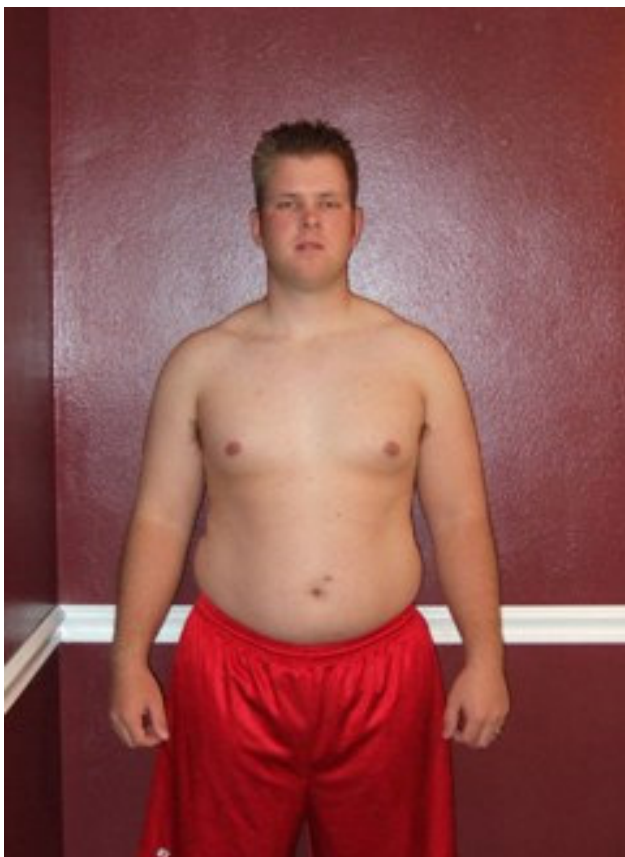
Traditionally, interval training has been used with advanced exercisers. For example, someone might run fifty yards as hard as possible, walk back fifty yards to the starting point, and then repeat the process five to ten times. Used in this way, much of the population may rule out interval training, as their bodies may not handle running well. Many people will simply need to get to a base level of fitness before ever running. Others will not be able to run for orthopedic reasons.

However I believe the concept of interval training can be applied to virtually any exercise situation. For example, a beginner might do a relaxed walk for a minute, followed by power-walk for a minute, continued in an alternating fashion. This will be more effective for getting a person in shape than a leisurely stroll after dinner.

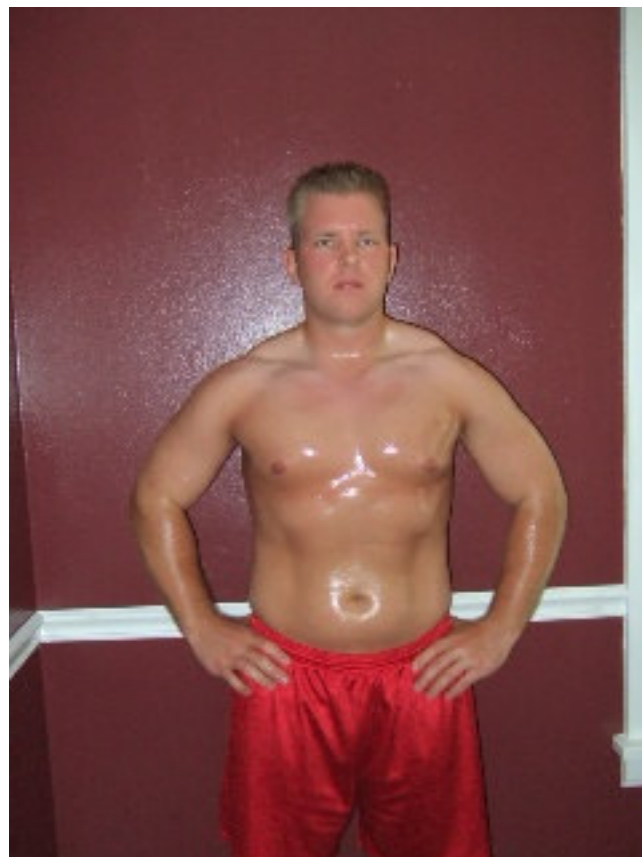
Lastly, you can use interval training in a variety of fitness settings. I believe the most effective form of intervals for fat loss is completing some sort of interval sprint workout. However, for people with joint problems or age concerns, intervals can also be effectively used on elliptical machines, stationary bikes, rowers, and walking.

The Exact Interval Routine that Josh Venis Used to Help Him Shed 34 Pounds in 14 Weeks

(See Below)



Week One – 234 lbs.



Week 14 – 201 lbs.

Josh's Interval Training Routine:

Here's Josh's interval training protocol that he followed for the majority of his fourteen week transformation. Keep in mind that in addition to this routine, he had a very precise nutrition regiment, an intensive weight-training program, and additional cardio. So although Josh considered the intervals one of the keys to his success, it was only one piece of the puzzle. Don't expect to get results like these by simply adding intervals into your program. Most people who add intervals to their program following a similar protocol as below may drop an additional 2-3% body fat within twelve weeks.

Josh Venis Interval Program:

Monday Interval:

2 minutes hard

1 minute light

Total of fifteen minutes

Cooldown as needed

Wednesday Interval:

1 minute hard

1 minute light

Total of fifteen minutes

Cooldown as needed

Friday Interval:

1 Minute Hard

2 Minutes Light

Total of fifteen minutes

Cooldown as needed

*This program was generally completed following intensive weight training sessions. This allowed for glycogen (carbohydrate) depletion near the start of the intervals and aided in increase fat loss. Completing intervals while having low glycogen levels will generally decrease energy levels during the workout, but will aid in greater fat loss.

Question and Answer with Josh: Josh answers basic questions regarding the most important aspects of his transformation:

1) Why did you decide to start a strict "body transformation" program?

Josh: I think this is kind of a question that I struggled with for several months before making the decision to do it. I knew that I had been pretty strong from always hitting the weights pretty hard, but I just couldn't seem to lose any fat. Sure I could throw up a lot of weight on my bench press, but I didn't look lean. I used to be at about 10% body fat around 6 years ago, and then it all went downhill from there. I knew I had the potential, and I just made a commitment to make it happen. I was not happy with the way that I looked, and didn't like the way my clothes fit. I finally came to a point where I said, enough was enough. I decided I was going to hire you as a trainer and commit 100% for 90 days to do whatever you guided me to do to get the desired fat loss. That decision was probably one of the hardest, yet best ones I've made in the last few years, it definitely has paid off.

2) What were the key things you did each day to get the results you achieved?

Josh: The biggest thing I can think of here was staying focused. Once you and I had our initial call and you explained to me what the vision and potential was, I took hold of that and got motivated to get the results we both agreed were possible. I really relied on your expertise to "Lead me to the water, and I drank." Simply put, it was just following exactly to the specifics that you set in my programs. I did not cheat, I did not cut any workout short, I never skipped a day. It was 110% from the start, and that was a big win! There were days that I didn't quite feel I had energy, but I knew I had to push through it and keep my eyes on the end goal. We went through basically 3 stages of workouts. The first stage

was mainly getting new movements into my workout to shock my muscles, and build a new base. This also included the introduction of “Active Recovery” workouts. Let me tell you, those were pretty tough at first, and then became more attainable as I went along. The second phase was a lot of introduction of approaching the cardio portion of the workout differently. This phase introduced very intense cardio intervals, which really produced results. The final phase, and probably the most brutal, was the peaking phase over the last 2-3 weeks. I literally busted my butt every day those last couple weeks to get the last bit of fat loss. Another key thing that helped me achieve the results from day one was the nutritional diet advice. Let me tell you, that was probably 70% of the catalyst that helped deliver the fat loss. Your expertise in this area, along with the way you educated me on this area was phenomenal. Now, I’m able to apply all this learning for the rest of my life! It’s a total change in mentality, a whole new approach to working out and eating right, eating clean.

3) How would you generalize what you were doing for your exercise before the transformation? How did you change your exercise program during the transformation process?

Josh: Before I started this transformation, I mainly just hit weights 5-6 days a week, and did cardio as I could fit it in 2-3 days a week. I did zero ab exercises, and really didn’t have much strength in that category. During my previous weight training, I mainly did 3-4 sets of 8-10 reps per exercise, and tried to increase my weight each time. I actually think I may have been over-training prior to this change. I would do on average 5-6 exercises per day on just one body part, and that equated to a lot of reps. After working with this new plan, we really tightened up the program by strategically picking exercises that would provide the most toning effect, and really dropped the total sets down to a more manageable level. I also really only hit each body part one time per week before the new program, and we changed that too. With what I was doing during this program, I was basically hitting just the main body parts, chest and back, twice a week. Everything else was once per week.

The active recovery workouts were mostly a total body workout experience. We combined stability ball movements with intense short spurts of cardio and it was a big circuit of about 9 exercises. It took about 10 minutes to complete one circuit, and I would repeat 2-3 times. This really incorporated a lot of “core” exercises and also helped me get my heart rate to different levels throughout the workout. Also, during the regular workouts, we really focused on the tempo. Some sets were 2 to 1, some were 2 to 2, and this really helped get a nice burn during the movements. Overall, this new program that I worked on with Doug really helped change the pace of what I was doing. We implemented a lot of super-setting, and this tactic also helped keep the heart rate at different levels throughout the workout. Also, by super-setting, I became more efficient with my time.

Cardio intervals were the last piece to the puzzle, which I never really knew much about. Going for 15-20 minutes, alternating 2 minutes killin’, 1 minute chillin’; this was really a good approach to cardio that helped mix things up. The total combination of new program layout, cardio, and introducing active recovery and ab exercises really were the key to the transformation and the major change from what I was doing before.

4) How would you generalize what you were doing for your nutrition before the transformation? How did you change your exercise program during the transformation process?

Josh: Before I started this program, I thought I actually ate pretty healthy. I found out very quickly that I wasn't, and that there were some drastic changes to make. I used to eat about 3-4 meals per day, and really didn't worry about the timing of when I had carbs or protein. I ate a lot of food that wasn't balanced correctly, meaning that it didn't have the right mix of carbs/fiber, or enough protein. I learned very quickly about the 7:1 ratio with the carbs/fiber. I also didn't realize how to "feed" my metabolism to help burn fat throughout the whole day. Once I started this program, I was coached on how to look for foods that were a lot healthier for me. I increased my protein intake through both whole food products and supplements. I would say that prior to the changes, I would be lucky to get 125-150 grams of protein in per day. After I started this program, I was getting well over 200 grams per day, and this really helped. I learned about keeping my body in an anti-catabolic state and how this helped with the insulin levels in my body. Overall, we also changed the times of the day that I ate certain things, mainly carbs. We put a majority of the carbs as close to my workout as possible so that my body could more effectively put them to use throughout the day. I also went from 3-4 meals a day, to around 6-7. The more frequent meals made it easier to cut down the portions, but yet still feel full. I also started watching my sugar intake. I really quit eating foods that were high in sugar, such as canned fruit, regular yogurt, etc. Instead, I changed to fresh fruit and low carb yogurt. This was just a slight change, but I applied this to everything that I ate. I no longer eat foods with high sugar contents. One final thing that I changed was adding a very high-quality multi-vitamin, fish oil, and fiber supplements into my daily routine. Overall, my nutrition now looks somewhat like this:

7AM – post workout shake, occasionally a piece of fruit

9:30AM – natural oatmeal or egg omelet with a high protein breakfast bar (Kashi or South Beach)

12PM – Spinach salad with a chicken breast or tuna

2:30PM – chicken breast, hard boiled eggs, tuna, occasionally a piece of fruit

5:30PM – High protein dinner with veggies (Usually meat and high-fiber veggies)

8PM – Protein Shake

That's pretty much how it looks. Major changes to what I was doing before, and it's a lot healthier.

5) What did you find to be beneficial about the coaching/accountability process?

The accountability was crucial. I always had opportunities to send a quick email or leave a voicemail about any questions or concerns I had, and it didn't take long to get a response. I think that working long-distance helped the accountability a lot, as I wanted to prove that I

was actually doing something up here with the program Doug was putting me through. The last thing I wanted was to get the program, and then not fully utilize it. So, the accountability was pretty key to my success. Doug was always asking me how I was feeling, and if I felt like I was losing or gaining any strength. One major concern when dropping weight is usually the level of strength that is retained. Surprisingly, I really never felt like I lost much of that. I think a lot of this was attributed to how we structured the workouts, as well as the supplements that I was advised to take. Glutamine supplementation was a huge help in retaining my strength and preventing muscle breakdown. Doug was a very good coach and motivator during the entire time, always making sure that I understood what we were trying to accomplish, and answering my questions. He never put me in a position where I didn't feel like I didn't understand or couldn't ask him a clarifying question. I also liked the fact that I would occasionally just get a random call from Doug just to see how things were going, and get a little encouragement! This was a pretty good feeling, knowing that there was someone that was believing that I could get through it, and succeed. This relationship far exceeded my expectations in this perspective, and I think that I felt just the same level of fulfillment from the long distance training as I would have had it been in person. This was really impressive to me, that we could accomplish so much over the phone and through email.

6) How do you feel about what you've achieved after 14 weeks of dedication?

It feels great. I feel like I actually accomplished what I wanted to, and beyond! At first I wasn't sure how well I'd do with the programs, but they worked. Dedication is the key thing. It took a lot of hard work, but was very rewarding along the way. Each week when I saw the number on the scale dropping, that kept me going. I was actually pretty surprised that I did not even lose any strength. Scientifically, usually people who drop weight usually lose a lot of strength, but the way we did it and some of the supplements Doug recommended to me, I was able to retain at least 90% of my strength! This was something that I felt really good about! I achieved 34 pounds of weight loss, and most of it was body fat. I can still lift quite a bit of weight, and the muscle mass is still there. It feels good to be able to look in the mirror and see a totally different person. Everyone in my family and at work has really complimented me, and they too are impressed with the results! That's also very encouraging, when someone else recognizes your results! I feel like a totally new person, and I know that accomplishing this goal is just the beginning of my total long-term transformation.

7) Now that you've achieved your initial goals, what's next?

Well, that's something I'm still trying to iron out a little. First of all, I took a few days off completely, and that was very refreshing. I've since then started back to the gym, doing mainly instinctive training and cardio intervals. I think long term; I want to get to a point where I'm down to less than 10% body fat. This may take some time, and I'm willing to work towards it, I just don't have a specific time table yet. I think, depending on what you advise, I will likely go through some muscle building phases to get some muscle growth again, but certainly keep the fat off. My ultimate goal is to be able to sustain my weight loss, get down to a very lean 185 pounds, and see where that takes me. This would mean

I'd have to work very hard to get about another 15-20 pounds of fat off, but I think we can do it. I just want to look good, look lean. If I can get that nice six-pack abs, and be lean, that's what I'm looking for. I don't know how long it's going to take, I'm hoping less than 1 year, but I'm willing to go for it. I think working with Doug, I'll get to my next goal, when I define what that really is. I also know that Doug will help me define this next goal. So Doug, we're not done yet, we have some more work to do. I'm ready for more! I can't thank you enough for helping me along this journey, and I really think you have definitely exceeded my initial expectations! I am going to recommend that anyone looking for someone to train with long-distance or in person, Doug Jackson is your man! He'll work with you, he'll help you make it happen!

The Next Steps to Getting In Your Best Shape Ever:

Make sure to sign up for Doug Jackson's Fitness Empowerment Newsletter at:
www.PersonalFitnessAdvantage.com.

Check out Doug's recommended sources for the best fat loss program:
www.TopFatLossPrograms.com

Are you a beginning or intermediate exerciser who would you like to transform your body, but aren't ready to work with a trainer? Invest in Doug's Fitness Now and Forever body transformation program at www.FitnessNowandForever.com .

Would you like to get the whole family in shape? Check out the one-of-a-kind family fitness program that Doug co-authored with 2006 ACE Personal Trainer of the Year Jonathan Ross at www.FamilyFitPlan.com

Want it all? Would you like coaching and personalized guidance in reaching your fitness goals? If you are 100% committed to getting results, Doug is currently reviewing consulting applications for his coaching services. To submit an application for an initial **15-minute complimentary phone consultation**, go here:
<http://www.south-florida-personal-trainer.com/contact.html>