

Five Fantastic Finishers

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Undoubtedly, with a program called *Show and Go*, Eric has covered all his bases with regards to providing a plan that will not only get you stronger than you've ever been, but also make the opposite sex want to hang out with you a little more. Let's be honest: we all have a little narcissism in us, and while lifting heavy stuff will definitely pave the way for a rock solid physique, sometimes we need to kick it up a notch.

That said, when it comes to "finishers" (or "death circuits," as many of our clients at Cressey Performance like to call them), I feel there's a lot of merit to including them sporadically throughout any given training week. Why? For obvious reasons, they kick your ass – and for someone who's spent hard earned money to get your hands on this program, these finishers will be right up your alley.

More specifically, though, from a bang-for-your-training-buck standpoint, finishers are unparalleled. For starters, they're way more efficient. Unlike slow, drawn out, steady-state cardio, finishers are usually completed within 10-15 minutes. You get in, work your butt off, hate life, and you're done. What's more, as research as repeatedly shown throughout the last decade, metabolic work (in the form of finishers, circuits, high-intensity interval training, or whatever you want to call it) trumps steady cardio in every category from fat loss, to improved $\text{VO}_{2\text{ max}}$, to keeping you from wanting to throw your face into a wall from sheer boredom.

Sadly, many people like to revert to what's easy for them. This is why, when you walk into just about any fitness center in America, you'll notice every elliptical machine and treadmill being used by people who are too busy watching *SportsCenter* or *American Idol* to actually doing anything remotely beneficial. Not coincidentally, these are the same people who piss and moan that, despite "exercising" consistently for months (maybe even years) on end, they never seem to get any results. You're not one of these people.

In the end, it comes down to training with a goal in mind. More importantly, it comes down to training with ***purpose*** and ***intent*** to kick some ass and take some names in the gym. This doesn't mean, however, that you should try to be a hero and do a finisher after *every* training session. Far too often, we get in the mindset that "more is better." While that may be true with many things in life (techno, episodes of *30 Rock*, and cowbells, for example), when it comes to utilizing finishers, it is not.

Remember that fatigue will always mask your true fitness level. Consistently beating yourself to the ground – although admirable – may actually *hinder*

progress, rather than enhancing it. Moreover, you're really opening yourself up to a plethora of overuse injuries if you're too overzealous with this stuff.

On that note, below are five finishers you can add here and there to the end of a training day. After checking with Eric, he recommended using no more than one per week – and to try to use them at the end of the day on Saturdays (the end of the training week – which is followed by a day of complete rest). I've tried my best to include exercises/equipment that can be used in any commercial gym setting. Enjoy!

1. The Inverted Ladder

This is a concept that I stole from strength coach Matt Pack, and it is without question one of my favorite finishers because it's so easy to tweak and adapt to each individual. To start, you will pick two exercises (preferably one upper body movement, and one lower body movement) that will be done in ascending/descending fashion, respectively. Also, you will also include a "wild card" exercise that will stay constant throughout the duration of the ladder. Using an example:

Goblet Squats: 1-10 (done in ascending order)

Push-Ups: 10-1 (done in descending order)

Jumping Jacks: 25 (constant)

Grab a stop watch and press the timer. From there, it will look something like this:

Goblet Squat x 1
Push-Up x 10
Jumping Jacks x 25

Goblet Squat x 2
Push-Up x 9
Jumping Jacks x 25

Goblet Squat x 3
Push-Up x 8
Jumping Jacks x 25

And so on and so forth...

The main objective is to complete the entire ladder in as little time as possible. For those who are competitive, try to beat your previous time each time you do the same ladder.

Of course, you can replace the above exercise with just about anything, depending on preferences, equipment availability, and weaknesses you want to bring up. Other favorite pairings I've used in the past are as follows:

Trap Bar Deadlift: 1-10 (ascending)

Overhead Med Ball Floor Stomps: 10-1 (descending)

Chin-Ups: 3 (constant)

*** Of note, I love using the chin-up constant here for those who are trying to improve their chin-up numbers. For those who are really weak with this movement, you could also just do ONE rep as the constant. Likewise, for the females, you could just use the eccentric-only version (jump up to the bar, and lower yourself as slowly as possible), or do them band-assisted.

Flat DB Press – Neutral Grip: 1-10

Inverted Rows: 10-1

Yoga Plex: x3/leg

I'm not kidding when I say that the opportunities are endless here. You could also increase (or decrease) the total number of reps you're doing. I've gone as high as twelve repetitions with some clients. Conversely, I've gone as low as five with others. It just depends on their fitness level and/or what types of injuries they may have or any postural considerations I need to work around. Be creative here.

2. Countdowns

The idea here is pretty simple. Pick two exercises and alternate back and forth between both until all repetitions are completed. For example:

Barbell Push-Press

Chin-Ups

OR

Barbell Reverse Lunge – Front Squat Grip

Seated Cable Rows

Again, grab a stop watch and press start. From there, you'll perform 10 reps of reach exercises, then 9,8,7, etc.

Much like the ladders above, this finisher offers a lot of variety for the trainee, so feel free to substitute exercises/or movements in depending on availability or any weaknesses you feel you need to address.

Of note, you could also do CountUPS, where you start at one repetition and work your way up alternating back and forth until you reach your desired end number (usually ten). Also, you can combine the two (CountDOWNS and CountUPS), but I only recommend these for those who are really sadistic and/or ready to puke.

3. Plate Finisher

I believe this is one that strength coach Nick Tumminello has made popular, although I've tweaked it slightly. Here, you'll perform all exercises in circuit fashion with no rest in between sets.

Plate Swing x 10

Plate Loaded Front Squat x 10

Low to High Plate Chop – Right Side x 10

Low to High Plate Chop – Left Side x 10

Reverse Lunge – Right Leg x 10

Reverse Lunge – Left Leg x 10

Plate Push – 25 yds (if this isn't possible, then do another round of plate swings for 10 reps)

Rest 60-90 seconds, and repeat for a total of 3-5 rounds.

4. Around the World

Not all of you will be able to utilize this one because of equipment restrictions, but for those who have access to the proper equipment, it'll be an ass-kicker.

Grab two med balls and place them roughly 20-25 yards apart on turf or any surface that allows you to push a sled. Starting at one end, press start on a stop watch, and sprint with the sled pushing it to the other end. Grab the med ball and perform ten med ball floor stomps. You'll only rest for how ever much time is left before the next minute starts. Once the next minute starts, you'll sprint to the other end, and again, grab the med ball and perform ten med ball floor stomps. You'll continue doing this every minute, on the minute, for ten minutes.

5. Grip It and Go

Much like the “Around the World,” with this finisher you’ll utilize roughly 20-25 yards of space, but in this case, you’ll be able to complete this one in any commercial gym setting. Grab one heavy dumbbell. Essentially, you’ll walk with the dumbbell in the suitcase position (farmer’s carry) all the way down with one hand, turn around, and then walk back with the other. Once you’re back at the starting point, set down the DB and then perform five burpees.

Personally, I like to do 4-6 total sets, incorporating a different exercise with each round of farmer carries. As an example:

Round One: Farmer’s Carry (down and back) paired with Burpees x 5

Round Two: Farmer’s Carry (down and back) paired with Spiderman Push-Ups x 5/leg

Round Three: Farmer’s Carry (down and back) paired with Mountain Climbers x 10/leg

Round Four: Farmer’s Carry (down and back) paired with Prone Elbow Touches x 10/arm

Round Five: Farmer’s Carry (down and back) paired with DB (or plate) Swing x 10

Round Six: Farmer’s Carry (down and back) paired with Bodyweight Reverse Lunge x 10/side

Obviously, you could just pick one exercise to pair the farmer carries with and do that, but I like the variety. Rest 60-90 seconds between rounds.

Conclusion

Again, to reiterate, finishers shouldn’t be used at the end of every training session; they should be plugged in here and there to give your training a kick in the pants when you feel like you’re getting stagnant and need to step up your game. Mix and match from the five I outline above – and invent some of your own – to keep things fresh.

About the Author



Tony Gentilcore is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) and Certified Personal Trainer (CPT) through the National Strength and Conditioning Association. A co-founder of [Cressey Performance](#), based just west of Boston, Tony has established himself as one of the premier trainers in New England through his no-nonsense approach to training and desire to provide the most up-to-date, results based, and fun training environment for his clients.

Tony is a regular contributor at *Men's Health*, *Testosterone Magazine*, *Experience Life*, and other reputable publications and specializes in fat loss, strength training, program design, corrective exercise, and nutrition.

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