

GET IN SHAPE FOR THE EPIC UTAH WINTER!

By Christopher Bell, MD

As the days shorten and get colder and the white stuff starts to fall, thoughts turn from hiking, biking, running, and boating to skiing and snowboarding. But before the resorts open, you may wonder what you can do to best prepare yourself for the season.

To get the most out of the world-famous Utah fluff, you need to focus on three things: (1) cardiovascular endurance, (2) muscle strength and endurance, and (3) core stability and balance. This article focuses mostly on the latter two items. By being well prepared before the snow starts piling up, you can be lapping your buddies on the early-season powder and maximizing the chances you'll stay injury-free throughout the winter.

CARDIOVASCULAR ENDURANCE: If you're not already active, you will find it beneficial to get into a routine of at least 150 minutes of cardiovascular exercise per week: running, biking, swimming, or anything else that raises your heart rate and causes you to sweat. This exercise will form your aerobic base and provide a good foundation upon which to build.

MUSCLE STRENGTH/CORE STABILITY: Muscle strength and endurance, as well as good core stability and balance, are also crucial for snow riding. The following exercises can help with these. Do each two to three times per week, gradually working your way up from one set to three sets of each exercise per session.



PLANK/SIDE PLANK: Get in push-up position but rest on your forearms instead of your hands, so that your weight is supported solely by your toes and forearms. Keep your torso nice and straight. Hold this position for as long as you can. If this is too hard at first, you can do it with your knees down. To increase difficulty, raise one arm or foot (or one arm AND the opposite foot) off the ground.

For the side plank, swing off of one arm and face sideways with only one forearm and your down foot in contact with the ground, supporting your weight. Hold for as long as you can. Switch to the other side and hold. To increase difficulty, bring your upper knee toward your chest and hold.

Make a goal to hold each plank position for at least one minute.



SINGLE-LEG SQUAT: First, try doing a single-leg stance with your eyes closed, making sure you can balance for 30 seconds on each leg without swaying too

much. Once you can do this, then you can try dipping down into squats on each leg. Go down as far as you can but no farther than 90 degrees of knee flexion, and make sure your knee stays directly over your toes for the entire squat. To increase difficulty, do this on a balance platform, BOSU ball, or thick carpet. You can also add dumbbells. Try to work up to 15–20 squats per leg.



LUNGES/JUMP LUNGES:

Start with your feet shoulder-width apart. Step forward with one leg, and dip down

until the knee from your back leg almost touches the floor. Stand back up, and go down with the other leg. To increase difficulty, place your back foot on an exercise ball or add dumbbells.

Another variation is the jump lunge, where you jump from right-leg lunge to left-leg lunge, back and forth. Try to work up to at least 20–30 lunges on each leg.

Many exercises out there are beneficial for skiing and snowboarding, but these three should build the strength and balance you need for a great season. Plus, you can always add more! Just be sure to start slowly and gradually progress; we don't want you to suffer any injuries while you're trying to *prepare* for the season! Enjoy the winter, and we'll see you out on the slopes.

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