

# FUN

## Circuit Training for Young Athletes

Terry West



Terry West is a Level V coach (Middle Distance) who has been involved in all facets of Track and Field over many years. During this time he has been involved at the national and international level as coach, manager and lecturer. His current role is President of the Oceania Athletics Coaches Association and ATFCA lecturer. Terry has coached many athletes to international level and his love for the sport grew from initially being interested through his own children's involvement with the sport.

**W**hen Ian Thorpe was interviewed in Los Angeles in 2006 about young people and training he offered the following thoughts. "Exercise is great," Thorpe said, "but when you see kids slaving in the pool who should be playing in the pool and not training, it's wrong. Parents think that's what is going to make this kid amazing, and it's not true. There is no evidence of that. You ask swimmers on the national team how many were doing these laps when they were eight or nine, and not many of them were, because they all burn out."

This was music to my ears and reminded me of a coaching clinic I was conducting. The kids (7 to 14 years) were doing a variation of circuit training, sweating, puffing, smiling and asking if they could do another one. A parent was on the side with his 10 year old daughter. He was telling her she couldn't join in. He said, "I didn't bring you down here to have fun."

What of course the parent didn't realise was that doing activities that are enjoyable can have valuable training effects.

Creative circuit training is an excellent training tool where we can obtain desired training effects in an enjoyable and mentally stimulating way.

### **What is Circuit Training?**

There are many different types of circuit training. For the purposes of this article I will refer to circuit training as simply comprising a series of exercises or activities performed in recurring patterns and sequences.

Circuit training is an excellent way of improving skills, mobility, strength and all round body conditioning at the same time. This type of training works simultaneously on both the neuro-muscular system and aerobic and anaerobic endurance. It can be simple, complex, general or specific, can be used throughout the year and is coach driven. It needs very little equipment or space and can be used with both small and large groups. It can be a part of a training session or it can be the whole of the session.

Circuit training is only limited by a coach's creativity, imagination and knowledge. What more could one ask for!

I present two different circuits.

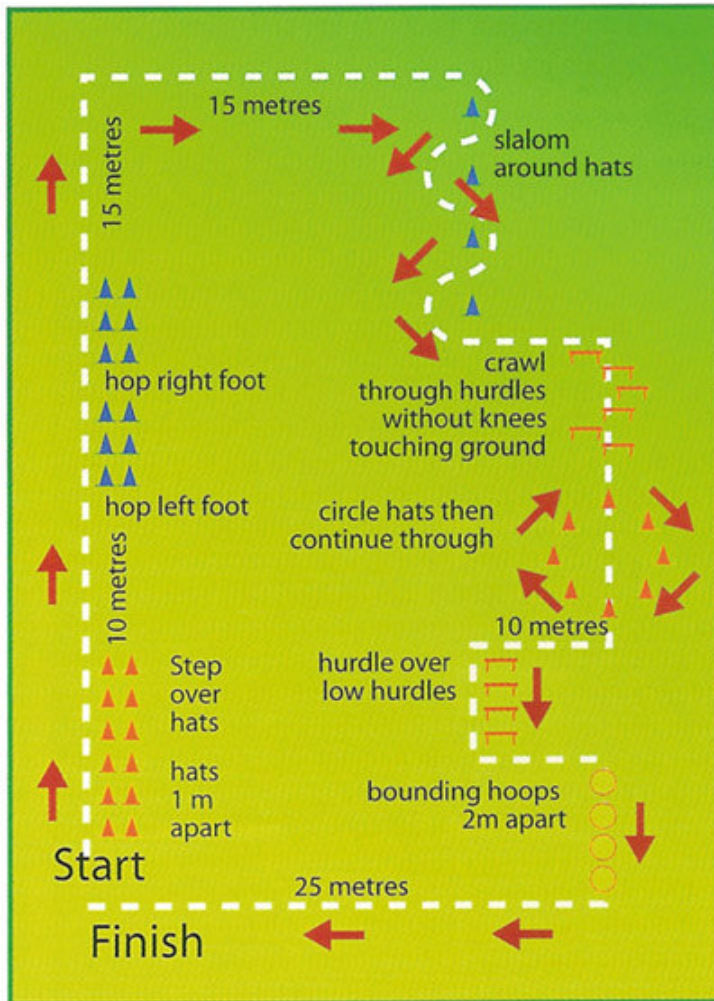
**Circuit 1** is an Obstacle Circuit.

**Circuit 2** is both rhythm and endurance and has parts "borrowed" from Max Debnam's article in the Modern Athlete and Coach. If you haven't read it go I advise you to do so.

### Circuit 1 - Obstacle Circuit

**Emphasis:** Endurance/skill/mobility

**Equipment and Space:** Cones, witches hats, hoops and hurdles. Approximately 50 square metres.



Circuit 1: Obstacle Circuit

Many more variations can be made depending on resources and desired outcome of coach.

**Age:** 7 to 14 years plus

**Time:** For one circuit - 45 seconds plus, depending on distances between stations

**Number of Reps:** 3 to 4

**Intensity:** As fast as possible

**Recovery:** Approximately 5 minutes or more

Note:

\* Original decrease in time will come from "learning" how to do the circuit.

\* After about 3 weeks, times will plateau and it will be time to change the stimulation

\* I use two witches hats in the stepping over part of the circuit, to eliminate the stepping "around" that some young athlete are inclined to do

### Suggested Variations:

1. Coach keeps completion times and using the best time each week and runs the last circuit as a handicap race. The introduction of a competition more often than not, produces a PB.
2. Run the last circuit as a handicap race but allow any athlete who catches another athlete to stop. If the athlete on Go finishes without being caught they have the pleasure of watching the group complete 40 push ups between them (or any other exercise and number). I have more often than not seen the "slowest" athlete complete the circuit without being caught.

## Circuit 2. Activity A, B and C

This is really three different rhythm and skill activities. By combining the activities at the end it is made into quite an intensive circuit. In using it this way, the circuit becomes the training session.

**Emphasis:** Rhythm/technique/flexibility/endurance.

**Equipment:** Witches hats, con and 4 hurdles

**Time Taken:** With the combination at the end less than 2 minutes for one repetition

**Suggested Ages:** 10 to seniors

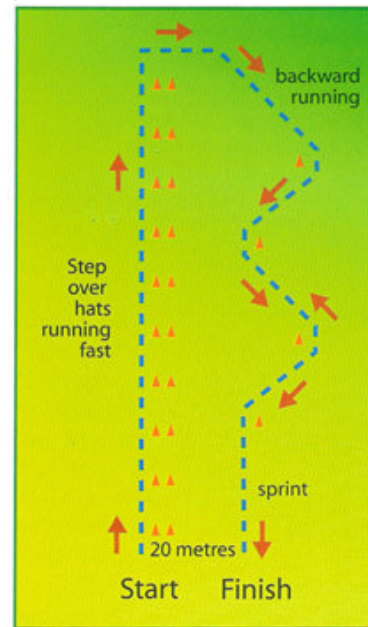
**Number of reps:** Two of each activity, then one to two of the combined activities

**Intensity:** As fast as possible whilst maintaining technique

**Recovery:** About 3 minutes for each separate activity and 5 minutes or more for the combination

### Procedure:

1. Warm up.
2. Complete two repetitions of each activity with 3 minutes rest between.
3. Rest 5 minutes and then complete all three activities as a circuit and as fast as possible. Coach records time. Once only.
4. Using the times a second circuit is completed as a handicap race. The variations of the Obstacle Circuit can be used.

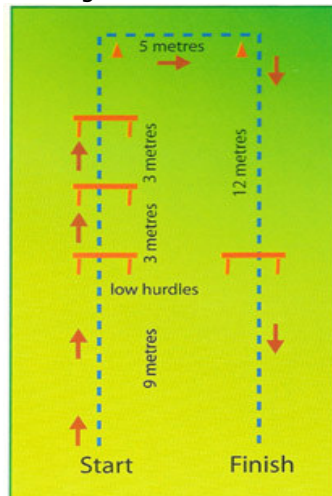


Circuit 2: Activity A

The variations with both of these circuits are endless. The space between the hats and cones and hurdles can be increased. The number of hurdles can be increased as can the height as athletes develop technique and a fast rhythm.

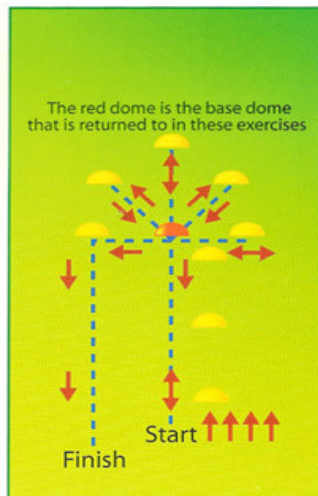
### References

1. Max Debnam. Rhythm, Balance and the Technical Model. Modern Athlete and Coach. Volume 45 No 1 January 2007
2. Brent McFarlane. The Science of Hurdling and Speed 4th edition 2000
3. IAAF Basic Coaching Manual 1992



Circuit 2

Activity B



Circuit 2

Activity C