

## Strength Training for Hounslow

Strength Training has been proven to improve running performance and in a race like Hounslow with so much vertical and a good percentage of that coming from stairs I feel its a vital part of your training routine . The question is what type of strength training will benefit you the most ?

The benefits of strength training are dependant on the exercises you do. The more similar the exercises are to the task the more the benefit. So for example hiking uphill with a weighted pack on will have a lot more benefit for Hounslow than sitting on a machine in a gym. Simply working the legs muscles in anyway you can is not going to help your performance . We need to think about how the legs are going to be used in Hounslow and pick exercises that are similar

### Exercises

There are a huge range of exercises you can do and a complete discussion of them would fill a book but I'd like to share what I think would help you at Hounslow.

#### Weighted Stair repeats.

Hiking up stairs 2 at a time with a weighted pack on is an extremely beneficial workout for Hounslow . The weight of the pack should be a few kilograms heavier than the maximum weight in your pack on race day. If you are using uniform concrete stairs then I recommend mixing up your foot positions to simulate the random nature of bush stairs. Turning your feet out or in a little, taking wider steps, and narrow steps will help recruit lots of different muscle fibres that wont be used if you stick to straight up and down. - Start with 3 x 10 minutes with a few minutes rest between and build up to 3 x 20 minutes once a week.

### Lunges

These are the staple of any strength program for runners and can be done in a variety of different ways. Walking lunges and jump lunges are two of my favourites .

Walking lunges are done simply by stepping forwards and lunging down at the same time then alternate legs. If you have the room do 10 steps with each leg , if space is limited then do as many as you can and turn around and repeat. You should also mix up foot placement , long strides, short strides, feet turned in/ turned out slightly , stepping wide or stepping across in front of the other leg. These variations help simulate the random nature of trails. The lunges should be performed in one movement- ie dont step forward pause and then lunge down - make it one fluid movement.

Jump Lunges are when you start in a lunge position , spring upwards , swap legs mid air and land again before quickly springing up again . The lower you go the harder they are .

If you have never done lunges before then start with fixed up and down lunges or some 2 and 1 leg squats first to build strength before you add walking and jumping lunges.

### Box Jumps

Box Jumps are simply jumping and landing on top of a box - high enough to be a challenge but low enough that you can do 15-20 reps without missing the box. From the top step back down and repeat.

Once you can comfortably do 2-3 sets of 15-20 reps you can also include jump downs. Jump up, jump down ( in a forwards direction), land lightly, turn around and repeat. The jumping down loads the legs significantly more so take your time building strength before including them. You might start with a box as low as 20cm and develop co-ordination then gradually progress higher .

## Core Training

Despite everything you may have read traditional core training is a waste of time . There is plenty of research showing planks, crunches etc have little to no effect on performance or injury prevention so I wouldn't waste any time doing them. Your core will work more effectively doing weighted stairs, lunges and jumps than it will doing planks . There are some effective core exercises you can do - see here for more details <http://www.mile27.com.au/3d-dynamic-vertical-core-training-for-runners/>

## Repetitions and Sets

I would look at reps of 15-25 or more and 2-3 sets to build endurance. High weights low reps has been shown to improve performance over shorter distances through helping recruit more fast twitch fibres. This might be great to kick at the end of a 10km but when you are doing a race lasting 10+ hours you want all the slow twitch fibres you can get.

A 30-45 minute strength workout twice per week will pay big dividends come race day .