

## **Teaching Boot Camp Is Like Kindergarten**

You may be surprised to hear that I actually plan my boot camps in a similar way as to when I taught kindergarten. In the 20 years I spent teaching primary school, I picked up some tricks that come in handy and I apply in my years of teaching boot camp. You'd be surprised at the similarities between the kindergarten classroom (or in the gym where I usually saw the little munchkins) and my boot camp.

Now I don't mean to be disrespectful at all. My clients are not 'elementary' in any way, shape or form, but the strategies I'm about to tell you about work with both groups.

### **Change it up!**

In kindergarten, I always had an activity that would last 10 minutes and then I would change it so as to keep little minds focused. Any longer than this time and many children would get bored, eyes would wander and trouble would sometimes follow.

Now in boot camp, the focus is on intensity. I find that most clients left on their own with a circuit can maintain a high intensity for 10-15 minutes (without direct instruction).

After that, they start to peter out and intensity falls off. So, I like to change up the activity every 10-15 minutes instead of having a circuit that will last the whole hour. I may be over generalizing here, many clients are very self motivated and given a circuit, goal, time to beat, reps to do, etc, will fly at it like it's their last day on earth. Others: not so much. To strike a happy balance, if I change the activity often, my motivated clients will find that they are nearing the end of the circuit anyway and are motivated to finish before I call 'time!'.

For example, here's a circuit that is great to do for 10 minutes. Tell the group the time frame and that they should get as much done as possible:

10 push ups/run or sprint a specified distance/10 squats/return to start  
9 push ups/run or sprint a specified distance/9 squats/return to start  
8 push ups/run or sprint a specified distance/8 squats/return to start  
Repeat this pattern until client gets to 1 and then start to work back up again.

Your motivated clients will try to get from 10 to 1 and back up to 10. Your 'not so motivated' clients will start at a slower pace and slow down as time goes on. By changing the circuit after 10 minutes, usually my less motivated clients will come to a second circuit with renewed energy. We all know that intensity produces results, so we need to keep the intensity high for the group for as much of the hour as we can.

I like to have a good mix of individual circuits like the one above and ones that we do as a group. I get comments from clients that enjoy the independence of working on their own and I also have clients that love timed sets that are done with the group. This seems to keep their attention and intensity at its peak for them. So, mix it up with both kinds of circuits.

For example, I may do the first set above, followed by the following timed set as a group:

### **30/30 No Equipment Strength/Cardio Set:**

Perform DB exercise followed by cardio burst for 30 sec each:

1. Climbing push up/mountain climber
2. Prisoner squat/speed skater lunge jump
3. Knee in/suicide sprint
4. Lateral lunge/sprint or stationary run
5. Staggered push up/squat jump
6. Plie squat/squat jump
7. Shoe touch/lateral suicide sprint
8. Wall stick up/sprint or stationary run
9. T push up/jumping jack
10. Squat-lunge-squat/speed skater lunge jump
11. Plank/suicide sprint
12. Bench dip/jack round house kick
13. Close push up/stationary skip hop
14. Frwd/bkwrld lunge R/mountain climber
15. Frwd/bkwrld lunge L/mountain climber

Most of my campers like the energy of the group as everyone works through this together. I can offer training tips to everyone at once, go over form and spot campers that need to clean up form. I can also offer modifications or ways to intensify to everyone in this setting.

### **Keep it the same...**

In kindergarten, little ones like structure and they like to know what to expect. If you start the class at the opposite end of the room, or do the 'calendar' out of order, then you're in for trouble. Routine is a helpful part of every day to maintain order and security.

Boot campers aren't much different. They are coming to you because they need guidance, support and motivation to get their body in shape. Having some routine is helpful.

For example, I do a very similar warm up every day. Over the years, I've tried a variety of things and asked for feedback from my group. They prefer to warm up in a similar way. This offers me the opportunity to address and explain the upcoming work without having to go in to long explanations about what to do in the warm up. We warm up fairly slowly with lots of large muscle movements and dynamic stretching, nothing too complicated. The work will come after the body is warm and the mind is prepared. As well, there is no down time to explain the workout; we can start in right away.

The cool down is similar in that clients know when to expect it and what to expect. Stretches will change daily so as to address different muscle groups from all angles and positions, but the mood will be the same. You can cool down the body and prepare the mind for the day. You can provide some motivational suggestions regarding nutrition. You can recognize the great effort of the group or of certain individuals. I find this and the warm up to be the two areas that clients like to maintain a similar format.

**Be the hero...**

In kindergarten I would often be presented with lint covered jelly beans saved from recess, or sticky fingered hugs. Children love their teachers.

Boot campers can be similar. While you won't be presented with the same offerings, the level of respect and even reverence can be the equivalent. This is something that you should value and preserve. Just as a kindergarten teacher will change a child's life, you too are in a unique position to change lives. Your influence can make or break someone's resolve to better their health, so take this position seriously. Maintain a professional distance; be sincere in your concern for your client's health and welfare and it's likely that you will be your camper's hero as well.

**Have fun!**

Kindergarten can be the best time in a person's life. Boot camp can be too. It's an hour a day that clients can forget the troubles in their life and focus on their health. Your leadership and the camaraderie of the group are invaluable in creating a positive environment that your clients will want to return to.

Too bad we can't go back to the carefree days of kindergarten, good thing we have boot camp instead.

Shawna Kaminski Fitness Bootcamp Inner Circle member and Sure Results Fitness [Bootcamp Workout](#) contributor  
*Female Fat Loss Over Forty*' Guru.  
<http://budurl.com/fatloss40>