

## Functional Fitness Training, the New Buzz in Fitness

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What is Functional fitness? Functional Fitness has been around since the days of our childhood. Whether you were a child 20 or 80 years ago, functional fitness would have been in existence. Functional Training is a method of training, where the focus is on training movements that utilize multiple muscle groups. To be scientific, it can be defined as the ability of the neuromuscular (this is the mechanism that links our brain to our muscles), system to perform dynamic (which is a fancy word for motion), eccentric, isometric and concentric contractions efficiently in a multiplaner environment. An eccentric contraction is what happens when a muscle lengthens, concentric is the shortening, and isometric means that the muscle is not doing either. Picture yourself holding a dumbbell in your hand, curl your arm up. The muscle in the front, which is called the bicep, is shortening. The muscle in the back of the arm, the triceps, is lengthening. Stopping any movement of the arm and simply holding the arm still in the curl would be isometric. Multiplaner refers to how our bodies relate to the direction of a movement. Are we moving forward, sideways or transverse (which is something like turning back to whack a tennis ball.) Functional Training integrates all three planes of movement and replicates motion patterns that we perform in our everyday lives. Things such as, getting in and out of bed, walking, reaching, and pulling open a door, pushing a grocery cart, picking up a dropped item from the floor while holding a baby in the other arm..

A functional training program incorporates balance, agility, posture, strength, and coordination exercises. And this brings us back to the days of childhood. Before the invention of Nautilus machines, there were free weights, ropes, trampolines and Indian clubs. As children we jumped, bounced, hop-scotched, swung bats, kicked balls, climbed trees, and ran after each other. We would not have considered any of those things, to be boring exercise. But every one of those activities was functionally building strength. The body had to perform in unison to accomplish each of those activities. Functional training

does not isolate individual muscle groups but integrates the muscles to execute the movement

Isolation techniques mostly grew out of the Body Building industry, where the specific development of muscles is the prime objective. What you see when you look at a professional body builder is not necessarily a functionally strong person, but more of a molded statue. How many times have you seen body builders who can't even put their arms to their sides, and they walk in an awkward stiff manner. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against bodybuilding, it is a sport that takes a great deal of dedication. However, most people are not planning on entering a body contest, but are planning on being healthy and physically able. One of the main differences between training functionally and training with machines that isolate the muscle, is the way strength is being measured. On the Chest press machine, you can look over at your stack of weights and see that you are pushing 70 pounds. When you are doing push-ups on the Swiss ball how is that strength measured? There is no special number to boost the ego. Functional strength is measured the way athletes measure their performance. The athlete measures their strength not based a number, but on the success of the activity. That's functional! When you can go out and stand steady on your boat, while a giant fish is pulling on the line attached to your fishing rod, that's functional strength!

Strength training, functional training, and cardiovascular training are all important components to a fitness program. Functional fitness brings out the child in everyone. Think about this, which among us can really resist sitting on a big red ball! To learn more about functional fitness log onto [PhysiquesByPT.com](http://PhysiquesByPT.com)

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