

Shape up for skiing, but easy does it!

Hey there, skier! Do you realize that at the next flip of the calendar page, there may be snow in the air! And shortly after that there will be snow on the ground, that's skiable.

And will you be ready for it? Will you be physically fit enough to ski as well as you can all day long? Probably not if you just sit there, doing nothing about it.

Fret not. There's still time to whip yourself into some sort of shape before winter arrives. And whether you're a down-hill basher or cross-country stalker, whether you're an overweight male or a slight little female (or vice versa), you can improve your fitness level -- and therefore your skiing ability -- in your spare time. The point is that a bit of extra effort now will pay off later on the hill and trails.

Dr. Douglas Firth, a Toronto osteopath and founder of the Canadian Ski Patrol System, believes that many injuries suffered each year by skiers on the hills could be less severe, or prevented altogether by proper conditioning.

"There are many excellent programs of exercises", he says, "but the most effective program for the individual skier is the simple one that he or she will stick with right through the season. It's no good if it's so complicated they won't continue with it." He stresses exercise which promotes the three fundamentals of muscle conditioning: flexibility, endurance and strength.

First of all, let's get organized and figure out what you need most. The answer to that is obvious: nearly everybody needs cardiovascular conditioning... which is just a big word for helping your heart-and-blood system reach a higher level of stamina. To get on the road to CV conditioning you must work hard enough to puff a bit, and then keep at it for several minutes.

The best single, general exercise for the skier is probably cycling. So get out your bicycle and begin with an easy ride; later on you can put more effort into it. If you don't have a bicycle, see if you can find an exercise somewhere. Swimming is a beneficial basic exercise, too. So is running, or a lively game of squash. If you don't like the choice so far, how about climbing stairs? And of course, there's always walking.

Take it easy at first, make it enjoyable. Then push yourself to the discomfort threshold, and try to do a little bit more every other day -- but only if you feel like it.

This cautious, progressive approach to exercise is important. To do you the most good for skiing, any exercise activity must be started gradually and gently, then practiced consistently. Pain has no place in the conditioning process. You don't want to damage anything vital or get sore muscles before you even start active skiing; exercise is supposed to avoid that.

After a few days of initial exercising you can begin to try a little harder, puff a little longer, endure a little more discomfort. And you'll feel so good when you stop.

Along with general conditioning where your heart and lungs are being asked to deliver more oxygen to the hard-working muscles, there are specific muscle groups which both downhill and cross-country skiers should pay attention to... gradually.

Let's start out with the most overlooked muscles of all -- those in the back. A helpful exercise simply involves getting down on the floor on your hands and knees with bare feet. Slowly straighten one leg until it is parallel to the floor, from your hip; hold it out straight for a few seconds, then bring your

knee back down on the floor. Do the same movement with your other leg, and alternate right and left -- say a dozen times each. Then straighten out each arm alternately from the shoulder; another dozen times each arm.

When you've had a few sessions of this exercise, try combining the arm and leg movements: your right arm straight out ahead at the same time you straighten your left leg behind. After a couple of weeks try it with your shoes on and a book in hand for extra weight. Eventually you may want to do it with your ski boots on, but avoid over-stressing the muscles with heavy downhill boots. Note that slow, deliberate movement is better for your conditioning than fast and jerky actions.

A well-toned abdomen is a big help to your back and important in skiing. Old-fashioned sit-ups are frowned on now (too much strain on the lower spine), but this exercise works on the abdomen, back, thighs and hamstrings without levering the spine out of shape.

Sit on the floor, legs together out front, hands on the floor behind for support. Slowly raise your right leg off the floor,

keeping it straight. Bring it up as high as it will go comfortably, then hold it there for a few seconds, or as long as possible. Lower slowly and repeat with the left leg. Just a few repetitions at first; gradually increase. Begin with bare feet, add shoes in a few weeks; maybe ski boots after two months.

Now the upper abdomen. Lie back with the head on the floor, knees raised and bent, feet flat on the floor, arms at the sides. Tell your neck muscles to lift your head slowly until your chin is on your chest; continue this lifting action until your shoulders are just off the floor (don't raise your whole torso). Then slowly lower your shoulders and head back to the floor. No more than three repetitions to start; these muscles complain painfully if they are overworked.

Let's get a little flexibility into those hamstrings. Sitting on the floor, let your fingers do the walking down your shins -- slowly -- to your ankles, or as close as you can get comfortably. Grasp ankles and hold them for a few seconds. Then lean back and relax briefly; stretch forward again. If, sooner or later, you can grasp your toes, that's fine, but don't make it a painful

objective. And don't hob and jerk forward, hoping to extend your reach another inch; that just tears at the muscle tissue and makes for a painful session the following day. Stretch slowly, gradually and pause for several seconds at maximum extension.

The "quads" -- those muscles on the thighs -- need stretching too. Sitting on the floor, legs out straight ahead, gradually bring your right foot back to your right hip (approximately) with some help from your right hand. Feel

those quads stretch! Easy does it. Repeat twice to begin, then add repetitions as you feel up to it.

So much for the formal exercises. Of course this is not a comprehensive program, but it will get any serious skier started on the trail to better conditioning. And they're simple enough to remember. Do them at least once a day; twice is better.

Consider the informal exercises -- those helpful movements you can combine with other activities. Downhill skiers need thigh

muscles trained for endurance; cross-country skiers will find them useful, too. So at every opportunity -- while cleaning your teeth, drinking coffee, reading the paper -- stand with your knees well bent (not more than ninety degrees, though) and feel those quads going to work.

Another brief exercise for the quads is the well sit; with your back against a wall and feet about 18 inches in front, pretend you are sitting on a non-existent chair. Hold the position until the discomfort in your


quads tells you to stop. Admittedly your friends will think you a bit strange when they notice this new behaviour; you have the option of explaining it or leaving them mystified.

Here's a related exercise you can practice more frequently and without raising as many onlookers' eyebrows. Every time you sit down anywhere, do it so slowly that the quads get a workout. Reverse the process every time you get up from a chair.

Cross-country skiers need shoulder and arm con-

ditioning; to a lesser extent so do downhillers. So try these two static exercises for the arms. Place your fist on the edge of a desk (as if emphasizing a point to a thick-headed boss) and press down as hard as comfortable, preferably with your elbow bent at a

right angle. Maintain the pressure for a count of ten. Do the same with the other arm. Now put your fist under the desk edge and lift up once again applying power gradually and not exceeding the discomfort threshold.



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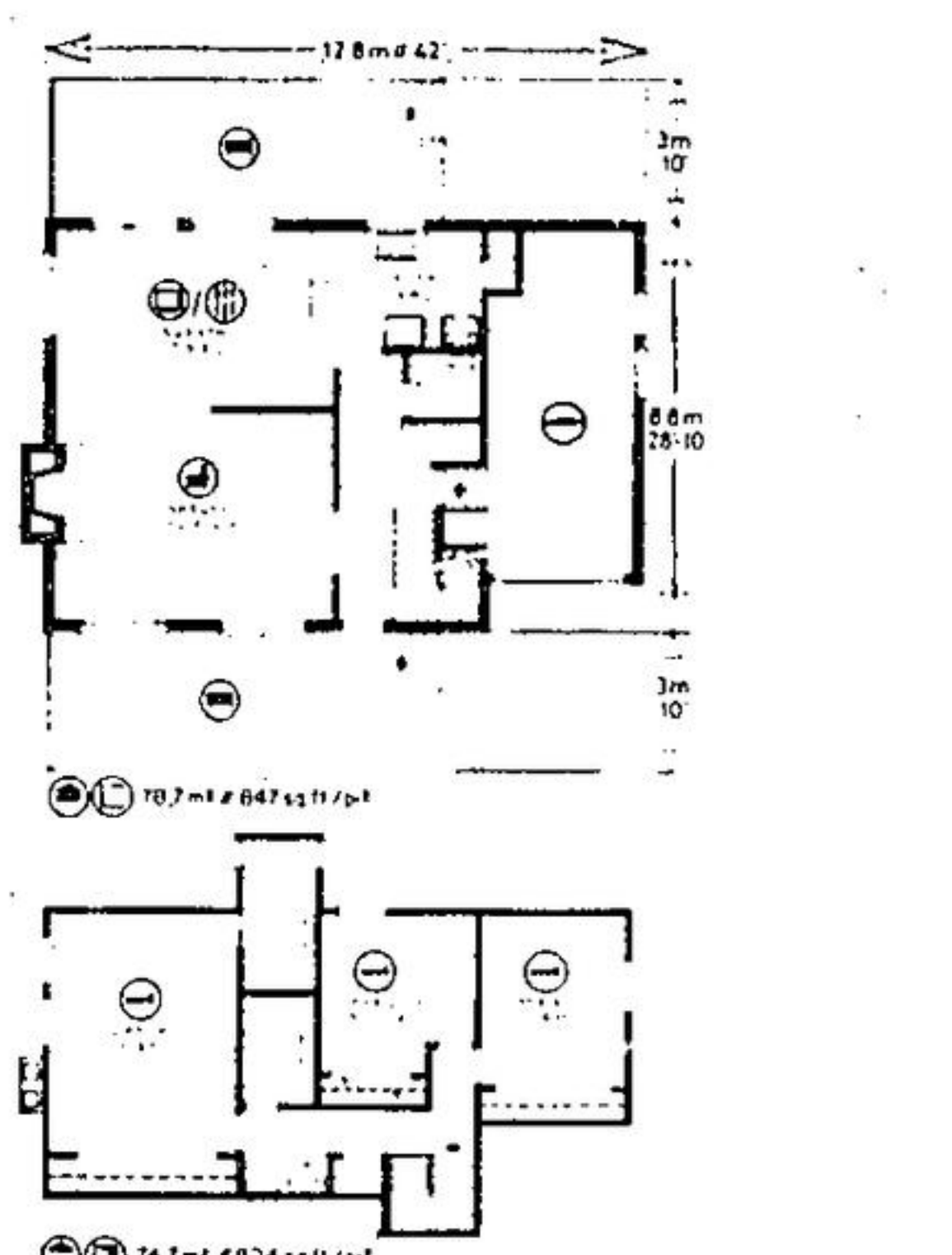
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COUNTRY-STYLE TWO-STORY COTTAGE

This charmingly rustic three bedroom cottage design possesses a degree of style and sophistication not often found in recreational homes. All of the modern convenience features found in today's residential homes have been incorporated into this eye-catching and compact package. The traditional exterior, finished in stone veneer, stone chimney, horizontal channel siding and shake roof, is reminiscent of the old stone cottages of continental Europe. The design's floor plan provides a spacious 1,650 square feet of finished floor area.

The weather-protected entry leads into a compact reception foyer and naturally led, into the large living-dining-family room complex. The living room features a large stone-veneer masonry fireplace and swing-out doors to the front verandah. The dining-family room is a large combination area which can contain several activities at once. It features a sliding glass walk-through which connects to a large rear-facing patio, for outdoor activities such as barbecues, table-tennis or sun-bathing.

An extended galley-style kitchen provides a step-saving work triangle configuration and ease of access to both the dinette and the patio. A two-piece vanity bathroom is centrally positioned to all downstairs areas.

A single enclosed garage is sunken three tiers from the main living level, and contains abundant space for both storage and a work bench for the cottage handyman.

All three bedrooms are positioned upstairs around the central bathroom and linen storage areas. Each has excellent natural lighting and ample closet storage facilities. The large master bedroom has a three-piece ensuite bathroom with tub behind a space-saving pocket door, and a full-width closet. A step-saving side-by-side laundry facility is contained behind louvered bi-fold doors, central to all bedrooms for convenience.

Plans for design No. 8-1051 may be purchased either by the single set, at a cost of \$95.00 for the first set and \$20.00 for each additional set, or by the package. A five-set plan package, including the first set, is economically priced at \$145.00 and an eighth set package, also including the first set, is only \$175.00. A higher method you choose, please include \$5.00 for postage and handling. Ontario residents please add 7% sales tax.

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