

# Bundle Up for Cool-weather Boot Camps



It is fall, but that doesn't have to be the end of your popular outdoor boot camp class.

Au contraire: With Thanksgiving and the Holiday season fast approaching, many clients will fight the urge to eat and drink more and exercise less.

Besides keeping your clients on track, your boot camp sessions can be a great way for clients to integrate family and friends with outdoor activity or take learned exercises indoors in place of watching TV.

Boot camp instructor Ian McGriff, who is the fitness director and head trainer at the [Tipton Lakes Athletic Club](#) in Columbus, Ind., recalls one of his most memorable outdoor boot camp classes on a crisp winter day.

“Two years ago, on a Saturday morning, when we had three feet of snow on the ground and all the businesses remained closed and sporting events were cancelled, I did a boot camp at a park—We had 12 people that day and it was huge success,” McGriff said.

McGriff said his Tuesday and Thursday morning outdoor sessions starting at 6:15 a.m. still draw about 8-10 people in spite of near freezing temperatures.

So what's behind the popularity of outdoor boot camps?

## **TRX Boot Camp**

In McGriff's view, it's a workout that sticks to its military roots with very little equipment and relying mostly on participant's own body weight and movement.

That is with two caveats: Keeping the exercises simple, so that every participant can follow and cueing the workout by time allows each person to move at their own pace and exercise ability.

“I want people to get the sense that this workout is special and different from anything they can be doing in a paid or free group exercise class and personal training session,” McGriff said.

A fan of [TRX suspension training](#), McGriff arrives at the park early to hook several TRX straps from trees.

A typical workout looks something like this: Start with a dynamic warm-up, followed by a TRX squat matrix series, then a jog or run, return to the TRX for upper-body work using opposing muscles groups (push and pull exercises), another jog or run, and back to the TRX for a second squat matrix; end with a cool-down.

In the winter, adaptation to the environment is key.

“When it’s 30 degrees and snowing, people are fine exercising outdoors, provided they wear the proper clothing,” McGriff said. “If it’s too cold, I’ll take it indoors, but I’ll hook up the TRX system even when it snows.”

To prevent falls, McGriff stays away from running on ice or snow.

McGriff pays close attention to the local weather forecast and notifies clients in advance to arrive in outdoor wear. When the conditions are too harsh, he tells them to dress for indoor activity.

“We always communicate with people,” McGriff said. “In Columbus, you never know what the weather will bring. On some days, we use the heater and air conditioning on the same day.”

## **Licensing and Liability**

If you plan on running a boot camp on public property, you need to obtain permission from the appropriate local authorities first.

Check with your local municipalities or parks and recreation department first as the rules and requirements can vary significantly from one local jurisdiction to another.

McGriff said his county’s parks and recreation department merely required him to produce proof of professional liability insurance and other release waivers.

“Our county doesn’t have anything against us going to the park and using it,” he said. “As long as we have liability coverage and release forms, we’re Ok.”

Christopher Mohr, who puts on a women-specific outdoor boot camp, five days a week, under his company, [Mohr Results Inc.](#) in Louisville, KY., also found a cooperative parks and recreation department.

“We show proof of liability insurance and pay a monthly flat fee (\$350) to use the outdoor space and the lights (which the city turns on before the park officially opens in the mornings specifically for the boot camp sessions),” Mohr said.

Mohr has 85 registered participants and draws as many as 60 women to the park on any given day. Most women are stay-at-home moms or busy professionals who want to start their day with exercise.

## **Boot Camp with Stations**

Like McGriff, Mohr’s clients won’t let the cold winter mornings get in the way of exercise.

However, when temperatures drop to near freezing, it’s important to extend the warm-up and have less downtime in between exercises.

“You don’t want your clients to get cold,” he said.

He runs his boot camp by setting up 20 stations with different exercises and uses equipment, including medicine balls, agility ladders, tubing, bands and dumbbells.

“We go by time and allow everybody to work within their own limits,” Mohr said.

“There are days when we do more agility drills, set up ladders and cones, but when there is ice and snow on the ground, we take in indoors,” he added.

Mohr has had great success renting space from a tennis club and from the local Jewish Community Center.

## **Identifying Indoor Space**

Todd Durkin, renowned personal trainer and owner of the [Fitness Quest 10](#) health club in San Diego, and boot camp educator, also has found no shortage of business owners or community groups willing to rent space to paying customers.

His recommendation: Check with operators of school gymnasiums, churches, and private businesses, such as hotels, tennis clubs, theatres, and music halls.

Most of them don’t run their business during the early morning hours. Hence, they often welcome the opportunity to generate extra revenue by renting out space and you get to grow your business.

Durkin runs his boot camps in the outdoor area of a hotel in exchange for paying a monthly fee. He advises instructors to purchase additional liability insurance.

JJ Brawley, an ACE-certified Personal Trainer and program coordinator of [Inner City Boot Camps](#) in San Diego, decided to take his boot camp into a music hall after feeling stonewalled by the city’s parks and recreation department.

Brawley said, in San Diego, the requirements to teach boot camps in public areas are so demanding that he basically gave up trying to meet them.

Among the city’s concerns as Brawley tells it: “If you work with kettlebells, they are concerned about divots, and if you’re using bands, they are concerned about them snapping.”

The city’s application also calls for a head count on participants on any given day, which creates the basis for their fees.

“It’s nearly impossible to know how many people are coming to your class,” Brawley contends. And he added, “Not to mention the city wants to collect all of your payments upfront and pay you at the end of the month. Not a good deal.”

So instead of putting on an outdoor boot camp in San Diego’s year-round sunny and warm climate, Brawley now teaches indoors.

An opponent of the military in-your-face boot camp-style, Brawley’s gentler and show-oriented boot camp draws mostly women in their 30s and older.

“I don’t yell at anyone -- Instead, I give them constant positive encouragement,” he said.

He also offers clients a form of a “money-back” guarantee.

## **Smart Marketing**

Participants, who pay \$199 per month for 12 months and achieve their weight loss goals and then relapse, are invited to train for free until they reach their ‘graduation’ body weight. To sweeten the deal, Brawley throws in a free pair of designer skinny jeans.

Developing your own style and word-of-mouth referrals are the best ways to grow your boot-camp business.

What makes a successful boot-camp instructor?

Mohr, who prides himself in having an 83 percent participant retention rate, offers the following advice for successful boot-camp teaching:

- Knowledge of the human body
- Being able to interact well with groups
- Being able to take command
- The ability to think quickly and adapt the workout to changing environments
- Know each participant by name and acknowledge them during the workout
- Never lose sight of any participant
- Connect with a media outlet or networking group to earn name recognition

Other essentials include:

- Good communication skills
- Notifying clients in advance, if plans change and can be predicted
- Rewarding clients for achieving their goals

Don’t let winter weather get in the way of your client’s favorite workout.

This Holiday season why not encourage your clients to stay on top of their weight and their fitness programs. This will help your clients start the New Year without the need for a resolution to lose weight and get in better shape in time for bathing suit season.