

Outdoor Gym Equipment

Many parks and open spaces contain outdoor gym equipment, you may have noticed them yourself whilst out and about. They can seem a little intimidating, but they are designed to be easy to use whatever your level of fitness and ability. You will usually find a selection of equipment to focus on upper body, lower body and core strength as well as some cardiovascular exercise (working the heart and lungs). The equipment usually has instructions on it but here is a selection of commonly found outdoor gym equipment with information on how to use them so that you will know what to expect if you want to have a go. Try to warm up first with some gentle cardio work and then include a mixture of upper and lower body exercises.

Cross trainer or Sky Stepper



Place your feet on the foot plates and hold the handles. Cycle your feet forward or backward in a walking motion and move your hands back and forwards. Works muscles in the arms, legs, chest and abdomen as well as raising your heart rate. Increase or decrease your speed to increase or decrease the intensity of the exercise.

Slalom Skier



Stand with both feet on the footplate and hold onto the handles. Push your feet out from side to side replicating the action of slalom skiing. Works muscles in the thighs, calves and lower abdomen as well as raising heart rate and improving balance and coordination. Often set up with two skiers facing each other, as shown here, so you can chat with a friend whilst exercising.

Rower



Sit on the seat and hold the handles. Pull the handles back towards you in a rowing action whilst pushing with your legs and keeping your stomach muscles working. This exercise uses your body weight as resistance and will raise your heart rate as well as providing strengthening to the muscles in the chest, stomach, arms, and legs. An excellent all over body workout!

Bicycle



Sit on the saddle with feet on the pedals and pedal gently. This exercise is a great way to warm up and improve mobility in the knee and hip joints. Increase the speed of cycling to increase the intensity of exercise.

Lat Pull Down



Sit on the seat and hold the handles. Pull the handles down by squeezing your shoulder blades together and using your back muscles (the lats or latissimus dorsi). This exercise uses your own body weight as resistance and strengthens the back muscles as well as the upper arms, in particular the biceps.

Chest press



Sit on the seat and hold the handles. Push the handles forwards and lower them slowly. This exercise uses your own body weight as resistance and strengthens the chest muscles as well as the shoulders and upper arms, in particular the triceps.

Leg Press



Sit on the seat with feet resting on the foot bars. Keeping your heels down push with your feet to move your body away as you straighten your legs. This exercise works the muscles at the front of the thigh as well as the backs of the legs and bottom making it an excellent for strengthening the lower body.

Tai Chi Discs



Hold the handles and rotate the wheel. You can use both hands at the same time and rotate in the same direction or opposite directions. This exercise mimics some of the movements of Tai Chi, the Chinese martial art practiced for both its health benefits and meditation. The exercise gently improves flexibility and movement in the arms and shoulders as well as improving co-ordination if both hands are used.