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How to 'In-Vest' in your preparation

We had plenty of sayings in the Marine Corps, some of which aren't exactly rated G. The laundered version of a popular one is "Proper preparation prevents poor performance." What this means, in a nutshell, is that being ready ensures success.



**Matt
Brzycki**

Of course, maintaining a state of readiness isn't something that's only applicable to the armed forces; it's also absolutely crucial for the law-enforcement community.

Police officers who are members of a SWAT Team wear tactical vests. Although the weight of a tactical vest may vary, it's significantly heavier than a duty vest. Not being "used to" the extra weight could present a physical challenge during an operation in which you might have to sprint down an alley, hop a chain-link fence, run up several flights of stairs and/or pull yourself onto a ledge. (Remember, too, that you'll be wearing a ballistic helmet and humping other gear which adds even more to the load.)

The more acquainted you are in handling the extra weight, the more likely a mission will have a favorable outcome. One way for you to become more comfortable with extra weight without having to "saddle up" with all of your gear is to train with a weighted vest.

BENEFITS

A weighted vest will prepare you for the weight of tactical gear. But there are other benefits, even for those who aren't on a tactical team.

A weighted vest is an outstanding tool for general conditioning. Merely wearing a weighted vest during normal activities applies a substantial load to your muscular and cardiovascular systems.

In addition, training with a weighted vest is a great way to provide variety in your workouts. This is especially important for those individuals who have been training for quite some time and are "in a rut."

EXERCISES/ACTIVITIES

You can wear a weighted vest for most bodyweight and calisthenic-type exercises. This includes the squat, step-up, lunge, dip, push-up, pull-up/chin-up and sit-up/crunch. If you're a fan of metabolic conditioning, you can devise a sequence of these exercises that could be repeated a few times in a "circuit."

A weighted vest actually improves some of these exercises.

"I have found weighted vests better than weight belts for dips and chins because the weight is centrally located on the torso," says Doug Scott, the Strength Coach and Fitness Director at The Pingry School in Martinsville. "Weighted vests are also better for lunges and step-ups because the added weight reduces the amount of weight that you need to hold with dumbbells."

Suspension training has become highly popular among the military and police. A weighted vest will add a new dimension to this type of training.

A great conditioning activity is to walk up and down stairs or stadium steps wearing the vest. Hiking is another good activity. The vest works well for doing agility drills, too.



But you should exercise caution when running. "I wouldn't use weighted vests for prolonged running or jumping due to the added stress," says Scott. You can, however, do short sprints with a weighted vest.

CHOOSING A VEST

It's always better to have your own weighted vest. When training in a weighted vest, perspiration is a constant companion. With increased concerns about infectious diseases, there's nothing worse than swapping sweat.

It's said that "you get what you pay for" and that's pretty much the case with weighted vests. If you buy a cheap product now, you may find it in rags by the summer. It's better to invest your money in a quality vest.

If at all possible, try on the vest before you make a purchase. Different vests will fit different ways. The vest should provide a snug fit yet be comfortable. Pay particular attention to the location and distribution of the weight. If the weight "sits" high on your chest, it might hinder your breathing, especially when you're training with a high level of intensity.

Also examine the shoulder straps: Too wide and the straps might restrict your range of motion; too narrow and the straps might feel uncomfortable.

Ideally, the weight of the vest should be adjustable in small increments. And it should be in a range that suits your needs.

Make sure that the material is "breathable." You don't want to feel as if your torso is wrapped in a 20-pound Hefty bag. All stitching should be "heavy" and durable. Finally, confirm the warranty and return policy.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A weighted vest is an excellent "tool of the trade" and training with one will help your physical preparedness. ♥

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