

Rope Training: The Next ‘Wave’ in Fitness

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It is an exciting time in the fitness industry right now as we have seen a “renaissance” in the training methodologies and exercise tools. Of the main tools being used by the top strength and conditioning professionals and communities, “ropes” have recently surfaced as an effective tool for full body conditioning, endurance, power endurance, movement enhancement and fat loss. The unique aspect of the rope training is that it allows you to create a “wave”, much like you would see in the ocean. The typical rope being used for “waves” is usually between 50 and 60 feet in length and 1.5 to 2 inches in diameter. The length of the rope makes it quite challenging as you need to develop a substantial amount of power to get the wave to travel all the way to the end (where the rope is anchored to). The thickness of the rope provides a big challenge to the fingers and hands with the end result being a much stronger set of “paws”.



The brainchild behind rope training is John Brookfield, the creator of BATTLEING ROPES. John is one of the most knowledgeable guys in the fitness industry and is well known around the world for his superhuman feats of strength and endurance. I want to give John the credit for inventing such a cool and innovative method of training.

As a fitness professional and enthusiast I must say “thank you John”. I have never taken any of John’s courses but from what I hear they are fantastic.

What Yoana and I have done is take the rope wave concept John has come up with and we have put our own flavor on it coming up with our own program called **“The Revolution Solution: Combining Ropes and Kettlebells for Maximum Fitness and Fat Loss.”** We have found that similar to kettlebells, rope training develops a level of fitness that gives you immediate benefit and results. We have successfully used ropes and kettlebells together for the last five years at our training studio in La Jolla, San Diego and have developed some effective programming for fat loss and overall full body conditioning.

Below is a list of the **TOP 5 REASONS** I feel rope training is beneficial:

1 Rope training increases your Endurance and Stamina Quickly

I have a client who has Multiple Sclerosis and is in his late sixties. He cannot run and cannot do traditional cardiovascular exercises. We started having him perform rope wave training earlier this year and his cardiovascular fitness improved greatly as did his medical blood profile. His blood pressure dropped considerably as did his insulin levels, blood sugar and cholesterol. My client has also noted an increase in his energy during the day from the rope training. This client is one of many who have reported an increase in stamina and endurance since adding rope wave training. If you are familiar with the concept of General Physical Preparation (GPP), think of rope wave training as an excellent method of GPP to build you overall movement ability and work capacity.

#2 Allows you to perform new movement patterns with endless variety

Rope wave training offers an endless amount of movements which means an increase in motor learning. By simply switching the grip, foot position and body position you can seamlessly alter the type of wave being performed. You will not be bored with rope wave training because you can alter so many variables leading to fresh and new patterns your nervous system has never been exposed to. I have seen clients who were rather clumsy and goofy with their movement abilities start to improve in other exercises from adding rope wave training. My guess is that the multiple patterns that ropes allow you to perform improve your full body integration and coordination. The proof is in the pudding. Our clients start to move better from rope wave training.

3 Improves Grip Strength, Power and Endurance at the same time

Rarely will you find an exercise method that allows you to train a myriad of bio-motor abilities at the same time. Grippers train strength, farmer's walks with weights increase endurance, but rope training improves your power plus strength and endurance simultaneously. Why? Because the thickness of the ropes taxes your grip and the speed at which you move the rope must be fast, developing not only quick hips but quick hands.

4 Greater Mental Toughness

Rope training is brutally tough, both physically and mentally. Few people can perform powerful rope waves for one minute without stopping and gasping for air. From the looks of some of the rope wave movements, many erroneously conclude that they can easily perform rope waves. One try and they are in for a big surprise. Rope training will humble even the fittest athletes out there. I have done

few things as tough as long duration sets of rope waves (maybe the 400 meter sprint performed all out is a bit harder.....but either way.....both suck....in a good way).

5 Phenomenal Tool for Fat Loss

This may be the main reason while people should and want to perform rope waves. Rope waves, kettlebells and proper nutritional habits can absolutely sizzle unwanted body fat. I have no double blind studies to prove the effectiveness of ropes for fat loss, but I do have large percentage of clients who are leaner and more fit because of rope wave training and that in my book trumps any double blind college study. We think of our fitness studio as somewhat of a “laboratory”, where we constantly test tools and methods to find out what works and what doesn’t. Our experiments with rope waves: they deliver results!

What Rope Size is right for me?

We usually recommend getting a 50 or 60 foot rope. Any less than 50 feet seems to be too short and greater than 60 feet seems to be rather long, especially if you are training indoors. My favorite length is 60 feet and that seems to be a great length for most fit people to work up to using.

The diameter should be no less than 1.5 inches and you could even go up to a 2 inch diameter rope which is very challenging to the grip. For the average trainee who is new to rope training, we recommend: a 50 foot rope / 1.5 inch diameter.

For the more fit and conditioned person we recommend: a 60 foot rope / 1.5 inch diameter.

If you are training a client who has more of a need for grip strength as would be the case with a fire fighter, a construction worker or a mixed martial artist, you could use: a 60 foot rope / 2 inch diameter.

Nylon or Manilla



Both work very well. I prefer the Nylon for the indoor studio or gym because it lasts longer and does not shed. The manilla ropes tend to shed their fibers and that can be quite a mess as you are always having to sweep up the manilla fibers. Manilla ropes tend to work better in outside environments.



What is the Proper Technique?

The beauty of rope wave training is that nearly anyone can do it. If you can get the wave to travel the entire length of the rope you are more than likely doing it fine. However, I will suggest that some basic biomechanical guidelines be followed when learning or teaching rope waves.

1) Posture and Staying Rooted into the Earth

The spine should not be rounded or curved to any extreme. Try and sit the hips “back” and keep the entire foot on ground. If you are familiar with dead lifting you will want to think of “rooting” the entire bottom of your foot into the earth. Imagine a tripod or pyramid on the bottom of your foot. That means you will have one point of contact directly underneath the first metatarsal (big toe joint), the fifth metatarsal (pinky toe) and one point on the center of the heel. Keep these three points of contact while performing most rope wave movements.

This is a great position to start from because it keeps people from jumping. Jumping is fine to do for athletes that can tolerate the high forces that jumps produce but most people need to learn how to perform rope waves with their feet rooted firmly into the ground. Over time you can start to experiment with jumping while performing your rope waves as jumping is a natural athletic expression of power. My experience is that most of my clients get to “trashed” from doing the jumping version of rope waves and that is why I keep them grounded for a while.

2) Tension in the Core / Arms Loose

You will want to keep the abdominal/core region engaged and braced with the arms being rather loose. If the rope waves looks choppy and uneven there is too much tension in the arms. Try the following: take a handful of people of have them perform some double rope waves. Only do not watch them. Close you eyes and only listen to their rope waves. The people that make loud and chaotic sounding rope waves are the ones with poor form. If the rope waves sound smooth and symmetrical you can bet that the person is steering his or her strength in the right direction and is more coordinated and integrated in their movement.

3) Eyes, Face and Neck

Keep your gaze looking forward toward the horizon and keep the tension out of your face and neck. Excessive tension in these areas will rob neurologic signals that should be going to bigger and more power producing muscles. Remember that most of the tension in your body should be in your midsection, not your face. Breathing with depend on how fast, how long and how powerful you are producing

the rope waves. Breathe as your body needs to and realize that the shorter duration power sets will disrupt breathing similar to sprinting a 200 meter dash.

Program Design

Designing a program with ropes does not need to be complicated or confusing to be effective. Sometime the most simple of programs are best. The following Five training protocols are my favorite and happen to be very simple to implement:

1) Repetition Method

For the “Repetition” method you will choose a specific number of reps to perform. I would start most people out with 20 to 30 reps per set. That means they perform the desired rope wave exercise for 20 to 30 reps and then rest. What constitutes a good rep? Getting the wave all the way down to the anchor point is one complete rep. If the wave dies in the middle, you have not completed a solid rep. You must get the wave to travel the entire length of the rope. If the rope wave exercise you are performing is part of a larger circuit than you would complete the desired number of reps (i.e., 30 reps) and then continue on to the next exercise in the circuit.

2) Timed Set Method

This is perhaps the most efficient method in a class setting or group format. For example, let’s say you have 5 stations and one of the stations is an alternating rope waves. Since the sets are timed, let’s assume each station must be performed for exactly 1 min. That means you would do the alternating rope waves for 1 minute without stopping. What’s nice about his method is that there is no need to count individual waves. You just keep on waving for one minute

3) Tabata Protocol

Alternate 15 sec of rope waves with 15 seconds of active recovery such as “fast and loose” drills, walking back and forth or shadow boxing. You would complete this 15 seconds on/15 seconds off protocol for 10, 15 or 20 minutes. This is an excellent method for fat loss but be warned; this method with rope waves is not for the newbie or rookie.

4) Superset Method

Our Revolution Solution system is based on this method. You take one kettlebell exercise and super set it with a rope exercise. We typically pick four exercises and do them in this super set fashion. The following examples highlight this method:

Superset Circuit # 1

A-1	Tactical Lunges with Kettlebell	10/10
A-2	Double Rope Waves	30
A-3	Kettlebell Swings	20
A-4	Alternating Rope Waves	15/15

Superset Circuit # 2

B-1	Half Kneeling Kettlebell Military Press	5/5
B-2	Kneeling Double Rope Waves	40
B-3	Kettlebell Snatches	10/10
B-4	Rotational Rope Waves	15/15

5) I go, you Go Partner Method

In this method you pick one or more rope wave exercises to be performed either for reps or time. When the first partner has completed the desired number of reps or time, the next partner performs the same method. The partner who is resting is performing active recovery by doing “fast and loose” drills, pacing or shadow boxing. The idea is to stay active while you are waiting for your turn.

Try the following Rope Wave Exercises

To get started I recommend getting really proficient at the following rope wave exercises. Keep the quality high and focus on the tips outlined in this article.

Double Rope Waves



Alternating Rope Waves



Full Body Rotational Waves



Snake Waves



I hope you enjoy rope training as much as we do. Please contact us with any comments and questions at revoinfo@revolutionlajolla.com

We look forward to hearing from you!