

110m/100m Hurdle Workouts

Sprinting 3-step Workout

This is the standard 110m/100m hurdle workout that I use, from which many variations can be derived. Set up five to six hurdles, with the first hurdle on the regular mark, the second hurdle one foot in from the mark, the third hurdle two feet in from the mark, etc. (My observation has been that many high school hurdlers practice with all the hurdles on the regular marks, fearing that if they can't do it in practice, then they won't be able to do it in a meet. This logic is misguided. In practice, you have to make allowances for lack of adrenaline, less time to stretch and get loose, and, in many cases, not running in spikes. I hardly ever have my athletes practice with the hurdles on the regular marks; we almost always practice with the hurdles moved in.) From a standing start, or from a sprinter-style three-point stance, sprint over all of the hurdles. Jog or bounce back on the balls of the feet, then go again. Do two sets of about ten reps per set. A full workout would be 100 to 120 hurdles, focusing on a specific aspect of technique. Rest between sets should be 5-7 minutes, staying active by stretching or doing drills. This is a good workout to do at any time of the year. Late in the season, however, you would want to decrease the number of reps.

Variations:

- Do a total of 40-60 reps, then do some sprinting (something like 4x200); this way, you can hurdle more often per week.
- Raise the hurdles so that regular height feels easier. Collegiate 110 hurdlers can't do this because the hurdles don't go any higher than 42". But I've found that for experienced high school hurdlers, raising the hurdles from 39" to 42" for this workout, or for part of this workout, enables them to return to the 39's with a new confidence, because the 39's suddenly feel so "low." Same thing goes for experienced female hurdlers; raising the hurdles to 36" for this workout can be similarly beneficial. However, for taller women hurdlers – those in the 5'9" range, the 33's already feel low, so there wouldn't be any point to employing this variation.
- Lower the hurdles to emphasize running *through* the hurdles. Hurlers who get too high because they are afraid of hitting hurdles can get over this fear by doing this workout over 36's (boys), 30's (girls, women), or 39's (men). When the hurdles are raised again to their normal height, the athlete will tend to maintain the aggression he or she displayed over the lower height, which was the whole point of lowering them to begin with. Meanwhile, his or her body will instinctively make the necessary adjustments to clear the hurdle at its normal height.
- Move the hurdles in even further for hurdlers who are getting crowded in races. Do this especially late in the year, when hurdlers' speed is reaching its max. Late in the season, you may need to move the second hurdle in two feet, or even three feet, from the regular mark, to mimic the crowded feeling that your hurdlers have during races. Adjust all hurdles after the second one accordingly.
- I'm sure there are many other variations to be found; as a coach, don't be afraid to be creative in finding ways to tailor workouts to specifically fit the needs of your athletes.

Sprinting 5-Step Workout

A good hurdle-endurance workout for 110m hurdlers that I like to do is to set up five to six hurdles twelve yards apart from each other, with the first hurdle on the regular mark. Try to get in a total of 100 – 150 hurdles, divided into two sets of 10 to 15 reps. Rest between sets should be five to seven minutes, depending on the weather and the athlete's level of conditioning. Rest should be spent stretching, doing easy drills, staying loose. Don't sit around. Within each set, rest should be to jog slowly or bounce on the balls of the feet back to the starting line, then go again. This workout, with the five strides between the hurdles, enables the hurdler to get a good sprint going between the hurdles. The five strides is also more tiring than the normal three; that's why this workout is so good for conditioning. I generally don't do this workout during the competitive season, because if the 5-step rhythm starts to feel too normal, it will be hard for the athlete to adjust to the 3-step pattern of a race. I generally have my athletes do this workout about once a week during the winter months. In warming up for this workout, the athlete should do a lot of stretching, sprint drills, and hurdle drills, and also a few windsprints, mainly to prevent injury. In the actual

workout itself, the athlete should be focused on improving one specific aspect of technique. A good one hundred hurdles worth of focusing on snapping down the lead leg, or keeping the hips square, for example, will make that particular aspect of technique much better. I always say that an athlete's goal in any hurdle workout is to be a better hurdler by the time the workout is over than you were before you began. So, you gotta get the reps in. And they have to be quality reps. Doing a whole lot of sloppy reps isn't going to make you any better. Nor will your confidence increase. Beginning hurdlers should have a coach present when doing this workout – a coach who knows what to look for. Even experienced hurdlers can benefit from having a reliable set of eyes to observe and point out any noticeable flaws, as even the minor flaws become major as the level of competition grows more intense. This workout is a good one to videotape as well, because of the high number of reps, and of how progress can be monitored from the beginning of the workout to the end. For athletes who compete on the weekends in the winter, this would be a workout to do in the early part of the week – on a Monday or Tuesday, so that your muscles have time to recover from it, and also, as I said earlier, so that you don't grow too accustomed to the five-step rhythm.

Quick-Steps

This workout can be done either as a hurdle-endurance workout, as a quickness workout, or as a combination of both, depending on the athlete's needs, and on the time of year. Set up five to ten hurdles, approximately six yards apart from each other. If your focus is on quickness, then keep the number of hurdles low (five to seven); if your focus is on endurance, then raise the number of hurdles (eight to ten). With the first hurdle on the regular mark, the hurdler should take a quick-stepping, high-knee approach to the first hurdle, getting to it in nine or ten steps. If you get to the first hurdle in eight steps, you're going too fast. Slow down. This is a quickness drill, not a speed drill. For each rep, clear all the hurdles as quickly as possible, taking short, quick strides between the hurdles. If you're feeling crowded, then good, that's how you should feel. The more crowded you feel, the quicker you have to be, both between the hurdles and over top of them. *Force yourself to be quick.* Rest between reps should be to jog or bounce on the balls of the feet back to the starting line if the focus of the workout is to improve endurance, or to walk back to the starting line if the focus of the workout is to improve quickness. When emphasizing quickness, clear somewhere in the neighborhood of 100-140 hurdles for a full workout, broken into two sets of 10. When emphasizing endurance, clear somewhere in the neighborhood of 240-300 hurdles, broken into three sets of 10. Sometimes, I might break the sets down into one set of 15 reps, one set of 10 reps, and a third set of 5 reps. If you want to do something similar to that, that's fine. Rest between sets, whether the emphasis is on quickness or endurance, should be in the range of five to seven minutes, staying active. The benefits of this workout is that it gets you accustomed to the feeling that the hurdles are racing up at you, which is how it usually feels during a race. You get used to using your reflexes, of flirting with disaster without being afraid of getting too crowded. For endurance purposes, this workout is beneficial because you don't exhaust yourself with a lot of running, so you get the opportunity to clear many more hurdles than you would if you were sprinting to the hurdles the whole workout. You'll know that if you can clear over two hundred hurdles in one workout, maintaining a high level of quality, then ten hurdles in a race, even at full speed, will be no problem for you. This is another good workout to videotape, and it's another workout in which the watchful eyes of a knowledgeable coach are virtually essential for maximum benefit.

The Zone Drill

This is the ultimate pre-race workout, described and explained in detail by hurdle guru Wilbur Ross in *The Hurdler's Bible*. Set up hurdles 1-4, leave an open zone where hurdles 5-7 would be, then set up hurdles 8-10. Athlete clears the first four hurdles, at full speed, runs through the zone, gathering even more speed, then clears the last three hurdles and crosses the finish line. This workout should be done two days prior to major competitions, so, for a high school athlete, it should be done two days before the first day of the state meet, for instance. For college and elite athletes, it should be done two days before the first round of any major championship race. The amount of reps should be no more than two or three, out of the blocks, with spikes on, preferably with a teammate to run beside, a coach to give the starting commands, and another coach or reliable individual to time the run. A 5-7 minute active rest between reps should be enough recovery time. The goal is to run each rep within .5 of projected race time. This workout requires a high level of fearlessness; it is essential, when coming out of the zone, to attack the 8th hurdle with aggression.

Back & Forths

This workout is the ultimate hurdle endurance workout. It is the one that Renaldo Nehemiah did as a senior in high school, when he became the only high school hurdler ever to break 13.0 in the 110s. For this workout, set up the first five hurdles twelve yards apart, then set up five more hurdles beside the first five, facing in the opposite direction. Bouncing on the balls of your feet, approach the first hurdle in nine or ten steps, then five-step between all the rest of them. Without stopping, turn around, and clear the five hurdles going in the other direction. The five steps between should not be evenly paced. The first two steps are short and quick, then with the last three, you want a higher knee action and full arm swing. Up and back one time equals ten hurdles, so the amount of times you go up and back without stopping to rest depends upon your level of conditioning. You want to get to a point where you can go up and back at least 2 ½ times (25 hurdles) without stopping. Rest time between sets will also depend upon conditioning level. Anywhere between three and seven minutes is okay. When I would do this workout back in the day, I would increase the amount of rest gradually, starting with three minutes after the first set, then working my way up to six minutes as I grew more fatigued. To clear a total of 200 hurdles (8 sets of 25, for example) would be considered a full workout. As a point of reference, in Ken Doherty's *Track and Field Omnibook*, Nehemiah's high school coach, Jean Poquette, states that Renaldo worked his way up to four sets of 100 hurdles in this workout during his senior year, which I find even more amazing than his sub-13.0 as a high schooler. This is definitely an out-of-season workout, as it is way too exhausting and causes too much muscle soreness to do during the competitive season. Ideally (although it never actually happens this way), I like to have my hurdlers do this workout twice a month from October through January, marking the progress they make each time in regards to how much they're able to do effectively. The most obvious benefit of this workout is that it gets you into excellent hurdling shape, it forces you to be efficient with your technique, and it is another method by which to correct technical problems. One of the dangers of this workout, however, lies in trying to do too much too soon. The more fatigued you become, the higher the hurdles get, if you know what I mean, so it's important to know when enough is enough, as well as when to decrease the reps and increase the rest. This workout is one in which falling is a very real possibility, as fatigue can cause major breakdowns in technique. So work hard, but work smart.

Variations:

- Do all or part of the workout clearing the hurdles with just the lead leg, or just the trail leg if there are specific problems with either leg that you need to address. The benefit of this approach is that you can get a quality workout and correct technical flaws without enduring the overwhelming fatigue that comes with clearing the hurdles with your whole body on every rep.
- Clear only 100 or so hurdles, and mix in some 100's or 150's between sets. This way, you're still working just as hard, but you're not beating up your legs as much by clearing so many hurdles.

Super-Quick Three-Step Workout

This one is similar to the quick-step workout, but the hurdles are even closer together. Set up eight to ten hurdles five yards apart from each other. I usually use the men's 110 marks. I'll put the first hurdle on the first mark, the second hurdle half-way between the first and second marks, the third hurdle on the second mark, etc. In the workout, have the hurdler do super-quick three-step reps over the hurdles. Between the hurdles, there will not be enough room or time to drive the knees or pump the arms. This workout is more plyometric in nature than the quick-step workout. Because the knees are low and the arms are not driving between the hurdles, the athlete must quickly thrust the lead-leg knee upward with a quick, explosive push off the ground over each hurdle. Also, the arms, torso, and head have to instantly transition into hurdling posture. Since this workout is so plyometric, it helps the athlete to get used to pushing off and diving into the hurdle without the benefit of the momentum that comes with speed. Like the quick-step drill, this is a good workout to use for improving hurdle technique in that it requires a lot of hurdling, but doesn't require a lot of running, so the amount of hurdles the athlete will be able to clear in one workout will be significantly more than if he or she were running fast between the hurdles. Hurdlers don't always need to go full speed at the hurdles to development the muscle memory of hurdling mechanics.

Doing this workout as an off-season or pre-season conditioning workout, the hurdler should clear in the neighborhood of 200 hurdles (20 reps over 10 hurdles, for example), broken into sets of two, or maybe three to start with. There should be a jog-back recovery between reps, and a five-to-seven minute recovery between sets.

I also like doing this workout as a light pre-race workout. It helps the athlete to maintain his or her muscle memory, and to work on minor technical flaws without the physical demands that come with going at the hurdles at full speed. When I have a hurdler who has late-season tired legs, this is a workout I'll use often. In such a scenario, I'll have the hurdler do maybe five to seven reps (50 to 70 hurdles), with walk-back recoveries between reps. I would note, however, that this is not a good workout to do with athletes who are just learning, or have just learned, how to three-step, as they will internalize the lower knee lift and low arm carriage because they have yet to internalize what it feels like to three-step comfortably and confidently in a race. If they do internalize the lower knee lift and lower arm carriage, then they'll regress in their development of mastering the three-step rhythm.

This workout can also serve as a drill to do as a warm-up before big meets or indoor meets where there is a limited amount of space to warm up. In such a case, setting up four to six hurdles five yards apart can serve the purpose of providing some pre-race preparation.

Variation:

Do the workout back-and-forth style, setting up five hurdles facing one way, and five more beside them facing the other way. This will make it an even more challenging hurdle endurance workout. Again, 200 hurdles would be considered a full off-season workout. I'd start by doing twenty hurdles per rep (up and back twice), taking 1:30 rest between reps. Ideally, you want to do the workout in one continuous set, but if fatigue becomes too overwhelming and form begins to break down, then divide the workout into two or three sets, with a five to seven minute rest between sets.

Every-Other-Hurdle Workout

This workout is another good one for off-season conditioning. In the months-long training process, hurdlers often need hurdles in their way to keep from getting bored, so this workout is a good one to use to get in a good amount of running without the tediousness that comes with doing endless interval workouts. Set up five hurdles on the straight-away. Using the men's 110mh marks (for males) or the women's 100mh (for females), set up only the odd-numbered hurdles (hurdles 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9). Hurdles should be set at race height (39" for high school males, 42" for collegiate males, 33" for females). From a crouched start or standing start, or a three-point stance, the hurdler will take an aggressive 8-step approach to the first hurdle, then continue on with a fluid, quick, but not-all-out 7-step or 9-step approach (depending on the athlete's sprinting speed) between all the rest of the hurdles. After clearing the last hurdle, the hurdler will continue through the finish line for the full 110m (males) or 100m (females). For recovery, shuffle/jog/bounce back to the starting line, catch your breath and gather yourself for about twenty seconds, then go again. Twelve to sixteen repetitions, preferably as one uninterrupted set, would be considered a good conditioning workout.

The challenge of this workout lies in the fatigue factor, as it is very difficult to get over a high hurdle with efficient technique when taking so many steps in between the hurdles. This workout gets you into the habit of lowering your center of gravity during hurdle clearance even when you're feeling so tired from doing so much running that you don't feel you have the energy to get down that low. It's also good to get in the habit of running through the finish line after clearing the last hurdle, as many hurdle workouts allow you to relax after touching down off the last hurdle.

Variations:

If you want to do this as a speed workout, reduce the volume down to somewhere in the range of six to eight reps, divided into sets of two. Jog-back recoveries between reps, walk-back recoveries between sets. With the increased speed, hurdlers who are able to take seven steps between the hurdles in the conditioning version of it will have to be a lot quicker to fit those steps in, and those who take nine steps in the conditioning version will really have to focus on being sprinters in between the hurdles in this version, and cut the number of steps between the hurdles down to seven. Never take an even number of steps (six or eight) between the hurdles in this workout unless the hurdler is a high school female four-stepper. As a 110m/100m hurdle workout, it requires that all three-steppers take an odd number of steps between the hurdles, even if they have the ability to switch legs, as they will never switch lead legs in a sprint-hurdle race.

If you want to do this workout as a 300m/400m hurdle workout, then lower the hurdles to the respective height (36" for males, 30" for females), place the hurdles on the even-numbered markings for the sprint-hurdle race (hurdles 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10) so that you will have a longer approach to the first hurdle. Set up this way, this workout would be good for those hurdlers who are learning or trying to perfect their ability to

alternate lead legs, as eight steps between all hurdles would be a comfortable rhythm to serve this purpose. Even for those long hurdlers who don't alternate lead legs, this workout would still be good for conditioning. Someone doing this as an intermediate workout, however, would want to increase the amount of reps to the 16-20 range for a full conditioning workout.

One-Step Drill

This is a drill that serves as a good warm-up before a hurdle workout. It is not a workout unto itself. It gets the muscles loose and prepares the mind for the need to act instinctively when hurdling at full speed.

Set up 6-10 hurdles at 42" (college men), 39" (high school boys) or 33" (women, girls) about 9-10 feet (men and boys) or 7-8 (women and girls) apart from each other, measuring from crossbar to crossbar. Do five passes with just the lead leg, five passes with just the trail leg, then five more with the lead leg, then five more with the trail leg. Then increase the distance between the hurdles by a foot, and do five passes over the top of the hurdles. This drill requires a high level of quickness and ability to react reflexively. It is a drill that will expose your technical flaws. If you're slow snapping down the lead leg, this drill will expose you. If you tend to lock the knee of the lead leg, this drill will expose you. If you remain too upright during hurdle clearance, this drill will expose you. If you lean from your upper back instead of from your waist, this drill will expose you. If you tend to drop your trail leg too soon, this drill will expose you. If you swing your trail leg around too widely, this drill will expose you. If you swing your arms across your body during hurdle clearance, this drill will expose you. There is nowhere to hide in this drill, and that's why a lot of hurdlers don't like it, but that's also why it is so beneficial. It is a good way to address technical flaws without the fatigue that comes with running. This drill also gives you the courage you need to flirt with disaster.

Variation:

You could lower the height of the hurdles by three inches and still derive more or less the same benefit. If the regular race height seems too dangerous to you at first, then start with the hurdles lower until you feel confident enough to raise them.

Five-Step Quick-Steps

This is a workout that I got from Enrique Llanos, a professional hurdler who trains near me in Raleigh. In this workout, you set up twelve hurdles nine yards apart from each other, with the first hurdle on the regular 110 mark. The hurdles should be 3 inches lower than race height. From a standing start, approach the first hurdle with good knee lift but not a lot of speed, then go down the lane of hurdles as quickly as you can, five-stepping all the way down.

When Enrique does it, he does two sets consisting of the following: three reps of just trail leg, three reps of lead leg, and three reps of over-the-top. Five minutes rest between reps, ten minutes rest between sets. Have someone time each rep, making it a goal to keep the times as fast as possible, but as consistent as possible. The watch should start at touchdown off the first hurdle, and stop at touchdown off the twelfth hurdle.

This workout is a monster. It's not for beginners. It covers all the food groups, so to speak - quickness, strength, endurance, technique. It is very hard to fit five steps between the hurdles, and it's especially hard to do it for twelve hurdles. You start getting dizzy as you go down the line, so you really have to stay focused and relaxed. Even though you're on the watch, you can't press the issue and chase after the time. If you do, you'll stumble, maybe even crash. From a strength perspective, the groin and hips are doing a lot of work in a very tight space, so those muscles, as well as the hamstrings and quads, are getting stronger and developing essential muscle memory. A hurdler who relies more on power than on quickness will struggle tremendously with this workout at first.