

ART150

leadership series

Lateral Slide Training Part One: a versatile fitness tool

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This is the first of a two-part article about Lateral Slide Training. Part one, a leadership article, introduces the idea of reviving the slide as a fitness activity to add variety and fun to classes today. Part two, a technique article, discusses selecting a slide and the biomechanics involved in slide training. The information presented in this series is for the instructor leading the average healthy exercising adult. Additional information that is not covered in this article is needed for teaching special populations (athletes, children, infants, elderly, sedentary, people on medication, pregnant women, individuals with cardiovascular, disease, diabetes, asthma, obesity and other illnesses).

LATERAL SLIDE TRAINING, SOMETIMES CALLED LATERAL MOTION TRAINING, was performed by Eastern European athletes over one hundred years ago as a form of physical discipline. In the 1970s, speed skater, Eric Heiden brought the concept to public attention while training during off season when he slid back and forth on polished marble. Then, in the 1980s, physical therapists began using slide boards to rehabilitate knee injuries. Since the technique of sliding requires the knees to remain continuously flexed, it was considered a preferable method to strengthen the quadriceps over repetitive flexion and extension of the knee joint. It remains a successful method of rehabilitating knee and foot injuries. The professional exercise community discovered the slide in the 1990s as a new form of training, and manufacturers developed several different types of slide boards that fitness classes adopted.

LATERAL SLIDE TRAINING USES a flat, long, slippery piece of plastic from three to twelve feet long with rubber “bumper” stoppers at each end. Commercial slides that are created for exercise classes are generally three to six feet in length. The exerciser places “booties,” usually made of nylon, over the top of his or her athletic shoes and slides back and forth, from one end to the other, across the surface. The bumper stops the participant when reaching each end of the slide. When used in this manner for twenty to thirty minutes, it is an efficient form of cardiovascular training. It was also used for muscle conditioning, by standing with one foot on the bumper in various body positions and sliding the other leg out on the slide and then returning it to the bumper. Muscle toning could also be accomplished by standing stationary in the center of the slide and slowly sliding both legs in various positions to isolate specific muscles.

SLIDE WAS FUN AND SOON BECAME A POPULAR FAD in fitness classes, studios, and clubs. Unfortunately, as a popular exercise mode, it died quickly. Out of all of the various props that have been used over recent decades--lightweights, steps, stability balls, and resistive bands--slide training was one of the shortest lived pop-exercise-props. Very few facilities and classes use the slide today.

THE BENEFITS OF LATERAL SLIDE TRAINING

THE SLIDE:

- ☒ is an excellent mode of cross training to supplement a program
 - ☒ can be designed as a circuit class or as a station in a circuit class
 - ☒ targets the inner and outer thigh muscles
 - ☒ stabilizes the core
 - ☒ exercises the core muscles
 - ☒ improves balance, spatial perception, and body awareness
 - ☒ is an excellent cardiovascular exercise
 - ☒ is non-impact with minimal joint stress
 - ☒ uses neuromuscular pathways to improve proprioception
 - ☒ strengthens the ankles and knees
 - ☒ assures balance--sliding one direction requires the opposite
 - ☒ enhances lateral motion sports--tennis, racquetball, basketball
 - ☒ develops leg speed and power for aerobic activity
 - ☒ can be used to train different energy systems
 - ☒ versatile tool to vary intensity levels--low, moderate, or high
 - ☒ an excellent closed kinetic chain activity
 - ☒ adds variety, challenge, and FUN
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THE ONCE POPULAR PROP'S DEMISE resulted primarily from the overly enthusiast efforts of many fitness instructors--obviously coordinated and in top condition--who aggressively led fast and furious classes forgetting that the beginner exerciser and average individual does not have the high degree of balance and cardiovascular stamina that the instructor and the very coordinated participants had. In itself, the act of sliding requires the typical adult to overcome a certain fear of falling like they might have while learning to ice skate. Many very well-intentioned instructors in perpetual search of new challenges and choreography often pushed at such a rapid pace that it left the new and less accomplished participants, the ones who were there to develop coordination, in the dust. Without patient instructions from an encouraging teacher, who could make a challenge do-able, a large number of potential "sliders" that needed to develop the skill-related fitness component of *balance* became discouraged by the small number of skilled experts flying across slides with fancy footwork, twirls, and turns in perfectly poised symmetry.

AT A CERTAIN POINT, the slide choreography became too complicated and fast paced to accommodate beginners. Slide became a slippery slope, as instructors, in general, had difficulty finding a pace that would minimize risk and maximize challenge in a fun way at moderate levels with simpler movements. On a large scale, the prop was doomed as people became discouraged and lost interest. As slide participants diminished, so too did the slide classes, and the slide all but disappeared as a fitness tool. Sadly, they now hang in storage closets or are rolled in dusty piles in attics and basements, abandoned and forgotten, with heaps of lonely booties stacked in boxes nearby. Unfortunately, the opportunity to augment training diversity in a unique way was lost along with the other many benefits of lateral slide training.

NEVERTHELESS, THE SLIDE REMAINS A VALUABLE FITNESS TOOL with the potential to enhance exercise classes and personal training sessions. There is an old saying that, "everything old is new again." People are often ready for a revival, a novel slant, or a unique way to use an old form. So, if you need "something new" to motivate your participants or clients, consider revitalizing "something old"--the slide. If you are an instructor who has forgotten about the slide but has been trained and earned ESA Lateral Slide Certification rejuvenate your creativity and energize your classes in a different, contemporary way. Dust off your slides and booties and invent a way to use the prop in an intelligent and moderate manner. You might come up with something surprising.

IF YOU ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH LATERAL SLIDE TRAINING, contact an ESA STAR America Representative for more information about certification training programs or order the ESA Home study course (PAK201). Regardless of how you decide to use it, the lateral slide is worth a first or second look. It may awaken new life in your participants and rekindle a fire in your teaching routine.

IDEAS FOR A CONTEMPORARY SLIDE CLASSES

BALANCE CLASS - (place the slide on top of a thin Yoga “sticky-mat”); Design a non-cardiovascular class that focuses on *balance* by using slow and controlled techniques without sliding across the board; for example: stand on the floor facing the long side of the slide in the center; place the right foot on the slide; breathe in; breathe out and tighten the abdominal muscles while slowly sliding the right foot forward about 6 inches; hold; breathe; slide the foot back to the beginning position. Repeat with the same foot several times. Then, repeat on the opposite foot. This exercise can be performed facing the side and sliding the foot to the side in a very small range of motion. The objective is to begin to develop balance and control. When participants master the use of the abdominal muscles, breath, and quadriceps muscles, move to the center of the slide and practice sliding both legs out slowly return. Keep the center of gravity low (for optimum stability) by controlling the quadriceps muscles and keep the head and spine straight. The objective is not an aerobic slide class, but a class to develop neuromuscular pathways and improve balance.

HYBRID CLASS - Combine the slide with other popular props such as stability balls, lightweights, and resistive bands to create a hybrid class. Alternate the exercises by performing a slide exercise and then a ball or band exercise on the mat. Combine a light hand weight with a muscle isolation exercise like the balance exercise above. Again, the goal is not a cardiovascular workout

CORE STABILIZATION CLASS - Design exercises using Pilates six principles as the theme--concentration, control, center, fluidity, precision, & breath. Create one specific slide exercise that focuses on one principle. Repeat for each principle. Alternate a slide exercise with a Pilates exercise on the mat, for example, “the hundred.” The goal is to focus on building the core stability and the Powerhouse muscles--gluteals, abdominals, and back.

MUSCULAR CONDITIONING CIRCUIT - Place slides on “sticky mats” to form a circle or square. Keep the mats close enough together so that the participants can move from one mat to the next without stepping on the floor. Design a different exercise for each mat-station.

A NICHE CLASS - A certain number of students will want to slide. Allow participants to grow into this type of class by “graduating” from one of your classes that focuses on body control. Create a masters class that incorporates sliding. Remember the training principle of progression. Use intermittent sliding and not continuous sliding. Slide across and hold at the bumper. Keep the total emphasis on body awareness and not on fast and rapid sliding or intricate choreography.

In whatever way you choose to use the slide, build every class around correct posture and alignment. Challenge yourself as a teacher by improving your verbal skills and leadership techniques rather than simply using your demonstrative abilities. Develop new teaching strategies to create focused body awareness as well as improving your awareness of participant's understanding and execution after your explanations.

Let the slide to release your imagination not remain a limitation

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ART150 QUIZ

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- 1 - Slide training is new and was first performed in the 1970s.
- 2 - Speed skater, Eric Heiden brought the concept to public attention.
- 3 - Physical therapists use slide boards to rehabilitate knee injuries.
- 4 - Considering other exercise props, the slide in the 1990s was short lived.
- 5 - The slide can be used only for cardiovascular exercise.
- 6 - Instructors can improve their teaching methods by creating classes using the slide.
- 7 - Slide creates an opportunity to develop the fitness component of balance.
- 8 - Slide training must always be performed fast.
- 9 - Slide training uses a long slippery board and booties to cover the exercise shoes.
- 10 - Slide training is an open-chain kinetic activity.