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## Getting Race Ready: A Simple Guide to Obstacle Course Race Training

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Obstacle course racing (OCR) is more than just running through mud or climbing over walls—it's a full-body test of speed, strength, endurance, and mental grit. To cross the finish line confidently, you'll need a mix of cardiovascular stamina, explosive power, agility, and obstacle-specific skills. While OCR training can seem overwhelming at first, it doesn't have to be. Whether you're gearing up for your first Spartan or Savage Race, or preparing for a local challenge like the Peachtree Corner's Decathlon at Fort Pain, this guide will help you cut through the noise and focus on what really matters.

Every athlete is different, and there's no one-size-fits-all formula. But the framework outlined here is designed to give you a solid foundation—whether you're starting from scratch or fine-tuning your current program. Because OCR is such a multi-dimensional sport, your training needs to be just as well-rounded. To make it more approachable, I've broken it down into three essential pillars: **Endurance Running**, **Compromised Running**, and **Strength & Obstacle Skill Training**. Each plays a critical role in preparing you for the unpredictable and demanding conditions you'll face on race day.

### Endurance Running

Endurance running is essential for building the aerobic base needed to handle the distance and duration of most obstacle course races. Since courses typically range from at least 3 to over 6 miles, developing solid cardiovascular endurance is crucial for every OCR athlete. Endurance runs should make up approximately 40% of your total training. These runs should primarily be performed at a lower intensity, targeting heart rate zones 2–3 (60–80% effort), to maximize aerobic conditioning without overtraining.

A weekly mileage of 15–25 miles is a good target, depending on your race goals and fitness level. Vary your runs with a mix of long slow distances, fartlek sessions, and tempo workouts to build different aspects of your endurance. Whenever possible, prioritize trail running to better simulate race terrain. For your weekly long run, aim to train to a maximum distance that's about 30% longer than your race distance. For example, if you're preparing for a 5K (3.1 miles), work up to running around 4 miles consecutively. Your long run is also a great time to test your race-day shoes, gear, and nutrition strategies. If you can, incorporate natural elements like river or lake crossings along your run to simulate racing while wet—just like in a real event.

### Compromised Running

Obstacle course races demand constant shifts between running and intense obstacle challenges, requiring your body to perform and recover under fatigue. Compromised running refers to the state of

running while fatigued—when your running ability is reduced due to tiredness from previous exercises or obstacles. To prepare for this, incorporate compromised running workouts—training sessions where you run while already tired or after performing strength exercises. This approach teaches your body to maintain efficient running form and pace even when fatigued. By blending aerobic running with anaerobic efforts, these workouts closely simulate obstacle course race conditions and improve your ability to recover quickly and push through the course.

Compromised running should make up about 30% of your training, performed at a moderate-to-high intensity (heart rate zones 3–4, or 70–90% effort). Aim for 2–3 sessions per week, each lasting around 45 to 60 minutes. A typical workout might include short runs (¼ to ½ mile) followed by functional movements such as burpees, carries, or bodyweight strength exercises, with minimal rest between rounds. For example, you might run ¼ mile, perform 20 burpees, run another ¼ mile, complete a one-minute sandbag carry, and repeat the cycle. These chaotic conditions train your body and mind to handle the unpredictable demands of race day.

### **Strength & Obstacle Skill Training**

Endurance alone won't get you through an obstacle course—you need functional strength to climb walls, grip monkey bars, lift heavy objects, and move through varied, non-linear movements. Strength and skill training should comprise about 30% of your overall OCR prep and be done at a higher intensity (zones 4–5 / 80–100% effort). Aim for 2–3 strength-focused sessions per week, lasting 45 to 60 minutes each.

Your workouts should include full-body functional training and grip-building exercises. Plyometrics like box jumps, burpees, push-ups, lunges, and pull-ups build explosive power and agility. Incorporate compound strength movements such as weighted burpees, wall balls, dumbbell cleans or snatches, and kettlebell swings to develop the power and stamina needed for race obstacles. Use non-linear movements to improve joint stability, coordination, and overall body awareness—skills that directly translate to obstacle efficiency.

To build specific obstacle proficiency, seek out local obstacle gyms and parks like Fort Pain in Peachtree Corners; these are often labeled “ninja gyms” or “obstacle course training gyms.” These facilities typically offer both open gym hours and classes designed for OCR athletes. Other options include parkour gyms, CrossFit boxes, or even playgrounds with monkey bars for grip training. You can also find home obstacle training equipment through brands like FitBar Strong and Race Ready Obstacles. If you're looking for guidance, search YouTube for obstacle technique tutorials or check out instructional content like the Fort Pain videos designed specifically for OCR skills.

### **The Power of Warm-Up, Cool-Down, & Recovery**

Warming up, cooling down, and prioritizing recovery are also essential components of effective obstacle course race (OCR) training. A proper warm-up prepares the body for the physical demands ahead by increasing heart rate, boosting blood flow to muscles, and enhancing mobility—reducing the risk of injury during intense efforts like climbing, crawling, or sprinting. Effective warm-up activities might include 5–10 minutes of light jogging, dynamic stretches such as leg swings and arm circles, and bodyweight exercises like squats or lunges.

Likewise, a cool-down helps the body transition out of high-intensity exertion, gradually lowering heart rate and aiding in the removal of metabolic waste, which can reduce post-workout soreness. Cool-down routines often include slow walking, gentle stretching, and deep breathing exercises. Recovery is just as crucial—incorporating strategies such as proper sleep, hydration, balanced nutrition, foam rolling, and rest days allows muscles to repair and grow stronger. Other effective recovery techniques include active

recovery (like light swimming or cycling), contrast showers, massage therapy, yoga, and using compression gear. These practices are key to training smarter, staying injury-free, and maximizing your performance on race day.

### **Additional Tips & Resources**

Everyone's fitness journey is different, but this training structure offers a strong starting point for most new obstacle course racers. If you're feeling unsure about where to begin, working with a coach can help build your confidence and provide structure. As OCR has grown in popularity, so has the availability of high-quality training resources—both in-person and online. With a quick online search, you can find local OCR training facilities or virtual coaching programs that match your goals. Many race organizations and online platforms also offer free training guides and resources to support athletes at every level. I've included a few helpful links below to help you explore coaching options and find a program that works for you.

- [Free Savage Race Training Guide](#)
- [Spartan Race Free Workouts](#)
- [Tough Mudder Free Training Guide](#)
- [OCRWC Free Training for Beginners](#)
- **Yancy Camp** offers a subscription-based training program for less than \$40 per month that offers obstacle course race training programs through an app, all designed by coach Yancy Culp. You can find those programs through Train Heroic: [Yancy Camp Training](#)
- **Spartan SGX Coaches** are certified professionals trained specifically in OCR preparation. Many offer both in-person and virtual coaching options, costs vary based on coaching rates. You can search for one near you: [Find a Spartan SGX Coach](#)

### **Final Thoughts: Consistency is Key!**

Whether you're gearing up for your very first obstacle course race or looking to elevate your performance to new heights, this training framework provides the foundation you need to succeed. OCR isn't just about running fast or lifting heavy—it's about adapting under pressure, pushing through fatigue, and embracing the unknown. It is not about being perfect, but maintaining consistency and forward momentum. Your steady effort over time will prepare you to meet the demands of race day with confidence and grit. Each workout you complete, each trail you run, and each rep you grind through builds not just your body, but your mindset and resilience. So, train smart, stay consistent, and lean into the discomfort, because that's where real growth happens.