



Indoor Cycle Instructor PROfile Welcome to the Jungle An Introduction to Tabatas!

Created by: Krista Leopold, aka GroupFitPower
Training Type: High-Intensity Intervals
Working HR Zones: Zones 4-5c
Total Class Length: 60 minutes

Objective and Intensity

This ride was created as a way to introduce my students to tabatas in a way that would educate them about what tabatas are and what they are not. I also had to create an entire profile that supported the tabata effort without draining too much of their energy.

For those who do not know, Dr. Izumi Tabata is a Japanese man who in 1996 published a study in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* which showed that moderate-intensity aerobic training did not change anaerobic capacity, but “adequate high-intensity intermittent training may improve both anaerobic and aerobic energy supplying systems significantly, probably through imposing intensive stimuli on both systems.”

In layman’s terms, the Tabata study provided further evidence for the value of High-Intensity Interval training and its positive effects on both aerobic and anaerobic capacity. “Tabatas” are based on the IE1 training protocol used by the test subjects who experienced the most significant improvements. The Tabata IE1 protocol consists of ultra-intense intervals in 2:1 work to recovery ratios:

20 seconds ultra-intense effort
10 seconds recovery **x8**

The sum total is a 4 minute effort that is extremely difficult. As I mentioned, this is the portion of the study that folks have defined as a “tabata,” and we’ll be using this definition in the ride. However, it is important to note that in addition to performing the IE1 protocol 4 days per week, subjects also completed 70 minutes of steady-state activity at 70% VO₂ max. Another point to make with students is that what we do on the indoor cycle is not the true IE1 protocol. Tabata had his subjects working on a mechanically braked cycle ergometer at **170% VO₂max**. You might be working really hard, but it’s not the IE1 protocol of the Tabata study.

Welcome to the Jungle is a high-intensity class. For the student, the prescribed intensity gradually increases from below threshold to maximum effort, which is advisable only for students with previous experience and solid fitness levels. Just as in any class, new and deconditioned students will be coached to ride only where they feel comfortable. This ride is best taught to a group that you already know, and is not a ride to use on a day when you are subbing or just starting out in a new setting. Ideally, you would have announced it in advance so that they are prepared and rested for it.

Instead of using heart rate numbers for this ride, we will rely on good ‘ole RPE. You and your students will benefit from having 1-10 scale RPE chart displayed. We will work through four rounds of intervals separated by a complete recovery. Each round will increase in intensity and the recovery time will decrease.

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For all of the work efforts I recommend the Spinning® movement called “Running with Resistance,” but any movement can be substituted. Running with Resistance is particularly effective because it is a move that is specifically done for short periods. It allows you push a higher resistance at a higher intensity in a way that is different from a sprint. Done correctly, you can easily push your heart into the high end anaerobic zones.

Pre-class preparation

Hopefully you are already in the habit of interacting with your students as they enter and set up their bikes. For a class like this, it is even more important that you have good rapport with your riders. As the students enter, greet them all and begin to get them thinking about training hard while being smart about it. When you encounter a new student, whether new to IDC or just new to you, the best thing you can do for that student is have a one-on-one conversation with them. Giving them not just a suggestion, but insisting that they take it much easier is how you keep things safe for your riders. Let them know that you will have your eye on them throughout class. It is wrong to assume that students will be upset or disappointed that you have told them they have to take it easy in your ride. Most beginners are intimidated at the thought of how hard IDC supposedly is. They will thank you for giving them permission not to do as everyone else will be doing. I have yet to receive one drop of push-back from a student using this approach. In fact, more often than not, they are grateful to have been able to observe and learn without the pressure of the effort.

Getting things started

Once you've greeted everyone, it's time to get their attention. Before you turn on the music or mount your bike, look them in the eye and lay it out straight for them. Let them know that today's ride will be demanding and that some of them should not/will not be doing it as hard as you describe it. In fact, they should think of the first section of the ride as their audition. If they can be smart about their preparation and how they handle the interval progression, then you will let them have the treat at the end – the Tabata round. But they have to earn it!! I cannot stress enough how responsible you must be about this introduction – you alone can ensure and enforce safety in your classroom!!

I have a slide that I display on our video screens that features a Tiger's menacing growl and the title “Welcome to the Jungle.” I want them thinking fiercely from the first moment they enter the room. It's on display as I give the spiel. That part is strictly up to your tastes. Then, I move on to describe the structure. If you don't have a screen to display a slide like what follows, you can always write on the mirror or bring a white board to print out:

- | |
|----------------------------------------|
| (1) :30 HARD / 1:30 EASY x 4 |
| (2) :30 VERY HARD / 1:00 EASY x 4 |
| (3) :30 VERY, VERY HARD / :30 EASY x 4 |
| (4) :20 MAX / :10 EASY x 8 |

They will see right away that we only do one Tabata Round, and it comes at the very end of the ride. The intervals progressively get harder: they will increase their effort levels while losing recovery time. They will be using this progression to become more efficient at managing their recoveries. The important part is that they have to EARN round 4. If you are observing bad physical form, if they are losing it or give you any indication that they can't handle it, then

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Round 4 is out and you either ride below threshold or take an easier interval pattern, like :20 / :40 x4. Letting them know that this must be taken seriously, and you aren't going to give them something they aren't ready for improves the integrity of your coaching. Just be sure to follow through! Now, let's ride....

Warm-Up

Song 1: Manifold by Aes Dana from Electro Therapy 7:58

It is important to take plenty of time for warming up, at least 10 minutes. Pump them up with some imagery of a boxer about to enter the ring or a horse about to leave the gates.

About midway through the warm-up, I'll encourage them to really consider what the RPE numbers mean and will feel like, while empowering them to take responsibility for their effort. They should listen closely to their bodies and honor any signals that they should not undertake a maximum effort today, such as not being well-rested, nourished, or prepared for such an undertaking. Give them an out, but don't let them wimp out if there is no good reason not to enter the ring!

Song 2: Desert Euphoria by Giacomo Bondi from Electric Oasis 2 4:24

Toward the end of the warm-up, we will accelerate as we leave the saddle, almost like jumping, to finish raising our exertion to right around 6 on the RPE scale. If your students are accustomed to heart rate or zone guidance, you can tell them that it might feel like 75% MHR or Zone 3. It is moderately difficult, but still an aerobic pace.

Song 3: Let It Burn (Solar System Remix) by S.U.N. Project from Must Be the Music 7:26

Round 1: :30 RPE 7 / 1:30 RPE 4 x4

Even though this song is structured like intervals, it will not feel like it. RPE 7 is very manageable for most of our students. The important part of this section is that they observe an effort level that they know for certain allows for an RPE 8, 9, and 10 to lie beyond it. We are saving up for harder efforts and we are appreciating our recoveries. This section is about helping them getting used to attacking the RWR and then learning how to maximize every second of recovery, as it will be disappearing very rapidly. It is also a place to keep the folks who will not be advancing in intensity, so you want to help them feel successful here. My cues sound something like this:

A 7 is difficult. You'll still be capable of talking but you won't want to. Save anything more than that for round 2. If you want to monitor we're going for 80% MHR or High Zone 3. You only have 30 seconds so get ready... get set... go!

(After 30 seconds) Awesome. Great first effort. We have 3 more just like that. First, we are going to take 90 seconds to recover. This first time, 90 seconds will probably seem like overkill, but the recovery is going to get more and more precious as the intervals progress! How did you do hitting your "7"? Did you feel any burning? Not yet. Any sort of burn in the legs or chest is an 8, so keep it below there. Still, it's uncomfortable so don't take it too easy on yourself.

Assist them through two more efforts. The final effort will correspond to the end of the song, so your final recovery will also be the recovery between rounds:

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Song 4: My Body by Young the Giant from Young the Giant 4:10

It's early, and they most likely do not need a big full recovery, so you can keep them a little more active here (RPE 5 if they look fresh). Also time for some more prep talk. Compare for them how on a normal day, what they just did might have been the bulk of the workout, but today it is just the starting point!

Song 5: Open My Eyes by Andy Hunter from Life – EP 6:11

Round 2: :30 RPE 8 / 1:00 RPE 4 x4

There isn't much time to prepare them in this song, just about 10 seconds of intro:

For this set, we are going to be at or slightly above threshold. It's around 85% of your MHR. Remember that we are an 8 on the scale of 1-10, which feels very hard. It is the point where the burning will start. You can still track your breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.

When their first, shorter recovery is over, you might also draw their attention to the fact that they are (probably) missing those longer 90 second recoveries already! There is less time, so you have to be more efficient and more graceful. You can't allow yourself to try to escape the ride. Stay focused and on task. Part of the fun is the fact that there is nothing comfortable about this. This song gives us time for all 4 rounds in toto. Then we'll take a short break. Keep them working above 70% MHR so they don't begin to cool down prematurely!

Song 6: Haven't Had Enough by Mariana's Trench from Ever After 3:28

Help keep them in an active recovery to make sure they are ready for the next set rather than trying to restart a body that has begun to cool down. You should also explain that from here on out you cannot both perform what you are asking of your students and teach the class. Physically impossible, so don't even try. You can fake it for inspiration, but I prefer to get down and look in their eyes and encourage them one-on-one. You have to prepare them for the fact that the next set of intervals will suck. They will be going as high as they have ever attempted in a class – a 9. The hardest part will be the incomplete recovery, but 30 seconds is still a luxury compared to the Tabata. Remind them that if they fall apart, it is game over. But if they keep cool in the face of the challenge and demonstrate that they can, you will reward them with a max effort round.

Song 7: Born to be Wild by Hinder from Extreme Behavior 3:59

Round 3: 0:30 RPE 9 / 0:30 RPE 4-5 x4

They are ready to go so send them on their way. During these four minutes, you can sprinkle in some more guidance:

You know you are at 9 when you have just enough to get through all 30 seconds, but no more. You will be burning in the legs and maybe even breathless. If I asked you to describe it, the word "hate" would cross your lips.

You are not just getting tougher, you are getting smarter. You are using your resources wisely and not wasting one single second of effort or recovery.

Even though you are experiencing something incredibly challenging, deep down in your heart you know that if you absolutely had to, you could go one step further. This is very very hard. But there is still a 10 in there.

Remember also that you promised to watch them and make sure they were ready before giving them the Tabata. Remind them that they have to earn it. They do this by staying composed.

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Song 8: Girlfriend (Junkie XL Extended Mix) by Avril Lavigne from Girlfriend 5:44

You have a nice long recovery to prep for the last round. But this is where it becomes like a “Choose Your Own Adventure,” so you’ve got a decision to make, coach. How does your team look? Have you beat them to a pulp or do they still have more left? How do you know if they are capable of taking on the last challenge? At this point they are red, and sweaty and breathing hard. That’s not enough to cancel the finale. But did they lie on the handlebars, suck wind desperately, hunch their backs, or give any other indications they were dying? You can see the difference between a rider who is thriving on the challenge, and one who is done.

OPTION ONE: PULL THE PLUG

If you see the need then be completely honest with them. If they are toast, they will be grateful not to have to go again. Let them know they are off the hook. They gave a valiant effort, but there is work to be done before we try again. Give them a future time you have in mind (in a month or so) to try again and then help them prep for it. Encourage and tell them that they have only to sit back and enjoy the last song. It’ll be a fun, high-cadence climb that will be as easy or as hard as they want it to be. You can keep it steady-state, or try a lighter interval timing.

OPTION TWO: TABATA TIME!!!

If they show that they can do this, then you prep them for the last big effort. This is where you have help them to find something incredible that lies deep within them. You cannot push 100% on your own. You need someone beside you, pushing you, driving you, helping you to see all that you are and all that you could be. There are a million different motivational techniques you could employ here. I use the example that they have a personal cheering squad beside them made up of their most cherished friends and family. I also tell them:

So it is time to get serious. What you are about to undertake, done properly, will be the hardest thing you have ever done. I don’t choose those words lightly. The Tabata study consisted of exercise at an intensity of 170% VO2max. It isn’t realistic for us to think we could even reach that number on our indoor cycles, but we are going to try. This is going to be the hardest you’ve ever pushed, because you are not going to settle for anything less than that. You choose to go above and beyond your limits to finally learn what you are capable of.

It might be a good idea to leave them alone for a while to get prepared. Give them a countdown if that is your style so that they have an idea of how much longer they have to get ready.

Song 9: Welcome To The Jungle by Guns N’ Roses from Greatest Hits 4:30

Round 4 – Tabatas!!

This is a fantastic song. It starts with about 30 seconds of “hell-yeah”-inducing intro. The goodness begins at 0:28 and you can send them on their way with a “Yeow!”

Keep a close watch on your timer, because it is just cruel to overshoot the :20 effort or undercut the :10 breather. I recommend a Tabata Timer for your phone to assist if you have the technology.

For this final effort you are mostly cheering them on, reminding them that their cheering squad is cheering them on, and giving them their starts and stops. Be very clear with every start and stop because you don’t want them to miss it. I find that a “3-2-1-Stop” countdown at the end of every segment helps them by giving them a regular pattern to follow.

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Right around the end of the 3rd cycle, they begin to break down. Their brains are begging them to stop, but they are not done. So you have to be the push they need to get past it, and you have your work cut out for you.

The song ends with a familiar punch that should correspond to a collective sigh of relief that you are all done.

Song 10: But I Feel Good by Groove Armada from Lovebox 5:18

The first order of business is to congratulate them all for going the distance with you. I try to walk the entire room and give them a high five or a fist bump as validation of their effort.

But now is your chance to educate them on several topics, namely the importance of recovery, and when it is safe to attempt this again. Make sure they know that if they could do it again tomorrow, it was not a Tabata. Their bodies should be demanding rest, and their job is to complete the process through complete rest.

To get stronger and to get the full benefit of what you just put yourself through, you have to recover. The only way to do that is to take the time to do it. 48-72 hours of minimal efforts (Zone 1 or 2). It is during the recovery process that your body rebuilds itself into a stronger, more able version of itself. DO. NOT. SKIP. THIS.

Song 11: Hanging On by Active Child from You Are All I See 5:21

This is a wickedly beautiful song that will put the finishing touches on your ride. It is haunting and gorgeous and perfect for sighing into all of your stretches.

Welcome to the Jungle Quick PROfile

Created by: Krista Leopold, aka GroupFitPower

Training Type: High-Intensity Intervals

Working HR Zones: Zones 4-5c

Total Class Length: 60 minutes

Warm-up: 12 minutes

Start with a long warm-up to help settle them in. After 8-9 minutes, bring them out of the saddle to get them energized.

1:3 Intervals Round: 11 minutes

30 seconds “Hard” (RPE 7) + 90 seconds “Moderate” repeated 4 times, followed by complete recovery of 2 minutes.

1:2 Intervals Round: 9 minutes

30 seconds “Very Hard” (RPE 8) + 60 seconds “Moderate” repeated 4 times, followed by a complete recovery of 3 minutes.

1:1 Intervals Round: 10 minutes

30 seconds “Very, Very Hard” (RPE 9) + 30 seconds “Moderate” repeated 4 times, followed by a complete recovery of 6 minutes.

2:1 Tabata Intervals: 4 minutes

20 seconds “All-Out Maximum” (RPE 10) + 10 seconds “Moderate” repeated 8 times.

Cool Down and Recovery.

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Playlist:

- ♣ Manifold by Aes Dana from Electro Therapy 7:58
- ♣ Desert Euphoria by Giacomo Bondi from Electric Oasis 2 4:24
- ♣ Let It Burn (Solar System Remix) by S.U.N. Project from Must Be the Music 7:26
- ♣ My Body by Young the Giant from Young the Giant 4:10
- ♣ Open My Eyes by Andy Hunter from Life – EP 6:11
- ♣ Haven't Had Enough by Mariana's Trench from Ever After 3:28
- ♣ Born to be Wild by Hinder from Extreme Behavior 3:59
- ♣ Girlfriend (Junkie XL Extended Mix) by Avril Lavigne from Girlfriend 5:44
- ♣ Welcome To The Jungle by Guns N' Roses from Greatest Hits 4:30
- ♣ But I Feel Good by Groove Armada from Lovebox 5:18
- ♣ Hanging On by Active Child from You Are All I See 5:21

All songs are available in iTunes, Amazon, or emusic.

[Welcome to the Jungle PRO/Playlist](#) in Spotify.