



**SWS Mountain Guides**

**110 Alpine St.**

**Mt. Shasta, Ca. 96067**

**[info@swsmountainguides.com](mailto:info@swsmountainguides.com)**

**[www.swsmountainguides.com](http://www.swsmountainguides.com)**

**Phone: 888.797.6867**

## **SWS Physical Conditioning Requirements**

The type of climb, course, or expedition you are booking will determine the level of conditioning needed. Give us a call if you have questions. It would be best if you were in good to excellent physical condition, as all our climbs and courses occur at altitude and in the mountain environment. Therefore, training and doing physical conditioning before your course or climb is essential. An exercise and training program is required for advanced-level courses or altitudes above 14,000 ft. The idea behind any conditioning program is to do an aerobic activity at least 4-6 times a week. Sitting at a desk or behind the steering wheel does not add to your physical health or conditioning. We found the best-conditioned clients do a lot of walking & hiking with and without a pack. Walk or Hike whenever possible. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Ride a bike or walk to work or the store.

**Warning: Consult your physician before embarking on any exercise or conditioning program.**

**Aerobic:** Walking 30 minutes daily is an excellent way to condition all ages. It is easy, accessible, and relaxing. Walking, hiking, or jogging with a pack of 20-35 lbs. is an even better way to condition for climbing. To approximate carrying a pack, working with lightweight (20-35 lbs) in your pack at least once or twice a week while training is a good idea. According to researchers, running steadily for 20-30 minutes daily, keeping the heart rate up, is far more beneficial than running for speed. The same applies to all aerobic activities, whether swimming, jogging, or bicycling. The idea is to train your heart and lungs to increase your ability to use oxygen efficiently. You should prepare at least four times a week for intermediate courses and 4 to 6 times a week for strenuous classes, with at least 45-60 minutes of exercise each session. Including some hill work, walking, running, or bicycling is good. Also good is soft sand, walking or running with a pack up hills, stadium steps, or stairs. A Versa-climber or Stairmaster is also an excellent alternative to bad weather days and, yes, with a pack.

**Flexibility:** This is an essential factor in any outdoor activity. Stretching exercises are fundamental and should be added to any conditioning program. A few minutes of bending and gentle stretching each day will add to your overall conditioning. Training Levels

**Level I - GOOD Conditioning:** Ice Ax Clinics, Day Ski Tours, Bear Valley Rock Clinics; Plan to exercise at least three times a week for 20-30 minutes each session. Plus, plan to hike or walk with your day pack a few weekends before the trip, including walking on hilly terrain once a week.

**Level II- VERY GOOD to EXCELLENT Conditioning:** Basic Winter Mountaineering, Shasta Climbs/ Mt. Whitney Summer Ascents, Sierra Nevada Summer Mountaineering, Technical Ice & Rock Course – Multi-Pitch or Multi days of climbing; Plan to train at least 4-6 times a week for at least 40-50 plus minutes each session in one of the following categories or a mixture of each: running, bicycling, swimming, stair or elliptical machines. Including some flexibility training three times a week (stretching for at least 10 minutes) in your workout is also a good idea. In addition, plan on having hikes or walks on hilly terrain with your pack weekly for overall conditioning.

**Level III - EXCELLENT PLUS Conditioning:** Winter/Spring Shasta Climbs/ Mt. Whitney Winter Ascents, Sierra Nevada Mountaineering, Ski/ Snowboarding; Training at least 4-6 times per week for at least 60-90 plus minutes each session in one of the following categories or a mixture of each: running, bicycling, swimming, stair or ski machines. Include some flexibility training three times a week (stretching for at least 20 minutes) in your workout. Plan to include at least 2-6-hour weekend training hikes and climbs with your loaded pack for overall conditioning. Running or walking stairs or stadium bleachers is excellent training for climbing and mountaineering. – SEE Examples of Excellent Conditioning below



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### **Very Good to Excellent Physical Requirements for Climbing Mt Whitney/Mt Shasta**

Climbing Mt Whitney/Mt Shasta is challenging by any stretch of the imagination. It requires both physical and mental toughness. Listed below are the minimum physical requirements we would expect all of our clients to have before they show up to climb either of these peaks:

- Be able to maintain 185 to 215 meters per hr (600-700 feet per hr) climbing pace AND maintain this pace for 1-hour increments.
- Carry a 15-18 kilogram (35-40 pound) pack
- Be able to move efficiently off maintained trails on scree and talus. Using large step-ups and step-downs, some movements require the whole body while carrying a pack.
- A guest who can do 350 meters per 1.5 hr / 1,150' feet in 1.5 hrs with a loaded pack on a stair stepper should have the fitness to climb Mt. Whitney in relative comfort.
- 10-mile hikes with a loaded pack over the hilliest terrain a guest can access are also good training tools.
- Time to basecamp on Whitney is 4-6 hours, and time to the summit from basecamp is 4-6 hours.

#### **Mt. Whitney 3 Days:**

Day One: Whitney Portal Trailhead - 8,374 ft to 11,000 ft – 2,626 ft elevation gain  
Day Two: High Camp to Mt Whitney Summit: 11,000 ft to 14,505 ft. 3,505 elevation gain / 3,505 ft of elevation loss. Total elevation gain and loss: 7,010 ft. --  
Day Three: High Camp to Whitney Portal: -- elevation loss: 2,626 ft.

#### **Mt. Shasta 2 Days:**

Day One: Bunny Flat Elevation: 6,950 ft. to 10,000 ft – 3,050 elevation gain  
Day Two: High Camp: 10,000 ft to 14,179 – 4,179 ft elevation gain with 7,229 ft elevation loss  
Total Day: 11, 408 ft of elevation gain and loss

**Level IV- EXCELLENT EXPEDITION Conditioning:** Expedition Training; Level IV training required six times per week for at least four days at 60-90 minutes each session, two days at 60 -120 minutes each session, in one of the following categories or mixture of each: running, bicycling, swimming, stair master, or other aerobic activities. Including some flexibility training three times a week (stretching for at least 20 minutes) in your workout is also a good idea. Plan on having 4–6-hour weekend training hikes and climbs with your loaded pack for overall conditioning (can count as a 60-120 minute session). Other activities which will improve your workout for the expedition include weight training for strength, versa-climber, jogging with a light daypack, and running stairs or hills.

Contact us for examples of conditioning depending on the expedition or trek.

**Mountain Training Programs & Physical Conditioning Consultations:** SWS Mountain Guides offers professional training consultations & designed programs for our climbs, courses, and expeditions with **Dr. Bradford Thomas (Doctor of Physical therapy DPT)** - [SWS Mountain Training Programs](http://www.swsmountainguides.com)  
Or Contact: [drbradford@swsmtns.com](mailto:drbradford@swsmtns.com) / Dr. Bradford Thomas (Doctor of Physical therapy DPT)  
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