

Improve Your Hand-Eye Coordination with these Exercises

Hand-eye coordination is one of the most important skills to have, especially in the military, and yet, it's rarely talked about in general fitness circles.

When it comes to the armed forces, poor hand-eye coordination can lead to mistakes. And when you're dealing with weapons and heavy machinery, mistakes can cost lives.

But great hand-eye coordination goes beyond shooting a gun, working on machinery, and flying planes - It's also crucial for day-to-day activities and longevity.

Let's talk about what is hand-eye coordination along with its benefits inside and outside of training. We'll also cover exercises that are guaranteed to improve hand-eye coordination.

What is Hand-Eye Coordination?

To put it simply, hand-eye coordination is the unique relationship between your brain, eyes, hands, and fingers that allows you to accurately and safely perform a number of tasks.

For example, someone throws you a football. What's the difference between catching the ball and getting hit in the face?

Great hand-eye coordination!

To get a bit more in-depth, hand-eye coordination is when your eyes take in a visual cue such as a football being thrown to you. Your brain registers the visual information and immediately sends a signal to the muscles in your arms, hands, and fingers to prepare to catch the ball.

In response, your arms move up and your hands reach out. Your fingers take the formation to catch the ball.

What's really fascinating about this process is that most of us are terrible at a lot of things that require excellent hand-eye coordination at first. But your body and brain rely on a process called proprioception. This means that if you drop the ball, this information is registered and remembered on a cellular level.

With enough practice, your body automatically changes position and process so that you eventually will catch the ball. Again, this information is remembered within your body, making it easier to perform this task over and over again.

Catching a ball is one example, but this happens with everything around you. The thing is that most of us take this for granted until we start a new task and realize how terrible our hand-eye coordination is in the beginning.

Thankfully, practice makes perfect.

Benefits of Hand-Eye Coordination

There are several benefits of hand-eye coordination, especially for those in training or who work with their hands every day:

Faster Reaction Time

When your hand-eye coordination is good, your brain can process visual information faster. This means that you'll be able to react to things in your environment quicker. Whether you're trying to master a barbell snatch, fire at targets faster, or dodge punches during combat training, a faster reaction time makes the difference between success and failure.

Enhanced Agility

Continuing with the point above, hand-eye coordination allows you to move faster and with greater accuracy. When your hands and eyes are working together in perfect harmony, you'll find that you move almost without thinking about it, especially if it's an activity that you've practiced many times.

A great example is when you quickly catch something that's falling. The falling item is an unpredictable target, and when you catch it, seemingly without thinking about it, you're demonstrating high-level hand-eye coordination.

In regard to combat training and sports, agility equals hitting a target faster and with ease. Again, that can mean successfully completing a training activity that has a time requirement attached to it.

Reduced Risk of Injury

Improved hand eye coordination can mean a lower risk for injuries in a few ways:

First, if you have better hand-eye coordination, you're less likely to make a mistake during your day-to-day work, chores, and activities.

Second, if you're involved with military training, you'll have better control over your weapon, machine, etc. and during a training exercise, this can mean successful completion of a task and no injury for you and your partner.

Finally, if you're in a fight - whether for training or not - hand-eye coordination can help you bob, weave, and respond appropriately.

Exercises to Improve Hand-Eye Coordination

Since hand-eye coordination focuses on the brain's ability to process visual information and react, when you practice exercises that improve hand eye coordination you effectively develop this part of your brain.

Here are several exercises, activities, and drills that you can do to improve hand-eye coordination.

Have a Catch

This is hand-eye coordination 101. It's easy, fun, and one of the best hand-eye coordination exercises is to do. You can even take this up a notch by throwing a frisbee around, which requires a completely different type of hand-eye coordination skill.

Play Call of Duty

Yep, we're giving you an excuse to jump on the PS5 or Xbox. This video game requires you to have quick hand-eye coordination skills in order to shoot the bad guys before they get a chance to take you out. Play a few rounds with people who are way above your skill level, and you'll see your skills go up fast.

Juggling

Juggling can be an excellent hand-eye coordination drill because it's not as easy as it looks and forces you to be in a hyper aware state of mind. An added benefit of learning to juggle is that you'll have a great party trick to show off.

Hit the Speed Bag

Rocky makes the speed bag look easy, but have you ever tried hitting a speed bag? It's far from easy, especially if you're trying to keep it going for a few minutes. Practicing on a speed bag until your body finds a consistent rhythm is a great way to improve your hand-eye coordination.

Play Tennis

If you're looking for a sport that will really test your hand-eye coordination skills, tennis is it. This fast-paced game will have you reacting quickly to balls coming at you from all directions.

Go to a Shooting Range

If you're interested in joining the armed forces and you still haven't gotten your hand on a gun, it's time to do so. The earlier you get acquainted with the weapons you'll be using, the better. Make the investment, pay for an instructor, and practice regularly.