Aretas

Running a functional fitness throwdown

A functional fitness throwdown is three or four short, hard workouts in one day, run in heats across a row of lanes, with athletes split into categories by ability, age and sex. This is the classic CrossFit-style competition. This playbook covers everything you set before entries open: the categories, the workouts and their standards, the heat order, the floor, the kit and the people.

Everything is worked through on the example every Team Aretas resource uses: **120 athletes, 8 lanes, one day**.

By Steven Batchelor · Last updated 27 October 2026 · 8 min read

The short answer

- **Set every category's cap to a multiple of your lane count.** With 8 lanes, a category of 6 costs a whole heat on every workout, which is 42 minutes on this day.
- **Publish a movement standards document with each workout**, and brief the judges from the same document, so athletes and judges are held to one set of words.
- **Run one category per heat, easiest first**, and stage the next category's kit before its first heat.

The worked example

The day uses the three workouts and slots from the scheduling guide, scored by rank sum as in the scoring guide:

Workout	Format	Time cap	Slot
Workout 1	For time: 50 wall balls, 30 box jump overs, 20 power cleans	10 min	14 min
Workout 2	As many reps as possible: 5 pull-ups, 10 push-ups, 15 air squats	12 min	16 min
Workout 3	Heaviest clean and jerk	8 min	12 min

A **slot** is the time cap plus a 4-minute changeover for the next heat to set up. Each workout runs 15 heats, with a 20-minute reset between workouts, so the last heat finishes at 19:40.

Categories

Most throwdowns split by ability (Rx and scaled), then by sex, then by age. Here is a field of 120 that fills every heat exactly:

Category	Athletes	Heats of 8
Scaled women	24	3
Scaled men	24	3
Masters women (35+)	8	1
Masters men (35+)	16	2
Rx women	24	3
Rx men	24	3
Total	120	15

Rx means the workout as written, at the prescribed loads and standards. **Scaled** uses lighter loads and easier versions of the hardest movements, so newer athletes can finish the same workouts. Keep them as separate categories with their own podiums; the scoring guide covers putting both on one board if you have a reason to.

Masters and teens

- **Masters** usually start at 35. One masters category per sex is plenty for a field this size; you can split the results into 35 to 39, 40 to 44 and 45 and over on the leaderboard without running extra heats.
- **Teens** are usually 14 to 17, on lighter loads than scaled. You need written consent from a parent or guardian, and check that your insurance covers under-18s before you open the category. Everyone working with them needs to be checked as safe to work with children: a DBS check in England and Wales, PVG in Scotland, AccessNI in Northern Ireland. This adds a lot of work, so decide early whether a teens category is worth it.

Pairs and teams of four

A pair usually works in one lane, taking turns or splitting the reps. A team of four usually needs a much wider lane; we recommend the space needed for two lanes. That changes the heat count, not the number of people on the floor:

Change	Lanes per workout	Heats per workout	Last heat finishes
As planned: 120 individuals	120	15	19:40
Scaled as 24 pairs	96	12	17:34
Rx as 12 teams of four, two lanes each	96	12	17:34
Rx as 12 teams of four, a lane each	120	15	19:40

Pairs, and teams of four on two lanes, both put two athletes in each lane, so either change finishes the day over two hours earlier. A team of four that needs a lane each saves nothing. If you want a mixed team category, say in the rules whether it must be two men and two women or any mix.

Caps in multiples of 8

A category that does not fill its last heat still costs a whole slot on every workout. Add a teens category of 6 and every workout gains a heat: 14 + 16 + 12 = 42 minutes, so the last heat finishes at 20:22 instead of 19:40. Cap it at 8 and it costs the same, with two more places to sell.

Workouts and standards

Writing the workouts

Each workout needs a format, a time cap, a tiebreak and a scaled version, all published before the day:

Workout	Tiebreak	Rx	Scaled
Workout 1	Time at the end of the wall balls (rep 50)	9 kg / 6 kg ball, 24" / 20" box, 60 kg / 40 kg clean	6 kg / 4 kg ball, step-overs allowed, 40 kg / 25 kg clean
Workout 2	Time at the end of the last full round	As written	Jumping pull-ups, push-ups with hands on a box
Workout 3	None: the heaviest lift wins	Clean and jerk	Power clean and push press

Put the tiebreak at the end of a movement, not in the middle of one, so a judge can see it happen. Every athlete who hits the cap needs a rep count, or the bottom of every heat becomes one shared place.

The movement standards document

For every movement, write down where it starts, where it finishes, the load and what counts as a no-rep. Add a short video of each movement if you can, because a video settles arguments that a sentence starts. Publish it with the workout, and use the same document word for word in the judges' briefing. Here are workout 1's standards as they are written in the workout editor:

WORKOUT STANDARDS

H1 H2 Sans Serif Normal

Wall ball: 9 kg / 6 kg to a 3 m / 2.7 m target. Hip crease below the knee at the bottom; the centre of the ball hits the target. A ball that drops short is a no-rep.
Box jump over: 24" / 20". Take off from two feet, both feet touch the top of the box, land on the other side. Stepping up is allowed; stepping over without touching the top is a no-rep.
Power clean: 60 kg / 40 kg. From the floor to the front rack in one movement, then stand with hips and knees fully open and elbows in front of the bar.
Scaled: 6 kg / 4 kg wall balls, step-overs allowed, 40 kg / 25 kg power cleans.

Heats and lanes

Run one category per heat so athletes race the people they are ranked against, and run the categories easiest first, so the Rx heats close each workout:

Heats	Category	First heat starts (workout 1)
1 to 3	Scaled women	08:30
4 to 6	Scaled men	09:12
7	Masters women	09:54
8 to 9	Masters men	10:08
10 to 12	Rx women	10:36
13 to 15	Rx men	11:18

Each workout changes load five times, at every switch between categories. The 4-minute changeover only covers that if the next category's wall balls, plates and box heights are staged before its first heat starts.

The floor

Lay the space out in the order an athlete moves through it:

Zone	What happens there
Warm-up	The next two heats warm up, with their own kit
Holding pen	The heat after this one checks in with the marshal
Competition floor	8 numbered lanes, one judge in each, a clock every lane can see
Kit staging	The next category's balls, plates and boxes, behind the lanes
Score desk	Judges hand in signed scores; the head judge sits here
Spectators	Behind a barrier, with a view of the clock
First aid	Next to the floor exit

Allow about 3 metres of width per lane for barbell work, so a judge can stand clear of a dropped bar.

Equipment

For 8 lanes and the three workouts above:

Item	Quantity	Used in
Wall balls: 9 kg, 6 kg and 4 kg	8 of each	Workout 1
Wall-ball targets, marked at 3 m and 2.7 m	8	Workout 1
Boxes, 24" and 20"	8	Workouts 1 and 2
Barbells, 20 kg and 15 kg	8 of each, plus 2 spares	Workouts 1 and 3
Bumper plates and collars	Enough to load 8 bars to the heaviest lift you expect	Workouts 1 and 3
Pull-up rig	8 stations	Workout 2
Clock and timing	1 per floor, plus a backup	Every workout

Staffing

On the floor for every heat:

Role	People	Job
Lane judges	8	Count reps and call no-reps, one per lane
Head judge	1	Rules on disputes and signs off scores
Heat marshal	1	Calls the next heat to the holding pen
Floor crew	2	Change loads and kit in each changeover
Score desk	1	Enters each score as it is signed
Check-in	2	From doors at 08:00 until the first heats are through
MC and music	1	Keeps the day moving and the crowd with it
First aid	1	All day

That is 17 people. One crew of 9 judges can cover the day, but a second crew taking over at the resets keeps the last Rx heat judged like the first.

Common mistakes

- **Category caps that ignore the lanes.** A category of 6 on 8 lanes adds a heat with 2 empty lanes to every workout: 42 minutes on this day.
- **Standards published late, or written vaguely.** Athletes train to the standard they read, and judges call the one they were briefed on. If the two differ, the scores are argued on the day.
- **One set of loads on the floor.** Without the next category's kit staged, every switch between categories overruns its changeover.
- **No holding pen.** A heat that walks on a minute late costs a minute, and 45 late heats cost 45 minutes.
- **Masters and teens on Rx loads.** It thins the categories you most want to grow.

Run it on Team Aretas

Team Aretas builds every category here, from scaled pairs to masters, each with its own price and capacity, and age filters split a leaderboard without extra heats. Each workout carries its time cap, tiebreak, scaled option, standards and video, and can stay hidden until its release date.

- Running a functional fitness throwdown on Team Aretas
- How Team Aretas sets up categories

- How Team Aretas scores and publishes the leaderboard