

Movement Methods: Strength Training Guide

The US Department of Health and Human Services recommends that for good overall health, adults should engage in about 20 minutes of physical activity each day. Ideally, this should be a combination of cardiovascular and muscle-strengthening activity. While many people are familiar with the basic principles cardiovascular exercise, weight training can be more mysterious. Without question, weight training is imperative for building strength and fortifying bones.

No longer do fitness professionals hold onto the notion that hours of cardio is the key to improving body composition. However, the gym can be intimidating, especially if you have never tackled the weight floor. Free weights, medicine balls, cable machines, kettlebells... the sheer number of options is daunting for the uninitiated. Not to worry. This guide is designed to help newer gym-goers overcome that apprehension, and to provide a starting point for effective weight training.

An important thing to remember: even if you are a complete beginner, the fact that you have made it to the gym in the first place probably means you had to shift a few things around in your life to make time for the commitment. Acknowledge this first victory!

You have to crawl before you walk, and walk before you run. With that in mind, consider that everyone was a beginner once. Even the most ardent gym rats had a ‘first time’ picking up a weight or jumping on a new machine. Because you have to start somewhere, you might as well start now! The quicker you start a program, the sooner you strength and coordination will advance. Then you will be the gym veteran that can help someone else new with you knowledge.

Don’t worry too much about how you look to other while exploring new equipment or employing a new exercise. The truth is, most people in the gym are excessively focused on themselves to really notice anything else. Folks that are passionate about health and fitness will not judge. People in the gym with drive and motivation are often the first ones to greet and encourage new gym members. People who get upset with new folks in the gym are not worth your concern. Fitness needs to be a priority for everyone, and is not exclusive to any gender, age, or background.

For your first time in the gym, choose a weight that is relatively light so you can establish your stability and baseline strength. Do 10 to 15 repetitions with a light weight, and if you are stable and comfortable, increase the weight for your second and third sets. Ideally, for optimal strength and muscle growth, you need to feel the burn on those last few repetitions.

Improvements happen when you step outside your comfort zone, so choose a weight that fatigues your muscles in 10 to 15 repetitions. Repeat each exercise for three sets. You can move in a circuit with three or more exercises and little rest between sets, or if your gym is very crowded, do one exercise at a time and rest for 30 seconds between each set. Start with at least two days per week, but then work on progressing to three. It is important to note that lifting weights improperly or too often can result in injury. To avoid this, proper form and the correct volume are essential.

Weight-Training Tips for Beginners:

Stay Hydrated: Muscle is 75% water. So weigh yourself on a digital scale before and after your workout. Then drink the difference in ounces of water.

Embrace the Dumbbell: You will not need a spotter, you will rarely have to wait for a pair, and they'll work your muscles harder than machines via proprioception.

Control the Weight: As a beginner, never use a weight that is so heavy that you need momentum to lift it. A simple gauge: You should be able to pause for at least one second before lifting a weight.

Start Slow: Making minor amendments to your daily routine will help you cultivate positive habits. If you start so gradually that you barely notice the change, you'll be more apt to continue it and make more changes without them ever seeming daunting.

Stand Up Straight: Want an easy way to tell if you're performing your exercises correctly? Check your posture. The correct starting position for most exercises is shoulders back, chest out, standing (or sitting) tall, with your abs tight. Good posture, good form.

Weight Training Log

Date:

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