

5 Common Training Mistakes And How To Fix Them

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Admit it. At some point, you've blindly undertaken a popular training program without a clue as to its validity. When I was a young lad, I did it, too. We think because something is out there via paper, print, or the Internet - especially if it's coupled with photos of well-built physical specimens who supposedly used that program - it must be effective, right? Not necessarily.

This is one mistake many of us make or have made when it comes to physical training - just going with the latest trend because everyone is doing it. We're human and not infallible. We all screw up from time to time. But your goal should be to minimize mistakes and learn from the missteps you do take. If you make the wrong decision, then correct it and move forward.

Blindly following a mainstream training program is one common mistake. What are other mistakes well-intended trainees make? Here is a short list of what I believe are the common training transgressions.

1. You're not directly addressing your goals

Two wide spread examples of this are fat loss and muscle strength. As a society, we are accumulating an inordinate amount of fat deposits. What do we typically do when we want to counter this? Initiate an exercise program and pay more attention to disciplined food selections. Good move! However, the exercise program many of us pick entails some low-demand activity like walking, jogging, yoga, Pilates, or powder-puff circuit training. And the food intake side of it often looks like a fad diet or extreme calorie restriction.

To optimally expunge body fat, activities that are higher in intensity and physical demand should be employed. This includes intense circuit training, strength training, and interval training. Regarding food intake, a sensible diet incorporating the right balance of good carbohydrates, lean proteins, and healthy fats should be used and in the proper amounts that create a caloric deficit. I know that is a general statement, but it will work.

2. You're not lifting heavy enough

This is a much-debated topic and I'm sure I will get an earful no matter what I suggest, so I'll try to keep it simple. Whether you're using low (two to seven), moderate (eight to fifteen), or high (sixteen to 25-plus) repetitions and using single or multiple sets (two to four), all these approaches will benefit you provided you work hard and recover from the stresses they create. "Hard" means you worked each bout to the limit. That means if your goal is a hard set of eight reps, it should be difficult to obtain those eight reps. If you could have performed twelve reps, what exactly did you accomplish? If you perform either one or four sets, assure each one is demanding as per my previous statement. Performing multiple sets at a low intensity level is not time efficient.

3. You're training with high injury-risk methods

Safety should be first and foremost in any training program. Think about it. If you're performing specious and unsafe activities and you're experiencing recurrent injuries, is that not counter-productive? Hell yes, it is.

If you're involved in a sport that entails explosive and ballistic activities, then that is your prerogative. Good luck and best wishes. Understand, though, the human body can only take so much. By nature, sports that have a greater inherent risk can lead to a greater risk for injury. We're talking about collision sports such as football, rugby, wrestling, MMA, Olympic lifting, and competitive CrossFit. I completely understand those activities may be your passion, but know there is a risk when performing them due to the ballistic and joint-compromising nature of them.

If you're simply attempting to lose fat, become stronger, or improve your level of conditioning, opt for safer and more joint-friendly methods. You don't need to engage in unnecessary explosive and ballistic activities. You'll lower your risk of injury and prolong your training career if you eschew high-risk training methods.

4. You're not training hard

At some point you need to train hard to alter your current status. Half-assed efforts or being intolerant to the pain of proper training will not cut it. Your body wants to remain as it is. It resists change. For any change to occur, an abnormal stress must be placed on the system targeted. Whatever training mode used, it should at the very least create an overload on the targeted system.

For example, if you're attempting to improve cardiovascular endurance, then you need to engage in activities that actually challenge that energy system. This would mean working hard in extended activities over a long duration. If your goal is improved high-intensity, short-duration ability, then overload yourself with high-effort, short-rest-period events. Examples would be:

:30 hard effort and :30 rest performed for 15+ repetitions

1:00 hard effort and :30 rest

:20 hard effort and :10 rest

:45 hard effort and :25 rest

And don't forget strength training. You need to train hard when strength training, too. The inability to perform another perfect repetition is objective and measurable. Yes, it's going to be painful (it's temporary pain, so deal with it), but if you halt a set because it's beginning to get uncomfortable or you reach some arbitrary number of repetitions, you just sold yourself short.

5. You're over-training or under-recovering

It's a double-edged sword. You need to work hard, but you also need to rest properly. Run. Lift. Practice. Run more. Lift more. Practice more. When will your body get a much-needed break?

Hard training stimulates a potential adaptation to the imposed demand. Your workout may create a positive improvement in a quality such as endurance or strength, but to allow for its development, adequate recovery time must be given. Additionally, how do you maximize your efforts in multiple training components? After a vicious leg day in the weight room, will you be recovered adequately for a quality conditioning day? And what about sport practice? If you're still hung over from the effects of a previous workout, don't expect to be a hundred percent.

Employing exercises and training sessions that continually tax the system without allowing time to adapt can result in fatigue, regression of ability, and injuries. Train hard, but rest hard. It's better to be over- rather than under-recovered.

Mistakes. We all make them. Learn from your training missteps and you'll better achieve your goals.

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