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Physical Fitness

Before You Start

1. Get a physical from your doctor, especially if you are overweight or have not exercised for a while. In addition, if you are over 35, you should have an exercise stress test. Weight training is vigorous and demanding and you must be in good health to get good results.
2. Stick to one program- this One- -at least in the beginning. Don't be influenced by what you read or by your friends in the gym, it can be confusing. In all the books and articles on bodybuilding and weightlifting, everyone has a different philosophy, training method and surefire guarantee to success. I've found that often the most rigid opinions are held by those with the least knowledge. In spite of all the claims, there is no one method that works best for everyone. (Just about anything you do is better than nothing.) But in recent years, along with the surge of interests in fitness, there have been certain principles and guidelines that have come to light that seem to work for everyone in maximizing progress. Our approach is simple and it works.
3. Keep a record. Plan your workouts at the beginning of each week and write them down for each day. After each workout write down sets, reps and poundages of each exercise. This eliminates "guesswork," shows your progress and can help eliminate weak spots.

Setting Goals

Set goals that you can reach. If your goals are too high, you're likely to become discouraged, or worse, injured. On the other hand, if you set your goals that are too low, you will not make enough progress. Set a long-term goal (perhaps a year in advance) and then several short-term goals to keep things moving along. Also, put a time limit on your goals. Don't just say, "Some day…" Promise yourself that on July 1st, or whatever day, the goal will be achieved.

When You Start

1. Be sure to warm up and stretch
2. Take it easy. Don't watch others in the gym and try to handle the same weights they do. This can be discouraging and cause injuries. Also, you don't have to copy the top

competitive athletes. They push their bodies to the absolute limits and are often on the edge of injury. The average person does not have to train like this to be in good shape and feel good.

3. Pay attention to previous injuries. If it's hurting, don't "work through the pain." Switch to an exercise that works the same area but isn't painful. A light, non-painful workout of an injured area gets the blood moving, helps clean out wastes and speeds healing.
4. Don't worry about your body weight when starting. You may gain weight at first, since muscle weighs more than fat.
5. Don't worry about diet when you're just starting. It's not a good idea to change everything at once. I never tell people to change their eating or drinking or smoking habits when they're starting. Because I know from experience that if you try too big a change in lifestyle all at once, you're more likely to drop the program. Once you get encouraged by some results the other things will fall into place.
6. Watch for the development of muscle tone– a slight yet constant tension in the muscles. This will be one of the first positive and exciting effects of your new training program.

How Often Should You Lift?

Rule of Thumb: Three workouts a week, 45-75 minutes a session, with a rest day following each workout. It's the same as running or cycling; you get best results when you apply stress in a hard day/easy day routine. This allows for cellular changes to occur on the rest days, for the muscles to recover from stress and automatically rebuild stronger. Thus, workouts are Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday.

Don't skip the rest day. It's important. Gary Moran, an all-around athlete and veteran weightlifter, fractured his leg skiing and had to quit his usual running, swimming and racquetball games. "I put all my energy into lifting, as was the only exercise I could do." He lifted five or six times a week and doubled the usual number of sets. In about six weeks he found he could only bench press 210 lbs., compared to his usual 250 and he lost ground (about 15%) in the other lifts as well. He also had soreness in the tendons and ligaments of his shoulders. His mistake was in increasing his workload too drastically and not giving his body time enough to recover from the added weight training stress. He quit the new program, took a week off, returned to his normal program and within three weeks was back to pressing 250.

Pearl, Bill. Getting StrongerBolinas, CA, Shelter Publications, 1986 pg. 14-15