

- SPECIAL REPORT -

Fitness Wisdom for 2006 :

**Bodybuilders & Fitness Enthusiasts Share
Real-Life Tips**

From The Readers of [Beginning-Bodybuilding.com](http://www.beginning-bodybuilding.com)

Sponsored by Marc David

<http://www.beginning-bodybuilding.com>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Marc David is widely considered one of the web's **leading beginning bodybuilding experts.**

He is the featured author on the subject of beginning bodybuilding – ***The Beginner's Guide To Fitness and Bodybuilding.***

His **UncensoredBodybuildingLive** 88 episode fitness and health podcast routinely “weeds out some of the bad info” and his brand new **10 Steps to Beginning Bodybuilding** course breaks new ground in uncovering fitness techniques that lead to results.

Marc has been helping people establish and learn how to body build since 2001, and has created an **astounding 5 successful fitness website** in his first four years online.

When he's not working, Marc is found spending time working out and practicing what he preaches. Snowboarding somewhere or reading the latest fitness book and writing a review.

He has a weekly bodybuilding question and answer newsletter at **BeginningBodybuilding.com** that answers questions from advanced athletes to people who are just starting out on their quest to get healthy.

Other products from Marc:

- **JustAskMarc**
- **Dynamic Fitness Portal**
- **Friendly Bodybuilding Community**
- **Beginner's Guide to Fitness and Bodybuilding**
- **Everything About Creatine**
- **UncensoredBodybuildingLive** (tons of fitness audio)

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INTRODUCTION

During January of 2006, I asked all my 2600+ readers of Beginning-Bodybuilding.com the following question:

"Marc David with a quick question - **can I feature you in my next ebook?**"

Then I asked everybody to think about and contribute one or all of the following experiences they had to share collectively with the rest of the group.

Advice: What's the one bit of advice you'd give others about fitness? If you could share only one recommendation for success, what would it be? What's the greatest lesson you've learned in fitness? (Bodybuilding, general health, weight reduction, supplements, dieting, training, etc).

Shortcuts: Have you discovered any ways to make your workouts easier? Any ways to get results faster? Any special tools you use? Any ways to use something or make something better?

Mistakes: Have you made mistakes that have set you back? Any problems or pitfalls that we should watch for? Any red flags that might indicate we should try something else? What should we NOT do when it comes to working out?

Ideas: If there is one thing you'd suggest we do first, what would it be? If there is one thing that's the most important ingredient, what would it be? If you had to begin again with only one idea, what would it be?

A month and many responses later, this PDF was created showcasing people who have worked out for years with degrees in personal training and nutrition to somebody who was on Day 7 of their routine.

Marc C. David

Marc C David
The "Beginner's Expert"

THE READERS SPEAK

1 The one fitness tip that comes to my mind first and the one that I am most passionate about is over training in the Gym. You might not believe me but I spend the majority of my time as a fitness instructor trying to keep clients out of the gym!

The cold hard facts are that over 80% of the regular trainees in your gym are over training. That's right, 80%, disturbing isn't it? So try to put a stop to it by understanding that the two main components of strength training are the intensity of the exercise and the recovery after the exercise.

Also have a look at some scientific principles found below, practice them in the gym and you will be on the road to greater gains in muscle size without the problem of over training.

Limited Energy Level

A strength-training program should be short and simple; you only have a limited amount of energy per training session. To do this, you will have to perform high intensity workouts consisting of multijoint, compound movements in the shortest amount of time so that blood sugar levels don't deplete.

Progressive Overload

Progressive Overload is the main exercise principle you need to be aware of in order to get the results that you're after with strength training. Basically this means that when the body is stressed by high intensity training beyond its normal demands, the body will adapt to these new demands of improved strength.

Training Frequency

Infrequent, short, high intensity weight training sessions, followed by the required amount of time to recover and become stronger is what is needed to increase functional muscle size and stop over training in its tracks.

Over Compensation

Here's what you need to do - allow your body enough recuperation time for over compensation to take place, so that the muscles can adjust to their new strength and growth.

Make no mistake about it by following these principles you will not only develop greater muscle size but also banish over training for good.

- Gary Matthews is the author of *Maximum Weight Loss and Maximum Weight Gain*. www.maximumfitness.com

2 Did you know the average weight training enthusiast can barely bench press their own bodyweight? That statistic doesn't even account for the people that don't work out. Give yourself a pat on the back if you've conquered the feat of benching your own bodyweight. Don't worry if you're not there yet, you're about to learn eight sure-fire methods that will help you earn bragging rights in and out of the gym.

So what's the big deal about the bench press anyway? You're not playing sports or trying to compete, why is this legendary exercise so vital to an attention grabbing physique? In fact for those of you who think the bench press is simply for the ego, you're wrong. It's true no other exercise is more frequently talked about. However it's not so strange when you think about it. The bench press is a core fundamental exercise for developing upper body strength. You're not only working your pectorals (chest), you are also working your anterior deltoids (front shoulders), triceps brachii, and latissimus dorsi (back). If you could pick just one exercise to acquire a full round chest with some functional power to go with it, you would be wise to go with the bench. You just can't develop the same upper body with any other exercise.

As a personal trainer I have seen hundreds of people strive for a 300-pound bench. The truth is most people make the same mistakes, but they can easily be changed to help you start an explosive growth spurt of your own.

Mistake #1: Less is more. By far the biggest mistake people make is "wanting it" so bad that they overtrain. It's human nature, if we don't see the gains we're looking for the common sense solution is to work harder and harder. I can tell you from

personal experience that last time I hit a plateau in my training I took a week off from the gym and came back stronger than the last time worked out. Be on the look out for warning signs of overtraining such as lack of motivation, trouble sleeping, poor nutrition, and of course lack of progress.

Mistake #2: Full body workouts. Let's get you set up on a new split where you can give each muscle involved in the bench press the attention it needs. Remember, there's more to the bench press than just your chest. For maximum recovery you should only train each body part once per week with an optimal workout split. If you still think you need to bench two or three times a week, see mistake #1. You have time to workout 45-minutes a day, 4-days a week don't you?

Mistake #3: Self-doubt. Hopefully you don't need a pep talk, but here it goes anyway. Excuse me as I impersonate motivational speaker Anthony Robbins for a moment. Your subconscious mind believes whatever you tell it, so do yourself a favor and program it with positive thoughts. I cringe every time someone asks me for a spot and they bash themselves before they even start the lift. Comments like, "I don't think I'll get very many reps," or "I can't do this much, but I'll try." If you're not confident, fake it, and tell yourself you're going to succeed. Trying is a part of failing. If you're afraid to fail, you're afraid to try.

Mistake #4: Bad form. Let's work on some mechanics. After practicing a few of these techniques you should be able to boost your bench press by a minimum of 25 pounds.

Widen your grip a little bit. The wider your grip, the less distance the bar has to travel. Therefore it makes sense that you'd want to grip the bar as wide as possible. If you have been benching with a closer grip this will take some getting used to, but will make a big difference in a few weeks. To determine your grip, assume a natural push-up position and then bump it out approximately 3-inches.

Another way to decrease the distance the bar has to travel is to retract your shoulder blades. Try to squeeze your shoulder blades together during the entire movement. This will give you a more stable surface to bench from.

Keep your feet on the floor and drive with your heels. If you see someone kicking or flapping their legs in the air, as they turn blue trying to push the weight you'll know that they are off centered and it's costing them some serious poundage. Keep your heels on the floor to help you generate power.

Arch your back. Your butt, shoulder blades, and head should always be in contact with the bench, but it's okay to arch your lower back. If this isn't natural for you, you can place a foam roller under your lower pack for practice. Many people have asked what the point of this technique is. Again, it shortens the distance the bar needs to travels.

Is this cheating? Not at all, this is a regulation lift. If you want to completely isolate your chest head over to the pec deck machine to finish up. It's good that you're learning to use more than just your chest when you bench press. Don't be surprised if two days later you feel sore in your back, chest, shoulders, and triceps.

Mistake #5: Too many warm-up sets. Don't get me wrong you certainly need to properly warm-up. However you should do so with some very light weight, push-ups, and stretching. You don't want to exhaust your muscles before you get to your working sets. Most people pyramid up and then wonder why they can't get the weight on their last set. By doing lighter warm-up sets you will save your energy for the heavier weights and a big finish.

Mistake #6: Neglecting your back. Strong lats or "wings" are very important to the negative phase of the bench press. Your back is the center of support for the weight as you lower it to your chest. That's why blasting your back is so important and must not be skipped. Try some T-bar rows, or bent over barbell rows to strengthen your back. You'll notice that it's almost the exact opposite or antagonistic lift to the bench press.

Mistake #7: Lack of goals. So you want to increase your bench press. That makes the two of us. The problem with this statement is it's much too vague. I want you to pull out your pen and paper. Write your goal down on four separate sheets of paper in bold letters. "ACHIEVE A _____ POUND BENCH PRESS BY _____." The simple task of writing your goal on paper brings you closer to completion. This act will make your goal more concrete, increasing the likelihood of achieving it. Now

post these pieces of paper on your fridge, dashboard, computer screen, and dresser to constantly remind you of your goal.

Mistake #8: Lack of variety. The human body is an amazing system. Whatever you throw at it, it can adjust and learn to handle. Keeping it off guard, mixing things up, and adding variety to your workouts will ensure your body responds positively. Always stay one step ahead by changing your workouts when you feel you're not making the gains you expect. If you're like me and want to look good while, while having some strength to back it up you've probably been training with reps between eight and twelve. Try lowering the reps on your bench press sets to the six to eight repetition range for a few weeks. You'll be pleasantly surprised to see how your body reacts if you haven't tried this before.

If you can avoid these common pitfalls and you're open-minded enough to try something new you'll soon be bench pressing more than you dreamed possible. Take it from me, the man who was stalemated at a 275-pound bench press for more than three years! Learn from others mistakes and watch your bench press soar. Your wife or girlfriend will be admiring your muscular upper body while your friend's are dying to learn your secrets.

- Mike Westerdale Mike Westerdal, BS, CPT; Owner of Critical Bench, www.criticalbench.com

3 It's something of a no-brainer, but it's the kind of foundational material I find myself repeating a lot these days when people ask me for fitness tips (bodybuilding in particular).

Basic is Better

Until I got serious about weight training last year, I was a scrawny, 6'2" toothpick. At 33 years old, barely tipping the scales at 131 pounds, I was constantly preoccupied with and self-conscious of my total lack of muscular development. Sure, I had tried to gain weight in the past with mega-calorie gainer shakes, and what I thought were calculated, aggressive forays into bodybuilding; but in truth, I was kidding myself. In my enthusiasm to build my body as quickly as possible, I grasped at every workout routine I read in the magazines, and threw money

indiscriminately at supplements, looking for the “magic bullet” that would pack on the pounds. I was the typical bodybuilding newbie, seduced by the promise of a quick fix, bending over backwards to avoid facing the simple, hard work that lay between me and my dreams. Like a lot of skinny guys who become fixated on getting buff, I was making things a lot harder for myself than I had to.

One of the ways I derailed my efforts was to follow everyone’s split body part workout routine advice, breaking my body up into groups of two or three muscles over four or five days, and blasting each muscle with an arsenal of ego-flattering isolation movements. I must have had fifteen exercises for deltoids alone! Well, it only took ten years of kidding myself and getting no results to wake up and smell the coffee.

If there’s one piece of training advice that made all the difference for me, and rings true for skinny guys and newbies trying to pack on muscle, it is this: **basic, heavy, compound, free-weight exercises build muscle faster than any combination of isolation movements.** I’m talking about plain old vanilla squats, deadlifts, bench presses, pushups, chin-ups, military presses, cleans, and barbell rows –exercises that mimic real-life movements, and require dozens of muscles to work together simultaneously.

Isolation moves have their place –when you’re already quite well-developed, and need to fine-tune your appearance- but trying to build mass on an Nth-degree split schedule built around isolation exercises is like trying to mow a football field with a pair of scissors. I didn’t want to hear that news, and I spent a long time running from it. Why? Because isolation exercises can be deliriously fun, and it’s easy to sound like a PhD talking endlessly about targeting your infraspinatus, or your extensor digitorum longus. I wasn’t ready to trade all those cool machines for a boring, plain old barbell. But the moment I did – literally from the *first day*- I started growing like a weed!

Don't Fall Prey to Supplement Hype

There is almost as much controversy surrounding bodybuilding supplements as there is hype behind their marketing, and while some products do little more than make “expensive urine”, not all supplements are rip-off scams. With a little thoughtful

research, and the right attitude toward dietary supplementation, you can realize measurable improvements in workout performance, muscle-gain efficiency, mood, motivation, and overall physical appearance with proven supplements. Unfortunately, most beginning bodybuilding and fitness enthusiasts don't bother with this research, or worse, rely almost exclusively on their friends' anecdotes when making decisions about where to spend their supplement dollars. They grasp desperately at every new product that hits the shelves in a flashy new bottle, looking for a shortcut to muscular greatness. Considering the amount of time we spend fine-tuning everything else about our training, diet, and recovery, I'm often baffled at how eager some people are to ingest a strange compound without even knowing what's in it, or how and why it purportedly works.

The most compelling advice I can offer regarding supplements is to **look the word "Supplement" up in the dictionary, and hold yourself to that definition when planning your diet.** BCAA's, concentrated proteins, vasodilators, anti-catabolics, and the like should be viewed as the icing on the cake –not the flour, eggs, sugar, oil, the pan, and the oven. When you are trying to build lean muscle, the majority of your raw materials should come from clean, whole, un-processed foods. If you're only sixteen, and you're carrying 18% bodyfat, and have little vascular definition to begin with, don't waste your time or allowance on Nitric Oxide products that promise day-long pumps and vein-popping madness. You *will be* disappointed. Instead, put your supplement dollars toward a quality whey protein. There are thousands of guys who have done just fine building massive amounts of muscle with nothing more than hard work, clean food, multivitamins, and a post-workout protein shake.

Once you have the basics mastered, *then* think about tweaking that final 3% margin. If you are working toward strength and size increases, consider a creatine regimen. If you want to mitigate catabolism and beef up your immunity, you should be using Glutamine. If you are rolling into a contest, or you want to dial in a killer finishing touch for your trip to the beach, *then* consider including pump enhancers. In short, have a *REASON* for spending your hard-earned money on supplements, and treat them like the *TEMPORARY* boost that they really are.

-Brett D (aka. Veggeep) www.discussbodybuilding.com

4 I am a certified personal trainer so I get asked a lot of questions about fitness and health. One piece of advice I would give someone would be to constantly change up your workouts. Every week do something a little different. Switch your type of cardio every week, maybe you did the elliptical last week so this week do the treadmill. Same thing goes for weight training, do different exercises for your body all the time. Your body will adapt to a workout if you are constantly doing the same thing, so keep your muscles guessing for what's in store next.

Also remember that getting yourself in shape involves three things, and you need ALL three things to see the most improvements. The three things you need to do are weight training, cardio and nutrition. You can weight train and do cardio all you want but if your nutrition is horrible on a daily basis you won't see very good results, if any. Nutrition plays a BIG role in seeing improvement with your body and health. I never say to people that they have to "diet". The word diet just turns people off right away. The way you eat has to become a lifestyle. Eating healthy isn't a diet, its a way of life. I'd say that nutrition plays the greatest importance out of the three key elements for success.

Also, one tip for all the women out there....you CAN train like the guys! Women can and should do a lot of the same exercises when weight training that all the guys do. Women always say to me, I don't want to get big, well you won't!! I am a female, 5'2 and I weigh 105 Lbs.....I train with heavy weight and do low reps and on other days I might switch it up and train with lower weights and do higher reps....and I am not a big, bulky girl!! BUT, I am only 16% body fat because I have built more muscle in my body. So to all the women, don't be afraid to weight train and weight train heavy sometimes, it's good for you!

- Brianne Bruder

5 My best tip is you should do as many exercises on the fitness ball as possible. This includes dumbbell shoulder presses, and dumbbell chest presses to get your core balance muscles in the

best shape possible. Do not do both arms at the same time, but rather one at a time. Its a great way to change up your workouts and improve strength when you have seem to reach a plateau.

- Kyle Charbonneau

6I would say that separating your meals to 5-6 small meals a day is the best advice to staying fit and not feeling hungry. Combining healthy fats, protein and complex carbs in each meal will keep you full and satisfied thought the day. Every 3 hours is best, it will keep your metabolism burning. Make sure you eat breakfast, the most important meal of the day!

If you have trouble getting through your workout, turn up some of your favorite music! It pumps me up and keeps me going. It makes workouts much more fun!

One mistake that I've made, along with many others I'm sure, is eating below the amount of calories your body recommends. I mean sure, you will lose weight, but it will be from muscle also, it will slow down your metabolism and your body will try and store all the fat it can. Your body is not designed to lose fat, but to survive. It's a very unhealthy habit.

For anyone out there who wants to lose fat and increase their metabolism, no matter how big you are starting out, lift weights. the muscle you gain will use up more calories to maintain and will without a doubt speed up the fat burning process, leaving you with a defined look when you lose the fat.

- Sara Jane Morano

7I have only just begun my fitness routine. Tonight will be day seven. If I had any advice to give it would be - not to give up and don't be afraid. I'm currently overweight. I was always afraid to go to a gym because I wasn't thin enough. ...What an excuse. How do I expect to gain my ultimate goal - losing weight and getting fit, if I don't take that first step?

- Denise Moran

8I am a 50 year old male, 6' 5" 215 lbs who lifts for health and exercise. The best tip I can give is SQUATS, I never took them serious till this past year. I hate squats! But once I started

incorporating them into my regular workouts I have noticed increases in body mass and conditioning. I cycle from a 20 rep program for a couple weeks and 3 sets of 6 reps with heavy weights. (Heavy for me) That 20 rep program is a killer. I wish I had discovered this years ago when it really could have made a difference.

- Glen

9 Don't get so overawed by the opposition in your first contest. Okay, so you may be on stage with your all time hero, but just a deep breath and remind yourself that in a bodybuilding / fitness / weightlifting / powerlifting / bench everyone has gone through the same training, the same preparations and the same nerves as everyone else. On stage you are all getting judged!

- Harry Hayfield

<http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/bodybuildingtoday/>

10 Here's a pretty decent hint for those trying to cut fat at a decent rate, but remember this shock shouldn't be done more than 3 or 4 days a week and for about 2 to 3 weeks at a time. Start your workout on an empty stomach or maybe a liquid breakfast. Get a nice solid cardio in before a weight session whether that is running, elliptical, bike, etc. Then catch your breath and start your weight training. For the weights the best to cut fat during the session is cardio training like tri-sets or mega-sets with 3 to 4 exercises with zero rest until you get through the third or fourth exercise such: bench, immediately calf raises, immediately abs, immediately a tricep exercise, rest for a minute or so, then start your second set, and on so. After a hard weight session, get back on a cardio machine for 10-12 minutes (sugar levels are low and there's no food in your stomach so your body must attack something and that something is storage fat). Also remember to take whey protein within the first 45 minutes after the workout.

- Kyle Blessing

11 My best tip for success in the gym is not to give certain exercises a specific day of the week. If you can only workout 3 times a week, say Monday, Wednesday and Friday, don't use a certain day to exercise a specific body part. If you miss Mondays' workouts, don't wait until next Monday to do them again you. Don't squeeze extra workouts into your 3 gym

days, try and take an extra day so you're paying full attention to each body part. Getting into shape comes over time, so don't let your workout plan fall behind.

- Joe Gray

12 I have been training for about 4 years. My goal was not to become a bodybuilder, but to gain strength and stamina for skiing, mountain biking and Lindy Hop dancing which is very hard on your knees. I train at home with free weights and a Soloflex machine.

When I started working out, I did the standard 3 sets of 10 reps. I did not perform the sets to failure; the moment I got to 10 I would stop. At first, I gain muscle and strength, however I plateau quickly and the gains from that point were minimal. Another mistake was my diet. Or, should I say lack of a diet plan.

Today, I do 2 to 3 sets to failure. I use heavier weight so 4 to 6 reps are enough to reach the failure point. Not only am I seen better results, but my whole workout is done in about 30 minutes. The shorter workout makes it easier to fit it in my schedule, and hence I don't skip any. Now I eat 5 smaller meals a day. Two of them are a meal replacement shake and/or protein bar. I also include aerobic routines first thing in the morning with an empty stomach.

So my advice is to keep your workout **short and intense**.

- Edward Sanchez

13 There are many people especially overweight people who want to make their metabolism (losing weight) faster. Here's a method to boost your metabolism. Start eating 5-6 small frequent meals (quarter plate of what you've been eating 5-6 times after 2-2.5 hours never skip meals). For example you eat 3 times per day full plates so 5-6 small frequent meals will automatically reduce it to 1 or 1 1/2 plate per day.

- Sibtain Mushqaq

14 When someone (especially women) craves ice cream, what I do is buy either fresh or frozen berries. If the berries are fresh, you'll want to freeze them first. I prefer to use

blueberries myself. Then you pour skim milk over them until it forms a thin layer over the top of the fruit. Wait about two minutes for the milk to freeze and enjoy. You don't need to add sugar because of the natural sugar in the berries. It's the healthiest dessert I know of.

- *Melusina*

15 One of the biggest advice I could tell you is to stay motivated . This is the biggest problems with new beginners or just new members trying to lose weight. To lose weight or just exercising takes patients and time. There is no one quick pill or fast short cut. Eating health instead of a cheep bag of chips or chocolate bar eat protein and fruits. If your trying to gain muscle one of the biggest mistakes is over training. Try one or two muscle groups a day and no more than 3 exercises for each. People tend to work out too much or over strain their muscle in the mean time.

- *Rocket 24-7*

16 Fitness - health - optimum performance in any sport, whatever your goal is the best way to get there is to visualize your success.

I remember years ago when I began life as a runner, I just couldn't get my 10km race time under 40 minutes. I read that the mind must believe and if the mind believes the body will follow.

Well, I tricked my mind - I would run for 39 minutes and call it 10 km. I repeated this during all of my speed workouts. Then the day came and I entered a 10km race, I was delighted with the results, I finished in 38:33.

Believe in yourself,
Write the goal down,
Visualize success,
and you will succeed.

These affirmations are not new most of you have probably heard about them already, but it's the person who takes the next step and practices and believes who will succeed.

Smile and enjoy life

enjoy today - for tomorrow it will be gone...

- John Thomson, Licensed Practical Nurse and Paramedic

17 Advice: Definitely tracking your diet. I know you mention this a lot, because it really is important. It's basically why I didn't get anywhere until last year. I would walk/run, whatever, do some cardio, and wonder why I'm not losing any weight while I'm chowing down on chips on the couch, watching a boxing match. Actually, watching TV while you're on the treadmill will help keep you active, keep you off the couch etc.

Shortcuts: Well running or lifting weights to music helps the time pass if you're one of those people that gets sort of bored or doesn't have the greatest attention span

Mistakes: Well, I find that when people (including me) when they just start out, for some reason get the notion that they can't "start" this new lifestyle at any time of the day. "Oh, I'll just wait until the beginning of next week to start tracking my diet, and indulge this week because I'll miss the food". Sunday rolls around, they somehow forget, eat an ice cream, whatever, and all of a sudden "oops, well, I'll definitely start tomorrow. It doesn't happen. soon enough, the beginning of another week, the months almost over, "Oh I'll wait until the 1st" or the 1st of the year. Procrastinating isn't going to get you anywhere and it's how you get stuck in a rut, so you have to just buckle down and just DO it rather than lying to yourself about starting out next week. You CAN make a difference NOW in how you live. Procrastinating until the beginning of next month is just doing to slow you down.

Ideas: Put down the goldfish and stop snacking. A lot of people will eat just because they're bored, or they think they feel hungry... Well usually you're actually just thirsty. So drinking a cup of water will take the edge off. So basically when you feel like snacking during the commercials of a TV show get up off the couch and drink some water. Most people don't drink enough anyway. And we all know staying hydrated is essential. So just use that little hunger pang as a reminder, "oh, better drink some water"

- John

18 I use my stretch sessions as my meditation, focus fully on the physiology of the muscle movement, blot out the world/thoughts/etc. When having difficulties, I use almost a mantra of "I am here for myself, not for you people, purely for me, such that I may enjoy you, I don't care about what you think/see/etc." I use it to focus.

-Paul

19 Get plenty of sleep after you workout or your muscles will be sore longer than they would be if you didn't sleep as much.

- William

20 As many of them must be aware of Super Sets - a technique to increase your muscles, similarly there are few more techniques which I have listed here:

German Volume Training

German Volume Training is an old program reintroduced by Canadian strength coach Charles Poliquin. German Volume Training consists of picking an exercise for two antagonistic (opposite) bodyparts and performing supersets. Nothing special there, but the catch is that the trainee will be doing 10 sets of 10 reps for each exercise. The recommendation is that you use around 60% of their 1RM for the weight.

This usually translates to a weight they can do 20 reps to failure. They may feel that this is too light at first, but by the fifth or sixth set, they will be pushing hard to get the 10 reps for remaining sets. Only allow 90 seconds rest between sets.

This will result in a workout that has a tremendous amount of volume, and volume is an important factor for muscle growth. It is also great for getting the most out of a workout if you are limited by how much weight you have access to. German Volume Training is very stressful and should be used for no more than 6 weeks in a row, and should be followed by at least a 4-6 week period using a lower volume program. In addition, you should allow a bodypart at least 5 days rest before working it again when using this program

Drop Sets/Strip Sets

When I was first learning about bodybuilding training it was obvious to me that when you come to the end of a set and seemingly cannot do another repetition, that doesn't necessarily mean the muscles involved are totally fatigued, only that they are too tired to lift that amount of weight. If a plate or two is removed, you can do more repetitions. Take another plate off, and you can keep going even longer. Each time you do this, you are forcing the muscles to recruit more muscle fiber. This training principle is called the Stripping Method. You should never use the Stripping Method at the beginning of an exercise when you are fresh and strong, but only for your last set. Since the changes in weight must be made quickly so that the muscles don't have time to recuperate, it helps to have a workout partner ready to slip plates off the bar or move the pin in a machine weight stack. For example, you might do Bench Presses with the heaviest weight on the bar you can handle for six reps. Say that weight is 300 pounds. After you have failed, your partner would quickly strip off weight so that you could do more reps with 250 pounds. I don't recommend going too low, however, unless you are training for maximum definition, because you won't grow by handling weights that are too light. Many bodybuilders use this principle in a different way by working their way down a dumbbell rack as they do more sets of an exercise and get more and more tired.

Drop sets are another of my favorite ways to shock the body. It involves doing an exercise with say a set of dumbbells, putting them down, picking up the next lighter weight, and doing another set without stopping. This is actually a dumbbell variation of the Stripping Method. For example, I would do Dumbbell Presses starting with 100-pound weights and going to failure, then immediately setting them down and continuing with 90-pound dumbbells. My muscles were too tired at this point to press 100 pounds, but the remaining unused fiber could still lift the slightly lighter weight. Again, when the 90-pound weights got too heavy, I would go down to the 80s, then the 70s, and so on. Each time I went down the rack I reached a little deeper into the available muscle tissue to shock and innervate the muscle more thoroughly. There are a number of ways of varying this technique; for example, using the dumbbells on a rest/pause basis-doing the exercise until exhausted, putting down the weights for ten seconds, then forcing out additional reps-or working your way up the rack as high as you can, then back

down, doing fewer reps with the heavier weights and more reps with the lighter ones. Another good exercise to use drop sets on is the leg extension machine. I sometimes do triple drop sets on this exercise. I would start by doing a set of 10 on leg extensions with 130 lbs. then immediately drop the weight to 110 lbs. and do another set of 10 then immediately drop the weight to 90 lbs. and rep out as many as I can. You can bet that this will kick your ass. Try it if you don't believe me. You will be sore for at least 3 days to the bone after doing this one.

Negatives

Whenever you lift a weight using the contractile force of your muscles you perform what is defined as a "positive" movement; when you lower the weight, uncontracting the working muscle, you perform "negative" movement. Negative repetitions actually put more stress on the tendons and supportive structures than on the muscles themselves. This is beneficial because you want tendon strength to increase along with muscular strength. To get the full benefit of negatives in your normal workouts, always lower the weights slowly and under control, rather than letting them drop. To work harder at negatives, first try cheating a weight up that would otherwise be too heavy to lift strictly and then lower it slowly and deliberately. Your muscles can lower a heavy weight under control more than they would actually be able to lift in the first place. At the end of a set, when your muscles are very tired, you can have your workout partner give you a little assistance in lifting the weight, and then do strict negatives on your own. Negatives are excellent to add strength to a weak bench press. You can also use negatives for adding size to biceps by emphasizing the downward movement. Raise the barbell at a normal pace, then take a five count to lower the weight emphasizing the negative portion of the movement.

Isotension/Flexing

During your one-minute rest period between sets, don't just sit around watching your training partner do a set. Continue to flex and contract the muscles you are training. This not only keeps them pumped and ready for more action, but is in itself a very beneficial kind of exercise. Flexing is a form of isometric exercise, and isometrics involve very intense muscle contractions. Bodybuilders who are posing, flexing, watching himself in the mirror, are not doing so out of vanity. They are

engaged in a very important part of the workout. You get the same kind of benefits from really hard sessions of posing. John Parillo is a big proponent of stretching after a set on given exercises. He calls his method fascial stretching. The purpose of this stretch is to stretch the skin as to allow more room for muscle growth. It also keeps the muscles warm in between sets. I personally think this is a great way to achieve some new growth if you are stuck on a plateau for a while.

Instinctive Training

If you are a beginner bodybuilder and are attempting to master exercise fundamentals and create a basically sound muscle structure, it pays to follow a set program. But after you have been training for a longer period, you will find that your progress will increase if you learn to perceive and understand your body's individual responses to training and vary your workouts accordingly. If you usually began a back workout with Wide-Grip Chins, you might decide instead to begin with Bent-Over Rows and finish off with Chins. This is trusting your instincts to help guide you through a workout. Occasionally, you might abandon your normal workout and do something entirely different: instead of German Volume Training for chest; for example; do fewer, very heavy sets or a lot of sets done rapidly. Your body has its own rhythms. It is different from day to day, and that the more advanced you become, the more you need to be aware of these variations and cycles. Let me caution you, however, that this awareness does not come overnight; a year or more of training is usually needed before you can begin to profit from making these occasional instinctive adjustments in your program.

21's

This system is elaborate because you do a series of half reps in the lower range of motion, a series of half reps in the upper range of motion, and then a series of full reps. You can use any number of reps for this type of set. You can do 10-10-10, or 8,8,8 or any combination as long as you do the same number for each of your half reps and full reps. Traditionally, many bodybuilders have used seven reps -hence the name "21's": 3 x 7. The extra stress generated by this kind of training comes about because you have to stop the movement right in the middle, and this forces the muscles to exert themselves in ways

they are not used to. Making the muscles do things that they are not used to will help spur them on to new growth. This type of exercise is typically done on the biceps or you can even experiment with this on the squat rack with a lower weight than you would normally use.

- Chirag Shah

21 I workout at home. My cousin comes over every day after work and we workout together. After a long day at the office and then sitting in traffic for the hour-long commute back home, I tended to find all sorts of excuses to not workout. But having Erin come over sort of forces us both to get at it. In fact, our husbands have even started joining us. We motivate each other to not only get off the couch, but work harder. I think we all secretly try to out-do each other, too. Also, we are constantly changing it up. I get SO bored SO fast! So every day is something different (Cardio Coach, weight training on alternate days, step aerobics, walking, bellydancing... shoot! We even do cardio strip tease DVDs! Ha! We look pretty ridiculous, but... whatever...). In fact, I went to flicketyflick.com and signed up for their fitness DVD rental membership (it's like NetFlix but for fitness DVDs so it keeps the workouts fresh). Finally, music is essential! I plug my iPod into my stereo and turn the volume up pretty loud. We all look pretty funny making our solo music videos, but it works.

Some mistakes I've had to correct:

Taking a day off or at least toning it down - we began to burn out, so we've started taking a day off or at least taking it down a notch (bellydancing and a walk, for example). Also, on the days that we weight train, we used to waste too much time trying to figure out what exercise to do, what weight, reps, etc. Now we pre-plan the routine and track our data so we can just get right to the workout. I also have a calendar on the fridge outlining what we'll be doing each day so we can plan our workouts around our changing schedules. Writing it down for the week(s) helps to keep us motivated.

Best diet device EVER!:

I (almost) obsessively count calories. Between having a toddler, a full-time job, a husband and a house to run; I needed an easier way to track calories. I downloaded a calorie counter

application onto my blackberry. It has a large and editable food database built into it. This thing rocks on! I found it at <http://www.rimroad.com/software/rim1/Total-Fitness-for-Blackberry-2005-4-3-rim-rim1.html>

Well, that's all I've got for now...

- Beth Riedemann

22 I think the most important advice for people who start with training is: Don't fall below once a week. Keep that one workout there, whatever happens. If you're traveling, do body weight exercises but if you are anywhere near a gym, do your one workout a week. That doesn't sound like much for someone who's doing a lot - but I see so many people who try to do too much from too early on and then stop entirely. By keeping that one workout a week there, the results start to come in and that is where the motivation comes from to continue. Afterwards, you can do more and you tend to do more anyway because it becomes enjoyable. But the first few months are crucial.

Many people tend to start in January with a Year Pass for a gym, go four or five times in two weeks. Then, they leave out a week or two and before they know, they're out. They don't go back (because of a bad conscience?) and the whole experience is gone.

By starting and sticking to once a week the results should be there after a month or two and the whole thing becomes enjoyable.

- Lukas Eppler

23 So many people are talking about how slow their metabolism is and why they need to start taking the latest diet supplement scam yet they don't even understand how the human metabolism works. So before I even go into how to speed yours up, I want to first go over some of the basics.

What is metabolism?

There are many scientific ways for me to put to you and I could make it seem really confusing like most of the so-called experts

do, but I won't. I'm going to give you my extremely simple and easy to understand definition...

metabolism is the rate at which your body burns calories to sustain life

I should also note that your body, yes yours, burns calories 24 hours a day, everyday – regardless of whether or not you workout or not. Remember that, your body needs energy all the time, even while you're asleep and that is why skipping meals is the absolute worst thing you can do if your goal is to lose weight (body fat).

Before we go any further let's talk about what affects metabolism...

What affects metabolism?

What do you think has the biggest impact on your metabolism? Activity levels? Your Thyroid? Age?

WRONG! WRONG! and WRONG! Activity levels, Thyroid function, and age do affect metabolism but not nearly as much as...

any idea? It's muscle tissue! The more muscle you have the more calories you burn regardless of how active you are, how old you are, etc. It's live tissue and it's there working for you and burning calories 24 hours a day – each and every day!

Here's a list of some of the factors affecting metabolism in order of biggest impact to least:

- muscle tissue (you already know why this is on the top of the list)
- meal frequency (the longer you go between meals the more your metabolism slows down to conserve energy)
- activity level (important but doesn't make any difference if you don't match your eating to your expenditure)
- food choices (ex. low-fat diets tend to result in poor hormone production which leads to a slower metabolism)

- hydration (over 70% of bodily functions take place in water – not enough water causes all your systems to slow down and unnecessary stress)
- genetics (some people have higher metabolisms than others – you can't change genetics but you can still win the battle!)
- hormone production and function (think you have a slow thyroid? it's not likely – before you go blame it on the thyroid first stabilize your blood sugar and throw in some progressive exercise 2-3 times each week)
- stress (stress also can slow metabolism by placing extra stress and strain on numerous systems. plus, many people tend to overeat when "stressed out")

Why does it slow down?

How many times have you heard someone say, "as soon as you hit 30 your metabolism slows down"? Maybe you've said it. I know I hear it all the time and I got tired of hearing it so I did a little research and found that the metabolism does NOT slow down significantly due to aging but DOES due to a lack of muscle. And, you don't lose muscle quickly due to aging either but due to a decrease or lack of physical stress.

So, the major cause of a slowing metabolism is three fold...

1. you lose muscle due to the lack of physical stress
2. your body cannibalizes muscle when it needs energy but you won't supply any because you are "dieting" and skipping meals
3. your activity levels tend to decrease as you get older

So now we know the problem... what's the solution? Address those 3 issues! I've found with years of experience in helping hundreds of people, that increasing your metabolism and getting rid of that excess body fat can often times be quite easy! Yet you'll hear of all these experts telling you how hard it is and why you need to buy their new diet program, supplement, or fitness contraption.

It's not that hard, it doesn't have to be confusing, and you don't need any of that crap! All you need is an understanding of how your body works and the willingness to make some small changes.

Here's my basic formula for jump starting your metabolism:

Step 1 - Stop the storage of new fat

It doesn't make any sense to start an exercise program if you just end up adding new fat later that day. This is a problem that is very common among people who start an exercise in an attempt to lose weight.

See the problem is this...

We don't get fat due to a lack of exercise – we get fat because we supply the body with more calories than it needs at a given time. So the solution has nothing to do with exercise – it's all about your eating! And I'm not saying you have to eat low-fat, super clean and healthy diet consisting of salad and tofu only. You can still eat the foods you like IF you can give the body just the amount it needs.

The key is to give the body the energy it needs, but just that amount not a bunch extra because extra is extra is extra, it doesn't matter what it's from. Salad can be stored as fat, celery can be stored as fat – if it results in extra it can be stored as fat. I should also note that not all extra energy is stored in the fat cells and I will touch on that later.

So forget about trying to burn off any fat unless you can first stop storing new fat! Again, you do that by matching your eating to your activity level. This means small, balanced meals or snacks every 2-3 hours and the amount of calories in each feeding should depend on how active you are at that time of day.

Step 2 – Attack the existing fat

This requires a combination approach consisting of stable blood sugar/energy levels, and progressive cardiovascular/aerobic exercise and strength training.

We already talked about how important stable blood sugar and energy levels are and how to match you eating to your activity level so now I'd like to cover the exercise part of the equation.

In order for the exercise to even be worth your time you must be sure it's progressive. Just because you run on the treadmill for 30 minutes three times a week, that doesn't mean your body has to burn off that unwanted body fat! You have to force the body makes changes and improvements and the ONLY way to do that is to consistently provide a stimulus or stress that is greater than what the body is used to.

Here are some general guidelines on how you can make your exercise progressive and productive:

Strength training

- Change exercises frequently (every 2-4 weeks)
- Increase resistance
- Perform more reps
- Slower reps
- Advanced techniques

Cardiovascular training

- Increase speed/resistance
- Perform intervals
- Increase distance traveled
- Cross train by performing numerous activities

I should also say that it is extremely important that you have a well thought out and detailed plan to follow. You can't just say "ok, now I know what to do" and then try a little of this here and little of that there. You need a roadmap. If you are serious about achieving your weight loss and fitness goals I highly recommend you get the help of a professional. Whether that means one on one personal fitness training or just a do-it-your-self fitness plan – your chances of success are much greater.

- Jesse Cannone CFT, CPRS, CSPN; www.guaranteed-weightloss.com

24The single most important aspect of my workouts has been variety. For a long time I was on a football core lifting routine and I gained in overall strength, but after a while,

the gains stopped. I found that by altering my workout constantly I was always improving both definition and strength. What I do is I choose one exercise that is my favorite from each body part and include that in all my routines so that I know I will have at least one exercise that I both enjoy/excell at. This keeps me motivated. Next I choose one exercise that I dislike or are hesitant to try and make sure to include that in my new routines. This provides a new challenge to work toward and also it hits my muscles in ways that my usual exercises don't. I have found that including these "hated" exercises gives me a surge of energy to try and overcome them and thus gains. I use a routine for about 3 weeks to a month and then switch it up, but I am sure to always keep at least one of my favorite exercises in each body part. I say 3 weeks to a month because anything longer I find my gains start to plateau. I switch from bulk routines, cutting routines, superset weeks and balanced routines. Next time your at the gym look around for someone doing something you haven't tried and test it out, odds are they are doing it for a reason.

- Alex Rai

25 After 42 years, I FINALLY learned the "secret". Dieting alone won't get you into shape. Exercise alone won't make you lose weight. You MUST find your own proper combination. People can tell you what you need to do, you can read about what you need to do, you can watch videos on what you need to do, but until you actually realize it for yourself, nothing will work. (Or it may work for a few weeks or months, but it will not stay with you.)

Unfortunately, this is something that you must learn for yourself. Nobody can teach it to you.

It's not a "diet", it's a mindset. It's not a regiment, it's a lifestyle. You're in this for the rest of your life. So make it a good, strong, healthy one.

-----Sidebar-----

Now for a little background on me: I have Charcot-Marie Tooth disease (which is a form of Muscular Dystrophy), RA, Lupus, & Fibromyalgia, among other things. My right ankle is screwed and fused from multiple surgeries. But I can walk, and I can move.

I'm in daily pain, but the pain is FAR worse if I don't move every

day. I've had to modify every workout routine I've ever done to meet my needs. So when I say "If I can do this, anyone can!", I'm not lying. I have the mindset that nothing will stop me. One of my favorite motivational sayings is:

-----End Sidebar-----

There is a way over, under and around everything that stands in the way of my goal.

- *Betsy*

26 In addition to all the "Don't overdo it and burn out your enthusiasm" tips, watch your diet. Make sure you are not only consuming enough calories in small meals spread throughout the day, but also make sure you are consuming enough healthy fats and essential fatty acids. This is especially important for males. The body requires cholesterol for things like joint lubrication and cell membrane integrity. If your body doesn't receive a high enough fat intake, it shunts prostaglandin synthesis (the basic building programme for hormones) away from producing things like testosterone (necessary for many things including maintenance of muscle tone) to producing adequate amounts of cholesterol for basic body maintenance. Bad fats include things like coconut and palm oils, cocoa butter, lard and visible chunks of fat in animal products. Good fats include various nut and grain oils (things like flaxseed oil, rapeseed/canola oil, olive oil, walnut oil) and fish oils. If you are trying to lose weight by decreasing your food intake and just can't make those hunger pangs go away, try swallowing a tablespoon (15mL for the metrically advanced) of olive oil-it fools the hunger centres in you brain into thinking you've just had a large meal. Another food for males to keep an eye on intake levels is Soy-it promotes oestrogen production-just the thing you need to promote fat storage! Just so the women don't think they are being marginalised, oatmeal chelates iron. If you consume a lot of oatmeal and are feeling lethargic-check you iron level.

- *David Oyen*

27 I believe the best way to go about training is by alternating the exercise used every few weeks. I go to the gym practically every day, so I see the same people. However, along with the same people, I see them do the same exercises for each muscle group week after week, month after month,

never alternating. The purpose of weightlifting is to shock your muscles into growth, and if you don't change up the angle/type of exercise you use, your muscle will simply adapt and become used to it, thereby stopping the growth. I hope this was helpful and not a waste of your time.

-Albert Leu

28 I cannot overestimate (for me at least) the benefit of having a gym-partner to train with. There have been a couple of times where I have not been motivated for gym, but stuck to it because it is just not fair to not pitch up if you made a prior appointment with a friend (otherwise they become your ex-friend). Also, we are able to regularly comment on the other's lifting style (e.g. bar too bent, legs in a bad position, etc.) It is very hard to spot one's own mistakes in the gym.

Another tip that I have personally experienced: Mixing whey protein is a pain - there are always lumps. However, I buy these small Tupperware-type containers, with matching lid, from Løvbjerg. Before I go to work, I put a scoop or two in each container (number of containers = number of shakes I want to have). When I want my shake, I add enough water, close the lid tight and give it a good shake. My shakes are as smooth as the pacific on a hot Sunday afternoon. I find mixing shakes in larger containers doesn't give enough force

- Sven Shepstone

29 One of the biggest mistakes that I see myself making is rushing through my workout. I have been looking for a workout partner that is close to my strength level to workout with but with out someone there to push me I tend to speed through each rep and set. I would imagine that by doing this I am not getting as much growth momentum for my muscle growth as I could.

- William Ray

30 Keep a Workout Journal. Without it how are you going to track your progress? How are you going to know when you need to increase the weight you're using or even change up your workout? Keep track of your workout using a log, journal, diary, or notebook.

Get Plenty of Sleep. Sleep is important. It is what allows our bodies to recover and build on our workouts. Sleep is also when the greatest Growth Hormone release comes. Short sleep can greatly cut into your gains and make it harder for your body to get ready for your next workout.

Unless you are a total beginner (i.e. less than three months) you might want to look at how often you are changing your workout. Once your body adapts to the workout further gains become harder to attain. Changing something about your workout every two weeks can help alleviate the adaptation. If you want to get big then you don't want your body adapting or becoming used to the workout. Use more reps, heavier weights, different exercises, change the days you work given body parts, change the order you work them, something in order to keep those gains coming.

- Kevin Newman; IAPC Physique Coach 123-health-and-fitness.blogspot.com

31 Recipe for Working Out:

80% - Showing up at the gym

10% - Is having fun

10% - If you show up and are having fun, the last 10% is enjoying your workout

- John K.

32 If you really want to achieve the results you truly work hard for, weather its gaining muscle or losing fat or even for sports training, I would suggest counting calories and adjusting your macronutrients. Adjust them depending on your goal. This is the best way to make sure your reaching your goal. To make things simple, just eat the same type of foods everyday until you've reached your goal. Then you can start to change things around a bit. This makes sure your macronutrients and calories are consistent. Counting calories and adjusting macronutrients gives you so much control over your body.

This leads me to my other piece of advice. Take things slow and don't rush into doing things that seem uncomfortable. But, you must have that goal in your mind constantly. For example, when I was 13 yrs old, I wanted to lose fat, but couldn't see myself counting and weighing everything I eat. I constantly told myself

that I was going to count calories one day that I had to if I wanted to reach my goals. Over a couple of months I slowly started to weigh/measure some of my foods and finally weighed everything. I'm now 16 yrs old and I can't imagine myself not weighing my food and calculating my calories and macronutrients. It's a great habit to develop and will soon become part of your life.

- *Tiago Martins*

33 People always ask when is the best time to exercise. I say it whenever you can! Now would be better.

Face it, if you aren't a morning person morning workouts will not work for you. Training is not one size fits all. I think this is proven by the huge number of fitness philosophies out there.

- *Dennise*

34 If I had to narrow down all the many mistakes I made along the way, especially when I first began training, it would be 2 specific things:

- 1) I continually overtrained by a large margin.
- 2) I wasted way too much money on useless supplements.

I continually overtrained by a large margin

Why is that so bad? Because by its very definition, it means you are literally 'in debt' with regard to recovery and growth. Most people fall into a trap driven by the notion that "more is better". Unfortunately, this way of thinking is what drives you into an overtrained state to begin with. And once you reach this stage, it drives you deeper and deeper into a hole.

You reason that if you are already training 4 days a week, doing 3 sets per exercise and 3 exercises per muscle group, the answer is to now train 5 days a week and add 2-3 extra sets and exercises per muscle group. Frankly, that equals the worst possible decision you could make.

After years of this madness, I finally realized the truth: I had to use my head and figure out a better way to reach my goals.

Without going into detail, I had the good fortune of meeting some extremely knowledgeable people who knew how to get results: by training less, training correctly, and most important of all, training smart.

I wasted way too much money on useless supplements.

Now this one may sound a bit odd coming from someone who owns a sports nutrition company, but the simple fact is most supplements, 90% in my estimation, are absolutely worthless. And I spent a small fortune over the years to find out this sad fact for myself.

This one really needs no explanation. In fact, here is what we stress to all our customers when they buy from us: If you want big results, then you must get both your training and your diet correct FIRST. Then, and only then, will you see the results you are hoping for by using our products.

Do your research, look for products and companies that hold patents (that is, real patents you can find online in the U.S. Patent office's database: www.uspto.gov). Ask a ton of questions before you invest good money. And don't take 9 products at one time. Why? Because it'll cost you too much money, and you won't know what is actually working. In fact, only 1 of the 9 might actually be giving you results, and you won't know that you are wasting a pile of cash on the other 8!

Therefore, stick to the proven basics, e.g., protein, creatine, glutamine, and vitamins. If you want to get a little fancy, add in some Arginine-alpha-Ketoglutarate. Overall, you don't need to go crazy with supplements to get spectacular results.

- Brian Andrews, President, All American EFX www.aaefx.com