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How to Lift Weights to Lose Weight

By Michael Stefano

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HOW TO LIFT WEIGHTS AND LOSE WEIGHT

The 5 Golden Rules

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I was barely fifteen when I bought my first set of weights. My best buddy and I lugged the 110-pound set uphill for the twenty plus blocks from the sporting goods store to my parent's basement. Back then pumping iron was reserved for bodybuilders and others at the extreme end of the exercise spectrum. But there were a dedicated few of us that found out just how far a little bit of weight lifting could take you.

Today things have surely changed! The popularity of weight training has soared. We've discovered that if not taken to an extreme, lifting weights, or "strength training" is one of the healthiest, most fat burning and body transforming fitness systems you can apply.

This article is not about bashing cardio, as aerobic exercise is a useful adjunct in the fight against fat, but in a slower, more drawn out format. But it is about breaking down the barriers that prevent many more individuals from sharing in the benefits of the most phenomenal approach to health, fitness, and weight loss known to man (and woman) -strength training.

In this new millenium, most fitness experts and exercise physiologists agree, a properly executed strength or weight lifting routine can do the following:

Lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, stabilize blood sugar

Increase bone density, strength, endurance, speed and flexibility

Reduce the risk of heart disease and certain types of cancer

How to Lift Weights to Lose Weight

Induce weight loss, tone muscles and create a more youthful appearance

Increase strength, endurance and agility

This list goes on. And while you're deciding if strength training is right for you, here's a tidbit of information

that may encourage you to partake - 20 or 30 minutes, two to four times per week. That's the time it takes to do ALL of the exercises necessary to share in the above benefits, including the transformation of your entire body. But there are guidelines that need to be followed to keep your program not only effective but also safe. An early injury will sideline you before you get a chance to see any real results.

The 5 Golden Rules of Strength Training

Rule One: Apply Perfect Form

Strict adherence to perfect form is absolutely crucial with any strength or weight lifting program. Be sure you get instruction from a reliable source (book, tape or trainer) and follow it to the letter. Always move slowly through your full range of motion with every exercise, and don't allow speed and / or momentum to help you complete a lift in a haphazard or jerky manner.

Stay in control of the movement

as you go through it smoothly and deliberately, utilizing proper breathing techniques. Be aware of speed and tempo. The part of the lift where you move the resistance against gravity is defined as the positive phase, and when lowered with gravity the term negative phase is used. Keep the negative phase (a slow count of four) twice as long as the positive (a slow count of two). You can opt to move even more slowly (up to twice as long on both phases), as a way to intensify the set without adding resistance.

Rule Two: Proper Intensity

Applying the right amount of intensity to every set will speed progress, including muscle development and fat loss. Regardless of how much resistance you're working against, or how many sets and repetitions you do (see rule number three), ALWAYS work to some level of muscle fatigue. Muscle fatigue is defined as the point in the set when you experience some local discomfort or slight pain in the targeted muscle group.

You needn't take the "no pain no gain" philosophy to the extreme, but you do need to feel a substantial burn to get real results. Lactic acid is the byproduct of anaerobic exercise, and it's what causes that burning sensation in your muscles when you near the end of a set. Don't sacrifice perfect form or attempt to lift or go beyond a resistance level you can safely handle just to get that lactic acid burn.

Quite to the contrary, adherence to perfect form will bring upon muscle fatigue and associated burn much faster, and with a reduced risk of injury or mishap.

How to Lift Weights to Lose Weight

As mentioned in rule one, slowing speed and tempo is another way to increase intensity when you don't have the option of creating additional assistance. This works well with exercises that utilize body weight only.

Rule Three: Control Weight, Sets, Reps

Anyone embarking upon a new strength training program wants to know, "How much weight should I lift?" and "How many sets and repetitions should I do?" Your selections here will largely control the overall effect of each workout.

Select a resistance level (or weight) that allows you to hit fatigue in a pre-established rep range that coincides with the results you want. But remember the cardinal rule; don't "waste" a set because you initially picked too little resistance, work to some level of muscle fatigue regardless of the number or reps completed, and adjust

resistance on subsequent sets.

The more intensely you train, the fewer sets are required to get the same results but limit total sets to two or three per exercise. If working at the proper intensity levels, your entire workout should be no more than 10 or 15 sets. This can be accomplished in one session or split into two (see rule four for more details on frequency of exercise).

Keep your objectives in mind, the addition of any amount of lean muscle mass will burn more fat 24 hours a day.

Rule Four: Adequate Rest and Recovery

Intense exercise combined with an inadequate amount of rest equals a failed program. Whether you create intensity by doing extra sets or working past muscle fatigue on every movement, intensity mandates plenty of recovery time.

Let's take a look at how to make sure we recover properly from set to set, as well as workout to workout. Every workout should start off with a five minute warm up. This could be a walk, jog, step in place, or any such activity. Immediately after the warm up move right into your first set done to fatigue in your correct rep range. So how long do you rest before doing set number two?

Long rest between sets is compatible with lifting heavy weight at low repetitions. A three-minute rest will allow you to recover completely and be ready for a heavy weight on the next set. Shorter rest between sets will lead to more tone, endurance, and fat-burning effect. A recovery time of one minute or less will keep your heart rate elevated, necessitate the use of a somewhat lower resistance

How to Lift Weights to Lose Weight

level possibly still more than you used on the first set), and burn a lot more fat.

On a weekly basis, more intensely trained muscles need more rest. If, for whatever reason (illness, age, fitness level), you need to keep intensity at a minimum, repeating two or three full body workouts each week with at least 48 hours between each workout is the way to go.

On the other end of the spectrum, if you're ready, willing, and able to crank up intensity, be sure to rest an adequate amount of time before repeating exercise on the same muscle group (from 48 to up to 96 hours). By splitting your full body routine in half, you can create two separate workouts that train the whole body in two sessions. This would result in four "half" workouts each week.

Rule Five: Utilize Multi–Muscle Movements

Stick to exercises that act upon more than one muscle group. For example, many of us are interested in maintaining lean and well–toned arms. After all, this is the part of your body (man or woman) that gets exposed all summer long, and there's the temptation to do endless bicep curls or tricep presses.

But the biceps and triceps are relatively small muscles that don't need a lot of work. As a matter of fact, when bench pressing, the chest, shoulders and arms are all trained at

the same time. This translates into a much higher calorie burn and greater overall muscular development. If you want to lose weight when you lift, forget about isolating small muscles.

Do an extra set of exercises like the bench presses for the upper body and squats for the lower body. An easy way to differentiate between exercises that isolate small muscles, and those that work many muscles simultaneously, is to observe how many joints come into play as you go through the full range of motion called for. Multi–muscle movements will work across at least two joints (usually the elbow and shoulder, or the hip and knee). Stick with these "big" exercises that not only work many muscles, and challenge the body in a more functional capacity, but bring a host of balancing and stabilizing muscles into play as well.

Quick Review of the 5 Rules

Rule 1: Adhere to perfect form, following instructions/illustrations closely

Rule 2: Accelerate progress and overall results by increasing intensity levels

Rule 3: Control weight lifted and reps performed to bring about desired results

Rule 4: Adequate rest and recovery time is essential to continued success

Rule 5: Stick to multi–muscle movements like squats and bench presses

Michael Stefano: Author of The Firefighter's Workout Book, Not Just For Firefighters! Special Offer: Lose weight and get in the shape of your life with the FREE Train For Life Newsletter, as well as customized workouts for both men and women. Go To: <http://www.firefightersworkout.com> Mailto: ContactUs@firefightersworkout.com

Fitness Strategies and Benefits

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Stretching:

Concentrates on improving flexibility. Stretching requires no fitness equipment. Types of stretching include Yoga and Pilates. Whether you decide to stretch before, after or during your exercise routine, there is no doubt that stretching should be included every time you exercise. It keeps your body agile while engaging in any type of resistance or cardio training routine.

Benefits of stretching:

1. improves flexibility
2. increases range of motion
3. promotes relaxation
4. improves performance and posture
5. reduces stress on your body and reduces risk of injury for any resistance training routines or athletic performance

Strength Training, Weight Training or Resistance Training:

Concentrates on improving muscles. Strength training or weight training may require you to lift free weights or use equipment that makes you lift weight. It may also be called resistance training because you are putting resistance on your muscles to improve them. In resistance training you may use tools like rings and tubes rather than weights. Some exercises also allow you to use your own body as resistance. For instance, abdominal crunches can be part of a strength or resistance training routine. Strength training should be included in an exercise routine.

How to Lift Weights to Lose Weight

The benefits of resistance and strength training:

1. helps you lose weight in two ways: improves your muscle mass and increases your energy expenditure, both make you to burn more calories.
2. helps you tone and look better even if you are not overweight.
3. gives you more strength and endurance
- 4 increases bone density
5. has cardiovascular benefits
6. may help reduce risks of injury in athletes

Cardiovascular or Aerobic Training:

Aimed at improving your heart muscle and cardiovascular system. Cardiovascular training or aerobic training may be accomplished in several ways and you don't need to spend any money. Walking, jogging, skipping rope, boxing, dancing, riding a bike – any of these qualify as aerobic exercise.

Cardiovascular training should be an essential element of your fitness routine.

Benefits of cardiovascular training:

1. strengthens your heart
2. helps you lose weight and reduce fat
3. increases your endurance

Interval Training or Anaerobic Training:

Aimed at improving aerobic endurance for athletes. Interval training is characterized by repetitions of heavy exercise with a recovery period following each repetition. For instance, you might sprint for 10 seconds and then follow that sprint with a two minute recovery jog. Then you repeat the sprint/jog routine for about 20 minutes. During the sprinting you are producing a state of oxygen debt. This can also be called anaerobic training because you are out of oxygen. Circuit training is also a form of interval training.

Benefits of Interval Training:

1. improves athletic endurance
2. strengthens the heart muscle
3. improves the lungs or the ability to take in oxygen

Cross Training:

Aimed at improving aerobic endurance, strength and flexibility in athletes. Can also help fight boredom for anyone who exercises.

Type of training that requires you to do two or more types of

How to Lift Weights to Lose Weight

exercise either within the same routine or in successive routines. For example, you may stretch every day for flexibility, lift weights two days a week for strength training, and ride a bike once a week for aerobic endurance.

Circuit Training:

Type of interval training aimed at losing weight and inches. Circuit training has been made popular by places like Curves and Ladies Workout Express. In circuit training you have several pieces of strength training equipment interspersed with aerobic equipment like steps or jogging pads. It has all the benefits of both cardiovascular and strength training workouts.

Renee Kennedy is the editor of the monthly ezine NutriCounter Update. Come and visit the NutriCounter web site at <http://www.nutricounter.com/news.htm> for an extensive selection of articles on health, nutrition and exercise.

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