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Proper Form and Technique While Exercising

By Peter Kudlacz

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Popular Fitness – <http://www.popularfitness.com>

Pay attention to using proper form and technique when working out with weights. Some of the points I want to discuss in this article may seem very basic or trivial, but a momentary reflection on the basic points I will outline will help improve your overall workouts. I feel this article will be helpful for novices and experienced fitness enthusiasts alike!

There are two reasons why you should always pay attention to form and technique when exercising. The most important and most obvious is that if you're not performing the exercise correctly, you risk the chance of hurting yourself either immediately or in the long term. The other reason is that you are not realizing the full benefits from your workouts. You are merely going through the motions.

For people just beginning training with weights or if you're trying out a new exercise, it is important that you understand how the exercise is performed, the mechanics of an exercise. As well as what muscles or muscle groups you are working. For more experienced people, sometimes it's good to re-evaluate how you are performing a particular exercise. How you can improve upon what you are doing. Sometimes over time form and technique tend to slip into bad habits.

So what constitutes proper form and technique?

When beginning a new exercise for the first time, start with a very light weight. Go through the motions of the exercise slowly. This way you'll gain an understanding on how it is to be performed as well as committing the movement to memory. You'll also learn whether or not you are comfortable with the exercise or whether it is even worthwhile doing. Once you understand the basic movement, you may continue with your desired weight.

Proper Form and Technique While Exercising

Concentration. Concentrate on what you are doing. Your mind should be focused on the task at hand. This way you will avoid bad habits.

When performing an exercise stress equally the positive and the negative of the movements. For example, if you are doing a dumbbell chest press the positive is the movement up and the negative the movement down. When exercising, many people forget about the negative. They exert all their effort on the pushing the dumbbells up, but they bring down or let the dumbbells drop too quickly. Thus negating any benefits derived from the negative portion of the exercise.

Don't forget to breathe. By holding your breath during even a single repetition of an exercise, you are depriving your body of valuable oxygen and experiencing muscle fatigue much sooner.

Muscle Isolation. Try to isolate the muscles when you are working out. Most exercises rely on

secondary muscle groups. For example on pull downs for the back, the arms can tire before your lats do because they are much smaller muscles than your back. By concentrating on using the lats to pull the weight down you are effectively reducing the work your arms are doing and placing the workout on the lats.

Each exercise that you may be doing may also have specific areas where bad form may result. There are many examples. If you are doing any type of chest press while lying flat on a bench make sure your lower back is flat on the bench. Many people forget about this and end up curving their lower back without even realizing this and risking the chance of a back injury. This is also true if you are sitting up for certain exercises or sitting on a bench with a vertical cushion. There is a tendency to slouch. Make sure you sit up straight and suck in your abs to keep your back straight. Other exercises require that you keep your knees slightly bent.

As a matter of fact, in every day life you should also be paying attention to how you lift things, sit, etc... This way you will avoid any nagging pains or aches. These body pains exist to tell you something is being done wrong to your body. You will also improve your posture.

Over time you may want to modify a certain exercise. Add some variations to more effectively or differently work your muscles.

These are just some of the most important points to pay attention to when weight training. By paying attention to these points you will avoid any possible injuries and you will maximize the potential from every single workout. And this is the whole purpose of weight training. To strengthen your muscles, prevent injuries and know that a little attention to your health now will go a long way to your future well-being.

I run a couple of fitness websites:popularfitness.comexercise-fitness-programs.comPlease include a link to <http://www.popularfitness.com>when using this article.

Training Technique

By Matt Russ

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Having an effective training plan is very important, but if you are reinforcing bad habits or technique with your training you are working against yourself. Technique, form, and skill are often overlooked facets of training. Athletes should spend a portion of each season perfecting their form, just as they work on strength, endurance, and speed.

Proper technique not only makes you more efficient and faster, it can prevent overuse injuries. Endurance athletes repeat motions thousands of times in a single work out. Improper leg tracking on your bike or a bad foot strike at best wastes energy, but could lead to a visit with the orthopedist. Here are some guidelines for perfecting your form and technique...

- Seek instruction. You can not work on better form if you do not know what it is. A cycling or running coach can video your stride or spin and give you exact feedback on what you need to work on. Books and video tapes are helpful, but they do not have a discerning eye and can not give you the specific instruction you may need. Most coaches charge an hourly fee for one to one instruction.
- Get Feedback. Visual feedback is the best. If you own a video camera set it up on a tri-pod to record your form. Playing it back in slow motion allows you to break down each portion of your stride or spin. A mirror in front of the treadmill or trainer is another inexpensive way to give your self feedback.
- Conscious then unconscious. The process of reinforcing proper form is to consciously repeat a proper motion until it becomes automatic and unconscious. This process takes thousands of repetitions, and you must regularly focus on and check your technique and form.
- Work on only 2–3 aspects of technique per session. If you try to adjust too many things at once it is difficult to focus on performing them all correctly. Take just a few aspects of your stride, stroke, or spin and work on perfecting them.
- Slow then fast. Take a motion or even part of a motion and perform it very slowly and correctly. Gradually bring up the speed of the motion until you are at your race pace. If at any point you perform it incorrectly, slow down again and repeat until you have it.
- Work in base. As intensity increases it becomes harder to concentrate on form. If proper form is not unconscious at this point, it will be much harder to learn. The long slow base work outs are great for working on form. This is not to say you should only work on technique in base. You should work on technique and use drills year round. Base is simply the best time to perfect your form so that you carry good technique into the season, and it adds variety to your base work outs.
- Get the right equipment. If you are running in the wrong shoe for your stride mechanics, or you are improperly fit on your bike, it will make it more difficult to have good form. Make sure you have the right equipment and that it is adjusted correctly.

Learning and using proper technique is "free speed." Often you can lower your energy usage and increase your speed without greater exertion. In fact, your exertion level may go down and your speed or power up. Proper technique is no less applicable to an amateur athlete than it is to a pro. In fact, amateurs can usually benefit the most from technique instruction.

Matt Russ has coached and trained athletes around the country and internationally. He currently holds

licenses by USAT, USATF, and is an Expert level USAC coach. Matt has coached athletes for CTS (Carmichael Training Systems), is an Ultrafit Associate. Visit www.thesportfactory.com for more information.



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