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When Not To Train

By Matt Russ

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Training, simply, is adding specific stress to the body. Your body then adapts to the stress load, and gets stronger, faster, or more powerful. There are times when completing your work out is detrimental to your training and perhaps your health. Knowing when these times are will reduce your risk of injury, and ultimately make your training more efficient and productive.

·When you are sick: You may not need to stop your training with a minor cold, but if you have a more severe illness your body needs to devote its energy to healing itself, just like an injury. Generally, if your symptoms are above the neck (nasal congestion), you may be able to train. If your symptoms are below the neck, such as gastrointestinal problems, upper respiratory issues, fever, body aches, and sore throat you should wait until you are better.

·When you are injured: In my experience, the body usually gives you an indicator when an injury is impending – such as a small amount of pain when training. If you listen to your body, and give it a few days to heal, the injury may quickly resolve itself. When you try to train through minor sprains and strains you will greatly increase your risk of a more serious injury that could keep you from training for some time. If you are experiencing pain when you are not exercising, you definitely need to let your injury heal before placing further stress on the body.

·When you are over stressed: Training can help alleviate stress, but when you already have a high stress load placed on you from work, family, etc., sometimes it is best to take a day off. This is largely a judgment call of course, but if your sleep has been affected and you are already exhausted from a tough day at work, it may be better to get some rest.

·When you are hung over: Alcohol dehydrates the body and affects a variety of other body systems. Getting up after a night on the town and training can be dangerous. Make sure you are rehydrated before resuming training.

·When you are not fully recovered: A balanced training plan is crucial to athletic success. You should not add another high intensity work out unless you are fully recovered from the last. This breaks the stress–recovery cycle. Instead of stress–recovery, your training becomes stress–stress and further breaks down the body. This will make you slower instead of faster and increases the risk of injury.

·When you are not mentally prepared or focused: Often once you start your work out, and the endorphins start flowing, you will enter into a more prepared state of mind. Getting started is often the

When Not To Train

hardest part. Generally speaking, as intensity is increased your training will require more focus and mental energy. No more than 2–3 "break-through" work outs per week are recommended. These work outs move you forward in your training. If you are having a day where you just do not have what it takes to perform a break-through work out, reschedule it for another day. If you cannot put forth a good effort, going through the motions is not necessarily productive.

·When you have more important responsibilities: I advise all my athletes to seek a balance with their lifestyles. Family and job responsibilities must come first. There will be times when you must miss a work out due to these other responsibilities. When you invest a lot of time and energy in your training this can be frustrating, but it is more important to have your priorities in order.

Athletes are highly driven and motivated people who do not like to lose ground. Even though most of

the above are common sense, we have all trained when we probably should not have. As a rule, if you really feel you need a day off you should take it off. It is far better to be conservative in your training than risk over training or an injury that could end your season.

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 had coached athletes for CTS, is an Ultrafit Associate. Visit www.thesportfactory.com for more information.

Model Train Scales

By Jason A. Martin

When you get into model railroading, you quickly learn about model train scales. Every model train that is produced has a scale letter associated with it, such as: HO, O and so forth. The scale lets you know how true to life it is and more importantly, the physical size of the train itself. The scale refers to the size in comparison with the real thing. For example, 1:220 means the real version of the model train is 220 times larger. If you are a newcomer to model trains, the amount of space will be the first factor in determining which scale to go with. For the hardcore model railroader, mixing scales is a great joy when space permits. Let's take a look at some of the model train scales and minimum space requirements.

Z Scale trains are 1:220, which means they are very small. I call these "cute" trains and they are perfect for those with an extremely limited space. As with any scale, you can expand the layout as large as you want to go.

Next up is the N Scale, which is 1:160. N scale trains are semi-popular and are great if you want your focus to be on your layout and not the train itself. They are small as well, so you can fit these trains into minimal space.

HO Scale model trains are 1:87 and the most popular scale of model train with model railroaders. They offer a good level of detail and allow you to fit a nice size track into an average size space. I like HO scale trains because they blend in great with any type scenery and you get a good balance as a result.

When Not To Train

The O Scales, my favorite, are 1:48 and very popular as well. Lionel has been making great O scale model trains for many decades. These model trains are larger and require a good amount of space for a proper layout. It is possible to setup a small oval track in about a 5-foot by 5-foot area. Although the track will seem small because of the train's size, it is better than nothing. If your layout is smaller, the O scale train will dominate the view.

There are a couple other scales, such as S and G, but these are the main ones I choose to discuss in this article. Only you can decide which scale is right for you. Some, with limited space, prefer the O scale model trains, even though they dominate the layout, because of their detail and size. O scale trains are "meatier" and are really great for pacifying the children.

All trains have a variance in quality so one scale is not necessarily more expensive than another. Although, I have found O scale model life to be a little bit pricier. You really can't go wrong with model railroading. It is highly rewarding and wholesome. In the end, you might find yourself collecting model trains across the entire scale spectrum. Get out there and ride the rails!

Jason A. Martin is a model railroading enthusiast. You can read more at

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