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Women's Fitness Focus: The 5 Canons of Resistance Training

By Laura M. Turner, C.P.T.

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Trying to firm and tone? Looking for a bathing suit body?

No problem!

If your resistance training program isn't performing for you, there's a solution. Get back to basics: give your routine a face lift by reviewing these 5 fitness canons.

Canon 1: Always Exhibit Proper Posture

The most important thing to remember when resistance training: proper form will make all the difference. Forget sets and reps, if it's results you're looking for and your form isn't solid, you are asking for injury (not to mention an inferior workout).

Guarantee a shape-shift by using this technique:

Stand in front of the mirror with feet shoulder width apart, eyes facing forward. Tuck your hips under and engage your abdominals - this will protect your spine and lower back and place your body in the safety zone.

Use this technique when performing a lift from a sitting position, as well. Make a mental picture; train your mind to notice if you are out of alignment by recognizing how this protective, invisible girdle feels around your torso. Soon, you will find your body naturally conforming to this posture.

Canon 2: Always Be Aware of Your Breath

When performing a lift, always be aware of your breathing. This is especially important if you have considerations with your heart and blood pressure. If you hold your breath during resistance training

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you could be placing a dangerous amount of pressure on your heart.

Here's a technique to help you breathe properly during a lift:

While engaging the lift: inhale through your nose. Continue to take in this long deep breath until you've reached capacity. Then, quickly exhale through the mouth on your exertion. Over time your breathing pattern will become rhythmic.

Canon 3: Know The Difference Between Precision and Momentum

It's often been said: 3 repetitions performed with precision will net greater results than 20 repetitions performed with momentum. This statement demonstrates the difference in the two: Yes, you'll need to challenge yourself and push your body's limits, but swinging weights and using momentum not only looks sloppy, but begets equal results.

The answer: A proper lift with a sensible weight will create definition and a sleek beautiful body.

Canon 4: Be Aware of Lifting To Heavy

Canon 4 is a natural extension of the previous principle. Remember: it's important to make strength gains during resistance training (and this will happen naturally) however, if you are forcing the lift, you are using a weight that is too heavy.

Here's the test: After a workout, you may experience some slight soreness in the muscle. However, if this soreness lasts beyond 48 hours, it may be a sign that you are lifting too heavy. As a rule: always aim to warm up and cool down, before and after your workout session.

Canon 5: Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate

The body is made of 60% – 70% water, therefore, it is important to hydrate the body before, during and after exercise as the increased exertion accelerates the rate of water loss.

A rule of thumb is to drink at least an 8oz glass of water before during and after you workout. This will keep the body hydrated. It will also prevent dehydration and undue stress on your kidneys.

The Secret Canon:

Something else to keep in mind for a safe, effective workout: obtain proper footwear.

This should not be taken lightly. Proper footwear will help protect your feet, back and joints from receiving the majority of impact.

As a rule you should take a constant inventory of your feet, replacing your training shoes 2–3 times per year (depending on use). You will know when it's time if they've broken down or feel loose and sloppy.

Above all: Listen to you body! Be aware of what is trying to tell you. It's my guess, however, if you aim your awareness toward these canons of resistance training; your body will reward you with a strong, shapely, and injury free body – just in time for summer.

Let Laura Turner, Certified Personal Trainer help you build your Brand New Body. Check out her "New Body News" eZine for FREE. You'll also receive her free report "7–Steps To A High - Performance Body." Send a blank email to:

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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.

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 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.

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