

# 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

by Michael Stefano

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

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.

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 resistance. 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 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

#### About the Author

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.

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