

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

Researched & Written by Robert J. Bovee Certified Master PPT, RTS, ETS, FTS, LMS, WMS, HWFS, SNS, SSCS, MES, E/FT, PSCS, PRCS

~ 7 Nasty Habits ~ Strategic Errors that Hinder Your Training

How many nasty habits have you picked up that will sabotage your training and leave you injury prone and underdeveloped? You probably are not even aware of these habits. You will be when you look into the mirror to find not the “**after**” image you expected, but the same old “**before**” image. May you never realize your bad habits through injury.

Bad habits impede your progress before you finish even your first week of exercise. Breaking bad habits is hard. Recognizing them and nipping them in the bud is the only way you’ll get back on track toward results. Check out the following list and see if you might be undermining your exercise program.

Before training

Psyching up for your workout includes getting your head into the gym before your body actually arrives. This doesn’t require an out-of-body experience, just a little forethought. It means thinking about things that will affect the quality of your exercise session and overall results before you lift a single weight. Do you recognize any of these bad habits?

1. Working out on an empty stomach.

It would be foolish to eat a gigantic meal immediately before your workout, and entering the gym on a completely empty stomach is just as irrational, especially if you exercise in the morning. A too-low blood-sugar level will add up to an uninspired workout due to a lack of energy, and your hunger pangs may hinder your resolve to complete your session or can lead to overeating later. To keep your body energized and ready to hit the gym at any time, eat five smaller meals spaced equally during the day. If you still need an extra boost before your workout, choose a piece of fruit or bottle of fruit juice rather than a sugar-filled soft drink or energy bar.

2. Not warming up properly

Finding the time to make it to the gym can be a workout in itself. After all, they day has only so many hours, and by the time you allow time for sleep, work and family, you barely have enough time left to exercise. But skipping a warm-up when you’re running short on time couldn’t hurt, right? Wrong! Failing to complete a proper warm-up may leave you unusually sore and possibly injured after your workout. Warming up should include at least five minutes of a cardiovascular activity such as running, walking or biking, followed by some light weight bearing movement and stretching to ease your major muscle groups into training. Stretching maintains normal range of motion in the joints and pliability of the muscles and tendons, making them more injury-resistant and producing a better overall workout.

3. Not being mentally prepared.

Getting the most out of your training has as much to do with being mentally prepared as being physically tough. Leave work, home or relationship issues behind and focus all of your attention on the task at hand. As you perform each set for whichever bodypart you’re working, envision the abs, pecs or shoulders you’ve always wanted. Creating the image or goal in your mind is the first step to achieving it; then set goals and revise them frequently as you progress. Before you know it, your workout will be over and your day-to-day distractions will seem insignificant.

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In the gym

You have made it to the gym, but you aren't out of harm's way yet. The following roadblocks can derail your goals and possibly cause injury even when you think you are on track.

4. Sitting still between sets

After a hard set, fatigue begins to set in and you may be inclined to take a breather. Sitting still after performing a hard set can cause blood to pool in your fatigued muscles and lead to stiffness. Performing mini-stretches between sets or staying on your feet and walking a bit can invigorate your muscles, increase circulation and enhance your next set. Especially important, stay on your feet and keep your legs moving between sets when working your lower body.

5. Neglecting your weak spot

We all like to do things that we do well; the sense of accomplishment and pride after a job well-done can be a great ego boost. Think about it: If you have fabulous lats, don't you have just a little more fun on that training day than you do on others? Isn't easier to focus and exert the effort required to finish that day's workout, too? If you answered yes to either question, you've developed at least one nasty habit - neglecting your weak spot.

Overlooking the least desirable parts of your anatomy and training your favorites will leave your physique unbalanced. If you're less than thrilled with a specific bodypart, seize the opportunity to focus a little more effort on training that particular muscle. This may be unpleasant at first, but you'll grow to love that bodypart as it responds to your increased attention. After all, a muscle grows only when you expose it to progressive stress loads, so load up and let 'em have it. Soon you'll have to find another bodypart to designate as your least favorite.

6. Ignoring the negative

Current research shows that an important part of any repetition for increasing strength, size, and flexibility is the negative portion. A good rule of thumb is to attend to the negative portion at least as much as the positive portion. To get the most out of each set, take the time to feel the muscle fibers engage and fatigue. You may have to initially decrease the amount of weight you lift, but the end result will be worth it.

Sacrificing form

Paying more attention to the weight you are lifting rather than proper form can leave you without results and ultimately set you up for injury. Though the poundages you lift are important for strength and size increases, correct form ensures that you're moving the joints through their proper range of motion and actually working the intended muscle. Using momentum to complete the last reps in a set may boost your ego, but it won't do a whole lot for your body. Maintain proper form and let your muscles, not momentum, do the work.

After training

When you're done with your workout, only half of your work is done. The following post-workout habits can leave your body aching for attention.

7. Not replenishing fluids lost while training

Sweat and the stress of working out can deplete your body of fluid as well as essential vitamins and minerals. If you also smoke or drink coffee or alcohol, your risk of fluid depletion is even higher. Drink water before, a little during, and definitely after every workout. If dehydration or thirst isn't enough to get you on the bottle, remember that water is important for the fat-burning process.

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8. Not getting adequate rest

Knowing when to back off and let your body recuperate is just as crucial as knowing when to push it. Don't be afraid to take a day or two off if your body needs it, or to catch an extra wink before your next workout.

Don't let nasty habits derail your training program. Staying on track takes time, hard work and attention, but a killer body is worth the effort.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at **(585) 330-0614**.