

A head-start is half the work!

By Soren W. Hartmann

Both fitness and weight training are in essence very simple. But in this case simple does not mean easy!

Using the basic exercises given on this website it is impossible to grow stronger without your body as a whole at the same time becoming more impressive.

When exercising with weights it is important to constantly increase the amount of weight you are lifting and to always do so in a disciplined manner.

In this connection it is important that you select a handful of basic exercises to work with over a longer period of time.



Legs, barbell squats

If you do not grow stronger and/or bigger while seriously engaging in weight training, something is wrong with the combination of your training, sleep and diet.

Please remember that a universal training method does not exist. Neither is there any training routine which can be repeated year in and year out with equally good results.

However, you may use the basic system given on this website as a starting point, but as you progress you should supplement and adapt your training.



Legs, dumbbell squats

Strict exercising

Start off with a pace of 3-0-1-0 (3 seconds to lower the weight, no rest, 1 second to lift the weight, no rest).

This way of exercising has several advantages:

- It avoids forced and uncontrolled movements (1-0-1), which may cause accidents or injuries.
- It forces you to consciously carry out the exercise in a controlled manner which reinforces the mind-to-muscle link.
- The extra (3 seconds) stretch in the long run increases the elasticity of the muscle concerned.
- Most micro-lacerations, necessary to effect muscle growth, are sustained while the weight is being lowered.

From the above it follows that it is very important to strictly perform exercises.



Legs, dumbbell lunges

The Basic Principle

In the [Workout manager](#) a thorough explanation is given of a number of basic exercises which in practice have proven their effectiveness.

By doing these basic exercises men will build muscle mass and women will develop firmer arms and legs. After having done these basic exercises for a couple of months, muscles and connective tissue will have grown stronger and a good 'mind-to-muscle' link will have been established.

The exercises in the [Workout manager](#) are effective and have proven their value in practice. It is precisely these exercises which form the basis of your future performance in power training. We recommend you follow the program as outlined in the [Workout manager](#) for at least 6 to 12 months.



Legs, leg extensions

During this time you will learn to perform the basic exercises correctly before going on to making combinations with other exercises and techniques to build up your workout intensity. After the 'starting out' period you will be ready for other training programs and for adding more advanced supplements to your diet with ingredients such as Creatine and HMB (in addition to proteins, multivitamins and vitamin C!).

The [Workout manager](#) system saves the beginner a lot of time and effort by presenting a complete plan. The system provides a quick and responsible way to make the beginner familiar with the principles of weight training.



Legs, leg presses

The principle

Not only the variation of exercises, but especially the differences in the number of repetitions for each set in combination with weight, all play an important role. For this reason the Workout manager allows you to choose between differing numbers of repetitions per set, thus making it possible to periodically (every 4 to 6 weeks) train the muscle fibres in totally different ways (power, mass, shape).

Important to know:

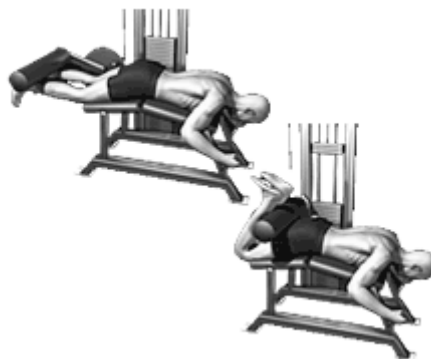
- Each set of 4 to 6 repetitions stimulates the muscle fibres mainly in getting stronger (power).
- Each set of 6 to 8 repetitions increases the size of muscle fibres (mass).
- 12 or more repetitions form the basis for improved signal transmission to the muscles, as well as giving specific attention to muscle shape.



Legs, standing leg curls

Variation in the number of repetitions every 4 to 6 weeks forces your muscles to adapt. Within 4 to 6 weeks the principle of progressive resistance is applied: weight is continuously and proportionally increased.

For example, you add 2 ½ kg of weight each week when bench-pressing. After 4 weeks you will be able to lift a total of 10 kg more when bench-pressing than previously.



Legs, lying leg curls

Various methods of exercising

Yet another principle is the distinction between various methods of exercising.

Exercises can be divided up into 4 categories:

- 1) Dumbbells and barbells
- 2) Fitness machines
- 3) Cables
- 4) Body weight

You will understand that for the proper development of your body it is necessary that all of the above methods of exercising be included in your training. They each have their own specific strong and weak points.

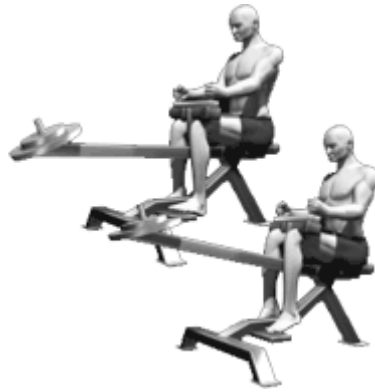


Legs, one leg calf raises

By putting together a balanced combination of dumbbell/barbell exercises with exercises using fitness machines, cables and/or body weight exercises it is possible to compensate for the disadvantages and enforce the advantages

Dumbbells and barbells

Dumbbells and barbells are often referred to as 'free weights'. Dumbbell/barbell exercises are particularly suitable for the development of muscle co-ordination and muscle balance. They provide a unique freedom of movement while performing exercises. Because the weights are kept in balance during the movement the so-called stabilizer muscles are stimulated. These muscles stabilize the body while doing basic exercises such as bench pressing and squatting. These muscles are usually smaller and mostly outwardly not visible. However, stabilizer muscles to a large extent determine your body's strength and symmetry.



Legs, seated calf raises

In many respects dumbbells are superior to barbells.

Dumbbells force parts of your body to work independently of each other causing each individual muscle to experience approximately the same weight. With barbells, however, the stronger muscles of a muscle-group often carry the greater part of the weight, allowing the other - weaker muscles - to work less hard. Over a longer period of time this may result in disproportional muscle development within muscle-groups.

It is important to combine barbell exercises with dumbbell exercises

Machines

In many modern fitness centers all kinds of fitness machines can be found, each one training a specific muscle or muscle-group. Machines ensure that a specific movement is carried out along a pre-determined curve. This reduces the risk of performing it incorrectly. In this way you can concentrate on the weight instead of on the way the exercise is performed. In theory this will make you grow stronger whilst increasing the number of ways in which the body may be developed.



Legs, standing calf raises

In practice, however, it has been proven that fitness machines do not adapt themselves to divergent body types. Another disadvantage is that many stabilizer muscles are not stimulated by such fixed exercises.

Fitness machines should therefore only be used to supplement your training, but not as the basis of a balanced body training program.

Cables

Cable exercises combine some of the advantages of free weights with those of fitness machines. Cable exercises ensure that the muscles involved are evenly tensed during the entire movement. This in contrast to free weight exercises and exercises using fitness machines, during the performance of which the muscle tension varies.

Because of this unique way of stimulation cable exercises also deserve a place in your training program. However, here too it is important to emphasize that the selected exercises should only be used to supplement your total body training program.



Back, one arm dumbbell rows

Bodyweight

Exercises which only make use of your own body weight are excellent for use outside of the gym. Many men and women who train at home do these exercises. They are easy to perform and can be done almost anywhere if you have no access to a gym. A lot of these exercises train your muscles as effectively or even better than many exercises using weights.

A barbell or dumbbell exercise to train your biceps may serve as a good example. If you pull yourself up on a bar using only your biceps, you will notice that this is much heavier than the barbell or dumbbell exercise. Body weight exercises therefore are an excellent way to supplement your training.

By combining these divergent methods of exercising you will have a complete arsenal of exercises and variations at your disposal. Be receptive to variation and diversity!

Variation and diversity will ensure continuous development of your body and will prevent boredom.

Basic types of training

It is important for you to be able to distinguish between compound and isolation exercises.

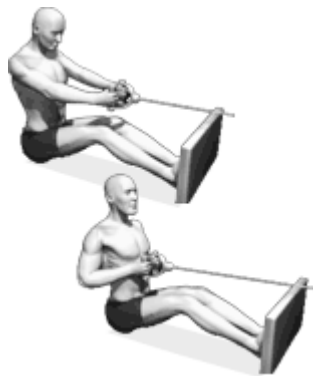
These 2 basic types of exercises are used in weight training. The distinguishing features of these two types of exercises provide unique ways to work on our bodies.

A balanced combination of both types will optimize the effect of your training. And such combinations will gain in importance as you advance.



Back, reverse pull downs

A **compound exercise** involves the use of more than one joint. Such exercises require the use of many different muscle-groups to complete a single movement.



Back, seated cable rows

An **isolation exercise**, however, involves the use of just one single joint and one single muscle-group. A good example of a compound exercise is squatting. When doing knee-bends the hip as well as the knee-joints are used to carry out a single movement. An exercise like leg extensions, however, places the emphasis on the use of one specific part of the upper leg.

Although in both these exercises the thighs are trained, they nevertheless have a different effect. To perform the compound exercise, almost all the muscles of the upper legs are used, i.e. mainly the frontal part of the thighs (quadriceps), but also important muscles of the rear part (hamstrings and buttocks).



Back, wide grip pull down

To perform the isolation exercise, however, just one single muscle is used without using any of the other muscles. The isolation exercise, then, mainly concentrates on a specific (isolated) part of the thighs.

Understanding the relationship between these combinations is essential for successfully developing your body.



Back, dumbbell shrugs

Compound exercises are the backbone of every balanced bodybuilding routine. They contribute towards the development of your muscles in a way which cannot be achieved by the use of isolation exercises alone.

The compound exercises are also most important during the first stages of your development when you are striving to achieve total body development. In the reference guide you will find a list of carefully selected compound and isolation exercises included on this website.

However, there is no doubt that many more may be found in your local library or bookshop.

Progressive resistance principle

Regular workouts can be compared to a new job: imagine that from being an office worker from one day to the next you become a road-worker: at the beginning your body would undergo several interesting changes. You would develop your lower-back muscles by carrying stones in a wheelbarrow and in addition you would develop a firmer grip in your hands, because you would be working with a shovel all day long.

In this example, the changed working conditions would result in positive adjustments, but after some time your muscle strength would no longer develop as fast as when you first started out on your new job. A sudden new impulse, however, would again cause new adjustments.

Exercising can be compared to this. Many trainees develop tremendously during the first year, but subsequently hardly achieve any noticeable results.

To force the body to keep on adjusting (and therefore growing) the progressive resistance principle is applied.



Deltoids, bent over lateral raises

We will discuss two applications suitable for your workouts.

Proportional incremental development: the weight is continuously and proportionally increased. An example of this application is when you add 1.25 kilograms of weight to your bench-pressing exercises every week.



Deltoids, cable upright rows

Step-by-step development: weight is increased by leaps. Every leap is followed by a certain period without any weight increase, after which another large weight increase takes place and so on. This method is used by very experienced athletes.

There are a number of methods which - provided they form part of your training - ensure progress in your workouts.

- Increase the weight you are lifting. Do a standard number of repetitions and sets every week. Add, for instance, 1 to 2.5 kilograms of weight to your last two sets.
- Increase the number of repetitions for each set. Use the same weight for each workout, but try to increase the number of repetitions from week to week.
- Increase the number of sets in each workout. Don't forget, however, that by adding one extra set you increase the total load by more than 25%!
- Shorten the rest period between the sets of an exercise. Use the same weight, same number of repetitions and same pace during each workout, but shorten the rest taken between sets by for instance 10 seconds. This increases the intensity enormously.
- Lengthen the time the muscle remains under tension. Use the same weight and the same number of repetitions, but try to slow down the downward motion. Start with a pace of 3-0-1 (3 seconds to lower the weight, no rest, 1 second to lift the weight). During the next workout slow the pace down to 5-0-1. The following week slow down to 7-0-1 and so on. In practice you often use 2 or more of these methods at the same time.

It is important to know that there are a number of different ways in which you can keep on exercising progressively.



Deltoids, standing barbell presses

A slower development over a longer period of time tends to lead to better and longer lasting results. Try to develop your body as slowly and consistently as possible.

Large muscles are trained first

Exercise the large muscles-groups first before starting on the smaller ones.

This means that the large muscle-groups of the chest, legs and back should be exercised before going on to the arms and shoulders.

Exercising of the larger muscle-groups both mentally and physically taxes your system quite heavily. With these larger muscle-groups many other muscles are involved to help finish the exercise.

Take bench-pressing exercises, for example, for training the chest. To do these exercises you do not only use your chest muscles. Your back and triceps also have to work quite hard to lift the weight. Before doing the bench-pressing exercises you could first exercise some smaller muscles like the triceps and biceps.



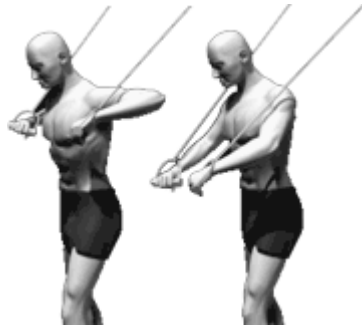
Deltoids, lateral raises

Take heed, however: there is a good chance that these strenuous bench-pressing exercises will tire the triceps before tiring the chest muscles. If that should be the case, you will not have trained your chest muscles sufficiently that day for growth to take place.



Deltoids, seated dumbbell presses

Moreover, you will probably have strained the triceps, which may even slow down growth!



Chest, cable crossover

Therefore, when starting up your workout, do the exercises involving multiple muscle-groups (compound exercises) first.

Beginners routine

In the Workout manager system you have to choose between power, mass or shape before saving or printing out your workout schedule. In this way you can work out the correct number of repetitions per set for each period of 3 to 4 weeks.

After finishing a period, you set your next goal for the subsequent period on the basis of the beginner's schedule (mass, power or shape).



Chest, barbell bench presses

We recommend the following schedule to beginners:

Period.	Duration.	Goal.	Means.	Method.
First period	3-4 weeks	shape	8-12 repetitions	PR
Second period	3-4 weeks	mass	6-8 repetitions	PR
Third period	1 week of rest	rest	rest	rest
Fourth period	3-4 weeks	power	4-6 repetitions	PR

PR = [progressive resistance](#)



Chest, flat dumbbell presses

After a cycle of 10 to 13 weeks, you start all over again. With the data noted in your log-book (in other words, make sure to save all your training printouts!) you can compare the new cycle with the previous one. The end weights of a previous power, mass or shape period are the starting weights for a new power, mass or shape period.

For example: let us assume that at the end of a 'power' period (4 to 6 repetitions) you are able to lift 10 kg dumbbells doing a biceps curl. The starting weight for the next

period of 4 to 6 repetitions will then be 10 kg dumbbells. After having slowly increased the weight over 4 weeks' time, you can imagine that you will have reached a weight of 14 kg dumbbells doing this same biceps curl. This will then be your starting weight for the next power period, which in fact starts 7 weeks later. From this example it follows that it is possible to work through 4 periods of 13 weeks each per year.

In this way your fitness goals can be achieved in the fastest possible way!

Well thought out assistance from 3 standard workouts.

By adding 3 standard workout types to the Workout manager the beginner is enabled to train all 9 muscle-groups every week. We recommend these standard workouts, which are built up as follows:

Day 1 (for example on Monday):

Muscle-group 1, chest;
Muscle-group 2, triceps;
Muscle-group 3, abdomen.

Day 2 (for example on Wednesday):

Muscle-group 1, thighs;
Muscle-group 2, hamstrings;
Muscle-group 3, calves.

Day 3 (for example on Friday):

Muscle-group 1, the back;
Muscle-group 2, shoulders;
Muscle-group 3, biceps;
Muscle-group 4, abdomen.



Chest, flat dumbbell flies

Feel free to change the exercises, but do not change the muscle-groups and especially do not change their sequence. The sequence has been determined on the basis of the criterion that large muscle-groups come before small muscle-groups. In other words, the sequence is important. The sequence from day 1 through day 3 is also most logical.

This weekly sequence gives all muscles enough rest to enable you to directly or indirectly train them again later during the week. We therefore recommend that this sequence be adhered to as well. It is important for beginners (2 to 6 months of training) to know that 2 different exercises for one muscle-group are more than enough for each workout.

After a period of 4 to 6 months you may be considered to have reached an intermediate level and do up to 3 exercises for each muscle-group.

Beginners should therefore not fill out the last exercises of the standard workouts, but leave them blank!

Advanced bodybuilders will find that the Workout manager is flexible and comprehensive enough to meet their personal requirements and preferences. Countless combinations are possible with the selected exercises and it is possible to put together a workout schedule with as much as 12 exercise sets for each muscle-group. The selected exercises will always form 'constructive' and serious workouts.



Chest, incline dumbbell presses

Write down your goals

If you want to make progress and be continuously motivated, setting realistic goals is one of the best motivators.

Many trainees are highly motivated when they begin with a fitness program, but often give up after just a short while. In the long run the absence of clear goals hampers the development of your body.

Long-term goal

This really consists of the image of your body held on to in your mind over a longer period of time.

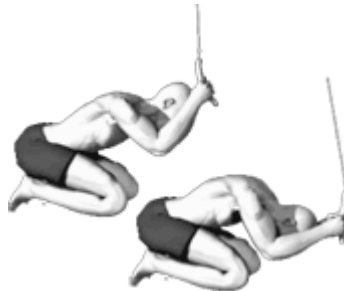
Visualize your entire body - your arms, legs, chest, shoulders and back - and try to form an image of how you want your body to look. Picture yourself in excellent condition walking along the beach or - if you are a woman - at a party in a sexy evening gown.

The point is to visualize yourself as you want yourself to look ideally. Hold on to this image, because it is your long-term training goal.

Short-term goals

These consist of the realistic and measurable intermediate goals you have to set yourself. Here we are concerned with concrete and measurable goals such as: within the next 3 months I want to lose 10 kg of fat, or within the next 8 weeks I want to gain 2 kg in muscle mass.

It is important not to set unrealistic goals. Please note also that the experience of others does not always apply to your own particular situation. Your own training experience and starting point will ultimately determine how realistic your goals are.



Abdominals, cable crunches

After having trained for a longer period of time, experience will have taught you how to set more realistic goals. Eventually you will reach the point where you are able to more or less control the development of your body.

From that moment on you can begin to introduce different phases in your workout schedules. For example, effecting seasonal weight gain (muscle mass build-up) in autumn and winter and weight loss (loss of fat without loss of muscle mass) in spring for the summer.

If you set realistic goals and stick to your workout schedules, you will surpass your own expectations and goals.



Abdominals, cable twist crunches

It is important to take your training seriously and to organize your workouts carefully with the aid of the Workout manager on this website.

Keeping your exercise log-book up to date. Write down your goals. Think of the parts of your body you particularly want to change and describe the desired change clearly.

In other words, don't just write: I want bigger arms. Describe it as follows: within 2 months I want to achieve a 1 cm size-increase of my upper arms.



Abdominals, floor crunches

Each week write down on your printout how many centimetres you have actually added to your arms following the previous week's arm exercises. This is the only way in which you can measure what you are doing.



Abdominals, decline sit ups

Measuring is knowing ... Remember that many small steps in the end add up to one big step.

How much weight should I lift?

How much weight should I lift? There is a short answer to this most frequently asked question: Every human body differs in strength when compared to others.

Therefore you should find out for yourself by trial and error where the limits of your own strength lie.

Especially during the first few weeks you will have to try and determine where the limits of your individual muscles lie.

It is important to carefully write down for each individual muscle where its limits are when doing specific exercises.



Triceps, close grip pushdowns

An example to illustrate how to determine these limits.

Let us take bench-pressing, for example. First do the exercise lifting only the empty bar. The empty bar may weigh up to 20 kg and without any added weights most people can easily do the exercise. Next add on 5 kg discs, one to each side. This will already be quite a bit heavier ... nevertheless, with some difficulty you manage to do approximately 10 repetitions. Add a further 2 ½ kg disc to each side. With much difficulty you can now manage about 6 to 8 repetitions.

This amount of weight should then be noted on your workout schedule as your maximum bench-pressing weight. This amount becomes your starting weight for the last two sets of your bench-pressing exercises to be noted on your daily printout for your next chest workout.



Triceps, one arm pushdowns

Next time you do bench-pressing exercises try to increase the weight on both sides by adding on 1.25 or perhaps even 2.5 kg discs.



Triceps, dumbbell kickbacks

By taking small steps at a time your muscles will in the long run become much stronger. It is therefore better to take many small steps than a few bigger ones. This slow approach prevents injuries and, more importantly, disappointments.



Triceps, close grip bench presses

The joy of weekly successes - even though they may be relatively small victories - will keep you motivated for a long period of time!



Triceps, overhead barbell extensions

Correct breathing

Correct breathing is a prerequisite to proper weight training. Inhale deeply before starting on any exercise.

Exhale in a controlled manner during the most strenuous part of the exercise. During the easier part of the exercise, you inhale again.

In other words, you exhale when making the greatest effort whilst you inhale on the way back to the point where you started from. It is that simple

Try to do the exercises strictly as prescribed whilst inhaling and exhaling evenly. In this way you will teach yourself to breathe correctly during exercising.

Correct breathing will ensure that oxygen will be transported evenly from the lungs to the muscles.



Biceps, standing dumbbell curls

Variation: adjusting your training-habits

There are no hard and fast rules for when you should drastically change your workouts. Much depends on how you react to your current training-program, your predisposition and your training-history.

Changing your training-program will stimulate the muscles differently, forcing them to adjust.

Aside from a protein-rich diet, variation is the most important factor to ensure positive long-term development.

Once you have reached the intermediate level, you will notice that you exercise more often, require more food (proteins) and need more rest, whereas at the same time you will start to use various [supplements](#).



Biceps, hammer curls

It is important to start implementing in your daily workouts any extra information you may have obtained from books and magazines about exercising and nutrition.



Biceps, incline dumbbell curls

The importance of rest

The importance of rest is too often underestimated in.

Muscles do not grow inside the gym; they grow outside of the gym!

Both under-exercising (insufficient muscle stimulation) and over-exercising (excessive muscle stimulation) are counter-productive.

Continuous or even incidental over-exercising of the muscles will not strengthen them. On the contrary, it may even weaken them. Proper balance between resting and exercising must, therefore, be observed.

Beginners often grow faster during the first few months than many advanced body-shapers can remember. Moreover, beginners often appear not to be affected by over-exercising. They therefore start exercising even more intensively and their bodies always seem to adjust wonderfully.



Biceps, seated dumbbell curls

Unfortunately, however, this will end. After a while the growth slows down and you enter the stage where, like most advanced drug free bodybuilders, you have to exercise hard for just a little growth. However, once you have reached this point you are able to lift more weight in less time; in other words, your workout intensity has increased.

It is important to know that specifically at this stage your body needs more rest. Such rest should consist of 8 full hours of sleep every day, a half an hour's afternoon-nap or a specific muscle massage. Particularly if you feel muscular pain following a very intensive workout, rest is of paramount importance to afford your body a chance to recover.

A diet based on extra [high-grade proteins](#) and extra stretching are excellent during this recovery period. Once the muscle has completely recovered after a couple of days, you may start exercising it again.



Biceps, standing barbell curls

If you exercise 3 days a week as is suggested on this website - for instance on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays -, you should use the remaining 4 days to recover and grow (by eating well and resting thoroughly).

Three days a week going to the gym and training this way usually is more than enough! Exercising one day extra per week is probably not conducive to muscle-development.

Once every 4 to 6 weeks spend a whole week without exercising at all.

Between sets of exercises it is probably best not to rest more than 30 to 90 seconds. This way the intensity of the total workout remains high, which stimulates the burning of fat and improves your stamina and overall condition of your body.

If you are a beginner, you will notice that your average workout takes longer. That is because you spend more time on other things than on actually exercising. However, after a while your body will adjust to the intensity of your workouts. You will then begin to notice that the exercises use up less time and that you can do more work in less time.

However, if you do not feel very well, by all means take more rest in between sets of exercises.



Biceps, concentration curls