



COMMANDMENTS FOR WEIGHT TRAINING SUCCESS

Resistance training has changed considerably since the days when a circus strongman would amaze the assembled crowd with his bulging muscles and amazing feats of strength. Over the past 25 years, from when Arnold Schwarzenegger ruled the bodybuilding world, resistance training has undergone a revolution in areas including equipment, nutrition and training methods.

But no matter what new training theory or gym equipment emerges, there remains a core group of truisms which, when applied to any resistance training program, will go a very long way toward achieving results. These are the commandments for weight training success.

1. THOU SHALT CONSISTENTLY OVERLOAD YOUR MUSCLES

The human body is lazy. It hates expending energy. That is why it takes so long for muscles to grow stronger and why they lose strength when we stop training. The effort required to make muscles grow and to keep them big and strong is one our body is not eager to make because through evolution, it has learned to save energy whenever possible in case we need it for an emergency. If you want to achieve significant and lasting results from your weight training program you need to consistently encourage your muscles to grow bigger and stronger. In a gym environment this translates to three basic rules:

- keeping safety in mind, use a challenging weight. This will force your body to use more individual bundles of muscle fibres (called 'motor units') during each repetition;
- do exercises that work muscles through a longer range of motion. This will make your muscle fibres contract more often and more forcefully during each repetition (a muscle fibre contraction takes milliseconds and many single contractions 'piggyback' on each other in quick succession during a single repetition). Talk to your personal trainer or gym instructor for more information;
- make training a part of your lifestyle. This ensures your muscles are regularly overloaded, which is necessary for significant and permanent change.

2. THOU SHALT EAT AND DRINK WELL AND REST

This should be obvious but for too many people, it isn't. Muscles don't grow bigger and stronger in the gym. Muscles grow stronger during recovery - while you're

sleeping or at the office or in front of the television. Ensuring adequate nutrition and hydration will also help them recover and respond to training.

3. THOU SHALT REMEMBER:

technique is everything Proper technique during weight training ensures that you really are exercising the muscles you are targeting, and that you are doing so safely. There is little benefit in simply moving a weight from point A to point B unless you are training specifically for weightlifting or powerlifting. If you want bigger or more shapely muscles, you must apply the weight to the intended muscle using proper technique. If it means you have to lift a lighter weight, then so be it. Notice how your body responds to slight improvements in technique and your training will gradually become more efficient. Also, personal trainers and gym staff are there to help you, so don't be afraid to approach them! If you want bigger, stronger muscles, you must train a muscle, not just lift a weight. There is a difference.

4. THOU SHALT SQUAT

A properly performed squat uses more muscles more intensely than any other exercise there is. A deep squat uses thighs and, to a lesser extent, glutes and hamstring muscles as prime movers and calves, lower back and abdominals as stabilising muscles. Not only that, but your breathing muscles get quite a workout as well. Make sure you are shown the safe way to squat and that you are warmed up before beginning.

5. THOU SHALT JOURNALISE

Write down your workouts as you do them. Successful weight training comes about through small, regular steps of improvement over a long time. Documenting your workout makes it easier for you to monitor those small steps along the way. It helps you identify where to pick up from after your last workout, and it helps you see which exercises work best for you. It also gives you something to do between sets.

6. THOU SHALT STAY FOCUSED

If you go to the gym to train your body, then train your body. Don't be tempted to fool around with a piece of equipment and then spend time chatting. People who do that waste their money, time and energy. Don't waste yours!

7. THOU SHALT STRETCH

If you regularly force your muscles to contract powerfully they will develop 'tone': they will be slightly contracted at all times

and look and feel tight, strong and resilient. However, allowed to develop unchecked, toned muscles can become too tight and can affect your posture. For example, people who do heavy bench presses and don't stretch or balance their effort with appropriate back work can tend to develop hunched-forward shoulders caused by their chest muscles growing too tight. So stretch. If time is an issue then stretch between sets.

8. THOU SHALT BALANCE THY MUSCLE

groups Allied to the above point, muscle balance is also important. For example, quadriceps are often worked to the neglect of hamstring muscles. This can happen with any opposing muscle groups and can lead to postural problems and pain. Be sure that your program trains all body parts and their opposing groups. Talk to your personal trainer or gym instructor for more information.

9. THOU SHALT DO AEROBIC EXERCISE

Being a fit person has a lot to do with the efficient delivery of oxygen around your body and this relates to your cardiovascular/aerobic fitness. For optimal health and fitness make sure you do some regular aerobic exercise. Weight training will not increase the volume of blood your heart pumps, nor will it significantly increase the blood's capacity to carry oxygen, but cardiovascular exercise will - so make sure you do it!

10. THOU SHALT TRAIN

predominantly with free weights Free weights use a greater proportion of muscle during each exercise and also develop strong stabilising muscles. Machines have their place in every workout but to develop strength and muscle size, base your program on free weights. Ask your gym instructor or personal trainer for more information.

11. THOU SHALT NOT TAKE IT TOO

seriously Caring about how your body looks is a positive personality trait but be sure to avoid equating how you look with who you are. It's great that you are exercising and it's great that you look and feel good, but don't let it rule your existence. Enjoy feeling good and focus on integrating exercise into your life in a balanced manner.

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