

## How to Choose the Right Weightlifting Routine

Resistance training exercise, or weightlifting, is crucial to attaining your goals. Research has shown that a combination of weight training and cardio sheds more pounds and boosts the metabolism higher than cardio alone. This is primarily because you burn several more calories per day for each droplet of fat that you replace with a fiber of lean muscle. In addition to the weight loss benefits, resistance training provides you with higher bone density, a more coordinated and well-functioning collection of muscles and joints, and better agility and balance. Furthermore, athletes can use weightlifting to improve force potential, decrease injury potential, and cross-train with sport specificity. Unfortunately, the number of weight training "routines" that exist in magazines and on gym walls can be intimidating and confusing, and what works best for your lean next door neighbor or marathon-running friend may not be your body's cup of tea. So how do you choose what's best for your personal goals? I'm going to describe four basic and popular methods of lifting, and then help you decide which one to choose, depending on your individual needs.

1. **Body Split Training** This style of training involves splitting the body into several "groups" of muscles, and working those muscles on certain days of the week - for example, a 5 day split would look like this:  
Monday: Chest/Back/Abs

Tuesday: Shoulders/Biceps/Triceps

Wednesday: Quads/Calves

Thursday: Shoulders/Abs

Friday: Hamstrings/Low Back This style of training is very popular among the bodybuilding crowd, because it allows an individual to focus on a specific muscle group and work that muscle to complete exhaustion. With proper rest, this results in very large and defined muscles. The sets can be as high as 10 sets per exercise, and the reps fall anywhere in the range of 8-20. Rest periods can be as short as 10 seconds and as long as 5 minutes. Strategies include back-to-back sets, pyramiding up or down in reps and/or weight, pre-fatiguing, bouncing, super-slows, negatives, and a host of other tricks from the realm of bodybuilding. If you simply want to get "big and cut", this is a good approach. The problem with this style of lifting is that it only works well if you can sufficiently exhaust the muscle groups, so you need to plan on spending at least an hour and a half, and up to three hours every day weightlifting in the gym. Many of the lifts are single joint lifts, meaning that the focus is not on calorie-burning, strength, or athleticism - but simply muscle isolation and growth. Many of us don't have that kind of time: the people who get the most benefit out of a body split routine must have a high amount of dedication and devotion to their exercise program, and have a single desire: build muscle.- 2. **Traditional Weightlifting** When most of us think of "resistance training", we think of a traditional weightlifting program. This typically involves 3-4 sets of 10-12 reps of a specific exercise, with a 45-60 second rest after each set. Once an exercise is completed, you move on to the next. Usually, a routine is made up of 8-10 exercises that work the entire body. Usually, this kind of routine is performed 3-4 days of the week. This is a good, straight-forward way to build strength, bone density, and add lean muscle. Compared to some other types of lifting, traditional weightlifting does not burn a high amount of calories or elicit a high cardiovascular response, since you spend a significant amount of time sitting down and "resting" between exercises. If your goal is maximizing weight loss and/or toning and cutting, there are better programs out there for you. The same can be said for athleticism. If your goal is simply to maintain fitness and keep your body strong, this would be a good choice.
- 3. **Circuit Style Training** Circuit style training involves choosing a series of exercises - typically multi-joint movements that work a large amount of muscles and joints at the same time - and performing these series of exercises, one after another, with minimal rest between exercises. The heart rate and metabolism get screaming high during a circuit training workout, and the density, or volume, of exercises performed can be very high with this approach. When you are trying to get the most "bang for your buck" out of your resistance training routine, a circuit style training program can be very effective. Reps are typically in the range of 10-20, and many of the exercises include a cardio component, such as a 250 meter row, a 2 minute treadmill sprint, or 25 medicine ball throws against the gym wall. As mentioned, the weightlifting exercises are primarily multi-joint, like a "squat to press", "lunge to curl" or "deadlift to overhead extension". Most of the clients that I train who desire weight loss and toning will have some resemblance of a circuit training routine in their program. Often, a 20-30 minute core routine performed every day of the week will literally melt away fat. The downside to circuit style training is that since the rest periods are so short, you typically can't lift very heavy weights, and strength gains can be minimal when compared to body split training or traditional weightlifting.

4. **Periodization** Periodization simply means that a training year is divided into workout cycles or "periods". Each cycle of the training year involves a different type of weightlifting approach. For example, a training year might be divided into 1) the off-season; 2) muscular endurance building; 3) muscular strength and/or mass building; 4) power and explosive strength development and 5) strength maintenance or competition season. Obviously, this style of training has the most benefit for an athlete who is preparing for a competition. Periodization allows an athlete to "peak", or have maximum physiological preparation, prior to their event. An example of a periodization weightlifting scheme for, say, an Ironman triathlete training for a June race, might involve the following, with three full body workouts per week:  
July-September: off-season, cross-training  
October-December: muscular endurance building, 3 sets of 15 reps, 8-10 exercises, 30-45 seconds rest  
January-March: muscular strength building, 4 sets of 12 reps, 6-8 exercises, 60-90 seconds rest  
April-May: power and speed training, 5 sets of 4 reps, 3-4 exercises, 2-3 minutes rest

June: strength maintenance, 2 sets of 10 reps, 4-6 exercises, 1-2 minutes rest This scheme might look different for a basketball or football player, but the underlying concepts are the same: take the body through several different training periods to allow for peak performance when it really matters. No serious athlete should choose any weightlifting routine that doesn't include periodization. Obviously, there are many choices and limitless combinations of workout routines. In as little as one to two e-mails, an online personal trainer can design a routine that is personalized to your goals. Then, to avoid a training plateau, your trainer can constantly change your workout to avoid any adaptation your body may have to the exercises. A personal trainer is

full of useful information like that! As a matter of fact, on my diet and fitness website, [www.pacificfit.net](http://www.pacificfit.net), I've published a brand new e-book full of hundreds of fitness tips and tricks, pages of workout combinations, and dozens of health and wellness articles. It's called Ben Greenfield's E-Health Handbook of Diet & Fitness Secrets, and between now and August 1st, you can get it from [www.pacificfit.net](http://www.pacificfit.net) for only \$19.95. If you're looking for more direction and information on fitness, you should check it out!

### About the Author

12 secrets for building muscle mass, learn what it takes to build muscle super. Bodybuilding is a sport of building muscle. Bigger and stronger.

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