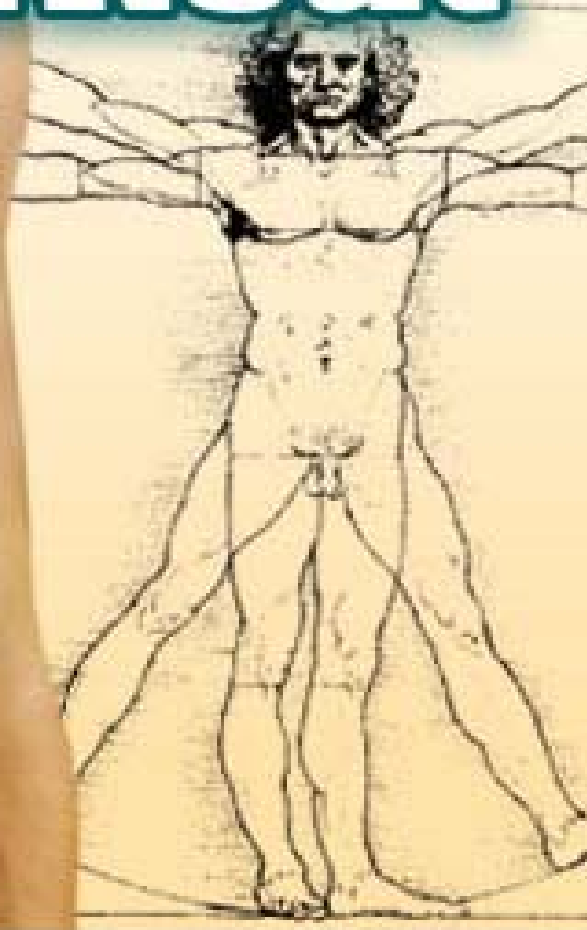


# **12 Intelligent Ways to Improve Your Next Workout**



**By Bestselling Fitness Author, Pete Sisco**

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## Twelve Intelligent Ways to Improve Your Next Workout

It's amazing how knowing one or two little workout tricks can energize a stale routine or press you past a plateau. Your next trip to the gym can be filled with enthusiasm when you know you'll be using a new technique to squeeze more benefit and muscle building efficiency out of each exercise.

And I'm not talking about cutesy things like 'wear a cheerful color' or 'try new exercises'. I'm talking about techniques and strategies that have been proven - in most cases, mathematically proven - to deliver improved results to thousands of users.

Here are (in reverse order) twelve ways to improve your workouts:

**12. Do a proper warm up.** Before you lift weights do 10 or 15 minutes at a moderate pace on the treadmill, stationary bike or similar exercise. Also, before each lift pump out a dozen or so reps with one third to on half of the maximum weight you'll be lifting in that exercise. A proper warm up reduces the overall wear and tear on your body and that means you'll be able to stick with a program longer and see better results. Studies vary as to whether these benefits and others - like reduced soreness - accrue to all trainees, but at the very least you'll burn a few more calories and, for most of us, that's a good thing on its own.

**11. Know your bodyfat percentage:** Two guys the same height can weigh 190 pounds, yet one of them looks flabby and the other looks lean and athletically fit. The difference is in their percentage of lean and fat. We lift weights so we can add more muscle, but if you gain five pounds of muscle and lose 5 pounds of fat your bathroom scale will say your weight hasn't changed. You'll feel like you're getting nowhere and you'll lose motivation. Needlessly. Check your bodyfat about once every 3 weeks and you'll see your true results vis a vis muscle gain and fat loss.

**10. Build your forearms.** Forearms are one of the most neglected bodyparts in the world of strength training. When was the last time you saw a guy in the gym doing barbell wrist curls, reverse wrist curls or grip exercises? But forearms are one of the most noticed bodyparts, especially in the warmer months when you wear short-sleeved shirts. And it's not just about having 'bowling pin' forearms. Grip strength is the foundation of many other important exercises. And I can think of at least a dozen sports like martial arts, rock climbing, golfing and water skiing that all benefit from having more power in your grip and [forearms](#).

**9. Reduce your range of motion and increase weights.** Full range of motion is an absolute requirement of *flexibility* training such as yoga. However, it has been proven that a full range of motion is not required to build new muscle tissue and strength. (*Power Factor Training, 1993 Contemporary Books; Static Contraction Training, 1999 Contemporary Books; Train Smart 2009, Pete N. Sisco*) By limiting your range of motion to one half, one quarter or one eighth of a rep in the strongest range you can increase the weight substantially. That extra weight will stimulate new muscle growth. Extra distance will not.

**8. Make sure each workout is progressively more intense.** One of the keys to triggering adaptation in the human body is to demand more and more from it. If your workouts are always the same intensity there is no reason for your body to grow new muscle or transform itself in any way. So add a little more weight to each exercise or squeeze out a few more reps with the same weight. Never, ever, do the same workout twice unless you have achieved your goals and are in maintenance mode.

**7. Use a logbook.** Once you understand the role of intensity and progressive overload you'll see the great benefit of writing down exactly what you did each workout. Knowing the weight and reps for each exercise (or the weight and time of static holds) is what allows you to engineer your next workout so that it truly is progressively more intense. (See #8) Your logbook becomes your personal journal of what delivers the best results for you.

**6. Use gloves, grips or wrist wraps.** You'd be amazed at how often

you have to stop an exercise before reaching your true maximum number of reps because the knurling on the bar is causing too much discomfort. Also, many people can't add more weight to pushing exercises like bench presses because their wrists can't withstand it. This means their chest muscle development is limited by their wrists. There is no excuse for living with that limitation. [Grips](#) and/or wrist wraps can get you to the next level.

**5. Use lifting hooks.** I've advocated the use of hooks for over ten years, because I've measured and seen the increases people can achieve the first time they use them. Hooks assist on important exercises like deadlifts, barbell shrugs, lat pulldowns and chins where grip fatigue is the usual reason people fail to get more reps and use heavier weights. Why let your grip strength limit the development of all those major muscle groups? I highly recommend the hooks made by [my friend Dave](#).

**4. Use high intensity exercises.** When you want to target a specific muscle group (chest, triceps, quads, etc.) you have many exercises from which to choose. Use the exercises that allow you to lift the greatest amount of weight in the shortest time. For example, doing cable curls using a low pulley delivers only 36% of the intensity of doing seated barbell curls. The latter allows the lifting of more pounds per minute, which is the definition of intensity. Avoid the goofy, exercise-de-jour you see in some magazine articles in favor of the exercise that delivers the most overload to the target muscle.

**3. Try Alpha and Beta workouts.** There are two forms of muscle strength. Alpha strength is the momentary strength required to do, for example, one maximum bench press rep. Beta strength is the strength required to perform four sets of 20 reps with the heaviest weight possible. Think of it as a sprint versus a marathon. Experiment to discover which form of muscle strength is your forte. Try a workout where you do only one all out set and try a different workout where you do multiple sets to failure. In our measurements about 10% of people do better with a higher volume Beta workout.

**2. Do leg presses.** Heavy leg presses, especially when limited to only your strongest range of motion, are the single most intense exercise anyone can do. The anabolic effects of doing ultra high intensity leg

presses carries over to the entire body. It is literally true that heavy leg training helps build bigger muscles throughout the entire body because of this systemic carryover effect. I know many people who can leg press over a ton (or 1,000 kg) doing strong range leg presses. Believe me, that has an effect on the body that using a colorful Swiss ball will never approach.

...and the #1 thing you can do to improve your workouts:

**1. Work out less often!** Yes, this is the only tip that is totally counter-intuitive. If you want to burn more calories by jogging, you should jog every single day. But the #1 mistake I see in people who want to gain muscle and transform their physiques is that they work out too often and do not allow enough time to fully recover between workouts. Metabolically speaking, your body must first fully recover before it will perform muscle-growing functions. The best way to know whether you have fully recovered is to see if the intensity increased on all of the exercises in your workout. If the intensity didn't go up, you need to work out less often. You should constantly monitor and adjust the frequency of your strength building workouts to make sure they are spaced far enough apart to ensure constant progress toward your goals.

Try using one or more of these tips on your next workout and watch how your level of success and enthusiasm increases. Try all twelve tips and you'll be unstoppable!

Have a GREAT Workout!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pete". The letter "P" is large and loops around the "e".

Pete Sisco

P.S. You can see how all these principles are used by learning more about *Static Contraction Training* [at this link](#).