

A Beginner's Workout

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Here's a weight training workout that works well for beginners and for anyone getting back into training after a prolonged layoff. Each workout can be finished in less than an hour and it can be practiced only twice a week to show results. When I did ongoing personal training, this workout program filled the bill for most clients.

It's a full body routine where every body part gets one exercise. One set of ten repetitions is all that is required for the first two weeks or for as long as the trainee feels its effect (some soreness should be experienced the following day). Subsequently, a second set is then added, and the weight is increased slightly. The repetition scheme is then 12 reps on the first set, increase weight, 10 reps on the second set. A one-to-two-minute rest is taken between sets, enough time to allow breathing and pulse to return to normal and time for 15 seconds of stretching the muscles worked in each exercise.

Incline dumbbell press for upper pecs and front deltoids

Dumbbell pullover for ribcage, lower pecs, and serratus

One arm dumbbell row for lats

Dumbbell side raises for lateral deltoids

Dumbbell curl for biceps

One arm dumbbell triceps extension

Reverse barbell curl to work forearms

Leg raises for abdominals

Seated twist with light pole for obliques

Leg Extension for quadriceps

Leg curl for hamstrings

Standing calf raise for calves

This makes a total of 12 weight training exercises involving basic equipment, mostly dumbbells for upper body, and a few machines for legs. Aerobics should be done for a minimum of 12 minutes at the end of the workout since this is the time when the body's fueling system changes from burning glucose and glycogen stores to burning stored body fat. As the body adapts to this routine and a second heavier set is added, the trainee should consider practicing it three times a week. Continue to do three workouts a week and take your aerobic time up to 20 minutes at the end of each workout.

Even with added aerobics the workout shouldn't last much longer than one hour, if it does, one should rest less between sets. If you do two sets of each exercise with a minute rest between sets, the weight training workout should take about 48 minutes: one minute to set up the exercise and perform it and one minute rest during which time you hold a stretch for 15 seconds. This results in two minutes for each set times 24 sets or a total of 48 minutes. The goal for each set is to get a pump in the muscles being worked. The pump is a swell feeling in your muscles—they become engorged with blood, expand, and when you look into the mirror you see the picture of your future body.

Many people who hire a personal trainer never move beyond the beginning routine, but those who do should move up to a two-way split routine, the simplest of which is to work upper body one workout and lower body the next. I tell my clients they should never work upper body two days in a row. Doing this over time can result in overworking the shoulders, something I've personally experienced. But with this particular two-way split routine, your shoulders are only worked on upper body day so the routine can be done two days in a row. One might work upper body on Mondays and Thursdays and lower body on Tuesdays and Fridays. Since only two body-parts—thighs and calves are worked on lower body days, more abdominal work can be added along with extra aerobics. Splitting the routine this way works well for women who usually want to focus more on hip and thigh work since this is where they store body fat. Adding extra hip/thigh exercises on lower body day makes each of these workouts more equal in length.

Another way to do this two-way split routine is to do it every other day alternating workouts. A two-way split routine I had good success with 20 years ago when I was younger and had more resilience was to work back and legs one day and chest, shoulders, and arms on the other day with a rest day between each workout. I trained with a partner and each workout took

an hour and 20 minutes. On days in between I rode my 12-speed bicycle outdoors for the same length of time, usually covering more than 20 miles. I got in great shape doing this routine.

There are many variations to the split routine. The basic idea is that as you get into better condition you need to do more work for each muscle group, usually two to four exercises. To do all this in one workout would make the workout too long and counter productive, so you split it up. My current program is the three-way split routine: chest, shoulders, triceps on day one; calves and thighs on day two; back, biceps, forearms on day three; and some abdominal work and aerobics at the end of each workout. This is my favorite way to train. I work each muscle group hard and then give them a good rest to recuperate. I spread these three workouts over five days: day one, day two, rest, day three, rest, repeat. I've spent the last 30 years of my 50-year training career working out this way and the results speak for themselves. Choose the workout program and training frequency that best fits into your time schedule and priorities.