



The 50 Golden Rules Of Fitness

1. **Log Your Workouts** – Tracking your workout is essential. It's the only way you can truly judge if you are making progress. Plus, if you ever find yourself out of shape, you can check back with the training you were doing at the time and repeat it to regain the conditioning.
2. **Mobility Drills** – Exercise isn't all about aesthetics, we also have to look after our body and ensure that our muscles and joints work fluently through a full range of movement. Daily mobility drills like stretches can help keep your body working as it was intended to. This one gets more and more important with every passing year.
3. **Intermittent Fasting** – Skipping breakfast could be the best move you ever make. Intermittent fasting can keep your body's natural growth hormone active for longer, offset the ageing process and help keep you lean. Just make sure you've read up on the topic before you start.
4. **Eat accordingly** – We all know there are recommended daily allowances for things like calories, but it's easy to forget that our actual lives fluctuate rapidly from day to day. We rarely expend exactly the same amount of energy two days in a row, so it stands to reason that we should approach food intake on a day-by-day basis. If you exercise a great deal on Monday and do nothing but chill out and relax on Tuesday, you're going to need more fuel on the Monday than the Tuesday.
5. **Ice Baths** – Taking an ice bath or hitting a plunge pool after a heavy training session can significantly speed up the recovery process. It squeezes the blood out of your muscles whilst you're in the water, meaning that when you get out you're hit by a flood of brand new oxygen-rich blood. It's agony, but it's worth it!
6. **Progression** – Exercise is all about progressive overload, so don't get caught up in a rut doing the same workout over and over again with no forward momentum. People who aim to 'maintain' often end up going backwards. Do more each time you work out – even one extra rep over an entire session is enough to represent progression.
7. **Learn how to time your workouts** – You have to be able to predict when you'll get the most out of your training sessions. It's an individual thing: you may find that you just don't have the same output in the evening as you do in the morning, or vice versa. Experiment with different training times and find what works for you.
8. **Use BCAA To Preserve Muscle** – I don't recommend many supplements, but there's one that helps to protect your hard earned muscle that seems like a no-brainer to me. I take BCAA in the mornings (due to intermittent fasting) as well as pre and post workout to prevent catabolism. It's such a small price to pay for what I like to call 'muscle insurance'

9. Train Your Legs – Don't be the 'every day is upper body day' guy. So many men make the mistake of never training their lower body and end up with an unbalanced physique, both aesthetically and functionally. Training your legs properly will raise your testosterone and growth hormone production and actually make your whole body more anabolic. Get it done!

10. Train Your Glutes – OK, so you read the point above and started training your legs right? But are you really training your whole leg? Do you realise how important your glutes are to your athletic performance, not to mention how attractive they are to the opposite sex? Ladies like a pert, toned bottom just as much as men do. Hit your glutes hard and regular. Use weighted lunges, deadlifts and hip extensions to develop the perfect man butt.

11. Train You Calves – So you read the point above and started training glutes right? But what about your calves? I know I'm annoying but I have to say my piece. Nobody likes calf training, because, well, it hurts. There are so many nerves down there that genuine calf training is pretty painful- but when all is said and done, that's no excuse to leave them off your agenda. Weighted calf raises once a week should be enough to bring them up. People notice calves, believe me!

12. Talk To Experts – Guess work is the worst thing you can do in the gym: it leads to poor results, and a lot of wasted time and money. If there's a question you don't know the answer to, just ask a pro. You don't have to sign up with a personal trainer, just ask one in the gym or via email. Most love what they do and are pretty happy to help.

13. Get Your Mind Right – I once read a study that up to 13pc of gains from a workout can be the result of simply performing it mentally. On reflection, I've completed a training phase with no thought to my goals and progress and seen literally a fraction of the results from the same training as when I am focused and thinking about what I'm trying to achieve. Get your mind in the game. Know your outcome for every workout and what your overall fitness goal is; your brain is more powerful than you think.

14. Avoid Crash Diets – Unless you have been at your ideal weight for some time and regularly eat balanced, healthy meals, you really have no business at all doing any kind of diet. And even then it would be to achieve an advanced goal like competing in an event or doing a photo shoot. Crash diets tend only to lead to a loss of muscle and are, by definition, temporary. Avoid diets at all costs and just focus on the basics of healthy eating.

15. Drop Your Ego – Nobody cares how much weight you lift. Nobody is watching and nobody is tracking. What does draw attention is terrible lifting technique. Lifting well beyond what you can handle just to look good in front of other people is pretty much the same as tattooing "I'm insecure about my strength" on your forehead. If you can't bench, squat, deadlift and curl with immaculate technique, it may be time to drop down a weight, develop authentic strength and come back to lift heavier another day. If it really is respect you're after, that'll be how you earn it.

16. Get Outside – You don't have to be cooped up in the gym for every workout. There are plenty of opportunities to get outside and train in the fresh air. Sprints, circuits and TRX workouts all provide a great opportunity to head to your local park and enjoy the fresh air.

17. Have A Mantra – When times get tough in the gym and you just don't feel like you have the will to train, you need yourself a mantra to get you through. Personally I use "You Never Know Your Limits Until You Push Through Them". What will yours be?

18. Dress To Impress – Dressing well in the gym can make a big difference to how you feel. Feeling good in your gym kit adds motivation and makes you feel that all the effort you are putting in is worthwhile. You can also use it as an intrinsic motivator: if you only have tight fitting gym wear it's pretty clear for all to see when you aren't in shape, so you won't stay there long. Apparently this was a favourite trick of a certain Arnold Schwarzenegger.

19. Don't Look For Shortcuts – I'm not going to philosophise about whether performance enhancers like steroids and potent thermogenics are inherently right or wrong. What I will say is that neither should even be considered without truly earning your right to say that you have reached your natural potential the old fashioned way. If you are hoping to find the perfect physique in the bottom of a pill box, you are setting yourself up for a lot of disappointment.

20. Train In Phases – Your body gets used to the same exercise stimulus after about four to six weeks, grinding your progress to a halt. Switch stimulus by training in six week phases. For example, this could mean switching from a hypertrophy phase to a muscular endurance phase followed by a fat-loss phase. Plan your training 24 weeks in advance and always switch up to a new phase after six weeks. This is how athletes and bodybuilders train. Success leaves clues; follow what the pros do and you won't go far wrong.

21. Get Over Setbacks Quickly – We all experience setbacks in life. Health and fitness is no different. The most common exercise setbacks are typically injury and illness. When you get struck down, rest up, recover, and when you feel like you can train again, return with vigour. Never get down in the dumps about a setback. Yes it's frustrating, but time is going to pass anyway so the sooner you get back on the horse the better.

22. Oil The Machine – Exercise takes its toll on your muscles, joints and tendons so be sure to take steps to repair the damage. These might include using a foam roller, getting a sports massage, using cold showers and saunas for hot and cold therapy and just making sure you get enough sleep.

23. Basic Supplementation – There is a lot of debate as to whether supplements are worth the money we pay for them, or if they even work. The way I see it, the cost to benefit ratio is just too highly stacked in our favour to ignore. Because of modern transportation and supermarket logistics, by the time our food reaches us it often no longer contains the full spectrum of vitamins and minerals that nature intended. To account for this I recommend that everyone take a multivitamin and a multi-mineral supplement. At such a low cost, why would you not want to take your shot at optimal health?

24. Cultivate Your Environment – Making progress isn't just about what you do in the gym. It's just as important to cultivate a living environment conducive to your fitness goals. Aim to create a system for healthy food delivery, make your supplements easy to reach for those early morning training sessions and make sure you have enough training kit on constant rotation. There's no worse excuse for not training than having no clean kit!

25. It's You vs You – Never be disheartened by the progress or condition of others. Everyone has their own genetic make-up, their own goals and their own demons. All you need to concentrate on is being better than you were yesterday.

26. Be A Mentor – Remember what it was like to be young and starting out in fitness? Or your first day in the gym? The experience you accumulate over time may feel unimportant to you, but it represents small nuggets of gold for someone starting out. Be available to those that need encouragement, help and guidance.

27. Don't Get Boring – Sure, it's great having a totally ripped physique and being the most muscular guy in the room. But don't get so obsessed that it's all you think and talk about. If you can't lead a normal life because of your exercise goals, it may be time to stop and think. Dedication is one thing but obsession is never healthy.

28. Never Let Anyone Hold You Back – Peer pressure is a powerful thing, but you have to overcome it in pursuit of personal fitness. Remember that when people try to make you feel guilty for not drinking or for staying at home on a Friday night, they're mainly doing it out of a sense of jealousy. If you've decided that your fitness goals have number one priority in your life, don't let the carping of others detract from them.

29. Get Compound – Never substitute tried and tested compound exercises in the name of isolation or the latest exercise craze. The classic exercises have earned their status because they've been tried and tested over time. Be sure that your strength training regime includes exercises such as squats, deadlifts, barbell rows, shrugs, lunges cleans and presses.

30. Avoid Overtraining – Overtraining occurs when you train too hard, too frequently and don't get enough rest. Overtraining literally feels like having the flu and will completely take you out if you let it grab hold of you. Be sure to take adequate rest between workouts, especially when attempting intense programmes or coming back after a lay-off. If you start to feel fatigued, experience an elevated heart rate while resting, or feel like your workouts are deteriorating for no reason, it's time to take a break.

31. Get Tested – The more you can learn about your body the more information you can act on to get the results you are looking for. Body composition, hormone analysis, food intolerance and metabolic gas exchange tests are all available relatively inexpensively given how much they can aid your training efforts.

32. Get A Training Partner – Enlisting the help of a friend to keep you focused and accountable can pay dividends over time. A great training partner gets you to the gym when you least feel like it, motivates you to train past failure and celebrates your achievements with you.

33. Relationships Do Not Spell The End – There is a curious phenomena I've observed while working in the fitness industry: when men enter a long-term relationship, they let their training, physique and diet go to ruin. If you were in shape when you met your partner and you aren't now, something is wrong. Think about it like this: if you were only in shape during the dating process, you were effectively erecting a facade. Obviously life hands us family demands and unforeseen circumstances that can affect our training, but all things being equal ... you know what I'm saying.

34. Avoid Ab Obsession – Revealing a rippling six pack is all about having low body fat. Too many people spend way too much time training their abs to oblivion and wondering why they never show. Truth be told, you need 10pc body fat or lower to have visible abs and that is best achieved through a clean diet and a steady mix of total body strength training and well planned cardio. Work your abs as frequently as you would any other body part; no more, no less.

35. High Intensity Cardio – When trying to get lean I recommend two types of cardio: high and low intensity. High intensity provides a great way to increase the amount of calories burned throughout the day. Intervals, sprints and tabata drills are all great options for that metabolism spike.

36. Low Intensity Cardio – We'll define low intensity cardio as exercise that keeps your heart rate between 105-120 BPM. At this heart rate you might not burn as many calories as with the high intensity stuff, but you do burn a higher proportion of those calories from fat. Low intensity provides a great tool in your quest for leanness that won't affect how you recover from your other workouts.

37. Sport Specific Training – We've come a long way from the days of one-size-fits-all resistance training. If you take part in a sport at any level you can vastly increase your performance by training specifically for it. For example runners may want to work on strengthening their legs and core to support them through a long run, whilst rugby players should be doing extra work on speed agility and quickness to improve their game.

38. Acknowledge Age, But Don't Be Limited By It – No one can ignore the passing of time, but it's simple enough to adapt training and account for changes in your body as the years pass. For example, it takes a little longer to recover in your forties and fifties than it does in your twenties, and you start to lose some muscle if you don't actively work to maintain it. That being said, age is no reason not to have great health. Be the outlier and don't allow the idea of 'age' detract from your goals.

39. Experiment – Don't be afraid to experiment on yourself. Change your training stimulus and try new workout programs to see what works for your body. For example, when trying to gain muscle do you know how your body responds to each of the following: German Volume Training, 5x5 Stronglifts, HST, 5 day split? Do you respond best to jogging, sprinting or walking when trying to get lean? If you don't know, you should find out – you may stumble on the blueprint to your perfect physique.

40. Train On An Empty Stomach – If training on an empty stomach can work for your schedule, you may stand to benefit from an instant increase in performance and gain an ace up your sleeve in the battle against body fat. It sounds counter intuitive, but fasting before exercise really can help: without a store of food to turn into energy, your body turns to its own fat cells, burning away some of the excess blubber. It also delivers a huge insulin spike after training, kick-starting the recovery process right when you need it.

41. Range Of Motion – Aim for a full range of movement with every exercise you perform. This allows more muscle fibre to be stimulated and damaged, meaning greater muscle growth. Controlling the pace of movement will also help.

42. Hydration – Perhaps one of the most overlooked principles of fitness. Even the smallest degree of hydration can significantly affect your exercise performance, mood and ability to problem solve. I once heard that every single ailment humans are subjected to can be improved with water. So, it stands to reason that if we want to perform, we must stay hydrated.

43. Drop The Weight Worry – Unless you're a boxer, what you weigh when you stand on a set of scales doesn't really matter. Instead, the important aspect, in terms of feeling fit and looking good, is your body composition. Is your weight comprised of a lot of blubber or good, toned (and heavy) muscle?

44. Prepare For Running – While probably the lowest barrier to entry in terms of picking an exercise pursuit, running is not as simple as just heading out of the door – at least not if you want to optimise your body to perform. Running demands a lot of your body, especially over long distances. Head to the gym to develop your quads, glutes, hamstrings, calves, core and shoulders to make sure your body can withstand the strain running puts on it.

45. Visualise – Have an idea of what you would like your body to look like and hold that image in your mind. You can revisit the image whenever you need extra inspiration. It's a very powerful technique that has worked for many of the world's best bodybuilders – and, because it's all in your head, no one has to know what you're thinking.

46. Keep Nutrition Simple – Great nutrition doesn't have to be complicated. Always opt for the highest quality food sources you can get your hands on. The closest you can get your food to the way it occurs naturally the better. Keep protein high to maintain muscle, opt for low glycemic index carbohydrates, try to get plenty of unsaturated fats and eat as many leafy greens as you like. Simple!

47. Take A week Off – Sometimes the best thing you can do for your body is nothing at all. After a really hard six week training phase, it's usually a good idea to take a complete week off training. This allows your body to fully repair and recover from the gruelling demand you've put on it. If you really can't bear to be away from the gym, opt for a 50pc week. No one can keep going full pelt for ever.

48. Pre & Post Workout Nutrition – Pre and post workout meals are probably the most important meals of the day. At least, they are the meals that should be most thoughtfully constructed. Ensure that your pre workout meal is going to provide enough energy to get you through the exercise by consuming high G.I food sources (like white rice and pasta) that will provide an immediate burst of

energy. Post workout, you need to kick-start the recovery process so keep the high G.I carbs, but add protein and additional supplementation e.g. BCAA/Glutamine to start the repair process.

49. Have A Plan – Every time you enter the gym you need to have a plan. You should know exactly what exercises you are going to perform, for how many sets and how many reps you are aiming for. Without this you will waste time and possibly select the wrong exercises. The same applies to nutrition: every day you should know how many calories you need to consume.

50. Consistency Triumphs In The End – With all the advanced training principles, dieting secrets and magic bullet supplements at our disposal, the people who really succeed in fitness are the ones that keep things simple and consistent. Great workout after great workout and clean meal after clean meal will trump any genetic or synthetic advantage over time. Decide where you want to be, take the first step and don't stop until you achieve it. Honestly, it really is that simple.