

The Top 10 Things You Must Do To Have A Great Workout - EVERY Workout

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The basic idea of a good warm-up is to walk that fine line between preparing yourself adequately for the intense work to come, without fatiguing yourself in the process. From my observations, however, few people seem to manage this, either performing far too little work, or doing so much that their warm-up becomes a workout in itself. I conceptualize the perfect warm-up as a 5-stage event, as follows:

Engage Brain Before Putting Body in Gear: The Mental Warm-up

The experienced athlete has been thinking about the impending workout all week. He's rehearsed the workout dozens of times in his mind, and is already aware of the possible problems he might encounter (such as dealing with rush hour in the gym or a nagging hamstring pull that might kick up during the workout). A novice trainee, on the other hand, can be identified by the fact that he doesn't even know what he will do until he gets to the gym (and maybe not even then!). Since novices typically get novice-level results, I urge you to explore visualization and autogenic training, both of which are established methods of maximizing physical performance both in training and in competition. Some people learn these techniques on their own, others need instruction. Either way, **USE** them!



- If you'll be training early in the morning, and/or if it's cold out, beef up the warm-up process commensurately.
- Training in dry climates requires a more thorough warm-up than training in humid surrounds.
- Older trainees generally profit from more extensive warm-ups.
- If you are otherwise healthy but have "creaky" joints, err on the side of being too extensive with your warm-up. After all, the goal of being able to train takes precedence over the fact that you might fatigue yourself slightly with an extensive warm-up.
- The closer you venture toward 1RM in your workout, the more extensive your warm-up should be. In other words, do a more thorough warm-up for 5x5 than you would for 3x12.
- You can accelerate your warm-up through passive means such as a hot bath or shower. Although active means are superior to passive, often, a combination of the two leads to great results.
- On exercises where your own bodyweight is the minimal load possible (chins, dips, etc.), first warm up with similar exercises that allow lesser loads (e.g., lat pulldowns and decline bench presses), and then proceed to the target

exercise, using multiple sets of 1 rep. As soon as the next set of 1 does not feel any easier than the set before it, you're ready to proceed to your work sets.

- If you are executing exercises for antagonistic muscle groups "back to back" (such as training seated rows with triceps extensions), do your warm-up sets for these exercises in the same pattern that you'll use for the work sets.
- If you've done it right, your middle work set(s) will feel the easiest. For example, when performing 5x8, the 3rd set should feel the best, and sets 4 and 5 should feel progressively more difficult. If your last sets feel the best, it indicates that your warm-up was not thorough enough. If your first work sets are easiest, you may have warmed-up too much.

On to the Heavy Metal...

If you've followed my suggestions, you should now feel warm, strong, loose, and enthusiastic about training hard. It's kind of amazing, isn't it? Fifteen minutes ago you could barely tolerate the thought of a hard workout; now you're looking forward to it!