

CONSTRUCTION OF A WORKOUT

<http://www.peakfitnessgym.co.uk/kevanwilson/construction-of-a-workout/>

Sounds simple enough doesn't it? But over the years the construction of basic workouts is something that I've seen so many people get wrong. You have probably seen it too, the people that do the same old exercises, the same old reps, the same old way every workout which means that as the years go by their body gets.....well the same and old. Vary your workouts and although you will still get old you will also get growth and maybe at least look younger than you are. When I first started I weighed 175 lbs, for my last show I dieted down from 260 lbs to 240lbs, it took time and a lot of hard work but also a lot of "smart" work.

When I first started lifting in 1987, under the watchful eye of two well known bodybuilders at the time, Ian Dowie and Barry Lockwood, one of the first things that they taught me was about the variations of workouts, but they were surprised that it was something that I was already only too well aware of as it was something that I had learned in my years of being an amateur boxer. In the gym where I boxed there were various "drills" written up on the walls, but the coaches there always made sure that the drills were only used as *part* of what they were teaching us lads and that the drills didn't form any kind of pattern within our training. Instead, they were used to work on weak areas as extra training during or at the end of our workouts. I for example was often given the extra skipping drill to make me lighter on my feet but at different stages of the workouts and on different days, when my body wasn't expecting it. At that time I learned something that has always served me well - VARIETY IS THE KEY.

So when I told Ian and Barry what I was bringing from my boxing days to my weight training they were very happy and they taught me a lot in the time that we trained together in an old warehouse in Potters Bar. I'm pleased to say that we're still friends to this day and although Barry has retired, Ian, now in his 60's and looking incredible, still coaches at his gym Dowe Dynamics in Archway, North London.

Anyway, back to the subject matter now. Constructing a workout sounds simple enough but lets start with the basics. Hands up how many people go to the gym and bench press every Monday? How many then do the same things after bench pressing, maybe dumbbell pressing, machine pressing, flyes and then pec deck? Do you think it's wise to be one of the "sheeple" that do the same thing every Monday? Then take that same mentality on to any body part on any given day, do you always do the same thing on the same days? Do you always do chest with biceps? Back with triceps? Same and old my friends, same and old.

Now I know about all of the bumper stickers that say "fail to prepare - prepare to fail" and all of that stuff but when it comes to workouts the importance of that stuff dwindles. Let me explain with a true anecdote from a few years ago. Someone that I was coaching was on a rest day that I had told him to take because he needed it and even though he was resting he couldn't help but think about getting back into the gym the next day. That sort of self motivation and dedication is highly commendable of course, but what he did next wasn't.

He decided to plan out his next days' workout meticulously and then took the trouble of texting it to me, exercise selection, order, reps, sets, weights, the lot. I replied that it looked good and that I would see him tomorrow. Also it was the most important session of the week, leg day, we would train together. Maybe that scared him or maybe he realised his mistake but I never heard from him again that day. The next day we started legs at the agreed time, fired up and working exactly to his plan. It all started well but 20 minutes into the workout he was struggling, he looked at what we still had to do and he began to see the error that he had made. Full credit to him, he held his hands up, admitted his mistake and asked me to lead him for the rest of the workout. Battlefield decisions is a speciality of mine so we trained hard for another 50 minutes, both threw up our breakfast in the car park and then sat down for a post workout shake and a chat. At that time I told him what I'm now going to tell you about how far you should go with workout pre planning.

Obviously you need to go to the gym with some sort of idea of what you're going to be doing body part wise so get to the gym fully prepared for that, hopefully some of you will be using "[The Zone](#)" to help you with that part of your pre workout prep. When you start always start by warming up and stretching the whole body, from here you will know if there's any body part that you need to train around or protect. For example if your lower back is very painful then squatting won't help it. If you have a painful bicep tendon then bench pressing will aggravate it etc, etc. So during the warm up and stretching see what feels good and then choose exercises that will use that feeling to the max. Choose exercises that will hit the muscles that feel good as the primary muscles used and the muscles that feel ok as the secondary movers.

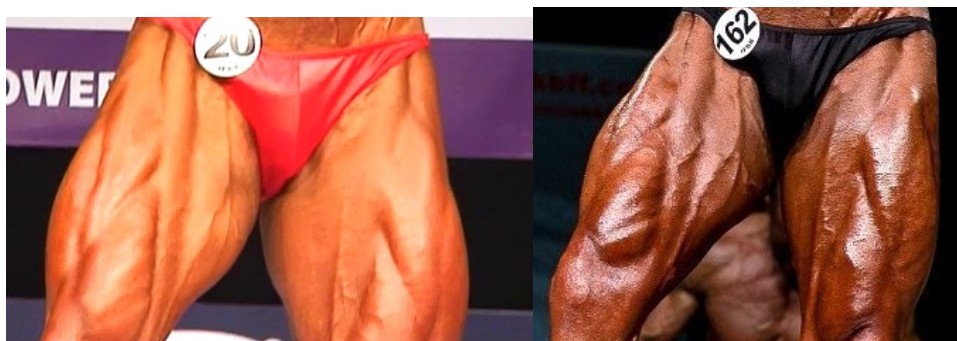
For example if your back feels great and your elbows and arms have no pain then go and use the chin up bar until you can't get more than 5 reps per set. This was exactly how I built my back many years ago. In those days my upper back workout was 100 wide grip straight bar chins in as many sets as it took. As soon as I could do it in 10 sets I started using a weighted belt to make it harder and the weight went up every week that I could manage 100 reps in 10 sets. However, there were some days that I couldn't chin for various reasons so as soon as I had stretched and realised this I would start with something else and see how that felt and from there continue to use the muscles that felt good as the primary movers whilst protecting anything that didn't feel so good. I remember one time when I was aching from work that day so much that all I could do was light seated rows, so I did 500, that was a fun day. Doing what I could when I could worked for me and I soon developed a good 'V' in my back.



Now it's important that you understand that you can't just go into the gym and "wing it", there has to be some sort of structure. Also, don't use what I've said to avoid the exercises that you don't like. The fact of the matter is that if you hate a certain exercise simply because it makes you work so hard without causing any sort of injury to yourself then it is probably doing you the world of good. Nobody ever got in shape just doing the stuff that they enjoy, you have to do the horrible stuff too.

So combine all that I've said when you hit the gym for leg day for example. We all know that squats build the entire lower body and even have a secondary effect on the upper body but we also know that a lot of people hate doing them. So be honest with yourself, do whatever you possibly can and don't look for excuses. Tiredness for example is no reason to not do certain exercises, in fact I've had some of my best workouts when I've been tired because I've made myself dig deeper, it's something that you have to do sometimes, so man up and do the tough stuff unless you have a really good reason not to.

Some people do actually have really good reasons for not doing certain exercises and those people have to again be honest with themselves and look for viable alternatives that will work the muscles equally as hard. Again using legs as an example, because they are always the most important part for a bodybuilder (although not so much of course if you compete in the long shorts categories) it might surprise you to know that due to worn out knees and degenerated discs in my lower back I haven't been able to do a proper squat or deadlift for over 10 years, that could be a career ending problem competing at the level that I was. It has meant that every leg workout for all of that time, including all of my competitive career, has had to be done strictly according to what I have been saying, it seems to have worked though, the first picture is from when I was 50 and the second was when I was 55.



Of course you can't really grow in the latter stages of your life but I managed to maintain the size, shape and definition by using different exercises, some of which can be seen in these two YouTube videos, [here's part 1](#) and [here's part 2](#)

As you get older, other body parts will begin to suffer too but by using the methods that I've stated you can still get an excellent workout to every body part one way or another. By that I mean that apart from the variation of the exercises you should also vary your training system. Some weeks go heavy, some weeks look for more reps, other weeks concentrate on negatives and other times it can all be about super sets; the list of different ways of training is never ending in these days of people constantly reinventing the fitness and bodybuilding wheel. As a personal favourite, if I'm really feeling good I'll commit to a period of every session being volume training.

Whichever system you choose though please listen to your body, it will soon tell you when it doesn't have the capacity for any more of that sort of training and when it's time to change your workout plan. Again, be honest with yourself and don't look for ways out but as a guide, if you're not sleeping well and aching all of the time those are the two classic signs of overtraining and the body being in need of a change or a rest so please be aware of that and address it by changing things when you need to or taking a few days off.

Please have a good think about all of this. There is no point in grinding away doing the same old things week in and week out, the human body is very good at adapting itself to whatever you put it through and if you keep on doing the same things it will soon be able to do them without it having the desired effect on your muscles. One last very important tip is that you should never be afraid to ask for advice - but be careful who you ask. As obvious as it may sound you won't learn much about building a competitive body from someone who has never competed or has only ever done the odd bottom of the range show. So ask someone with a proven record of competing, coaching or preferably both, who has built the kind of physique that you want many times for themselves or for others. Finally, always work hard, work smart, rest lots and eat well!