

10 General Bodybuilding Rules You Should Never Break

The purpose of this newsletter is to give bodybuilders everywhere practical, straight forward and meaningful information that can be applied to their bodybuilding program in order to illicit better results. To this end I thought it would be a good idea to outline some general rules that the average bodybuilder should always follow. By doing this my hope is that everyone who reads this will construct a plan based on a solid foundation which in turn will lead to better results in the short and long term.

I'd like to start off with some general bodybuilding rules. Some will involve your training, some your diet. Others will involve more general principles that can be applied to your daily life, directly impacting your bodybuilding progress. These rules are very general and to some degree will apply to 99% of the bodybuilders out there. Of course there are always the lucky few who can pretty much do whatever they want and still grow. They are the few and far between so I won't write any rules for them cause often there aren't any. Here we go.

1. Eat every 3 hours. Now I don't mean sit down to a 3 course meal every 3 hours. What's required here is some protein at least every 3 hours. What this does it constantly supply your body with resources it needs to build new muscle while inhibiting catabolism which is the breakdown of muscle tissue. Basically your body can't build new muscle without plenty of protein and protein is not like carbs and fat. It does not get stored in the body for later use. The protein you eat either gets used by your body or clears the system every 3 hours or so. Every time you go to the bathroom your body is removing some excess protein from your blood, with the help of your kidneys via your urine. In order to make sure your body always has protein to work with, you need to keep feeding it and that means ingesting some protein every 3 hours or so. For most bodybuilders 20-40 grams of protein (the amount depends on your current size and on your goals) every 3 hours seems to be adequate. By ensuring a constant supply of protein in your blood you also prevent your body from braking down your muscle in order to obtain protein. Your body has a lot of uses for protein, one of them being to build new muscle but it also uses it for other important functions as maintaining your immune system and repairing other vital systems. When there is not enough protein in the blood stream to carry out these functions, the body releases cortisol to break down muscle cells which releases protein. Obviously we don't want that because we are trying to gain muscle here not lose it, right? So, to be safe and to ensure your body always has enough to build new muscle and prevent breakdown, make sure you get at least 20-40 grams of protein every 3 hours.

2. Keep your work outs to 1 hour max. Preferably I would say keep it to 45 minutes max but I know some people find it impossible to work out that fast while other require longer rest in between sets making a 45 minute work out impossible. So to be safe, let's say 1 hour. That hour does not include the 5-10 minutes of warm ups and stretching you should be doing in advance of your work sets. Why do we want to keep the work outs under an hour? There are a number of reasons. For one thing, study after study has shown that intensity, that is the ability to give it all you can, drops significantly after 45 minutes to 1 hour. This is probably due in part to the fact that it is very difficult to work out at a super

intensive pace for very long amounts of time. After a while your body just gets tired, you begin to lose interest and your mind begins to wander. Once this happens you can no longer achieve the kind of intensity you need to grow. Another reason why your intensity drops off so after 45 minutes to an hour is probably due to a drop in testosterone levels after approximately 45 minutes of intensive training. Less testosterone floating around in your blood means less strength and mental drive and focus. After all, its testosterone that makes us big and strong, without enough of it the work out is not going anywhere. This drop in testosterone levels coincides with a gradual increase in cortisol levels throughout the work out. Intense training causes your body to release cortisol which is a bad thing but something we can't avoid. However, when testosterone levels begin to drop, the raising cortisol levels in your body change the balance of power and a catabolic rather than anabolic environment is created. This is very dangerous for a number of reasons. For one, a catabolic environment leads to the breakdown of muscle. Secondly, attempting to train while in a state of catabolism will lead to noticeable strength decreases and the very ultimately, overtraining. Both of these factors are detrimental to your progress and must be avoided at all times. One simple way to do this is to keep your work outs below 1 hour so that you get out of there just as your anabolic state is about to be replaced by a catabolic one. Go as hard as you can for 45 minutes to 1 hour and then get out. It's that simple.

3. Stay calm. What does staying calm have to do with bodybuilding? A lot actually. Although this rule may sound a little simplistic, it can actually play a leading role in deciding whether you progress or stagnate. When you let yourself get all worked up and upset over something your body releases stress hormones to combat the situation. It's known as the fight or flight response. Your body prepares for a tense situation by releasing cortisol to breakdown muscle for energy. What could be worse then working out day in and day out to put on a little extra muscle just to see it get burned away because you're stressed out? Now don't panic if you get upset once because you're not going to melt. This rule is for those people who work 10 hour days in high stress jobs or for those people who seem to be wound up a little too tight all the time. Relax. If you won't for your heart's sake, then try for your muscle's sake. Being stressed out too often will lead to an internal environment that frequently favors catabolism over anabolism. You don't want that. So next time your ready to freak out over something, remember, stay calm or else you may start burning all that hard earned muscle away.

4. Have a post work out drink. This is probably the most important meal of the day. Right after you finish a grueling, intense work out your body is starving for all the nourishment it can get. Don't let it suffer. You worked out hard need feed it and make it grow. Immediately following each work out you should down a drink consisting of a high glycemic carb (I like maltodextrin, glycemic rating of 150) and a protein that can quickly be absorbed by your body (for this I would go for whey isolate). Keep the fats out of this drink because they will only slow down the absorption of the carbs and protein. For most people a 3:1 to 4:1 ratio of carbs to protein works best. For example, mix 200 grams of maltodextrin with 50 grams of whey isolate. If you can afford it I would suggest using only 40 grams of whey isolate and adding 10 grams of glutamine peptides to bring the protein count up to 50. Glutamine peptides are great after a work out because glutamine

makes up 60% of all skeletal muscle and without enough of it you just can't grow. Glutamine deficiency (not enough floating around in the blood) is one of the major factors that lead to catabolism. Without a good solid post work out drink, your progress will be seriously limited. If you're going to put any effort into your diet, put it into perfecting your post work out drink.

5. Rest. Again, a simple one but one that most people especially beginners' neglect. Growth does not happen while you're in the gym. It happens after you work out especially when you sleep. Now don't fall into the usual belief that muscle grows exclusively during sleep. It doesn't. Your body is constantly in a state of rebuilding. However, while you sleep your body does do most of its rebuilding work which is why sleep and enough of it is essential to every bodybuilder. By rest however I am not just referring to sleep. I'm referring more generally to the time you take between work outs especially between working the same body part. One of the biggest mistakes beginners make is they fall into the work out everyday trap. They figure "the more I work out the bigger I'll get". This belief is usually backed up by the quick gains made by most beginners. What they don't understand however is that most if not all beginners make quick gains when they start simply because their body is responding to the sudden change in activity level. The kind of gains beginners experience will not continue throughout their entire bodybuilding career and are not due to the high volume that most beginners usually put into their work outs. One reason most beginners become discouraged from working out after 4-6 months is because they are no longer seeing the kind of results they saw when they began. A lot don't see any new results after the first 6 months. The reason for this is because they are still training the way they were when they started which means most are highly over trained. The best way to over train is to not give your body enough time to rest. Doing the whole body 3 times a week is not nearly enough time between work outs to allow for growth. If anything it will only lead to catabolism. Always leave at least 5 days between before working the same body part again and as a general rule, work the entire body no sooner then every 5 days. This will ensure your body has enough time to repair and rebuild. Some people may require more then 5 days. To figure out just how long you need, listen to your body and look at the progress you are making. Common signs of over training include inability to sleep, prolonged soreness, lack of appetite and irritability. Another good sign of over training is lack of progress in the gym. If you don't seem to be able to lift any more then you did a month ago or if your lifts actually seem to be decreasing, its time to add some more days off to your routine. In the case of severe over training, it's sometimes a good idea to take a full week off from working out or to cut your volume in half for a week. This will allow your body more time to recover.

6. Drink enough water. Again so simple but so often ignored. It is vital to maintain an anabolic internal environment that you drink at least one big glass of water every hour. Your body is made up mainly of water which means your muscle cells are also mainly water. Your muscles also use requires water to pull nutrients such as protein and carbs into their cells. This is really the easiest rule to follow but one that most bodybuilders don't follow because most don't see what water has to do with bodybuilding muscle. Its not that water is vital in building muscle, water is vital in being generally healthy. You

can't possibly expect to build muscle when you're not even healthy. So drink plenty of water, at least one big glass an hour. Your muscles and body in general will thank you.

7. Be intense. It's what separates that average bodybuilder from that guy who stands out in the crowd. Some guys will go into the gym day after day, year after year and will not improve. Usually they wander in, look around wondering what they want to work today and what exercises they want to do. Then they chat for a while with someone and then maybe they will do a set, usually with the exact same weight they have done for years and will put little to no real effort into it. They think they are putting effort in because the weight feels heavy but are they really pushing themselves to the max? Not even close. If you want your body to grow you have to give it a reason. You have to push it to the edge. You have to be intense. Intensity is defined as the amount of weight you are lifting to relation to your 1 rep max. However intensity also relates to the mental intensity you put into your work outs day in and day out. You have to want it. When you get under the weight you have to be ready for war. You have to be ready to hit failure and then push your body for one more rep. You have to focus your mind to get it ready for the pain that a super intense set will cause you and you can not back down just because it starts to get tough. Do not let yourself be distracted when you're in the gym. Go there with a purpose and focus on that exclusively. Save the fitness chick for after the work out (every hard working bodybuilder needs some fun right?). Spend a minute or two before every set mentally preparing yourself for what your about to do. See the lift in your head and see how you want it to go. Imagine yourself driving the weight through the ceiling. Working out is more a mental battle than a physical one. When you have the mental intensity ready to go, the physical will follow.

8. Always try to improve. This relates closely to the last rule because its something that comes with intensity. One thing most bodybuilders forget is that the body will only build as much muscle as it needs to perform a certain amount of work. Basically if you can lift a certain amount of weight for 8 reps and you continue lifting that amount of weight for 8 reps for months or years on end, you body will not grow. Why? Because it doesn't have to. The human body is a very efficient machine. It won't hold any more weight then it has to. If you don't give it a reason to grow it won't. So, in order to give your body a reason to continuously build new muscle, you have to continuously strive to improve in the gym. Now I'm not saying lift more weight each week because this is obviously impossible because a 10 year bodybuilder would be squatting over a thousand pounds. What I'm suggesting is that you try and get one more rep, or slightly more weight, or slow down the lift to increase the time under tension. Little changes like this will allow you to constantly increase the demand on your muscles. For example, if you do a set of bench press for 8 reps at 200 pounds at a tempo of 2-1-1 (2 seconds down, 1 second pause and 1 second up) you can add 5 pounds to the bar, go for one more rep, or try to do 8 reps but at a 3-1-1 tempo. All three of these options will increase the stress on the muscle and will force it to adapt and hopefully grow. Continuous growth requires progressive increases in work load. Even if these increases are small they are still improvements and that will keep you growing.

9. Concentrate on basic movements. Complex and highly isolating movements may look

nice but they are not going to make you bigger. There are a core set of exercises that all bodybuilders must incorporate into their work out if they want to maximize their gains. These core exercises are chest press (bench or dumbbell), military press, pull ups, squats and dead lifts. These movements are big basic lifts that utilize multiple joints and activate lots of muscle fibers throughout the body. Some, like squats and dead%20lifts work the entire body. The goal of working out is to get the most benefit out of the least amount of work. These exercises allow you to do minimal exercises while maximizing the workload. Chest presses for example work the pecs, delts, tris, bis and lats. Pull ups work the lats, bis, and delts. By activating as many different muscle groups as possible in each exercise you increase the intensity of the work done which promotes growth. Another benefit of big basic movements is their ability to create an anabolic environment inside your body. Squats and dead lifts for example have been shown to cause a spike in growth hormone and testosterone levels. This is one of the main reasons why squats are considered to be the king of all exercises. By involving practically every muscle group in the body, the squat forces the body to respond by released an increased amount of anabolic hormones. So, when developing a routine, make sure the basics form the foundation of your work out.

10. Don't work out more then 3 days in a row. Most people can not and for that matter should not work out for more then 3 days consecutively. When you work out, you place intense stress both on the muscles being worked and your entire neurological system. Just like your muscles, your neurological system needs a break to from time to time. Your muscles may be the ones moving the weight but they wouldn't be able to do it without the signals being sent from your brain to tell them to fire. Without that signal the muscles wouldn't respond. When you work out for too many days in a row you tire your neurological system out to the point where it can not function efficiently. When this happens the signals from your brain will not reach enough muscle fibers which will in turn lower your work load capability. Not only will you find yourself unable to lift as much weight but you may even begin to feel generally fatigued as your entire neurological system begins to tire. To keep your nerves fresh, give your entire body a day off at most every 3 days

BONUS. Change your work out every 6 weeks. The human body is a master at adapting to new situations. However this adaptation does not take place immediately. In bodybuilding terms, your body will usually adapt to a particular routine in about 6 weeks. For this reason it is necessary to alter your routine before your body gets too used to it. It is during the processing of adaptation that your body gets stronger and bigger but after it has found a way to adapt, the need to improve (that is continue to get bigger and stronger) will be gone and your progress will usually start to plateau. To combat this you should try a new set of exercises, juggle the order of exercises or change your desired rep range every 6 weeks at the most. Some people prefer to alter weeks of higher rep and lower rep training in order to keep their body guessing. Some people prefer to throw in the occasion drop set based work out to challenge their body. The key here is variation. You don't want to allow your body to get so comfortable with a routine that it no longer needs to improve in order to complete the desired work load. For most people 6 weeks is a good time to change things up but some people find every 4 weeks to be more acceptable while others will try a slight variation every week. It's up to you.