



FAQs about over-50 gym workouts

Warm Up

***Q. Thanks Dave, Extremely helpful information. Do you recommend light warm up sets for main exercises?**

Thank you!

Ben

A. I recommend a general warmup before the workout starts, just a few minutes of light movement to get the blood flowing. So, You could walk on a treadmill or use a stationary bike for 3-5 minutes to get the blood pumping in your legs, and for the upper body a warmup set with 50% of your working weight for 4-6 reps is a nice specific warmup.

The bottom line with warmups is this: do whatever you feel you need to do so you won't injure yourself on your heavy sets, and limit the warmup to that amount. Don't turn your warmup into a workout of its own.

Rest between Sets

***Q. I've been putting into practice your tips and I've experienced success. I've been strength training on and off for 30 years and never saw much gain in weight I could lift. With your tips I either go up in reps or weight every workout. That's never happened before, so thank you!**

I was curious about how long to rest between sets. What do you recommend?

Jena



A. You're quite welcome, I love hearing success stories - It's amazing how quickly progress can happen when you apply the right principles.

The general rule for how much rest to take between sets is this: take as much time as you need to recover sufficiently so that you can perform your next set with maximum intensity, *but no more*.

If you move too quickly to your next exercise, you might be too winded to generate a maximum muscular effort, or even get light-headed or nauseous.

But if you rest too long, your workout ends up taking way longer than it needs to, and you tend to lose focus and intensity.

Remember, take all the time you need, *but no more*.

Weight and Reps

***Q. Hello,**

This sounds awesome! I noticed you didn't mention anything about reps. What is the reference point to determine what weight to use for each exercise?

Nelson

A. Great question, I suggest a rep range of 7-10 reps for upper body, and 9-12 reps for lower body.

So if you can't perform at least the lower number of reps (either 7 or 9) the weight is too heavy, and if you can do more than the higher number with perfect form (either 10 or 12), that's your cue to increase the weight a little on your next workout, to knock you back down into the rep range.



How Many Sets?

Q. I'm a 64 year old male who is in generally good health.

I've been doing three sets of reps for each exercise, with a short rest between sets. Is it necessary to do more than one set if I work the muscles to failure or is one set enough? Brad

A. One set per exercise is definitely enough.

You have to remember that intensity and duration of exercise are inversely proportional; if you do 3 sets, you probably won't be able to generate maximum intensity on all 3, and subconsciously you'll be pacing yourself a little, both of which are counter-productive.

Also, the more sets you do the harder it is to recover from your workouts, and recovery time is when the actual increases in size and strength take place.

Workout Design

***Q. What's a typical strength training workout look like for men and women over 50?**

Joe

A. First off Joe, a strength training workout for men or women over 50 should look the same, because we all have the same muscles, and the physiological process that causes an increase in muscular strength is the same for all of us.



Whether we're male or female, once we're over 50, we want to not only train the large, superficial muscles of the body, but also the smaller deep muscles of the body, which serve to hold us together and protect us from injury. So a good strength training workout for someone over 50 will include exercises for both.

For the large superficial muscles I mentioned – these are the ones everyone knows about - the pecs, the biceps, the abs, the glutes, etc. – you can cover your full body with 5 different movements:

A lower body push, where you are extending or straightening your knees and hips;

Next is lower body flexion, which can alternate between knee flexion, or bending, and plantar flexion of the ankles, which mimics pushing the gas pedal and involves your calf muscles, such as a seated or standing calf raise.

Third on our list is an upper body push, which would involve straightening the elbows,

Then we add an upper body pull, an exercise where we're bending the elbows,

And the 5th one is a midsection exercise, either trunk flexion for the abdominals, or trunk extension for the low back muscles.

Now we move on to the smaller deep muscles of the body, such as the rotator cuff muscles of the shoulder, the neck muscles, or the gripping muscles in our hands. I call exercises for these muscle groups Rebuilding exercises.

You want to pick exercises for areas of your body that have either been injured in the past, or that you feel are especially vulnerable to injuries in the future. So the exact exercises vary based on each individual's personal situation, medical history, and available equipment.



I usually recommend 3 of these rebuilding exercises per workout, bringing the total number of exercises performed to 8.

After the strength training workout is a great time to do a little stretching, especially for the shoulders and hips, which tend to lose flexibility as we get older.

Once you get the hang of things, this whole process takes under 45 minutes, and you only need to do it once or twice a week.