

# Bodybuilding for Beginners: Tips for Faster Results & Mistakes to Avoid

Once a niche hobby, bodybuilding has exploded in popularity over the last thirty years or so. There are many reasons for this including the increased commercialization of professional bodybuilding, social media, and a bigger emphasis on physical fitness.

Bodybuilding, particularly natural bodybuilding is a fantastic way to improve your fitness and clean up your diet. But bodybuilding for beginners can feel quite overwhelming at first.

In this article we are going to provide ten tips for a beginner bodybuilder as well as highlighting ten common mistakes that beginners make. Everything that a new bodybuilder needs to excel in this amazing sport.

## Bodybuilding Tips for Beginners

Nothing quite hits the spot like the aftermath of a hardcore bodybuilding workout. You feel jacked, happy, and accomplished. If you're new to the bodybuilding game, you'll be buzzing from your achievements after each session. Ready to get started? Here are ten bodybuilding tips for beginners:

### Set Realistic Goals

Having a proper plan before starting is crucial for a new bodybuilder. Training hard will get you far, but training smart will get you further. You need to decide what you want to achieve, and when you want to achieve it. Be realistic, if you're expecting to go from couch potato to Schwarzenegger in three weeks, you're going to be disappointed.

### Track Progress

How can you determine if you are on target if you have no idea where you started from and where you are now? Take a pre-program photo, weigh yourself, and record chest, arm, leg, waist, and abdominal measurements by using tailor's tape. Take weekly measurements to track progress.

Studies show that when you monitor your progress, you'll dramatically increase your chances for success. Think about it: As you measure your muscle mass and see that you're making incremental changes each month, this is going to fuel your motivation to keep going. It'll also help you increase your drive and intensity during workouts. [\[1\]](#)

## Count Calories

While tracking progress, you should also track your calories. Depending on where you are starting from, you are either going to need to concentrate on building mass or burning fat. Either of these will require you to know how many calories you are consuming so that you can create a caloric deficit (burning more than you consume) or a caloric surplus (eating more than you burn. Meal tracking apps like MyFitnessPal are your best bet here.

## Keep Protein High

The bodybuilding diet for beginners should revolve around protein. Studies on natural bodybuilding have shown that a protein intake of between 2.3 grams and 3.1 grams of protein per kilogram of lean mass (your body weight minus your body fat) is ideal. [\[2\]](#)

Protein contains the literal building blocks of muscle tissue. Not only is it imperative for proper recovery and avoiding overtraining, but it'll also ensure you can achieve the muscle mass you want.

Healthy fats and complex carbohydrates are also important but when it comes to building mass, keeping your protein intake high should be prioritized.

## Choose ONE Training Program and Stick to It

Hopping between different programs too often can sacrifice those results you want. For bodybuilding newbies, it's more important to find a comprehensive bodybuilding program and follow it for at least 12 weeks (ideally more) than to always be looking for the next "best" exercise.

As a new bodybuilder, you'll see good results from most bodybuilding programs for beginners. Focus on compound movements or those exercises that target the greatest number of muscle groups in one sitting such as squats and deadlifts.

Here's a full-body workout program that you can do three times a week to start:

- Barbell Back Squats: 3 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions
- Rows: 3 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions
- Romanian Deadlifts: 3 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions
- Bench Press: 3 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions
- Mountain Climbers: 3 sets of 30 repetitions
- Burpees: 1 set to failure (do as many as you can)

## Rest Properly Between Sets

Finding the ideal amount of time to rest between sets can seem daunting, but there is a general rule of thumb, depending on the type of workout you're doing:

- If you are training for hypertrophy (muscle growth), you'll want to rest for 60 to 90 seconds between sets.
- If you are looking to build strength, you'll want to rest for two to three minutes between sets.

## Focus on Recovery After a Workout

You don't build muscle while in the gym; you build muscle once you leave the gym. How you dedicate time to recovery after a workout will affect your results.

Most bodybuilding programs for beginners will start you off with lifting three times per week and resting four times per week. It doesn't seem fun or glamorous, but you have to make sure that you are resting properly for those four days.

This doesn't necessarily mean you'll be a couch potato for those four days. Rather, practice good nutrition, perform light physical activity such as walking or jogging, stretch, and consider getting a massage. Studies show that massage is one of the most effective means of promoting post-workout recovery. [\[3\]](#)

Above all, you must focus on your sleep. Aim for no less than seven hours each and every night.

## Use Full Range of Motion

Treat every rep like it is the most important rep of your life. Too many injuries are caused by bad technique. Bodybuilding is all about increasing muscle size, and strength is of secondary importance.

Because of this, you should aim to perform every exercise with a full range of motion. Rather than trying to lift as much weight as possible and shortening your movements, go full lighter weight and a concentrated and complete range of motion.

Remember: The deeper the range of motion, the more muscle fibers that are activated. The more activated muscle fibers, the bigger the muscles (assuming you are following up with proper nutrition).

## Focus on Tempo

Lifting tempo or the speed at which you lift, pause, and lower is crucial. Think of a bicep curl. Imagine curling the weight up as fast as possible and then dropping it down again within a second. This is poor form and lifting speed. Yet, you see so many guys doing this in the gym. Don't be that guy!

Now imagine slowly curling that weight up, squeezing your bicep as you go. You pause at the top of the movement, and then slowly lower the weight back down. During the lowering section, you are fighting gravity all the way.

The ideal lifting speed to build muscle is as follows:

- Lifting the weight (concentric): 2 seconds
- Pausing at the top (isometric): 0 seconds
- Lowering the weight (eccentric): 2 seconds

## Sleep 7 to 10 Hours Each Night

Studies show that sleep is when your body releases the greatest amount of the recovery hormones: testosterone and human growth hormone. This is essential for muscle growth. Increased sleep can lead to increased testosterone while interrupted sleep can significantly reduce testosterone. <sup>[4]</sup>

Sleeping more can also improve your gym performance, improve your mood, and help you to concentrate better. All of this is necessary for bodybuilders.

## Bodybuilding Mistakes to Avoid

Bodybuilding mistakes are a natural process and so long as you learn and adapt from them, you'll be a better bodybuilder. However, if you can, try to avoid these gym mistakes.

### Unrealistic Expectations

Nothing can sap motivation faster than unrealistic expectations remaining unfulfilled. If you expect too much from yourself or from your training program you are going to be left disappointed.

Remember that a realistic goal for muscle gains is about one to two pounds per month, depending on a number of factors, including current weight, age, and gender. Keep this in mind as you establish your long-term goals.

### Spending a Fortune on Supplements

We're not saying that supplements should be avoided. In fact, there are many supplements that can help you as a bodybuilder. However, your primary focus in the beginning should be on developing quality nutritional habits.

Focus on whole food meals and meal preparation. Don't worry about spending half of your monthly paycheck on supplements.

Once you are comfortable with your training and nutrition – usually about two months into the program – then consider purchasing proven supplements only. Here are a few recommendations:

- Whey protein
- Creatine
- Glutamine
- Pre-workout (energy)
- Post-workout (recovery)

## Too Much Volume

The single biggest mistake that a new bodybuilder can make is adding too much volume to their training program. Volume is certainly important, but too much might lead to overtraining and injury.

What is volume? It is a measure of all the reps and sets you perform as well as the weight you use. To put it simply, don't follow a program that has you training seven days per week for two hours.

Also, aim to use 50% to 65% of your one-repetition maximum or the greatest amount of weight that you can lift with perfect form one time.

## Chasing Heavy Weights

The route to building strength and size is through increasing the amount of weight you are lifting over time. However, this needs to be done sensibly. Too many lifters get caught up on trying to lift as much as possible too soon.

Start light, perfect your form, and slowly increase the weight from week to week. A good rule of thumb is to increase your weight between 2.5 and 5 pounds every week. But if that's too much, don't sweat it. We would rather see you return to the gym to lift, rather than lifting a weight that is too heavy for you and getting hurt. Lose the ego and lift what you can.

## Copying the Pros

While you can look up to them for inspiration, we advise against lifting like the pros. This means do NOT attempt a professional bodybuilding program because, as we discussed above, it will be too much volume for a beginner.

Also, skip the steroids. Sorry to disappoint anyone who still believes that professional bodybuilders don't take steroids, but most do.

Taking the steroid route, believing it is a short cut, is false thinking. Any bad habits you have before steroids such as improper form will follow you when you begin taking them. What's more, there are too many risks for taking illegal steroids. The cons far outweigh the supposed benefits.

## Neglecting Legs

Years ago, it felt like nobody trained legs; it was all about those chest and arm muscles. Now most people have seen the light and the necessity of leg training. But there is still a large group of beginning bodybuilders who avoid legs as much as possible.

We understand why: Chest, arms, shoulders, and abs are all more visible and more enjoyable to train. They are the glamor muscles. But studies show that leg training helps to support total body muscle building through an increased release of testosterone and growth hormone. This can fuel muscle protein synthesis and, as a result, muscle growth. [\[5\]](#)

## Worrying About Other People

This is good advice for anyone who is new to the gym, particularly new bodybuilders. Do not worry what other people in the gym are thinking about you.

Ninety-nine percent of gym goers don't care about how much weight you're pushing. Most will be supportive. The one percent who MIGHT be judging you are not worth worrying about. Don't feel that you need to impress them and don't feel that you need to copy them.

Do make an effort to ask them for help if you need it. Most bodybuilding mistakes stem from worrying about other people. Don't let this affect you.

## Bodybuilding for Beginners: Start Slow, Stay Smart

Becoming a bodybuilder is one of the most challenging things you can do, but it is also one of the most rewarding. Not only will you improve your physique, but you'll also improve your physical and mental health, build discipline, and add years to your life.

Be consistent, work hard, don't cut corners, and get your 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night, and you will create lasting change. Good luck!

## References

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