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## Balance in Exercising

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Most of us are already aware that the key to becoming physically fit is a healthy diet combined with exercise. However what catches many of us by surprise is that having a *balanced* exercise routine is just as critical to success. In this article we will take a look at why a balanced exercise routine is important and I will also provide some examples so that you can create a balanced routine that fits your personal goals and life-schedule.

### Why a balanced exercise routine is important

When I first started getting serious about physical health, I focused entirely on my upper-body. I was young and unwise and I felt that to work my legs would be useless because of my physical challenge (stupid, I know). So I worked my upper-body exclusively, every single day for several hours per day. Did I see results? Yes; were they great results? Not really.

I couldn't understand it, I was pushing my upper body very hard (chest, arms, upper-back) with the determination rarely seen on this earth. Yet my results were less than astonishing... and for quite a while I stagnated because I couldn't figure out what was holding me back. Then I began to get frustrated at my lack of progress and used that anger to push myself harder; lifting heavier weights longer and more often until I finally burnt out my muscles and almost brought about serious injury had I not stopped when I did.

To most of you my problem is now obvious, my exercise routine lacked balance. My scales were tipped completely to one side... my upper-body, while completely ignoring the lower body. I had fallen into the old "more is always better" trap and was under the mistaken impression that the more I worked my upper-body, the more often I lifted heavier weights the faster my results would manifest and the more "buff" I would become. That is one of the most common misconceptions today, and please allow me to save you a lot of pain, agony and time... It isn't true!

The truth is that muscle groups need time to recover after weight-lifting. By focusing entirely on certain sets of muscles and overworking them by lifting too-often, you will tear them down and eventually destroy them. Now this is not an excuse to slack off. Muscles typically only require one or two days to recover... After three days of inactivity they will start to atrophy if not used.

Now I know that those of you who have read my previous articles on physical health are probably now wondering if what I just stated about rest is contradicting what I stated

previously in the [Inactivity Inertia](#) article. The quick answer is no. The longer answer is that the exercises and methods outlined in that article are very low impact and will not tear down muscles. They are designed more to burn calories and speed up the metabolism to burn fat. So you can perform those exercises throughout the day for quick bursts... You won't build giant muscles with them, but they will aid in calorie burning.

### **Balancing your routine**

Before we start looking at the examples, there are a couple of simple points to consider when planning a balanced exercise routine:

- It should include both weight-training, and at least 30 minutes of cardio per day. Weight-training is not a replacement for cardio-vascular exercise, nor is cardio a replacement for weights. They both serve different purposes and they both compliment each other. I've seen people try to speed through weight repetitions and claim that they are getting "cardio" from it, when in reality all they are doing is destroying their muscles and joints.
- Separate upper and lower body days. What I do now (and this is crossing over into my example a bit) is have one day where I focus just on my upper-body with weight-training and do only cardio lower body. Then the next day I reverse it; doing weight-training on my lower-body and cardio on my upper-body. My abs and core I work every day since they recover more rapidly than other muscle groups.

Using this method I am working hard every day without over-exercising any particular muscle group. A completely balanced exercise routine.

### **The examples**

Below are some examples for a balanced exercise schedule. Ideally, my schedule of one day for upper-body and one day for lower-body is what most people would want to achieve, but of course there are special cases not only because of time constraints but also certain physical conditions or challenges may require different schedules.

Below is my personal schedule to start with. I am not going to list specific exercises because each persons' requirements are different and serious injury can occur from people perform exercises that do not suit their physical abilities or requirements.

Day 1: Morning pre-breakfast cardio & after breakfast cardio,  
noon Upper-body weight training,  
evening cardio

Day 2: Morning pre-breakfast cardio & after breakfast cardio,  
noon Lower-body weight training,  
evening cardio

Day 3: Morning pre-breakfast cardio & after breakfast cardio,  
noon Upper-body weight training,  
evening cardio

Day 4: Morning pre-breakfast cardio & after breakfast cardio,  
noon Lower-body weight training,  
evening cardio

Day 5: Morning pre-breakfast cardio & after breakfast cardio,  
noon Upper-body weight training,  
evening cardio

Day 6: Morning pre-breakfast cardio & after breakfast cardio,  
noon Lower-body weight training,  
evening cardio

Day 7: Upper and Lower-body cardio,  
No weight-training.

Now please keep in mind that my training schedule is a bit more intense than the average person. I worked-up to this level over a long period and if you are new to fitness training or not in the best of shape I do not recommend starting with something that intense as you can and most likely will suffer serious injury or perhaps cardiac-arrest. This is just an example of the *ideal schedule* something to aim for as a goal, not something to start with.

For someone new to fitness I would recommend cutting out all of the post-breakfast cardio and just keeping the pre-breakfast cardio (as it is the most beneficial). Also I would recommend cutting down the weight-training to perhaps three-days a week. But still focusing on upper and lower-body on different days.

When it becomes easy, then gradually increase the work until you eventually reach the ideal schedule above. Don't rush to reach that goal, enjoy the journey slowly.

For someone who doesn't have the time to devote to a schedule like that one above, I would recommend much the same thing. Try to keep the pre-breakfast cardio because it really is the most beneficial, however if you simply cannot do that, then you would want evening cardio to rev up your metabolism at the time when it normally is at its slowest.

Weight-lifting shouldn't take very long. 3 sets of 10 reps really doesn't take that long and when you focus on only half of the body at a time, it takes even less. From watching others exercise what takes the most time is the rests in-between. Most people rest in-between sets much longer than they should. I rest an absolute maximum of 60 seconds in-between sets. Your mileage may vary, and if you are not used to weight-training you should rest longer, but I wouldn't go longer than 2 minutes between sets.

## **Conclusion**

This is not the end-all and be-all of exercising. You should talk with your healthcare professional and/or personal fitness trainer to have a customized health plan for you. This is meant as a simple guide to aid those seeking to better themselves physically. The most important thing to remember is **progress slowly**. Much like my story at the start of this article, if you try to rush or over-exercise, you can and will hurt yourself. Serious injury and death can occur from improper training and that is why you must consult a professional. A guide on the internet is not a replacement for personal care.

With that said, stay strong, true achievement is won day by day, it will happen.

Rise to the Challenge!

James