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BATTLE-READY STRENGTH TRAINING

universityfitness Q&A

By Matt Brzycki

If performed in the same workout, should aerobic training come before strength training, or the other way around?



If increasing muscular strength is the main goal, then strength training should be performed before aerobic training; if increasing aerobic fitness is the main goal, then aerobic training should be performed before strength training.

But what if improving overall fitness is the main goal? Research indicates that better results are obtained when aerobic training is performed before strength training. In a study by Dr. Wayne Westcott, subjects performed strength training, rested for five minutes and then performed aerobic training (pedaling for 20 minutes on a stationary cycle). During a subsequent workout, the same subjects performed the same activities, but in reverse

sequence. When they performed strength training after aerobic training, their strength performance was 1 percent worse than when they did strength training before aerobic training; when they performed aerobic training after strength training, their aerobic performance was 8 percent worse than vice versa. If both activities are to be performed in the same workout, aerobic training has less of an impact on strength training, than strength training has on aerobic training.

Does boron increase size and strength?

Because of gross exaggerations by the supplement industry, individuals have used boron thinking that it will increase their muscular size and strength. One study that is frequently cited by the supplement industry shows that boron increased serum testosterone concentration up to 300 percent. What the promoters didn't mention was that the subjects in this study were postmenopausal women whose testosterone levels were quite low. In fact, the women hadn't received adequate boron intake for the previous 119 days prior to the supplementation. In a seven-week study that involved 19 male bodybuilders

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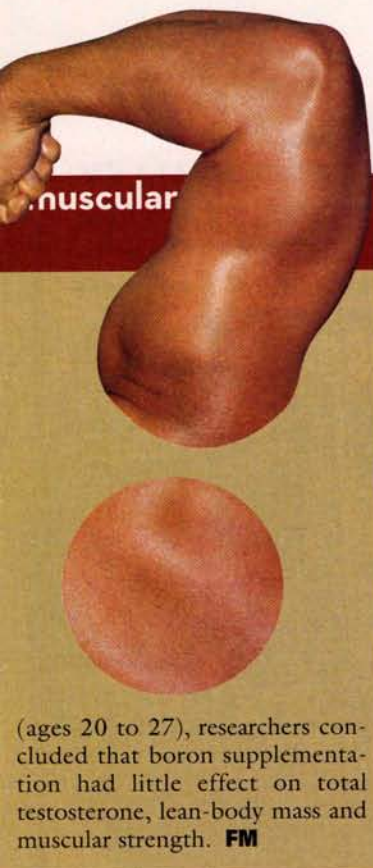


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What's the best order for strength-training exercises?

The order in which members perform their exercises is essential for producing optimal improvements in muscular strength (and size). The order of exercises also determines which muscles are emphasized or targeted. As a rule of thumb, the idea is to train the most important muscles as early as possible in the workout. It stands to reason that members should address those muscles while they are fresh, both mentally and physically. Effectively, a workout should begin with exercises that influence the largest muscles, and proceed to those that involve the smallest ones.

In a total-body workout, the best order of exercise would look like this: hips, upper legs (hamstrings and quadriceps), lower legs (calves or dorsi flexors), torso (chest, upper back and shoulders), upper arms (biceps and triceps), lower arms (forearms), abdominals and finally the lower back. If included, the neck should be trained at the beginning of the workout, or just after completing the lower-body exercises.

If a member prefers to perform a "split routine" — in which the body parts are "split" into several workouts instead of one total-body workout — the aforementioned order of exercise would still apply. In a workout that only targets the chest, shoulders and triceps, for example, a member should still address those body parts from largest to smallest.

It's important for facility managers to take this into consideration when designing the layout of the strength-training equipment. Members will find it helpful and efficient if the equipment is grouped by body part throughout the fitness center, and placed in a logical sequence.



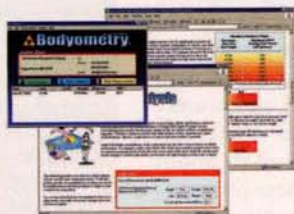
Matt Brzycki is coordinator of recreational fitness and wellness programs at Princeton University, Princeton, N.J. He has more than 20 years of experience at the collegiate level and has authored, co-authored or edited 11 books.

Do you have questions that you need answered? Email them to edit@fitnessmgmt.com.

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