

These days, weight rooms are commonplace all over the world, and more people than ever are getting into fitness, bodybuilding, and even competitive lifting. Unfortunately, the vast majority of people that lift weights to gain muscle mass and strength are going about it all wrong. Their nutrition is horrible, their lifting form is atrocious, and they have no idea how to put together an effective plan. Here are 5 of the most essential muscle building tips you must know to ensure your own bodybuilding success.

Nutrition is Key

Nutrition is AT LEAST half the puzzle when talking muscle building. Whenever people ask me how to get big, or what I did to gain as much size as I have, they focus on the training. “How many days a week do you workout,” or “How often do you work each muscle,” are the most common questions I get.

While training is obviously the stimulus your body needs to grow new muscle tissue, you will never make any progress without proper nutrition. The food that you eat is not only your body’s training fuel, but the building blocks for new muscle mass.

The best, most simple approach to muscle building nutrition is to focus on protein first. I like to take my bodyweight and multiply it by 2 to get the number of protein grams I need to get per day. For me, this is at least 400- 500 grams. That seems like a lot, and it is, but you should spread your protein requirements over 5-6 meals, not the usual 3.

After protein, you should focus on the “energy” nutrients, carbs and fats. At breakfast, before, and after training, you should eat carbs with your protein. Eat bread, pasta, oats, other grains, beans, etc... Get some starch, but don’t eat junk food.

At other times of the day, you should eat fruits, veggies, and some fats in the form of oils and nuts with your protein.

You Gain When You Sleep

In addition to nutrition, sleep is absolutely critical for muscle building. When you sleep, your body’s levels of muscle building hormones such as growth hormone are highly elevated. This creates the best possible environment for growth.

To better understand why sleep is so important, think of a baby. Babies grow faster than people of any other age, and they also sleep more than people of any other age. This is because that sleep provides the optimal environment to build new muscle tissue.

Lifting Weights Does NOT Build Muscle!

Contrary to popular belief, you DO NOT build muscle while you are lifting weights in the gym. When you train hard and heavily tax your muscles, you are actually BREAKING DOWN muscle tissue.

It is outside the gym, especially during sleep, when your muscles have a chance to repair and hopefully grow a little bit larger than they were before the workout. This is also why nutrition is so important – you must consume more calories than you burn, so that your body has extra energy left over to build some NEW muscle tissue.

More is Not Always Better

This important principle is very similar to the previous one. Since you are breaking down your muscles when you weight train, it only stands to reason that there is only so much punishment your body can productively take.

Rather than focusing on how MUCH you're doing in the weight room, you should focus on the QUALITY of your workout. No matter your muscle building weight training program, your goal should be to make some kind of progress, be it in weight, reps, sets, or a combination of all three.

This progress, and not how sore you got from that last workout, should be your main goal. As long as you are progressing, you are getting bigger.

Train for Strength

The best method of progression in a weight training program is getting stronger. You can add reps, you can add sets, you can add more exercises, but these things are all very finite and limited. You can't keep adding sets and exercises until you're doing 10 sets of 10 exercises just for one muscle group. It's impossible, and you'd burn out way before you ever got to that point.

Weight, on the other hand, is infinite. Of course you're never going to lift infinity pounds for any exercise, but you can pretty much always stand to get stronger than you are now. There are many ways to progress in strength, but that should be your main overall goal.