

The Five Basic Principles of Fitness

There are 5 Basic Principles of Physical Fitness. They include:



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| 1. The Overload Principle |
| 2. The FITT Principle |
| 3. The Specificity Principle |
| 4. The Rest and Recovery Principle |
| 5. The Use or Lose Principle |



The Overload Principle

The Overload Principle is probably the most important principle of exercise and training. Simply stated, the Overload Principle means that the body will adapt to the workload placed upon it. The more you do, the more you will be capable of doing. This is how all the fitness improvements occur when exercising and training. The human body is an amazing machine. When you stress the body through lifting a weight that the body is unaccustomed to lifting, the body will react by causing physiological changes in order to be able to handle that stress the next time it occurs. This concept is similar in cardiovascular training. If you ask the heart, lungs and endurance muscles to do work not previously done, it will make changes to the body to be able to handle that task better the next time. This is how people get stronger, bigger, faster and increase their physical fitness level.

When you are working out, you want to strive to somehow increase the workload you are doing above what you did on your previous workout so you have overloaded your body to create a training adaptation. This increase in workout stress can be a very small increase, as many small increases over time will eventually be a large increase or adaptation. To determine how to increase the workload of a given workout you need to understand the F.I.T.T Principle.

The F.I.T.T. Principle

An easy way to get started on developing a personal fitness program is utilizing the **F.I.T.T.** principle. This acronym stands for **F**requency, **I**ntensity, **T**ime and **T**ype. These are the areas in which someone could increase or overload in order to improve physical fitness.

Frequency: This refers to how often you will exercise. After any form of exercise is performed your body completes a process of rebuilding and repairing. So, determining the frequency of exercise is important in order to find a balance that provides just enough stress for the body to adapt and also allows enough rest time for healing.

Intensity: Defined as the amount of effort or work that must be completed in a specific exercise. This too requires a good balance to ensure that the intensity is hard enough to overload the body but not so difficult that it results in over training, injury or burnout.

(OVER)

Time: Time is simply how long each individual session should last. This will vary based on the intensity and type.

Type: What type of exercise will you be doing? Will an exercise session be primarily cardiovascular, resistance training or a combination of both? And, what specific exercises will you perform.

Combining The Overload Principle and The F.I.T.T. Principle

	Resistance Training	Cardiovascular Training
Frequency	Increase the number of workout days	Increase the number of workout days
Intensity	Increase the resistance / weight	Increase pace or % of Max. Heart Rate
Time	Increase time involved in exercise or Increased repetitions.	Increase time involved in exercise
Type	Changing the exercise but still working the same area of the body	Changing the workout to a different cardio exercise. Ex. jogging to jump rope

The Specificity Principle

This principle is just how it sounds...how you exercise should be specific to your goals. If you're trying to improve your racing times, you should focus on speed workouts. If your main goal is simply health, fitness and weight management, you should focus on total body strength, cardio and a healthy diet. Make sure your training matches your goals.

The Rest and Recovery Principle

While we often focus on getting in as much exercise as possible, rest and recovery is also essential for reaching your weight loss and fitness goals. While you can often do cardio every day (though you may want to rest after very intense workouts) you should have at least a day of rest between strength training workouts. Make sure you don't work the same muscles two days in a row to give your body the time it needs to rest and recover.

The Use or Lose Principle

The Principle of Use or Lose implies that when it comes to fitness, you "use it or lose it." This simply means that your muscles build strength (hypertrophy) with use and lose strength (atrophy) with lack of use. This also explains why we or lose fitness when we stop exercising.