



ANDREW'S SIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO FITNESS

**The basics of the gym, nutrition,
recovery, and a healthy lifestyle**

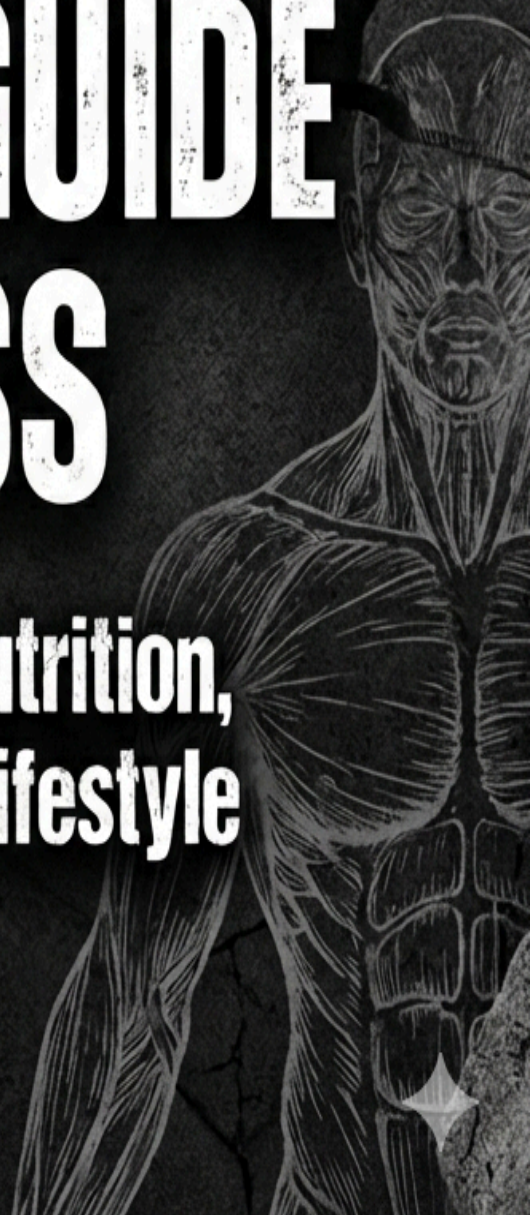


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Word of Advice

The world of fitness is a seemingly daunting place. It feels like everyone in the gym knows what they are doing beside you. You go home and don't know what foods to eat, maybe besides chicken, rice, and broccoli, but everyone else knows that perfect meal. As someone who has lived the fitness world consistently for a number of years, I can confidently say that is definitely not the case. Most people you see lifting heavy or looking shredded were just as confused as you are when they had just started. They've simply been at it longer.

The “perfect” form you admire? Often the result of hundreds of imperfect reps and tweaks over time. The meal plans you envy? Usually trial-and-error, not some secret formula. The truth is, fitness isn't about innate talent or instant mastery, it's built through small, consistent choices. Everyone starts as a beginner, and the only real difference between “them” and “you” is time under tension (literally and figuratively).

I made Andrew's Simplified Guide to Fitness in order to help someone, just like my high school self stepping into the gym for the first time, learn the foundational information to achieve their fitness goals.

The most important thing I've learned since those early gym days has nothing to do with lifting heavier, eating cleaner, or nailing recovery. It's accountability. It's something so many people overlook. Real progress doesn't come from one killer workout or a burst of motivation. It's the day to day, detail oriented focus that actually sticks and builds results over the long haul. It's the difference between wanting results and actually getting them. That's the main philosophy behind Zalev Fitness.

Now hear me out, fitness should not get in the way of life. We absolutely need our vacations, sports outings, and pizza from the shop down the street. By living a healthy lifestyle most of the time, we get to enjoy the parts of life we love, knowing we are keeping ourselves healthy and have a routine to return to.

When you work with me, that's what you get: Someone holding you to the standards you set for yourself, celebrating the wins, and enjoying a well rounded lifestyle. I am not an AI bot that doesn't care about your feelings, nor am I a massive company where you are just a number. I am a human being who wants to give you the best opportunity to achieve your fitness goals through personalized coaching. What works for someone else, might not be the same thing that works for you, and I am here to help you pave that path.

Don't just dream it, go get it.



Certified Personal Trainer & Nutrition Coach

Guide to Working Out 💪

When people generally think of fitness, they imagine some form of working out, whether that is lifting weights, going for a run, or even Yoga. Although there is so much more to it, this section simply highlights aspects of the gym and related physical movements.

Terminology (Gym Focused)

Term	Simplified Meaning	Example
Reps	Number of times a movement is performed	10 reps = 10 complete bicep curls
Sets	A group of consecutive repetitions for a movement	3 sets of 10 reps = 1 exercise, completed in 3 groups of 10
Supersets	Performing 2 exercise back-to-back with no rest in between	Completing a set of sled pushes on the turf directly followed by leg extensions on a machine
Drop Set	Performing an exercise to/near failure, then decreasing weight to perform more reps	During a lat pulldown movement, a user performs 6 heavy reps at 120 pounds then decreases the weight to 50 pounds for 10 additional reps
Tempo	Speed of a rep, often represented as numbers	2-1-2 where the first number is the speed of the way down, the middle is the time being held at the bottom, and the last is the speed of the way back up
Eccentric	Lowering phase of a lift, builds strength through controlled resistance	During a bicep curl, the movement when the arms extend down
Concentric	Lifting phase of a lift, muscles shorten under tension to create a force	During a bicep curl, the movement when the arms curl back up
Progressive overload	Gradually increasing weight, reps, or intensity to challenge muscles and promote growth	Starting with 10 pounds on leg press week 1, then increasing by 5 pounds for week 2

Rep & Set Counts: Matching to Goals

¹Rep ranges:

1 - 5 : “Power” - Builds power and strength using heavier weights for explosive movements

6 - 12 : “Hypertrophy” - Improves muscle growth and development

15+ : “Muscular Endurance” - Enhances ability to use muscles without fatiguing

Set ranges:

Lower sets (2-3): Emphasis on training intensity, great for beginners to avoid fatigue

Higher sets (4-6): Increase of volume for specific regiments (typically powerlifting)

Workout Splits

What is a Workout Split?

A workout split is a routine that an individual follows as a strategy to attain their fitness goals. There are a number of ways to go about this, and there are no right or wrong answers, but there are more optimal solutions depending on your fitness goals. Three common splits that gym goers follow are:

- 1.) Push, Pull, Legs
 - Push = Chest, Triceps, Shoulders
 - Pull = Back, Biceps
 - Legs = Legs
- 2.) Arnold Split
 - Day 1 = Chest, Back
 - Day 2 = Shoulders, Triceps, Biceps
 - Day 3 = Legs
- 3.) Upper Lower
 - Upper = Chest, Triceps, Back, Biceps, Shoulder
 - Lower = Legs, Core



There are many variations to each of these splits mentioned and they are certainly not the only ones out there, so it is important to know how to choose a split to help you achieve success.

How to Choose your Split

The two most important aspects of choosing a workout split is 1.) YOUR fitness goals and 2.) how frequently you are able to make it to the gym. Let's be honest, not everyone's goal is to be a body builder, so it's important to understand what your fitness goal is centered around (Losing weight, putting on

¹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7927075/>

muscle, etc.). The frequency of time you go to the gym is also important because it is important to hit all areas of your physique more often rather than not.

Example scenario: Say Jack goes to the gym 4 times a week with a goal of losing body fat while maintaining strength.

Option 1: Jack decides to go on a 3 day split

This means in a 7 day time span: Day 1 gets hit twice, day 2 just once, and day 3 just once, with 3 rest days. The following week the same process will occur but in more favor of day 2.

Training will remain uneven from week to week and although this is not a poor choice, it could be better.

Option 1: 3-Day Split (4 Sessions/Week - Uneven Distribution)

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 1	Day 1	Day 2	Rest	Day 3	Day 1	Rest	Rest
	Week 1 Totals: Day 1 (2x), Day 2 (1x), Day 3 (1x), Rest (3x)						
	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEEK 2	Day 2	Day 3	Rest	Day 1	Day 2	Rest	Rest
	Week 2 Totals: Day 1 (1x), Day 2 (2x), Day 3 (1x), Rest (3x)						

Option 2: Jack decides to go on a 2 days split

This means in a 7 day time span: Day 1 gets hit twice, and day 2 gets hit twice, with 3 rest days. In the long term, this evenly distributes his work load week to week maintaining a strong balance of training for muscle groups over time.

Option 2: 2-Day Split (4 Sessions/Week - Even Distribution)							
WEEK 1	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Day 1	Day 2	Rest	Day 1	Day 2	Rest	Rest
	Week 1 Totals: Day 1 (2x), Day 2 (2x), Rest (3x)						
WEEK 2	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	Day 1	Day 2	Rest	Day 1	Day 2	Rest	Rest
	Week 2 Totals: Day 1 (2x), Day 2 (2x), Rest (3x)						

As previously stated, the 3 day split is not inherently wrong, rather the 2 day split would allow for a more even distribution of muscle targeted days. An experienced trainer can help remove the guessing or trial and error from the equation.

Multi-Joint (Compound) VS Single-Joint (Isolation) Movements

Over years of mixing and matching different exercises together, a major lesson I emphasize to my clients is the importance of multi joint movements. These exercises are the fundamental side to fitness where you don't need fancy equipment. These movements allow you to hit multiple muscle groups at once while building coordination between them.

	Multi-Joint	Single-Joint
Target	Multiple muscle groups	Single muscle group
Example	Squat, plank, pull-up	Weight machines
Benefit	Engages multiple muscle groups at once making it an efficient source for functional strength and fat loss	Targets specific areas for muscle growth or conditioning

Importance of Cardio

²No matter what your goal may be, cardio is an essential aspect of fitness, especially for enhancing long term heart health! Do you have trouble falling asleep at night? Cardio will actually help! Consistent physical activity will allow you to fall asleep faster and increase time spent in deep sleep where the body repairs tissues and strengthens the immune system. Benefits for different goals include:

Fat loss: Burns calories and increases metabolic rate

Muscle gain: Improves blood flow for better recovery

Strength training: Improved work capacitance with higher training volumes



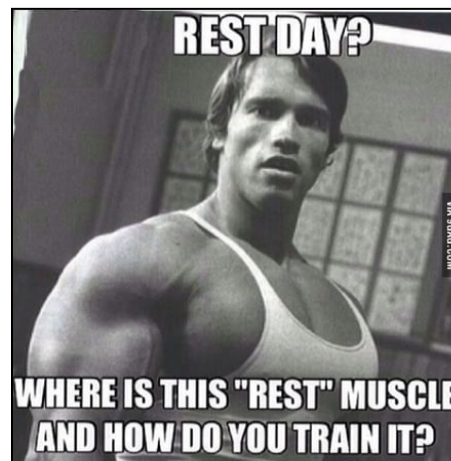
² <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/the-many-benefits-of-a-cardio-workout>

Importance of Rest Days

It's one of those classic stories in the gym world. A new lifter gets super excited and decides the best way to grow is to hit the gym every single day without a break. The truth is, rest days are just as crucial for building muscle as those heavy chest sessions. ³During your rest day, the body is able to:

- Repair muscle fibers in order to build muscle, which is an essential step in muscle development, to rebuild them stronger
- Prevent muscle fatigue by allowing time for the muscles to relax
- Prevent injuries that may occur from the body being overworked

Ultimately, taking a rest day will allow the body to come back stronger, which means performance will be more efficient, leading to more muscle growth. Taking a day to focus on recovery allows your body to invest in a better workout when you come back.



Now a rest day, unless you are on vacation or have a matter to attend to, usually doesn't mean a day off from the diet you are trying to follow. To keep those muscle-building gains rolling, your body still needs fuel. That means sticking to clean, high-quality macro choices: plenty of protein to support repair and growth, balanced carbs to refill energy stores, and healthy fats to keep hormones in check.

In a typical seven day week, I aim for one or two rest days, depending on how my schedule looks and how my body feels. If I've got a packed day and the only option is to cram in a rushed thirty minute workout, but I know tomorrow is completely open, I'll just skip today. Same thing goes if I'm still sore in the muscle group I'm supposed to train. I'll give it an extra day to recover and hit it fresh tomorrow. Pushing through when my body is screaming no is never worth the risk. Injury can set you back weeks or months, and honestly, it's just not smart. Listening to those signals and giving yourself the recovery time you need keeps the progress steady and sustainable in the long run.

³ <https://www.healthline.com/health/exercise-fitness/rest-day#doing-rest-right>

Guide to Nutrition

Nutrition isn't about perfection, it's about choosing high-quality foods most of the time and staying consistent. Focusing on nutrient-dense options to fuel your body in workouts and recovery will support your long term fitness goals!

*Macros

⁴Macronutrients (macros) are the building blocks of your diet: protein, carbs, and fats. They provide energy and support health. Let's take a look into each of the three main macros below:

Macro	Value	Under consumption	Over consumption	Good examples	Bad examples
Protein	Builds / repairs muscles, tissues, and cells	-Muscle loss -Fatigue -Weakened immunity	-Kidney strain -Dehydration	-Chicken breast -Greek yogurt -Salmon	-Bacon -Processed sausages -Chicken nuggets
Carbs	Bodies main source of initial energy	-Low energy -Brain fog -Poor workout performance	-Weight gain -Blood sugar spikes -Digestive issues	-Fruits -Vegetables -Potatoes -Rice	-Bread -Pasta -Cereals -Soda -Candy
Fats	Long lasting energy, helps absorb vitamins, brain health, produce hormones	-Dry skin -Hormone imbalances -Poor nutrient absorption	-Weight gain -High cholesterol -Heart disease risk	-Avocados -Nuts/seeds -Olive oil -Fatty fish -Algae oil	-Fried fast food -Butter -Cheese

*Daily Consumption

⁵Your recommended daily consumption will vary greatly by age, sex, and most importantly goals.

Macros	Rec % of daily intake	Andrew's notes
Protein	10-35	No matter the goal, very important to consume to maintain muscle in body over time
Carbs	45-65	Too much = fat gain, not enough = fatigue
Fats	25-35	Undervalued by most, important for personal health

⁴ https://www.scripps.org/news_items/7278-what-are-macronutrients-why-balance-matters-in-your-diet

⁵ <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2023/08/breaking-down-food>

*This is a source of general recommendation based on proven research. For professional advice, see your Registered Dietician.

Guide to Recovery

After a productive day of training hard to meet your goals, optimal recovery is essential. Without consistent, high-quality recovery, your progress will be greatly limited! Recovery consists of adequate water consumption, high quality sleep, and proper eating as we discussed previously.

Water Consumption

While many sources recommend tracking exact amounts of water intake, I don't think precise measurement is necessary for most. The key is to stay consistently hydrated by sipping water steadily throughout the day. Here are some simple daily habits I rely on to make this pillar effortless:

- 2 cups of water right out of bed in the morning before my coffee
- At least a cup of water before and after the gym
- Water with every meal

Sleep

I cannot emphasize enough the value of getting the proper rest at night. You can do everything in this guide right until it is time for bed, but then spoil it all down the drain without hitting the sheets consistently for a good night's rest.

Good VS Bad Quality Sleep

Believe it or not, just because you spend a lot of time in bed, it doesn't mean the quality of the sleep was good. The quality of your sleep is determined by the state your body is able to succumb to while in this rest period.⁶Your body should spend a split time in the following states:

State of sleep	% of time goal	What happens	Benefits
Light	50 - 60	Your body begins to relax, heart rate and breathing slow, and body temperature drops	- Memory consolidation - General relaxation
Deep	10 - 25	Brain waves slow dramatically, breathing and heart rate are at their lowest	- Tissue repair - Muscle growth - Hormone release
Rem	20 - 25	Brain activity ramps up, eyes dart rapidly, dreams are most vivid	- Memory processing - Emotional regulation - Mental restoration

Although you cannot consciously control the state of sleep your body enters, there are proven strategies that will improve your bodies ability to earn better quality sleep on a night basis:

⁶ <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/body/12148-sleep-basics>

Habit	Reasoning / Benefit
Getting to bed on time / waking up at a consistent time	Allows your body to stay within a good rhythm
Avoiding food consumption before sleep	If your body is digesting food, it is using energy to break down nutrients instead of recovering.
Avoiding (not limited to) alcohol / marijuana consumption before sleep	These two types of drugs will increase your body's stimulation, making it difficult to reach a low resting heart rate
Putting the phone and other electronics away before bed	Similar to different types of drugs, looking at your device will cause your mind to become stimulated, making it more challenging to enter deeper stages of sleep
Daily physical activity including working out, cardio, and any other forms of physical activity	Allows your body to become naturally tired making it easier to fall asleep and have a lower resting heart rate



Achieving Your Fitness Goals

As I touched on in the Word of Advice introduction to this guide, fitness revolves around more than one component. You can't just crush it in the gym and skip your meals, or survive on 4 hours of sleep and expect your muscles to grow.



How I describe fitness to all of my clients is that the whole picture is like a puzzle. You can't put the puzzle together without piecing together all the little parts. You also can't let the other parts come apart if you want the whole puzzle to come together. It ALSO isn't fun to complete the puzzle if you aren't having fun while doing it, so make sure to enjoy vacations, time with friends, and life in general.

This guide encapsulates just some of what I have learned through years of trial and error, certifications as a trainer and nutrition coach, and constant research. If you are ready to stop guessing and skyrocket your results, let's make it happen at ZalevFitness.com.