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What is the best form of strength training

"Strength training" is one of those blanket terms used for everything from your 20-minute at-home HIIT workouts to the single heavy barbell lifts that Olympian bodybuilders do. The reason a single term applies to such a vast majority of workouts? There are actually seven different types of strength training, all of which are important for keeping your body strong and healthy. "Collectively, the seven modalities of strength can help you move better, stronger, faster, and with less risk of injury," says Rafique Cabral, NASM CPT, co-founder of Trooper Fitness and Isopure Athlete. "It's important to focus on each in order to explore and develop your movement potential." While it's possible to work all seven together in a single session, trying to do everything at once might limit the number of each that you're able to do—and that can slow down your progress. To get the best results, Cabral recommends training them individually or in pairs. Putting together a diverse training program that incorporates all seven different types of strength will not only help you get stronger in the short term, but it can also have major benefits for your body over time. "Longevity and quality of life are at the forefront when all forms of strength are accounted for, because by focusing on each strength, you'll improve your overall health and well-being," says Lauren Wilson, CPT and senior master instructor for CycleBar. "It will also help prevent injury, increase mobility, and increase athleticism." Not to mention, when you rotate through seven types of workouts, you're far less likely to get bored. Below, trainers break down the different types of strength that you should be focusing on—and how to put together workouts that hit them all. Photo: Getty Images

- 1. Agile strength** Agile strength, according to Wilson, is "the ability to change directions quickly and powerfully." That's characterized by quick accelerations in speed, direction, or velocity, or carrying heavy weights in multiple directions. This, Wilson says, helps your body to move with ease and fluidity in any direction, which improves your coordination and balance while helping to prevent injuries. The good news? You're probably working your agile strength on the reg without even realizing it. "Consider the times you've had to grab a heavy bag, groceries, or car seat and maneuver around a store, your house, or up the steps," says Jess Cifelli, NASM CPT and master instructor at CycleBar. "You're essentially carrying weight through different planes of motion." {{ truncate(post.title, 12) }} How to work agile strength: Agile moves are characterized by "multi-directional workouts with low to moderate weight," says Miami-based fitness coach and surfer Natasha Franco. Pros suggests things like medicine ball lat shuffles and direction-change sprints. "Try 30 to 60 seconds of farmer's carries with a moderate-heavy weight," says Wilson. Take it around your neighborhood or gym, feeling each time you need to change direction." Rest for 60 to 90 seconds between sets, and repeat for three to five rounds.
- 2. Endurance strength** Endurance strength is all about how long you can go. It's the complete opposite of most of the HIIT moves you might be used to. According to Cifelli, it requires your body to use both aerobic and anaerobic pathways to stay in motion, which can help you develop postural stabilization for long periods of time and improve the aerobic capacity of the muscles you're working. How to work endurance strength: Start with bodyweight workouts, then add weight to your movements as you get stronger. Cifelli recommends doing 15 squats and 10 push-ups back to back with little to no rest, and repeating for three to five rounds. "Over time, you will not only get a little stronger, but you will find that you can get back to work quicker and quicker, building your strength endurance," she says. Or, you can follow along with this endurance running plan:
- 3. Explosive strength** This is the type of strength that you work with those all-out effort moves during HIIT workouts. "Explosive strength allows you to move yourself or an object quickly, with a lot of force," says Cifelli. Think: jumping and powerlifting, aka the types of moves that require a lot of energy for a short amount of time. "Explosive strength improves the speed of motor unit recruitment, enhances intramuscular coordination, reduces reaction time, and improves the resiliency of muscle and connective tissue," says Wilson. How to work explosive strength: Think about movements that require you to explode (like box jumps, snatches, and cleans). "Medicine ball throws are a great place to start," says Cifelli. Start with five non-stop explosive throws from your chest to a wall, then rest. In your second round, either throw harder, or take a few steps back and continue to try and generate that extreme force. Do five rounds of five reps.
- 4. Maximum strength** Characterized by the "maximum force you can carry under a heavy load," think of your max strength as your "one-rep max," or how much weight you can hold for a single rep. Cabral explains that these workouts helps develop the fast-twitch muscle fibers capable of generating high levels of force, increases the levels of muscle-building hormones in your body, and increases bone density and strength. This is especially important to prep your body for aging, as bone density (particularly in women) decreases as you get older. How to work maximum strength: Heavy weights with low repetitions are the name of the game here. Franco calls out moves like heavily weighted squats, hip thrusts, deadlifts, bench press, and powerlifting as great ways to test your maximum strength. Because these exercises require you to push yourself with the amount of pounds you're handling, Cifelli notes that your best bet is to follow along with professionally designed programs to avoid overtraining injuries, and allow for long periods of rest in between sessions.
- 5. Speed strength** Simply put, your speed strength is how fast you can go. "It puts your muscles through a fuller range of motion—improving flexibility—and trains more muscles, leading to better muscle balance," says Wilson. According to Cabral, this training can minimize reaction times, enhance athletic performance, and reduce time of the stretch-shorten cycle in your muscles. How to work speed strength: The easiest way to work your speed? Sprinting. Try some short, fast distance running on your own, or follow along with this coach-led program.
- 6. Starting strength** "Starting strength is the first push of movement without any momentum," says Cifelli. "This can be anything from a rumer on a track right before the gun shot starts the race, or you standing up from your chair—there was nothing that came prior to that first movement from a momentum." Working your starting strength, says Cabral, can improve the ability of muscle and connective tissue to increase the rate of force production (and allow you to lift heavier weights), improve your ability to accelerate in any movement, and enhance your ability to transition from seated to standing. Outside of your workouts, this type of training is important for making your bones, muscles, and joints stronger, and improving your overall health. How to work starting strength: Since starting strength is literally the strength you start a move with, think of these exercises as those that require you to go from zero to 60 almost immediately. Pros suggest dead-start kettlebell swings, sprinter jumps, and sit-down squats as great ways to work it.
- 7. Relative strength** Unlike the other types of strength on this list, relative strength takes an individual's body composition into consideration and comes as a result of developing the other six modalities. "Relative strength is a reflection of how strong you are compared to your personal size—it's based on your personal abilities, size, and gains over time," says Cifelli. "In this ability to control your own bodyweight through space, it's often found that smaller individuals have more relative strength. It all comes down to strength-to-weight-ratio." To determine the starting point for your own relative strength, write down your max number of reps on a specific bodyweight exercise (for example, push-ups) and divide it by your weight. Over time, as you get stronger, you should be able to do more reps, and that number will increase. How to work relative strength: Since relative strength comes as a result of working all of the other types of strength on this list, there aren't really any specific moves that can help you target it. Instead, focus on the other modalities, and watch your relative strength improve as a result.

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If you are new to strength training or need a bit of a refresher on good form, you are in the right place. Good form allows you to reap all the benefits of your workout and avoid injuries at the same time. No matter your age, current fitness level, or sex, you can benefit from weight training with the right technique. Follow these guidelines to make the most out of your time at the gym. If you need additional help, consider hiring a personal trainer to set you up for success. Cold muscles are more susceptible to injury. Start your workout with five minutes of brisk walking or another aerobic activity to warm up your body. Once you have increased blood flow, perform some dynamic movements and active stretches such as: Bird-dogs 90-90s Gate openers Wall angels Inchworm Don't just daydream. Focus on the muscle group(s) you are working. Focusing on the mind-muscle connection improves muscle activation, so you can lift more and obtain better results. Get tips from an experienced weight training friend or a personal trainer, then stay focused during your workout. Don't increase the speed of the movement until your form is in good shape. If you have a hard time feeling the muscles you are trying to work, try asking a friend to touch the muscles gently. Focus on going slowly and contracting the muscle being touched. Hold the contraction for a count before slowly returning to the starting position. This can help you develop awareness. Don't use momentum to lift free weights—use your muscles instead. Avoid swinging movements. You will activate more muscle fibers if you lift and lower weights slowly and with control through the entire range of motion. If you cannot lift a weight without swinging it, it is too heavy, and you should decrease the weight. As a beginner, select a weight that allows you to complete 15 repetitions. Around repetition 12, you should be feeling a considerable amount of fatigue. Stand tall with your chest lifted and your arms naturally at your side. Don't hunch your shoulders or hold tension in your neck. Keep your core engaged. The stronger your core, the more effective you will be at lifting weights. If your posture is poor due to working at a desk, try working on the muscles of your upper back while stretching your chest muscles. Take breaks at work to prevent upper-cross syndrome—wherein some muscles become weak and stretched while others become tight. If you go to a weight-training class, your instructor will likely show you good form and provide verbal cues. As you do your workout, keep these cues front of mind. For example, doing an arm exercise where you are supposed to keep your elbows by your sides will make that exercise more effective. You might be tempted to hold your breath when you are exerting effort. Proper breathing is vital for effectively bracing and supporting your spine. Try this: Before you begin the lift, inhale. Exhale during any pressing movement. Inhale while returning the weight to start (such as during the lowering phase with a bench press). While it is okay to work out with DOMS—muscle soreness from a previous training session, never work through intense pain. Instead, learn to differentiate between pain and muscle fatigue. If you experience any irregular pain, stop exercising immediately and tell your doctor. Ensure your weekly strength training routine works all of your major muscles—abdominals, legs, chest, back, shoulders, and arms. You can perform full-body routines each time you train, or break your muscle groups into individual training sessions. You can also perform upper and lower body split routines or push-pull-based routines. Starting with bodyweight can help ensure you have proper form before loading the exercise with additional weight. This can help prevent injuries that occur when you try to add weight to a movement that you cannot perform effectively. Sometimes your own body weight can be the most effective and most challenging. Make sure to add at least a few to each session. Try planks, push-ups, squats, and lunges. Understanding basic strength training principles can help you enjoy a safer, more effective workout. Overload: To build muscle, you must apply an appropriate resistance using weights, cable machines, or even your own body weight. The amount of resistance should be above what you are accustomed to in everyday life. Progressively challenging your muscles is essential for seeing continued progress. Balance: You should work the entire musculoskeletal system, not just the 'mirror muscles' (the ones in front of your body). Skipping this can lead to postural and strength imbalances, and possibly injury. Work several muscle groups at once when possible. Rest: Rest between sets of exercise for 60 to 90 seconds to give your muscles a chance to recover. Also, rest 48 hours between bouts of weight training. If you work your legs hard on Monday, for example, you should not exercise the legs again until Wednesday at the earliest. As you strength train, you will naturally get stronger and need to increase the weight you lift. Soon you will be amazed at how regular strength training can improve your cardio conditioning and change your body. Plus, now your body will work for you while you are sitting at your desk. The more muscle you have, the more calories you will burn at rest. Thanks for your feedback! What are your concerns? Vervwell Fit uses only high-quality sources, including peer-reviewed studies, to support the facts within our articles. Read our editorial process to learn more about how we fact-check and keep our content accurate, reliable, and trustworthy. Olsen O, Sjøhaug M, van Beekvelt M, Mork PJ. 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