



Exercises most commonly performed incorrectly

Being a personal trainer means I am often in different health clubs and training surroundings. Frequently I see people using incorrect form in their exercises. There are five I would like to highlight. When performed correctly they can bring awesome results, but when incorrect, are pretty much a waste of time. These are movements I see performed incorrectly by nearly 50% of gym-goers.



Luke Taylor is an independent personal trainer working from Fitness First, Hammersmith. For further information about these exercises or to arrange a workout, contact Luke at: personaltrainer@inlondon.com

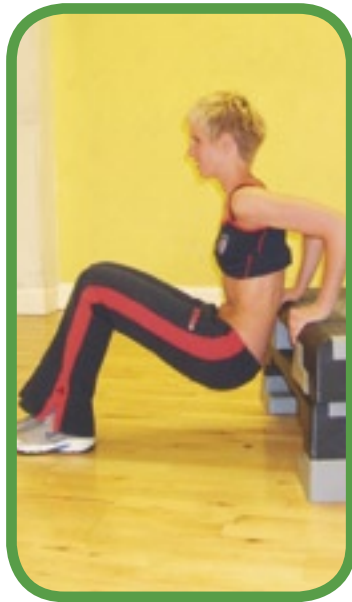
Side Lateral Raises

This exercise can so easily be performed incorrectly. Even a slight change in the movement can alter muscle recruitment. The most common mistake is opening up too much, so that your palms are pointing forward at the top of the movement instead of down to the ground. By doing this, you open your pecs (chest) too much and end up with far less shoulder stimulation. The best way to prevent this mistake is to focus on having the shoulder, elbow and wrist all in line at the top of the movement. The hand should be slightly dipped forward as though you were pouring something.



Bench Dips

Bench dips can be classed as a fantastic tricep burner, builder or toner if done in text book form, but if you lose the technique, they can put you en route to a shoulder, chest or elbow injury. The main error is letting the body go too far forward from the bench, when the gym-goer attempts to push themselves up using hip action as opposed to allowing their arms to do the work. Combat this by bringing your feet closer towards you and by focusing on almost brushing the bench with your back as you dip up and down. Hands should be shoulder width apart and elbows should move back and not outwards.



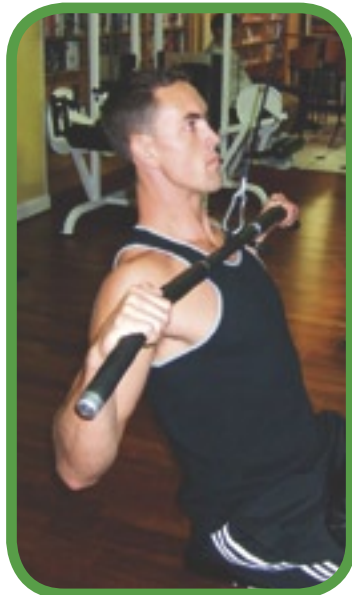
Tricep Pushdowns

The golden rule is that unless you are performing cheat reps or dips, whenever working the biceps or triceps, there should be very little or no movement in the upper arms. Any upper arm movement means immediate shoulder recruitment and therefore less results in the intended arm muscle. So when performing tricep pushdowns, the elbows should be fixed tightly at your sides. Your starting position is slightly above parallel with the floor (bringing the bar higher than this is going to mean you lose tension on the tricep for a brief moment – not what we want). Your finishing point is a fully extended arm.



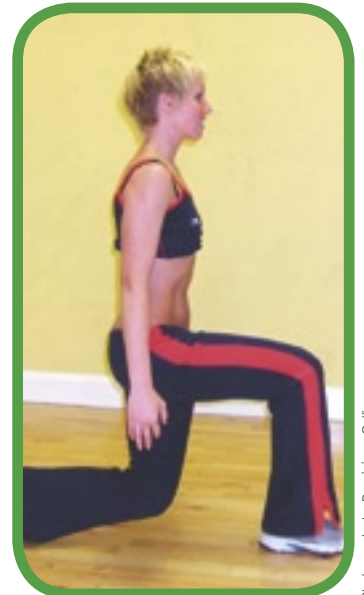
Lat Pull down

This exercise mimics a pull/chin up and should be performed the same way. That means that leaning back until you are almost parallel with the ground. You should get the bar to the top of your chest without amputating your nose. Thumbs should be on the same side as your fingers (to minimise forearm recruitment) and the bar should be drawn to your upper chest by putting the focus on pulling with the elbows and not the arms (minimizing bicep recruitment and isolating the lats). Bring your scapulae (shoulder blades) as close together as possible, squeeze out a one second contraction and release.



Stationary Lunges

A very important point to remember with lunges, is that the toe mustn't overlap the knee at the bottom of the movement. The way to combat this is by measuring a perfect 90° angle between both calves and hamstrings and by dropping straight down into the lunge, as opposed to going forward into it.



Photography by Dominique Cellier