



Exercise Checklist Instruction Manual

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Thanks for downloading the Exercise Checklist!

If you haven't downloaded it yet, you can go here to do just that:

<http://castrovalleyfitness.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Exercise-Checklist.pdf>

This is going to give you a new and deeper understanding of every exercise you do in the gym, and you'll learn how to get much more out of your effort and time!

This document will serve as your Exercise Checklist Instruction Manual. You'll learn what each question means and how to use your answers to improve your results, your feel, your chronic pain, and a heck of a lot more!

Let's get started.

Name of Exercise

This one's pretty easy. If you're doing Squats...write down Squats. If you're doing a Standing Band Row...write down Standing Band Row. You got this!

Number of Reps/Number of Sets

Also, pretty easy, but now we can start to determine a few things.

How much load you use for an exercise can usually be determined by the sets and reps, for instance.

Simply put, the fewer reps you're doing, the greater the load should be and vice-versa. For example, if you use 30 pounds for a set of 15 Goblet Squats, you should use **MORE WEIGHT** for a set of 10. There should be no such thing as "The weight I use for squats." This is one of the most common mistakes I see people make and something that consistently takes away the full impact an exercise can, and should, have.

The number of sets and reps is also one of the factors that helps indicate the purpose of an exercise, which is something we'll talk about in a minute.

Workout Placement

Another important factor as to the purpose of an exercise is where the exercise takes place within a workout.

Generally speaking, the earlier an exercise is placed, the more nervous system activity and coordination it can use which can indicate an exercise purpose of either strength or muscle-building. Those are the purposes that generally use the most nervous system activity and coordination.

It would be expected that, even with a similar rep range, you may not be able to use the same load for an exercise if placed later in a workout than you would for an earlier placement.

Exercise Purpose

Now here's where the rubber starts meeting the road. All the questions you've answered so far have been giving you clues to be able to answer this one:

Why am I doing this exercise?

This is kind of an important thing to know, huh? And you may, or may not, be surprised at how often this question goes unanswered.

The answer to this question determines how much load to use and what to emphasize (pace, load, feel, range of motion, etc.) among other things.

Let's talk about how to figure this out using the answers we already have, but first you must understand that there isn't always just one answer to this question. It's possible to work on muscle-building and cardio simultaneously. Or muscle-building and strength. Or strength and power. There isn't necessarily a time when one thing is completely eliminated from the benefits you receive from performing an exercise, but the more you understand the little things that determine the true purpose of what you're doing, the more you can get out of it.

It's like if you're putting together a dinner following a recipe, but you don't know what the recipe is for. How are you going to know what to make for an appetizer? OK...bad analogy. Let's move on.

Sets and reps

Here's a very general chart for determining what each rep range's main focus may be:

1-4 reps - Strength

5-8 reps - Strength/Muscle-Building

9-15 reps - Muscle-Building

16+ reps - Cardio

Now, this is by no means an exhaustive chart and it's not cut-and-dried like 8 reps gets you stronger but 9 reps doesn't. Also, notice how it doesn't include Feel or Mobility from the checklist because those aren't exercise purposes that can usually be determined by their rep range. We'll talk more about how to identify those in a minute.

The chart gives you a solid starting point for determining what the purpose of an exercise may be. Especially when we consider the next question:

Workout placement

As I mentioned above, the earlier an exercise is placed in a workout (aside from during the warm-up) the more likely that it's placed there because the purpose of that exercise requires a lot of coordination and/or nervous system activity. In other words, it's placed earlier in the workout because it's supposed to be freaking hard!

That usually means either strength or muscle-building.

So, what we can surmise is that when an exercise is:

- Placed first in your workout
- Calls for 4 reps

Its purpose can be regarded as strength.

The later in a workout an exercise is placed the more possibilities emerge.

The one thing we can generally count out is that since strength, as an exercise purpose, takes the maximum amount of coordination and/or nervous system activity, the later in a workout an exercise is placed, the lower the chance of strength being its sole purpose, although it may certainly be one of a few purposes.

Here are some general guidelines you can use to determine an exercise's purpose:

Strength:

- Placed early in a workout
- Lower rep range
- A multi-joint exercise

Muscle-Building:

- Reps between 5-15
- The exercise uses load you can increase

Mobility

- Placed during the warm-up
- Focuses on movement quality at one or, at most, two very specific muscle groups or joints
- Uses minimal, if any, load
- Is done at a slow to moderate tempo

Cardio

- Is done at a high-rep range or is part of high-rep range circuit
- Uses minimal, if any, load
- Is done at a moderate to fast tempo
- Focuses on pace and intensity

Power

- Is done at a low rep range
- Focuses on an athletic skill such as jumping or throwing
- Must be done with maximum effort during every rep

Feel

- Focuses on the feel and/or technique of a particular movement
- Uses minimal, if any, load
- Is done at a slow to moderate tempo
- Uses variations of strength/muscle building exercises

Now again, this is a general guideline, and an exercise doesn't have to check every box in order for it to be the main purpose of an exercise.

For example, we frequently use a "Mobility" exercise later in a workout and I've done "Muscle-Building" exercises in a 20-rep range, it's just these tend to be the exceptions.

Another important point to consider is that the same exercise can have many different purposes depending on the workout placement and rep range.

For example, I've used Squats as

- A mobility exercise in my warm-up
- A muscle-building exercise at the beginning
- A cardio exercise in a very high rep-range at the end

All in the same workout!

Remember, the more thought you put into determining these things within your workout, the deeper the understanding you will gain, the easier this will get, and you'll see the difference in your results.

What are my shoulders/hips doing?

Now that you know how to determine an exercise's purpose within your workout it's time to talk about the things that can help you achieve that purpose. One of the most important is form.

While this checklist can do a lot of things, it can't give you form notes on every single exercise, but as I'm fond of saying, try and make every exercise a shoulder and/or hip exercise. The reason being that the shoulders and hips are a huge

component of literally every exercise there is and understanding how they work is one of the most important aspects of proper form and posture.

Luckily, this is pretty easy to figure out and can be usually answered with a simple question:

Are my hips/shoulders moving during the exercise?

If the answer is no, they're stabilizing. Wasn't that easy?

And if they are stabilizing that means you must position them with that intent ***BEFORE YOU START THE EXERCISE!***

The only exception would be that if you're sitting during an exercise, the hips may not be doing anything. The shoulders still are, however!

It is literally impossible to perfect your form without taking these questions into account, and if you have any kind of chronic pain issues, one of the reasons may well be a lack of attention to what your shoulders and/or hips are doing.

If you're not clear on this, you can watch this video:

<https://youtu.be/PjXJywv2ppU>

Please take this seriously!

[Where should I feel it?](#)

Pretty simple question, huh? Not always a simple answer, though.

One general rule is that the fewer the muscles an exercise uses, the easier it will be to feel in a specific place. That's why you won't feel squats in one particular spot and why there's an answer labeled "Whole Body."

Pay attention to this, though. Whether you do feel it in your whole body or one particular muscle, you should feel every exercise in a specific way, especially "Mobility" and "Feel" exercises.

It would stand to reason that if you're not feeling "Mobility" and "Feel" exercises, you should take a step back and figure out why. If you don't, you're simply wasting your time.

Last thing, the answer to this question should always be a muscle, NOT A JOINT. If you're feeling exercises in your joints, talk to your trainer. Something isn't right.

Form Notes and Other Thoughts

For this section I'd suggest writing down anything you feel you need to remember. That can be as simple as what the exercise actually is, to more complex form cues that help you achieve the purpose you're looking for. It's all just up to you and there's no wrong answer. Whatever helps, helps so use it.

Final Thoughts

If you take the time to think about these questions, what they mean, and how you can apply them to your workout, you'll see some great results. It just takes a little initial work and thought, but it'll get easier as you gain a deeper insight into what you're doing in the gym, how it feels, and why.

Keep these things in mind:

- The same exercise can have different purposes.
- ALWAYS keep your hips and shoulders in mind.
- If you have chronic pain issues, understanding why you're doing the things you're doing in the gym is even more important.
- There is no substitute for hard work.

As always, I'm here if you have any questions.

Take care!

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