



BASICS **OF THE** BAR



INTRO TO **WEIGHTLIFTING**

YouFit
GYMS

Barbells aren't just for bodybuilders. Learn how they can help anyone build muscle, develop strength, and gain confidence in the gym—one rep at a time.

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If you want to get the most muscle-building bang for your buck, your best bet is to become best friends with a barbell. Sure, kettlebells and dumbbells are also great for making gains and improving your overall fitness, but nothing beats executing compound movements with a barbell.



From the squat to the bent-over row to the clean-and-jerk, there are countless movements you can perform on the newly installed Olympic weightlifting platforms at your local YouFit Gyms. However, before you dive into deadlifting or bench pressing, it's important to understand not only the science-backed benefits of strength training but also how to use the equipment safely.

Whether you've been too intimidated to touch a barbell or you simply want to refine your technique and expand your exercise repertoire, this guide will give you the tools to transform from a nervous novice to a confident conqueror of all your weightlifting goals.

BARBELL BASICS

INTRO TO WEIGHTLIFTING

Versatility is the name of the game when it comes to the barbell. This vital piece of gym equipment is used to perform a number of exercises, including squats, deadlifts, presses, rows, and hip-hinge variations. Master those movement patterns and you'll make significant progress in your physique and strength goals.

Of course, the key to maximizing the returns on your lifts is to utilize the proper technique. Incorrect form—especially when using heavier loads—can lead to injuries. So, if you're new to the strength training world, you should take the time to learn the mechanics of each lift from a certified personal trainer who can identify any issues and make adjustments.

Like any new endeavor, it requires patience and practice to become comfortable working with a barbell. You'll need to get used to moving a standard 45-pound Olympic bar before you add more weight. However, the ultimate goal is progressive overload—a concept that's critical for gaining muscle and building strength.





BENEFITS OF LIFTING WEIGHTS

Why make weightlifting part of your weekly gym routine?

It's simple: Carving out some time for resistance training is beneficial for both your mind and your body. From boosting your mood to adding inches to your biceps, here are some of the potential payoffs of working out with weights:

1. INCREASES LEAN MUSCLE

Barbells, kettlebells, dumbbells, and machines are all capable of helping you make gains. Lifting weights on a consistent basis and consuming adequate protein provides a pathway for developing lean muscle.

2. IMPROVES METABOLIC RATE

Lifting weights is also directly beneficial for boosting your metabolism. Lean muscle is a more metabolically active tissue than fat, which means it burns more calories when at rest.

In other words, the more muscle you have, the more you need to eat to keep your body fueled.

3. TEACHES DISCIPLINE

One of the non-physique-related benefits of lifting weights is the opportunity to develop self-discipline. It takes a careful, calculated approach, solid technique, and consistency to make progress on your lifts.

The further you go on your fitness journey, the better you'll get at not just the movements but also holding yourself accountable.

4. BUILDS STRENGTH

Besides improving your physique, lifting weights is also beneficial for gaining strength. As you adapt to particular loads, you can push the envelope by increasing the intensity.

Training with heavier weights will make everyday tasks that much easier. If you go hard in the gym and follow a progressive overload program, you'll quickly realize that carrying groceries or lifting a box off the floor isn't nearly as challenging as before.

5. LOWERS YOUR RISK OF INJURY

Although it may seem counterintuitive, lifting weights actually lowers your risk of injury. As long as you use the correct form, you can make improvements in strength, range of motion, mobility, and muscular imbalances.

Just how effective is strength training at setting your body up for long-term success? A 2014 study on youth athletes showed resistance training decreased not only the risk of injury but also the development of diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

6. SUPPORTS HEALTHY AGING

Lifting weights is certainly a stressor—but it's a beneficial one. Weight-bearing movements send signals to cells in your body to rebuild bones stronger.

That makes weightlifting especially important as you age. Rather than scaling back as you grow older, you should continue to make strength training a priority, as stronger bones reduce your risk of osteoporosis.



HOW TO USE

THE OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING PLATFORM AT YouFit^{GYMS}

Even if you still have some hesitations about lifting weights, you'll soon have the knowledge and confidence to crush upper, lower, and full-body workouts on the Olympic platform at your local YouFit.

Think of this area as a blank canvas where you can create a training session tailored to your goals. Want to build the strongest squat possible? A 5x5 protocol where you work with about 75% of your one-rep max is a great place to start. Interested in mastering Olympic lifts? Use the barbell and bumper plates to practice the movements at a safe, but stimulating level of difficulty.

Knowing where to begin is half the battle. I've broken down the most popular and useful lifts you can execute on the Olympic weightlifting platform. So, if you're looking to level up your workouts, incorporate at least a few of these exercises in your routine.



UPPER BODY

EXERCISES

OVERHEAD PRESS

Build round shoulders and well-developed upper back muscles with a staple exercise in any lifting program. Grip the barbell about shoulder-width apart, unrack it, and step back before planting your feet just wider than your shoulders.

Brace your core, then push the bar toward the ceiling until your elbows are locked out. Carefully lower the bar to chest level and repeat for the desired number of reps.

BENCH PRESS

One of the three main powerlifting movements, the bench press is a tried and true exercise that targets your chest, biceps, triceps, and shoulders. Besides keeping your feet planted, your core braced, and your back slightly arched, ensure your elbows are tucked at approximately 45 degrees.

After you unrack the barbell, slowly lower it until it touches your chest. Finish the movement by explosively pressing the bar back to the starting position, remembering to exhale at the top.

SNATCH

A technically advanced movement that involves the quadriceps, deltoids, traps, and glutes, the snatch is a staple in Olympic lifting and CrossFit. Start with your feet hip-width apart, grip the barbell with your hands just wider than shoulder-width. Then, squat down with your shoulders slightly in front of the bar.

With your core tight and your back straight, drive your legs into the ground as you pull the bar to hip level. Keep your arms relaxed as the force of the full extension drives the barbell upward. At the same time, quickly let your feet leave the ground before you plant them and drop into an overhead squat position.

Lock your arms overhead, stabilize the barbell, and rise back to a standing position before you carefully drop the barbell back onto the platform.

TRAINERS TIP

If you don't feel comfortable with a barbell just yet, the dumbbell snatch is a great alternative for those who want to work on their technique first.

CLEAN AND JERK

One of the two competition movements in Olympic weightlifting, the clean and jerk essentially combines a deadlift, a clean, and an overhead press into a single exercise. As perhaps the most technically demanding exercise you can perform with a barbell, it's important to focus on doing it correctly so you don't suffer an injury.

Start by standing in front of a barbell with your feet hip-width apart and slightly turned out. With the bar close to your shins, initiate the movement by performing a deadlift. As you pull the barbell to hip level, drive your hips forward and forcefully rotate your elbows underneath to get into a front squat position.

With the barbell sitting across your delts, rise to a front rack position. Then, dip your knees down a few inches to create momentum as you spring upward and drive the barbell overhead in a push-press motion. Lock your arms out and pause to stabilize the weight. When finished, carefully drop the barbell onto the platform.

SHRUGS

Barbell shrugs are terrific for building thick, dense traps. Start by adjusting the safety bars to the appropriate height (about mid-thigh), add your desired weight, and take a shoulder-width stance. Grab the barbell right outside your thighs, brace your core, and lift from the rack.

Actively engage your traps and upper-back muscles to pull the barbell vertically. Contract for 2-3 seconds at the top of the movement to put the muscles under tension. When you finish your set, simply lower the barbell to the rack, rest, and repeat.



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white sports bra and black leggings, is in a squat position with a barbell across her shoulders. She is looking forward with a focused expression. The background is a gym setting with various equipment.

LOWER BODY

EXERCISES

SQUAT

Although it's a #LegDay staple, squats involve much more than just your lower body. Performing the perfect squat requires you to properly brace your core, keep your chest upright, and your back engaged.

The standard squat should be done with your feet approximately shoulder-width apart. Unrack the barbell, take a few steps back, set your base, and slowly descend until you reach a 90-degree angle. Explode up and squeeze your glutes to complete a full-depth rep.

TRAINERS TIP

Switch things up with variations like box squats, front squats, and pause squats—all of which involve different techniques.

DEADLIFT

One of the three core powerlifting movements, the deadlift incorporates both lower- and upper-body strength. To perform the conventional deadlift, stand in front of a barbell with your feet midway under it, approximately hip-width apart.

Next, grab the barbell with a shoulder-width grip, bend your knees until your shins touch the bar, raise your chest, and straighten your lower back. Take a breath, brace your core, and simultaneously push your feet into the ground and pull the barbell vertically until you reach a locked-out position.

Carefully lower the barbell back to the floor and repeat the movement for the desired number of reps. Alternatively, you could perform the sumo deadlift, which involves placing your feet as wide apart as possible, pointing out your toes, and lifting with your hands inside rather than outside your legs.

LUNGE

Ideal for developing strong, toned hamstrings, quads, and glutes, the barbell lunge is a terrific exercise that can help you perform better on squats and deadlifts. Don't worry about going heavy; this is a supplemental movement that is best done with a medium load.

Begin by stepping underneath the barbell in a racked position. Rotate your shoulders outward to engage your lats and upper back, then un-rack the barbell and step back so you have room to lunge. With your feet slightly wider than hip-width and your shoulders directly over your hips, take a step forward and bend your hips, knees, and ankles until your back knee is approximately 1-2 inches from the ground.

Once both your legs reach a 90-degree angle, push your entire foot into the ground, and engage your glute and quad to push back into a standing position. Alternate legs for the desired number of reps before you step forward and rack the barbell between sets.



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