



FRANKENSTEIN FITNESS

MF's new strength-training columnist James Griffiths explains why you need to avoid mix-and-match training methods

This isn't going to be an article talking about how I think Frankenstein got massive. Instead, what we're going to look at is people creating mix-and-match exercise programmes by piecing together lots of different ideas. These different training and nutrition concepts come from different coaches, athletes and influencers, and unfortunately most of the time they simply don't work well together.

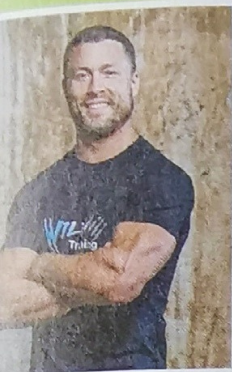
The 'best' training systems aren't always the best way for you to achieve the results you want. Those two things aren't necessarily the same, because a lot of the time people aren't ready for the most advanced training protocols. That's based on a lot of things, like fitness levels and how long someone has been exercising consistently for. Ask yourself, are you skipping a few training phases that have definitely come before the advanced training concepts for the writer or athlete you are reading about?

DIY PROGRAMMING

Here is my step-by-step guide to creating an effective system for yourself, without risking overtraining or imbalances

I always programme around three main focuses: Power, Endurance and Control. They can be further split up into stamina, hypertrophy, strength, power, speed, flexibility, skill, balance and coordination. Whatever your goal is, you need to focus your training on the relevant components, but my advice would be to have phases where you at least check in with all of the above to make sure you don't let your strengths get too far in front of your weaknesses. Big imbalances are a fast route to injuries, and injuries stop you training.

- Start with endurance (stamina and hypertrophy), as you get to hit light to moderate weights for a lot of reps. High reps mean you get more practice on your technique and the risk of injury is lower.



MEET THE EXPERT

A life with no limits is James Griffiths' creed. He has recorded the highest altitude workout ever, completed 1,000 24kg kettlebell snatches in under one hour, was Southern England's strongest man under 80kg in 2018, and (best of all) even graced the cover of this very magazine back in November 2020. His obsession isn't with his own fitness, though: everything he's done is about learning how to help others push past their limits. *Wild Training*, which he founded in 2015, is all about sharing the joy of health and fitness in unique ways that challenge traditional norms.



- After building up some skill and resilience you can move on to strength, which involves higher intensities and bigger weights. Just don't get stuck on strength, even though it's great for your ego.
- Hit some power by building more explosive training into your programmes. For most of my clients, the power-based training is where they actually feel and look their best.

Dipping your toe into a different style of training for a month will be good for your fitness, great for your motivation, and your body will thank you for the change of pace, which is good news for keeping your nervous and hormone systems happy.

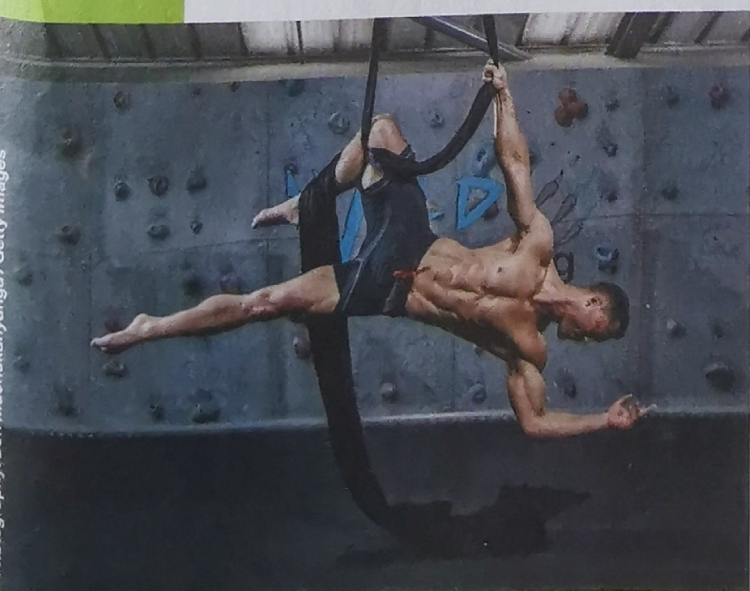
For that reason, I tend to be pretty

specific with my programming. So if I'm working on endurance, most of my workouts in that phase will be built around supporting that adaptation. I won't do a strength workout on Monday, endurance on Tuesday, and a flexibility session on Wednesday – your body will just get confused.

What are you trying to achieve: fat loss, muscle growth, increased strength, or better stamina? Your body can't do it all at the same time. So when I'm talking about changing up your training focus, it makes more sense to do it as phases of training, rather than trying to create a weekly workout routine that does everything. Give your body a clear stimulus to change the way you want it to change. Once you hit your targets, move on to the next phase.

If your focus is strength or muscle size, you might go from a phase of stamina training that might be as short as four to eight weeks, into a strength phase that could be 12-24 weeks. After that, have a few weeks working on control and then start over again with new targets. It's about understanding your body, when to push and when you need to ease off.

Read everything, but don't add it all into one programme. The less goals you prioritise, the faster you'll achieve your targets and the less time you will waste. **MF**



DOS & DON'TS OF CREATING YOUR OWN TRAINING PROGRAMME

DO

- ✓ Look at training systems that are new for you, but aren't necessarily the toughest or most advanced workouts.
- ✓ Programme in phases of training that cover all components of fitness.
- ✓ Work through the phases in order to give your body the best opportunity to progress safely.
- ✓ Vary the amount of time you spend in each training phase. Spend more time in the phases that relate to your primary goals.

✓ Focus on one goal in a phase. This is especially important as you get fitter, so your body isn't getting mixed signals around how you want it to change. Be specific and you will achieve your targets faster.

DON'T

- ✗ Mix and match programming concepts without getting some good coaching advice that can check they are relevant to your goals and level of fitness.
- ✗ Compare your training to others. They aren't the same as you, might not have the same goals as you, and won't have the same background experience as you.
- ✗ Get stuck on strength training, even though it's great for your ego. Exploring power, speed and even the lower-level stamina and hypertrophy programmes will keep your training interesting and help you see sustainable results.
- ✗ Disregard training programmes you haven't done before. Try them before you potentially miss out on some easy gains that will transfer to your primary training goals.