

# GYMGAFFES;

## Avoiding Mistakes May Help You Stick With The Program

By LAURIE LUCAS

### Sign up, work out, drop out.

That's the destiny of millions of disenchanted or injured folks who will quit the gym they joined this year.

The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association estimates that 10 million Americans will join a health club this year - but more than a third of them will junk the gym by next December.

Burnout, boredom and bungled workouts are the main culprits, said Ray Anderson, a personal trainer in Murrieta.

Hefting too much weight to showboat and copying poor techniques are among the key abuses. And who are the chief offenders?

"Men are much worse than women," said Anderson, who owns a private studio, Elite Fitness. "Women are cautious. They want to do things right. But testosterone and ego are a bad combination."

Other common boo-boos are cranking up the treadmill's incline, running too fast and hanging on for dear life; using equipment without adjusting the seat height or weights that were set for the previous person; making rapid, jerky movements on machines.

"People don't warm up enough," said Frank Saucedo, a personal trainer in Riverside. "They have no program. They see a machine that looks good,

but they don't know what to do. They use it and get injured. I've helped carry people out of the gym."

### HELPFUL WEB SITES

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE  
[www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org)

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SPORTS MEDICINE  
[www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org)

IDEA HEALTH AND FITNESS ASSOCIATION  
[www.ideafit.com](http://www.ideafit.com)

### 1. GO-FOR-BROKE APPROACH - ALL OR NOTHING.

Lacking a full hour to exercise is no reason to skip your workout. Research shows that even 10 minutes can provide health benefits. "The biggest mistake is more is better," said Bruno Bianchi, a certified personal trainer in Redlands. "People think if one hour is good, two is better. Giving your body time to rest and recover is important."

### 2. UNBALANCED STRENGTH-TRAINING PROGRAMS.

Most people focus on certain muscles, such as the abdominals or biceps. To achieve a strong, toned body, learn to work all the major muscle groups. Bianchi said many women erroneously believe that lifting weights will bulk them up.

“Doing it the right way with the right weights benefits the entire body.”

**3. BAD FORM.** The surest way to get injured in a gym is to use improper techniques or posture. Don't offload weight by gripping treadmill rails as you run. Don't slump over the stair stepper's console as your feet skim the too-fast moving pedals. Don't use your neck and back muscles while doing sit-ups. Keep your back stable in every exercise or you'll wind up in a brace. Banging weights together at warp speed is wrong and stupid showboating.

**4. OVERTRAINING.** Many fitness fanatics exercise too much, too hard or too often.

**5. LACK OF VARIETY.** Unchanging workouts can lead to boredom, plateaus, injury or burnout.

**6. NOT ADJUSTING MACHINES.** Most exercise equipment is designed to accommodate a wide range of body types and sizes. One size doesn't fit all; reconfigure the settings to your strength and proportions.

**7. FOCUSING ON ANYTHING BUT YOUR WORKOUT.** Cut down on chatter, stay “mindful.

“ Reading or watching TV can adversely affect the quality of your workout because distractions can slow you down.

**8. NOT PROPERLY COOLING DOWN AFTER WORKING OUT.**

Take a few minutes to lower your heart rate and stretch your muscles to improve flexibility and prepare your body for the next workout.

**9. POOR GYM ETIQUETTE.** Hogging machines, chatting on cell phones and leaving unracked weights is rude. And failing to wipe your sweat off equipment is disgusting.

**10. LACK OF PLANNING.** Unrealistic and vague goals are among the leading causes of exercise dropout. Establish a timetable that is specific and appropriate for your fitness level: challenging but doable. “The key to adopting a regimen is a readiness to change your behavior of your own volition,” said Fabio Comana, an exercise physiologist in San Diego and member of the American Council on Exercise's board. “If you're merely thinking about working out, you're probably not ready yet.”