

# **THE 5 BIGGEST MISTAKES BEGINNERS MAKE**

(And How to Avoid Them)

By CJ Critney

13+ Years of Elite Personal Training

*A proven roadmap from training 500+ clients to real, sustainable results*

## Introduction

After 13+ years of training hundreds of clients, I've seen the same mistakes over and over again. These aren't small issues—they're the difference between getting results in 12 weeks versus spinning your wheels for 12 months.

The good news? Every single one of these mistakes is fixable. And once you fix them, everything gets easier.

This guide will show you exactly what's holding you back—and more importantly, what to do about it.

Let's get started.

# 1 Not Eating Enough Protein

## **The Mistake:**

Most beginners think working out is 90% of the equation. So they train hard, feel sore, and expect results. Then nothing happens. Why? Because they're eating like a bird.

If you're not eating enough protein, your body can't build muscle. Period. You'll work out, break down muscle tissue, and then fail to rebuild it because you didn't give your body the raw materials it needs.

## **Why It Happens:**

- You don't track your food, so you have no idea how much protein you're actually eating
- You think protein is just for bodybuilders
- You fill up on carbs and fats instead

## **The Fix:**

- **Aim for 0.8-1g of protein per pound of bodyweight**
- **If you weigh 180 lbs, that's 144-180g of protein per day**
- **Track your food for one week to see where you actually stand**
- **Prioritize protein at every meal: eggs, chicken, fish, Greek yogurt, protein shakes**

**Bottom Line:** Protein is non-negotiable. If you fix nothing else, fix this.

# Program <sup>2</sup>Hopping

## **The Mistake:**

You start a program. Two weeks in, you see someone on Instagram doing something different. You think, 'Maybe that's the secret.' So you switch. Then you switch again. And again.

Here's the truth: Every program works. But no program works if you don't stick with it long enough to see results.

## **Why It Happens:**

- You expect results in 2 weeks (real results take 8-12 weeks)
- You see other people's highlight reels on social media
- You get bored and think variety = progress

## **The Fix:**

- **Pick ONE program and commit to it for at least 12 weeks**
- **Focus on progressive overload: add weight or reps every week**
- **Track your workouts so you can see your progress**
- **Understand that consistency > variety**

**Bottom Line:** The best program is the one you actually stick with.

# 3 Skipping Recovery

## **The Mistake:**

You think more is better. So you train 6-7 days a week. You never take rest days. You push through soreness, fatigue, and joint pain because 'no pain, no gain,' right?

Wrong. Your muscles don't grow in the gym. They grow when you rest. If you're constantly breaking them down without giving them time to rebuild, you're just spinning your wheels.

## **Why It Happens:**

- You confuse activity with progress
- You feel guilty taking rest days
- You don't understand that rest is when adaptation happens

## **The Fix:**

- **Train 3-4 days per week for strength, with full rest days in between**
- **Sleep 7-9 hours per night (this is where muscle actually builds)**
- **Take a deload week every 8-12 weeks (reduce volume by 50%)**
- **Listen to your body: if you're constantly sore and tired, you need more rest**

**Bottom Line:** Rest is not laziness. It's strategy.

# 4 Ego Lifting

## **The Mistake:**

You load up the bar with more weight than you can handle. Your form breaks down. Your back rounds. You use momentum to swing the weight up. And you convince yourself it's working because the number on the bar is big.

But here's the reality: Bad form doesn't just prevent results—it causes injuries. And injuries set you back months.

## **Why It Happens:**

- You care more about the weight than the quality of the rep
- You compare yourself to others in the gym
- You think lifting heavy = progress (it doesn't if your form is trash)

## **The Fix:**

- **Master form with lighter weight first**
- **If you can't do 8-10 reps with perfect form, the weight is too heavy**
- **Film yourself lifting to check your technique**
- **Hire a trainer for at least a few sessions to learn proper mechanics**

**Bottom Line:** Perfect form with lighter weight beats sloppy form with heavy weight every time.

# 5 Expecting Linear Progress

## **The Mistake:**

You start training and see amazing results in the first 4-6 weeks. Then progress slows down. You get frustrated. You think something's wrong. So you quit.

But that's exactly when the real work begins. The first few weeks are newbie gains—easy wins. After that, progress becomes slower and harder. That's normal.

## **Why It Happens:**

- You expect every week to be better than the last
- You don't understand that progress is not linear—it's wavy
- You compare Week 12 to Week 2 instead of Week 12 to Week 1

## **The Fix:**

- **Accept that progress will slow down after the first month—that's normal**
- **Track long-term trends (compare Month 3 to Month 1, not Week 12 to Week 11)**
- **Celebrate small wins: adding 5 lbs to your squat, doing 1 more rep, feeling stronger**
- **Stay consistent even when progress feels slow**

**Bottom Line:** Progress is never linear. Stay patient. Stay consistent.

## Final Thoughts

These 5 mistakes are exactly what I see with 90% of beginners. And the frustrating part? They're all completely preventable.

If you're making any of these mistakes right now, don't beat yourself up. Just fix them. That's all it takes.

Start with protein. Stick with one program. Prioritize rest. Master form. Be patient.

Do that, and you'll see more progress in the next 12 weeks than most people see in 12 months.

## Ready to Start?

If you want a personalized plan designed specifically for your body, goals, and lifestyle—reach out.

### **FYTS Fitness**

■ (805) 907-1112

■ [fytsfitness@gmail.com](mailto:fytsfitness@gmail.com)

■ [fytslifestyle.com](https://fytslifestyle.com)

■ 31360 Via Colinas, Ste 103, Westlake Village, CA 91362

*Let's elevate your fitness. Let's elevate your life.*