



THE OX PROTOCOL

14 Lessons From 14 Years of Training

Phil Tyreman

Important, Please Read

All physical activity carries an element of risk, as do modifications to your diet and/or lifestyle. Therefore, you should always consult your doctor or another appropriately qualified medical professional before embarking on any exercise programme or modifying your diet and/or lifestyle in any way.

Furthermore, the information contained within this document is for educational guidance only. I accept no liability whatsoever for any reliance placed upon this material (or any of the material I publish in my marketing materials for that matter) as you are not my client and no contract exists between us.

Always seek advice from an appropriately qualified professional before taking action.

Thank you,

Phil Tyreman

Director

C M Tyreman Ltd.

14 lessons from 14 years of training

This morning, it occurred to me that I'm about to enter my fifteenth year of training.

Now, when I say "fifteen years of training", I mean fifteen years of uninterrupted, diligent hard work.

The longest break I've ever taken was two weeks after I had surgery on my eyes. I didn't want to take the time off, but the surgeon insisted. Actually, he said I might go blind if I went back to the gym too soon. So, with some reluctance, I acquiesced to his demands.

Anyway, I've picked up plenty of nuggets in my time under the bar. And, today, to celebrate the end of my fourteenth year of training, I'm going to share fourteen of the shiniest nuggets with you.

Onward:

Lesson One

90% of success is just showing up

Listen: I have the athletic potential of a slug. This is because I was very, very, very fat when I started and played no sports of note whatsoever growing up.

Progress has been slow. Painful. Oftentimes non-existent.

And yet, I've managed to build a body that's stronger and looks better than 99% of guys my age and probably 80% of men who ever so much as set foot in the gym... without ever touching a performance enhancing substance of any kind.

My "secret"?

Just showing up.

Did you know you start losing appreciable amounts of muscle after taking just 3 weeks off the gym?

This is why most men don't make progress. It has nothing to do with their programme and everything to do with the fact they keep taking extended breaks.

Lesson Two

Cardio. Cardio. Cardio.

Here's my confession: I am very lazy.

Little wonder considering I used to be very, very, very fat.

It's this laziness that attracted me to lifting weights in the first place. I saw it as a way to get into shape where I could eat loads of food and spend a significant proportion of my workouts sitting on my backside.

Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!

Look, whilst it's technically possible to get a lean physique without cardio, it's so difficult it might as well be impossible. Unless, of course,

you're stupid enough to take performance enhancing substances. (More on that momentarily).

This, I believe, is why most guys who lift 3, 4, 5, or as much as 6 times per week are fat.

Yes, they lift hard and heavy... but without *cardio* the lean look they all secretly want will forever elude them.

Lesson Three

People who take performance enhancing substances are stupid

This will upset some people.

Taking performance enhancing substances is dumb.

For starters, they can kill you. And if they don't kill you? Well, you get the chance to "enjoy" all sorts of nasty side effects including but not limited to infertility, gynecomastia, and cancer.

And for what?

Bigger lifts and muscles - that most don't even get because they don't know how to train.

It's true. In my experience, most people who take gear in your local gym don't look like they take gear. Typically, acne and oily skin are the only signs they're on something.

Lesson Four

A minority of lifts are responsible for the majority of your progress

I touched on this last week in my email about the Pareto Principle, but here's a quick recap.

The Pareto Principle states that a few of your inputs deliver most your outputs.

In training, this means most of your progress comes from a few core lifts. Namely, the barbell squat, bench press, deadlift, overhead press, and their variations.

Why?

You need to be strong if you want to look good, because strength is required for size, and size is required to look good when you strip the fat off.

The core barbell lifts are the most reliable and predictable way of developing strength in healthy populations. Ergo, provided you can perform them safely, they ought to be the focus of your training *irrespective* of your goal.

Sure, details differ but the lifts themselves are always there in some way, shape, or form.

Lesson Five

If you want to avoid injury... *ditch the belt*

What's this? Have I lost my mind?

Perhaps. One thing is for certain - nobody could ever justifiably accuse me of being *sane*.

Regardless, on this, I am of clear and sound mind.

I shall explain: Weightlifting belts are not designed to protect your back. They are designed to help you lift more weight.

Yet, most people wear them in the mistaken belief they're for the former. This is dangerous. All they're doing is masking their weak backs... and... enabling themselves to lift weights they're not ready for.

The inevitable consequence?

Pain, injury, and misery.

Let me tell you a story: For years, I struggled with excruciating back pain. Partly caused by my job (I was an ambulance paramedic at the time), and partly by my improper use of a lifting belt.

My back was very weak and my squat form substandard. However, the weightlifting belt enabled me to squat in excess of 180kg for reps. This satisfied my ego but left me with chronic debilitating pain. And, had I continued on this path, I would have probably ended up addicted to painkillers.

So, I got rid of my belt. This wasn't a conscious decision. One day, my belt just broke and I couldn't be bothered to replace it.

My laziness meant I had to...

- 1) Take a lot of weight off the bar. And,
- 2) Learn how to squat, deadlift, and overhead press properly. I.e. without using a weightlifting belt as a crutch.

I kid you not, within nary a month my back pain was gone.

Yeah, my lifts went down a fair bit. but, if you stop and think about it, I hadn't lost anything because I was only lifting as heavy as I was because of the belt. I had no right to lift those weights. I was a pretender. A fraud.

And anyway, it didn't take too long for me to reach and then surpass my previous "belted" personal bests. Only this time without any pain whatsoever.

Lesson Six

Be patient, but not too patient

Achieving any training goal takes time. At least, they do if they're worthwhile training goals.

That said, it's very tempting to use this little truism as an excuse to be lazy.

Let's use weight loss as an example.

Say you want to lose 24lbs. That's nearly two stone. A substantial amount of weight and a worthy goal by any rational estimation.

And *because* it's a substantial goal, a lot of guys give themselves too much time to accomplish it.

They might say something like, *"Oh, my goal this year is to lose 24lbs."*

And then...

... they never ever achieve their goal.

Why?

The huge timeframe they've given themselves means there's no urgency. No focus.

So, they dither and meander about, never training as hard as they need to because the "deadline" is so far away in the future.

What they should have done is set a tight yet realistic timeframe. Like, say, 12 weeks. Here, to achieve their goal they'd need to lose 2lbs per week. Difficult, yes. But eminently possible with diligent, disciplined training, eating, and living.

Best of all, the tight timeframe forces you to take decisive action towards your goals. And this, my friend, is the real key to success.

Lesson Seven

Counting calories is pointless... and... quite possibly dangerous

Listen up: If you are interested in losing weight do not start counting calories.

Here is why: The only way to do it with any degree of accuracy is to weigh everything you eat.

It matters not whether it's a main meal or a tiny morsel, measured, recorded, and tracked.

Please don't kid yourself into thinking you can do this. You can't. I can't. Nobody can. It's impossible.

This means all you end up doing is the total number of calories - rendering the entire activity a waste of time.

So, you can plainly see why calorie counting is pointless. But dangerous? Yes.

I swear, I am not exaggerating here. I believe counting calories is the fastest and surest way to develop a frightfully unhealthy relationship with food.

You will become obsessed. What's more, eventually you will find yourself in a situation where you cannot track your calories. Like, for example, when you are on holiday. When this happens, the chances are you will find this inability to monitor your food intake distressing.

Not good. Not good at all. Although, I suppose you could argue that this isn't "dangerous" per se.

Fine.

But I'll tell you something that is dangerous whatever way you look at it.

One thing I've seen time and time and time and time and time again in people who count calories is, they start substituting healthy foods like fruit, vegetables, unprocessed meats, and so forth, for unhealthy foods like cakes, biscuits, crisps, etc. because, "the calories are the same".

The bottom line is, if you want to be lean *and* healthy... and... if you're interested in living a long life then you damn well should... you need to how to eat.

This means investing time and effort in learning which foods to eat and why you ought to eat them. How to manage your cravings. How to control your portion sizes. How to make the right choices despite all the pressures of life... you get the idea.

It is the only way to get *and stay* in shape.

No ifs, but, whys, maybes, or wherefores. The end.

Lesson Eight

You're (probably) not doing enough bodyweight work

Push ups, pull ups, dips, crunches, etc. ought to be a firm fixture in your training.

Here is why: People who struggle with bodyweight work are fat or weak.

You can say this is harsh, but you cannot say it is untrue.

Someone who can deadlift 200kg but can't do a set of 10 pull ups is *fat*. A thin man who can't do a set of thirty push ups is *weak*.

Cope and seethe all you like, but this does not change the facts.

Bodyweight work keeps you honest. Perhaps that's why you don't see many people doing it?

Who knows.

But what I do know is, recently, I was doing some situps in the gym. Proper, old-fashioned situps on the floor with my feet tucked under a bench. A guy I know came up to me with a confused look on his face and asked why I was doing traditional situps instead of using some fancy ab machine.

He genuinely didn't understand why I'd opt for a basic bodyweight movement over a "modern" alternative.

I said to him what I just said to you: *Bodyweight movements keep you honest*. So just do them, OK?

Lesson Nine

Social media is poison

Ironic, considering it's overwhelmingly likely you stumbled across me via one of my social media adverts.

But, do a little digging, and you'll see I have I've no real presence on social media. This is for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, because I prefer to work with a small number of intelligent, driven, and dedicated individuals. People who want to do something rather than be something. Additionally, they almost always place a high value on their privacy. Hence, mainstream social media platforms are unattractive to them, so investing a lot of time in "building a following" is a waste.

Secondly, because it's a cesspit.

Idiots who are *obviously* juiced up to their eyeballs - yet claim they're "natural"... dim-witted influencers pushing flavour of the month training protocols to make a quick buck... keyboard warriors who know everything yet achieve nothing...

Honestly, ditching social media was one of the best decisions I've ever made. Silencing the noise not only made it easier for me to train efficiently and effectively... but it also enriched my whole entire life.

Look, I know deleting your social media accounts is a big step. You probably don't want to and I understand that.

But do me a favour and just think about it, OK?

Lesson Ten

It takes just 6 months to change your life

The body is a forgiving thing.

You can abuse it *for years*, yet you can undo much of the damage in a matter of months.

Obviously, there are limits - which is why you should never let things get *so bad* you reach the "tipping point" from whence you will never return - but, regardless, your body can take a lot of punishment.

Truth: You can transform your physique *and* your whole entire life to an utterly profound degree in just 6 short months.

However, just because something is possible doesn't mean you can do it.

Why?

Everything you want sits on the other side of a *Pathway of Pure Pain*.

On this pathway sit a number of obstacles. The nature of these obstacles is determined by your past choices. The more bad decisions you've made around training, food, and so on, the more imposing and complex the obstacles will be.

Yet, no matter how challenging they seem... how scary they look... these obstacles can be overcome. It's simply a question of whether you're prepared to put yourself through the pain.

Now, when I say "pain" I'm not really talking about physical discomfort. For sure, there'll be some but it's mostly *psychological*.

Accepting you have a big problem.

Forgoing the pleasures of junk food.

Sacrificing your free time to go train.

And so on.

Most aren't willing. They take one look at the Pathway of Pure Pain and decide they prefer cheap dopamine now to achieving their goals later.

Others give it a go. They defeat one obstacle, then another, and maybe even a third... but then it all gets too much and they quit.

Shame.

A tiny minority make it all the way through to the end. They tough it out for 6 months and reap the rewards. Their journey is not complete - not by a long shot - but they're one hell of a lot further along than they were at the start. Moreover, they've laid the foundations they need to make the next 6 months... and the next... and the next far less painful.

Have you got what it takes to navigate the Pathway of Pain?

Only you know the answer.

All I'll say is if you believe it's impossible - you're right. And, if you believe it *is* possible then... you are also right.

Lesson Eleven

Lose fat first

What I'm about to say may make you uncomfortable. If you're especially fragile, it may even make you angry.

Here it is: Most men who go to the gym are fat.

Moreover, "most men" *includes* guys who train hard and consistently.

Why is this?

Simple. They have their priorities dead wrong.

Look, if your BMI says you're overweight or obese it's almost certainly not because you're carrying "a lot of muscle" *unless* you're a steroid-taking halfwit.

Your BMI is deranged because you are fat.

A fact that is self-evident when you take an *honest* look in the mirror.

The uncomfortable truth is, a lot of guys get into lifting weights because they think it gives them a licence to be a glutton. After all, you gotta eat big if you wanna get big, right?

Wrong.

Oh, for sure there are *some* people who need to eat food by the truckload. However, 19-year-olds who walk everywhere, work manual jobs, and play a tonne of sport outside the gym are not representative of the "average" gym-goer.

My point is, the chances are, right now, today, you don't need more muscle or strength.

You need to lose fat.

Believe me, I know. I've been that fat guy who thinks he needs to get bigger and stronger... and trains and eats accordingly.

And you know where it led me?

Illness, injury, and shame.

Listen: I trained my backside off, but I *hated* the way I looked, was forever nursing injuries, and suffered from all sorts of maladies.

Frankly, I felt a little seen off. But plough on I did until, one day, I realised that the root cause of *all* my problems was that I was fat.

So I did the difficult thing and started training and eating to get in shape... and... funnily enough... the problems I just described vanished once I re-gained human form.

Bottom line: If you are overweight or obese, get your weight under control first. *Then* look at building muscle and strength.

Your body will thank you.

Lesson Twelve

Take regular planned breaks from training

Taking breaks from training is a *Very Good Idea™*.

So far, so obvious. However, where a lot of people go wrong here is that they leave it 'til they're *forced* to take a break through burnout and/or injury.

You know, it's funny. As I write this, I'm taking one of those "forced" breaks from the gym because I was stupid and skipped my planned rest week because I felt I didn't need it at the time.

Instead, I went straight into another training cycle. Consequently, my performance tanked, I picked up a few niggles, and last week it culminated in a migraine/viral illness combo that's put me out of action.

If only I'd taken my own advice.

Whatever. Nobody's perfect.

Anyway, what I'm saying is, training until you drop is unwise.

This means what you ought to do is plan your breaks in advance.

Typically, I schedule a week off all gym and hard conditioning work every eight, ten, or twelve weeks. The exact interval is determined by the specific training programme I'm running. I.e. I take a full rest week when I complete a training programme. (Note: I do not take a week off from walking every day without fail for at least 30 minutes because walking isn't training - it's a basic human function).

I also take the last two weeks of January off of training, mainly to avoid the inevitable rush of New Year's resolutioners.

Lesson Thirteen

Eliminate needless complexity

Consider: Do you *really* need to keep track of the weights you use for dumbbell flies?

Similarly, does it *really* matter if one week you decide to swap those dumbbell flies for cable crossovers?

No. It does not.

Honestly, in almost every circumstance you only *need* to track your progress on your "main" lifts. If you are following a sensible training programme, these will be variations of the squat, deadlift, bench press, and overhead press.

Why?

Your main lifts build strength.

Everything else builds muscle.

With the former, you work the movement. With the latter, you work the muscle.

Essentially, you want to get as strong as possible on your main lifts. To do this efficiently, effectively, and safely, you need precise programming. Hence, you ought to track them carefully and, ideally, use a percentage-based system to determine your weights in advance.

By contrast, with "everything else" (henceforth referred to as "assistance work"), you want to flush the target muscle full of blood. Or, get a pump - to use bodybuilding parlance. The reasons for this are manifold, wonderful, and way beyond the scope of this email. But, in practical terms, this means your focus ought to be on *total volume* and *quality of movement* above everything else.

So, with assistance work, you're better off picking a total rep goal to achieve using whatever combination of exercise, sets, and reps you desire than you are wasting time waiting for a machine to be free.

For example, these days, in my programmes I carefully programme the main lift. But, for the assistance work, I just write "Back, 100 reps", "Biceps, 50 reps", or whatever. Then, I go hit the rep count using a combination of exercises, sets, and reps based on how I feel and what's available.

So, if I'm feeling gash, I'll do something like 3 sets of 25 reps of cable rows and 1 set of 25 reps of shrugs for my 100 reps of back. Whereas, if I'm full of the joys of spring, I'll maybe do 5 sets of 10 barbell rows with a moderately tough weight, 3 sets of 10 pull-ups, and a set of 20 face pulls to finish.

The real strength of this approach is the flexibility. Frankly, it's a game-changer. Never again will you have to stand around waiting for equipment to become free. Likewise, it gives you options for when you're having a less than stellar day, but still want to train.

You're welcome.

Lesson Fourteen

Train alone

I believe anyone who is serious about getting results ought to train alone. Why?

3 reasons.

- 1) You do what you need to do, not what your mates want to do.
- 2) Your workouts become more efficient and effective because there's no temptation to mill about chatting for ages between sets.
- 3) You have to rely on intrinsic discipline rather than extrinsic motivation.

I'm not saying you must train alone all the time, forever if that's not what you want. (Although, experience tells me once you start training alone, you won't want to stop). Nor am I telling you to become some sort of weirdo-hermit who doesn't talk to anyone at the gym.

However, I am saying learning how to train alone is essential for getting the best possible results from your hard work.

Yes, ask people for a spot if you need one. Yes, exchange chit-chat with people. But do the meat-and-potatoes of your workouts alone.

Bonus Lesson One

Leave the gym feeling better than you did when you walked in

Listen up: Smashing yourself in the gym isn't hardcore.

It's stupid.

All it does is dramatically increase your risk of burnout and/or serious injury, for very little (and often zero) benefit.

Instead, you're much better off taking a more measured approach to training.

To be clear - when I say "measured", I don't mean "easy". It's training. It's supposed to be challenging. However, it should never be so challenging it wipes you out.

Look at it this way. If you train to the point you're utterly destroyed you'll *maybe* burn an extra couple hundred calories, and *maybe* stimulate a

little extra strength and muscle gain. However, if you live in the Real World it's impossible to maintain this intensity in your training. Perhaps you'll manage it for a few weeks, maybe a month and a half, but soon you will burn out or do yourself a mischief and need to back off or stop training entirely for an extended period to recover.

On the other hand, if you train *less hard* you will be able to chain together solid workouts for month after month, year after year while taking short *planned* breaks.

Think: Who is going to make more progress?

The guy who smashes his face into the wall for four to eight weeks with "hardcore" workouts, injures himself, and takes a load of time off.. or... the guy who trains sensibly and consistently in blocks of eight to sixteen weeks, with programmed rest weeks in between?

The answer is obvious, and yet so few men train the smart way because their minds have been corrupted by the pernicious influence of social media and the braindead juiceheads who reside therein.

Fact is, training for *sustainable* results isn't glamorous.

It's simple and repetitive - much like a job. That said, if you can accept the mundanity, and stop gauging how successful your training is by how it makes you feel, getting those sustainable results is pretty much a foregone conclusion.

Bonus Lesson Two

If in doubt... do something

You want to know something cool?

You already know how to get the results you want from your training.

The physique... the strength... the athletic performance... whatever.

OK, I suppose you might be a little hazy on some of the finer points, but I'll bet the half-eaten apple on my desk you've got the big stuff covered. Actually, I'm yet to meet anyone who doesn't have a respectable command of the basics. They might be fat, they might be out of shape... but this is not due to a lack of knowledge.

What I'm saying is, if you're in any way frustrated that you can't hit your fitness goals, your problem is not a lack of information. It's a lack of implementation.

In other words, you're not doing the things you *know* full well you need to do for some reason.

You know, the other day someone asked me why I give away all my "best information" for free in one of my books, in my emails, and on my website.

The answer is I do it because the value I provide isn't in my information. That's not to say my information isn't *valuable*. It is. Hell, it's *life-changing* when properly applied.

And therein lies the catch: *When properly applied*.

I know for a fact that most people read my information and do nothing with it whatsoever. I also know for a fact these same people read other people's information and do nothing with it whatsoever.

Why?

Loads of reasons - but no matter the reason, there is a common cause...

... *they have an implementation problem.*

My point is, you're probably much better off doing something than you are reading *yet another* article or watching *yet another* video.

And if, despite "doing something" you're still stuck...

... you can book a consultation in my diary using the below link:

www.philtyreman.co.uk/consult

Thank you,

Phil Tyreman

