

# WEIGHT TRAINING

**FOR THE  
MARTIAL  
ARTIST**



**GEOFF  
THOMPSON**

**SUMMERSDALE**

# About the author

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He has published articles for *GQ* magazine, and has also been featured in *FHM*, *Maxim*, *Arena*, *Front* and *Loaded* magazines, and has appeared many times on mainstream television.

Geoff is currently a contributing editor for *Men's Fitness* magazine.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

**BY DAVE TURTON**

***SENIOR NABA COACH***

Dave has been a NABA (National Amateur Bodybuilding Association) life member since 1964, an area judge since 1974 and the official stage manager for the Mr Universe, Mr Britain, Mr Scotland and Mr North-West Britain bodybuilding championships. He is a senior instructor in weight training for NABA and has trained with former Mr Britains and a former Mr Universe. Dave Turton is also a 5th Dan black belt in Goshin Kai ju-jitsu.

Before Geoff goes into listing the best exercises and routines for the use of weight training for the martial artist, it is advisable to explain more of what weight training is, and, more to the point, what it should be.

There is a long history of the multitude of different systems of personal combat, full of examples of the use of progressive resistance exercises to improve an individual's own abilities. Therefore it would be superfluous to list the history of 'weight

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training' in the combat arts, and more beneficial to try to understand how best to use it both for you and your art.

Firstly, weight training is to be viewed in the same context as running or stretching. That is as a supplementary aid to the combat skills, not as a replacement for them. Weight training is used to improve the strength of a weaker trainee and to give work to the muscles pertaining to your art. After all, if you had been a bodybuilder and power-lifter to competition standards since your sixteenth birthday, and now at 26 years old, six-foot tall and fifteen stone and are just starting karate, your power development wouldn't be a worry.

### **What weight training is not:**

In the early days when sportsmen and athletes were trying out the weights in order to become better at their chosen event, a few mistakes were made. Most sportsmen with no knowledge of how to train with the weights turned to the weight-lifting and bodybuilding fraternity for help and advice. Unfortunately very few knew how to use the weights to improve other athletes' performances. Weight-lifting, bodybuilding and power-lifting are separate athletic sciences which happen to use the same tools, but in totally different

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ways (not everyone in a tracksuit and trainers is a sprinter, a miler or a decathlete). After all, would you ask a soccer coach to train a rugby team simply because both sports use a field, a ball and two teams?

So, the well-meaning bodybuilders put the other sportsmen on bodybuilding routines, and the hoped for results didn't materialise.

Bodybuilding is about developing the many muscle groups so that, along with a loss of fat, the shape, balance and development are at the optimum levels. It is important to a competitive bodybuilder to ensure correct and balanced development of all muscles and muscle groups. Intercostals, serratus and brachialis need work but a karataka shouldn't be too concerned about minor muscles, more about improved functions.

So, weight training isn't bodybuilding, nor power-lifting nor weight-lifting.

### **What is weight training?**

Weight training is the use of progressive resistance training to improve the power output, function and strength of an athlete. It strengthens weaker muscle groups, and aids in using the increase in strength and power to improve your sport. Seen in this way we can now look more at how useful weight training can be.

There are two further divisions and subdivisions in the understanding of this subject. Firstly, the art that you are in, secondly, your personal needs. Taken in context, the needs of judo, karate, kendo, tai-chi, sumo, kyudo and wing-chun, are all different; likewise, the needs of a 16-year-old girl in aikido will naturally differ from those of a 26-year-old, sixteen-stone judo international.

People differ, so their needs for weight training also vary. Arts differ; punching and kicking arts have different needs to the pulling, lifting and throwing arts. Admittedly, these are generalisations, but they are quite valid.

So now we can look at the exercises and the ways that we can use them to improve our chosen arts.

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For the purposes of martial arts improvement, we will first look at the muscle groups most used, the 'best' exercises, sets and reps (repetitions), and some exercises that you shouldn't use.

There will be two basic routines, one more useful for the punching and kicking arts, such as karate, tae-kwondo and Chinese 'hard' systems; the other for the holding and throwing systems like aikido, judo, some of the ju-jitsu systems and wrestling.

### **Two further pieces of advice:**

1) As your other training (running, stretching, etc.) will work the endurance factors of your overall fitness, then weights should be used for fairly low repetitions (in the 6-12 range) to balance out the fast and slow twitch fibres.

2) All the body should be worked; there should be no weaknesses. Having said that, extra emphasis should be placed on the muscle groups that are most used in your art.

As far as the type of training goes, I have preferences for the use of weights. I shall list my do's and don'ts, with appropriate

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explanatory comments when needed (don't worry, we'll get to the nitty-gritty eventually – but the more that you know about and understand a subject, the better for you).

Firstly, forget the many machines: basic bar-bells and dumb-bells, bench and squat racks are enough. Many machines make your muscles work in fixed 'grooves'; with free weights, you find the balance and adjust with secondary muscles.

Secondly, where feasible, use dumb-bells in preference to bar-bells. The reasoning here is that a bar 'fixes' the hands in a set position (which never occurs in a combat situation), and also a balanced bar doesn't allow for that little extra work and coordination for the weaker side.

Thirdly, train muscle groups and not just individual muscles. Nowhere in a combat scenario would *any* muscle work totally independent to others. For example, seated concentration dumb-bell curls are great for the bodybuilder who desires that extra 'peak' on his biceps, but it is of no use to a judoka trying to lift a sixteen-stone opponent.

Enough said, enjoy the book, learn from it, and make weight training an integral part of your martial arts' training.

