

The 4 ABSOLUTES of Strength Training

By Tyrone T. Irby, The Choice Performance Center

If you ask 10 gym goers the absolutes of their strength training, you will likely receive 10 different responses. From professional strength coaches to personal trainers to your next- door neighbor, everyone has an opinion on the best exercises, the best program, the best gym, and of course the best trainer.

At Choice Performance, we, of course have our own set of 4 ABSOLUTES.

Our 4 absolutes are designed to prepare a progressive training program to enhance athletic movement regarding stability, strength, and speed while reducing the risk of injury. Here are our 4 absolutes of strength training.

Train in All Planes of Motion

Your body does not move in one plane of motion, but three separate planes. All training program designs should reflect that. Sagittal, Frontal, and Transverse are the three planes of motion for human movement. Sagittal movements involve flexion, extension, dorsiflexion, and plantar flexion (i.e. squats, deadlifts, forward walking lunges, and split squats). The frontal plane involves adduction (moving towards the midline of the body), abduction (moving away from the midline of the body), elevation (moving to a superior position), and depression (moving to an inferior position). Examples of movements in the frontal plane are lateral lunges and dumbbell lateral raises). The third plane of motion, the transverse plane, involves rotation, pronation, and supination. An example of a transverse movement is a horizontal medicine ball wood chop.

The simplest reasons to train in all planes of motion is to increase your range of motion, injury prevention, and improved stability for all movements. All are important to improve as an athlete.

Train for Stability, Strength, and Power

You should always train for stability, then strength, then power. Strength cannot be developed without stability, and power cannot be developed without strength. The first phase of any training program begins with stability. Are you able to exhibit stability on one leg at a time? Are you able to perform a perfect body weight squat to full range of motion (ROM) without deviations? For endurance runners, muscular strength is essential to complete any race without injury. Power defines your ability to not only finish a race, but finish it strong. For athletes especially, this progression provides a safe, natural training process that builds stability, strength, and power while reducing the risk of injury.

A typical training program provides for 4-6 weeks of stability training, 4-6 weeks of strength/endurance training (hypertrophy), and 2-4 weeks of power training for peak performance at your event.

Train in all 5 human movement patterns

The human body moves in five distinct movement patterns. It is important to train in all five patterns for symmetry and balance. The five human movement patterns are push, pull, hinge, squat, and loaded carry. For runners especially, the most important movements are the hinge, pull, and loaded carry. Both the hinge and loaded carry strengthen the hips, and the pull assists in developing postural strength. Strong hips and good posture lead to an economical running form.

The most prevalent running injuries occur because of muscular imbalances. Knee injuries especially are often caused by an imbalance between the quadriceps and hamstrings. For running safety and power, your hamstrings should be 80% as strong as your quadriceps. Training the posterior chain (hamstrings, glutes, lower back, and upper back) is the key to eliminating strength imbalances and remaining injury free.

Train all three muscle actions: concentric, isometric, and eccentric

Each of the above planes of motion and movements have three distinct muscle actions: concentric, eccentric, and isometric. Each of the actions are important to build stability, strength, and power. The concentric movement is the contraction of the muscle during the raising phase of a resistance movement. An example of this could be a bicep curl. An isometric muscle action is the top or bottom part of a resistance movement, where there is no movement of the joint. An example would be a squat that is held for time. The eccentric muscle action is the “negative” of the resistance movement. An example would be the lowering phase of a bicep curl.

One of our most popular admonitions to our clients is “control the weight,” which means to focus on all three muscle actions while performing a strength movement. Utilizing this method builds functional strength and builds both primary muscles, along with stabilizer muscles. The small stabilizer muscles are key to completing the movement without deviation.

Improving strength with compound, multi-joint movements (i.e. squats, deadlifts, and rows) is a missing link in training for runners. Strength training delays muscle fatigue, allows the body to transfer energy, and increases the ability to generate power for speed. Strength training just two days per week will help build a stronger, faster, and more resilient body and improve running performance. These four absolutes are the basis for all programs at Stronger and Faster and Choice Performance. Our goal is to simply get you stronger-not in just one area, but in all areas.

Tyrone T. Irby (CPT, CES, PES) is the owner and performance coach of The Choice Performance Center of Durham. As a strength and conditioning expert, speaker, author, and performance coach, Tyrone has helped individuals of all abilities to achieve their fitness and performance goals. His focus since 2013, has been working with endurance runners, along with tri-athletes, including Ironman participants. He hosts the Stronger and Faster group training series on Wednesdays and Saturdays year-round. For inquiries or questions, feel free to contact Tyrone at ttirby@yahoo.com or visit his website www.strongereveryday.solutions

