

How to Choose a Barbell vintage gym barbell

"How on earth can you break a barbell?"

That was the question I was asking myself standing in my driveway with, well, a broken barbell...

Years ago, when I purchased my first barbell I didn't put much thought into type or quality. They are just barbells...right?

That

thinking (or lack thereof) led to my first barbell breaking within 24

hours of purchase.

Well, with broken barbell in hand I decided it was time to uncover

some of the basics as to what makes a good, durable barbell.

What I

found was that they can range from \$200 to \$2,000, and they are a little

more complicated than your average sporting goods store would have you

believe. A barbell serves as the foundation of true strength training.

You can get by without a lot of things, but you cannot get by without a

barbell.

Buying the right bar will help you to avoid big issues – they can

warp, bend, rust, and break. The most common bar mishaps are bending

from missed lifts, and sleeves popping off from, more or less, cheap

manufacturing. Today, I want to make you an informed consumer

of the
barbell.

Before you can truly make an informed decision you need to know exactly what a barbell consists of – its “anatomy.”

A commonly used barbell has a 28-29 mm diameter shaft for men and 25 mm for women. Barbells come in all shapes and sizes, but the standard length is 7.2 ft for men and ~6.5 ft for women. They weigh ~44 pounds for men (20 kg) and ~33 pounds for women (15kg).

First, you have the bar itself, or shaft. It's put through a machining process to get it to the right length and diameter.

On the shaft, you have what is called knurling. Knurling is simply the rough, cross-hatched pattern you see on a barbell. Knurl is very

important and is mainly for grip. It is machine-pressed and can be

extremely rough, or smooth, depending on the manufacturer. It is

important to feel the bar to get an idea of what you like (unless you

buy online – in that case, look at reviews), but most top-end bar

manufacturers have a good knurl. Where knurling can differ, even on

top-end bars, is where the knurl does and does not exist. Some bars have

knurling that extends all the way to the sleeves, and some bars have a

gap of no knurling where the bar meets the sleeves. Sometimes bars will

have center knurling and sometimes they won't. You have to

decide what
you want and what you are most comfortable with.

If, say, you like Olympic lifting and you prefer a wide snatch grip, I suggest getting a bar with knurling that extends to the sleeves (if that sentence made no sense, then don't worry about knurling going to the sleeves).

If you are often shirtless or do high-rep front squats and presses (CrossFit anyone?), you may want to go with no center knurling. If you regularly squat heavy weights and need the bar to grip the back, get the center knurling.

Furthermore, the markings on the knurl indicate which type of bar you are using. I recommend a dual marked bar for general purpose use.

However, the outermost marking indicates an Olympic lifting bar and the inner marking indicates a powerlifting bar, and we'll talk more about those in a minute.

It comes down to how it meets your needs and style of fitness.

Next, we have the sleeves.

The sleeves are simply where you put the weights. They are created from drawn-overmandrel (DOM) tubing, a machine process that makes the sleeves straight and strong. The biggest thing you are looking for in

the sleeves is the rotation, or how the sleeves spin on the shaft.

Unless you are extremely picky, or a professional lifter, the difference

in bearings or bushings aren't that important. Bushings are a low

friction material placed between the shaft and the sleeve – they are

more affordable, and they are what you will find on most bars. Needle

bearings spin more smoothly, and are actual bearings between the shaft

and the sleeve. Generally, bearings are on the high end bars. Bushings

will save you a lot of money, and work perfectly fine, without having to

go high-end. But, if you want the premium, then go bearings. Bearings

are better – you aren't paying more without reason – but the difference

would only be noticed at the professional and elite levels.

Sleeves are also connected by bolts or snap rings. I will make this

one very easy for you. Snap rings only! Stay away from bolts on a bar!

Bolts = broken in 24 hours.

Also, know barbells come in many finishes – chrome, zinc, black

oxide, unfinished, and even stainless steel – but also know that the

finish is primarily an aesthetic preference. Stainless steel does

provide an advantage because it is rust and corrosion free, forever.

Barbell Strength

At this point, you already know more than your average gym-goer, but let's make you a true barbell connoisseur.

The strength of a barbell is very important. You need to know the terms I am about to go over because when you shop for a barbell, this is the information manufacturers will give you. If you have no idea what the numbers are referring to, how do you know what to buy?

Bar strength is reported in three areas: tensile strength, yield strength, and test.

Tensile strength is the maximum load your bar can support without fracturing or breaking. So high tensile strength = good bar. This will be your primary determining factor.

Yield strength is basically how much weight the bar can handle before it will become deformed – that is, it won't return to perfect straightness. Breaking and deformation are very different. Unfortunately, you will be hard-pressed to find a manufacturer that provides yield strength information.

There is also test, which means the bar has been loaded and tested with weights at which there was no bending or breaking, so the higher, the better. It's best if you can find a manufacturer that will give you a tensile strength rating, which is reported in pounds per square inch

(PSI).

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Now you know the terminology, but what is a “good” rating? Here is a starting point for the most important factor –
tensile strength ratings:

- <150,000 PSI = Ehh
- 150,000-175,000 PSI = Good
- 175,000-200,000 PSI = Better
- >200,000 PSI = Best

A bar in the good range is perfectly acceptable and will last a very long time. Considering cost and quality, most people do not need more than the “good” level bar.

If you are getting into sport weightlifting, there are differences in Olympic lifting bars and powerlifting bars:

- Olympic weightlifting bars have more of a whip, or spring, to accommodate the sport.
- Powerlifting bars are very stiff, as powerlifters prefer no surprises or major fluctuations during a big lift.

Barbell Plates

Next, you have to think about plates. Unless you plan on competing at the professional level, plate quality is not as vital as the quality of your barbell.

Price can vary greatly with plates. You can get 300 lb. of iron at a

garage sale for \$30 or you can spend \$3,000+ on a couple hundred pounds of certified competition bumper plates.

The most frequently asked question is whether to purchase bumper plates or iron (metal) plates, and that depends on the type of lifting you plan to do. If you like powerlifting (squat, bench press, and deadlift), then you will be just fine with iron plates. If you are dropping the bar frequently during CrossFit workouts or practicing the snatch and clean and jerk in Olympic weightlifting, you'll need bumpers.

Personally, I prefer a blend of iron and bumper plates in my arsenal, and I'll explain why and some considerations in just a minute. First, let's talk bumper plates.

When it comes to bumper plates, what you are paying for is the thickness of the plate and how much they bounce when dropped.

Here is a quick breakdown of their categories:

- Black bumpers (\$): Thick with a big bounce
- Colored bumpers (\$\$): Thick with less bounce
- Olympic training bumpers (\$\$\$): Thin and dead bounce
- Competition bumpers (\$\$\$\$\$\$): Thin and dead bounce + certified weight to the gram

They all should be 450mm disks with a 50mm opening. Economy black bumper plates are going to be good enough for 95% of people; 4.9% will want/need colored bumpers or Olympic training bumpers, and .1% will need certified Olympic competition bumpers. Colored plates generally follow a color

coding, and some companies do follow the color code of the International Weightlifting Federation, but not all do. The official color coding can be found at the IWF website.

I like to have around 300 lb. of cheap iron plates along with another couple hundred pounds of black bumpers. I use the bumpers for when I am going to be dropping the weight, and I use a combination of iron and bumpers if I am doing a heavy back squat.

You'll be hard pressed to find bumper plates at a garage sale, so you will need to order them online, but iron plates are a completely different story.

For iron, here's where you use the power of Craigslist to find a lot of weight for pennies on the dollar. People are constantly moving, giving up on at-home fitness, and letting plates sit in their garage and rust. That's a win for us! The easiest way to shop for plates is to put it on autopilot using a combination of Craigslist and IFTTT; you can read about how that works here. Basically, you set up a program that will notify you when plates come up for sale in your price range.

Conclusion

Most people are looking for a general, high-quality bar, and there are plenty out there that are suitable for all training and that will last for a long time. So, unless you are planning on becoming an Olympian, I would stay away from the "Cadillac" bars. You can get a good barbell that will meet all of your needs for around \$250, and

the
near-perfect bar for around \$500.

That can seem like a lot of money for a barbell, but it is the heart
of your training, and you will be using it day-in and day-out.
Don't get
a bar that will bend or fail while you are using it.

Get a bar that will last a lifetime. It is an investment in
your fitness and your health!

And that, gentlemen is all you need know about plates,
weights, and barbells.

Now, let's start your story differently than mine.

"How on earth can this barbell withstand this abuse?"

That will be the question you are asking yourself while
standing in your driveway with, well, an amazing barbell.

Hiring the Nutrition-Fitness Hybrid Pro

What are consumers looking for when they come to your gym or
studio? Sure, they want great workouts and access to the
latest equipment in a welcoming, fun environment. But above
all, they really want to attain their health and fitness
goals.

At our gym—One on One Fitness in State College,
Pennsylvania—we've learned that lasting, consistent client
success depends on intelligent nutrition and habit-change

strategies. Thus, we've pivoted from workouts to wellness to help clients succeed—and to differentiate our business. We focus on three areas: fitness, nutrition and lifestyle habits.

We're making this happen with a new job title: the **nutrition–fitness hybrid pro**. We recruit registered dietitians who love fitness, and then we train them to be fitness professionals.

It's an incredibly exciting opportunity for the right people. These RDs interact with clients in ways that they wouldn't normally, as clinical dietitians. Moreover, they help clients in ways that a dietitian or personal trainer, individually, could not.

"I became an RD because I have a passion for helping others," says Haley Golich, RDN, LDN, a recent addition to our team at One on One. "The nutrition–fitness hybrid position enables me to promote healthy living, help clients set and achieve health goals, and contribute to the prevention of chronic disease. It is the ongoing interaction with clients that intrigued me the most."

Advantages to This Professional Model

We employ four RDs and are recruiting more. Here's what we've observed since implementing this strategy:

Our Pool of Hiring Candidates Is Wider

Hiring/recruiting **quality fitness professionals** can be a significant challenge because it's so hard to find that "gem" of a personal trainer who is competent, professional and (of course) looking for work. The nutrition-fitness hybrid position lets us recruit outside the pool of personal trainers and kinesiology students.

"When I went off to college, I couldn't decide whether I wanted to study kinesiology or nutrition," says Bethany Paszkowski, RDN, LDN, another member of our team. "They both interested me, and both would allow me to achieve my longer-term goal of helping people. This position is perfect for me."

RDs Have Advanced Skills

When hiring an RD, you're getting someone who is dynamic, smart and organized. Five years of vigorous education forces a person to develop many of the professional skills required to succeed in this role. Although RDs don't have a degree in kinesiology, they quickly develop an **intellectual understanding** of the science and prove that they can consistently apply it in a fitness setting. Bottom line: You're not hiring a "project."

RDs Enjoy Career Satisfaction

This position has a **strong allure** for the right kind of RD. After all, RDs rarely encounter so much diversity in their tasks and such a committed client base in clinical or

community nutrition jobs. “I’ve worked as a registered dietitian in both the public health and clinical settings. These settings can be challenging to impact change,” says Golich. “By combining nutrition counseling along with fitness consulting, I am able to impact clients in a comprehensive way to elicit the most positive change.”

It’s Easier to Turn RDs Into Trainers Than Vice Versa

Teaching RDs

about fitness is a time-consuming but straightforward process. Conversely, dietetics is a complicated, multifaceted subject that will

soon require a master’s-level education. Thus, the model works only if

you start by hiring RDs. Turning trainers into RDs is rarely achievable.

The Investment Will Pay Off

RDs are used to making a healthy salary, so you will have to pay them competitively. You will

have difficulty competing against the pay of a clinical setting.

However, we don’t try. Instead, we attract people strongly motivated to

engage in our holistic wellness opportunity. We provide a 5-week

training program whose value is clear to the people we hire. They

recognize that our team will teach them a trade and that we’ve made an **investment** in them—knowing we won’t see a return until well after they start.

How the Nutrition-Fitness Model Improves Your Business

In a **competitive marketplace**, fitness businesses have to differentiate themselves and generate new sources of revenue. In our market, a lot of gyms and clubs are doing the same things: offering different spins/pricing on group training and selling supplements. Although many businesses succeed tremendously on this path, we think the competition will only get stiffer.

We believe that creating a one-stop shop focusing on fitness, nutrition and habit change is a win-win that helps our business while giving our clients the best opportunity to succeed. We hired our first full-time RD in 2015, and our nutrition program became profitable after about a year, mainly through individual counseling sessions.

Some of the most significant benefits are intangible. Having RDs on staff clearly differentiates us from our competitors and solidifies our position as leaders in our field. RDs also get nutrition clients interested in fitness, educate our community and contribute to our social media updates.

The 8 Best Ways to Get 6-Pack Abs Fast

Whether you're aiming to achieve your fitness goals or simply want to look good in a swimsuit, acquiring a sculpted set of six-pack abs is a goal shared by many.

Getting a six-pack requires dedication and hard work, but you don't have to hit the gym seven days a week or become a professional bodybuilder to do so.

Instead, a few modifications to your diet and lifestyle can be enough to produce serious, long-lasting results.

Here are 8 simple ways to achieve six-pack abs quickly and safely.

1. Do More Cardio

Cardio, also called aerobic exercise, is any form of exercise that increases your heart rate.

Regularly incorporating cardio into your routine can help you burn extra fat and speed your way to a set of six-pack abs.

Studies show that cardio is especially effective when it comes to reducing belly fat, which can help make your abdominal muscles more visible.

One small study showed that doing cardio exercise three to four times per week significantly decreased belly fat in 17 men ([1](#)).

Another review of 16 studies found that the more cardio exercise people did, the greater amount of belly fat they lost (2).

Try to get in at least 20–40 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day, or between 150–300 minutes per week (3).

Activities like running, walking, biking, swimming or engaging in your favorite sports are just a few easy ways to fit cardio into your day.

Summary

Studies show that cardio exercise can reduce belly fat, which can help you get six-pack abs. One review found that the more cardio people did, the more belly fat they lost.

2. Exercise Your Abdominal Muscles

The rectus abdominis is the long muscle that extends vertically along the length of your abdomen.

Although most well-known as the muscle that creates the appearance of the six-pack, it's also necessary for breathing, coughing and bowel movements.

Other abdominal muscles include the internal and external obliques and the transverse abdominis.

Exercising these muscles is key to increasing muscle mass and achieving six-pack abs.

However, keep in mind that abdominal exercises alone are unlikely to decrease belly fat.

For example, one study found that doing abdominal exercises five days per week for six weeks had no effect on belly fat in 24 women ([4](#)).

Instead, be sure to pair your abdominal exercises with a healthy diet and regular cardio to boost fat burning and maximize results.

Abdominal crunches, bridges and planks are a few of the most popular exercises that can help strengthen your abdominal muscles and create the appearance of six-pack abs.

Summary

Exercising the muscles that make up your abdomen can help increase muscle mass to achieve six-pack abs. Pair abdominal exercises with a healthy diet and cardio to optimize results.

3. Increase Your Protein Intake

Upping your intake of high-protein foods can help promote weight loss, fight belly fat and support muscle growth on your road to six-pack abs.

According to one study, consuming high-protein meals helped increase feelings of fullness and promote appetite control in 27 overweight and obese men ([5](#)).

Another study showed that people who increased protein intake by just 15% decreased their calorie intake and saw significant decreases

in body
weight and body fat ([6](#)).

Consuming protein after working out can also help repair and rebuild muscle tissues as well as aid in muscle recovery ([7](#), [8](#)).

Plus, one study even found that a high-protein diet helped preserve both metabolism and muscle mass during weight loss ([9](#)).

Meat,
poultry, eggs, seafood, dairy products, legumes, nuts and seeds are
just a few examples of healthy, high-protein foods that you
can add to
your diet.

*Summary Protein may help
reduce calorie intake, as well as decrease body weight and
fat. It can
also help repair and rebuild muscle tissues and preserve
muscle mass
during weight loss.*

4. Try High-Intensity Interval Training

High-intensity interval training, or HIIT, is a form of exercise that involves alternating between intense bursts of activity and short recovery periods. HIIT keeps your heart rate up and increases fat burning.

Adding HIIT into your routine can boost weight loss and make it even easier to get six-pack abs.

One

study showed that young men who performed HIIT training for 20 minutes three times per week lost an average of 4.4 pounds (2 kg) and saw a 17% decrease in belly fat over a 12-week period ([10](#)).

Similarly, another study found that 17 women who did HIIT twice per week for 16 weeks had an 8% decrease in total belly fat ([11](#)).

One of the simplest ways to try HIIT at home is to switch between walking and sprinting for 20–30 seconds at a time.

You can also try alternating between high-intensity exercises like jumping jacks, mountain climbers and burpees with a short break in between.

Summary

High-intensity interval training can help increase fat burning and may be especially useful for reducing belly fat and achieving six-pack abs.

5. Stay Hydrated

Water is absolutely crucial to just about every aspect of health. It plays a role in everything from waste removal to temperature regulation.

Staying well-hydrated may also help bump up your metabolism, burn extra belly fat and make it easier to get a set of six-pack abs.

In

fact, one study found that drinking 500 milliliters of water temporarily increased energy expenditure by 24% for up to 60 minutes after eating ([12](#)).

Other research shows that drinking water may also reduce your appetite and increase weight loss.

One study with 48 middle-aged and older adults found that people who drank water before each meal lost 44% more weight over a 12-week period than those who didn't ([13](#)).

Water requirements can vary based on a variety of factors, including age, body weight and activity level.

However, most research recommends drinking around 1–2 liters (34–68 ounces) of water per day to stay well-hydrated.

Summary

Studies show that drinking water can temporarily increase metabolism, reduce appetite and increase weight loss to help you lose stubborn belly fat.

6. Stop Eating Processed Food

Heavily processed foods like chips, cookies, crackers and convenience foods are typically high in calories, carbs, fat and sodium.

Not only that, these foods are typically low in key nutrients such as fiber, protein, vitamins and minerals.

Nixing these unhealthy junk foods from your diet and swapping them for whole foods can increase weight loss, reduce belly fat and help you achieve a set of six-pack abs.

This is because it takes more energy to digest whole foods rich in protein and fiber, which can burn more calories and keep your metabolism up ([14](#)).

The nutrients in whole foods, like protein and fiber, also keep you feeling fuller to curb cravings and aid in weight loss ([15](#), [16](#)).

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes are all nutritious alternatives to prepackaged convenience items like frozen meals, baked goods and salty snacks.

Summary Processed foods are high in calories, carbs, fat and sodium. These foods require less energy to digest and are also lacking in important nutrients like protein and fiber that can aid in weight loss.

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7. Cut Back on Refined Carbs

Cutting back on your consumption of refined carbohydrates can help you lose extra fat and gain six-pack abs.

Refined carbs lose most of their vitamins, minerals and fiber during processing, resulting in a final product that is low in nutritional value.

Eating lots of refined carbs can cause spikes and crashes in blood sugar levels, which can lead to increased hunger and food intake ([17](#)).

Eating plenty of whole grains, on the other hand, has been linked to a reduced waist circumference and lower body weight ([18](#)).

In fact, one study found that people who ate a high amount of refined grains tended to have a higher amount of belly fat compared to those who ate more whole grains ([19](#)).

Swap out refined carbs from foods like pastries, pastas and processed foods and instead enjoy whole grains such as brown rice, barley, bulgur and couscous to help support satiety and burn belly fat.

Summary

Refined carbs are low in nutrients and can increase hunger

levels. A

high intake of refined grains has been linked to increased belly fat.

8. Fill up on Fiber

Adding more high-fiber foods into your diet is one of the simplest methods for increasing weight loss and achieving six-pack abs.

Soluble

fiber moves through the gastrointestinal tract undigested and can help

slow the emptying of the stomach to make you feel fuller for longer ([20](#)).

In

fact, one review found that increasing fiber intake by 14 grams per day

was linked to a 10% decrease in calorie intake and 4.2 pounds (1.9 kg)

of weight loss ([21](#)).

Research shows that getting enough fiber in your diet may also prevent weight gain and fat accumulation.

One

study showed that for each 10-gram increase of soluble fiber taken

daily, participants lost 3.7% of belly fat over five years without

making any other modifications in terms of diet or exercise ([22](#)).

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds are just a few healthy, high-fiber foods that you can add to your diet to help burn belly fat.

Summary Eating fiber can help keep you feeling full and may help protect against weight gain and fat accumulation.

The Bottom Line

There's much more to getting six-pack abs than simply doing a few crunches or planks each day.

Instead, it requires following a healthy diet and maintaining an active lifestyle to help achieve your goals.

Making a few simple switches in your daily routine can get you a set of six-pack abs and improve your health at the same time.