

The Ten Percent Rule

Use this guideline to improve performance without risking injury

Whether you are just beginning a new exercise program or training for your 20th marathon it is essential to progress at the right pace to meet your goals and avoid injuries. The Ten Percent Rule is an easy way to gauge your training increases to get the most from your workouts while reducing your risk of injury.

If you are new to exercise, the first thing to do is to get your doctor's ok before starting. This is especially important if you have any health issues, haven't been active recently or aren't sure of your health status.

Once you know you can safely exercise, the main thing to remember is that you need to start and progress slowly. The ten percent rule is a guideline many fitness experts use to help both expert and beginners avoid injury, yet still see continual improvement in performance.

The Ten Percent Rule

Increasing the intensity, time or type of activity too quickly is one common reason for sport injury. To prevent this, many fitness experts recommend that both novice and expert athletes follow the ten percent rule, which sets a limit on increases in weekly training. This guideline simply states that you should increase your activity **no more** than 10 percent per week. That includes distance, intensity, weight lifted and time of exercise.

For example, if you are running 20 miles per week and want to increase, adding 2 miles the next week follows the ten percent rule. If you are lifting 50 pounds and want to increase, add 5 pounds the next week to follow the ten percent rule.

If you are a beginning exerciser, 10 percent may be too much, and a 5 percent increase per week may be much more comfortable. If you aren't sure of your ability, or if you experience any aches or pains, go even slower.

The ten percent rule is a simple way to gauge your training, but it also helps you remain consistent with your exercise program. In order to effectively improve your ability, the ten percent rule requires that you continue your workouts from week to week. It can be a great motivator for someone just starting to get active as well as for those who are preparing for a specific event.

Keep in mind that whether you follow this guideline or not, listening to your body is still the best way to avoid injuries. If you ignore aches or pains you may be a risk for a more serious injury. If you feel you are doing more than you can safely do, slow down, modify your activity or rest to accommodate your body's needs.