



# Weight Training Over 50: All You Need to Know!

—Fred Stellabotte and Rachel Straub, MS, CSCS

One of the most debilitating results of the aging process is the loss of overall muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility. And one of the most important things—possibly the most important thing—you can do to mitigate these aspects of aging is proper exercise, specifically through weight training. Once you reach age 50 (preferably sooner), you need to decide if what you are doing is actually contributing to or slowing the aging process.

As you age, your goal should not be to build size (or bulk), but rather to maintain muscular strength, flexibility, and endurance:

- For endurance, focus on more repetitions using minimal weight.
- For strength, focus on fewer repetitions using more weight.
- For flexibility, focus on achieving a full range of motion.

What should you be doing specifically? The list below enumerates each of the major muscles groups with general recommendations. All the details regarding proper and improper technique for the exercises mentioned in this article can be found in ***Weight Training Without Injury: Over 350 Step-by-Step Pictures Including What Not to Do!***

## ARMS

- **Biceps.** Exercises for this muscle (which forms the front of your arm) are not a high priority. The biceps brachii is naturally lean, and the primary purpose of biceps exercises is to increase overall size. Leave these for the younger generations.
- **Triceps.** Being approximately 75% of the upper arm (with the actual location being the back of the arm), you must do triceps-specific exercises. Preferably, do those that require your hands to be moved behind your head. This will facilitate proper stretching in this muscle group. Fred's personal favorite is the **Rope Overhead Extension** (which requires a rope—see the **Stellabotte Triceps Enhancer Rope**—and a cable system). If you don't have access to such equipment, simple dumbbell moves (for example, the **Seated Dumbbell Triceps Extension** or **Supine Dumbbell Triceps Extension**) are excellent options.

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Rope Overhead Extension

## SHOULDERS

You have two main options for shoulder exercises: shoulder presses and shoulder raises. Skip the shoulder presses completely and do raises instead. Shoulder presses are good for bulk, so just leave those for the younger generations. For shoulder raises, the options are endless. There are lateral raises, front raises, posterior raises, and more. However, 95% of people do these moves incorrectly and are actually causing themselves more harm than good. Therefore, do *only* the **Complete Shoulder Move**, an exercise invented by Fred in the 1970s to effectively and properly exercise the entire shoulder region in a single exercise. For this exercise, minimal weight is needed—you will benefit from just the proper movement.



Complete Shoulder Move  
(Up, Together, Wide, Twist, and Down)

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## BACK

The focus of back exercises should be to maintain proper posture. For this, perform more repetitions with lighter weight. Technically, you can do any of the general back exercises daily with just your body weight; for example, the **Lat Pulldown**, **Row**, or **Reverse Fly**. (For those with postural challenges Fred's personal favorite is the Cable Reverse Fly.)



Cable Reverse Fly

## CHEST

You have two options for chest exercise: bench presses or chest flies. Eliminate bench presses completely. Bench presses are fine for increasing size, but nothing more. Chest flies stretch the chest wall using its entire range of motion, so these are all you need. Any chest fly will do. Fred's personal favorites are the **Flat Bench Chest Fly** and **Standing Cable Chest Fly**.



Standing Cable Chest Fly

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**“There is no activity or sport  
that is not enhanced by proper weight training.”**

—Fred Stellabotte and Rachel Straub, MS, CSCS  
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## CORE

The number of possible core exercises is endless. Essentially, though, **Push-ups** are all you need. They improve your general flexibility and strength, and when properly executed they will not cause injury. If floor push-ups are too challenging, any elevated surface will suffice (such as a kitchen counter). Many core exercises involve too much twisting and turning, and inevitably this can cause extensive back problems, something you just don't need.



Push-up on Elevated Surface

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**“The ‘core’ refers to the 29 muscles surrounding your lumbar spine. This includes the abdominals, glutes, and back muscles.”**

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## LEGS

The most important exercise you can do for your entire body is the squat. It works almost every muscle in your body. Low weight (even just your body weight) will suffice. Go down as far as you can comfortably, and when you reach that point, go down 2" more. However, never go past 90°! Fred's personal favorite squat is the **Smith Machine Squat**, though the **Free Weight Squat**, **Wall Squat**, and **Counter Squat** are all good alternatives.



Smith Machine Squat

In addition to the squat, calf raises are highly recommended for leg strength. The calf dictates how the entire leg moves and is one of the most neglected areas. Just doing proper calf raises—even while only using a ledge or stair—will suffice. Fred's favorite calf raise is the **Standing Calf Raise** (which requires a Standing Calf Machine). Regardless of the type of calf raise you do, *always* make sure your heels drop below your toes—otherwise, you are not getting the full stretch, which is an essential component.

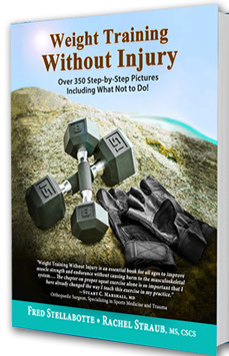


Other leg exercises (such as the leg extension, leg curl, lunge, and leg press) are also beneficial, but in Fred's opinion, squats and calf raises should be your priority.



Standing Calf Raise

For details on structuring a weight-training program (and much more), please refer to ***Weight Training Without Injury: Over 350 Step-by-Step Pictures Including What Not to Do!***, a full-color manual that illustrates incorrect vs. correct technique for trainers, professionals, intermediates, and novices by Fred Stellabotte and Rachel Straub, MS, CSCS.



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