

WRITE IT DOWN!

Tracking your progress will lead to bigger gains

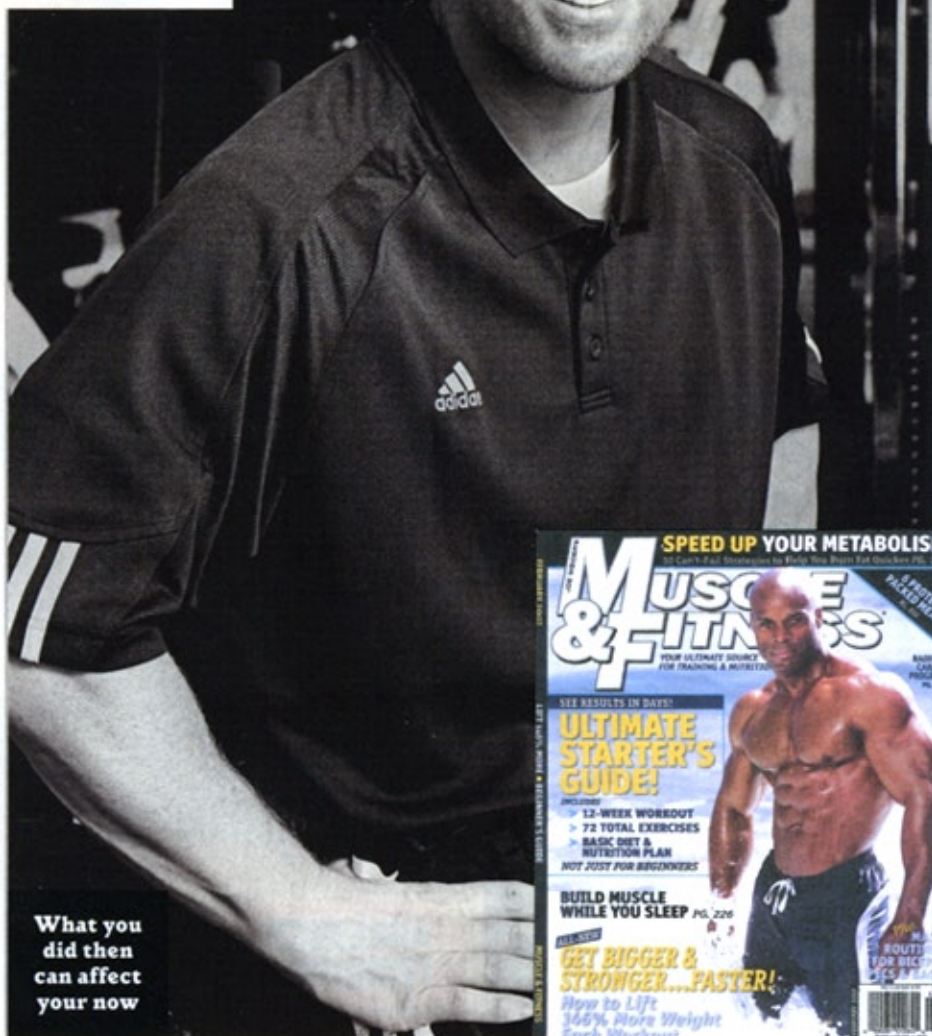
HOW MANY TIMES while growing up did my dad tell me, "Write it down!" How many times have I told myself the same thing? Answer to both: too many.

Writing something down has proven to be an effective memorization technique. It is also the key to the past that helps shape your future — and I do mean *shape* your future. To know where you're going, it helps to know where you're coming from. Regardless of how much fish oil or ginkgo you take, it's far-fetched to expect that you'll remember every set, rep, mile and nuance of your last workout or the one before that.

Why do you need to remember what you've already done? Same reason people write down recipes: to increase the chance of success the next time you're in that situation.

And I'm not talking just sets and reps. In fact, anything that affects your senses can affect your workout, even if you've mastered how to block out distractions. Recreating a situation in which you can tune out those annoyances increases the possibility of a positive gym experience. Control what you can, have a backup plan for what you can't and ignore the rest.

Food and supplement intake, including quality, quantity and timing, also affects your workout, so make some notes. At the gym, temperature, lighting, music, accessibility to the equipment you need, the gym's layout and how crowded it is are all factors in your workout. Things you noticed on a particular day that affected your training, good or bad, are worth jotting down.



What you did then can affect your now

After a while, taking notes will become second nature — a common occurrence within your day-to-day workouts. It doesn't have to be prose; it can be bullet points. Next time you're in a slump, flip back to a great workout and see why it worked. Draw from that experience. Borrow that recipe. It won't always work, but it could mean the difference between a bad day, week or even month. If you harness creativity with discipline, you can create a masterpiece. Write *that* down.

Gunnar Peterson is the nation's premier celebrity trainer.

"Write" Down to the Minute

- >> **Got a date?** Noting the dates of your workouts will help you look back and assess your progress.
- >> **Of reps and rest.** Keeping tabs on variables such as volume, load and rest periods will keep your muscle gains from stalling.
- >> **Be a split head.** Track your training splits and muscle pairings throughout each workout cycle.
- >> **Choice is yours.** To avoid training the same way too often, log your order of exercises on each gym visit.

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