

# Gym Etiquette

David Bretton discusses gym etiquette and the unwritten rules of the gym

For a 16 year old, small, skinny kid entering the gym for the first time was pretty daunting. As a newcomer to the gym environment, it appears that everyone else knows exactly what to do and how to behave in the gym. Fast forward 10 years and I now would consider myself to be pretty comfortable in any fitness environment. This is because I now understand gym etiquette, the unwritten rules.

In this article, I will discuss 10 rules, which I think we should try and follow in the gym.

## Rule 1: Leave your ego at the door

The first thing we should appreciate about the gym environment is that everyone is there to better themselves. Although we may all be at different points along the fitness journey, we have all been the new guy/girl at some point. Do not be afraid to lift low weights while you master and understand the technique. Correct technique will allow you to achieve better results and will also minimise the risk of injury.

## Rule 2: Don't drop your weights

Throwing your weights down is not a sign of strength and dominance. It is just a sign that you are seeking attention, can't control your repetitions and have no respect for the other gym goers and the owners of the gym who kindly supply the equipment.

## Rule 3: Put your weights back

If you're strong enough to lift it, you're strong enough to put it back. This is simple advice, but unfortunately, there are so many who fail to act upon it. There are several issues when this rule is not followed. Firstly, as a weightlifter, there is nothing more annoying when you are unable to find the matching dumbbell. Dumbbells come in pairs and they should stay this way! Furthermore, we should consider other people who may want to use the equipment. If you have just finished leg pressing 500kg do you think it is fair that someone else then has to come and unrack all of your weights? Can everyone lift the 25kg plates? Probably not. Put them back yourself.

## Rule 4: Don't grunt

Hard work can sometimes result in some strange noises. There is nothing wrong with this. What I'm talking about are those excessively loud grunting noises that are totally inappropriate and serve for no other purpose than to attract attention.



## Rule 5: Wipe your sweat up

There is nothing more disgusting than going to use equipment than when the bench is glistening from someone else's sweat. It's great if you're having a good workout and building up a sweat...but carry a sweat towel and make sure you mop up after yourself.

## Rule 6: Clean your workout clothes

The gym isn't a fashion show, if you want to wear a cheap t-shirt and shorts then that's cool. But make sure they are clean. Fresh sweat doesn't smell! There is nothing more unpleasant than working out in close proximity to someone who smells of stale sweat.

## Rule 7: Personal space

In a busy gym, this one can be difficult. The only person who should be in close proximity to someone lifting weights is their spotter (someone assisting the weightlifter). This is important for a nicer gym experience, but also for health and safety reasons. It has been aware of your surroundings – midway through a set someone walking into you while lifting can be very frustrating and also dangerous! Also be aware of the mirrors in the free weights...while some people use the mirrors for vanity purposes, others



is sat on it on their mobile phone! Have a better workout and avoid annoying other gym users by leaving your mobile in your locker

This list of 'rules' is probably not complete and I would always encourage users to check their specific gym's rules, as there are usually variations between gyms. It is, however, a good place to start and once you are comfortable in your surroundings you will tend to have a much better workout. Personal trainers can be another good way to familiarise yourself with the gym and learn some of the unwritten rules – more to follow on these guys in a later issue. ■

may be using the mirrors to check their form. Try not to block the people's mirror view if possible.

### **Rule 8: Socialise in the pub, not in the gym**

For many of us, it is great to socialise at the gym. A gym is a place we may meet friends and workout together. Working out with a training partner is a great and something I would generally encourage. One thing that really does annoy me, however, are groups standing around discussing their antics from the weekend. This is particularly annoying when the gym is busy, and equipment is limited. I often work out wearing headphones; I find this a great way to prevent people talking to me more than I want them to. If someone is wearing headphones, unless they take them off then this is generally a sign they don't want to have a chit-chat.

### **Rule 9: Check nobody is using the equipment; but don't hog it**

When you go to use some equipment make sure you first check that nobody is using it. Signs that someone is using it will be things such as the presence of a water bottle or sweat towel. It is polite if you are

unsure whether someone is using it to just check with people nearby. One thing that many people do in the gym is 'supersets'. This involves using multiple pieces of equipment in a mini sort of circuit. This can be a great way to work out but can make it difficult to see when someone is using the equipment. If you are doing supersets, please consider other gym users – do not take up the 3 most popular pieces of gym equipment, particularly when the gym is busy! I feel if supersets is a way you wish to work out then you should try and use the gym during the quieter hours.

### **Rule 10: Leave your mobile in your locker**

Now I could be very easily criticised for this one as I am guilty of breaking it more than once – and this is clear from videos and 'selfies' on my social media. Generally, though I try and leave my phone in my locker when I work out. Your mobile phone in the gym is a sure way to have a poor workout. The phone addict in us is tempted to continually check our phones instead of working out. It is also extremely frustrating when you want a piece of equipment and someone