

# Three's Company

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Strolling through the gym often gives me flashbacks of my old high school cafeteria. On one side of the room you have the brainy calorie counters meticulously analyzing the nutritional value of a fruit smoothie. The cardio junkies are running around in circles and bouncing all over the place. And all the way in the back, the weight room jocks are picking things up and putting them down.

All three are completely different approaches to losing weight and getting fit; so many people have a hard time deciding "which table" to sit at first.

The calorie counters will correctly argue that nutrition is the most important determining factor in any weight loss equation. At least 70 percent of your success is directly linked to the foods that you consume.

There's actually merit to that old adage "you are what you eat." You can't realistically expect to have a ripped six pack if you continuously rip open a six pack or stop at Dairy Queen after every workout. Jogging to McDonald's will not get it done. And loading up on Doritos, Cheetos, Oreos or any of the other various 'O's' on the market probably won't give you those buns of steel that you so desperately covet.

Okay then it's settled, nutrition wins. That's a (whole grain) wrap! Roll the credits. Let me just slap my bio at the end of this article, we're all done here right? Well no, not exactly. You see, while the foods that you eating are obviously important, if you're not also exercising in conjunction with eating properly, your body will not be able to fully utilize those nutrients you've so carefully chosen to consume.

Yeah that's right: can I get a high five from the cardio junkies? They've also got it right because you can't accomplish your goals by simply moving a fork, you've also got to get up and move your body!

Speaking in extremely general terms; your weight is determined by the daily ratio of calories that you consume versus the amount of calories you burn. Therefore, the more active you are, the better your results will be.

Cardiovascular activity also helps your body become more efficient at consuming oxygen which will improve your energy levels and mental health. And realistically, working toward a fitness goal is hard stuff so you're going to need all of the energy and mental toughness that you can muster!

Beyond that, cardio has been shown to help improve bone density, lower the risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, sleep disorders and a laundry list of other serious medical conditions.

"Oh...okay then doing cardio exclusively is the way to go?" Well again; no, not exactly. I've already explained how ignoring nutrition could easily derail your fitness goals but ignoring strength training could prove to just be as detrimental.

Yep, here's looking at you weight room jocks because they too have also got it right.

Merely pedaling an exercise bike around for hours like a gerbil will not get the job done either. In actuality, that's a

recipe for building what I like to refer to as the "skinny fat" physique. You know, lean like Gumby but with absolutely no muscle tone resulting in droopy arms, saggy pecs and flabby glutes. In fact, it's quite common for those with this build to have extremely high, unhealthy body fat percentages because their ratio of lean muscle is so low in comparison to the amount of fat their bodies must store to endure their grueling cardio routines.

Sure many of us would just settle for being skinny but if you're still going to look awful in your bathing suit and your jeans still won't fit right, that's not much fun either now is it?

Aside from helping to fill out your clothes in all of the right places, carrying a little extra muscle tone will actually help you lose weight faster! Many people are under the false impression that they should wait until they've lost weight before starting to strength train but this couldn't be any further from the truth.

Every pound of muscle on your body burns approximately 35 calories per day. Add 4lbs of muscle and you can shed 140 additional calories each day without any extra effort! On the flip side however, doing cardio or focusing on food while ignoring strength training could result in a loss of muscle mass. Losing 4lbs of muscle would then conversely result in your burning 140 less calories per day meaning that you'd have to work even harder to reach your goal!

Depending on the type and intensity of strength training that you're performing, you can actually burn just as many calories as you would on a treadmill or elliptical machine.

Carrying extra muscle will also help to prevent injuries and diseases, improve balance and increase body mechanics and functionality which will be especially important as you continue to grow older.

So this brings us back to our original question. "Which table you should sit at first.?" Well who says that you can only focus on one at a time? By merging these 3 keys to success you'll see results much faster than focusing on any one of them individually. So my suggestion is to pull all three of these "tables" together and reap the benefits of each approach simultaneously! I mean really, can't we all just get along?

Try combining a balanced mix of cardio and strength training with a healthy diet of proteins, whole grain carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables. It's also recommended that you follow each workout with a high quality protein, ideally in the form of a liquid shake within 30 minutes to fully reap the benefits of your hard work.



*Darrell W. Butler has trained, managed and consulted for fitness centers and media outlets around the world. When he's not training a client or sharing his words of wisdom, you can catch him drinking a PFC Berries A'More Recovery Shake at his local gym's juice bar! For more information visit the Darrell Butler Personal Training website at [www.dbptonline.com](http://www.dbptonline.com)*



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