

FITNESS CHEAT CODES

Twenty rules that stick.

Short enough to carry into training. Specific enough to test. Every maxim keeps its evidence limit attached.

Use these as decision aids, not universal laws. The complete source-linked library lives at art-of-survival.com/pages/fast-study?view=cheat-codes-library



01 - STRENGTH

Progress without turning every session into a test day.

01 Earn the load.

Add challenge only after the rep stays recognizable. More weight is not progress when range, control, or position collapses.

02 Strength is specific.

Practice the movement, range, speed, and loading pattern you actually want to improve.

03 Progress is more than plates.

Load, repetitions, range of motion, control, work completed, and cleaner execution can all move a program forward.

EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

No progression method is universally best. Training history, technique, adherence, and the outcome being tested all matter.

Sources: PMID 36199287

02 - MUSCLE GROWTH

Stimulate the adaptation. Preserve the ability to recover.

04 Muscle needs hard sets - not a sacred rep range.

Useful hypertrophy work can live across multiple loading ranges when sets are challenging and repeatable.

05 Failure is a tool, not a toll booth.

Use it selectively. Maximal fatigue can reduce the quality of later work and raise the recovery bill.

06 Volume is a dose.

Add work only while performance, joints, sleep, and recovery remain productive.

EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

Muscle growth can occur across loading ranges. Useful effort, volume, and failure exposure vary by exercise and person.

Sources: PMID 26848545 | PMID 33343066 | PMID 37144554

03 - CONDITIONING

Train the output you want to repeat.

07 Build the engine that recovers between bursts.

Aerobic capacity supports the work between hard efforts and helps make the next round more repeatable.

08 Intervals are a dose - not punishment.

Choose work and recovery periods for the adaptation. Suffering is not a unit of measurement.

09 Measure output, not sweat.

Record pace, power, distance, repetitions, accuracy, and recovery.

EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

The original Tabata result came from a small, specific cycling protocol. Not every four-minute circuit produces the same adaptation.

Sources: PMID 8897392

04 - RECOVERY

The next useful effort is the scoreboard.

10 Recovery is the return of capability.

The question is whether function, motivation, movement, and output are returning - not whether the ritual looked restorative.

11 Sleep is part of the program.

A plan that ignores sleep ignores a major part of learning, alertness, tissue repair, mood, and readiness.

12 One bad session is a data point; repeated decline is a signal.

Compare several sessions alongside symptoms, sleep, stress, and workload.

EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

Readiness scores and symptoms are trend inputs, not diagnoses or infallible daily commands.

Sources: PMID 33062443 | PMID 31096123

05 - NUTRITION

Separate the acute signal from the long-term result.

13 Insulin is a signal - not a verdict.

Immediate fuel handling and long-term body-fat change are related questions, but they are not the same question.

14 Absorbed is not the same as built into muscle.

Protein digestion supplies a whole-body amino-acid pool. Training and the total nutrition pattern help determine what follows.

15 BCAAs participate in signaling; all essential amino acids are still needed as substrates.

An EAA blend is not complete nutrition or proof of long-term lean-tissue preservation.

16 Make overeating harder by changing the food environment.

Build convenient defaults around protein, minimally processed foods, useful portions, and preparation.

EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

Acute metabolic responses do not alone prove long-term fat loss or muscle gain. Needs vary with body size, diet, training, and total intake.

Sources: PMID 26278052 | PMID 26556791 | PMID 38118410 | PMID 28638350 | PMID 31250889

06 - MEASUREMENT

Make the comparison harder to fool.

17 Same test. Same conditions. Better comparison.

Keep equipment, warm-up, instructions, timing, order, and scoring as consistent as practical.

18 Track the result and its cost.

Record output beside effort, errors, symptoms, and recovery. Performance without context tells only half the story.

EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

A repeatable test is not automatically a valid test. Use repeated trends, explicit scoring, and qualified interpretation.

Sources: NIST TN 1297, Appendix D1 (repeatability and reproducibility)

07 - MARTIAL ARTS

Train perception, choice, action, and exit as one chain.

19 Fast and wrong is still wrong.

Score false starts, wrong choices, unsafe continuation, and missed cues alongside speed.

20 Pressure-test progressively; a safe exit is the win condition.

Add uncertainty only with qualified supervision, clear rules, stop signals, protective equipment, and lawful objectives.

EVIDENCE BOUNDARY

Simple reaction-time gains do not automatically transfer to complex real-world decisions, and controlled drills cannot prove survival effectiveness.

Sources: PMID 34393739 | PMID 31448120

KEEP THE MAXIM. INSPECT THE SOURCE.

Memorable does not have to mean misleading.

The public library links each chapter to its research sources and explains what each result does not establish. If a rule stops fitting the evidence, the rule changes.

Full library: <https://art-of-survival.com/pages/fast-study?view=cheat-codes-library>

Corrections and topic suggestions: <https://art-of-survival.com/pages/fast-study?view=ideas-collaboration>

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