



**“A Letter from a Curves Fitness Technician”**  
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This is an e-mail I received from a Curves Fitness Technician who read my ‘Analysis of The Curves Fitness Program’ article also posted on this site. I have plugged in my answers to this young lady’s questions and they should be of interest to anyone who wants to know how the Curves fitness program could be improved.

“Dear Kyle,

You generously provided some very helpful information your analysis of Curves. I am a senior at Sacramento State University, and I have worked in the fitness industry for five years to support my way through college. Throughout the years, I have been committed to educating myself with valuable and supported fitness related information so that I can confidently answer questions I am asked on a daily basis. In these five years, I continue to hear the same contradicting messages that confuse and frustrate people who truly want to work out efficiently and safely.”

**\*\*\*I commend you for educating yourself on a regular basis. The problem with educating yourself is that you must be careful who you learn from and be careful what you read. There is a lot of garbage information out there. I recommend studying some of the books listed in the back of my e-book (available at [www.HomeGymSecrets.com/ebook.html](http://www.HomeGymSecrets.com/ebook.html)), studying anatomy and physiology texts, and reading information from some of the major certification organizations such as NSCA, ACSM, and ISSA.**

“Needing a change, I reduced my hours as a fitness instructor and obtained a position as a fitness technician at Curves.”

**\*\*\*I am curious. What is involved in being a ‘Curves Fitness Technician’? Is there any training involved? What requirements do they have?**

“Some of the information they provide to their members contradicts what I stand by.”

**\*\*\*Understand that Curves is a VERY successful franchise due most likely to their marketing angle: Women’s Only Fitness in 30 minutes.” This is a very effective and very appealing marketing message that convinces many women to join their program. The Curves organization is thriving but I have seen behind the scenes. I have seen hundreds of women who have been injured or frustrated with their lack of results.**

Curves is not likely to change their approach because they are making money so at some point you'll have to decide to either leave Curves and train at a gym or continue to follow their ineffective recommendations. It's up to you.

"They tell their members to work out in 65-75% of their maximum heart rate and no higher if they want to burn stored body fat most efficiently. So more than half my members work to slow down their heart rate during their 30-minute workout. That just doesn't seem right. I feel that I am robbing these vulnerable people of a true workout by telling them to slow down."

**\*\*\*Your intuition is right. This is just plain dumb and based on outdated research. Exercise physiologists once believed that we burned more fat if we stayed in this so-called "fat burning zone" but today we know that it comes down to calories burned. If you want to see better progress you need to burn more total calories. If you don't want to train longer (over 30 minutes here) then at some point the misled Curves members would need to work harder if they wanted to achieve greater results. This is an inherent problem with the Curves fitness program. As far as I am aware, there is no way for Curves members to achieve progressive overload the way the circuit is set up.**

"It frustrates me greatly. A Curves representative also trained us in another contradiction to my background knowledge by enforcing members and employees to never do exercises that focus on the lower part of the abdominal muscle. She says it only pulls on the hip flexor, which causes the stomach muscles to pull down and out, creating a "tummy pooch". She says we should only be focusing on working the upper portion of the stomach, which will pull the abs in and flat. I feel this information is self-prophecy to the equipment at Curves, which only works the upper abdominal region."

**\*\*\*I have to wonder what kind of training this Curves representative has had. First of all, there is no "upper" and "lower" abs. Your Rectus Abdominus muscles, the 6-Pack, is one muscle. Dr. Stuart McGill talked about this in his excellent book entitled "Low Back Disorders." Dr. McGill showed in laboratory studies that some people can in fact preferentially recruit certain portions of the abs but stated that these people are rare. He said that most people cannot preferentially recruit the upper or lower portion of their abs and contract the entire length of the muscle no matter what type of flexion exercise they perform! So the translation is that there is no upper and lower abs. A particular abdominal exercise may emphasize the upper or lower portion to a greater degree but you are never working just one or the other. Some of these exercise myths just refuse to die!**

Now, let's tackle the Curves Technician's recommendation to not perform 'lower-ab' exercise because they pull the stomach muscles down and create a 'tummy pouch.' I agree that most so-called lower ab exercises are garbage but NOT for the reason he gives (the hip flexors, the Iliacus and Psoas Major muscles, are attached to the transverse processes of the lower lumbar vertebrae and the Iliac Fossa which is the front side of your hip bone). So-called lower ab exercises such as Lying Leg Raises, Flutter kicks, etc are primarily recruiting the hip flexor muscles and the abdominals are simply playing a stabilizing role (they are isometrically contracting to hold the trunk still). The

problem with these lower ab exercises is the TREMENDOUS lower back shearing forces that are created in performing them!! If you have back pain then these should be the last exercises that you should be performing! Once again, check out Dr. McGill's excellent text to learn more about how these exercises affect the low back. So, long story short, skip the lower ab exercises and perform exercises like Planks, Side Planks, and controlled abdominal curl-ups. More importantly you need to get rid of the layers of abdominal fat covering your abdominal muscles if you ever want to see them!!

"Now, I do not feel that Curves is a bad place to workout. It is very beneficial towards a woman's body, providing a cardiovascular and strength training workout that they can fit into their busy schedule. As you said, it's great for beginners. However, I feel that it is my responsibility as a fitness trainer to provide these people, who desperately want to lose weight and will listen to whatever I say, with true information."

\*\*\*Once again, from a business standpoint a gym that offers 'women's only fitness in 30 minutes flat' is a great business model (wish I thought of it ☺). As I said in my Analysis of the Curves Fitness Program article there are inherent flaws in the equipment that they offer and the lack of variety and progressive overload in the program. The program, as it is structured is doomed to fail. Members who follow it will likely see good initial results if they are de-conditioned but once they have adapted to the stress of the program they will hit a plateau that they will not be able to break through because they cannot add weight to the exercises and they are falsely instructed to keep their heart rates in a low range. Improving your fitness is not as simple as showing up and 'doing the circuit.' There are other considerations that must be accounted for.

If I was you and wanted to make a lot of money I would put together a 29 minute fitness program for women only built around multi-joint free weight exercises (squats, lunges, deadlifts, chest presses, seated rows, pulldowns, overhead presses, and some core work) that progresses attendees through various fitness stages every 3-5 weeks. Each stage would be a little more challenging and would incorporate some different movements. The 29 minutes is just to 'one-up' on the existing Curves program. If a knowledgeable fitness professional were to create such a program I guarantee that the members would achieve MUCH BETTER results, suffer from less overuse injuries, and learn how to achieve real results that last! Once you start this business and make millions send me a royalty check OK? ☺

"Could you please provide me with good online or text sources where I can get un-biased, researched, quality fitness information? I want to give people information that is going to help them reach their goal that they work so hard towards."

\*\*\*My bookshelves are stacked with HUNDREDS of training, anatomy, and nutrition books! I probably get a new book every couple of weeks (my girlfriend hates it!) and I spend at least an hour every day reading articles and research studies about training and nutrition. If you want to know your stuff you have to put in the time. I could list tons of books but here are a few to get you started:

-Facts and Fallacies of Fitness by Dr. Mel Siff (a great read that dispels many of the myths that are floating around!)

-Read the text books by the NSCA and for the ISSA. These texts have great information pertinent for the folks you will be working with.

-Subscribe to the Home Gym Secrets Newsletter for a ton of great info from some of the nation's best personal trainers for free at [www.HomeGymSecrets.com](http://www.HomeGymSecrets.com)

-There are a ton more and if you look in the last section of my e-book you'll find a comprehensive list ([www.HomeGymSecrets.com/ebook.html](http://www.HomeGymSecrets.com/ebook.html)).

"I deeply appreciate you taking the time to offer any sources that would be helpful. Thank you for your dedication to spreading the truth about health and fitness."

Sincerely,

Anonymous

**\*\*\*My pleasure! I hope to help as many people as I can achieve their health and fitness goals and the only way we can do that is to educate more people with the right information.**

Train with purpose,

Kyle