

Quality vs. Quantity

**by
Dan Foley**

When it comes to training or nutrition, the question of quality versus quantity always arises. So what is more important the quality of what we eat and the repetitions that we perform or the quantity of food we eat and the amount of weight and number of repetitions that we perform?

Let's talk about nutrition first since about 90% of our body composition results come from nutrition. Should we be more concerned with the quality of the food that we are eating or with the quantity of food that we are eating? First of all, if you are trying to lose weight then you must be in a caloric deficit, which means you must consume fewer calories than you expend on a daily basis. If you are trying to gain weight then you must be in a caloric surplus on a daily basis. So yes, the quantity of food that you consume does matter, but this is not the whole story. I would argue that the quality of the food that you consume is probably more important than the quantity of food you consume. It is possible to be in a caloric deficit and not get leaner because the wrong foods are eaten.

The quality of the foods you eat determines the hormonal response of your diet. If your hormones are out of balance then it is going to be impossible to change your body. When someone first comes to our facility and wants to get leaner we are usually more concerned with the quality of their diet than the quantity of their diet. Why? When the right foods are eaten the body's appetite and hormones will regulate themselves and will make it easier to control the quantity of calories that are eaten. The typical person who is dieting today is so concerned with the quantity of calories that they consume. Most dietitians will tell you that if you want to lose weight then you simply must eat less, but this is not the case. The problem with this is that the majority of dietitians have no background on hormonal balance and how they affect body fat and appetite. As a society we have been lied to. We have been told for years that the number of calories we eat is the only thing that matters. This is bad information because the quality of the calories we consume is more important than the quantity. When the quality is good the quantity tends to take care of itself. Diets and calorie counting with no concern for quality are not a recipe for success when it comes to changing your body. Improve the quality of your diet and then refine the quantity if you want to make lasting body composition changes.

So what is more important when it comes to working out? Should we worry about the quality of our movements or should we worry about the quantitative aspects of our workouts? Just as with the nutrition my first recommendation is that people always focus on quality when they start a program. If you focus on developing good technique and movement patterns when beginning a program you are setting yourself up for more progress in the long run. When people try to advance their weights and reps too fast with improper technique and range of motion they are setting themselves up for failure. We see this many times with squats. Many people come into our facility with poor squat mechanics and try to load up the weight. These people reach their ceiling very quickly and stop making gains in their strength. When your mechanics are poor you are going to hit a wall with the amount of weight that you

can lift. You are also greatly increasing your chances of injury. So our first recommendation for people coming into our facility is that we want to develop proper technique and range of motion and then progressively add the weight.

Progressive resistance is the key to making gains over the long term. One of the secrets to making lasting progress with someone who hasn't worked out in a while is starting with light weights and low workloads and then gradually adding more weight and volume from there. Our bodies adapt to the demands that we put on them. So if someone hasn't worked out with weights before then even very light weights and low workloads will stimulate improvements in beginners. By starting with very light weights and low workloads and focusing on great technique we are able to improve the quality of our movements and still improve strength and body composition because this workout is more demanding than what the person was doing prior to this. This gives us much more room to make progress over time. Many trainers will make the mistake of starting out with either too much weight or volume with a beginning trainee. All this does is make the client very sore and cause them to reach their limits faster.

So the answer to the question of what is more important quality or quantity is BOTH. Both the quality and the quantity of your nutrition and workouts are important. The advice that I would give to someone who is just starting would be to focus on the quality of the foods that you eat and the movements that you perform and then gradually start to think about the quantity side of the equation. Once you get the hang of the quality then you can individualize your program more and more by focusing on quantity.