



STEVIE RAE

ROOT YOURSELF

GETTING BACK IN THE GYM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 INTRODUCTION

04 WHY YOU WILL FAIL

06 THE SCIENCE BEHIND CONNECTION

07 RECONNECTION PHASE

08 YOUR FIRST WEEK BACK PLAN

09 EXERCISE VARIATIONS

14 HOW HARD SHOULD YOU TRAIN?

15 SECOND WEEK PROGRESSION

16 BE YOUR BEST SELF

INTRODUCTION

If you've been away from the gym for weeks, months, or even years, *this guide is for you.*

Many people make the same mistake when returning to training. They try to train like the person they used to be.

They chase old numbers.

They compare themselves to their strongest self.

They leave the gym exhausted, sore, and discouraged.

A week later they're nowhere to be seen.

The goal of your first week back is not to get fit.

The goal is to rebuild the habit.

Think of this week as reconnecting with your body rather than challenging it.

By the end of this guide you'll know exactly how to ease back into training, rebuild confidence, and create momentum without overwhelming yourself.

WHY MOST PEOPLE FAIL WHEN THEY RETURN TO THE GYM

When motivation is high, people often train harder than they should.

This creates three problems:

1. Excessive Muscle Soreness

When you've been inactive, your muscles become less accustomed to training stress.

A very intense session creates large amounts of muscle damage which can leave you extremely sore for several days.

This soreness can make the next session feel impossible.

2. Motivation Crashes

Motivation is emotional.

Consistency is behavioural.

If your first workout feels disappointing because you're weaker than before, motivation often drops rapidly.

WHY MOST PEOPLE FAIL WHEN THEY RETURN TO THE GYM

3. Identity Conflict

You remember who you were.

Your body reflects who you've recently been.

The gap between the two can feel frustrating.

The solution is not to force your body to perform at its old level.

The solution is to gradually bridge the gap.

THE SCIENCE OF THE MIND-MUSCLE CONNECTION

The mind-muscle connection refers to consciously focusing on the muscle you're trying to work during an exercise.

Research suggests that directing attention towards a specific muscle can improve muscle activation.

Think about the difference between:

Pulling a weight from A to B

vs

Actively squeezing the target muscle throughout the movement.

The second approach helps improve awareness, technique, and muscle recruitment.

This is especially important after time away from training.

RECONNECTION PHASE

TRAIN EACH
MUSCLE
GROUP
SEPARATELY



LEAVE EVERY
SESSION
FEELING LIKE
YOU COULD DO
MORE

USE LIGHTER
WEIGHTS

USE HIGHER
REPETITIONS

FOCUS ON
MOVEMENT
QUALITY

This approach helps restore what scientists call neuromuscular efficiency.

In simple terms:

Your brain becomes better at communicating with your muscles again.

The goal isn't to challenge your muscles.

The goal is to reconnect with them.

FIRST WEEK PLAN

DAY 1 - CHEST

Choose 3-4 exercises:

Machine Chest Press
Dumbbell Bench Press
Push-Ups
Cable Flyes
Resistance Band Presses

Perform:

3 sets
12-15 reps
60-90 seconds rest

Focus on:

Slow lowering phase
Full range of motion
Chest contraction

DAY 2 - BACK

Choose 3-4 exercises:

Lat Pulldown
Low Row
Single Arm Dumbbell Row
Barbell Bent Over Row
Gorilla Rows

Perform:

3 sets
12-15 reps
60-90 seconds rest

Focus on:

Pulling with your elbows
Squeezing your shoulder blades
Controlled movement

DAY 3 - LEGS

Choose 4 exercises:

Goblet Squat
Leg Press
Walking Lunges
Stiff Leg Romanian Deadlift
Step-Ups

Perform:

3 sets
12-15 reps
60-90 seconds rest

Focus on:

Control
Balance
Technique

Not weight.

DAY 4 - SHOULDERS

Choose 3-4 exercises:

Machine Shoulder Press
Dumbbell Press
Lateral Raises
Rear Delt Flyes
High rows

Perform:

3 sets
12-15 reps
60-90 seconds rest

Focus on:

Smooth movement
No momentum
Feeling the muscle work

DAY 5 - ARMS

Choose 4 exercises:

Bicep Curl Variation
Hammer Curl
Tricep Pushdown
Overhead Tricep Extension

Perform:

3 sets
12-15 reps
60-90 seconds rest

Focus on:

Full contraction
Controlled lowering
Quality over quantity

DAY 6+7 - REST

EXERCISE VARIATIONS

MACHINES

What Are They?

Machines guide your movement through a fixed path.

Examples include:

- Chest Press Machine
- Leg Press
- Lat Pulldown
- Seated Row
- Leg Extension
- Hamstring Curl

Benefits

Reduced Coordination Demands

Machines remove much of the balance and stabilisation requirements.

This allows you to focus entirely on the target muscle.

For example:

A machine chest press requires far less stabilisation than a dumbbell bench press.

This means you can concentrate solely on feeling your chest work.

Best For

- Beginners
- Returning gym-goers
- Muscle isolation
- Building confidence
- Learning movement patterns

Improved Mind-Muscle Connection

Because stability demands are lower, machines are excellent for rebuilding awareness of a muscle after time away from training.

This is one reason bodybuilders often use machines during rehabilitation or when returning from injury.

Safer When Fatigued

Machines generally reduce the risk of technique breakdown because the movement path is guided.

This makes them particularly useful during the first few weeks back.

Limitations

Machines train muscles very effectively but often require less stabilisation from the body.

For long-term athleticism and functional strength, they should be combined with free-weight exercises.

EXERCISE VARIATIONS

DUMBBELLS

What Are They?

Free weights that allow each side of the body to work independently.

Examples include:

- Dumbbell Bench Press
- Goblet Squat
- Dumbbell Row
- Shoulder Press
- Lunges

Benefits

Increased Range Of Motion

Dumbbells often allow greater movement than machines.

For example:

A dumbbell chest press typically allows a deeper stretch than a machine press.

This can increase muscle recruitment.

Best For

- Building balanced strength
- Correcting imbalances
- Increasing muscle growth
- Improving coordination

Greater Stabiliser Activation

Because the weight is not fixed, more muscles are required to control movement.

This can improve overall strength and coordination.

Identifying Weaknesses

Machines can sometimes allow the stronger side of the body to compensate.

Dumbbells expose these imbalances. This helps create more balanced development.

Limitations

They require more technique and stability.

For someone returning after months away from training, they may initially feel awkward.

EXERCISE VARIATIONS

KETTLEBELLS

What Are They?

A weighted ball with a handle that shifts the centre of mass away from the hand.

Examples include:

- Kettlebell Swings
- Goblet Squats
- Turkish Get-Ups
- Farmer Carries
- Single Arm Presses

Benefits

Builds Strength And Cardio Simultaneously

Many kettlebell exercises train both muscular endurance and cardiovascular fitness. This makes them extremely time efficient.

Best For

- Functional fitness
- Athletic performance
- Core development
- Conditioning
- Full-body training

Improves Movement Quality

Kettlebells challenge balance, posture, coordination, and body awareness. This helps rebuild movement confidence after time away from training.

Develops Core Stability

Nearly every kettlebell exercise requires significant core involvement. This teaches the body to transfer force efficiently.

Limitations

Technique is important. Movements such as swings and cleans should be learned gradually before using heavier weights.

EXERCISE VARIATIONS

RESISTANCE BANDS

What Are They?

Elastic bands that create resistance as they stretch.

Examples include:

- *Band Rows*
- *Band Pull-Aparts*
- *Band Squats*
- *Band Chest Presses*
- *Band Lateral Raises*
-

Benefits

Low Joint Stress

Bands create less impact on the joints compared to many free-weight exercises.

This can be useful for people returning after long periods of inactivity.

Best For

- Home workouts
- Warm-ups
- Injury recovery
- Joint-friendly training
- Travelling

Portable And Accessible

Bands can be used almost anywhere. This removes many barriers to exercise.

Variable Resistance

Resistance increases as the band stretches.

This creates tension throughout the movement and can improve muscle activation.

Limitations

Progressive overload can be harder to measure compared to traditional weights.

EXERCISE VARIATIONS

BODY WEIGHT

What Are They?

Using your own body as resistance.

Examples include:

- Push-Ups
- Squats
- Lunges
- Planks
- Pull-Ups

Benefits

Teaches Movement Control

Before loading movement with external resistance, it is often beneficial to master your own bodyweight.

Best For

- Rebuilding confidence
- Learning movement patterns
- Training anywhere
- Improving relative strength

Builds Confidence

Many people returning to training feel intimidated by gym equipment. Bodyweight exercises provide an accessible starting point.

Highly Functional

Your body learns to move itself efficiently through space. This transfers well into daily life.

WHICH SHOULD YOU USE?

For your first week back:

Machines = Best for rebuilding confidence

Dumbbells = Best for rebuilding coordination

Kettlebells = Best for full-body movement

Bands = Best for accessibility and recovery

Bodyweight = Best for relearning movement patterns

Remember:

The best exercise is not the most advanced.

The best exercise is the one you can perform safely, consistently, and with good technique.

The goal of your first week back is not to prove your fitness.

It is to rebuild it.

HOW HARD SHOULD YOU TRAIN?

Use this simple rule:

Finish every set feeling like you could perform 3-4 more repetitions.

This allows you to:

Recover faster

Reduce soreness

Build confidence

Create consistency

Remember:

The goal is not maximum effort.

The goal is maximum adherence.

SECOND WEEK PROGRESSION

Once the first week feels comfortable:

Increase weight slightly.

Keep technique the same.

Gradually reduce repetitions into the 8-12 range.

Begin introducing more challenging sessions.

The foundation has now been rebuilt.

BE YOUR BEST SELF



Now that you know how to ease yourself back into training, why not take the next step with one of my training programmes?

Each programme is delivered through an easy-to-use app designed to keep you organised, motivated, and accountable throughout your fitness journey.

Inside the app, you'll be able to:

- Track your progress with body measurements and progress photos
- Follow a structured workout plan scheduled directly into your calendar
- Access exercise demonstration videos to help you maintain proper form
- Log your sets, reps, weights, and workout times with ease
- Use the built-in rest timer to stay focused and keep your sessions running smoothly

By following a structured programme, you'll spend less time wondering what to do in the gym and more time making progress. Every workout includes alternative exercise options, giving you flexibility if equipment is unavailable or if you have personal limitations or injuries.

All programmes can be completed independently or alongside in-person personal training sessions.

Take the guesswork out of your training, stay consistent, and keep yourself accountable with a programme designed to help you succeed.

STEVIE RAE

**THANK
YOU**

WEBSITE

StevieRae.UK