

# 10 SECRETS TO CROSSFIT 4 LIFE



THE DOCTORS OF  
PHYSICAL THERAPY  
*Live Life Today*

These 10 Secrets to CrossFit for life have been compiled after countless hours of working with CrossFit athletes of all levels. The issues that plague the top athletes, are the same ones that plague the average CrossFit junkie, just at another level. Inside this quick read you'll find 10 tips that you can put into action immediately and find benefit. It's easy to get overwhelmed if you try all 10 tips at once. Pick one or two to start, and master them over the next few weeks. The long game is really about building good habits that will improve your technique, strength, and durability in CrossFit.

## 1. Master Your Breathing

This is #1 because when you master your breathing you'll unlock some huge benefits. Among those benefits are increased power and stamina. Learning to breathe correctly will also have benefits for your daily life including increased energy, and increased relaxation.

Take a deep breath, right now. Just breathe in all the air you possibly can. Take note when you do it, if your shoulders elevate or your stomach expands. Which one happens first? If you're in the large group of people who elevate their ribcage to breathe in, you have a lot to gain from breathing mastery and activating your diaphragm muscle. Start simply by sitting upright and focusing on taking big breaths into the belly, not into your ribcage. There are several progressions of this, but that's a good place to start.

Now, when you're lifting the key is to slowly let air out as you lift or exert force. Whether your pushing, or pulling, your exhale should be synced up with when you're exerting more effort. Don't hold your breath, while lifting heavy weights. Holding your breath can lead to lightheadedness, dizziness, and even abdominal herniations.

## 2. Land Like a Ninja

When jumping onto a box, off of a box, or over a bar, this is a super important concept. "Land like a ninja" means don't let anyone hear you landing! It shouldn't sound like a bowling ball hitting concrete when you land on top of that box. If it does you've only got a few months (or years if you're lucky) before you wear out important ligaments and cartilage in your ankles and knees.

Landing quietly will force you to absorb the shock and use your muscles to land. Yes at first it might mean more muscle soreness and burning during your workout, but what are you here for?

## 3. Squat With Your Ankles

This is for you if you have trouble getting deeper in your squat. Often times people focus on stretching out the hips when they can't go lower in their squat, but they forget about their ankles

which play a HUGE role in you getting down lower. If you've had a lot of trouble getting lower in your squat, and hip mobility and strength doesn't seem to be doing the trick, switch it up and do some calf and ankle mobility work. These certainly include foam rolling and stretching your calves.



#### 4. Mobility 1st

A lot of people will focus on mobility *after* a workout. There are two big reasons to do it *before* your workout instead.

Reason #1: You're only human. Leaving the mobility work for after the workout means that you're much more likely to have an excuse to avoid it. Dinner needs to get started, the kids need to be picked up, you've got an extra errand to run. The list goes on. Don't kid yourself! Show up early and get your mobility work in and conquer your inner excuse-maker.

Reason #2: Doing mobility work before your workout means that you will actually be training with improved mobility and moving better during your workout. This will make it so that your body is able to develop strength around these new ranges of motion and make you much more likely to keep it. The more you keep, the less you'll need to keep mobilizing!

#### 5. Work On Your Form 1-2days/week

Lifting heavy weights is fun. It's a good challenge, it gets your heart rate up, and it feels good to throw some things around before or after a long day. If you don't take any days to deload and work on form, training heavy every day will eventually burn your body out. It's like driving a car

at 100mph day after day without taking the time to do any maintenance on it. Eventually it'll break down and be much more difficult to fix.

Take 1-2 days a week to unload to 50% and just work on perfect execution. You may be surprised. Your body will thank you, you'll feel better, and you might even notice that you get stronger at a quicker rate.

## 6. Stabilize Your Spine

Lifting without good spinal stability is a recipe for disaster. If you don't feel like you're actively engaging your abdominal muscles during heavy lifting, start paying close attention to that today. If you are like most people who work at a desk all day, and you're ever thought to yourself "I don't know what people mean when they say to activate my core" or "what core?" This applies directly to you. Do not pass go, do not collect \$200. Start learning how to activate your core muscles by asking your coaches if they have any tips. The easiest place to start is by lying on your back and drawing your belly button towards your spine as you flatten your back completely against the ground. If you happen to try this, the next step will be to make sure you're not holding your breath. You should be able to hold your core tight and breathe at the same time.

## 7. Don't Run Far In Lifting Shoes - But If You Do...

Lifting shoes are not made for running. If you land on your heels like most people they'll give you shin splints and a variety of other injuries. If you don't want to change shoes for running, simply lean forward and run on your toes. This will absolutely burn your calves out if you're not used to it, but the choice is yours. Burn your calves out, have shin splints, or change shoes.

## 8. Find Your Rhythm

This is a great trick for improving performance and stamina. When you're in the AMRAM from your worst nightmares, the best thing to do is find a rhythm and stick with it. When you notice you're breaking from that rhythm take a short breather. Being able to key in on this will mean that you'll avoid pushing into the injury zone where your form starts to fail.

When you're training for a competition, know your usual rhythm, then try to train while making your rhythm gradually faster. Eventually you'll push your normal rhythm to be a little faster, and you'll have done it while keeping good form and avoiding putting yourself in dangerous positions.

## 9. Start Where Your At - Track It

Tracking your progress is huge. It can help you to realize how far you've come, and also help you to be smart when going for a new PR. You should be able to get stronger by a few percentage points each month. If you're not seeing that, there are a couple of possibilities.

1. You're neglecting your stabilizing muscles. These muscles, such as the rotator cuff, are hugely important. If they aren't strong, then the big muscles that lift all the weight can't do their job well because they're also trying to stabilize the joints.
2. You're over-training. This means that it's probably time to take a few days to deload and work on form at 50%. Don't be afraid that you're going to lose all of your hard-earned gains. Your body will use the opportunity to let the muscles recover and get stronger and then you'll bust through your plateaus.

## 10. Fix Injury Quickly

This is a big one. Most people will deal with a nagging injury for months before getting it checked out. By the time months have gone by, you're moving completely differently because your body has been trying to avoid further injury and discomfort.



Getting your injury checked out quickly allows you to get a game-plan to fix it well before this happens. Not all doctors are created equally though. If you go to an MD you'll likely get told to rest, take pills, and ice it. You'll want to find a specialist who understands performance, and how to keep you training and adjusting your program, while getting better all at the same time.

The PT's at The Doctors of Physical Therapy specialize in keeping athletes of all levels in the game while simultaneously fixing their injury. Check out our website at [www.thedoctorsofpt.com](http://www.thedoctorsofpt.com) and while you're there, if you feel like we can help you, fill out a form to contact us and we'll be in touch.

We know what it's like to love to be active. CrossFit is more than exercise, it's personal development, a community, and a way to take care of your health and have others to suffer with you. Enjoy your workouts, let us know what you thought of this book, and we'll look forward to helping you if you need us.

Take care,  
Dr. Tom Padilla

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The Doctors of Physical Therapy, LLC  
7399 E, Tierra Buena Ln, Suite 101  
Scottsdale, AZ 85260  
480-482-0651

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