American Council on Exercise (ACE's) Top Ten Mistakes People Make in the Gym

Finding or making time to exercise is the first step toward improving your health, but it's not the only step. Workouts can be challenging and mistakes in the gym are common. At times, these mistakes can cause mild strains or more significant injuries. By changing small parts of your routine, you'll begin to see incredible results.

1. **The all-or-nothing approach.** Not having a full hour to exercise is no reason to skip your workout. Research shows that even 10 minutes of exercise can provide important health benefits.
2. **Unbalanced strength-training programs.** Most people tend to focus on certain muscles, such as the abdominals or biceps, because they have a greater impact on appearance or it is where they feel strongest. But to achieve a strong, balanced body, you have to train all the major muscle groups.

3. **Bad form.** The surest way to get injured in a gym is to use bad form. For example, allowing the knee to extend beyond the toes during a lunge or squat can put undue stress on the knee, and using momentum to lift heavy weights or not exercising through a full range of motion will produce less-than-optimal results.
4. **Not progressing wisely.** Exercising too much, too hard or too often is a common mistake made by many fitness enthusiasts. Rest and gradual progression are important components of a safe and effective exercise program.

5. **Not enough variety.** Too many people find a routine or physical activity they like—and then never change it. Unchanging workouts can lead to boredom, plateaus and, worse case, can lead to injury or burnout.
6. **Not adjusting machines to one's body size.** Most exercise equipment is designed to accommodate a wide range of body types and sizes. But it's up to you to adjust each machine to your body's unique needs. Using improperly adjusted machines will lead to less-than-optimal results and increase your risk of injury.

7. **Focusing on anything but your workout.** The importance of being "mindful" of the task at hand cannot be overstated. Reading or watching TV can adversely affect the quality of your workout because the distraction can literally slow you down.
8. **Not properly cooling down after your workout.** Too many people wrap up their workouts and head straight to the showers. Instead, take a few minutes to lower your heart rate and stretch your muscles. This not only improves flexibility, but also helps prepare the body for your next workout.

9. **Poor gym etiquette.** This can range from simply being rude—lingering on machines long after you are done or chatting loudly on your cell phone—to poor hygiene and not wiping your sweat from machines once you're finished. Always be considerate of other exercisers.
10. **Not setting realistic goals.** Unrealistic and vaguely stated goals are among the leading causes of exercise dropout. The key is to establish a training goal that is specific and appropriate for your fitness and skill levels—something a bit challenging but not overly difficult.