

Resistance Bands in all their Glory

When Covid hit this year, we had to make some dramatic changes to the way we train at bootcamp. One of these things was to move away from the classic free weight based sessions using dumbbells and kettlebells and other functional equipment. And we had to adopt a slightly different training technique. Resistance bands. But are they as good as free weights and do they still give the same benefits to your training? The answers may surprise you...

Resistance bands are ultimately an over sized elastic band. They stretch, they come in all shapes and sizes and they come in many different resistances. Best of all, they are mobile. No need to cart around 14 pairs of dumbbells in your car boot for a good training session, just pack your 3 resistance bands and off you go. You can even pack them in a suitcase and go on holidays with them. No slacking off when you have a good set of resistance bands.

They are also perfect to cater for all fitness levels. If you are just starting with your training, start with your lighter bands until you build strength and confidence in the movements. Then slowly move up the resistance.

With the right resistance band, you can pretty much mimic any free weight exercise. You can target every muscle in the body and the control required to use the bands can benefit your strength more than traditional weight training. They help activate and tone muscles as well as build strength and improve neuromuscular pathways between your brain and your muscles, giving you better muscle control.

Unlike free weights, resistance bands do not rely on gravity to provide the resistance so you get muscle activation through a full range of motion and must use your muscles to stabilise the band to ensure it does not flick back into position. This stabilisation often means you need to switch on your core (without even realising it) to maintain posture and good balance, and I don't think anyone will complain with a little extra core work. They are also fantastic for injury and rehab as you can choose the load of the resistance band and focus on light training with minimal force on the joints.

The best part of resistance bands is that they are not expensive. You can stock up on 3 different level resistance bands and some booty bands, for a good all over body workout, all for under \$50.

Although there will always be differences between free weights and resistance band exercises, both are effective. Because either way, your body is moving against resistance, and that will give your muscles an effective workout.