



Maintaining your Olympic Bars

Regardless of what you spent on your [Olympic bars](#), they are an investment. And, if you operate a gym, health club or high intensity training facility, you know those bars are definitely a popular piece of equipment, subject to a lot of wear and tear. Ask yourself, "What do we do to maintain our Olympic Bars?" You'll probably end up shrugging. Many tend to not really maintain their bars despite their importance and usually manufacturers don't offer up any care and maintenance tips beyond: Don't drop or overload the bars.



So, what should fitness facility owners and managers as well as home gym enthusiasts bear in mind when it comes to keeping their Olympic bars at their best? Cleaning, rust prevention, and storage are top considerations.

Combating Rust

Fact 1: Bars are made of steel and steel rusts when wet. Fact 2: When people workout, they sweat. So... when sweat gets on the bars, you can end up with rust. Bar manufacturers try to avert this by placing a coating on the bars. Common coatings include black oxide (the least expensive), chrome, zinc, and fabricating bars out of stainless steel, which is the most expensive option. However, regardless of coatings, gyms must still maintain their bars.

Don't Chalk it Up

If your gym provides [chalk](#), clean off the knurling on your bars on a regular basis. Depending on how much chalk gets used, this task could be performed daily. (Also remind members who bring their own chalk to clean it off as a courtesy to others.) Think about it... Chalk is used to dry sweaty palms by absorbing moisture, so when chalk remains on the bar, it's absorbing moisture too. That means any moisture, including humidity in the air. When the chalk absorbs this and holds it on the steel bar, it's going to be susceptible to rust. So, to keep those bars of yours from rusting, it's essential to clean off the chalk. A small stiff nylon bristle brush will do the trick: Simply go over the knurling with the brush to remove caked-in dirt and prevent future rust.

Wipe Out

Regularly wipe down all your bars with 3-in-1 Oil or a light coat of [WD-40](#). How often you do this depends on how often a bar is used. If you work out at home, twice a month should suffice. If you're responsible for a gym, then once a week would be

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good. If there is high humidity at your location and bars are used often, you may need to wipe them down on a more frequent basis. WD-40 is a good choice because it displaces water and dries quickly. Just spray some on a rag and wipe down the entire bar with a good even coat. If you use 3-in-1 Oil, wipe a thin coating on the entire bar, have it sit on the bar overnight, and then wipe it down once again. While 3-in-1 Oil does a great job, it will leave the bars feeling a bit greasier than WD-40.

Since today's bars are crafted to be mostly maintenance-free, there's usually no need to oil the sleeves as these often have oil-impregnated bushings or bearings. Some high-end bars feature small oil holes in their sleeves so you can drop in a little bit of 3-in 1 Oil allowing it to work into the sleeve. (Note: Never use WD-40 for this particular of application.) Do this after use, then check the bar before using it again to see if excess oil may have leaked out and just wipe it up.

Storage Matters

Bars should never be stored with any weight on them. NEVER! If you or your club members leave weight on a bar, you're asking for a bent bar -- especially if the bar is on a rack. While bars are designed to withstand weight, they aren't designed to permanently hold this weight. You've got to strip your bars, and in the case of gyms, encourage members to do this. Also be prepared to do some work over the course of the day, removing any weights that may have been left on and put the plates away. Besides protecting the bars, it keeps gym members happy if they don't have to keep stripping weights others left behind.

Your unloaded bars may be stored on a rack or [bar stand](#). Horizontal storage is preferred, however, its best not to not store your needle bearing bars in a horizontal bar holder. This can cause damage to the needle bearings when the bar is dropped into the holder. A majority of gyms using needle-bearing bars for Olympic lifts avoid damage by utilizing wall racks for storing this type of bar.

It's relatively simple to maintain your Olympic bars with just a little bit of time and effort. It's worth it to protect your investment in this equipment and keep it useful for years to come. If you have any tips on maintaining Olympic bars, feel free to share them with us at info@sportsmith.com.

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