
THE DRILLS

On the first pages of *Power to the People!* you discovered the only power tool which can transform your body—high muscular tension. Since then you have been steadily adding power features to your tool—unique techniques like hyperirradiation, pre-tension, or successive induction which amplify tension and your gains. You have sharpened your tool with the discoveries of low rep training not to failure, cycling, and other subtle yet vital keys to success. It is time to pick up your power attachments kit—a select group of exercises which will forge your body into an off-planet rock if used in the context of the *Power to the People!* plan.

▼
The whole thing will set you back by no more than \$150. Unlike Soloflex and other fancy coat hangers, hard core basics come cheap.



The Deadlift

Time to start by buying a 300 pound Olympic weight set: a barbell with plates. Even if you are as weak as your grandmother, still buy the whole thing (my grandmother beat me in arm-wrestling till I was fifteen). Eventually you will hopefully beat your grandmother, and, besides, the whole thing will set you back by no more than \$150. Unlike Soloflex and other fancy coat hangers, hard core basics come cheap.



Also get a rubber mat about seven feet long and three to four feet wide to protect your basement floor. About three quarters of an inch thickness should do. If you live in an apartment or an older building consider extra padding. If you are handling monstrous weights and/or you have to take extra precautions, follow the advice I got from Marty Gallagher. This powerlifting champ suggests that you get a thick sheet of plywood and set it on top of four old tires of the same size. No, the contraption does not feel like a water bed, promises Gallagher. Hammer a couple two by fours on the edges of the plywood parallel to the barbell. These lips should stop the bar from rolling off. Cover the works with a rubber mat. An overkill for most, salvation for some.

Set your shiny new bar on the mat and load it up with small plates. When you are loading the bar, make sure to keep your back straight and avoid twisting:

Develop good habits while the weights are light. Do not get sloppy. It is not the poundage, but poor alignment that gets you injured. Respect the weight, even if it is light.



Stand facing the bar with your feet the way you would have them for jumping: about one foot apart, with your toes pointing straight forward or slightly out. The barbell should be above the center of your feet.

Look right over your head and inhale as deeply as possible. Holding your breath, a very tight arch in your lower back, and keeping your shoulders

back, slowly descend to grip the bar. If you cannot maintain the arch even without a weight, you need to work on your hamstring flexibility. Get my book *Beyond Stretching: Russian Flexibility Breakthroughs* and fix it before attempting any deads.

Stay on your heels all the time and never let your eyes leave the ceiling. Your body will follow your head. If you look down, which is what everybody tends to do, you will do all the lifting with your back, rather than your legs. A bad move.

▼
Make a point of pushing your butt back as much as possible, as if sitting in a chair which is far behind you. You will feel like you are fighting your hamstrings to get down.



▼
Do not let your
knees go
forward, the
closer your shins
are to vertical,
the better.



Make a point of pushing your butt back as much as possible, as if sitting in a chair which is far behind you. You will feel like you are fighting your hamstrings to get down. It is good, they will tighten to contract more. Try this drill: Reach out for a stool with your butt as you are descending to grab the bar.

When you are squatting going down to grip the bar, your body should feel very tight. Visualize loading a very tight spring. Skinny Lamar Gant who has deadlifted five times his bodyweight, pound for pound more than anyone in the world, swears by this technique.

Make a point of pushing your butt back as much as possible, as if sitting in a chair which is far behind you. You will feel like you are fighting your hamstrings to get down. It is good, they will tighten to contract more powerfully when you start lifting the barbell. Do not let your knees go forward, the closer your shins are to vertical, the better.

Grip the bar without looking at it; your eyes should remain fixed on the ceiling throughout the lift. If you feel that you have not gripped it evenly, it is OK to adjust your grip. as long as you do not look down. If you fail, let go of the bell, stand up, and start all over.



1. Good Form—Note: the straight back.



1. Poor Form—Note: the curved back and forward lean.



▼
Use bad form
and find out
why there is a
'dead' in
the deadlift.
▲



It is alright if you are off by an inch or so; most real life activities are not symmetrical. Just make sure to stay tight during the lift and avoid any twisting.

▼
Some powerlifters flex their triceps as they are reaching for the bar to assure that their arms are straight. A good tip. Use it.
▲

Grip the bar with an alternate grip. It means one palm is facing forward, and the other one back. This weird move will help you to hold on to the bar better when the weights get heavy. If you have ever taken a self-defense class, you know that one thumb is weaker than four fingers. That is why you were taught to push against the assailant's thumbs to break his grip around your wrists. If you use a normal overhand grip on the bar, a heavy weight will eventually make your weaker thumbs give out. A staggered grip backs your thumbs up with the stronger fingers of your other hand. This maneuver will initially feel unnatural but you will get used to it. Remember to switch hands on every set to even out the load.



Try the alternate grip

Show time! You have held your breath, your head tilted back, and an arch in your spine all this time. Your knees are half bent and your hips are neither too high nor too low. Slowly and deliberately push the floor away with your feet, as if you are jumping in slow mo. Do not pull on the bar—you will only end up lifting it with your back and arms. Forget your arms, they are nothing but cables connecting the weight to your body. A Russian study by Sokolov determined that you lose 9% of your pulling strength if your head is down, 13% if your back is rounded, and a whopping 40% if you are pulling with bent arms! Besides, you do not strengthen your hips or thighs and risk a back injury if you are all humped over and yanking on the bar with your arms!



Flex the triceps before grabbing the bar

Some powerlifters flex their triceps as they are reaching for the bar to assure that their arms are straight. A good tip. Use it.



1. Poor Form—Note the angle of the shins



Poor lifting form demonstrated above. How are you going to get the bar past your knees if you pull straight up?

The weight should be deliberately 'squeezed' off the floor for safe and effective deadlift performance. Your knees should point in the same direction your feet are pointing at all times. Do not let them buckle in, which could be hard on your knee ligaments. Consciously keep your knees pointed forward throughout the lift. You may even have to think of pushing them out to keep them straight!

You have heard it before: keep you abs and glutes tight! Make a point that you keep your back locked at all times and keep your weight on your heels. If you are still looking at the ceiling, or far in front of you, like you should, it should not be a problem. But never twist or turn your neck when deadlifting! You are almost guaranteed a trip to a chiropractor if you do.

The bar should stay close to your legs at all times. It helps to think of pulling the

▼
**Never twist or
turn your
neck when
deadlifting!
You are almost
guaranteed a
trip to a
chiropractor
if you do.**
▲



1 . Good Form—Note: the bar is pulled toward the body



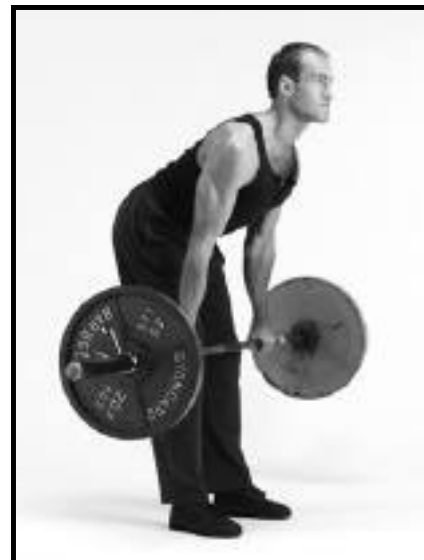
▼
The bar should stay close to your legs at all times. It helps to think of pulling the bar towards you rather than straight up
▲

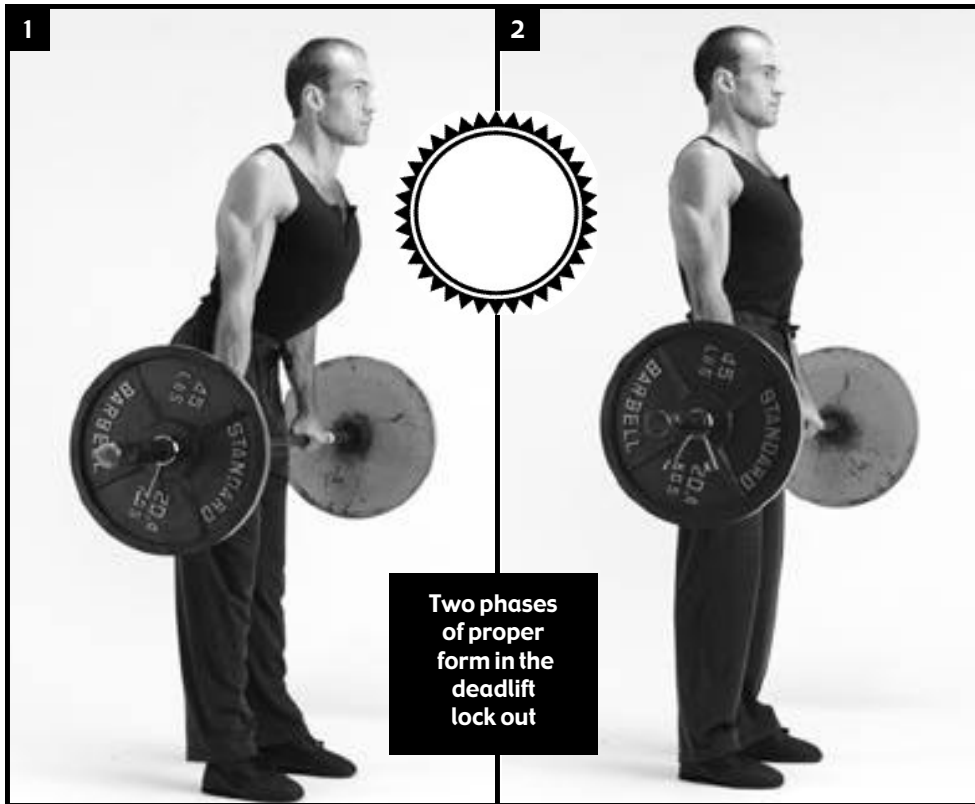
bar towards you rather than straight up:

If you have been doing everything by the book, by the time the bar has reached your knees, your shins should be vertical:

by the time the bar has reached your knees, your shins should be vertical

Once the bar has reached your knees, drive your hips forward while squeezing your butt





▼
A properly performed deadlift finish is crisp and mechanical, not flowing or draggy.
▲

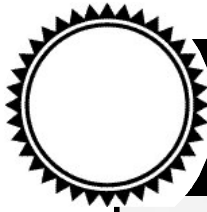
hard, as if pinching a coin. At the same time throw your shoulders back while keeping your chest high and back arched. A properly performed deadlift finish is crisp and mechanical, not flowing or draggy.

You will end up standing straight with the bar hanging in your straight arms and resting against your thighs. Do not exaggerate the finish by leaning back! It only puts unhealthy stress on your spine. Flexing your abs at this point will help to prevent you from leaning back.

Time to take a breather. Exhale half your air, inhale to the hilt, and head back to earth. For most exercises the rule of thumb is to lower the weight with control. The deadlift is an exception. An attempt to slowly lower the bar tends to throw the weight forward and overstress your back.

The proper way to get the bar home is to quickly push your glutes back—sitting in a chair, remember?—and let the bar nearly fall to the floor. Sticking your butt out will move your knees out of the barbell's way. Stay on your heels all the time and do not look down!





Proper down motion is the same as the upward one but faster. Push your butt back and let the bar almost fall past your knees. Go down with it.

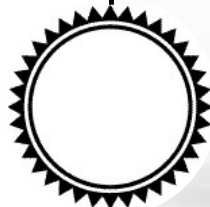


There is scientific data suggesting that controlled lowering of the weights is more important than lifting them for making the muscle grow. Deadlift is one of the few exercises which enables you to safely drop the weight after you have lifted it. One more reason to deadlift if you want to get stronger and harder without getting husky!

Do not purposefully drop the bar, however! Your hand or hands might get stuck and might get injured. Dropping with the bar is safer. Ditto for a time when for some reason you could not make the lift. Ideally it is 'never'.

**DO NOT SET THE DEADLIFT DOWN SLOWLY!
You will be pulled forward and might get hurt.**

For the next rep let go of the bar, stand up and start all over. If you hang on to the bar for the duration of the set, your form will surely deteriorate, and the weight will shift from your hips and thighs onto your back.



The Deadlift Highlights:

- Stay on your heels
- Keep your back arched
- Never look down
- Push the floor away
- Stay 'tight' and hold your air when lifting

The Sumo Deadlift (glute emphasis)

Don't get nervous now. You will not be breaking any bathroom scales! This deadlift is called 'sumo' because it is done with a wide stance and your arms inside your knees. Big Japanese dudes dig this stance because their thighs chafe less this way. One of the ladies I have coached insisted on calling these 'plie deadlifts' because 'sumo didn't sound feminine'. I said, what the hell, you could call it 'Bob' for all I care, just do them!



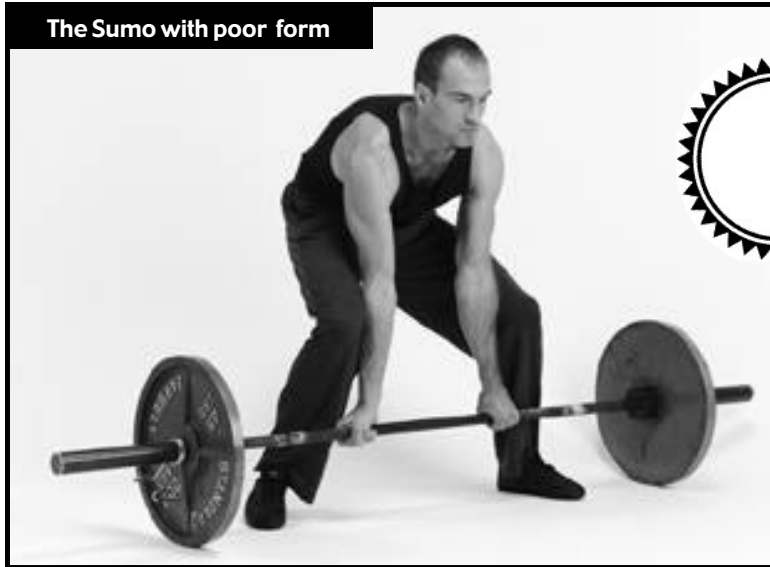
Some comrades choose sumos for the pointed effect they have on their glutes. Others, generally long backed and short armed folk, prefer it because it is more natural for their body structure. Some world class powerlifters start a cycle with the deadlift variation which is hardest for them, be it sumo or conventional, and then switch to their strong stance as the weight gets heavier and they approach the peak. It is a solid approach to training. Consider it.

Stand with your feet comfortably wide and your toes turned out thirty to forty five degrees. You should be able to reach the bar with your knees tracking your feet. If your turnout is inadequate and you cannot, off you go stretching your groin muscles!

▼
**Some comrades
choose sumos
for the pointed
effect they have
on their glutes.**
▲



The Sumo with poor form



Everything that applies to the conventional deadlift works for the sumo as well. One thing different is the lockout. You may have difficulty driving your hips through with a wide stance, the bar tends to drag.

Pushing your chest out while 'pinching a coin' between your buttocks will help. Also, think that you are trying to 'get tall':

The Romanian Deadlift—A tighter back arch and less straightened than usual



The Modified Romanian Deadlift for hamstring and calf emphasis

Modify the basic deadlift with the following.

Point your feet straight forward; no turnout. Make a point of keeping your weight on your heels and keeping your shins totally vertical. Imagine that you are stuck in cement up to your knees (for a few roubles it can be arranged).

Start the pull with your knees straighter than in the conventional deadlift, and your hips higher. Your hamstrings will be toast!



The Romanian Deadlift with a book added underfoot to blast the calves and hammies



To blast your hammies even more and give your calves something to think about, stick books or boards underneath the balls of your feet.

Make sure that you have adequate flexibility before taking up these deadlift variations.



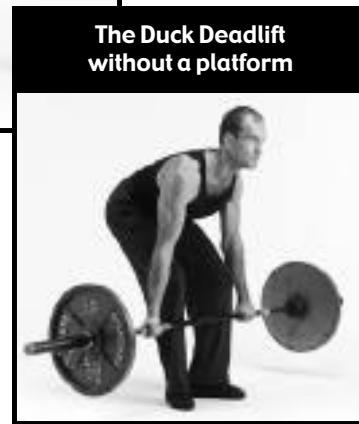


The Duck Deadlift off a Platform for quad emphasis

Turn your feet and knees out approximately forty-five degrees. Make sure that they keep pointing in the same direction for the duration of the drill.

As an options stand on a solid elevation of up to four inches to lengthen the pull and make your thighs more miserable. Using small plates on your bar also does the trick.

Keep your body more upright and your hips lower than in the conventional deadlift. Get going!





The Snatch Pull for upper lats and upper back emphasis

The Snatch Pull for lats and upper back emphasis

It is a conventional deadlift with a very wide overhand grip. Make sure that your shoulders and wrists can take it.

Use what weightlifters call the 'hook grip'. Wrap your index and, if possible your middle fingers around your thumbs. The hook grip is painful, but it enables you to hold on heavy weights without resorting to the staggered powerlifting grip. Eventually most people are not bothered by it.

Do everything by the basic deadlift book, but pay special attention to keeping your shoulder blades locked together. Finish the lift with a shrug, but do not pull with your biceps.



the hook grip



The Clean Pull (grip emphasis)

It is the same thing as the conventional deadlift, except the grip. The overhand—no hook—grip makes this drill an excellent hand and forearm developer.

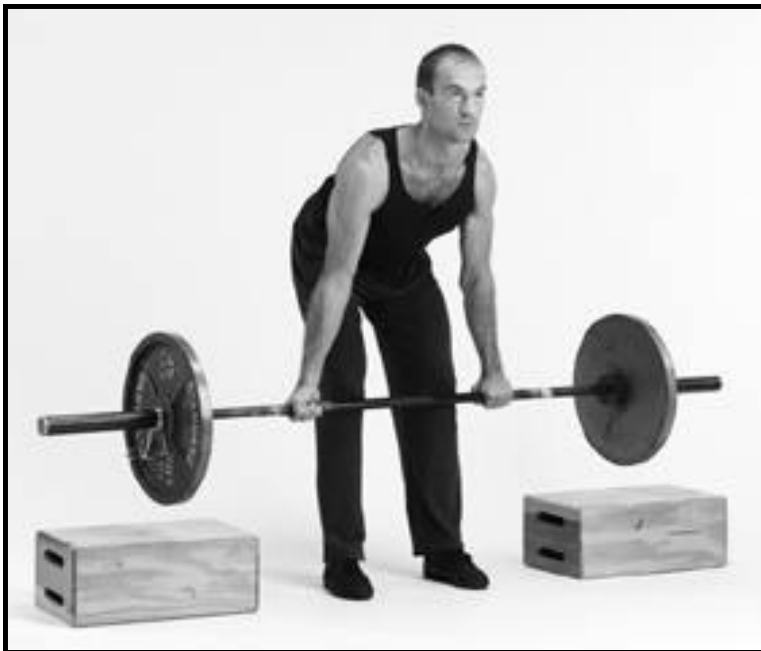
My favorite method of incorporating the clean pull into my training is to start a power cycle with it and switch to the staggered grip when I can no longer hold on to the weight.



The Deadlift Lockout, or the Health Lift (midsection, traps, and grip emphasis)

The deadlift from the knee level is the same thing as 'the health-lift' of the Civil War days! If you have access to a power rack, lockouts can be very beneficial. They enable you to handle a lot of weight and work a lot of muscle.

Perform a lockout like a standard staggered grip deadlift. Make a point of starting the pull by squeezing your butt, rather than pulling with your back. Keep everything tight.



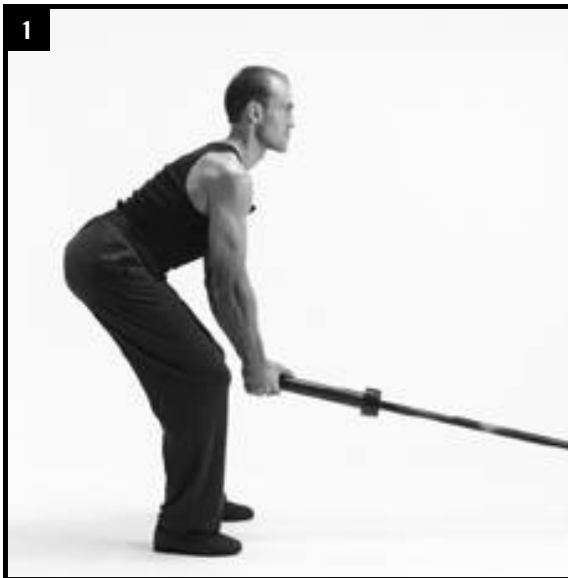
The Side Press

There are dozens of pressing movements: the bench press, the parallel bar dip, the incline dumbbell press... The old-fashioned side press is the press of choice for the exclusive *Power to the People!* program for seven reasons:

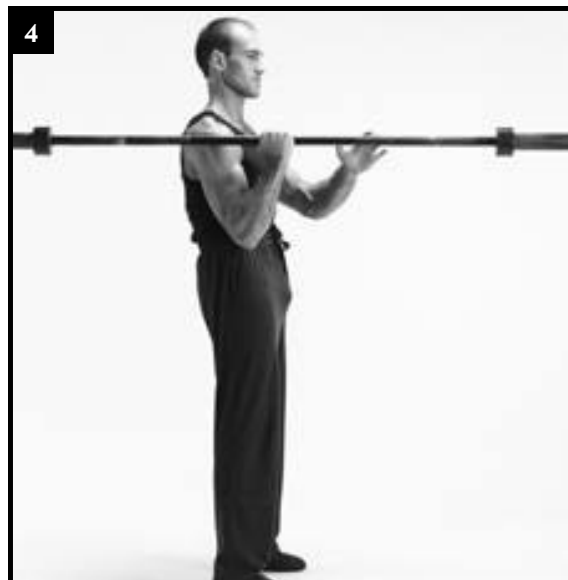
1. The side press requires full body action and gives a great workout to the stabilizing muscles of the midsection, it is a long time favorite of Russian weightlifters;
2. The side press requires that you to lift a seven-foot bar with one arm, therefore it gives a great workout to the gripping and various stabilizing muscles;
3. The side press is a lot easier to learn than, say, a proper two arm military press;
4. The side press teaches good habits for overhead lifting, which come in handy in everyday life;
5. The side press places the shoulder in the position of external rotation, which enhances workout safety and strengthens the rotator cuff muscles;
6. The side press encourages the use of the lats, 'the armpit muscles', to stabilize the shoulder joint, a measure that greatly increases training safety and longevity;
7. The side press requires no spotters or any additional equipment like benches or racks.

▼
The side press requires full body action and gives a great workout to the stabilizing muscles of the midsection, it is a long time favorite of Russian weightlifters





The hoisting sequence prior to the side press is exercise in itself. Follow all of these steps carefully to avoid injury.



Start by tilting a barbell on its side with two hands. Make sure that the barbell collars you use are up for the task. Regular spring collars are iffy when the weight mounts; at some point consider buying a pair of top of the line weightlifting collars.

When the bar is vertical, grip its dead center with one hand, inhale, and dip down as you hoist the bar to your shoulder. Keep your body tight and never lean back.



Needless to say, for most comrades, even men, starting out with a forty-five pound seven foot bar is a tall order. A short fifteen pound 'EZ curl bar' will come in very handy. If even that is a challenge, you can start your strength training career with a small barbell plate.

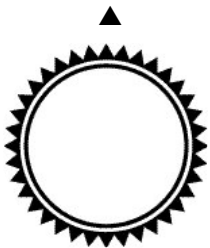
Your midsection should be solid; your hip and leg muscles should be braced against the ground. Never lean back or twist!

Here is a useful drill that will teach you how to do the above. Stand inside a doorway with your feet at your shoulder width. Place one hand against the top of the doorway. Without raising your shoulder more than necessary, slowly start pushing away from the doorway with your arm and away from the floor with your legs. Keep your abs and glutes tight and breathe shallow.

In a few seconds build the tension up to its maximum. Note how powerful and stable you feel when you keep your whole body rigid instead of just pushing with your arm. Let go.

The barbell should be in the position of a press behind the neck (photo). Press your working shoulder and elbow down, as if you are hitting someone in the head. Inhale, flex your whole body as you did during the last drill, and squeeze the barbell with all you have got.

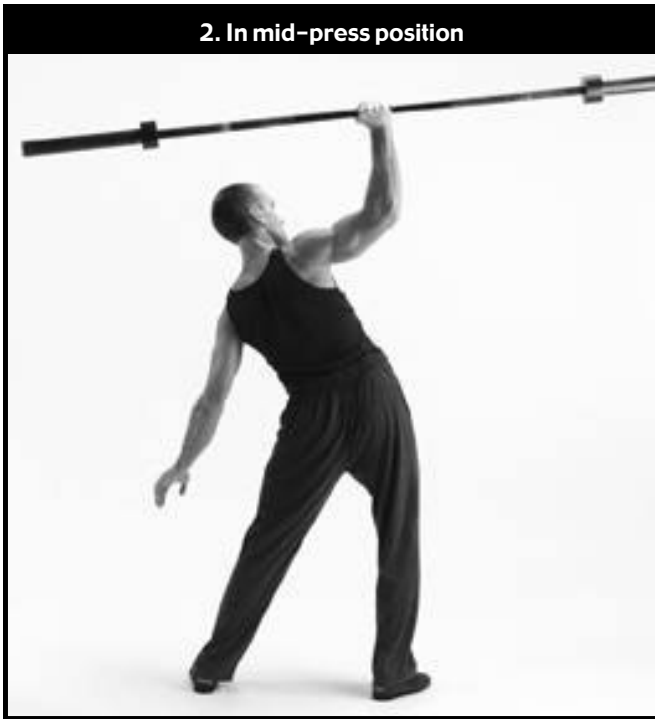
▼
Needless to say, for most comrades, even men, starting out with a forty-five pound seven foot bar is a tall order. A short fifteen pound 'EZ curl bar' will come in very handy.



Now, instead of pushing the barbell, push yourself away from the bar. This secret visualization prevents your shoulder from raising prematurely, losing power, and getting hurt.

Push away slightly sideways, so your body will lean away slightly. This move will give a great workout to your side muscles: lats, obliques, etc., and will enable you handle more weight. Leaning sideways also discourages leaning back, which is a no-no!





Avoid any twisting when you lean! Try to keep your lats, or 'armpit muscles' tight.



When you have locked out your arm, let out some air and relax a little. Do not overdo it; you might expose your back or shoulder to an injury.

Inhale again, crush the barbell, and actively pull the bar down with your elbow, as if you are trying to break a brick with it.

Successive induction boosts your strength and does a lot to protect your shoulder.

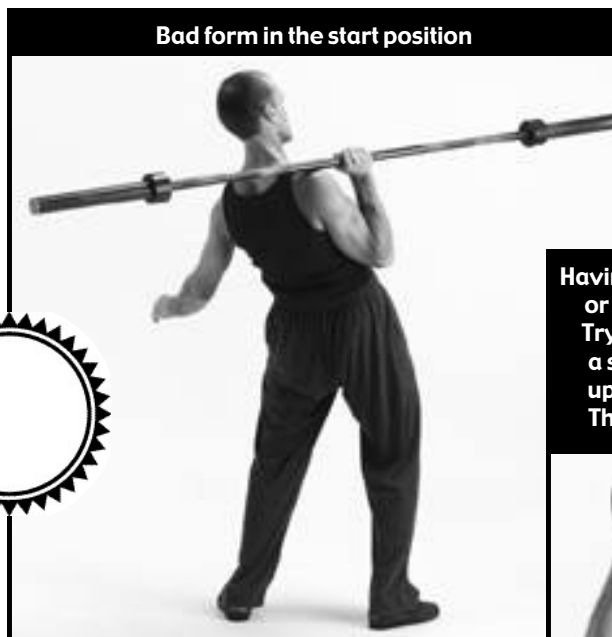


▼
If you choose to go with another free weight press, for example, the bench, it's alright, as long as you know how to do it right.
▲

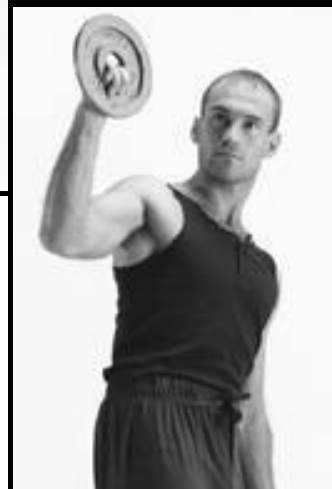


Your body will resume its vertical position as you lower the weight. Release some tension and air once you have brought your elbow down as low as it will go, and go for another rep.

If you choose to go with another free weight press, for example, the bench, it's alright, as long as you know how to do it right.



Having trouble with the bar, or even the EZ curl bar? Try starting out with just a small plate and work up to a 25 pound plate. Then try the bar again.



The Floor Press (pec emphasis)

The old fashioned floor press is the poor man's answer to the bench press—everybody has got some floor!

Floor Press: Showing good form



Floor Press: Showing poor form



Floor Press: The hand-off from the partner (end the same way)



Very important: your shoulders should stay pressed down into the floor and towards your feet throughout the set! Letting your shoulders roll forward or shrug up invites injury and makes for a non-productive workout.

To get your shoulders down, force your rib cage up as high as possible while pinching an imaginary tennis ball with your shoulder blades before the spotter hands you down the weight. Your lower back will arch slightly. It is OK.



Lie on the floor with your legs straight and your feet shoulder wide. Have a training partner standing behind your head deadlift a barbell and hand it over to you. The spotter should be holding the bar while you are adjusting your grip, then help you move it over your sternum

Use a comfortable width grip. Do not go too narrow or too wide, it puts too much stress on your wrist. Shoulder width, give or take a couple of inches, is about right. Also, keep your wrists neutral; letting them hyperextend is asking for problems. If you have trouble keeping them straight, squeezing the bar tight will help.

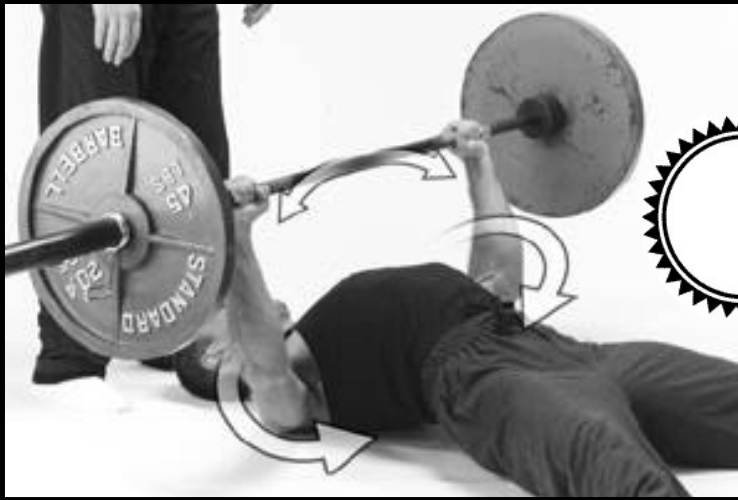
Once you have the bar over your breast bone—not over your face or throat!—inhale maximally. While keeping your body locked, lower the barbell straight down until your elbows rest on the floor. Your forearms should be vertical at this point. It helps to think of pulling your elbows into the floor for a tight and controlled descent (photo). Powerlifters use this technique with great success.



Attempting to 'break' the bar on the way down and up will heavily involve your lats and further increase your power and safety.

Let the air out and deeply inhale one more time. Keeping your whole body rigid, squeeze the bar and push yourself away from it. Squeezing the barbell will amplify the contraction of all the involved muscles. Visualizing pushing yourself away from the bar and into the floor will help to keep your shoulders down.

**Floor Press: Showing the concept of "Breaking the Bar"
Try to rotate the shoulders in commanding the lats.**



Floor Press: down position.



▼
Squeezing the barbell will amplify the contraction of all the involved muscles. Visualizing pushing yourself away from the bar and into the floor will help to keep your shoulders down.



The bar should move straight up. Don't curve towards your face (photo). When you lock out the weight don't try to lift it as high as possible by rolling your shoulders off the floor. (photo). Elbows have locked—and that is it, time for another rep (photo). Exhale, inhale again... well, now you know what to do.

**Floor Press: Showing good beginning and ending position.
From here the partner takes the weight.**



The Curl Grip Floor Press (biceps and lateral triceps emphasis)

This press is the numero uno exercise for toning up the lateral head of your triceps, or the outside of your arm. It is also very easy on the shoulder joint because the arms are tightly 'screwed' into their sockets. If you have a shoulder injury, ask the doc if this is the exercise for you.

To find the proper width for the reverse grip play with it in the starting position for the curl. You will notice that your arms naturally go out to the sides instead of coming straight down.

Prepare for the floor press and assume the grip you have found most comfortable. Turn your fingers out slightly and let the bar lie in the grooves of your hands.

The reverse grip press requires more control than the regular press and has a different sticking point. Be ready.

Demonstrating the curl grip for the floor press



Demonstrating the curl grip as applied to the bar



▼
This press is the numero uno exercise for toning up the lateral head of your triceps, or the outside of your arm. It is also very easy on the shoulder joint because the arms are tightly 'screwed' into their sockets.



The Barbell Curl

Too tired. To argue. With American males' fatal attraction to curls. I know young Commies will do them anyway, so I might as well teach them the right way.

Lift the bar off the floor with the wider than shoulders grip you used in the last exercise. Inhale, and lock your glutes and abs. 'Brace' your feet against the ground and press your shoulders down. Keep them there for the duration of the set.

Squeeze the bar and grind out your rep. Exhale and semi-relax on the top.

▼
Plug the curls into your workout following the deads and the presses and follow the standard cycling format.
Drop me a note when you are forced to drink your beer through a straw.
▲

Curl—begin



Curl—starting lift



Curl—end



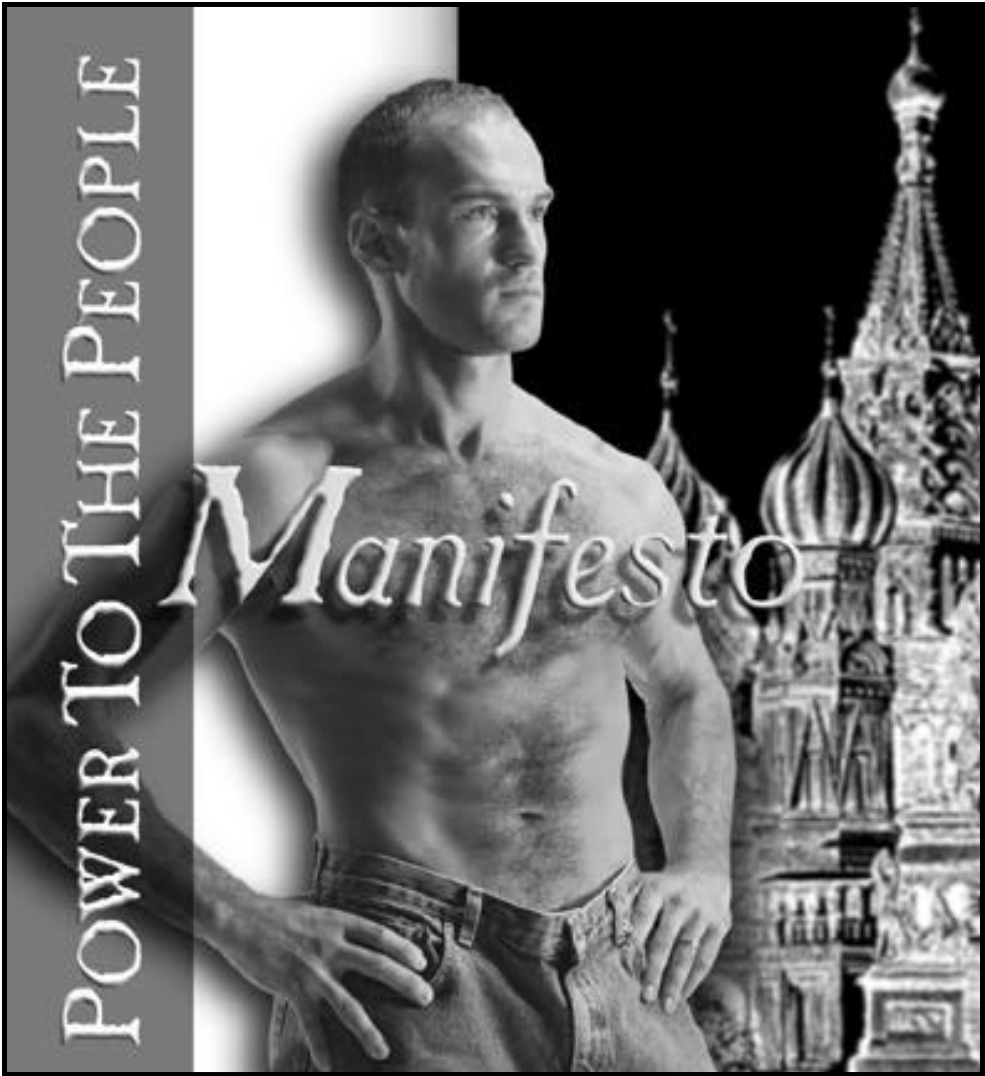
Inhale and tighten up again. Lower the barbell by pushing it down and away with your triceps. It is alright to let your elbows move forward slightly, but not back.

Plug the curls into your workout following the deads and the presses and follow the standard cycling format. Drop me a note when you are forced to drink your beer through a straw.

Curl—the whole nine yards







The Power to the People! Manifesto

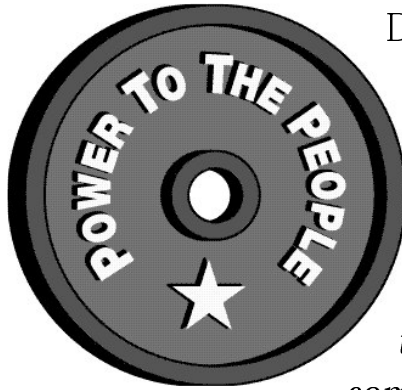
It is rough driving down the information superhighway when everybody is pushing you a different map. Different, expensive, and awfully complicated. The fitness business has gotten to the point where one needs a background in biochemistry just to read supplement ads. Listen to the locker room talk, and you will get the impression that you are on the campus of a graduate exercise physiology school. A gym rat at the turn of the century is a walking encyclopaedia of useless knowledge. Which brand of whey protein is the best, what bench incline angle is optimal for hitting the upper pecs, what are the advantages of effervescent creatine, when is the best time of the day to do cardio, how to superset biceps curls and triceps extensions for best pump.

▼
A gym rat at the turn of the century is a walking encyclopaedia of useless knowledge.
▲

None of the above will forge a strong body. "I knew so much about that which I did not need, but knew so little about that which I needed," laments Stuart McRobert, a once frustrated British bodybuilder who finally discovered the Holy Grail of power, periodization plus abbreviated routines of basic exercises. "And therein lies the plight of most body-building junkies."

Do you fail to see the forest from the trees? "Why do herbivores on the plains of the Savannah have eyes on the sides of their heads, whereas carnivores have them at the front?" ask biologist Jack Cohen and English professor of mathematics Ian Stewart in their awesome book *The Collapse of Chaos*:





Discovering Simplicity in a Complex World. *"A genuinely reductionist explanation would look deep inside the animals' cells, sequence their DNA, and describe the chemical changes that lead to eyes at the side of their heads... However, there is a very compelling "why" answer... Animals live in ecological systems, and forces from the outside cause them to evolve. Carnivores need eyes at the front in order to focus their attention on their prey as it tries to elude their clutches. Herbivores need to keep an all-around watch for predators, and that is most easily achieved with eyes on the sides."*

When the content is staggeringly complicated, look into the context.

Digging deeper into the muscle cell in an attempt to solve the strength puzzle is a clear case of dwelling on content of unessential details and forgetting the all-powerful context. The context is obvious. Your environment, real or self-imposed in the gym, demands that you get stronger. Go and lift heavier and heavier weights! It is that simple.

▼
When the content is staggeringly complicated, look into the context.
▲



Scientists who study non-linear dynamics know that complexity on one level implies simplicity on another. They even have a term, simplicity, which refers to the emergence of simple rules from underlying disorder and complexity. In Power to the People! I have attempted to deliver a 'simplex' approach to strength training, decades of scientific research and hundreds of years of lifting and martial arts experience distilled into a no frills power formula anyone, from a recent couch potato to a world class athlete, can use.

I shall finish Power to the People! with the words Bruce Lee, a martial artist extraordinaire who cut through the unnecessary fluff of the traditional fighting arts and refined combat to brutally effective essentials:

"Before I studied the art, a punch to me is just like a punch, a kick just like a kick. After I've studied the art, a punch is no longer a punch, a kick no longer a kick. Now that I understand the art, a punch is just a punch, a kick is just a kick."

