

THE BICEP BLACK BOOK



MY “DIRTY DOZEN” TRICKS AND TIPS FOR BUILDING ATHLEAN ARMS FAST!

The “Lowdown” - I know how badly guys like you want to be able to build bigger more ripped and defined biceps. More importantly, you want to know how to do it FAST!

You know, the kind that make people take a second look when they see your arms bursting out of your sleeves (without having to rely on size small t-shirts to create the illusion!). Seeing as how this was one of my MAIN GOALS growing up, I definitely feel as if I am qualified to talk to you about this, since I pretty much made myself the unofficial “expert” on what NOT to do as I made lots and lots of mistakes along the way to the arms I have today.

But as they say, mistakes are only costly if you don’t learn anything from them. Not only did I learn a few things along the way, but these mistakes are directly responsible for teaching me what SHOULD be done to get the kind of biceps most guys want.

So, being kind of the studious sort (that’s the PT in me) I looked back on all of my old training logs (yes, I actually kept them and read through them every now and then to see what valuable notes I can pull from them) and found the 12 Biggest “AHA!!” moments that turned my fortunes around and kick started new growth when it seemed like I had reached a plateau.

To help you avoid the years it took me to discover these shortcuts (that’s over 15 years of training logs!) I put them all together into one series that I like to call my “Dirty Dozen” Biceps Blackbook tricks and tips for bulking up the biceps when time is not on your side! Use these, my secrets of Mass ConstruXion, and never be self conscious about your arms again!

Blackbook AXXess is now granted!





NOTE #1

STOP CONCENTRATING ON CONCENTRATION CURLS

It's amazing how often I'll go into a gym and find guys spending entire workouts concentrating on concentration curls and other "low reward" exercises in hopes of building mountainous biceps. Yep, I did it too.

But just because it felt like I was doing something it didn't mean I was. The lack of results didn't lie.

Looking back now I have to call it like it is, and doing this exercise is a waste of your precious gym time.

Look, I know that most guys out there actually have many other obligations like work, family, and much needed hobby or relaxation time that they need to attend to and simply cannot be a slave to the iron in an effort to build bigger arms.

I get this, because I'm one of those guys.

// That said, it doesn't mean that you can't beef up your biceps with short, but intense 20-30 minute workouts. In fact it's necessary if you want results. //

The key however is intense, and in this case...exercises that give you the most bang for your buck.

Namely for biceps I'm talking about the **good old-fashioned straight barbell curl**. If your wrists are a bit achy, opt for the EZ Bar instead, but the essence is the same.

If you're one of those who don't think that barbell curls can "shape" the biceps and give you the peaks you've been looking for as well...well, consider that for the last 10+ years of my training career (starting somewhere in college) my biceps workouts shifted to include THIS EXERCISE in every arm workout and I said goodbye forever to the concentration curl!

The shape you see today was developed once I made the decision to make this swap. This might go down as the most lopsided trade since I switched Entenmann's for oatmeal, but that's a whole other story!



Bottom line: Don't get distracted by the curl machines and concentration curls those OTHER guys are doing.

Instead, "concentrate" on the exercises that will actually build the upper arm mass that others are hoping to get by doing the wrong (and easier) exercises!

NOTE #2

SEE THE POSITIVE IN THE NEGATIVES!

In the quest for bigger biceps it's crucial to understand that there really is **TWO** parts to every rep, and that by ignoring one...you are cutting your potential size by **MORE** than 50 percent!

Let me explain. As you may have heard, there is both a positive and a negative portion to each repetition on every exercise (not just biceps exercises). Now don't get confused by the names, because both of them are good and in fact equally important for growth.

The **positive** or **"concentric"** portion of the biceps curl is when you are lifting the weight up from in front of your thighs towards your shoulders.



While, the **negative** or **"eccentric"** portion is the slow and controlled lowering of the bar back to it's starting position.

Notice I said **SLOW** and **CONTROLLED**? That's the part that seems to get overlooked. You see... it's during this eccentric part of the rep that you actually combine both tension AND stretch.

What this does is cause mini micro tears in the muscle (*don't be horrified...it's a good thing!*). These mini fiber tears are actually what your body repairs while you rest and recover to allow you to come back bigger and stronger.



By simply letting the weight drop back to the starting position of the exercise without fighting this momentum and keeping the tension on your biceps throughout, you're literally allowing your chances to fall that you'll ever have arms that fill those t-shirts!

// Make the shift towards slowing this part of the repetition down and you'll notice your results speed up in your quest for legalized guns! **//**

This one modification alone (even when I was doing the not so productive concentration curls) still helped me to build arms that people noticed when I was a young teen.

By far, the biggest results getting tip I could give on stimulating biceps growth...if I was just limited to one!

NOTE #3

STOP WORKING ONLY PART TIME

(TIME UNDER TENSION THAT IS!)

Now that we've got the whole discussion of positive versus negative out of the way, and you now realize how a negative can very much be a positive (oh man...I'm starting to even confuse myself...well, you get the point right?), it's time to start figuring out HOW long you actually should be holding this negative for in order to maximize the size of your biceps!

// As a general rule, I want you to start taking 4 seconds per rep. 1 second for the explosive “up” or concentric lifting portion and 3 whole seconds for the controlled lowering back to the start. //

If this is new to you (and it will be to most of you...the average set is completed in 23 seconds for 12 reps!) then these 3 seconds are going to feel like a lifetime! If you perform the 10-12 reps per set that you should be to best build new muscle and definition, then your “new” sets should be taking you about 40-48 seconds...literally double the time it used to take you.



What does this mean?

Well, to begin with, double the “time under tension” that your biceps will “feel” during the set.

Take this out over the course of one workout, or a month's full of bicep workouts, or even a year's worth of workouts – and it's easy to see how the increased workload will translate to more focused effort and more productive growth.

All it takes is a clock on the wall and your eyes on the clock to unlock all new size potential you may never have thought was possible!

NOTE #4

CHANGE THE CHIN-UP TO SPEED UP YOUR BICEP DEVELOPMENT

One of my absolute favorite exercises for packing size on the biceps is the weighted chin up.

But before you can turn up the heat on your arms and get those gains coming, there are a few things you will need to adjust about the standard chin up that will turn it into more of a biceps driven exercise than a lat driven one.

First thing's first, focus on your grip.

With this being a chin-up, you're going to want to grab the bar with an underhand grip. But we need to look at how wide that grip needs to be and, more importantly, how wide the grip is in relation to the elbows.

Anatomically, we have something called the 'carrying angle of the elbow'. The carrying angle is in place to allow us to carry something at our sides and not interfere with the locomotion of the legs. The same thing happens when the arm is placed into full elbow flexion -- like we would be at the top of a bicep curl.



So, what we want to do is to mimic that angle with our grip so we can maximally target the biceps. This means that the hands are to be placed slightly outside the width of the elbows.

Next, you want to bend the wrist back slightly and be sure to grip the bar deep in the palm of your hands. This modification will take the forearms out of the exercise so that the biceps can do more of the work.

The key is to keep the bar deep in your hands so as not to overload the middle deep finger flexors, which can lead to medial elbow pain quickly if you forget to do this.

Now, as you start to curl, this is where all the difference is made.

When you curl to the top of the bar, maintain an open angle of the elbow. People often talk about getting the chin over the bar, but what that's really referencing is your chin higher than the bar - not actually bringing your body close to the bar and your chin to the other side.

By keeping the angle open and not collapsing yourself down, you keep the tension on your bicep and maintain the effectiveness of the exercise.



So, as you come up to the top, keep your distance from the bar. That distance is key.

In order to do this, however, you will find that you will likely have to arc your body as you bring it up on each rep. This should mirror what that barbell does when you curl it up on a standard barbell curl. Obviously, the bar does not travel in a straight line up and down on every rep. Instead, it follows a definitive arcing pattern.

Since you cannot move the pull-up bar, but you will want to move your body in relation to the bar to mimic the same mechanics at the joint and take advantage of the varied strength curves throughout the exercise.

**Want to see this modification in action?
Click here to watch.**

This exercise will build your biceps faster than any other because it is progressively loading you in a way you are likely not used to at the moment. Though the lats do contribute to the performance of this exercise, the percentage of work done by the biceps will often be higher than it would be if you were to try and apply the load through a standard barbell curl because you have to lift your own bodyweight.

And just like that, you'll start to see some significant gains.

NOTE #5

CHEAT YOUR WAY TO MUCH BIGGER BICEPS!

While cheating is hardly ever a good thing (infidelity, midterm, or tax return!)...there is one instance where **CONTROLLED** cheating can yield positive results! Now I know I'm going to get some flak out there from those of you that might have skipped over that big bolded word "**CONTROLLED**", since as a given rule, cheating in the form of improper technique can not only be unproductive but downright dangerous.

// Believe me, as a physical therapist, I advocate safety above all else when lifting. You see, I get paid to keep my pro athletes healthy and on the field...not rehab them once they've already gotten hurt! //

That said, there is a way that you can gently bend the rules to bump up your poundages on your curls, and this overload principle definitely helped me to break through one of my longest plateaus from around the end of college until say 5 years ago! **The secret is the "slightly" overloaded straight bar curl.**



I said *slightly*.

What I mean is, if you are used to normally curling say 75 pounds with picture perfect form, then I am saying bump it up to 95 pounds (or an added 20-25%) and literally "bump" up the bar to the top for all new growth.

To do this, stand with the bar at your thighs (as in the beginning of a rep) and lean forward ever so slightly from your trunk.

You can see a video of this by clicking here.

From there, you simultaneously begin your curl and bump your hips forward to assist with the heavier load. You must stop however as soon as your back reaches the vertical or straight up position. **You're not allowed to continue to assist the bar up by leaning back past vertical. Those are the rules!** Stick to this form for a few overload sets per workout and before you know it, you'll be breaking all new barriers on your way to the triple digit curl!

NOTE #6

OVERTRAINING THESE SMALL MUSCLES IS A BIG MISTAKE!

We've all been there at some point or another. In an effort to accelerate arm growth, or any other muscle for that matter, we've found ourselves hammering away at it two, three or god forbid even four times in a given week. If some is good...more is better right? That's the way our twisted minds work at least. Well...for money, health, and knowledge that may be true, but when it comes to muscle building and sun exposure...not so much!

You see, **you don't actually grow DURING your workouts.** Quite the opposite as we've already shown.

// During the workouts you are actually providing the stimulus for growth by breaking the muscle down. It's only when you rest and recover that the regeneration and size building occurs. //

That said, training the same group of muscles every day or every other day never allows for the crucial recuperation that is needed to make growth possible.



To compound the matter, the fact is that the biceps are an extremely small muscle. They do not have the resilience that the larger more durable legs, back and chest might (not that I'm advocating training them any more than twice a week either).

If you want to start seeing more results in the gym...the first thing you should most likely do is less in the gym.

I know this is going to be a tough pill to swallow for some of you. Heck, even the popular P90X system will have you believe that more is better with it's marathon 90 minute workouts and 6-7 day a week schedule. **Don't fall for the trap.**

Listen to someone who knows and who has made the mistakes already for you... So you don't have to.



Trust me.

If the 3-4 time a week workouts for biceps wasn't enough, I'd even do a few sets before I went out at night, just to make them look a litttlle bit bigger!

Pathetic I know, but I know I'm not alone (fess up!)

Train less and enjoy not only your better results...but also the other things in life that make you happy as you've freed up hours of leisure time and steered clear of the overtraining roadblock lurking in front of you.

NOTE #7

CURLING YOUR WRISTS IS CURBING YOUR PEAK POTENTIAL!

Just when you thought the rep was over and it was safe to relax... your chances of developing killer biceps peaks went down the drain.

You see, what almost 95 % of people will do when they're performing any curling movement (could be straight bar or EZ bar curls, incline dumbbell curls, preacher curls, etc) is allow the wrists to curl towards them as they reach the top. What this effectively does is both **remove the tension from the biceps and actually put the wrist in a mechanical disadvantage.**

Biomechanics will prove that the strongest position of the wrist is in slight extension: Bent backwards about 15 or 20 degrees.

At this angle you will find that your grip strength and forearm stability is greatest. With this the case, you'll be able to lift even that much more, to allow for even greater results.



An Added Bonus:

By maintaining this position all the way to the tip top of the curl, you've managed to keep the tension right where it needs to be...on the biceps...instead of in the flexor muscles of your forearms.

(And there are plenty of better exercises for accomplishing this)

This heightened tension at peak contraction of the biceps will help to develop those hard to get "peaks" that so many have written to me asking how to get.

This one little move that I've been using for years (and never see anyone else doing), I believe is largely responsible for the shape you see in the picture throughout the black book.

Yep...that is me in the pictures.

Start using this secret tweak and let your buddies wonder what the heck has gotten into you, or better yet your biceps, to make them stand up so tall! I won't say a word!

NOTE #8

TWO TIMES THE RESULTS WITH 1 1/2 REPS!

I remember when it like it was yesterday...my first time...
doing 1 ½ reps that is! What were you thinking?!?

Anyway, back to the story. I had read about it in a magazine (probably an old Flex or Muscle and Fitness) and it was being used for curls. I tried it and realized right away that I was going to be in pretty rough shape the next day, let alone for the next set.

The reason was simple. **I just increased my time under tension** (there's that phrase again) and the amount of reps that I was completing with the same tweak! What used to take around 40 seconds (even after I had made the adjustment to get this time right) was now taking about 60 seconds!



Those extra 20 seconds per set might as well have been 20 hours because I felt every burning second. The reps went from say 10 to around 15 now with the extra half reps. The end result was that my “two times” the results guess was conservative...**very conservative!**

If you're looking to really supercharge your workouts and give a jolt to stubborn biceps, then add the 1 and a half reps scheme to your 3 sets of barbell curls and see how you feel the next day.

Just agree now that you won't be writing to me to curse me out for suggesting it. On second thought, you won't be able to lift your arms to type so I should be pretty safe!



NOTE #9

THE MISSING ELEMENT OF MAX BICEPS GROWTH (THE SHOULDERS)

Long before I had any appreciation for muscle anatomy and physiology I would never have even thought that the biceps and shoulder have the slightest in common.

As far as I was concerned, they were trained on separate days so they should exist separately in my mind!

Well, then I went onto become a physical therapist and **everything changed.**

Shortly after starting PT school and getting knee deep in my studies, I started seeing that maybe there was a reason why the biceps and shoulders actually sit very close to each other! Maybe they actually share a few responsibilities? Well, in fact they do. They both flex the shoulder joint.

Due to the fact that long head of the biceps crosses the shoulder joint, **the only way to FULLY activate all of the fibers of the muscle is to do some type of move where the shoulder is flexed at the same time!**

This was another huge “light bulb going on” moment for me. I immediately started to add exercises like chin-up curls and barbell curls with the hands being pushed up towards the ceiling at the end !

// In the next year alone I added at least an inch to each bicep with just that one tweak. What I did was FINALLY let the biceps contract and work to their full capacity! //

For years I had been cutting them short on what they were actually biologically designed to do. No wonder they had a lot more growth left in them! I hadn't been using half of the fibers that were meant to be used. **Learn from my mistake and start incorporating these into your workouts! I'll also save you on the tuition on PT school that it took me to figure this one out!**

NOTE #10

VARY THE REP SCHEMES WITHIN THE SAME WORKOUT FOR SCARY BICEPS

One size rarely fits all! So does one way to train.

I made the mistake early on of reading the suggesting that low reps build power. Well, first of all, low reps without speed of movement **do NOTHING to build power**, so even that has to be qualified.

But nevertheless, since I was playing football in high school, and figured that a good dose of power would be just what the doctor ordered, I started to do nothing but low reps. **My results suffered.**



// I wound up exhausted, unable to recover and actually pretty damn sore in my knees, back and shoulders. //

By necessity I had to slightly modify my workouts to include at least a bit of higher rep work (since my body simply couldn't handle ALL of the heavy low rep stuff I was doing).

With just a couple of higher rep sets subbed in for the low rep sets I instantly started seeing (and feeling) a huge difference! I grew more that year (between sophomore and junior years) than I did during any other span in my teens.

I started doing this with every workout and consistently saw better results.

Now I know the reason.

Obviously each muscle group has different types of fibers that are best stimulated with varying rep ranges. You have those that are more endurance oriented and those that are built for short duration power. There's even those in the middle that respond to both and will morph into whichever purpose you train them for.

Suffice it to say...one rep range ain't gonna cut it! Vary yours from 8-10, 10-12, 15+ and sometimes burnouts to failure and you'll see just how powerful being "mixed up" can be!

NOTE #11

YOU CAN TRAIN BICEPS WITH BACK (BUT NOT THE DAY AFTER)

I completely abused this rule growing up and I often see guys in the gym making the same mistake day in and day out. I'll see someone train their back today and then come back and train their biceps the next day!



What's the problem you may ask?

Well, given the fact that the biceps and back work together in tandem as “pulling” muscles, if you opt to not train them on the same day then you are leaving yourself susceptible to drastically cutting into your recovery ability, and instead leaving these muscles in a state of constant overtraining.

You'll know if you're there if it seems like you just can't coax even another inch of growth out of your biceps or if you can't make any weight increases in the exercises you're doing because you just feel as if you've “topped out”. **That is most likely NOT the case. It's just that you've chosen to indirectly and then directly work the biceps on two consecutive days.**

Remember... I said before that the muscles don't grow IN the gym...they grow OUTSIDE of the gym when you're resting.

// If you're never giving muscles a chance to repair themselves with at least 48 hours rest (for that muscle group) between workouts, then you're never going to get the results you're looking for. //

That said, if you're going to split up the muscle groups into individual workouts, just make sure that you space out the muscles that work together in tandem (in this case the biceps and back) with at least one day off in between, preferably two.

NOTE #12

THE ULTIMATE ARM ACCELERATOR (SHORTER REST TIME BETWEEN SETS)

This one happened to me out of necessity one day.

It had been probably 4-5 days that I hadn't worked out and I was starting to get edgy. I just don't feel right when I let too many days go by without working out.

Well, I knew I needed to get in a good workout and I was just going to get started on my way out the door to the gym, when my best friend called me and told me he was stuck in a meeting and wasn't going to be able to pick up his brother (also my very good friend) at the airport.

I would need to leave the house in no more than 20 minutes to be able to get down to the airport in time to save the day and make the pick up!



Anyways...

Knowing that I absolutely HAD to get a workout in and couldn't let another day go by without it, I headed down in the basement to my home gym instead (no not the one you see on my YouTube videos but one from years ago that was far less stocked)!

With not nearly the equipment that I had planned on using and about half the time that I felt like I needed to get a good workout in, I headed down for a 20-minute biceps blitz!

Can I tell you - by far one of the BEST WORKOUTS I EVER HAD!

I waited just long enough to be able to catch my breath, get rid of some of the lactic acid burn in the muscles and then get started again.

Sets had to be kept to no more than 3 for each exercise. Exercise total had to be kept to around 3 to 4. I just simply didn't have the time to do my customary 5 or 6.

That day and workout changed my entire thought process.

I literally could barely move my arms for what seemed like a week.

I hadn't done anything unique in terms of exercises. I just used a barbell and some dumbbells.

It was:

- **The pace.**
- **The tempo.**
- **The urgency.**

All together, that led to one of the greatest workouts ever.

It was at that point that I realized that more (in terms of volume) is not only NOT better but it's actually NOT necessary.



I changed all of my workouts around to do fewer exercises than the 5 or 6 I had been doing and the shortened the rest periods to 60 or 90 seconds at most.



Call it the birth of the ATHLEAN-X program.



Either way, it's by far one of the greatest way to stimulate more growth and results and actually helps to add the elusive fat burning effects that **CAN DEFINITELY** be attained at the **SAME TIME** as muscle building if you're working out the right way!

If you want to accelerate your gains and break through stubborn plateaus in arm growth, then accelerate the pace at which you do your workouts. Pretend like you've got a friend to pick up in 20 minutes if you have to!

THERE YOU HAVE IT

MY TOP 12 TIPS FOR AMPING UP THE SIZE OF YOUR BIS!

However, you've probably heard the classic iron axiom that the triceps make up 2/3 of your upper arm size. If you're looking to **take your training to the next level** and amp up your gains, check out our program 'Ultimate Arms' where you can add up to 1" of muscle or more in only 6-Weeks.

Learn more at: www.athleanx.com/ultimate-arms

STAY STRONG,

A handwritten signature in dark red ink that reads "Jeff Cavaliere". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

M.S.P.T, CSCS
PRO ATHLETE TRAINER / PHYSICAL THERAPIST