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THE CRITICAL BENCH PROGRAM 2.0

by Mike Westerdal

**INCREASE YOUR BENCH PRESS
UP TO 50 LBS. IN 10 WEEKS!**

LEGAL

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NOTICE

The information presented is not intended for the treatment or prevention of disease, nor a substitute for medical treatment, nor as an alternative to medical advice.

This publication is presented for information purposes, to increase the public knowledge of developments in the field of strength and conditioning. The program outlined herein should not be adopted without a consultation with your health professional.

Use of the information provided is at the sole choice and risk of the reader. You must get your physician's approval before beginning this or any other exercise program.

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****Always consult your physician before starting any exercise program.****

I. Introduction

Believe it or not you have actually already completed one of the most important parts of the Critical Bench Program. Give me a second to explain. By ordering this program you have set a very specific goal for yourself and you have given yourself a timeline to work with. Eleven weeks from the day you start this program you will have a new maximum lift in the bench press.

The average increase is fifty pounds but ultimately this is going to be up to you. It is true that genetics and other external factors may limit us in some way, but the majority of us are limited by our determination and belief in ourselves. Don't ask yourself if it's possible. It is very possible and it has been proven again and again. Instead ask yourself if you're willing to pay the price to reach this goal.

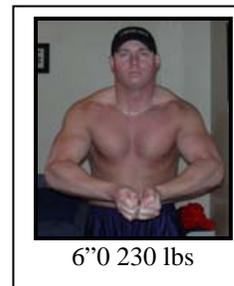
I mentioned that you had set a specific goal for yourself. This is much different than the general goals that many of us usually set for ourselves. You may have said in the past that you would like to increase your bench press. This would be a very vague goal, because you weren't specific in giving yourself a deadline or an amount of weight you wanted to add to your bench. Another example would be a captain of a ship saying he wanted to sail north. He would start of going north but would eventually get lost at sea without knowing exactly where he wanted to go. This is not going to happen to you.

It is now time to take matters into your own hands, but first a little about me.

A. About the Author:

Mike Westerdal, BS, CPT

Mike Westerdal is the founder of CriticalBench.com. He earned his BS from Central CT State University and holds certification as a personal trainer with the American Council on Exercise.



Westerdal also has experience coaching and playing professional football in Europe. His articles are published throughout the Web and in numerous weight lifting magazines including REPS! & Powerlifting USA.

Mike is an amateur powerlifter competing in the APF and APA federations. He resides in sunny Clearwater, FL and currently trains at Tampa Barbell & Strength Camp. He is married to his wonderful wife Courtney.

Bench Press Personal Records as of May 2010

Equipped competition bench: 630 pounds

Unequipped gym bench: 450 pounds

Raw Reps: 315 for 15 reps and 405 for 5 reps

II. Program Theory and Organization

This section outlines concepts and theories that were implemented in the creation of your program. It is meant to give you a better understanding of its design. Many of you have ordered this workout because you want to try a new regiment, not because you want to read a book. In my opinion, you are more likely to follow recommendations when you know the reasoning behind them. Therefore, it's important for you to read this section before jumping ahead to the training log.

A. *Variety:*

The human body strives to reach a constant state of homeostasis. "A state of equilibrium of the internal and external environment...State of consistency as to the body's chemical and or physical environment."

Weight lifting disrupts the body's homeostasis. The body's response to this disruption is growth. Once growth occurs a new disruption must occur in order to continue additional growth. The changing of repetitions, weights, sets, and exercises in your program will provide you with the necessary variety. Variety also creates excitement in your training and tends to eliminate boredom.

B. *Progressive Overloads:*

Progressive Overloading can be defined as, "**What ever you lift today, you want to do more tomorrow.**" This can be either more reps or more weight. Each week you will be provided with increasing weights and reps to use during the bench press. For the other exercises you will need to add either more reps or weight as the weeks go on.

C. *High Intensity Training:*

If you want to get stronger you must work hard. Hard work is not to be confused with more work. Remember, it's not how long you lift rather how hard you lift. The degree of intensity exerted during each exercise will determine the degree of results. The higher your intensity level, the better the results you'll reap. Once you can no longer raise the weight, a high level of intensity has been reached. A spotter may be used to help you finish the repetition that leads to failure but may not be used to do an extra repetition.

At this point maximum muscular failure has occurred. Be competitive every time you train, and try to improve on what you have done previously. Be sure to do those very intense last reps. Arnold the "*Governator*" made a great point in his movie "Pumping Iron". He said that you grow during the last few reps that really burn. **You need to step out of your comfort zone.**

D. Rest & Muscle Recovery:



- Over-training is one of the biggest reasons for lack of growth. You know that you are training too often if a weight you are lifting, continually feels heavier than normal. Chances are you have not gotten weaker but rather could use an extra days rest. Over-training is by far the biggest mistake made by natural weight lifters.
- **Muscles generally need at least 48 hours rest before they have recuperated. When performing certain exercises you affect more than one muscle group such as in the bench press. During the bench press, your shoulders, triceps, back, and chest muscles are primarily involved.**

Your program has been designed to space these days apart to make sure that all of the muscles involved in the bench press have fully recuperated by your next work out. For example; you will never lift triceps the day before chest, because your triceps would not be able to help you with the bench press the following day. As you know, strong triceps are critical to attaining a monstrous bench press.

- The order of the exercises you perform on a specific day is also important. Compound exercises and mass building exercises should always be performed prior to supplemental and specialization exercises. A compound exercise is simply an exercise that involves more than one muscle.

You want to perform the exercises that provide the most growth when you are fresh and concentrate on definition and cutting up later on in your routine. Generally you'll want to save any machines for the latter part of your workout and

perform the multi-joint free weight exercises at the beginning of your workout.

If you're confused, don't worry about it, we have it all set up for you. In other words, it is not a good idea to lift smaller muscle groups prior to larger muscle groups. Your program has you lifting each muscle group once per week on its own day to avoid any of these occurrences.

D. Training for Strength:

When training for cardiovascular fitness with the goal of getting cut up or lean, high rep sets are performed. However, when trying to acquire strength very low reps are used. Your muscles need to be exposed to heavy weights to build mass and power. Most people don't lift this way, but most people aren't trying to produce a powerful bench press and gain lean muscle mass.

During your program your flat bench press sets will consist of low reps. It is tough to keep doing this week after week, and has been adjusted periodically to make sure you aren't over-training or putting too much strain on your joints.

The Critical Bench Program is a Power Building program. It combines powerlifting and bodybuilding techniques in one program to give you both strength and size. If you're like me you'll agree that:

- 1) You shouldn't look strong with big muscles without actually being strong.
- 2) You shouldn't get strong at the expense of adding so much body fat people can't even tell you workout.
- 3) Using Power Building techniques we will look strong and be able to back it up!

III. Following Your Program

If you have been training intensely with low reps it is very important that you give your body time to recover before starting another heavy lifting program. Likewise, if you would like to perform this program again after completion you will need to give your body a rest. One might think if I gained fifty pounds in ten weeks, than I can gain 100 pounds on my bench in 20 weeks.

Sorry but it doesn't work that way. You will need to train lighter and differently for a few weeks before attempting the program again. This program has been designed to add an average of fifty pounds to your max. Beginners have been known to add much more.

Athletes that are lifting in the 500 pound range and up are happy to achieve any increase at all. The stronger you get the slower the gains come.

The training logs are broken down into a ten-week training cycle. There are five days of training with two days off per week. You have been provided with a full body workout.

It is absolutely mandatory that you follow your chest, shoulders, back and triceps workouts exactly as written. However you can feel free to modify your legs, and bicep training since they are not *as* important to your bench. Don't skip them, they are relevant so you can stay symmetrical and indirectly assist you in other lifts.

Each day you should complete every set for each exercise before moving on to the next exercise. Your core lifts for each muscle group will remain the same from week to week but you have been given the opportunity to select your own supplemental exercises during certain phases of the program. You will choose these supplemental exercises from a list we have provided.



A: Choosing Your Workout Days:

Your program has been divided into a seven-day period.

Day-1 begins with chest, followed by Day-2 Legs, Day-3 Back, Day-4 Shoulders, Day-5 Arms, Day-6 Off, and finally Day-7 Off.

If you begin your program on a Monday then you will have Saturday and Sunday off. If you would prefer to spend time at the gym during the weekend simply begin Day-1 of your program on another day. For example, if you begin on a Wednesday, you will lift for five days straight and then have Mondays and Tuesdays off. If you begin on a Friday, you will have Wednesday and Thursday off.

Example Scenarios:

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
Chest	Legs	Back	Shoulders	Arms	Off	Off

or

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUES
Chest	Legs	Back	Shoulders	Arms	Off	Off

Alternate Workout Split:

Over the years I have encountered athletes that prefer to use a four-day split. It is recommended that you follow the five day split, but if this is not possible you may follow this split instead.

Day-1 Chest, Day-2 Legs, Day-3 Off, Day-4 Shoulders/Back, Day-5 Arms, Day-6&7 Off

If you choose this split, follow the same exercises outlined in your training log. On Day-5 I prefer that you lift triceps before biceps so they get hit hard when while they're fresh. You can also feel free to switch back and forth between biceps and triceps exercises.



550 Pound Bencher Mike Schwanke

B: Exercise Definitions:

Bench Press Mechanics:

Just like in any sport, technique is going to play a vital role. Practicing the instructions below with lighter weight can help you add at least 10-15 lbs on your bench before you even start the program.

It may take a little while to get used to, but once you learn the technique you'll be able to sore past your previous plateau. Correct alignment and body position can increase leverage, give you a mechanical advantage, decrease the distance the bar has to travel, and provide a strong foundation to press from. The bench press requires more than just strong chest and triceps muscles. Many people fail to realize, if performed correctly, every muscle from your calves to your arms can be utilized when performing a perfectly legal bench press.



Ryan Celli pictured above

Positioning: To start the lift you want to make sure your eyes are lined up under the bar. If you scoot back too far, you may hit the bench as you press the weight up. If you're too far forward you will have trouble balancing the weight before you lower it. This is a complete waste of strength, which brings me to my next point.

Always, always, always have a spotter help you un-rack the weight if you have one available. Did I mention you should have someone help you un-rack the weight so you don't waste energy? That's right I mentioned it twice, because it's important. Your butt, and shoulder blades should always remain in contact with the bench. Never lift your butt of the bench to press the weight.

The Grip: Your grip should be about shoulder width apart. If your grip is closer you will be using more triceps and anterior deltoids. One way to determine your grip is to assume a natural push up position and use this same spacing for the bar. According to 1000 lb equipped bench presser Ryan Kennelly, if you are 5'10 or taller you should line your pointer finger up with the guide rings on an Olympic bar. If you are shorter than 5'10 you should line your pinkie or index finger up with the guide rings.

The wider your grip, the less distance the bar has to travel. So obviously you want to grip as wide as possible. If you have been benching with a closer grip this will take some getting used to, but will make a big difference in a few weeks.

IMPORTANT: Do not use a false grip! A false grip, “thumbless” or suicide grip is when you don’t wrap your thumbs around the bar. All your fingers need to be on the same side of the bar. Even very experienced lifters have hurt themselves with this grip when the bar slips and comes crashing down on their sternum puncturing their lungs and cracking ribs.

Now that you know where to grip the bar, you need develop a **STRONG GRIP**. It’s true you can increase your bench press by improving upon your grip strength. Squeeze the bar as tightly as you can. The harder you squeeze the bar, the more muscle fibers you will recruit to help assist with you with the lift.

Don’t believe me? Try making a bicep muscle without closing your fist. Now make a bicep muscle and squeeze your fist together and tell me you didn’t just contract harder. The same goes for your bench. Keep your entire body tight.

If you would like more information on increasing your grip strength visit this page to read about some cool pieces of equipment:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/wrist-grip-forearm-strength.htm>

Do not bend your wrists. Keep your wrists straight. Not only does it help prevent injury, but it also helps you transfer the power off your chest, deltoids, and arms directly through the bar. Your wrists should look like the picture on the next page. If you would like to use wraps to help you keep your wrists straight visit my friend Alan at www.prowriststraps.com

I like the 24-inch Convicts, but it’s just personal preference. Only use the wrist wraps when you are doing 3 repetitions or less. The last thing you want to do is protect your wrists so much that you make them weaker. They will help you grip harder as well so I do recommend them for your heavier sets.



Figure 1: Correct wrist alignment

Arch Your Back: Having a good arch will shorten the distance the bar has to travel between the chest pause and the lock-out. Arching your back will also give you better balance and increased power because you are activating your primary and stabilizing muscles.

Most people can bench more with when doing a decline bench press, and arching your back on the flat bench is the closest you can get to this angle when flat benching. If arching your back doesn't come naturally you can use a 2-4 inch thick PVC pipe or even a foam roller. Place the pipe or roller under the small of your back to create the arch.

Look at the arch this lifter is demonstrating below! This is probably the biggest arch I have ever seen and I don't expect you to be able to do it without a lot of practice. The judges are checking him out and his glutes, shoulders and head are all making contact with the bench. This takes an extreme amount of flexibility but demonstrates the point.





This is a nice arch as well.

If you have virtually no arch, you need to gain flexibility. Jared Bachmeier pictured below explained to me that you should start by getting a 3in. piece of PVC and just lye down on it.

Be warned, it's not going to feel good. Now roll back and forth on it hitting a 6-8" spot in your back that you want to bend. Try this a few times a week until it gets more comfortable. After you can set up your arch and not touch the 3" piece move to a 4" piece. Then repeat the steps. Once you are fairly comfortable and can arch over a 4" piece you are on your way to acquiring some decent flexibility.



Feet Placement: You must remember to drive from your heels. Your feet should always be touching the ground either with your heels or your toes on the floor. Most people have their feet in line with their knees like pictured above. Feel free to try spreading your feet out wider to see if it gives you more balance.

Cardinal sins include putting your feet up on the bench, straightening your legs, or letting your feet barely brush the floor. The placement of your feet is going to help you keep your balance, and it will be easier to maintain a nice arch in your back.

Digging Or Retracing Your Shoulder Blades: This is an often overlooked technique that can make a big difference between being an average bench presser and a great bench presser. When you are bench pressing you need to have a very stable base to press from. This cannot be done if most of your shoulder blades are off the bench. We can't change the width of the bench, but we can change how we position ourselves.

When you retract your shoulder blades together you're creating a more stable, firmer surface from which to bench press. It's a more stable surface because more of your body is in contact with the bench. The tightness of your upper back also contributes. As you have probably figured out by now, the key to pressing big weight is to press the shortest distance possible, and this technique helps shorten the distance the bar has to travel.

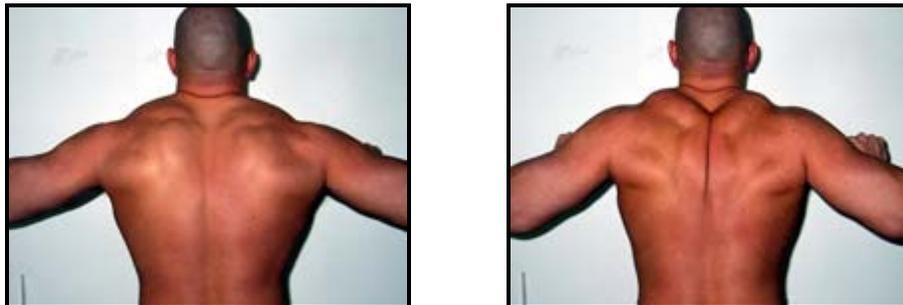


Figure 2: Try to make your shoulder blades touch



Figure 3: Picture on the left shows a typical flat back set up. The picture on the right shows the correct retracted shoulder blade position. Demonstrated by Lee Hayward author of [Blast Your Bench](#)

Tuck Your Elbows: Almost everyone you talk to says they want to increase their bench press, but not everyone actually bench presses. The number one excuse I get, “*I can’t bench press because my shoulders hurt.*” Its true bench pressing with bad form can cause shoulder injuries but there is a way to alleviate this. I had the same issues myself and thought my heavy benching days were over. That is until several years ago when I met with a powerlifting coach and discovered this tip.

As you bench press, keep your elbows tucked in close to your body. By doing this the path of the bar will change a bit. The bar will touch a little lower on your chest right below your nipples. The fact you’re touching the bar lower on your chest will decrease the pressure on your deltoids.

The further you are from your center the less leverage you have. When you tuck your elbows and keep them from flaring out you transfer the load to your triceps taking pressure off the shoulder complex.

Touching the bar lower and keeping your elbows in close will allow the bar to travel in a straight line. We all know the fastest way from point A to point B is with a straight line. Give this technique a try. You may drop in poundage the first few workouts, but you’ll skyrocket past where you were in the past in record time.

Example Of Tucked Elbows



Notice in the photograph above (courtesy of SAS Digital Memories) the lifter has his elbows tucked in nice and close to his sides. This forces him to touch the bar a little lower on the chest, just below the nipples. You’ll also notice that his forearms are perpendicular to the bar and perfectly straight for maximum leverage.

Example Of Flared Elbows



This is an example of a lifter that has flared elbows. It is not wrong to do this it just puts more pressure on the shoulders. If you were to follow the path of the bar I'd guess that it would touch higher on the chest, probably at or above the nipples. Personally I prefer the tucked elbows technique. (Photos courtesy of Brian Silk of SAS Digital Memories.)

Flare Your Lats:



Surprisingly, there is another main muscle group involved in the bench press. This muscle group is the lats which act by pushing the arm toward the middle of the body. Strong lats are important in the bottom or negative phase of the bench-press movement. By increasing the strength of your lats you can improve your bench press. By flaring the lats out and "pushing" with them you will be able to move more weight. Keep your lats flexed throughout the entire movement.

Breathing: As a personal trainer I typically teach my clients to take a deep breath in during the negative portion of the lift and tell them to exhale during the concentric part of the exercise. When it comes to maximum effort work it's another ball game. The rules that apply to high rep training are thrown out the window.

Fill your stomach with air before you unrack the bar and hold that air until the lift is completed. It may take practice, but try to fill your belly with air rather than your chest. If you let your air out during a max lift attempt, your body will move making you unstable. Holding your air keeps your entire body tight and gives you a stable base to press from.

Some people actually prefer to take two airs. This means they take one breathe when they unrack the bar. Then while holding the bar at lockout they exhale and take another breath before starting to descend. Give both techniques a try and see which you prefer.

Execution: After your spotter gives you a lift off, the bar should be directly over the bottom of your nipples or the region where your stomach meets your chest muscles.

There are many theories pertaining to the path the bar should travel. To stay in line with my statement that we want the bar to travel the least distance, you should lower the bar in a controlled manner and then press it in a STRAIGHT line back to the position you started in.

Your forearm bone should be directly lined up under the bar as well for maximum power. Lowering the bar too high on your chest will throw off your groove and put strain on your shoulders. Pro Powerlifter Clint Smith below shows you the sweet spot to touch.



Now comes the most important part of the lift...**The Drive**.

The bar has just landed on the perfect spot on your chest and you're ready to go. Squeeze the bar, and drive your feet through the floor and explode with as much speed as possible.

Avoid This Common Mistake: You've spent a great deal of time getting your arch set up, positioning your feet correctly and making sure you squeeze your shoulder blades together. Don't lose your set up during the hand off by reaching for the bar!

Stay nice and tight. Don't overextend to un-rack the bar. Let the spotter assist you in bringing the bar to your starting position. This is further explained in the Bench Press Fundamentals Online DVD that came with your purchase.

If you don't have a spotter or hand off person you'll need to pay extra special attention to this tip.

Special Equipment: Special equipment is not needed to complete this program. I wanted everyone to be able to use this program, not only those who have access to a specialty equipment commonly found at barbell clubs.

However, if you are competing with a [bench press shirt](#), I recommend you also train with a bench press shirt. You can follow this program with or without a shirt although it works best for raw or unequipped lifters. If you already own a set of [Bench Press Bands](#) you can use these for your burnout sets, and you can use them to replace the workout for week 5.

If you do not have a spotter you can do rack lockouts for week 7 instead of Heavy Negatives. Feel free to use wrist wraps for support.

I'm not a big believer in using [weight belts](#). I feel that they shelter your lower back and thus cause them to get weaker. That's right they do protect you...protect you from getting stronger. If you want to use a weight belt only use one for your heavier sets.

The same holds true for, straps. Obviously if you're deadlifting 500 lbs you need straps, but don't use them for every back exercise. We need strong forearms and grip strength for a big bench and the straps aren't going to help you with that.

You've heard it before you're only as strong as your weakest link. Show me a man with strong hands and I'll show you a STRONG man.

Rack Lockouts:

As mentioned earlier if you do not have two spotters to help you in week seven you can use the same weight prescribed in your workout log to perform rack lockouts (See below). This will help you strengthen your triceps for the last part of the press as well as give you confidence handling heavier weight.



Flat Bench Lower 1/2 Reps:

Have you ever spotted someone that gets stuck at the bottom of a rep and then after you give them a little help the rest of the rep is easy? This exercise helps you get by this sticking point. Simply lower the weight then lift it a few inches off your chest and lower again. This exercise is done with relatively light weight for higher reps on your week 5 deload week.

Flat Bench Upper 1/2 Reps:

Just as some people get stuck at the bottom of the exercise, some people have trouble locking out at the top. This is mainly due to the triceps, but this exercise helps you lock out when you are using heavier weight. Simply lower the bar half way down and push it upwards locking out at the top. Once again this exercise is done with lighter weight for higher reps. During these exercises you can take quicker breaks between sets. If you have boards you can use those to stop the weight half way down. A 3-board should do the trick. If you don't have boards, just stop the weight on your own.

Negatives:

You will need three spotters for this lift. One will stand behind the bar, and the other two will stand on each end of the bar. Three spotters are necessary due to the fact that some of your negative sets will be done at a much higher weight level than your one rep max.

All three people will help with the lift off, but the person behind the bar will be the main stabilizer. He should keep his hands on the bar during the entire lift. You will lower the weight down to your chest as slow as you possibly can. Exaggerate the motion. When you get to about half way down you will simply be trying to stop the weight from falling. Once it touches your chest, all three spotters will raise the bar up to your locked position.

Repeat until you can't do anymore. Remember to take a new breathe before starting a new rep. Negatives utilize the eccentric phase of lifting and have been known to punish your muscles. Exposing your body to this heavy amount of weight will prepare you for maxing out in Week 11. We are not doing this to create muscle soreness but rather to shock your Central Nervous System and to get you mentally prepared to man handle heavier weight.

Just controlling a weight heavier than you've ever lifted makes other weights seem lighter, and builds confidence. Don't be discouraged if during your heaviest set you only get two or three reps. **It is essential to make sure you have stretched sufficiently prior to performing any negative sets!!!**



Burn Out Sets:

For the purpose of this workout routine burn out sets and drop sets are the same thing. After you have completed your three main sets you have the option of performing a burn out set. The exact amount of weight you use is not so important. I suggest you use the same weight you warmed up with. Now that you are fatigued it will seem much heavier.

Do as many as you can to get a nice pump. Aim for 10-15 reps. If you can do more, keep going and use a heavier set the following week for your burn out set. You don't really need this but it will satisfy your hunger to overtrain without hurting you. Trust me, people always want to do more then they need to do. I do admire the dedication but refuse to let it be your downfall.

C: Choosing Supplemental Exercises:

Whenever your program allows you to choose a supplemental exercise you may choose an exercise from the list provided below for that specified muscle group. It is important that you do not choose the same exercise every week. Try to mix it up, and do not perform the same supplemental exercise two weeks in a row. Click each exercise below to see a video example, pictures and a description.

Shoulders:

[Side Lateral Raises \(Dumbbells\)](#)
[Cable Lateral Raises](#)
[Plate Raises](#)
[Bent Over Raises \(Dumbbells\)](#)
[Alternating Front Raises](#)
[Upright Rows \(Dumbbell or barbell\)](#)
[Face Pulls](#)

Back:

[Seated Cable Rows](#)
[DB Rows \(Chainsaws\)](#)
[Straight Arm Pulldowns](#)
[Close Grip Cable Pulldowns](#)
[Dumbbell Pullover](#)
[Wide Grip Pulldowns](#)
[Deadlifts](#) (Pick Me!)

Triceps:

[Dumbbell Kickbacks](#)
[Dips](#)
[Reverse Grip Cable Extensions](#)
[Incline Face Away Pushdowns](#)
[Bent Over Rope Pushdowns](#)
[Lying, Incline, or Decline Skullcrushers](#)
[Band Pushdowns](#)
[Overhead Dumbbell Extensions](#)
[Overhead Barbell Extensions](#)
[Pushdowns Any Bar](#)

Biceps:

[Incline DB Curls](#)
[Hammer Curls](#)
[Barbell Curls](#)
[DB Preacher Curls](#)

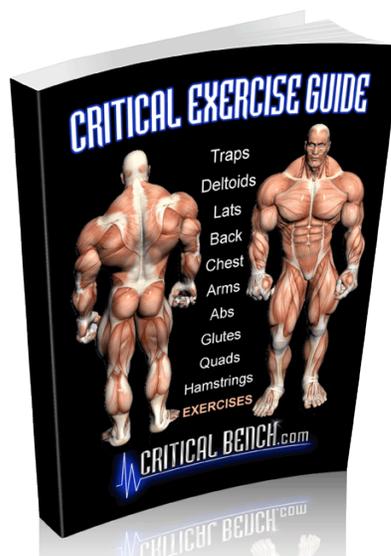
If you have a physical limitation, an injury or don't have access to the equipment that you need to perform an exercise you may use our online exercise database to make a substitution. Don't ask, just do it. The exercises I chose were chosen for a reason, but if for some reason you need to swap one out it's not the end of the world.



**CriticalBench.com Online Exercise Database
(Over 375 Exercises!)**

<http://www.criticalbench.com/exercises/exercises.htm>

If you're not sure how to perform an exercise you may also refer to the **Critical Exercise Guide eBook** that came with your order.



A Note about the Deadlift: This exercise was not included in your training logs because so many people have emailed me saying they can't deadlift due to injury. If the lift is done correctly this should not be an issue and I highly suggest you "pull" on back day or leg day.



Pro Strongman [Elliott Hulse](#)

Deadlifts are a great exercise to stimulate the release of testosterone and growth hormone. In addition it's a full body exercise that will indirectly make you a better bencher and an overall more muscular person. Visit the exercise description above and make sure you have the form down before going heavy. Wear a weight belt when doing three repetitions or less.

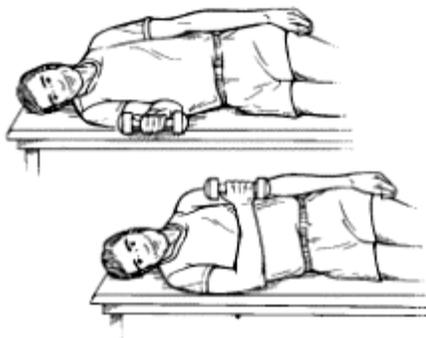


Mike Westerdal – Pull On Leg Day or Back Day

D: Stretching & Warm Up On Chest Days:

Follow this simple routine to warm up your muscles, keep your joints fresh, and avoid injury. By warming up you are preparing for a great bench day. **This part of the program is CRITICAL to your success!**

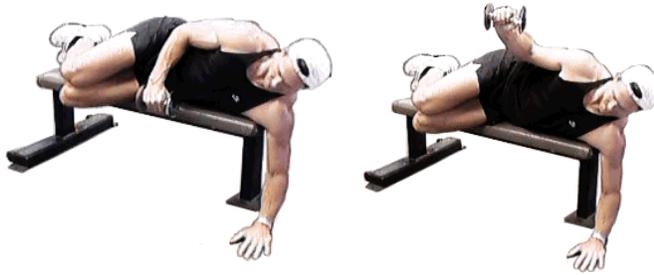
- Do some really light shoulder presses on a machine or with some dumbbells. Do about twenty reps. Don't break a sweat just loosen up a little.
- **Using a five-pound weight perform forward and backward Arm Circles. Arm Circles just means grab a weight and carefully swing your arms around to loosen them up.**
- Stretch out your triceps. Touch the back of your neck with one arm, then grab your elbow and pull it behind your neck until you feel a stretch in the your triceps. Stretch out both arms a couple of times.
- **Do a light set of dumbbell flys or just stretch out your pecs using a stationary object or use the assistance of a training partner.**



- Using a five or ten pound weight in your left hand lye sideways putting your right shoulder against the bench. Keep your elbows locked against your body with a ninety-degree bend in your upper arm holding the weight. Keeping the angle of your arm, swivel the weight down towards your stomach and then back up again.

Keep your elbow against your side! Lying in the same position switch the weight to your right arm. Swivel the weight towards your stomach and back again. Now flip over and to the same thing on the other side. This exercise helps you strengthen your rotator cuffs, and helps deter any soreness in your joints that may occur from lifting heavy several weeks in a row. Are you confused? Check out the images to follow. More rotator cuff warm ups:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/exercises/rotator-cuff-exercises.htm>



- **It is recommended you stretch out other parts of your body as well, such as your back, neck and hamstrings. This helps decrease the likelihood of cramping during strenuous lifting.**
- Many people like to do a really light warm up set with some 1/2 reps before their actual warm up set, which is outlined in your training log. Or you can do a set of push-ups prior to starting your working sets.
- **The methods above are preventative. However if you feel that you may have aggravated a muscle apply the RICE principal. Rest, Ice, Compress, and Elevate.**

You should ice after exercise and heat before exercise if you are dealing with an injury. Don't take the attitude of No Pain, No Gain. There's a big difference between lifting hurt, and lifting injured. By seeking a physician's guidance you can be back in the gym much sooner.

E: Speed of Movement:

The lowering and raising of any weight should be a controlled motion. Full range of motion is very important. Completely lower and extend the weight for each exercise. When you contract the muscle during any exercise squeeze the muscle before beginning the next repetition.

There are two phases in lifting weight, the eccentric phase; lowering the weight, and the concentric phase; raising the weight. The human body is stronger in the eccentric phase of exercise. As a rule, try to lower the weight in twice the amount of time it takes to raise the weight.

By lifting slow, strict, and in a controlled manner for your assistance exercises you will gain strength quicker even if you have to use less weight. With the bench press we want to be control the weight but lift explosively as we press.

F: Rest Between Your Sets:

The bench press exercise alone should take you a half hour to complete. Due to the fact that you are training for strength you must rest for a long period of time between sets. Wait until your heart is no longer beating fast, and your breathing has returned to normal.

Go get a drink of water after each set. You cannot rush the bench press. Toward the end of the workout, during the heavier sets, take about five minutes between sets. This isn't necessary during warm up. Just remember you are lifting heavy and need to regain your strength before the next set. If you were taking short rests between sets you'd be getting a cardiovascular work out and not lifting nearly as much weight. It is okay to take shorter rests between sets for other muscle groups. It just can't be stressed enough, to take your time during the bench press. Take three to five minutes minimum between each set.

G: Repetition Range:

As you have probably noticed, you have been given a range of reps to perform during each set of the bench press. Try your best to complete all the reps. Your spotter may assist you on your last rep but do not attempt an additional forced repetition.

Do not be discouraged if you can't get the weight for the number of reps indicated. The program was designed to have a spotter help you achieve muscular failure but we do not want to do forced reps due the strain it puts on the central nervous system. If you need help on a rep, that should be your last rep of the set.

As far as all other exercises, you must apply the theory of progressive overloads. "Whatever you lift today, you must lift more tomorrow." Either do more weight for the same amount of reps or get more reps using the same weight.

Record all of your lifts in your log to track your progress. You should know before the set what you have to beat from prior weeks. Write the weight used in the space above reps performed.

I can't tell you exactly how much weight to use for every exercise because I don't know your max for every lift. At first you will need to estimate, and do as many as you can. If you do more reps than assigned you know the weight was too light. Increase the weight for your second set and take it from there.



Big Bencher Joey Smith Pictured Above

G. Training Partner:

It is to your best advantage to try and acquire a quality-training partner. Listed below are some advantages to lifting with a partner.

- **They provide competition, and encouragement.**
- A training partner can help provide negative resistance and help you with forced reps, and achieving muscular failure.
- **You can take your time and don't have to feel like you are bothering someone for a spot.**
- If you promise someone you will meet them at the gym, you will be forced to go whether you like it or not.
- **If you aren't feeling motivated, a partner can make you raise your training level to meet their expectations.**
- You get used to the spotters' style, and can teach them how much assistance you prefer. (Don't you hate it when someone grabs the bar when you could have gotten it yourself?)

IV. Key Points and Additional Information

A. Mindset:



The bench press is a very mental lift. Big numbers can be intimidating, and so can three, four, or five plates on each side of the bar. Some people can do 310 lbs but can't get 315 lbs.

Some people can get 395 lbs but not 400 lbs, because 400 lbs sounds so much heavier.

Or they can lift 400 lbs but not 405 lbs because the four plates on each side of the bar psyches them out. The most important thing I can teach you is this:

“Never Plant A Seed Of Doubt In Your Mind!”

Do not be afraid to fail. Think of failing as way to try again more intelligently. Most people don't get it right their first time, but those that don't give up wind up reaching their goals.

If you even consider the fact that you might not get a certain weight, you probably won't. Don't cut yourself short. Either you or someone you know has said the following prior to a big lift, “I don't know if I'm going to get this.” That is the worst thing you can do. Stop making excuses for yourself before you've even tried.

“Failure is the opportunity to begin again, more intelligently.”

– **Henry Ford**

“Trying is a part of failing. If you are afraid to fail then you're afraid to try.”

- **Evelyn Cunningham**

Let me explain why positive thinking is so instrumental. The mind has two components, the conscious and the subconscious. The conscious mind is the rational analytical thinking part of the brain. The subconscious part is responsible for memory, reflexes, and autonomic functions such as breathing, circulation and several other functions. All you need to know is that **the subconscious mind does not think. It accepts whatever it is told whether it is true or not.**

Therefore, you need to program your subconscious mind with positive thoughts instead of self-destructing negative commands. Whatever you think about all day is what you become. Tell yourself everyday that you will be a bench press champion. You have to be consistent. If one day you want to be a bodybuilder, the next day you want to be a sumo wrestler and the next day you want to be a powerlifter you'll get nowhere fast. You can't give yourself conflicting goals. Concentrate on one goal...increasing your bench press fifty pounds in ten weeks and make it a reality. Nobody can stop you, except for yourself. This is an individual goal.

Always think positively. The mind works in funny ways. If you are lying under the bench thinking to yourself, *“Don't get pinned, Don't get pinned, Don't get pinned,”* your mind hears *“Get pinned, Get pinned, Get pinned.”* Use a positive statement telling yourself what will happen rather than what you don't want to happen.

Example: repeat to yourself, *“Through the roof, through the roof, through the roof.”* There is nothing negative in this sentence. Encourage yourself rather than trying to scare yourself. You must be confident. Know that you will get the weight, before the lift. If you're not a confident person you need to start faking it until it becomes a habit. Believing in your self is not being cocky or arrogant; in fact it's far from it.

Positive thinking is much more powerful than many people imagine. Put it this way, if somebody asked you to close your eyes and NOT think about penguins, you'll mentally see penguins everywhere. It's impossible to NOT think about something. You either think about something or you don't so make sure it's a positive thought in your head.

The second you catch yourself in a negative thought I want you to immediately replace it with a positive one. Instead of thinking, “I'll try” replace it with “I will.” Eliminate the word “can't” from your vocabulary.

5 Elements of a Useful Goal:

- **SPECIFIC:** Describes what you want to accomplish with as much detail as possible.
You have done this. You want to increase your bench press 50 lbs in 10 weeks.
- **MEASURABLE:** Describes your goal in terms that can clearly be evaluated.
Your goal is measurable. In week 11, you will max out lifting 50 lbs more than your previous max attempt.
- **CHALLENGING:** Takes energy and discipline to accomplish.
This journey is not easy which makes it even more rewarding when you accomplish your goal.
- **REALISTIC:** A goal you know you are actually capable of obtaining.
50 pounds in ten weeks is very realistic. Thousands of people have done it before you including myself.
- **STATED COMPLETION DATE:** Goals that break longer term goals into shorter pieces and clearly specify target completion dates.
You will have attained your goal in week 11 when you max out.

Okay now it's time to pull out your pen and paper. I want you to write your goal down on four separate sheets of paper in bold letters. "**ACHIEVE A _____ POUND BENCH PRESS BY _____.**" The simple task of writing your goal on paper brings you closer to completion. This act will make your goal more concrete, increasing your motivation to achieve it.

Now I want you to post these pieces of paper with your goal in four high traffic areas. You should choose places that you pass the most during day. Examples include the bathroom, the fridge, on your rearview mirror, next to your desk at work, or even your dresser. You have now created four goal reminders that will help motivate you throughout the day. Every time you wake up, go to the bathroom, sit in your cubicle, or drive your car you will be reminded of exactly what you are trying to achieve.

Next let's talk about visualization. Visualization is a powerful tool used by many professional athletes throughout the world. The night before your chest work out I want you to lie down with your eyes closed and picture yourself at the gym. Try to make it as realistic as possible, noticing textures, smells, colors, and sounds that are common to your gym.

Now visualize yourself under the bench and lifting the projected weight for the next day. Many college football players who have used this program utilize visualization not only for bench pressing, but also prior to athletic competition. Think of every chest work out as a big game. You always go into a game thinking you are going to win, do the same at the gym! You can even practice this technique while you are at work. Just imagine

yourself succeeding before you even get to the gym. Then reinforce your partner before each lift, and he will do the same for you.

B. Preparation:

This section can be considered common sense, but is often taken for granted. Without preparing yourself properly everything else involved in this program won't make a difference. We're all real people with real lives so just follow these three simple rules. It's not asking too much.

Rule 1: Make sure that you eat plenty of food the night before your bench workout, and the day of your bench workout. This seems like common sense, but some people skip breakfast, have lunch and then head for the gym after work. This isn't going to work.

You need energy. I'm not going to put you on a strict diet or tell you what to eat, just make sure you eat several times a day prior to your work out. This is always important regardless of what muscle group you are training. It can be tough to stick to a schedule, so just make sure to eat healthy and often, the day before and the day of your chest workout.

Rule 2: Get at least eight hours of sleep the night before your chest workout. If you couldn't get enough sleep, the night before take a nap before you go the gym. You must be well rested if you are going to perform to your fullest potential.

Rule 3: If you consume alcohol or abuse drugs, do not do this the day before or the day of your chest workout. Alcohol dehydrates you, lowers your testosterone and your metabolism. If you have a hangover you're not going to be ready for a great bench day.



Power Builder Morris Mendez Looking "Prepared"

C. Supplementation:

As mentioned when ordering your program, supplements are not a mandatory element of this program. However, if you decide to use them they will improve your results tremendously. It is highly recommended you consider following the suggested supplement program.

This may come as a shock to you, as it once did to me. Did you know that almost every major bodybuilding magazine is owned by a supplement manufacturer? This makes it almost impossible to find reliable information about what really works and what gives you the most bang for your buck.

Supplements are good for two things, insurance and convenience. If you don't get enough food they act as insurance, and if you live a hectic lifestyle they can be convenient.

Supplements aren't necessary to succeed on this program, but if you want some cutting edge suggestions we have proven recommendations for you based on real life experience as well as scientific research.

Top Supplements:

- **Muliti-Vitamin:** Don't buy a multi-vitamin from the grocery store or drug store. They are not high quality and are not absorbed well by your body. We recommend going with a known brand. Visit this page for a breakdown of top selling multi-vitamins. [Click here](#) or visit <http://www.criticalbench.com/Multivitamins-Supplement-Review.htm> for more information.
- **Creatine Monohydrate: Questions and Answers**
(Reference: May 2000, Muscular Development)

What is creatine? Creatine is a naturally occurring amino acid found primarily in the muscle (95%). 120 grams of creatine can be found in the muscle of a normal sized person, yet the body can store 160 grams.

Where does the body get creatine? Each day your body breaks down about 2 grams of creatine. When you loose creatine it is replenished in two ways. One is through your normal diet, when eating foods such as salmon. The remaining creatine is synthesized from amino acids glycine, arginine and methionine.

Why supplement my body's creatine? Think of yourself as a car that has a tank that is 3/4 full. Your body typically holds 120 grams yet by supplementing you can increase the storage to 160 grams.

What are the benefits? Increasing muscle availability of creatine helps you maintain energy for longer periods of time during intense weight lifting. It has also been known to help speed recovery between sets allowing you to perform more reps and sets.

What do the studies say? Over 250 studies have been conducted on creatine supplementation. Of these studies the majority have shown a statistically significant improvement in exercise capacity. 95 out of 100 times that you take creatine as described in the study you'll experience exercise improvement.

What is the best dosage? Load for the first week by taking between 20-30 grams a day. Divide the dosage up into 4 servings throughout the day. After the first week you have loaded your muscles and 5 grams a day is plenty to maintain.

What to take creatine with? Studies from Dr. Paul Greenhalf's lab at the University of Nottingham England recommend that athletes take creatine with a high carbohydrate drink such as juice. This increases your insulin level and promotes the uptake of creatine.

When to take it? Immediately after exercise due to higher levels of protein synthesis, and insulin.

Are there side effects? No side effects have been scientifically proven. If you feel you get an upset stomach, remember to take it after your work out perhaps with a shake.

Is the weight gain water? Most studies that have evaluated the effect of creatine on fluid retention and body composition indicate that although total body water increases, it is proportional to the weight gained. Muscle is composed of 80% water. If someone gains 10 lbs of muscle, 8 lbs of it would be water which does not change the percentage of total body water.

More information on creatine monohydrate and recommended brands:
<http://www.criticalbench.com/Creatine-Monohydrate-Review.htm>

- **Kre-Alkalyn:** Now that you understand why creatine is so important, you may want to consider a product called Kre-Alkalyn. It features a patented Creatine in a pharmaceutical delivery system providing maximum stability and absorption.

Creatine Monohydrate has been proven through a decade and more of research to enhance strength, endurance, and subsequent athletic performance. The only disadvantages of traditional Creatine Monohydrate are the extremely short-term stability, rapid conversion into the bi-product Creatinine when exposed to liquid, and subsequent poor absorption into the bloodstream.

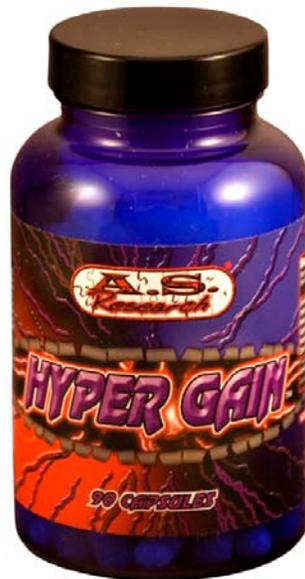
Kre-Alkalyn, which is buffered for maximum absorption and stability, solves this dilemma. Kre-Alkalyn offers the athlete Creatine which is 100% stable, will not break down into Creatinine, and will absorb efficiently into the bloodstream.

In fact, each 1 gram of Kre-Alkalyn is equivalent to ingesting 10 grams of Creatine powder allowing the athlete to take far less product while experiencing even more explosive results. For further information on Kre-Alkalyn visit the following page:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/Kre-Alkalyn-Supplement-Review.htm>

Personally, I use a brand called **Hyper Gain by AS Research**. I only recommend it if you are over 25 years old because it has testosterone boosting ingredients that you don't need at a younger age. This is the link:

<http://www.hypergaincreatine.com> I also have used All American EFX Kre-Alkalyn and can speak highly of that as quality brand as well.



- **Glutamine:** Considered a "conditional" amino acid, experts believe Glutamine is the single most important amino acid for all bodybuilders, strength, and performance athletes. Glutamine is the most abundant amino acid in skeletal muscles.

Glutamine plays a key role in optimizing protein and glycogen synthesis, retaining nitrogen, and preventing muscle wasting as a result of activities such as weight training or exercise. *To make it simple, glutamine helps you recover after your workout and helps stop your muscles from wasting away.*

Dosage: Take 5 grams immediately after working out. Take another 5 grams at night with skim milk or water before you go to bed. On days you are not weight training just take 5 grams before bed. *Note: Feel free to mix creatine and/or glutamine with your protein or meal replacement shakes. BSN, ProLab, and PureForm are [top selling glutamine products](#) this year.*

- **Joint Support:** Look for a combination of synergistic ingredients that are well-known for the benefits they have on easing the pain and symptoms of osteoarthritis while promoting enhanced mobility and flexibility.

Glucosamine sulfate, the most beneficial form of glucosamine, promotes reduction in joint pain and tenderness as well as improved range of movement and speed.

Chondroitin sulfate is another substance well-known for its anti-inflammatory properties and can further protect against cartilage breakdown.

Shark cartilage, a natural source of additional chondroitin sulfate is included for enhanced benefits. Other important ingredients such as Boswellia Extract, Quercetin, and citrus bioflavonoids have been included for their **anti-inflammatory** and antioxidant properties, essential factors for optimum joint health.

Many of us suffer from shoulder pain or sore joints. These supplements will really help your joints feel better. You're only as strong as your weakest link.

Each and every workout you subject your joints and tendons to literally tons of weight and stress from the numerous sets and reps you perform. The human body is an incredible machine but the constant stress and pounding your joints take from playing sports, running, and especially weight training can definitely take its toll.

Currently I take a joint complex from Gearmannutrition.com but you may be able to find a better deal by buying each of the ingredients separately. It's really hard to find a brand that contains everything. Personally my tendonitis starts flaring up whenever I stop taking shark cartilage.

- **Meal Replacements:** Protein is the building block for muscle. For a weight lifting athlete approximately 1.5 grams of protein is needed per pound of body weight. This is pretty tough to consume without the help of shakes. The carbohydrates provided in a meal replacement packet are especially useful after your workout.

After you finish lifting there is a half hour window span when your body is receptive to absorbing carbohydrates. These carbohydrates will be used to power your workout the next day. Complex carbohydrates are burned slowly over a period of time and give you longer spurts of energy.

Dosage: Take one shake per day immediately after you get home from the gym. We recommend [Myoplex](#), or Met-Rx shakes based on the amount of protein and affordable cost.

D. Eating for Strength & Power:

Building muscle requires a lot of energy: energy to perform muscle-building exercises, plus the energy to build the tissue itself.

Research has shown that to build muscle while maintaining cardiovascular fitness, serious weight lifters need 23.6 kcals/lb as a minimum.

With the entire craze about high protein diets many of us have neglected to realize how important carbohydrates are in training for strength. The predominant fuel for muscle-building exercise is carbohydrate. The more intense and the longer the duration of your workout, the more carbs your muscles need to store. If your muscles run out of stored fuel (carbs), fatigue will set in and your workout will suffer.



Most of us need to consume 500-600 carbohydrates a day to fuel our muscles. If you want to take this recommendation a step further consume 4 grams of carbs per pound of body weight.

Don't forget protein. I'm sure you didn't. Protein is the basic building material for muscle tissue, and it is required in higher amounts in the diets of individuals performing strength-training exercise. What I'm about to tell you has been debated in the fitness industry but I guarantee you that if you talk to any powerlifter, strength athlete, or

bodybuilder they will agree with me. **Your body needs 1.5 grams of protein per pound of bodyweight to build muscle.**

Now you know how much of your food will come from carbs and protein. The rest of your daily calories should come from fat. To keep your heart healthy, make sure that unsaturated fats from coconut oil, dairy, nuts and seeds make up the greatest proportion of your fat intake.

To keep your body running efficiently, you should eat every 2-3 hours including prior to and after exercising. As a pre workout snack eat a 200-300 calorie combination of protein and carbohydrate. Do the same within 30 minutes after working out to prepare your muscles for the next time you workout and help them recover. You should be eating 6 meals a day to constantly repair and fuel growth.

Stay hydrated. Drink as much water as you can because it's essential to muscle building and strength training. One gallon of water a day is ideal. It cleanses your system, speeds up your metabolism, and indirectly helps your muscles grow. Weigh yourself before and after your workout. For every pound you lose during your workout drink three cups of water or fluid.

Sample Meal Plan 1:

Meal 1:

- Scrambled eggs using 4-5 egg eggs.
- Piece of whole-wheat toast with organic peanut butter.
- Sliced potatoes (not fried).
- Glass of water and green tea.

Meal 2:

- Tuna fish sandwich on whole-wheat bread.
- Piece of fruit.
- Glass of water or organic milk.

Meal 3:

- Meal Replacement Shake.

Meal 4:

- 1 Grilled or baked chicken breast.
- 1 yam or sweet potatoe.
- Side of assorted vegetables.
- Glass of milk.

Meal 5:

- Baked salmon.
- Baked potatoe.



- Broccoli with cheese.*
- Glass of water or milk.*

Meal 6:

- Chocolate protein shake with 2 scoops of protein powder, ice cubes, milk, a banana, and 1 tablespoon of peanut butter.*

Sample Meal Plan 2:

Meal 1:

- Eggs and Bacon.*
- Piece of whole-wheat toast with peanut butter.*
- Glass of water or cup of green tea.*

Meal 2:

- Reduced sugar peanut butter and jelly sandwich on whole-wheat bread.*
- Piece of fruit.*
- Glass of water or milk*

Meal 3:

- Meal Replacement Shake.*

Meal 4:

- Turkey sandwich on whole-wheat bread with lettuce, tomato, and mustard.*
- Glass of milk.*

Meal 5:

- Turkey burger or lean beef burger with lettuce, tomato, cheese and ketchup.*
- 1 baked potato or yam.*
- Glass of water or water or milk.*

Meal 6:

- Strawberry protein shake with two scoops of protein powder, ice cubes, milk, a banana, and frozen strawberries.*

E. TNT Tips n Tricks:

- *Always get a spotter to help you with a lift up before you start the bench press. If you lift it up yourself you are wasting energy and wearing yourself out. In fact when you lift off for yourself you are also more likely to over extend and loss the arch that you have set up. It is much easier to stay tight and keep your shoulder blades squeezed together when someone else hands off for you.*
- *If your gym allows it, put chalk on the bar and on your hands for a better grip.*
- *Buy some [wrist wraps](#) to help keep your wrists stable. The harder you squeeze the bar, the more muscle fibers you recruit for increased power.*
- *Use the same brand of weights on the bar. Many gyms have different colored weights from different manufacturers. Although they are all the same weight, they can vary slightly and possibly affect your balance. It also helps to have all the weights facing the same direction. Preferably facing in. Be a perfectionist.*
- *Some people take a caffeine pill prior to chest workouts to gain an extra kick. (Use discretion this may not be appropriate for everyone.)*
- *If you take a nap before the gym, give yourself plenty of time to wake up, listen to music, or do whatever it is you do to get ready. Just don't go to the gym half asleep.*
- *Never exercise in any shape or form prior to your chest work out. If you must do cardio, do it after your workout. You won't have the energy to perform well if you have already exerted yourself.*
- *Find a bar you're comfortable with, and use it each time you bench. Some bars are thicker or skinnier and some have different locations for your grip.*
- *This is potent tip that a lot of people don't know. If you watch a world class bencher presser warm up you'll notice something very interesting. They treat every single warm up rep like it's a maximum effort lift. I don't care if it's your first warm up set with the bar, make sure you are explosive, squeezing the bar and use perfect technique. Don't ease your way into it. Be aggressive with every rep.*
- *This may sound like a cliché but it something my high school football coach told me that still sticks with me to this day. "Practice doesn't make perfect. PERFECT practice makes perfect."*

F. The Critical Support Group:

You are one of thousands utilizing this system. Many others have done this program and are willing to share their progress and advice. Discuss your training with others by visiting the CriticalBench.com Muscle Forum. If you have questions I'm sure someone else has asked the same thing. Remember there is no such thing as a dumb question.

This is the location of the **Critical Bench Muscle Forum**:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/muscleforum>

I stop by weekly to answer questions. I'm sure you understand that I don't sit on my PC twenty-four hours a day. Recently I had to hire an assistant to help me answer the abundance of emails coming to the site on a daily basis so the forum is the best place to reach me and others that can help you.

We have moderators, sponsored athletes and very intelligent members that will be able to help you with any concerns you might have, so don't be shy.



CriticalBench.com also offers a weight training tips e-Newsletter that is packed full of bench press tips, supplement reviews, PRO interviews, contests and more. If you haven't already done so, get a free subscription by visiting this page:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/newsletter.htm>

Last but not least, many top powerlifters in the world have submitted articles on bench pressing that can be viewed in our articles archives. This is a true gem of a resource:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/training.htm>

G. Critical Bench Program FAQs:

Q: The Critical Bench Program is going well. May I add more sets to the bench press than what the program prescribes?

A: As far as adding more sets, I'd rather you don't add more sets to the bench press, but feel free to add some sets to the secondary exercises. If you're on schedule and things are going well, don't change it. Instead do a burn out set. Put 50% of your max on the bar when you're done with flat bench and do speed reps for as many as you can. This will give you the feeling of doing more without overtraining.

Q: What size [wrist wraps](#) should I use when bench pressing?

A: When it comes to wrist wraps the longer they are the more times you can wrap them around your wrist and the more support you can get. I use the 12 inch wraps for squatting and the 36 inch ones for bench pressing. There's no right or wrong answer here. If you're not competing the mid-size ones should be fine which are, 24- inches.

Q: Is it okay to try and lose fat by doing a lot of cardio while I'm on the Critical Bench Program?

A: Your best results will come when you focus on one goal at a time. Extreme fat loss and strength are not good goals to have at the same time.

Keep your weight and work on strength. After you reach your goal of increasing your bench press and adding muscle, then worry about cutting any extra fat while maintaining your strength.

If you do want to do some cardio keep it moderate, make sure to do it after your weight training sessions and preferably not the day before your bench workout. 40-45 minutes of moderate cardio 3 or 4 times a week is okay, but more than that may affect your strength gains negatively.



Q: In week 4 I did not get my projected reps on the last set of my bench press. What should I do now? Redo week 4 or continue onto the next week?

A: Continue as planned, week 5 is a down week, which will heal you up to come back strong in week 6. Don't let it bother you. Stay positive everyone has a mediocre workout from time to time.

Q: I know what weights to use for the bench press, but how do I know what to use for other exercises?

A: As far as all other exercises, you must apply the theory of progressive overloads. "Whatever you lift today, you must lift more tomorrow." Either do more weight for the same amount of reps or get more reps using the same weight.

Record all of your lifts in your log to track your progress. You should know before the set what you have to beat from prior weeks. Write the weight used in the space above reps performed. I can't tell you exactly how much weight to use for every exercise because I don't know your max for every lift. At first estimate, and do as many reps as you can. If you do more reps than assigned you know the weight was too light. Increase the weight for your second set and take it from there.

Q: Why is my first set so heavy after my warm up set?

A: If you need an extra warm up set feel free to do one. I just don't want you to get tired before your heavy working sets.

Q: I just finished the workout involving heavy negatives. It is two days later and I'm the sorest I have been from the whole program so far. Did I overdo it?

A: It's normal. If you get really sore it's usually the 2nd day after the workout. You'll feel better tomorrow and should be almost completely healed up by the weekend. Heavy negatives have a tendency to make you really sore, especially if you haven't done them before. Just stay the course.

Q: I want to know the formulas. How to I calculate the percentages used?

A: The percentages change a bit as the starting max weight changes. Generally you can get your percentages by dividing the weight you are using by your one rep max.

Q: I'm used to benching 3-4x's a week. Won't scaling back to once a week hurt my progress?

A: It's pretty simple. When you lift you put stress on the muscle thus damaging it. When you are done lifting the growth and repair takes place through rest and refueling. If you are pounding the muscles every other day it never has a chance to recover and get stronger.

You're basically damaging it and ripping the muscle before it has had a chance to fully heal. When you allow your muscles to fully heal they rebuild themselves stronger and tougher. If benching 3xs a week has been working stick to it, but I don't see it working for very long.

Q: I usually use the Smith Machine for incline chest and shoulder press. Can I still stick with the smith machine for inclines and shoulder press with the program or, do i absolutely need to use the shoulder press rack and free weight incline rack?

A: Free weights will definitely help your bench press more than the smith machine. The Smith Machine takes out all your stabilizers and guides the path of the bar. You're right it's safer, but not as effective. If you want to add some smith machine exercises to the program feel free to do so but I strongly advise that you do the free weight incline and shoulder presses so you get the carry over to your free weight bench press.

Q: I can only work out 3x's a week. How can I change the split?

A: Here's what I suggest.

Day 1: Off

Day 2: Back/Shoulders/Biceps

Day 3: Off

Day 4: Chest/Triceps

Day 5: Off

Day 6: Legs

Day 7: Off

You can start on any day you'd like.

The exercises and weekly schedule from your training logs would still be the same you'd just have to jump around to make it line up like above.

This should do the trick!

Q: I'm traveling and will miss a week, what should I do?

A: Enjoy your trip. When you get back, repeat the last week you completed before leaving.

Q: I'm sick and will miss a week, what should I do?

A: Get better. When you're ready to return repeat the last week you completed before getting sick.

Q: Why doesn't this program include accommodating resistance with the use of bands and chains?

A: I want this program to work for anyone regardless of what equipment they have access to. Those tools are cool, but there were plenty of big benchers around before those methods became popular. I don't want you to have to find a barbell club to train at or build a fancy basement gym just to do these workouts.

Q: What if I can't hit my target weights?

A: You don't want to think negative but you are. You're focusing on what could go wrong instead of what WILL go right. You know that whatever you focus on will wind up happening so spend your energy thinking about good things not bad things.

If there are any issues that come up we'll deal with them when and if they ever happen. Don't waste time thinking about hypothetical situations.



Q: My abs are covered by fat. Can I do abs while on the Critical Bench Program to get my abs to show?

A: You actually said it yourself in the question. You already have the abs they're just covered right now by the body fat. Therefore doing the abdominal exercises won't make them show up, dropping your body fat will.

You're doing the Critical Bench Program right? If you are than trying to get stronger and lose body fat at the same time it could be tough.

You can certainly do abs. What I like to do is add one exercise at the end of each workout. Or you can hit them hard once or twice a week, that's up to you. There are plenty of abdominal exercises to pick from here:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/exercises/abdominal-exercises.htm>

You can add it some light to moderate cardio as well.

Just be careful not to do too much or it WILL affect your strength.

Maybe get the max you've been wanting first than focus in on the fat loss after that to give your joints and CNS a break.

Stop by the forum and see what the rest of the guys think.

www.criticalbench.com/muscleforum

Q: How important is the rest duration between sets and the rest between different exercises?

A: Extremely important when strength is your goal. You need to be recovered when lifting heavy weights to increase your max.

Q: With your workout I spend half the time at the gym. This leads me to believe I'm not doing anything. Also my muscles do not hurt as much afterwards. Is this normal?

A: Muscle soreness does not necessarily signify a good workout. Read my article on the matter:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/strength/muscle-soreness-needed.html>

Spending less time at the gym isn't a bad thing if the time you spend there is more productive.

Q: I'm not getting the 1 or 2 reps on my last set for the bench press, what should I do?

A: For your prior sets only complete the minimum number of reps and save some energy for the last set. This may just be a conditioning issue and should improve as you get more volume in.

Q: I want to use the program again, how long should I wait before starting the next program?

A: After completing the Critical Bench Program follow the Critical Deload Routine to rest your CNS, joints and heal any other aches and pains. Four to six weeks should be plenty. After that decide what your current goals are and start your next program in the Critical Training Series whether it's another round of the Critical Bench Program or moving on to something else.

Q: Why don't you have speed days or dynamic effort benching in the program?

A: Speed benching has been known to build explosiveness. Most people overtrain the bench press and by cutting out this second bench press workout of the week, most people will get stronger faster. It is more important to focus on getting your technique down and using some descent weight. When I see beginners do speed benches it can be a mess with every rep looking different. Many mature lifters also insist that the benefit of the lift does not out-weigh the wear and tear. Give this program an honest try and if you decide to incorporate speed benches in the future you can do them in week 5 or instead of close grip bench press on Friday.

IV. Week 11, Maxing Out

You have completed your program and it is now time to measure the level of your gains. Follow the same guidelines you have been accustomed to through out the program. Below you will find a schedule to follow when maxing out. If you happen to miss your max you can drop the weight slightly and attempt again after another 10 minute rest. After two attempts you will be fatigued and must wait another week before maxing out again. Be careful that you do not force any reps during warm-up, you don't want to exhaust your muscles before your max. This is why there is such a long rest period between sets. And remember: **Don't Plant a Seed of Doubt in Your Mind!**



Step 1: Determine your projected max or your goal one rep max. This should be approximately 50 lbs more than the one rep max you had when starting the program. Depending how the program went you can chose to increase your goal max or decrease it slightly.

Step 2: Stretch out and get warmed up without actually bench pressing yet.

Step 3: Follow the bench press protocol below to get warmed up for your new bench press max attempt. If you think you need more warm up do so with the bar, not with the heavier sets. Feel free to take longer breaks between sets as long as you don't start feeling cold. Do not however take shorter rest periods.

HOW TO FIGURE OUT PERCENTAGES: There is a chart on the next page you can use or you can do some good old fashioned math. Let's say your goal max is 365 pounds and you want to figure out what 12% of that is for your first set.

Take your goal max and multiply it by .12

Example: $365 \times .12 = 43.8$. The bar weighs 45 lbs so that would be your first set.

(NOTE: You're not multiplying by 12 you are multiplying by .12)

Week 11 MAX OUT Schedule

SET 1	SET 2	SET 3	SET 4	SET 5
12%of goal max for 10 reps	27% of goal max for 5 reps	61% of goal max for 1 rep	75% of goal max for 1 rep	89% of goal max for 1 rep
Rest 3 minutes This will probably be the bar. If it's not do push-ups for your first set.	Rest 3 minutes	Rest 5 minutes	Rest 5 minutes	Rest 10 minutes

SET 6 – New Max Attempt
100% of your Goal Bench x 1 Rep Congratulations!

Sample: If your goal max is 365 pounds, your warm up routine would like this:

Bar x 10 repetitions: – 3 minute rest
135 x 5 repetitions: – 3-minute rest
225 x 3 repetitions: – 5 minute rest
275 x 1 repetition: – 5 minute rest
325 x 1 repetition: – 10 minute rest
365 x 1 repetition: Your NEW MAX

- ✓ **DID YOU REMEMBER TO:** Perform your stretching routine, get plenty of sleep, eat plenty of food, take your supplements, and take the recommended amount of rest between sets?
- ✓ **How fired up should you get?** Different people are motivated differently. Some people are very vocal, while others display an internal determination. How an athlete gets in “the zone” is not something that is easily taught.

I have interviewed hundreds of elite athletes for the CriticalBench.com Web site and only found one common denominator when it comes to preparing for athletic competition that I'd like to share with you now.

Don't spend too much emotional energy before it's time. It is good to visualize and picture yourself doing well, but do not get too amped up, fired up, or too excited until it's time to compete or max out. You can actually drain yourself of valuable nervous energy and adrenaline before really needing it.

You don't see football players going crazy during pregame warm-ups. If they did, they'd be tired before the game even started. You should be so relaxed and focused that you can actually fall asleep an hour or two before it's time to max out.



But make no mistake, when it's time to lift you must flip the switch and focus all of your mental and physical energy on the task at hand. Remember your cues, block everything else out and get ready to **set a personal record!**

As long as you try your best and hardest to beat your own best lift, nothing else matters. It doesn't make a difference what your buddy or training partners can lift. Setting a new bench press max record for your self is a personal accomplishment. Don't be jealous of anyone else and don't compare yourself to anyone else.

100-295 Pound Chart

100%	95%	.92.5%	90%	.87.5%	85%	.82.5%	80%	.77.5%	75%	.72.5%	70%	.67.5%	65%	.62.5%	60%	.57.5%	55%	.52.5%	50%
1RM	2RM	3RM	4RM	5RM	6RM	7RM	8RM	9RM	10RM	11RM	12RM	13RM	14RM	15RM	16RM	17RM	18RM	19RM	20RM
295	280.2	272.8	265	258	250	24	236	228	221	213	206	199	191	184	177	169	162	154	147
290	275	268	261	253	246	239	232	224	217	210	203	195	188	181	174	166	159	152	145
285	270	263	256	249	242	235	228	220	213	206	199	192	185	178	171	163	156	149	142
280	266	259	252	245	238	231	224	217	210	203	196	189	182	175	168	161	154	147	140
275	261	254	247	240	233	226	220	213	206	199	192	185	178	171	165	158	151	144	137
270	265	249	243	236	229	222	216	209	202	195	189	182	175	168	162	155	148	141	135
265	251	245	238	231	225	218	212	205	198	192	185	178	172	165	159	152	145	139	132
260	247	240	234	227	221	214	208	201	195	188	182	175	169	162	156	149	143	136	130
255	242	235	229	223	216	210	204	197	191	184	178	172	165	159	153	146	140	133	127
250	237	231	225	218	212	206	200	193	187	181	175	168	162	156	150	143	137	131	125
245	232	226	220	214	208	202	196	189	183	177	171	165	159	153	147	140	134	128	122
240	228	222	216	210	204	198	192	186	180	174	168	162	156	150	144	138	132	126	120
235	223	217	211	205	199	193	188	182	176	170	164	158	152	146	141	135	129	123	117
230	218	212	207	201	195	189	184	178	172	166	161	155	149	143	138	132	126	120	115
225	213	208	202	196	191	185	180	174	168	163	157	151	146	140	135	129	123	118	112
220	209	203	195	192	187	181	176	170	165	159	154	148	143	137	132	126	121	115	110
215	204	198	193	188	182	177	172	166	161	155	150	145	139	134	129	123	118	112	107
210	199	194	189	183	178	173	168	162	157	152	147	141	136	131	126	120	115	110	105
205	194	189	184	179	174	169	164	158	153	148	143	138	133	128	123	117	112	107	102
200	190	185	180	175	170	165	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100
195	185	180	175	170	165	160	156	151	146	141	136	131	126	121	117	112	107	102	97
190	180	175	171	166	161	156	152	147	142	137	133	128	124	118	114	109	104	99	95
185	175	171	166	161	157	152	148	143	138	134	129	124	120	115	111	106	101	97	92
180	171	166	162	157	153	148	144	139	135	130	126	121	117	112	108	103	99	94	90
175	166	161	157	153	148	144	140	135	131	126	122	118	113	109	105	100	96	91	87
170	161	157	153	148	144	140	136	131	127	123	119	114	110	106	102	97	93	89	85
165	156	152	148	144	140	136	132	127	123	119	115	111	107	103	99	94	90	86	82
160	152	148	144	140	136	132	128	124	120	116	112	108	104	100	96	92	88	84	80
155	147	143	139	135	131	127	124	120	116	112	108	104	100	96	93	89	85	81	77
150	142	138	135	131	127	123	120	116	112	108	105	101	97	93	90	86	82	78	75
145	137	134	130	126	123	119	116	112	108	105	101	97	94	90	87	83	79	76	72
140	133	129	126	122	119	115	112	108	105	101	98	94	91	87	84	80	77	73	70
135	128	124	121	118	114	111	108	104	101	97	94	91	87	84	81	77	74	70	67
130	123	120	117	113	110	107	104	100	97	94	91	87	84	81	78	74	71	68	65
125	118	115	112	109	106	103	100	96	93	90	87	84	81	78	75	71	68	65	62
120	114	111	108	105	102	99	96	93	90	87	84	81	78	75	72	69	66	63	60
115	109	106	103	100	97	94	92	89	86	83	80	77	74	71	69	66	63	60	57
110	104	101	99	96	93	90	88	85	82	79	77	74	71	68	66	63	60	57	55
105	99	97	94	91	89	86	84	81	78	76	73	70	68	65	63	60	57	55	52
100	95	92	90	87	85	82	80	77	75	72	70	67	65	62	60	57	55	52	50

300-495 Pound Chart

100%	95%	.92.5%	90%	.87.5%	85%	.82.5%	80%	.77.5%	75%	.72.5%	70%	.67.5%	65%	.62.5%	60%	.57.5%	55%	.52.5%	50%
1RM	2RM	3RM	4RM	5RM	6RM	7RM	8RM	9RM	10RM	11RM	12RM	13RM	14RM	15RM	16RM	17RM	18RM	19RM	20RM
495	470	457	445	433	420	408	396	383	371	358	346	334	321	309	297	284	272	259	247
490	465	453	441	428	416	404	392	379	367	355	343	330	318	306	294	281	269	257	245
485	460	448	436	424	412	400	388	375	363	351	339	327	315	303	291	278	266	254	242
480	456	444	432	420	408	396	384	372	360	348	336	324	312	300	288	276	264	252	240
475	451	439	427	415	403	391	380	368	356	344	332	320	308	296	285	273	261	249	237
470	446	434	423	411	399	387	376	364	352	340	329	317	305	293	282	270	258	246	235
465	441	430	418	406	395	383	372	360	348	337	325	313	302	290	279	267	255	244	232
460	437	425	414	402	391	379	368	356	345	333	322	310	299	287	276	264	253	241	230
455	432	420	409	398	386	375	364	352	341	329	318	307	295	284	273	261	250	238	227
450	427	416	405	393	382	371	360	348	337	326	315	303	292	281	270	258	247	236	225
445	422	411	400	389	378	367	356	344	333	322	311	300	289	278	267	255	244	233	222
440	418	407	396	385	374	363	352	341	330	319	308	297	286	275	264	253	242	231	220
435	413	402	391	380	369	358	348	337	326	315	304	293	282	271	261	250	239	228	217
430	408	397	387	376	365	354	344	333	322	311	301	290	279	268	258	247	236	225	215
425	403	393	382	371	361	350	340	329	318	308	297	286	276	265	255	244	233	223	212
420	399	388	378	367	357	346	336	325	315	304	294	283	273	262	252	241	231	220	210
415	394	383	373	363	352	342	332	321	311	300	290	280	269	259	249	238	228	217	207
410	389	379	369	358	348	338	328	317	307	297	287	276	266	256	246	235	225	215	205
405	384	374	364	354	344	334	324	313	303	293	283	273	263	253	243	232	222	212	202
400	380	370	360	350	340	330	320	310	300	290	280	270	260	250	240	230	220	210	200
395	375	365	355	345	335	325	315	306	296	286	276	266	256	246	237	227	217	207	197
390	370	360	350	341	331	321	312	302	292	282	273	263	253	243	234	224	214	204	195
385	365	356	346	336	327	317	308	298	288	279	269	259	250	240	231	221	211	202	192
380	361	351	342	332	323	313	304	294	285	275	266	256	247	237	228	218	209	199	190
375	356	346	337	328	318	309	300	290	281	271	262	253	243	234	225	215	206	196	187
370	351	342	333	323	314	305	296	286	277	268	259	249	240	231	222	212	203	194	185
346	346	337	328	319	310	301	292	282	273	264	255	246	237	228	219	209	200	191	182
360	342	333	324	315	306	297	288	279	270	261	252	243	234	225	216	207	198	189	180
355	337	328	319	310	301	292	284	275	266	257	248	239	230	221	211	204	195	186	177
350	332	323	315	306	297	288	280	271	262	253	245	236	227	218	210	201	192	183	175
345	327	319	310	301	293	284	276	267	258	250	241	232	224	215	207	198	189	181	172
340	323	314	306	297	289	280	272	263	255	246	238	229	221	212	204	195	187	178	170
335	318	309	301	293	284	276	268	259	251	242	234	226	217	209	201	192	184	175	167
330	313	305	297	288	280	272	264	255	247	239	231	222	214	206	198	189	181	173	165
325	308	300	292	284	276	268	260	251	243	235	227	219	211	203	195	186	178	170	162
320	304	296	288	280	272	264	256	248	240	232	224	216	208	200	192	184	176	168	160
315	299	291	283	275	267	259	252	244	236	228	220	212	204	196	189	181	173	165	157
310	294	286	279	271	263	255	248	240	232	224	217	209	201	193	186	178	170	162	155
305	289	282	274	266	259	251	244	236	228	221	213	205	198	190	183	175	167	160	152
300	285	277	270	262	255	247	240	232	225	217	210	202	195	187	180	172	165	157	150

Is your goal max off the charts? Congratulations.

You can find a bigger chart here:

<http://www.criticalbench.com/weight-training-chart.htm>

VI. Projected Max Chart

You can track your progress throughout the program without actually maxing out by referring to this one rep max chart. People always ask if this chart is accurate.

It may not be exact but it gives you a good indication. It is usually within ten pounds of your true max. The left hand column represents the weight that you are basing your max off. Follow your finger over to the number of times you lifted the weight and you will see your projected max.

For example, if you lift 205 lbs for seven reps, your projected max would be 248 lbs. Congratulations if you are off the chart. For a bigger chart check the Web site at: <http://www.criticalbench.com/chart.htm>. You'll also find a calculator that does the same thing.



Weight/Reps	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
135	143	147	151	156	159	163	167	171	176
145	154	158	162	167	171	175	180	184	189
155	164	169	174	183	188	192	197	202	207
165	175	180	185	190	195	200	205	210	215
175	186	191	196	201	207	212	217	222	228
185	196	202	207	213	218	224	229	235	241
195	207	213	218	224	230	236	242	248	254
205	217	223	230	236	242	248	254	260	267
215	228	234	241	247	254	260	267	273	280
225	239	245	252	259	266	272	279	286	293
235	249	256	263	270	277	284	291	298	306
245	260	267	274	282	289	296	304	311	319
255	270	278	286	293	301	308	316	324	332
265	281	289	297	305	313	321	329	337	345
275	292	300	308	316	325	333	341	349	358
285	302	311	319	328	336	345	353	362	371
295	313	322	330	339	348	357	366	374	384
305	323	332	342	351	360	369	378	387	397
315	334	343	353	362	372	381	391	400	410
325	345	354	364	373	384	393	403	413	423
335	355	365	375	385	395	405	415	425	436
345	366	376	386	397	407	417	428	438	449
355	376	387	398	408	419	430	440	451	462
365	387	398	409	420	431	442	453	464	478
375	398	409	420	431	443	454	465	476	488
385	408	420	431	443	454	466	477	489	501
395	419	431	442	454	466	478	490	502	514
405	429	441	454	466	478	490	502	514	527
415	440	452	465	477	490	502	514	527	539
425	450	463	476	489	501	514	527	540	552

VI. What's Next?

As mentioned earlier, after completing the Critical Bench Program you will need to adjust your training before trying it again. I recommend taking 4-6 weeks off from heavy lifting. Start training with reps of 8 and up. You'll also want to develop a new training split and select new weight training exercises. You will maintain the strength you developed as long as you keep working hard in the weight room.

The Critical Deload Routine came with the purchase of this program. You can follow that routine before starting this Critical Bench Program again.

Deload simply means that you'll be giving your Central Nervous System, joints and tendons a break from the heavy weights. If you don't deload, you run the risk of overtraining or hitting a training plateau much faster. Most of us want to keep going heavy all the time, but trust me you need to take a few weeks off from heavy weights every few months.

Or perhaps you have a new training goal in mind, like burning some fat?

What If You Could Burn Fat and Build Muscle At The Same Time?

Does this sound too good to be true? Hold on a minute, let me explain.

Like many of you I played sports in high school. I walked on the football team in college and played four years of D-IAA football. Keeping my body lean and strong during that period of my life wasn't a problem. After all we had practice, mandatory weight lifting sessions, morning running and a very positive environment for keeping the body in an overall anabolic state.



As the post-college years kept passing by, I found myself being less and less active. Don't get me wrong I found a new passion and started testing my merit in amateur powerlifting over the past few years and it has kept me really motivated and I do love the competition.

But.....something is missing. I've gotten a lot stronger but I also gained over 25 lbs! It's kind of embarrassing actually. Here I am preaching on the Internet and trying to help others stay fit and I go right ahead and pack on some un-needed pounds. Hey, I'm human too.

What does all this have to do with the building muscle and burning fat at the same time Mike?

Well, several months ago I hooked up with my now good friend Elliott Hulse who is the

owner of a warehouse gym in my area called Strength Camp. Elliott is a **pro strongman** by the way. Anyhow, I started watching some of the workouts he was putting his clients through. This wasn't like anything I had really seen before. They weren't using your typical gym equipment. They were carrying odd objects, loading sandbags, dragging sleds and doing all kinds of exercises that looked like half resistance training and half cardio training.

I told Elliott I wanted to try some of the "Warrior Training" methods. He grinned and it's no surprise Elliott and I hit it off right away and started doing some workouts together.

We'd combine my strength building exercises with his max effort resistance cardio techniques to come up with some pretty sick training sessions. The fat has been melting off and I'm still maintaining my strength so I think it's safe to say we're on to something here. It has worked for us and it has worked for others, so it will probably work for you too.

We call this program [Lean Hybrid Muscle](http://www.hybridleanmuscle.com/).

You can learn more about this training style that combines powerlifting, bodybuilding and strongman at this link: <http://www.hybridleanmuscle.com/>

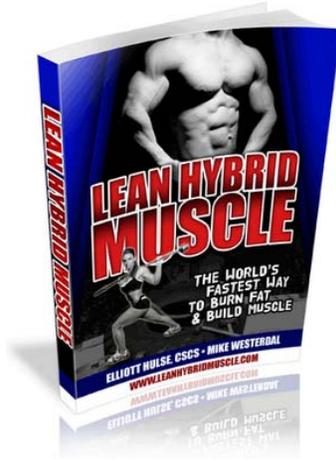
If you want to maintain the strength you've built with the Critical Bench Program but would also like to lose some fat then I think the Lean Hybrid Muscle system will make a nice follow up plan for you.



*Elliott Gained 34 Lbs of Muscle
& Dropped His Body Fat to 11%*



*Mike Shed 12 Pounds of Fat
Replacing It With 10 lbs Of Muscle!*



<http://www.hybridleanmuscle.com/>

VII. Conclusion

It's Your Choice

I want to give you one of the most powerful keys I have ever learned and studied over the past few years.

You can have anything, be anything, and do anything in life if you just make the choice to do so.

The power to choose whatever you want is something that the words written here cannot give justice to.

Your future has not happened yet. In fact, you create your future. The choices that you make today will shape your destiny later in life. The fact that you are reading this book tells me that you are serious about wanting to change in the future regarding your current strength and size.

The most important step you can take is to make the choice that you are going to commit to this and stick with it until you accomplish your bench press goal.

There are going to be a few days where you want to throw in the towel and call it quits. But choose not to.

Have faith that you will get what you want. It will require patience and persistence, but so do all good things in life. You can want anything in life, but it's what you're willing to go after that matters. Simply having goals and choosing to accomplish them is what distinguishes successful people from those that merely wish. NOW is the time to choose that you are going to increase your bench press, get stronger and build muscle.

You Have the Blueprint

You can do anything that anyone else has done. You can have anything that anyone else has. You can be anything that some else already is.

How do you know a 400 pound bench press is possible? Because others using this program have already have accomplished it so you know it can be done.

Take a minute to read some of these stories from people just like you that have changed their life by getting stronger, more muscular and increasing their bench press.

Bench Press = 390 LBS

"I decided to try the program after my brother had such great success. I had been stuck at 340 lbs for a while, but the program helped me break through that sticking point. After the ten week program I put up 390 lbs!"



ANGELO GRIFFIN
Putnam, CT

Increased Bench: 50 lbs
Time Period: 10 Weeks

Current Bench: 390 lbs

Height: 5'10
Weight: 205 lbs
Age: 24

Bench Press = 345 LBS

"What's up Critical Bench! Thanks for the program. It feels good benchin 3 plates. I was never much of a bencher but now it's one of my favorite lifts."

Sig placed 2nd in his first bodybuilding competition in 2004.



SIG WATKINS
Dorchester, MA

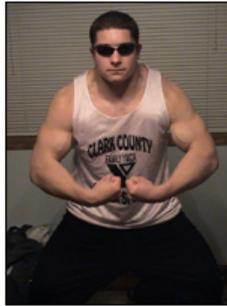
Increased Bench: 50 lbs
Time Period: 10 Weeks

Current Bench: 345 lbs

Height: 5'9
Weight: 210 lbs
Age: 24

Bench Press = 345 LBS

"WOW, I didn't know it was physically possible to make gains like that in such a short period of time, but with a lot of encouragement I broke through 300lbs barrel and my new goal to lockout 400lbs in at least 13 weeks. But with your training tips I know that will be reached!!"



MATT LISOVOY
Vancouver, WA

Increased Bench: 55 lbs
Time Period: 11-Weeks

Current Bench: 345 lbs
(as of May 6th, 2006)

Height: 5'11
Weight: 205 lbs
Age: 16

Bench Press = 345 LBS

"I've used the critical bench program for 3 month and my bench grew from 245Lbs to 345Lbs. A 100 pound gain in 3 months. I want to try the [Critical Bench Program](#) one more time so I can reach the 400 Pound class. This program has changed the way I train, and now I love benching so much more than before."



SERGE NOLET
New-Brunswick
Canada

Increased Bench: 100 lbs
Time Period: 3-Months

Current Bench: 345 lbs

Height: 5'11.5
Weight: 190 lbs
Age: 21

Bench Press = 300 LBS

"I have been lifting 3 years now and decided to get serious I was stuck on a plateau and decided to try critical bench and im sure glad I did. I added 40 lbs to my bench in 12 weeks to a goal I've always wanted thanks to the [program](#) I have finally accomplished it, and plan to go for more."



ROGER BLAIR
Lakeview, OH

Increased Bench: 40 lbs
Time Period: 12 Weeks

Current Bench: 300 lbs

Height: 5'10
Weight: 185 lbs
Age: 50

Bench Press = 405 LBS

"You should see the looks I get in the gym. People that have known me for years couldn't believe how much weight I was pushing up. When I read the program it looked tough, but I stuck with it and it paid off."



ARAM BOLDUC
Bristol, CT

Increased Bench: 50 lbs
Time Period: 11 Weeks

Current Bench: 405 lbs

Height: 5'9
Weight: 225 lbs
Age: 23

Bench Press = 405 LBS

"This is a picture of me as an inside linebacker at CCSU. I can bench press more now than I ever could as a college football player. I had been lifting higher reps for a while, and decided to try the bench press program from Critical Bench. The program was awesome and I was gaining about ten pounds on my bench every week!"



JAVIER PEREZ
Naugatuck, CT

Increased Bench: 65 lbs
Time Period: 7 Weeks

Current Bench: 405 lbs

Height: 6'1
Weight: 235 lbs
Age: 29

Bench Press = 455 LBS

*"After doing a bodybuilding show I was ready to regain my size and strength. I also needed to increase my bench fast. The **Critical Bench Program** was the answer. I was really impressed with the program. It felt like I was getting stronger every week. And not just my bench but my whole body. This program is a must for anyone looking to put on size and strength. I'm going to do the **Lean Mass Program** next, so look for before and after photos. Thanks Critical Bench."*



RANDY JACKSON
Oceanside, CA

Increased Bench: 50 lbs
Time Period: 11 Weeks

Current Bench: 455 lbs

Height: 5'7
Weight: 198 lbs
Age: 27

Be sure to visit Randy's Web site: www.bigjack.us.

Bench Press = 450 LBS

"I'm also a competitor in the WABDL. My training partner Sid told me about the Critical Bench Program, and I'm sure glad he did. I plan on using the program again prior to my next competition."

Darrell holds a LA state bench press record with a lift of 385 in the Masters.



DARRELL LESAGE
Greenwell Springs, LA

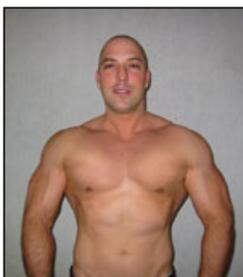
Increased Bench: 50 lbs
Time Period: 11 Weeks

Current Bench: 450 lbs

Height: ?
Weight: 181 lbs
Age: 45

Bench Press = 425 LBS

"I've been lifting for 7 years have always been involved in athletics and have seen a 60lb increase in my bench since I started the [program](#) it took me to the next level. Next is the 500lb barrier."



NICK SAINIS
Wallingford, CT

Increased Bench: 60 lbs
Time Period: 11 Weeks

Current Bench: 425 lbs

Height: 6'2
Weight: 231 lbs
Age: Unknown

Bench Press = 405 LBS

"Breaking past the 400 lbs mark has always been a personal goal of mine. Critical Bench helped me shock teammates when I came into camp benching 60 lbs more than I did before the summer."

Dwight played fullback at Plymouth State College in New Hampshire.



DWIGHT DIMARTINO
Atkinson, NH

Increased Bench: 60 lbs
Time Period: 12 Weeks

Current Bench: 405 lbs

Height: 5'10
Weight: 225 lbs
Age: 24

Bench Press = 365 LBS

"I was stuck at 315 and was never going to see 335 the way i was training. I spent less time training with this program and gained so much. It's a good feeling to bench your old max for reps. Being a father of 4 and don't have hours to train and be able to go everyday. This program told me what and how I was going to lift for the next 11 weeks."



JOHN ZIKMANIS
Salem, NH

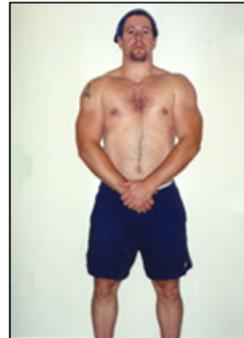
Increased Bench: 50 lbs
Time Period: 10 Weeks

Current Bench: 365 lbs

Height: 6'1
Weight: 235 lbs
Age: 33

Bench Press = 350 LBS

"I had been stuck at the 300# plateau for almost a year, and was skeptical at first. But with this program based on Progressive Overload Training, I was astounded by the gains in strength that I made in just 10 weeks. The training tips were invaluable!"



BRAD BARTOS, M.D.
San Diego, CA

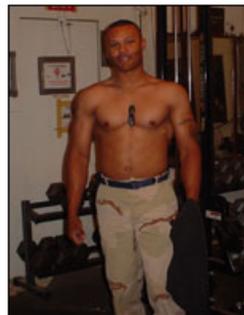
Increased Bench: 50 lbs
Time Period: 10 Weeks

Current Bench: 350 lbs

Height: 6'2
Weight: 235 lbs
Age: 30

Bench Press = 355 LBS

"I've been stationed in Saudi Arabia for the past 180 days. With this program, my bench went from 320 to 355. I "only" weigh 190 lbs."



SGT. KENYA FAIRLEY
US Air Force

Increased Bench: 35 lbs
Time Period: 10 Weeks

Current Bench: 355 lbs

Height: ?
Weight: 190 lbs
Age: ?

Are you willing to work as hard as these guys to get similar results?

I am not trying to say be like someone else here. I am saying that if you want to get stronger and bigger, make a study out of what other successful people have done to get it. That is exactly how I gained the knowledge that I have and now I'm passing this information on to you.

Sure, there are going to be some limitations and some setbacks.

You will probably not be able to play pro baseball or basketball if you are in your 50's.

You may not be able to be president of the United States if you've failed to graduate school.

That does not and should not mean you do not set lofty goals for yourself. There should be no doubt in your mind that you can increase your bench press 50 lbs in 10 weeks. It has been done thousands of times before.



What I will offer you in this course is tried and true steps that will lead you toward a bigger bench and a more muscular body. They are steps that I have taken in my own physical transformation as well as the steps my clients have taken.

Rest assured, the information you will read has been put to the test and it works.

But it only works as well as you want it to work.

Simply reading a "how-to" manual will not help you much if you don't put its principles into action. That is the reason that most "self-help" books contain action exercises at the end of each chapter. Knowledge is not much use by itself. It's what you do with that knowledge that matters. By putting into action certain steps, you more than likely will get certain results. That is not the case with just reading something and failing to use it. You must apply to your own situation what it is you just read and that is where the magic begins.

Accept Responsibility

If you think the paragraph above is total BS and does not apply to you, then you need to pay close attention. I refuse to work with and help "victims" that believe they are doomed to have a weak bench press forever. This is NOT true!

You are where you are right now due to the choices you've made. I do not say this so that

you'll begin to feel down on yourself, I say this because it's the first step in taking total control of your bench press and your life for that matter.

A large part of being a fully mature adult is taking full responsibility for your actions. Only then can you begin the action steps to clearly change your situation.

When you realize that you created your situation and that it's up to you to change it, you can begin immediately to do so.

Like we have already mentioned, we talk to ourselves in real time. This internal voice, or dialogue, dictates what we think about and what we do.

If you are blaming your current bench press on everything but yourself, that is what you're going to keep telling yourself internally to the point that you truly believe that you are not at fault for your lack of muscle or strength.

So if you feel that you are not at fault for your current bench press max, you are not going to get real with yourself and discover why you currently struggle with the lift.

Instead, you are going to continue to blame outside forces like fast food restaurants, bad genetics, lack of a training partners or the lack of a hardcore gym in your area and you'll continue in your never-ending search for getting bigger and stronger.

On the other hand, by accepting complete and full responsibility you can start the necessary preparations of figuring out why it's occurring and you can take action to change it.

You are in control of everything you want and everything you are going to achieve.

Once you realize this, you need to reinforce it with your internal dialogue. When something is not going right, you need to remind yourself that it's up to you to figure out a solution.

The more you talk to yourself internally about accepting responsibility, the more you will count on yourself to find the answers to your strength training problems.

Taking complete and total responsibility for your current situation is very powerful.

The fact is, by claiming ownership, you also realize that it's you and only you that will be the one who gets you to take action and change what you want changed.

There are some things in life that you just cannot change, no matter how hard you try or how bad you want to.

For instance, you cannot unscramble a scrambled egg, no matter how hard you try or how much you want to.

Your current physical situation and where you are in your life right now is not one of these instances you cannot change.

You can change anything about your current physical situation right now. It is just a matter of how hard you will try and how badly you want to change. Unlike the egg, you can unscramble your physical situation if you want to.

It's very powerful and comforting to stop blaming and start accepting.

Once you do, you and only you are in the driver's seat and you can now go as fast as you want toward achieving your goal!



I Believe In You – Do You Believe In Yourself?

Listen many of clients came to me extremely frustrated and the very first thing I tell them is to begin acting as though you have a monster bench and powerful physique.

Soon enough the subconscious mind will begin working to realize those actions and will begin creating the picture you hold to be your ideal body. I want you to do the same thing. Act as if you're already as strong as you want to be, and act as though your self-confidence is soaring through the roof.

Begin to act as if you've already a 300, 400 or 500 pound bencher.

This is important because I want you to begin experiencing the positive feelings you'll permanently have once you've hit your goal.

The more you start flooding your body and mind with feelings of energy, strength,

confidence, power, and other positive feelings, you'll begin to link pleasure with this entire process.

When you begin to act as though something imagined is real, you start to gravitate to those feelings and the actual accomplishment of those goals.

I know that sounds a bit foolish, but it's true.

In fact, it's a proven fact that if you believe something to be absolutely, undeniably true for a long period of time, you can actually convince yourself that it is true.

You can talk yourself into believing anything.

So why not talk yourself into being a 300, 400, or 500 bencher?

Sooner or later, by acting that way, your brain will seek out and begin to take the necessary steps to actually accomplish that goal.

As much as this seems like mental hogwash, its a simple fact that if you begin to act with absolute conviction that something has happened or is occurring, your brain cannot distinguish if it really did happen or not.

Now follow this bench press program and make the conscious choice to go after what you want.

Are you ready to do this? From this point on, you are now a new man. It's time to get mentally tough before you get physically tough.

I'm not going to wish you luck, because luck has nothing to do with this.

I can't wait to hear your success story and I know you can't wait to create it!

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to serve you.

God Bless,



Mike Westerdal

