



# MASSIVE IRON

**THE REP GOAL SYSTEM**



*by Steve Shaw*

# THE REP GOAL SYSTEM

*A Massive Iron Series Book*

*by Steve Shaw*

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# TESTIMONIALS

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## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT STEVE SHAW

*Strongman Competitor Jordan Martin:*

When I first decided to get healthy, I was massively overweight. I weighed in over 360 pounds and was fat, diabetic and weak. Following a diet plan very similar to what Steve Shaw recommends got me to under 215 in a year.

From there I used his lifting routines and individualized advice to get stronger and add quality mass. 3 years after starting my journey, I placed 1st in a state strongman record-breaker show, took 3rd place in the SHWs in the Illinois Strongest Man show, 2nd place in the SHWs at the UPA Nationals, and I am healthier and happier than ever.

Steve places a lot of emphasis not only on strength, but also on well-being. Following his advice, I am not only stronger than ever, but in a better place mentally and emotionally.

Training gives us mental strength as well as physical, and the drive to progress bleeds into other areas of our lives. I can credit his push to succeed in finding not only great physical strength but also a better job and a new, healthier relationship with a beautiful woman. So thanks Steve. It started out with the deadlift and continues with a more abundant life.

***Randall "The Squat Jedi" Pattee:***

Steve Shaw has helped me immensely with my lifting, since first coming in contact with him. Focusing on common sense, simple progression and smart training, his advice can be of use to lifters of any experience level.

His knowledge is contagious. When talking about any iron-related topic you can't help but learn something. He has encouraged me and countless others to pursue powerlifting, and helps to further the sport on a daily basis.

More than just telling someone what to do in the gym, Steve teaches lifters how to gather and interpret information, and apply it to their own training. I certainly would not have made the progress under the bar that I have without his help.

***Powerlifter and Industry Writer Jeremy Gray:***

Steve Shaw is the kind of person that seems too good to be true. His no-nonsense approach to life keeps all of the wisdom and knowledge he passes on as genuine as it can be.

He knows what he is talking about and wants to see everyone succeed. Whenever Steve gives me advice I run with it and reap the benefits.

***Powerlifter and Writer Nicholas Ludlow:***

Steve Shaw is an embodiment of everything that is "right" in the fitness community. With 20+ years of experience in the fitness world, Steve consistently provides straightforward and effective tips, advice, routines, and dietary layouts to help reach fitness goals; whether they

be to increase strength, increase muscle, decrease fat, improve endurance, or to improve overall health. Furthermore, Steve words his thoughts simply, yet effectively, and continuously pushes me to improve as both a person and weightlifter.

With his advice and support, I've increased my overhead press to 135lbs for reps, bench to 225lbs for reps, squat to 315 for reps, and deadlift to 455 for reps, all while increasing my muscle mass and minimizing fat gain, which is difficult for a natural trainee.

Steve does an excellent job of providing advice for the "average Joe" who balances work, social, relationship, and health commitments. Without the resources, support, and knowledge that Steve Shaw possesses I would not be where I am today. I have no doubt he'll continue supporting each and every lifter he encounters with his no-nonsense and effective fitness approaches.

Steve has taught me that through hard work, food, sleep, and progression, I improve my quality of life by incorporating weightlifting without allowing it to become the center of my universe; I can't think of many people that can provide such balanced recommendations.

### ***Powerlifter and Industry Writer Faheem Chauhan:***

In my opinion Steve Shaw is one of the most knowledgeable people on the natural bodybuilding scene. Steve has an inimitable knack for zeroing in on exactly what people need to hear when it's appropriate. You won't find Steve giving blanket responses to individuals; he has a broad range of experiences in coaching others which can help whatever your needs.

Whether that is fat loss or muscle building and whether your eventual goals are to be a big bodybuilder, or a slimmer fitness contestant. Steve himself is a record-breaking powerlifter and has been involved in fitness in one form or another for well over 20 years. I consider Steve to be a fantastic resource for all things related to bodybuilding and fitness, an excellent teacher and orator and finally I am also blessed to consider him a friend.

### ***Powerlifter Al Brown:***

I have known Steve for around 4 years now having met through Muscle & Strength. The first thing that struck me about him was how massive and strong he was. His numbers were significantly higher



than almost everyone on the board. That impressed me although I know plenty of strong guys who have got that way more through luck than judgment.

This is not the case with Steve; he is a scholar of lifting. I have had many a conversation with him on topics as diverse as carb manipulation, the origins of bodybuilding competition and the relative merits of different grip widths on bench press and whenever I have, I have learnt.

By far and away my favourite quality that Steve possesses though is that he is hugely passionate about helping others and seeing them succeed. I can count around 10 lifters in my small group of online contacts who have competed in powerlifting thanks to Steve's encouragement and coaching. That passion is rare in anyone but to have it in the abundance that Steve has, is incredible.

# ABOUT

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## About Steve Shaw

Steve Shaw is an industry writer, competitive powerlifter and strength coach who has also spent 28 years studying the sport of bodybuilding. Through his articles and workouts, he has helped thousands of individuals reach or exceed their strength and muscle building goals.

Steve Shaw holds national records in both the UPA and ADFPF, and ranks 8<sup>th</sup> all-time total in the Masters SHW class with a 1,653 pound raw total. His best competition lifts include:

- Squat – 600 pounds

- Bench press – 381 pounds
- Deadlift 672 pounds

When he first hit the gym, Steve was a typical hard gainer. He tipped the scales at 150, and couldn't bench press more than 95 pounds for reps. Driven to improve, Steve began experimenting with weight progression and training theory. After a year of training, he had dramatically transformed his physique.

Steve Shaw has spent an extensive amount of time studying the topic of natural strength and muscle building potential, as well as the training styles of top powerlifters and bodybuilders from the 1950s to the modern era. He has written hundreds of articles, and nearly as many published workout programs and training systems.

Currently Steve is moving towards the 220-pound powerlifting weight class, and is training to break an all-time over 50 raw world record.

# FOREWORD

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By Lisa Hostetter

*For more from Lisa, please visit [www.nutritionbeast.com](http://www.nutritionbeast.com).*

“The best part about strength training is the people you meet. I’ve met the most driven, positive, encouraging, hard-working, compassionate and generous people over the last several years.” - Steve Shaw

A man true to his own words, Steve Shaw embodies this statement. He is a legend in his own time. Steve is one of the most honorable men you could ever meet, and he has a sincere willingness to help others. He truly wants everyone to succeed in this sport.

Steve is a creator who changes lives and is always improving on his own physique; instead of dreaming, he takes action and has inspired and changed countless lives forever. Quite often you'll hear Steve say, "Trust in the process," and that he does.

He pushes himself and those around him to reach beyond what we believe we are capable of achieving to obtain our ultimate goals. He has transformed himself from a 346-pound powerlifting monster, to a jaw dropping and muscular 246 pounds.

I don't think he truly realizes the impact he has had on countless individuals, including me. I came across Steve by sheer accident one day while picking up a copy of Natural Muscle Magazine. I never told Steve this, but every month I would go straight to his interview page and read his write-up. I was impressed with his honest writing and interview style.

Little did I know, one day our paths would eventually cross. Over the last several years I have gotten to know him and I can tell you from personal experience, he is truly a humble man who has spent countless hours patiently helping me build a website and brand I truly believe in and has asked nothing in return.

I know I am just one example, but I speak for countless individuals whose lives he has forever changed in one way or another through the years. In a world where it's easier to be a critic than a creator in the fitness industry, his passion shines like a beacon of light. It is my hope that this book will encourage you to “trust in the process” and raise the bar higher for yourself.

Thank you Steve for making a tremendous impact in the fitness community now and in the future; you have touched so many lives and we will be forever grateful. We are all eager to see what you have in store for the future.

# INTRODUCTION

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## Who This Book Is For

This is not a book for advanced lifters. The **Rep Goal System** is designed to help struggling trainees get on track and make better progress, and to assist intermediate lifters with refining their training and improving weak, undersized and lagging body parts.

Make no mistake about it...this is not the only way to train. There are many ways to progress in weight. With that said, I believe the Rep Goal System to be one of the most efficient ways to spend your gym time. After all, if you never waste a set can there be much lacking with your training?

The programs contained in this book are merely examples. They are not the only way to utilize the Rep Goal System. The Rep Goal System is a tool. Use it where you need it.



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The header graphic for Chapter 1 features a black and white photograph of a person's hands gripping a barbell, overlaid with a geometric pattern of hexagons and triangles. A solid red horizontal band spans the width of the image, containing the chapter title in white text.

# CHAPTER 1

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE MASSIVE IRON SYSTEM

This book is for those of you that want to build as much muscle and strength as possible. It is not a bodybuilding or powerlifting book per se, but rather a collection of principles and tools that are meant to help the average lifter exceed their goals.

Consider it a base building book.

Should you decide you want to enter competitive bodybuilding, this book will help you build a muscle base. Should you decide you want to become a competitive powerlifter, this book will provide you with the strength base you need.

If you simply love training and want to get as big and strong as possible for the heck of it, then this is the book for you. Keep reading.

# MY MAIN PHILOSOPHY – MAXIMIZE SETS

I don't believe in wasting sets. What's the point in going to the gym if you aren't chasing progress? A set without a goal; a set lacking maximal effort is simply a calorie burning movement that *might* create progress.

We are not hitting the gym to burn calories. I don't care how much you sweat during a workout. I also don't care if you "destroyed" yourself in the gym. Neither of these are a good indication of a quality muscle or strength building workout.

Your main goal is progress. If you sweat while chasing progress, so be it. If a muscle is destroyed while seeking progress and you are sore for days, so be it.

Progress. Progress. Progress. Progress is your only goal while building a base.

To reach this goal you will focus on one thing, and one thing only - never wasting a set. By maximizing every set of a training session, you leave the gym knowing that you did everything you could to

ensure progress.

When you maximize sets, you maximize workouts. When you maximize workouts, you maximize results. It's really as simple as that.

## **BEFORE WE BEGIN**

This is not a book of magic secrets. Instead, it's a book that boils away the nonsense, leaving you with the mechanisms that truly drive gains.

Nearly all training systems work if you remain consistent and get a lot stronger than you are now. With that said, you'd be shocked by how many trainers, coaches and even experienced lifters never come to understand this reality.

There is so much arguing and feuding over "what type of training system is best." Instead of getting involved with this nonsense, I am going to show you how to maximize any reasonably constructed training system. This way, you'll be able to find a training system that fits your needs, motivates you to lift hard and allows you to reach your goals.

*“I am going to show you how to maximize any reasonably constructed training system.”*

This book presents my core training philosophies and principles, and the Rep Goal System. Future books will build off these principles, and show you many other workout programs and systems that will help you to build muscle and strength.

Understand this: you don't *need* my other books. If all you ever know is the Rep Goal System, you can pack on an amazing amount of muscle and strength. My other books will simply provide you with options.

There are many ways to climb a mountain. Options can help make the journey more enjoyable.

Don't over-complicate things, have fun and trust the process.

## **BREAKING DOWN THE BASICS**

Here are the basic principles and guidelines of my training system. Understand they are general rules and not "carved-in-stone"

laws.

My intention in presenting these rules is to help you find a quality starting point. Any good trainer knows training is about evolution. Start within these boundaries, and with these principles, and make tweaks to your training based on needs and body feedback.

## **THE PRIME DIRECTIVE**

The prime directive is: "Maximize Every Set."

## **MASSIVE IRON PILLARS OF SUCCESS**

- Pillar #1 - Stay consistent, stop missing workouts
- Pillar #2 - Get a lot stronger than you are now
- Pillar #3 - Be patient - gains take years not weeks
- Pillar #4 - Eat to match your goals
- Pillar #5 - Evolve your training and diet based on needs

# MASSIVE IRON TRAINING GUIDELINES

- Guideline #1 - Use the correct lift order
- Guideline #2 - No more than 2-3 compound lifts per day
- Guideline #3 - Start with a full-body, evolve to splits
- Guideline #4 - Use a maximum of 3-4 training days per week
- Guideline #5 - If you can't hit it hard in one hour, you have no business training longer
- Guideline #6 - Use a max of *about* 20 sets per training day
- Guideline #7 - Use a reasonable number of sets per body part
- Guideline #8 - Balance your training
- Guideline #9 - Strengthen everything from head to toe
- Guideline #10 - Train the body, not just body parts
- Guideline #11 - Focus on non-spinal flexion ab work
- Guideline #12 - It's OK to use some pet exercises
- Guideline #13 - Pick the best tools

Let's get started...

The header graphic for Chapter 2 features a background image of a person's hands gripping a barbell. Overlaid on this is a red horizontal band containing the text 'CHAPTER 2' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below the red band is a black horizontal band containing the text 'MAXIMIZE EVERY SET, MAXIMIZE RESULTS' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The background image also has a pattern of white geometric shapes (triangles and hexagons) overlaid on it.

# CHAPTER 2

## MAXIMIZE EVERY SET, MAXIMIZE RESULTS

Never waste a set. That is what this book is about.

My lifting philosophy is simple: *When you maximize every set, you maximize every workout. When you maximize every workout, you maximize progress.* It doesn't get any easier than that, does it?

Nothing complicated about this approach, yet it's not exactly something you hear talked about in the lifting industry every day.

Your average gym rat typically uses the opposite approach. Instead of trying to push each set for as many reps as possible, they rarely push any set to its limits.

These types of trainees make dismal progress, yet are unaware



of the fact that something is broken. They've spent hours researching and creating *perfect* workout routines (on paper) - yet have no clue how to maximize them.

But you can't really blame them.

Unfortunately the lifting industry is cluttered with workouts that don't tell you how to maximize sets and workouts. I call these programs "to do lists." They are more *a list of things to do*, than an intelligently-constructed workout with instructions on how to maximize your results while using it.

Here is what you typically find on the internet, or in the muscle magazines:

- Bench Press – 3 sets x 8 reps
- Incline Dumbbell Bench Press – 4 sets x 10 reps
- Pec Dec – 3 sets x 12-15 reps

Is this type of workout going to help you build muscle? Only if you know how to maximize sets and progress already. Most of you don't, and haven't built much (if any) muscle. That's why you're here.

# A DEEPER LOOK AT “TO DO LIST” WORKOUTS

So let's say you pick up a magazine and it tells you to perform 3 sets of 8 reps on the bench press. For the sake of example, we'll pretend you currently bench 200 pounds. Because this style of “to do list” workout is so vague, you have no idea:

- How much weight to use per set
- How hard to push each set
- If it's OK to perform more than 8 reps when a set feels too easy
- If it's OK to perform fewer than 8 reps when a set feels too difficult
- When to add weight
- If training to failure, or close to failure is required
- If you should use the same weight for each set, or decrease/increase weight with each set
- How long you should rest between sets
- Should you lower each rep slowly or quickly

I could add to this list, but you get the point. Without knowing the answers to these questions, how can you possibly be assured that

you are training correctly and maximizing gains? You can't. Therein lies the problem.

Give this bench press workout to 10 different guys, and they'll work it 10 different ways. Some guys will use too much weight and have their buddies “spot them” (meaning do most of the work rowing the weight up), barely pushing out 2-3 reps on their own per set. Other lifters will put on an extremely light weight, knock out 8 reps, and get virtually no muscle stimulation at all.

Maybe if we are lucky, 20% of these lifters will *accidentally* maximize most every set and make decent progress. Even so, most guys will fall away from lifting every now and then; taking weeks or months off for random reasons, and kill any progress they have made.

With this in mind it becomes obvious why so many lifters fail to see results.

1. They don't know how to maximize workouts.
2. They fail to remain consistent.

We will come back to these points in a little bit.

# WHY? WHY? WHY?

So the question becomes *why?* Why do magazines and internet lifting sites feature “to do list” workouts that lack instruction? There are a few likely reasons:

- The act of moving, or doing nearly anything in the gym that burns calories, is seen as an effective method of building muscle. It is not. Exercising, while great for health, does not inherently build muscle.
- Conspiracy? Perhaps magazines and websites purposely leave off all the important information so you spin your wheels. Why? Well, if you aren't seeing results, perhaps you'll purchase more gizmos, gadgets, treadmills and magic powders.
- Writers have no clue how to build muscle and strength, and therefore fake it by providing you with a list of exercises that can pass as an effective workout to the average reader.

If you ask my opinion, I simply think that most fitness writers are clueless. They know how to move and burn calories, and perhaps they know how to get “ripped”, but they don't understand the

mechanisms that drive our goals:

*To build as much muscle and strength as possible.*

This is my goal. If it's your goal too, stick around.

## **MOVING FORWARD TOWARDS YOUR GOALS**

It's time to get more specific. I've established that most training programs don't show you how to maximize sets, workouts and progress. So with that in mind, let me show you how to know for certain that every set you perform is a quality set.

But fear not...this book will not present a complicated system. You won't need an algebra refresher, or to memorize 22 lifting tables. The only thing required of you is to learn my Rep Goal System.

We will discuss the Rep Goal System shortly. Before we get to it, I want to address two questions:

1. Why is there so much confusion in the lifting world?
2. Why is it that every workout system seems to work?

# THE REAL MUSCLE CONFUSION

You've probably already noticed this, but no two lifters can seem to agree upon anything. If you ask a simple question on any Internet lifting forum, you're likely to get a wide variety of answers - and maybe even start a forum war.

If you don't believe me, post one of the following questions:

- What is the best workout for beginners?
- What rep range is best for muscle building?
- Should I use a high volume of sets, or a low volume?
- Are body part splits the best, or can I use a full-body workout?

But here's the funny thing: it's not only the training newbs who can't agree upon anything, it's also the more experienced lifters. Take 2 guys who have already experienced quality muscle and strength gains, and there's a good chance they won't see eye to eye on most things.

This is the *real* muscle confusion.

So the real question is obvious. *Why is it that no two lifters can*

*agree on everything? Why are there so many articles in the lifting realm that feature contradictory opinions?* And here's another big question:

*Why is it that despite these differing opinions, everything seems to work?*

## **WHY DOES EVERYTHING SEEM TO WORK?**

I work in the lifting industry. Over the years I've talked to hundreds upon hundreds of top-level bodybuilders, powerlifters, successful recreational lifters and body transformation stories. You know what I've found out?

*Nearly everything works.* Yes, you read that correctly. Nearly everything works.

Starting Strength can work. Wendler's 531 can work. Doggcrapp can work. HIT can work. High volume training can work. Body part splits can work. Full-body workouts can work. They all *can* work, if you know what truly drives progress in the gym.

Progress isn't the product of magic lifting programs. Progress

isn't the product of magic rep ranges. Progress isn't a secret magical combination of sets, reps, exercises and training frequency. It isn't a combination that you will eventually unlock if you continue to look hard enough.

Muscle and strength gains can come from nearly any quality lifting program if you know the real secrets behind gym success. These secrets are right in front of our eyes, yet most lifters either don't see them or dismiss them as being too simplistic.

Once you are armed with these secrets of success, you will know how to maximize nearly any workout program. I call these secrets the *Massive Iron Pillars of Success*.



The header graphic for Chapter 3 features a background image of a person's hands gripping a metal barbell. Overlaid on this image are two horizontal bars: a red one at the top and a black one below it. The red bar contains the text 'CHAPTER 3' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The black bar contains the text 'MASSIVE IRON PILLARS OF SUCCESS' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The background image also has a pattern of white geometric shapes (hexagons and triangles) overlaid on it.

# CHAPTER 3

## MASSIVE IRON PILLARS OF SUCCESS

Here are the pillars that create gym success. I will explore them in detail shortly.

- **Pillar #1** - Consistency
- **Pillar #2** - Progression
- **Pillar #3** - Patience
- **Pillar #4** - Food
- **Pillar #5** - Listen

What do these pillars mean? Simple...Stop missing workouts and start pushing each set for as many reps as possible. Add weight when you can, and understand that gains take years and not weeks. Eat enough food to allow your body to recover and grow, and listen to your body and learn to evolve your training and diet based on needs. If you

do this you will reach your strength and muscle building goals.

That's the magic you are seeking. Always has been, and always will be the mechanism that drives gains.

If you pick a reasonable and trusted workout program and apply these pillars, you will reach your goals.

The average lifter who isn't making progress is missing workouts, impatient and looking for quick results, has no concrete progression approach, is afraid to overeat and gain one microgram of fat, and jumps around from program to program thinking that someday one of these workouts will turn him into Arnold Schwarzenegger or Ronnie Coleman.

Let's look at each of the pillars and try to understand why they are important.

## **PILLAR #1 - STAY CONSISTENT**

This is an obvious, but important rule. If you're missing more than a handful of workouts each year something has to change. Perhaps you're simply trying to hit the gym on more days than your schedule

realistically allows. If so, it's OK to drop a training day per week and use a lighter schedule. You'll still experience quality gains.

Remember that results come from progression of weight over time. You don't need to live in the gym to reach your goals. Do what it takes to remain consistent.

Pick a program and stick to it. Make sure your current program fits your lifestyle. If work or school is kicking your butt and you find yourself short on time, it doesn't make sense to try and train 5 to 6 times per week for 90 minutes at a pop.

Successful lifters get it done. They don't make excuses; they find a way to get to the gym. If you are making excuses of why NOT to lift rather than finding ways TO lift, you are only shooting yourself in the foot.

Another point regarding consistency: quality results come from years of training, not months. Too many trainees hit the gym hard for 3, 6, 9 or even 12 months and then fall away. They take an extended period of time away from the iron and lose their momentum.

Most of these lifters place unrealistic demands and burdens upon themselves. They fly out of the starting gate like madmen, only to

fizzle and burn out a few months later. I have seen this happen way too many times over the years, even to seemingly hard-working lifters.

Consistency is not just about getting your butt to the gym. Consistency is also about choosing a workout system that doesn't burn you out. This will allow you to keep working out week in and week out, year in and year out.

Find a way to keep lifting.

Lifting is a marathon, not a sprint. Pace yourself.

Can you imagine the progress you would make during the coming year if you completely dedicated yourself to not missing workouts? I can. In fact, I can tell which lifters are going to make rapid progress and which lifters aren't, by their obsession with getting back to the gym. They live, breathe and dream of progress. They know what they want, and are motivated to get it.

## **PILLAR #2 - GET STRONG: PROGRESS IN WEIGHT**

Consistent progression is an essential if you expect lean muscle gains to keep coming and coming. Your body is efficient and adapts to

change very quickly. If you are not continually challenging it, your muscles will not respond by growing larger.

Strength is not optional. Though you do not have to train for one-rep max strength or necessarily use low reps, you do have to get a heck of a lot stronger than you are now.

Without progression of weight or progressive overload, nothing else matters. End of story. No amount of mind-muscle connection or muscle confusion is going to allow you to build muscle if you are not pushing for more weight on the bar someday, somehow.

Everything you do in the weight room hinges on progressive overload.

You can add drop sets to your routine, but unless you progressively add weight over time your body will quickly adapt to the specific demands of drop sets. You can't continue to add more and more drop sets. Therefore, drop sets (and other advanced training techniques) are a nice tool, but without progressive overload they soon become limited in impact.

You can decrease rest between sets, but unless you progressively add weight over time your body will adapt to the specific

demands of limited rest. You can't continue to decrease rest between sets forever. Sooner or later, because of a finite ability to limit rest between sets, your focus will return right back to the need to add weight to the bar. If you don't believe me, do some research on Doggcrapp Training. DC Training utilizes rest pause sets, but preaches *progression, progression, progression*.

Remember this truth – there are no weak bodybuilders. Yes, I know you've heard bodybuilders say things like...strength doesn't matter. You know what happens next? They head to the gym and squat 405 for 12 reps, followed by 455 pounds for a 6 rep set. Strength *does* matter. These guys built their physiques on progressive overload.

The message they are trying to get across to you is that *absolute strength* doesn't matter. You don't have to get as strong as a powerlifter, nor do you need to necessarily perform low rep sets. You do need to get a heck of a lot stronger than you are now.

I have personally interviewed, trained with and spoken to an army of professional natural bodybuilders. These guys are the biggest drug-free lifters in the world. There isn't a single one of them that is weak. Each of them is Herculean in strength!

Bottom line – if you want to build muscle, dramatically improve your strength levels compared to where you are now. This is the magic. Progression drives gains.

## **PILLAR #3 - BE PATIENT**

You can't build 40 pounds of muscle in 6 months, no matter what anyone tells you. If you are a beginner you might be able to add 1/4 inch to your arms or 2 pounds of muscle to your frame during a 4 week period, but that's about it.

Each workout is a step. If you don't enjoy that step and try to maximize that step, results will never come.

Over the years I've seen armies of guys hit the gym and neither enjoy, nor maximize their workouts. If this sounds like you, changes need to be made. It's time to put yourself on a program you actually look forward to, and it's time to learn how to maximize each set.

Once you are able to enjoy lifting and appreciate where your daily progress is taking you, then you stand a chance.

Remain patient. Muscle and strength building takes time. Make a long term plan. Set goals to change your physique and strength levels over the course of 3-4 years, not 3-4 months. Enjoy the journey.

To be fully committed to reaching your potential you'll need to adopt a new lifestyle, not a 10 week “toning” program. Once you build muscle, guess what? It will disappear unless you keep training. Once you build strength, guess what? You will get weaker unless you keep training. Once you get ripped and carve out the perfect beach body, guess what? You'll have to work your back end off (literally) to continue to look that good.

Fitness and health isn't a “90 day magical program.” It involves commitment and completely changing your habits. You must be patient.

Most of us have seen magazine headlines that look like this: “Gain 30 pounds of muscle in 60 days!” This is nonsense. 100% pure bull crap. Unless you are underweight to begin with, it will take you at best 4 years to build 30 pounds of muscle. Naturally, that is.

The same goes for hitting a 300 pound bench press. There are some trainees who are gifted at benching. You'll get no argument from me on that point. But the rest of us will struggle reaching a 300 pound



bench press. A bench press program might give us a 30-40 pound boost, but odds are it still might take you years and years to press 300 pounds off your chest.

## **PILLAR #4 - EAT TO MATCH YOUR GOALS**

One of the biggest mistakes made by inexperienced lifters is the neglecting of nutrition. The human body is like any other high performance machine. It requires a quality fuel source to perform at its peak.

To maximize the muscle building process, you must maximize your nutrition. If you neglect your diet you will limit your results.

Eating “healthy” is not good enough. Guessing how many calories or grams of protein you are eating per day is not good enough.

Over the years hundreds and hundreds of individuals have told me, “I am eating healthy but not making any muscle or strength gains.” The problem with the concept of healthy eating is twofold:

1. First, the concept of “healthy eating” means different things to different people. For some folks it means eating low fat, and for some folks it means eating reduced calories. *Eating healthy* is meaningless because it is vague; it means different things to different people.

2. Eating healthy is not the same as *eating optimally* to maximize the muscle building process. Constructing a muscle building diet requires much more than making better food choices.

Eating has become so complicated. The average skinny guy is so afraid of gaining fat that he eats far less than he should, wondering why his progress is so slow.

On the other side of the fence, you have the average overweight 20-something. These guys have become convinced that they need a radical or extreme dieting approach when all they really need is to stop eating junk and processed foods.

Eating is not rocket surgery. If you weigh 130 pounds and have the goal of becoming a muscular 200 pounds, you need to eat more food. If you weigh 240 pounds and have the goal of being a muscular 200 pounds, you need to start by making better food choices.

If you are thin, stop worrying that eating slightly more clean food

will turn you into a sumo wrestler. It won't. Individuals who gain a lot of extra fat have to work hard at it. They over-eat crap and processed foods (and drinks) day in and day out for many, many years.

A little extra healthy food will allow you to build more muscle and get stronger. Will you gain some fat? Possibly, but if so, not much. During my prime gaining years I added 40 pounds to my frame. About 30 of that was muscle. The muscle has lasted a lifetime (so far). The fat took 4 weeks to knock off.

I went from a skinny-fat 150 to an impressively muscular 190. Despite adding this trivial amount of fat, I actually looked 10 times better.

The average skinny guy can only visualize the 10 extra pounds of fat. He can't picture what the addition of muscle will do to his body. His mind fixates on the possible fat gain so much that he under-eats and wastes time in the gym, never reaching his goals.

If you are overweight, your first goal should be to eat better. Drop the cookies, chips and sugary drinks. Let's be real, you didn't gain fat because you were overeating steak and apples.

Don't rush out to starve yourself. Eat better, lift weights, do a little

cardio and see what happens. Reduce calories slightly (SLIGHTLY), and clean up your diet even more if the scale isn't moving.

Regardless of your goals, ground them in good nutrition and be patient. Remember you are starting a new lifestyle. Change will take time. Eat in a manner that is aligned with your new goals.

## **PILLAR #5 - LISTEN TO YOUR BODY, EVOLVE YOUR TRAINING AND DIET BASED ON NEEDS**

Have you ever noticed that no two experienced lifters train the same way? Why is that? The simple, but obvious answer is that each lifter is unique.

Over the years they learned to evolve their training style based on needs. They didn't follow a cookie-cutter template, but rather made changes based on body feedback and results.

Some trainees found that extra training volume left them feeling beat up, while others found that high volume improved gains. Some trainees found that a certain lift variation felt better with a higher

number of reps, while others may need to lower the rep range for this lift.

Instead of jumping from program to program to program, most seasoned iron vets molded a program to fit their physical and mental needs. Part of this, believe it or not, involves enjoyment.

You might find rest-pause training to be exhilarating, while another lifter likes a high volume of low rep sets with an extended period of rest in between. Or perhaps leg presses bore the living snot out of you, but walking lunges fit your bone structure better.

Each of us is a completely unique physiological package. We have different sleeping patterns, work demands, stress levels, coping mechanisms, recovery abilities, body types, bone structures, etc. It is far better to evolve your training based on what works and doesn't work; what feels good and doesn't feel good, than to just blindly try to follow some program designed by Lifter X.

Head over to any weight training forum and you're likely to find lifters remarking something like, "I have decided to use Smolov/the Texas Method/Doggcrapp/whatever." One to two weeks later you typically hear: "I decided to dump (whatever workout system) because it was not right for me."

Instead of trying to intelligently morph these programs to fit their specific needs, the lifter attempted to blindly follow the workout protocol, hoping everything would feel perfect. This is insanity.

Instead of dumping the program, our lifter should have assessed what about the program wasn't working, and made changes. This is called training evolution.

Program hoppers continue to hope and dream of finding the perfect program. The "perfect" program doesn't exist. Your needs are always changing. Instead of seeking perfection, learn to make adjustments.

If 4 sets of an exercise feel like it is too much, try 3. If six reps on the bench press feels uncomfortable, try 8. If 30 second rest-pause work feels impossible, try 45 seconds. If you can't recover from the 10x10 protocol of German Volume Training, reduce it to an 8x8 and see how that feels.

Understand that I am not telling you to avoid trying new programs. Not at all. But if these programs don't feel right, instead of dumping them after 2 days, try making minor changes. Evolve the program based on your unique needs.

Learning to evolve your workouts will help maximize gains and minimize injuries.

The header graphic for Chapter 4 features a black and white background image of a person's hands gripping a barbell. Overlaid on this image are two horizontal bars: a red one at the top and a black one below it. The text 'CHAPTER 4' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the red bar. The text 'THE PRIME DIRECTIVE' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the black bar. The background image also has a pattern of white geometric shapes (hexagons and triangles) overlaid on it.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE PRIME DIRECTIVE

Never waste a set. This is your goal for each training day.

When every set is maximized, a training day is maximized. When every training day is maximized, your progress will be maximized. This is an easy concept to understand; yet it is one that is rarely taught.

How do you maximize every set? Here is my way:

*Push every set for as many reps as possible, stopping that set when you feel like you might fail on the next set, or when your exercise form starts to noticeably slip.*

By maximizing every set, you are maximizing progressive overload. Not only is this great for rapid strength gains, but it also ensures that you are recruiting the greatest amount of muscle fibers



during each and every workout.

Hypertrophy, or the process of building muscle, involves the increasing of muscle fiber size. New muscle fibers are NOT created during the muscle building process.

Muscle fibers are recruited in order of size. Early in a set only the slow twitch Type I fibers are recruited. As the demands on the muscle increase, the fast twitch type IIA muscle fibers are recruited into action. Finally, when a muscle is under the greatest amount of duress, the potent Type IIB fibers are triggered to fire.

This is maximal fiber recruitment.

Ralph N. Carpinelli, PhD, did a meta-analysis of the existing research on training and found that maximal fiber recruitment occurred towards the end of a set pushed close to failure. Rep ranges, or relative intensity (weight compared to your one rep max) didn't matter as much as how hard you pushed that set.

This is certainly not a call to use light weight. While rep ranges may not matter much, when you are pushing them for maximum reps on each set - as Carpinelli advises - progressive overload is maximized. You will get strong regardless of the rep range.

I won't sit here and claim that maximizing every set in this manner is the only factor involved with muscle building. That would be a lie. I will say though that it is the best way to guarantee consistent effort, and a solid way of guaranteeing that a maximal amount of muscle fibers are recruited.

We will add some other parameters that will assist the muscle and strength building process in the next section.

If you look at the opposite scenario, we find lifters who randomly - or rarely - push sets hard enough. This not only reduces fiber recruitment, but it also can greatly reduce progressive resistance.

This combination is a recipe for sub-par results. It also happens to be the recipe given to lifters in nearly every muscle magazine or Internet workout.

These workouts never (well, maybe occasionally if you are lucky) tell you how hard to push sets or when to add weight. Instead they provide you with a generic set and rep scheme. This is idiotic. Without this required road map most lifters are likely to stall, sputter and experience crappy gains.

For years people proclaimed that the reason most lifters failed on

magazine workouts was due to the fact that they were “meant for steroid users.” While this might be true, I don't believe it's the real reason people are failing on these programs.

I believe lifters fail because these workouts ignore progression, and never teach lifters how to maximize sets and progress.

So, bottom line: maximize every set. While this is not the only factor that contributes to progress, it is the prime directive.



# CHAPTER 5

## MASSIVE IRON TRAINING GUIDELINES

### **GUIDELINE #1 - USE THE CORRECT LIFT ORDER**

Perform the most technically challenging exercises first, then the big compound movements. After these lifts you can move on to machines, cables and isolation exercises.

Examples of very technical lifts include power cleans, overhead squats, and numerous other Olympic lift variations. You should perform these movements when you are fresh, and when your focus is at 100% for the day.

Next up on your training day you want to perform the big hitters, such as squats, deadlift, bench press, etc. If you are using a full-body

or upper/lower approach I recommend that you perform these compound movements in order of difficulty.

If you are performing a body part split, you will have to also take into consideration body part groupings. Larger body parts are worked before smaller body parts. With this structure in place, you can then work the most technically challenging lifts for a given body part first, followed by any big compound movements.

Let's take a look at a few examples.

### **Example #1 - Full-Body Workout**

- Squats
- Bench Press
- Bent Over Row
- Seated Dumbbell Press
- Skullcrushers
- Bicep Curls
- Crunches

Squats are the big, beefy movement in this routine. You start with them first. Next you knock out the other compound movements in

order of intensity.

After seated dumbbell presses you move on to isolation lifts. Because the triceps are a larger muscle group than biceps and abs, you work them first. Biceps come next, simply because curls are a more challenging movement than crunches.

### **Example #2 - Lower Training Day From an Upper/Lower Split**

- Power Cleans
- Squats
- Stiff Leg Deadlifts
- Leg Press
- Power Shrugs
- Leg Curls

This lower training day is from a strength focused program. Power cleans are worked first because they are a more technical Olympic lift variation. Squats, for obvious reasons, come next. Stiff leg deadlifts are another taxing compound movement and are performed third, followed by the leg press, power shrugs and finally curls.

## **Example #3 - Chest and Tricep Body Part Split Day**

Chest is the larger muscle and is trained first.

- Bench Press
- Chest Dips
- Incline Dumbbell Bench Press
- Pec Dec

Followed by triceps:

- Close Grip Bench Press
- Skullcrushers
- Cable Tricep Extensions

Even though close grip bench presses are a challenging heavy compound movement, they are not performed until after the completion of all chest movements.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS ON LIFT ORDER**

At the end of the day, some of this comes down to judgment

calls. No one is going to die if you decide to do cable tricep extensions before close grip benches.

This tool works best applied to Olympic lifts and the big hitters. After these lifts are done, order your remaining movements in a manner that makes sense and allows you to train with the best focus and intensity.

## **GUIDELINE #2 - 2 TO 3 COMPOUND LIFTS PER DAY**

Depending on your goals, experience level and workout type, I recommend limiting your heavy compound movements to no more than three per day.

I find two major compound lifts to be about all I can handle in a given strength training workout. When it comes to full-body work, using a slightly more moderate average intensity (weight compared to one rep max), it is easier to squeeze in 3 per training day.

Some low volume programs may feature only one heavy compound movement per day. It is also not unusual for certain strength training programs to focus on only one major movement per



training day.

Consider this tool a guideline rather than a rule. This guideline can be broken on occasion if it makes sense within a certain program's parameters.

## **GUIDELINE #3 - START WITH FULL-BODY, EVOLVE TO SPLITS**

When you first begin training your form is weak and the weight is fairly light. It is a good idea to train using a full-body approach for quite some time. This will allow you to work some of the more challenging exercises more often, giving you a chance to practice your form.

The lighter weights will be less taxing, making it slightly easier to recover. This is another good reason to begin with a full-body workout.

There is also scientific evidence backing up frequent training. Protein synthesis levels return to normal around the 48 hour mark. This simply means that if you train a muscle group every 2-3 days, protein synthesis levels will be raised more often during the week.

This allows for greater potential gains.

On the other hand, if you work a body part only once a week, after about two days your protein synthesis levels return to baseline and stay there until the next time you work that muscle group.

As you gain strength levels, it can be a good idea to switch over to an upper/lower split. This allows for a little bit more recovery time for the muscles and connective tissue. At this point you will have built a quality amount of muscle mass and will need to balance the need for optimal protein synthesis with the demands of the heavier weight you are training with. This is why an upper/lower split makes more sense.

There is no rule saying you must leave full-body workouts; but upper/lower splits are certainly worth considering once you hit that early intermediate stage of training. You are still training more frequently than during a body part split, and because you have a history of muscle and strength gains, should be able to continue making good progress regardless of the program's frequency.

Many powerlifting and bodybuilding programs train a lift or muscle group once a week. Once you have been training for a couple years and have built a substantial amount of strength, this can be a

very solid option.

Once a week programs allow for greater recovery times. This is needed if a trainee is not periodizing intensity.

You can periodize intensity on a full-body workout. This is typically accomplished using a heavy, light, moderate approach. Heavy exercises and lower reps are worked on a Monday, higher reps and more isolation style movements are used on Wednesday, and moderate intensity and moderately difficult exercises are performed on Friday.

Periodization is also a common practice in strength training. There are many ways to do so. Despite this periodization, it is still commonplace to focus on each lift only once per week.

Most in the bodybuilding realm have not completely embraced periodization. They typically use the same weight intensity week in and week out, perhaps taking a week away from training every 8-12 weeks to lick their wounds.

Once you have spent several years building muscle, the truth is that it won't matter much how frequently you train. For natural lifters, the vast majority of muscle mass is developed during the first 3 years.

After this point you are scraping for pounds each year. You should be training using a program that is tailored to your needs, body part weaknesses, recovery demands, etc.

It should also be stated that the evolution from full-body to splits also makes sense from a strength weaknesses or lagging body part standpoint. The fewer number of muscle groups you are targeting during a given workout, the more time you will have to devote to weaknesses or lagging body parts.

## **BUT, BUT, BUT...**

I know what you're thinking. You've likely seen many beginning trainees make amazing gains using body part splits. Guess what? I have too.

Please remember that my guidelines are simply guidelines. If you follow the **Massive Iron Pillars of Success**, and continue to train consistently for the next 5 years, it really won't matter much how frequently you train.

I believe my method of starting with full-body to be more optimal.

With that said, “optimal” might only equate to a few greater percentage points of growth and strength gains.

Over the course of 5 to 10 years things will even out. In fact, if you’re doing everything correctly and making solid progress on a body part split, I wouldn’t even consider changing course. Use what works.

Splits work. Full-body workouts do work. That is really the heart of this book. You’re far better off picking a program you enjoy and using it for years rather than forcing yourself to try a training frequency you dislike.

Let’s face it...most of us will never be bodybuilders or powerlifters. If this is your goal, I will help you build muscle and strength in an efficient manner.

If you just want to gain 15 pounds of muscle and get your bench to 250 pounds - great. This is even easier. It will take less time.

But since you will never be a competitor, trying to squeeze out that last 1% of optimization isn’t really worth it. Enjoy the ride, pick a program that motivates you to train, and follow the principles in this book.

# **GUIDELINE #4 - USE A MAXIMUM OF 3-4**

## **TRAINING DAYS PER WEEK**

Most lifters really don't need to train more than 3 to 4 days per week. In fact, John Christy used to train folks using a twice per week schedule. They packed on plenty of muscle and strength using only the basics.

My point here isn't to pressure you into training fewer days per week. I simply want you to understand that you don't need to live in the gym to experience good results.

Training fewer days per week also allows you to rest more, and spend time doing other things that you enjoy. Save the 5-day body part splits for the competitive bodybuilders who need to work on weaknesses.

I would say only about 30% of the competitive bodybuilders I've interviewed, profiled or trained with lift 5 days per week. About 5% of the competitive powerlifters I know hit the iron more than 4 days per week.

These are very telling statistics. If advanced competitors don't need to lift 5 days per week, most of you don't.

Instead of rushing out to add more training days, focus instead on maximizing your existing work.

## **GUIDELINE #5 - THE ONE HOUR RULE**

This goes hand in hand with maximizing your existing work.

If you can't kill yourself in the gym in an hour, you have no business training longer. This isn't to say the goal is to beat yourself up, or make yourself vomit in an hour, not at all.

My point is that after an hour, you should want to leave the gym and go eat because what you've done has been challenging. If a workout runs longer than an hour, fine. You're not going to go catabolic or lose gains. Forget that nonsense.

If you get to the one hour mark and the workout felt too easy, something is severely broken. I've had guys tell me: "Hey man, this workout was way too easy!"

Start using the big compound movements, put some damn weight on the bar and push every set for as many reps as possible. Do this and you'll want to leave the gym after an hour.

## **GUIDELINE #6 - ABOUT 20 SETS PER WORKOUT**

This is a recommended maximum number of sets per day, not a target or goal. Stay off of the “more is better” train and instead focus on quality first.

Resist the urge to add volume for volume's sake. Adding additional working sets doesn't create a fast track to better gains.

Structure your program in a reasonable manner and test it out in the gym. If you feel a body part or movement is undertrained, slowly add in additional volume.

Far too many guys get a bug up their ass and start adding in extra chest, bicep and abdominal volume. They also add in extra training days to accommodate this volume. This is typically done before they've actually given their current program a chance. It's also usually done before the trainee has nailed down their eating program,



making it a complete waste of time.

When you are building a workout, start with balance. Choose quality exercises for each major muscle group or function of the body. Major muscle groups include:

- Chest
- Shoulders
- Back
- Quads
- Hamstrings

Next plug in a reasonable amount of work for minor body parts. These minor muscle groups include:

- Triceps
- Biceps
- Traps
- Calves
- Abs
- Lower Back
- Forearms

You do not need to work each and every body part. I have never trained forearms, yet they are massive from holding barbells and dumbbells for the last 30 years.

Lower back work is optional as well. If you feel your lower back is very weak, it's OK to add in a few sets of hyperextensions. If not, know that deadlifts, squats and stiff leg deadlifts will all work to build lower back size and strength.

Most of the training programs I've used over the years featured 16 to 20 sets per day. When I was younger I pushed the sets to 25 or a little higher. This was much easier for me to do when I was a teen or in my early 20s.

Younger trainees have better recovery abilities and can handle a lot more punishment. This doesn't mean they need it to grow and get stronger, but it does mean they are less likely to pay any physical penalties if they do use more volume.

Program exercises and sets wisely. Trust that progressive overload is the magic, not excessive amounts of volume.

Be patient, eat enough. Gains will come to you.

# **GUIDELINE #7 - USE A REASONABLE NUMBER OF SETS PER BODY PART**

For major muscle groups use around 9 to 15 sets per week. Minor muscle groups can be worked with 6 to 10 sets per week. These numbers apply to any frequency - full-body to splits.

If you are utilizing 9 sets for triceps on a once per week body part split, simply chop it up to 3 sets per day on a full-body workout. If you are targeting back with 12 sets per week on a full-body, and are transitioning into an upper/lower split, place 6 sets on each of your upper days.

There is nothing magical about these numbers. Remember that they are not rules, but rather reasonable starting points. As you advance you may find that certain weak body parts require more volume, or that some major body parts - such as hamstrings - need less.

## **GUIDELINE #8 - BALANCE YOUR TRAINING**

If I had a dollar for every time I saw someone overworking chest and biceps while underworking back, shoulders, legs and triceps I could likely pay off my home.

Balanced training is something rarely talked about. If it is discussed, the importance of it is typically dismissed. We have become so infatuated with the front of the body - chest, biceps and abs - that we often work ourselves into injuries.

Unbalanced training can lead to shoulder girdle issues, elbow tendonitis, knee issues, and lower back issues. It also creates aesthetically dysfunctional physiques, and lifters who fail to reach their strength potentials.

Muscle building has become so focused on body parts that it has lost sight of the fact that there is more to the bench press than just the chest, and more to squats than just the quads.

“Bros” who eagerly hunger after beefy bench press numbers rarely consider the reality that their shoulder, back and tricep strength

suck. You can carry over this example to nearly any lift or strength/lift goal.

But this is not just about strength. If you are not working all body parts equally, and not building quality strength from head to toe, you are limiting your overall muscle building potential.

Think about this...If your only goal in life is to build an Arnold Schwarzenegger-like chest, yet your shoulder, back and tricep strength is lagging, you will struggle to progress. This can only hinder chest growth.

Training balance is good not only for injury prevention, but also for gym maximization. It doesn't matter what your primary goals are - strength training, muscle building, or both - balanced training will help you.

Don't be the guy who hammers his chest with 40 sets and then does a few wimpy sets of lat pull downs and smith machine overhead presses. Don't be the guy who annihilates his biceps with insane volume while all but ignoring his triceps.

And whatever you do, don't forsake leg training. Strong, big legs are great not only for athletic performance, but believe it or not,

women notice them too.

Pencil legs will never be in. Neither will ugly, aesthetically unbalanced physiques.

## **GUIDELINE #9 - STRENGTHEN EVERYTHING FROM HEAD TO TOE**

Far too many lifters are infatuated with the concept of assistance work and weakness training. I am going to make a bold statement; a philosophy of mine that is a cornerstone of everything I teach:

*Make every body part from head to toe as strong as possible.*

Instead of worrying about weaknesses, understand that everything is a weakness. Train every body part, at all times, like it's a weakness. If you do this for three to five years you will not only be working towards maximizing progress, but you will also know that if a weakness rears its ugly head, you will know that it's truly a weakness.

**STOP** obsessing over assistance work, looking for the perfect

combination. It does not exist. Make your traps and calves insanely strong, and everything in between.

...And then, when you have exceeded your strength expectations - yes I said exceeded - on every lift and body part, it might be time to consider weakness training, or bringing up a lagging body part.

One final word, in which I will use calves as an example. 95% of you who think you were born with mediocre calves have one thing in common: you've not spent the last 5 years working your ass off to make them as strong as possible. You've tried every advanced training technique in the book, other than brute strength.

In my book a lagging body part is only a lagging body part after you've spent years trying to make it inhumanly strong. Period, end of story.

## **GUIDELINE #10 - TRAIN THE BODY, NOT BODY PARTS**

Hammer the body as a unit. Take a holistic approach to training.

Consider that compound lifts are just that: compound

movements. Far too many *muscle heads* try to turn compound lifts into isolation-style movements so they can target only a single muscle group. This is backwards.

When you turn a compound movement into a pseudo-isolation lift, you are likely changing the form and lightening the load. This combination is not a good one. You should be aiming for the opposite goals.

Embrace compound movements. Pull them outside of their little bodybuilding body part boxes and trust you will build muscle even if you don't feel a muscle working.

On a similar note, stop turning isolation movements into compound movements just so you can add weight. I've seen this time and time again, and it makes no sense.

Why turn compound movements into isolation lifts just to feel a single muscle group, and then turn isolation into a more compound-style movement just so you can toss around more iron?

Stop the madness.

Compound and isolation exercise both have their place. Use



them, maximize them, and trust the process. Understand how each of these movements impacts the body as a whole.

By embracing the movement as it was intended to be used, you will improve strength, form, and results. You will also likely reduce your chance of injury, and/or reduce the amount of cumulative wear and tear placed upon the body.

Right now some of you are saying...*but what about Dorian Yates? What about the bodybuilders who train for a pump, and try to squeeze and feel every rep?*

This is all good and well once you have built a strength and muscle base, and have a good understanding of exercise form. Only after you truly understand the rules and fundamentals, and have mastered the rules and fundamentals, can you break some of the rules and fundamentals.

You must invest time learning the basics: how to build muscle and strength safely. Then and only then, with a strong base, will you know if any of this pumping and squeezing is worth a try.

Honestly, 99% of you will never need it, and should never worry about it. If you are training for maximum mass, get everything crazy

strong first, then start to dabble with contractions and squeezing and pumping - if you desire.

I've built an incredible amount of muscle naturally without it. I know many others who have done the same. We focus on training the body as a whole, not as a group of body parts.

On the other side of the coin, there ARE guys who do everything I tell you to avoid during their first several years. Do they make gains? Of course they do. As I've said before, if you follow the **Massive Iron Principles of Success**, you will make progress regardless of the method used.

But please remember this: just because something can work doesn't mean it's needed or optimal.

Approach lifting like every other athletic activity. Master the fundamentals. Along the way you will develop your own approach, and your own set of training nuances.

Follow and trust this path.

# **GUIDELINE #11 - MAKE NON-SPINAL FLEXION**

## **AB WORK A CORNERSTONE**

Spinal flexion involves bending forward or down, breaking the spine from its neutral position. Loaded spinal flexion is one of the major causes of disc herniation.

For this reason I recommend that you place an emphasis on abdominal building and strengthening work that does not focus on spinal flexion. These exercises include, but are not limited to:

- Planks
- Ab Wheel Roll Outs
- Side Planks
- Rolling Planks
- Bird Dogs
- The Flutterkick
- Cable Crunches

It's also a good idea to work the entirety of the core, including obliques. For this area you may want to try the side plank and variations.

Resistance training is inherently a physically abusive activity. When looking at it from a longevity standpoint it makes sense to restrict excessive activities.

While it's debatable if a reasonable amount of weekly cable crunches or weighted sit ups will increase your risk of disk herniation, it does make sense to not obsess over your abdominal muscles and kill them with crunches and sit ups.

I certainly don't pretend to be an expert on spinal flexion, but I think we all can agree that any excessive activity brings with it an increased injury potential.

Use your best judgment. You can get an intense core workout without spinal flexion. Don't panic, worrying that planks and ab wheel roll-outs might be inferior choices. They are not. If anything they are better choices.

# GUIDELINE #13 - IT'S OK TO USE SOME PET EXERCISES

How many times have you heard something like this?

*Never do concentration curls. They are stupid and useless. Barbell and dumbbell exercises are the best. NEVER use machines. You should never use dumbbell shrugs because power shrugs are a better choice.*

Here's my rule: *If 90% of your training week is programmed correctly, and you want to use a pet favorite exercise - do so.* Who cares if it isn't the most effective lift? Who cares what the forum bros say.

Lifting doesn't have to be focused on optimization 100% of the time. It's OK to have a little fun after the hard work has been done.

If you want to do some concentration curls after a long week of squatting and deadlift, by all means do so. Muscle and strength building isn't life or death. No one goes to jail if you decide to kick back and do some exercise the pros or bros tell you NEVER to do

(because it's worthless).

For every voice telling you never to use leg extensions, there's a Tom Platz using leg extensions. For every voice telling you that concentration curls are worthless, there is an Arnold Schwarzenegger doing concentration curls.

Relax. After the hard work is done it's OK to have a little fun. Don't discount the impact of enjoyment.

These days everyone is trying to stuff you into the same 3 programs. Once they get you into these programs, you'll likely be crucified if you attempt to add in an exercise you like. *Don't change the program man. What are you, an idiot?*

You aren't going to get this nonsense with my system. I'll point you in the right direction, ask that you make 90% of your training week impactful, and then encourage you to have a little fun at the end - as long as it's reasonable and doesn't impact recovery or increase your chance of injury.

# **GUIDELINE #14 - PICK THE BEST TOOLS**

Don't avoid the hard exercises. If you go out of your way to avoid the most challenging exercises, you will end up with a body that looks like it wasn't challenged. (And the strength to match.)

Those who really want to be successful find a way to get things done. They don't complain about squats and deadlifts, they take the time to learn good form and get good at these types of lifts.

There is a saying in lifting that goes something like this: the exercises you fear or hate the most are the ones you **SHOULD** be doing.

The better your tools, the better your chances are of building quality muscle and strength. On the other hand, avoid quality exercises and you make it much harder to reach your goals.

A carpenter doesn't hammer nails with a socket wrench. Sure, if you beat on the nail long enough you might get the job, done, but you will have to work a heck of a lot harder to do so.

What is going to be the better tricep builder: close grip bench

presses or dumbbell kickbacks? Close grips, of course. This does not mean that kickbacks are completely useless for everyone, all the time. It simply means that given the choice, you are better off choosing the more challenging exercise.

While this is not a comprehensive list, here are some exceptional exercise choices:

## **Chest**

- Bench Press
- Dumbbell Bench Press
- Incline Bench Press
- Dumbbell Incline Bench Press
- Dips

## **Shoulders**

- Military Press
- Push Press
- Arnold Dumbbell Press
- Seated Dumbbell Press



## **Back**

- Deadlifts
- Barbell Rows
- Dumbbell Rows
- Pull Ups
- Seated Cable Rows

## **Quads**

- Squats
- Front Squats
- Leg Press
- Lunges
- Hack Squats

## **Hamstrings**

- Stiff Leg Deadlifts
- Romanian Deadlifts
- Good Mornings
- Leg Curls
- Glute Ham Raise

## **Triceps**

- Close Grip Bench Press
- Skullcrushers
- Cable Tricep Extensions
- French Press
- Dumbbell Extensions

## **Biceps**

- Chin Ups
- Barbell Curls
- Dumbbell Curls
- Hammer Curls

## **Abs**

- Planks
- Side Planks
- Flutterkicks
- Ab Wheel Roll-outs
- Cable Crunches
- Weighted Sit Ups

## **Traps**

- Power Shrugs
- Rack Pull And Power Shrug Combo
- Cleans
- Upright Rows
- Dumbbell Shrugs

## **Calves**

- Standing Calf Raise
- Seated Calf Raise
- Leg Press Calf Raise

The header graphic for Chapter 6 features a background image of a person's hands gripping a barbell. Overlaid on this image are two horizontal bars: a red one at the top and a black one below it. The text 'CHAPTER 6' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the red bar. The text 'THE REP GOAL SYSTEM' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the black bar. The background image also has a pattern of white geometric shapes (hexagons and triangles) overlaid on it.

# CHAPTER 6

## THE REP GOAL SYSTEM

Now that we have established how to maximize gains, let's dive into the nuts and bolts of the Rep Goal System.

The Rep Goal System is my tool of choice for novice to intermediate lifters. It allows you to focus on the most important aspect of your training - progression.

The premise is simple: *maximize every set*. By doing so, you maximize workouts and progress. You leave nothing on the table, and exit the gym knowing you gave it everything you could on that given day.

As I stated previously, most workout systems provide you with no guidance on how to progress. They simply list sets and exercises and wish you good luck.

Workout systems like this are generic, a dime a dozen and pointless. They are a “to do” list rather than a training strategy designed to maximize gains.

The Rep Goal System does the opposite. It tells you exactly how hard to push a set, and when to add weight. It ignores arbitrary set and rep schemes that sound good on paper, and instead provides you with parameters to work within so you are free to perform up to your potential on that given day.

## UNDERSTANDING REP GOAL SETS AND REPS

Here’s how it works. For each exercise you will see listings for:

1. Total sets
2. A rep goal total

For example, a chest workout might look like this:

- **Bench Press** - 3 sets, 25 rep goal total
- **Incline Dumbbell Bench Press** - 3 sets, 25 rep goal total
- **Pec Dec** - 3 sets, 35 rep goal total

**Sets.** Sets are sets. Each set is a group of reps; all sets should be worked for as many reps as possible. Only stop the set when:

- You feel like you may fail on the next rep.
- Your form starts to dramatically deteriorate.

There is no need to train until failure. Progression is the driving force for gains, not failure. If failure happens, so be it. It's not the end of the world. Just don't chase after it as a goal.

**Rep Goal Total.** A “rep goal total” for a given exercise is the goal for each of the sets combine. It is NOT reps per set.

Once you reach a rep goal for a given exercise, it's time to add weight. The next time you perform this exercise add 5 pounds to the bar, or 5-10 pounds to the machine stack.

So looking at the bench press example above, let's say you hit the gym and perform the following reps for your 3 sets:

- Set #1 - 200 pounds x 10 reps
- Set #2 - 200 pounds x 8 reps
- Set #3 - 200 pounds x 7 reps

Adding up the reps, you find you reach 25 total ( $10 + 8 + 7$ ). Because this was **equal to, or greater than** your rep goal, you will add weight the next time you perform this exercise.

What happens if you fail to reach the rep goal for a given exercise? You simply try to improve the next time you perform the lift. It's really as easy as that.

## THE REP GOAL TOTAL ISN'T MAGIC

The rep goal total for an exercise isn't magic. Progression is.

If you find that a certain exercise feels better with more reps per set, increase the rep goal total by +5. If you feel you are performing too many reps on average, drop the rep goal total by -5.

This isn't going to change results. You will still be maximizing every set, and progressing as quickly as possible.

Trust your own judgment and make changes as needed. Just don't mess around and keep changing the rep goal total for an exercise each week. Once you find something that works, ride it and

focus on progress.

*Messing around* is a game that slows gains. Make intelligent changes when needed. Evolve your training when appropriate.

You will find over time that each exercise is unique. Bench presses might feel better with fewer reps per set, and barbell rows with more reps per set. Don't overthink these differences. They aren't important in the grand scheme of things.

Progression is. Getting tired of hearing this yet?

## MORE REP GOAL TOTAL EXAMPLES

**Example #1 - Leg Press.** For this example your workout calls for 5 total sets of leg presses, with a rep goal of 70 total reps. Not knowing where to start, on week one you slap 350 pounds on the leg press sled and your session goes like this:

- Set 1 - 350 pounds x 22 reps
- Set 2 - 350 pounds x 18 reps
- Set 3 - 350 pounds x 16 reps



- Set 4 - 350 pounds x 15 reps
- Set 5 - 350 pounds x 12 reps

This was a brutally hard session that resulted in a total of 83 leg press reps. Because this was more than the 70 rep goal total you were after, you would add weight the next time you perform leg presses.

Since you overshot your rep goal total by quite a bit, you decide to try 375 pounds the following week. Your session goes like this:

- Set 1 - 375 pounds x 20 reps
- Set 2 - 375 pounds x 18 reps
- Set 3 - 375 pounds x 16 reps
- Set 4 - 375 pounds x 15 reps
- Set 5 - 375 pounds x 12 reps

Another quality workout. You nailed a total of 81 reps, 11 over your rep goal total. This is not a big deal.

The point of the Rep Goal System is to help you zero in on a quality weight, and to help you understand when you should add weight. Going beyond your rep goal total 2 weeks in a row isn't a major issue. You are making progress, and it's obvious.

Just continue to zero in until you fail to reach 70 reps for a given week. At this point you would continue to use the same weight until you *do* reach the 70 rep goal total.

During week 3 you decide to try 400 pounds. Your workout goes like this:

- Set 1 - 400 pounds x 16 reps
- Set 2 - 400 pounds x 13 reps
- Set 3 - 400 pounds x 11 reps
- Set 4 - 400 pounds x 9 reps
- Set 5 - 400 pounds x 8 reps

You completed a total of 57 reps, 13 shy of your rep goal. There is no need to panic. You slapped too much weight on the bar, and you know it. This is the beauty of the Rep Goal System. Simply continue to use 425 pounds until you reach 70 total reps, and then add weight.

How much weight you add when you reach 70 total reps is up to you, but I recommend keeping it reasonable. Because this is a lift that allows you to use a lot of weight, you could add 10 or 20 pounds if you'd like.

Or, if slow and steady progress is more appealing, it's certainly

OK to add only 5 pounds. Going with minimal increases will likely allow you to sustain very consistent progress week in and week out. On the other hand, jumping up by 10-20 pounds might require you to train for several more weeks before adding weight.

Either way, you'll likely progress in weight at the same rate. The Rep Goal System is auto-regulating and will reward you either way you go.

**Example #2 - Dumbbell Curls.** For this example we're using an exercise that doesn't allow for an insane amount of weight. Our workout calls for 3 sets of curls, and has a 30 rep goal total.

Having never tried dumbbell curls before, you decide that thirty-five pound dumbbells sound about right. Your first workout goes something like this:

- Set 1 - 35's x 8 reps
- Set 2 - 35's x 6 reps
- Set 3 - 35's x 5 reps

You managed to perform a total of 19 reps. This was well short of your rep goal, and the weight felt heavy. Realizing that you were not quite as strong as you thought, you decide to lower the weight to 30

pound dumbbells. Next week's session goes like this:

- Set 1 - 30's x 12 reps
- Set 2 - 30's x 10 reps
- Set 3 - 30's x 8 reps

You were able to reach the 30 rep goal total. Next week you will move back to the 35 pound dumbbells. It is likely you will need to use them for quite some time. Don't be concerned if you fall well short of the rep goal total. Focus on improving a little bit each week.

The header graphic for Chapter 7 features a background image of a person's hands gripping a barbell. Overlaid on this is a red horizontal band at the top containing the text 'CHAPTER 7' in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below the red band is a black horizontal band containing the text 'MASSIVE IRON WORKOUTS' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background image also has a pattern of white geometric shapes (hexagons and triangles) overlaid on it.

# CHAPTER 7

## MASSIVE IRON WORKOUTS

The following section contains sample Rep Goal System workouts. Here is a brief overview of each program, and who it is designed for.

**BEGINNER PROGRAMS** - For those of you who are new, or relatively new to the iron or major exercises.

- Massive Iron Novice Program - *for rank beginners*
- Massive Iron 3 Day Beginner Program A
- Massive Iron 3 Day Beginner Program B
- Massive Iron 3 Day Beginner Program C

**GAINS PROGRAMS** - Now we are into the gains programs. You are a late beginning lifter. Your exercise form is decent and improving, and it's time to rock through the early intermediate stage.

These programs can be run for prolonged periods of time. Pick one you prefer, and run it as long as you can stand to.

- Massive Iron HLM Full-Body Workout
- Massive Iron A/B Muscle Building Workout
- Massive Iron Strength Building Workout
- Massive Iron Lower Volume Muscle Building Workout
- Massive Iron 20 Rep Full-Body Base Building Workout
- Massive Iron 2 Day A/B Split
- Massive Iron 3 Day Pull Push Legs Workout
- Massive Iron 3 Day Chest/Back, Legs & Shoulders/Arms Workout
- Massive Iron 3 Day Back/Shoulders, Legs & Chest/Arms Workout
- Massive Iron 4 Day Chest/Triceps, Back/Biceps, Legs/Abs & Shoulders/Traps/Abs Workout
- Massive Iron 4 Day Chest/Back, Legs/Abs, Shoulders/Traps/Abs & Arms/Forearms Workout
- Massive Iron 4 Day Back Specialization Workout
- Massive Iron 4 Day Leg Specialization Workout
- Massive Iron Bench Press Specialization Workout

The header graphic for Chapter 8 features a black and white background image of a person's hands gripping a barbell. Overlaid on this is a red horizontal band at the top containing the text 'CHAPTER 8' in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below the red band is a black horizontal band containing the text 'MASSIVE IRON NOVICE PROGRAM' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background image also features a pattern of white geometric shapes, including hexagons and triangles, overlaid on the grayscale photo.

# CHAPTER 8

## MASSIVE IRON NOVICE PROGRAM

### MASSIVE IRON NOVICE PROGRAM

This is a 2-month program for:

- Those of you who have never stepped foot into a weight room before.
- Individuals unfamiliar with the major lifts (squats, deadlifts, rows, etc.).
- Someone who knows the major lifts, but has either bad form or has never really made any effort to focus on progressive overload.

You will be working out 2 days per week for the first month, and 3

days per week during the second month. Emphasis is on getting to know the movements and equipment, practicing form, and developing the habit of not missing workouts. You are also encouraged to dial in your eating plan during this time.

This break-in routine will also allow for intramuscular adaptation. Simply stated, you will be working towards making your body more efficient at recruiting muscle fibers per set.

### **Weeks 1-4**

You will train twice a week during this period. Rest at least 2 days between workouts. Here is a sample schedule:

- **Monday** - Workout A
- **Thursday** - Workout B

The Rep Goal System is not used during this program. The point of this 8-week period is to get familiar with the major exercises, and to learn how strong you feel on each.

During weeks 1-4 don't worry about adding weight. Pick a comfortable weight and get your reps in. It's OK during these 4 weeks



if you're not pushing sets to their limit. That's not the point of this period. Work on form and only add weight if you started way too light.

During weeks 5-8 you will be training three times a week. During this period you can slowly (very slowly) add weight to each lift when your sets feel manageable. Don't rush to overdo things. You will be moving full speed ahead after these 8 weeks are done.

**Note on Weight** - Use the same weight for each set of a given exercise.

**Rest** - Rest is in seconds.

**Squats** - These are barbell squats to parallel. No Smith machine squats allowed.

**Calf Raises** - If you do not have a seated calf raise machine or leg press, perform one leg calf raises holding a dumbbell.

**Sit Ups** - If you have access to an ab wheel, use it instead of sit ups.

**Stiff Leg Deadlifts** - Only lower the weight to the point where the lower back wants to round.

## Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
Squats	2	10	60-90
Bench Press	2	10	60-90
Barbell Rows	2	10	60-90
Upright Rows	2	10	60-90
Leg Curls	2	10	60-90
Cable Tricep Ext.	2	10	60-90
Dumbbell Curls	2	10	60-90
Seated Calf Raise	2	10	60-90
Plank	2	30 seconds	90

## Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
Stiff Leg Deadlifts	2	10	60-90
Dumbbell Bench Press	2	10	60-90
Goblet Squats	2	10	60-90
Seated Shoulder Press	2	10	60-90

Dumbbell Shrugs	2	10	60-90
Skullcrushers	2	10	60-90
Barbell Curls	2	10	60-90
Leg Press Calf Raise	2	10	60-90
Sit Ups	2	20	90

The header graphic for Chapter 9 features a background image of a person's hands gripping a barbell. Overlaid on this is a red horizontal band at the top containing the text 'CHAPTER 9' in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below this is a black horizontal band containing the text 'MASSIVE IRON BEGINNER PROGRAMS' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background image also has a pattern of white geometric shapes (hexagons and triangles) overlaid on it.

# CHAPTER 9

## MASSIVE IRON BEGINNER PROGRAMS

### MASSIVE IRON 3 DAY BEGINNER PROGRAM A

This is a 4 month program recommended for beginning lifters who:

- Have a reasonable understanding of how the major exercises should be performed.
- Are not new to the gym, and are familiar with the equipment, but have never seriously attempted to build muscle and strength.

**Program A** is a strength building focused program. It is more minimalistic, focusing mainly on the big hitting movements. I recommend this program for trainees who have no interest in

bodybuilding, but who want to improve their sports performance and strength levels.

You will build muscle on this program, make no mistake about it. Extra muscle is needed for additional strength gains. You will just be focusing on improving compound movements instead of trying to train (round out/flesh out) every minor body part.

The emphasis of this workout is to continue to improve exercise form while starting to focus on progressive resistance. Each exercise will have a rep goal total. When you reach this total, add 5 pounds to that lift the next time you perform it in the gym.

You may find the Rep Goal System to be tricky at first. Either you will overestimate your strength and fall well short of the rep goal total, or underestimate your strength and overshoot the total by quite a few reps.

This is OK. If the weight was far too light, simply add 5 pounds the following week. Continue to creep up in weight until it becomes challenging and you fail to hit the rep goal total. At this point you will continue to use the same weight until you can hit the rep goal total.

If the weight was way too heavy, drop it to a more reasonable weight the following week. If you fail to reach your rep goal total after this point, keep using the same weight until you can.

You will be training 3 days per week, with at least one day of rest in between sessions. Here is a sample schedule:

- **Monday** - Workout A
- **Wednesday** - Workout B
- **Friday** - Workout C

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**Bench Press & Military Press** - Alternate these movements every other workout.

**Leg Curls & Dumbbell Curls** - Alternate these movements every other workout.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 2 sets of 5 reps. If these 2 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

## Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	30	2-4 min
Bench or Military	3	30	2-3 min
Barbell Row	3	30	2-3 min
Dips/Skullcrushers	3	AMAP/35	2-3 min
Leg Curls/DB Curls	3	35	2 min

## Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlift	2	5 reps	2-4 min
Bench or Military	3	30	2-3 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	2-3 min
Dips/Skullcrushers	3	AMAP/35	2-3 min
Leg Curls/DB Curls	3	35	2 min

## Workout C

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	30	2-4 min
Bench or Military	3	30	2-3 min
Power Clean	5	2-3 reps	2-3 min
Dips/Skullcrushers	3	AMAP/35	2-3 min
Leg Curls/DB Curls	3	35	AMAP



# MASSIVE IRON 3 DAY BEGINNER PROGRAM B

This is a 4 month program recommended for beginning lifters who:

- Have a reasonable understanding of how the major exercises should be performed.
- Are not new to the gym, and are familiar with the equipment, but have never seriously attempted to build muscle and strength.

**Program B** is a more classic muscle building style full-body program. You will be performing more exercises, focusing on hitting all important muscle groups with direct and indirect work.

This is primarily a program for trainees who want muscle, muscle and more muscle and don't care to use one of the popular minimalistic programs. As with all Massive Iron workouts, you will utilize progressive resistance to reach your goals.

While working on building muscle size, you should also be focusing on improving your exercise form.

Each exercise will have a rep goal total. When you reach this total, add 5 pounds to that lift the next time you perform it in the gym.

You may find the Rep Goal System to be tricky at first. Either you will overestimate your strength and fall well short of the rep goal total, or underestimate your strength and overshoot the total by quite a few reps.

This is OK. If the weight was far too light, simply add 5 pounds the following week. Continue to creep up in weight until it becomes challenging and you fail to hit the rep goal total. At this point you will continue to use the same weight until you can hit the rep goal total.

If the weight was way too heavy, drop it to a more reasonable weight the following week. If you fail to reach your rep goal total after this point, keep using the same weight until you can.

You will be training 3 days per week, with at least one day of rest in between sessions. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday - Workout A
- Wednesday - Workout B
- Friday - Workout C

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**Squats** - You may choose to insert squats instead of front squats or leg press for Workout C.

**Leg Press/Front Squats** - If you perform leg presses, use a rep goal total of 50. For front squats, use a rep goal total of 30.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 2 sets of 5 reps. If these 2 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Static Barbell Holds** - In a squat rack, place the catch pins so that the bar is right above knee level. Lift the bar with a double overhand grip and hold it for as long as possible. When you can hold a given weight for 60+ seconds on both sets, add 5-10 pounds to the bar the next time you perform the exercise.

**Ab Wheel Roll-outs** - These can be performed with a barbell as well. If you do not like this exercise, or find it too difficult, you can use any other reasonable abdominal exercise.

**Weighted Sit Ups** - Increase weight slowly. I wouldn't recommend using more than a 45 pound plate while on this program.

**Standing/Seated Calf Raise** - If you do not have access to either of these machines, try calf raises in the leg press machine, or single leg calf raises while holding a dumbbell.

## Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	30	2-4 min
Bench Press	2	30	2-3 min
DB Rows	3	35	1-2 min
Upright Rows	3	30	1-2 min
Leg Curls	2	25	1-2 min
Dips	2	AMAP	2 min
Barbell Curl	2	25	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	2	30	1-2 min
Static Barbell Holds	2	60 secs	2 min
Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	AMAP/20	1-2 min

## Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlift	2	5 reps	2-4 min
Seated Overhead Press	3	30	2-3 min
Inverted Rows or Pull Ups	3	AMAP	1-2 min
DB Bench Press	2	20	2-3 min
Stiff Leg Deadlift	2	20	1-2 min
Close Grip Bench Press	2	20	1-2 min
Chin Ups	2	AMAP	1-2 min
Dumbbell Shrugs	2	25	1-2 min
Forearm Curls	2	30	1-2 min
Weighted Sit Ups	2	40	1-2 min

## Workout C

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Leg Press or Front Squats	3	50/30	2-3 min

Incline Bench Press	2	20	2-3 min
Barbell Row	3	30	1-2 min
Seated Arnold DB Press	3	30	1-2 min
Leg Curls	2	25	1-2 min
Dips	2	AMAP	1-2 min
DB Curl	2	25	1-2 min
Standing Calf Raise	2	30	1-2 min
Static Barbell Holds	2	60 sec	2 min
Planks	2	60 sec	1-2 min

# MASSIVE IRON 3 DAY BEGINNER PROGRAM C

This is a 4 month program recommended for beginning lifters who:

- Have a reasonable understanding of how the major exercises should be performed.
- Are not new to the gym, and are familiar with the equipment, but have never seriously attempted to build muscle and strength.

**Program C** is a happy middle ground between Program A and B. You are performing 7 exercises per day for a total of 21 sets per session. This is a quality muscle and strength building program for trainees who don't care for either minimalistic programs or a large number of daily exercises on a full-body routine.

As with all Massive Iron workouts, you will utilize progressive resistance to reach your goals.

While working on building muscle size, you should also be focusing on improving your exercise form.

Each exercise will have a rep goal total. When you reach this total, add 5 pounds to that lift the next time you perform it in the gym.

You may find the Rep Goal System to be tricky at first. Either you will overestimate your strength and fall well short of the rep goal total, or underestimate your strength and overshoot the total by quite a few reps.

This is OK. If the weight was far too light, simply add 5 pounds the following week. Continue to creep up in weight until it becomes challenging and you fail to hit the rep goal total. At this point you will continue to use the same weight until you can hit the rep goal total.

If the weight was way too heavy, drop it to a more reasonable weight the following week. If you fail to reach your rep goal total after this point, keep using the same weight until you can.

You will be training 3 days per week, with at least one day of rest in between sessions. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday - Workout A
- Wednesday - Workout B
- Friday - Workout C



**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 2 sets of 5 reps. If these 2 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Leg Curls/Shrugs** - Alternate between these 2 movements. For shrugs, you can use the dumbbell or barbell variation.

**Biceps/Triceps** - Alternate between biceps and triceps each workout. For biceps you can use barbell, dumbbell or EZ bar curls. For triceps you can use tricep extensions or skullcrushers.

**Calves/Abs** - Alternate between calves and abs each workout. For calves you can use seated raises, standing raises or leg press calf raises. For abs you can use cable crunches, weighted sit ups, planks, or ab wheel roll-outs Use 3 sets of 15-25 reps for abs when possible, adding weight when/if it makes sense.

## Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	30	2-4 min
Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Barbell Row	3	30	2-3 min
Upright Rows	3	30	1-2 min
Leg Curls/Shrugs	3	35	1-2 min
Biceps/Triceps	3	35	1-2 min
Calves/Abs	3	45/***	1-2 min

## Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	2	5	2-4 min
DB Bench Press	3	35	2-3 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	2-3 min
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Leg Curls/Shrugs	3	35	1-2 min
Biceps/Triceps	3	35	1-2 min
Calves/Abs	3	45/***	1-2 min

# Workout C

Exercise	Sets	Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	30	2-4 min
Incline Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
DB Row or Cleans	3/5	30/2-3	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	1-2 min
Leg Curls/Shrugs	3	35	1-2 min
Biceps/Triceps	3	35	1-2 min
Calves/Abs	3	45/**	1-2 min



# CHAPTER 10

## MASSIVE IRON GAINS PROGRAMS

### Massive Iron HLM Full-Body Workout

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Tend to feel beat up when using compound exercises each and every day during a full-body workout.
- Need a little extra recovery time between heavy sessions.
- Want to incorporate a greater number of exercises, including isolation work, into their muscle building routine.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first 4-6 months of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

The **HLM Full-Body Workout** is an excellent muscle building program for the late beginner to intermediate lifter who needs a little extra recovery time between big, bruising sessions. It's also great for the lifter that wants a little extra exercise variation, preferring to target major muscle groups with a few more isolation-style moments.

As with all Massive Iron workouts, you will utilize progressive resistance to reach your goals.

While working on building muscle size, you should also continue to work on improving your exercise form. The notion that “perfect form” exists is nonsense. You will never stop trying to improve your exercise form.

Each exercise will have a rep goal total. When you reach this total, add 5 pounds to that lift the next time you perform it in the gym.

You will be training 3 days per week, with at least one day of rest in between sessions. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday - Heavy Workout
- Wednesday - Light Workout
- Friday - Moderate Workout

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 2 sets of 5 reps. If these 2 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Pull Ups** - If pull ups get too easy, add weight via a weighted vest or dip belt. If you can't perform pull ups, perform inverted rows instead. You can also use lat pull downs if you want to lighten the day's intensity.

**Leg Extensions** - You can also use goblet squats or lunges.

**Leg Press** - You may also choose to use front squats or hack squats.

**Barbell Rows** - You can also use dumbbell rows or seated cable rows.

**Dumbbell Flye** - You can also use cable crossovers or pec dec.

**Calves/Abs** - Alternate between these 2 body parts each training day. For calves use whichever exercises you prefer. If you perform 2 sets, use a rep goal of 30. If you perform 3 sets for calves, use a rep goal of 45. For abs consider using planks or ab wheel roll-outs

Perform 15-25 reps per set, or planks up to 60-120 seconds.

## Heavy Workout

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min
Deadlifts	2	5	2-4 min
Bench Press	3	25	2-3 min
Military Press	3	25	2-3 min
Dips	3	AMAP	1-2 min
Barbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Abs/Calves	2		

## Light Workout

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Leg Extensions	3	50	1-2 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	1-2 min

Dumbbell Flye	3	35	1-2 min
Side Laterals	3	40	1-2 min
Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min
Concentration Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Dumbbell Shrugs	3	35	1-2 min
Abs/Calves	2		

## Moderate Workout

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Leg Press	3	50	2-3 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Barbell Rows	3	25	2-3 min
Upright Rows	3	30	1-2 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min



Abs/Calves	2		
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# MASSIVE IRON A/B MUSCLE BUILDING WORKOUT

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Are purely after muscle size/hypertrophy.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some beginner gains, and want to move away from a full-body style of training yet still train with some degree of frequency.

This **A/B Muscle Building Split** is basically a variation of the classic upper/lower split. Any trainee who understands how to build muscle, and has a decent understanding of exercise form on the big lifts can run it. It can be run as long as a trainee likes, and is experiencing good gains.

While this program focuses on progression, exercise selection varies slightly from a conventional strength building style of training. You will be utilizing some machines, and exercises like the leg press.

You will be training 4 days per week, with at least two days of rest in between similar sessions. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Back & Legs Workout A
- Tuesday – Chest, Shoulders & Arms Workout A
- Wednesday – Off
- Thursday – Back & Legs Workout B
- Friday - Chest, Shoulders & Arms Workout B
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

You can also run this workout using a more flexible schedule, and simply alternate between the A/B workouts as your schedule allows.

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 3 sets of 5 reps. If these 3 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Inverted Rows** – This exercise is performed like a pullup. Place a barbell in a squat rack, hang from it, and place your feet on a bench.

From this position, do “pull ups.” Concentrate on driving your elbows back.

## Back & Legs Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	30	2-4 min
Barbell Rows	3	25	2-3 min
Leg Extensions	3	50	1-2 min
Inverted Rows	3	AMAP	1-2 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlift	3	35	2-3 min
Standing Calf Raise	3	50	1-2 min
Planks	3	60-90 seconds	1-2 min

## Back & Legs Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlift	3	5	2-4 min

Leg Press	3	50	2-3 min
V-Bar Lat Pull Down	3	30	1-3 min
Hack Squats	3	30	1-3 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	50	1-2 min
Ab Wheel Roll-outs	3	10-20 reps	1-2 min

## Chest, Shoulders & Arms Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press	3	25	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	2-3 min
Pec Dec	3	40	1-2 min
Reverse Laterals	3	40	1-2 min
Rope Cable Extensions	4	45	1-2 min
Dumbbell Curls	4	45	1-2 min

## Chest, Shoulders & Arms Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Lateral Raise	3	40	1-2 min
Machine Chest Press	3	35	1-3 min
Skullcrushers	4	45	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	4	45	1-2 min

# MASSIVE IRON STRENGTH BUILDING WORKOUT

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Want as much strength as possible.
- Have a decent working understand of exercise form for the major lifts.
- Have experienced quality beginner gains and want to continue to add strength as rapidly as possible.
- Need to continue building a muscle base to fortify their strength progress.

A strength-building program for late beginner to intermediate lifters will require a focus on adding reps to the assistance work. This not only leads to a direct increase in strength, but it also builds additional muscle mass and will help propel future strength gains.

The **Massive Iron Strength Building Program** focuses on the use of barbell, dumbbell and bodyweight movements. It is designed to help you build head to toe strength, which will assist an eventual transition into a strength sport such as powerlifting or strongman, or simply assist you with athletic performance.

You will be training 4 days per week, with at least two days of rest in between similar sessions. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Squat/Deadlift A
- Tuesday – Press/Upper A
- Wednesday – Off
- Thursday – Squat/Deadlift B
- Friday - Press/Upper B
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**High Rack Pull and Power Shrug Combo** - Add weight in the same manner you do on deadlifts. Start with the weight at knee level. Perform a rack pull and complete each rep with a power shrug.



**Rope Pull Through** - Face away from a cable station. Bend over, grab the rope attachment between your legs, and then stand to an upright position. Do not lift the rope up. Instead, bend over and stand up, keeping the arms locked. You may also substitute in weighted hyperextensions - 3 sets with a rep goal of 40.

**Rolling Planks** - From a plank position, lift one arm up and roll it until it is at a 90-degree angle. Set this arm down and roll up with your other arm. Continue alternating arms until you have performed 10-15 reps per side.

**Inverted Rows** - Can be substituted with pull ups.

**One Arm Dumbbell Rows** - When you can hit a 35 rep goal total for both arms, add weight.

## Squat/Deadlift A

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Paused Squat	4	30	2-4 min
High Rack Pull & Power Shrug Combo	3	5	2-4 min
Leg Press	3	50	2-3 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlift	3	35	2-3 min

Seated Calf Machine	3	50	1-2 min
Ab Wheel Roll-outs	4	10-20 reps	1-2 min

## Squat/Deadlift B

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	4	5	2-4 min
Front Squats	3	30	2-4 min
Rope Pull Throughs	3	45	1-2 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Standing Calf Machine	3	50	1-2 min
Rolling Plank	4	10-15 reps	1-2 min

## Press/Upper A

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Paused Bench Press	4	30	2-4 min

One Arm Dumbbell Rows	3	40	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	1-3 min
Face Pulls	3	40	1-2 min
Skullcrushers	3	40	1-2 min
Dumbbell Curls	4	40	1-2 min

## Press/Upper B

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Military Press	4	30	2-3 min
Barbell Rows	3	25	2-3 min
Dumbbell Bench Press	3	35	2-3 min
Inverted Rows	3	AMAP	1-2 min
Close Grip Bench Press	3	25	2-3 min
EZ Bar Curls	4	40	1-2 min

# MASSIVE IRON LOWER VOLUME MUSCLE BUILDING

## WORKOUT

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Feel they see better results with fewer sets.
- Have joint issues and want to try a little lighter volume.
- Are over 40 and can't beat up their bodies like they used to.
- Need to get in and out of the gym more quickly.

If you find that your body responds better to a lower amount of daily volume, this upper/lower split variation is a good choice.

Supporting exercises are comprised of only 2 sets.

This program can also be used during the tight times in life where you need to get out of the gym quicker. It's also a good choice if you are feeling a little beat up, and need to tone down the volume for 8-12 while still pushing for progression and muscle gains.

You will be training 4 days per week, with at least two days of rest in between similar sessions. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Back & Legs A
- Tuesday – Chest, Shoulders & Arms A
- Wednesday – Off
- Thursday – Back & Legs B
- Friday - Chest, Shoulders & Arms B
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 3 sets of 5 reps. If these 3 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

## Back & Legs Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min
One Arm Dumbbell Rows	2	25	2-3 min
Leg Extensions	2	25	1-2 min
Inverted Rows	2	AMAP	1-2 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlift	2	25	2-3 min
Standing Calf Raise	2	35	1-2 min
Planks	2	60-90 seconds	1-2 min

## Back & Legs Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	3	5	2-4 min
Leg Press	2	30	2-3 min
V-Bar Lat Pull	2	25	1-3 min

Down			
Hack Squat	2	25	1-3 min
Leg Curls	2	25	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	2	35	1-2 min
Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	10-20 reps	1-2 min

## Chest, Shoulders & Arms Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press	3	25	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	2	25	2-3 min
Pec Dec	2	30	1-2 min
Reverse Laterals	2	30	1-2 min
Rope Cable Extensions	2	25	1-2 min
Dumbbell Curls	2	25	1-2 min

## Chest, Shoulders & Arms Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	2	25	2-3 min
Lateral Raise	2	30	1-2 min
Machine Chest Press	2	25	1-3 min
Skullcrushers	2	25	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	2	25	1-2 min



# MASSIVE IRON 20 REP FULL-BODY BASE BUILDING PROGRAM

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Want to experience a more classic 20 rep squat program.
- Prefer to train using a full-body style.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first 4-6 months of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

20 rep squat programs have been around for decades. They are extremely popular because they work, and work well. If you are looking for a challenge, and to build your squat and lower body strength quickly, this is the perfect style of program to try.

This program is well-rounded, and designed to help you build muscle and have the strength to back it up.

You will be training 3 days per week, with at least one day of rest

in between workouts. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Workout A
- Tuesday – Off
- Wednesday – Workout B
- Thursday – Off
- Friday - Workout C
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Calves/Abs** - Alternate between these 2 body parts each training day. For calves use whichever exercises you prefer. If you perform 2 sets, use a rep goal of 30. If you perform 3 sets for calves, use a rep goal of 45. For abs consider using planks or ab wheel roll-outs

Perform 15-25 reps per set, or planks up to 60-120 seconds.

**Pull Ups/Inverted Rows** - Use pull ups if possible.

## Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min
Pull Ups/Inverted Rows	3	AMAP	1-2 min
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Skullcrushers	2	25	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	2	25	1-2 min
Calves/Abs	3		1-2 min

## Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	3	5	2-4 min
Leg	3	40	2-3 min

Extensions			
Pec Dec/DB Flyes	3	35	1-2 min
Upright Rows/Lateral Raise	3	35/40	1-2 min
Close Grip Bench Press	2	20	2-3 min
Rope Cable Curls	2	25	1-2 min
Calves/Abs	3		1-2 min

## Workout C

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	1	20	N/A
Leg Press/Hack Squat	2	35/20	2-4 min/1-3 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Barbell Rows	3	25	2-3 min

Seated Arnold Press	3	35	1-3 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	2	25	1-2 min
Standing Dumbbell Curls	2	25	1-2 min
Calves/Abs	3		1-2 min

# MASSIVE IRON 2 DAY A/B SPLIT

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Have limited time to work out each week, but still want quality results.
- Don't mind training with a full-body style workout.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first 4-6 months of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

2 day per week workout plans are not very popular, to say the least. In our "more is better" culture, many lifters simply do not believe decent progress can be made using only 2 workouts per week. This isn't true.

Coach John Christy successfully trained hundreds of individuals using minimalistic routines. His track record of producing results was impressive, to say the least.

This program is difficult, make no mistake about it. It will

challenge you, and you will build muscle and strength.

You will be training 2 days per week, with at least two days of rest in between workouts. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Workout A
- Tuesday – Off
- Wednesday – Off
- Thursday – Workout B
- Friday - Off
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

You can also train every third day using this program. This works out to be a 6-day cycle. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Workout A
- Tuesday – Off
- Wednesday – Off
- Thursday – Workout B
- Friday - Off
- Saturday – Off

- Sunday – Start the 6 day cycle over

## Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	3	5	2-4 min
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min
Leg Press	3	45	2-3 min
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	2	30	1-2 min
Planks	2	Max time	1-2 min

## Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min



Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Barbell Rows/Pull Ups (alternate)	3	30/AMAP	2-3 min/1-3min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	1-2 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Standing Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Standing Calf Raise/Leg Press Calf Raise	2	30	1-2 min
Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	10-15	1-2 min

# MASSIVE IRON 3 DAY PULL PUSH LEGS WORKOUT

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Want to use a 3 day split.
- Enjoy simple, but intense programming.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first 4-6 months of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

The pull, push, legs split is an industry standard. Most 3-day splits are based upon this simple, but effective structure.

You will be training 3 days per week, with at least one day of rest in between workouts. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Pull
- Tuesday – Off
- Wednesday – Push
- Thursday – Off

- Friday - Legs
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Pull Ups** - If you can't perform pull ups, insert inverted rows.

**Barbell/Dumbbell Rows** - Alternate between these 2 exercises every other pulling workout day.

**Leg Press/Hack Squats** - Alternate between these 2 exercises every other leg day.

## Pull

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	3	5	2-4 min
Barbell Rows/Dumbbell Rows (alternate)	3	30/40	2-3 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	1-2 min
V-Bar Pull Downs	3	35	1-2 min
Power Shrugs	3	30	1-3 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Standing Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Planks	3	Max time	1-2 min

## Push

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min

Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Upright Rows/Seated Arnold Press	3	35	1-2 min
Pec Dec/DB Flyes	3	40	1-2 min
Face Pulls/Reverse Flyes	3	40	1-2 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	40	1-2 min

## Legs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min
Leg Press/Hack Squats (alternate)	3	40/30	1-3 min

Leg Extensions	3	40	1-2 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	30	2-3 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	45	1-2 min
Standing Calf Raise	3	45	1-2 min
Ab Wheel Roll-outs	3	10-15	1-2 min

# MASSIVE IRON 3 DAY CHEST/BACK, LEGS AND SHOULDERS/ARMS

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Want to use a 3 day split, but dislike the classic push/pull/legs split.
- Enjoy working chest and back during the same session.
- Like to work both biceps and triceps during the same training day.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first 4-6 months of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

The chest and back split can be an interesting and fun change of pace. Both the chest and back day, and the leg day are extremely challenging. While taxing, shoulder and arm training does allow for somewhat of an intensity break.

Chest and back exercises are alternated, allowing for a bit of extra recovery time in between similar movement patterns.

You will be training 3 days per week, with at least one day of rest in between workouts. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Chest and Back
- Tuesday – Off
- Wednesday – Legs
- Thursday – Off
- Friday - Shoulders and Arms
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Pull Ups** - If you can't perform any pull ups, use inverted rows instead.

**Leg Press/Hack Squat** - Alternate between these 2 exercises



every other week.

## Chest/Back

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlift	3	5	2-4 min
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min
Barbell Rows	3	30	2-3 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	1-2 min
Pec Dec or Dumbbell Flye	3	40	1-2 min
V-Bar Pull Downs or Machine Rows	3	35	1-2 min
Planks/Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	Max time/10-15	1-2 min

# Legs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min
Leg Press/Hack Squats (alternate)	3	45/35	2-3 min
Leg Extensions	3	40	1-2 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	30	2-3 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	45	1-2 min
Standing Calf Raise	3	45	1-2 min
Planks/Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	Max time/10-15	1-2 min

## Shoulders/Arms

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	2-3 min
Face Pulls/Reverse Flyes	3	35	2-3 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Standing Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Planks/Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	Max time/10-15	1-2 min

# **MASSIVE IRON 3 DAY BACK/SHOULDERS, LEGS, CHEST/ARMS**

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Prefer a 3-day per week split.
- Enjoy training chest and arms on the same day.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first 4-6 months of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

This is a very popular 3-day split variation, primarily because there is a single day dedicated to everyone's favorite body parts - chest and arms.

On back and shoulder day, exercises are alternated between body parts to allow for extra recovery and improved performance.

You will be training 3 days per week, with at least one day of rest in between workouts. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Back & Shoulders
- Tuesday – Off
- Wednesday – Legs
- Thursday – Off
- Friday - Chest & Arms
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Pull Ups** - If you can't perform any pull ups, use inverted rows instead.

**Leg Press/Hack Squat** - Alternate between these 2 exercises every other week.

## Back/Shoulders

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlift	3	5	2-4 min
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Barbell Rows	3	30	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	1-2 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	1-2 min
Face Pulls or Reverse Flyes	3	40	1-2 min
V-Bar Pull Downs	3	35	1-2 min
Planks/Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	Max time/10-15	1-2 min

## Legs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min

Leg Press/Hack Squats (alternate)	3	45/35	2-3 min
Leg Extensions	3	40	1-2 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	30	2-3 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	45	1-2 min
Standing Calf Raise	3	45	1-2 min
Planks/Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	Max time/10-15	1-2 min

## Chest/Arms

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min

Pec Dec or Dumbbell Flyes	3	40	1-2 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Standing Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Planks/Ab Wheel Roll-outs	2	Max time/10-15	1-2 min



# **MASSIVE IRON 4 DAY CHEST/TRICEPS, BACK/BICEPS, LEGS/ABS, SHOULDERS/TRAPS/ABS**

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Prefer training with a body part split.
- Feel that they grow and recover training each body part once a week.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first 4-6 months of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

This a classic and extremely popular muscle building split variation. Chest is worked with triceps, back with biceps, and traps and worked after shoulders.

Major body parts are targeted with about 12 sets each, and minor with 9.

You will be training 4 days per week. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Chest & Triceps
- Tuesday – Back & Biceps
- Wednesday – Shoulders, Traps & Abs
- Thursday – Off
- Friday - Off
- Saturday – Legs & Abs
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Pull Ups** - If you can't perform any pull ups, use inverted rows instead.

## Chest & Triceps

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Machine Chest Press	3	35	1-3 min
Pec Dec or Cable Crossovers	3	40	1-2 min
Close Grip Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min

## Back & Biceps

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	3	5	2-4 min
Barbell Rows	3	30	2-3 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	1-2 min
V-Bar Pulldowns	3	35	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Standing Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Curls	3	35	1-2 min

## Legs & Abs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min
Leg Press or Hack Squats	3	40/35	2-3 min

Leg Extensions	3	40	1-2 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	35	1-3 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	45	1-2 min
Planks	3	Max time	1-2 min

## Shoulders, Traps and Abs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Military Press	3	25	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	1-3 min
Lateral Raise or Upright Row	3	40	1-2 min
Face Pulls or Reverse Flyes	3	40	1-2 min
Power Shrugs	3	35	1-2 min
Dumbbell Shrugs	3	40	1-2 min
Ab Wheel Roll	3	10-15	1-2 min

Outs			
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# **MASSIVE IRON 4 DAY CHEST/BACK, LEGS/ABS, SHOULDERS/TRAPS/ABS, ARMS/FOREARMS**

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Prefer a body part split.
- Enjoy training back and shoulders during the same session.
- Like having an arm day.
- Believe they need direct forearm work.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first 4-6 months of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

Another classic split, this workout has you training back and chest on the same day. It also features an arm day that incorporates direct forearm work.

You will be training 4 days per week. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Chest & Back

- Tuesday – Legs & Abs
- Wednesday – Arms & Forearms
- Thursday – Off
- Friday - Shoulders, Traps & Abs
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Pull Ups** - If you can't perform any pull ups, use inverted rows instead.



## Chest/Back

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlift	3	5	2-4 min
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min
Barbell Rows	3	30	2-3 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	1-3 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	1-2 min
Pec Dec or Dumbbell Flyes	3	35	1-2 min
V-Bar Pull Downs	3	35	1-2 min

## Legs & Abs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min
Leg Press or	3	40/35	2-3 min

Hack Squats			
Leg Extensions	3	40	1-2 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	35	1-3 min
Leg Curls	3	40	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	45	1-2 min
Planks	3	Max time	1-2 min

## Shoulders, Traps and Abs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Military Press	3	25	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	1-3 min
Lateral Raise or Upright Row	3	40	1-2 min
Face Pulls or Reverse Flyes	3	40	1-2 min
Power Shrugs	3	35	1-2 min
Dumbbell Shrugs	3	40	1-2 min

Ab Wheel Roll Outs	3	10-15	1-2 min
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## Arms & Forearms

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Close Grip Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Standing Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Wrist Rollers or Forearm Curls	3	3 up & down/50	1-2 min

# MASSIVE IRON 4 DAY BACK SPECIALIZATION

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Feel like they have lagging back muscle & strength.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first year or two of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

This program is for the more experienced intermediate lifter who wants to focus on bringing up their back strength and muscle mass. Both back and legs are trained twice a week.

Back days are split between deadlift and pull up focus, and rowing focus.

You will be training 4 days per week. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Deadlift & Moderate Legs
- Tuesday – Chest & Triceps
- Wednesday – Off

- Thursday – Back & Moderate Legs
- Friday - Shoulders & Biceps
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**High Rack Pull & Power Shrug Combo** - Set the bar right above the kneecap. For each rep, deadlift the bar, and then finish with an explosive shrug.

**Pull Ups** - If you can't perform any pull ups, use inverted rows instead.

## Deadlift & Moderate Legs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	3	5	2-4 min
High Rack Dead & Power Shrug Combo	4	5	2-3 min
Pull Ups	4	AMAP	1-2 min
Leg Press	4	50	2-3 min
Leg Curls	3	55	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	50	1-2 min

## Chest & Triceps

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Machine Chest	3	35	1-3 min

Press			
Pec Dec or Cable Crossovers	3	40	1-2 min
Close Grip Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min

## Back & Moderate Legs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	4	30	2-4 min
Barbell Rows	4	35	2-3 min
Dumbbell Rows	3	40	2-3 min
V-Bar Lat Pulldowns	4	45	1-3 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	35	1-3 min
Standing Calf	3	50	1-2 min

Raise			
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## Shoulders & Biceps

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Seated Arnold Press	3	35	2-3 min
Upright Rows or Lateral Raise	3	40	1-3 min
Face Pulls or Reverse Laterals	3	40	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Standing Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Curls	3	35	1-2 min



# MASSIVE IRON 4 DAY LEG SPECIALIZATION

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Feel like they have lagging quad and hamstring muscle & strength.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first year or two of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

This program is for the more experienced intermediate lifter who wants to focus on bringing up their leg strength and muscle mass. Legs are trained twice a week.

The first leg day focuses on paused squats. The second leg training includes leg presses, leg extensions and hack squats.

You will be training 4 days per week. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Squat Focused Leg Day
- Tuesday – Back & Shoulders
- Wednesday – Off
- Thursday – Legs & Deadlift Day
- Friday - Chest & Arms
- Saturday – Off
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Pull Ups** - If you can't perform any pull ups, use inverted rows instead.

## Squat Focused Leg Day

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Paused Squats	4	35	2-4 min
Hack Squats	4	40	2-3 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	30	2-3 min
Leg Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	50	1-2 min
Planks	3	60-120 sec	1-2 min

## Back & Shoulders

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Barbell Rows	3	30	2-3 min
Military Press	3	30	2-3 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	1-2 min
Lateral Raise	3	40	1-2 min

Seated Cable Rows	3	35	1-2 min
Face Pulls	3	40	1-2 min
V-Bar Pull Downs	3	35	1-2 min

## Legs & Deadlift Day

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlift	3	5	2-4 min
Leg Press	4	50	2-3 min
Leg Extensions	4	50	1-2 min
Reverse Hack Squats	3	30	1-3 min
Standing Calf Raise	3	50	1-2 min
Ab Wheel Roll-outs	3	10-15	1-2 min

## Chest & Arms

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press	3	25	2-4 min
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	30	2-3 min
Pec Dec or Cable Crossovers	3	35	1-2 min
Skullcrushers	3	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Dumbbell Curls	3	35	1-2 min

# MASSIVE IRON 4 DAY BENCH PRESS SPECIALIZATION

This is a program recommended for lifters who:

- Want to bring up their lagging bench press.
- Have a solid working execution of major lift form.
- Have experienced some quality muscle and strength gains during their first year or two of training, and know how to eat for weight gain and lift for progression of weight.

This program is for the more experienced intermediate lifter who wants to focus on bringing up their bench press. Bench is trained twice each week.

The first bench day is a volume day. The second day is a heavier day. You will be training 4 days per week. Here is a sample schedule:

- Monday – Bench Volume Day
- Tuesday – Back & Biceps
- Wednesday – Off
- Thursday – Off

- Friday - Heavy Bench Press Day
- Saturday – Legs
- Sunday – Off

**Rest** - Rest is in minutes.

**Rep Goal Total** - When you reach the rep goal total for a given exercise, add weight (5 pounds) the next time you perform that exercise.

**AMAP** - AMAP stands for as many as possible per set.

**Deadlifts** - You will NOT be using the Rep Goal System. Start with a weight you can handle and perform 4 sets of 5 reps. If these 4 sets feel manageable, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

**Pull Ups** - If you can't perform any pull ups, use inverted rows instead.

**Heavy Bench Day** - Take your volume day weight and increase it by 10%.

## Bench Volume Day

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press	4	35	2-4 min
Dumbbell Bench Press	4	40	2-3 min
Lateral Raise	4	45	1-2 min
Skullcrushers	4	45	1-2 min
Tate Press	3	35	1-2 min

## Back & Biceps

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Deadlifts	3	5	2-4 min
Barbell Rows	3	30	2-3 min
Pull Ups	3	AMAP	2-3 min
Seated Cable Row	3	35	1-2 min
EZ Bar Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Dumbbell	3	35	1-2 min



Curls			
Planks	3	60-90 sec	1-2 min

## Heavy Bench Press Day

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Bench Press (10% greater weight than on volume day)	4	3 reps per set	2-3 min
Military Press	4	40	2-3 min
Close Grip Bench Press	4	40	2-3 min
Face Pulls	4	35	1-2 min
Rope Cable Tricep Extensions	3	35	1-2 min

# Legs

Exercise	Sets	Reps/Rep Goal	Rest
Squats	3	25	2-4 min
Leg Press	3	40	2-3 min
Leg Extensions	3	35	1-2 min
Dumbbell Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	35	1-3 min
Leg Curls	3	35	1-2 min
Seated Calf Raise	3	40	1-2 min
Ab Wheel Roll-outs	3	10-15	1-2 min

The header graphic for Chapter 11 features a background image of a person's hands and arms in a gym setting, overlaid with a pattern of white geometric shapes (hexagons and triangles) on a dark background. A solid red horizontal band spans the width of the image, containing the text 'CHAPTER 11' in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below this band, a solid black horizontal band contains the text 'EXERCISE SELECTION' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

# CHAPTER 11

## EXERCISE SELECTION

*Can I use different exercises?*

Absolutely. The programs listed in this book work well, but they are merely examples. There are plenty of other quality exercises and variations you can use. The following lists contain exercises I recommend, starting with compound movements and moving on to isolation exercises.

**Exercises listed with a star (\*)** are movements I consider to be the best choices. All decent programs must contain a quality percentage of these lifts. Use this rule when substituting exercises or building your own programs:

*First do what you should, then do what you like.*

I recommend making sure that 80-90% of the exercises in your program are "high impact", or top choices. After that, it's OK to use some fun exercises. What do I mean by fun exercises? Movements you prefer and enjoy performing.

Someone might tell you to "never do leg extensions", or that they consider "upright rows to be dangerous." You might also hear some random forum comment stating, "Concentration curls are useless", etc.

Other lifters like to tell you what to do. While they mean well, know that it's OK to use some pet (favorite) exercises after the hard work is done. There is no need to be obsessive compulsive about using every possible *best choice*. Get your hard work in, and then have a little fun in the gym. As long as you are progressing and challenging yourself, you will see good results.

If over time your favorite exercises don't appear to be working as well as you've hoped, try something different.

## ***Abs Exercises***

- Plank \*
- Side plank \*
- Rolling plank \*
- Ab wheel roll out \*
- Cable crunches
- Weighted sit ups
- Floor crunch
- Hanging knee raise
- Flutterkicks
- Wood chop

## ***Back Exercises***

- Barbell rows \*
- Pendlay rows \*
- One arm dumbbell rows \*
- Pull ups \*
- Inverted rows \*
- T-bar rows \*
- V-bar pull downs
- Lat pull downs
- Assisted pull ups

- Seated cable rows
- Two arm dumbbell row
- Machine row
- One arm cable row
- One arm machine row
- Yates row
- Chin up
- Rope lat pull down
- Behind the neck lat pull down

### ***Bicep Exercises***

- Barbell curls \*
- EZ bar curls \*
- Standing dumbbell curls \*
- Chin ups (palms towards face) \*
- Incline dumbbell curls \*
- Rope cable curls
- Preacher curls
- Concentration curls
- Hammer curls
- Zottman curl
- Drag curls

## ***Calves Exercises***

- Seated calf machine \*
- Leg press calf press \*
- Standing machine calf raise \*
- Standing one leg dumbbell calf raise
- Standing calf raise holding barbell
- Donkey calf raise
- Hack squat calf press

## ***Chest Exercises***

- Bench press \*
- Paused bench press \*
- Incline bench press \*
- Dumbbell bench press \*
- Incline dumbbell bench press \*
- Dips
- Decline bench press
- Decline dumbbell bench press
- Machine chest press
- Pec dec
- Dumbbell flyes
- Incline dumbbell flyes

- Dumbbell floor press
- Cable crossovers
- Push ups
- Floor bench press
- Wide grip bench press

### ***Forearm Exercises***

- Static barbell holds \*
- Wrist roller \*
- Plate pinches \*
- Seated barbell wrist curls
- Reverse grip barbell wrist curls

### ***Hamstring Exercises***

- Romanian deadlifts \*
- Stiff leg deadlifts \*
- Dumbbell stiff leg deadlifts \*
- Reverse hack squats \*
- Leg curls \*
- Seated leg curls \*
- Glute ham raise \*
- Wide stance good mornings



- Single leg curl
- Band hamstring curl
- Dumbbell hamstring curl

### ***Quad Exercises***

- Squats \*
- Paused squats \*
- Front squats \*
- Leg presses \*
- Hack squats
- Sissy squats
- Leg extensions
- Goblet squats
- Lunges
- Bulgarian split squats
- Step ups
- Box squats
- Zercher squats
- Single leg press

### ***Shoulder Exercises***

- Military press \*

- Push press \*
- Seated barbell overhead press \*
- Seated behind the neck press \*
- Standing dumbbell overhead press \*
- Standing one arm overhead dumbbell press \*
- Seated one arm overhead dumbbell press \*
- Standing Arnold press \*
- Seated Arnold press \*
- Face pulls \*
- Landmine press \*
- Upright rows
- Dumbbell lateral raise
- Dumbbell upright rows
- Power upright rows
- Seated dumbbell lateral raise
- Cable side lateral raise
- Bent over dumbbell reverse flyes
- Cable reverse flyes
- Machine overhead press

### ***Traps Exercises***

- Power shrugs \*

- Rack pull and power shrug combo \*
- Deadlift and power shrug combo \*
- Farmer's walk \*
- Dumbbell shrugs
- Barbell shrugs
- Upright rows
- Machine shrugs
- Behind the back barbell shrug
- Seated dumbbell shrug

### ***Triceps Exercises***

- Close grip bench press \*
- Close grip incline bench press \*
- Skullcrushers \*
- Cable tricep extensions \*
- Rope cable tricep extensions \*
- Dips \*
- Two arm seated dumbbell extension
- One arm seated dumbbell extension
- Bench dips
- French press
- Close grip push ups

- Decline close grip bench press
- Close grip floor press
- Incline bench skullcrushers

The header graphic for Chapter 12 features a background image of a person's hands gripping a metal barbell. Overlaid on this image are two horizontal bars: a red one at the top and a black one below it. The text 'CHAPTER 12' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the red bar. The text 'FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the black bar. The background image also has a pattern of white geometric shapes (hexagons and triangles) overlaid on it.

# CHAPTER 12

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

***Which program should I use if I am not a beginner? There are so many choices...***

At the end of the day it's important to remember that consistency and progression (getting stronger) drive gains. You will experience quality progress on nearly any reasonably structured program when these 2 factors are in place.

My best advice is to pick a program that motivates you to hit the gym. Run it, and if one aspect doesn't feel right, tweak the program instead of abandoning it.

Many lifters start a new program, and then quickly abandon it when one aspect doesn't feel right. For example, a trainee might not like squat sets higher than 8 reps (or say a rep goal of 30 for 3 sets), and decide to change programs because of it. Instead of changing programs over something trivial like this, it would be better to drop the reps/set (or rep goal).

The program in its entirety usually isn't the problem. Typically there are a couple of minor issues with the program that cause a lifter to jump ship. If you change programs every time one small detail doesn't feel right, you are making a huge mistake.

Instead of trying to find a perfect program, make modifications to your existing program based on needs. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that your existing program might not be optimal, and a more perfect system exists. It might, it might not.

Pick a program, sell out to it, and run it hard. Make changes when needed; evolve your training. This is the path to success.

## ***How often should I deload?***

The obsession with deloading is a modern phenomenon. Quite frankly, it drives me nuts. The notion has been propagated that lifters need to frequently deload. Many of these deload protocols require a light week once a month for random reasons.

There is no urgent need to deload if you are feeling good and training is going well. Listen to your body. If you feel physically beat up, or need a mental break from heavy weight, either add in a couple of extra rest days or take a deload week.

For the first 20 years of my training I typically only took small breaks every 8 to 24 weeks. Sometimes these breaks were caused by life events, and sometimes my body simply felt beat up.

Bottom line...most beginning to intermediate lifters don't need to plan their deloads. Scheduling a week off for random reasons is idiotic. It slows progress, and is completely unnecessary. Save your deloads, or time away from the gym, when you need it for personal reasons, or because you require healing or recovery.

***Do you believe the Rep Goal System is superior to linear progression?***

Yes. Maximizing sets not only helps to optimize the muscle building process, but it also helps a trainee to build strength in a more natural, and auto-regulated manner.

Linear progression works. Make no mistake about it. I simply believe there is a better way.

I also believe that the Rep Goal System, and the practice of maximizing sets but not at the expense of exercise form, teaches a trainee to progress in a safer manner. The focus is on progressing while listening to your body, not just randomly trying to add 5-10 pounds each week no matter what.

Listening to your body is a vital component of success. It helps you fend off injuries, and encourages you to focus on perceived effort during each and every rep. Perceived effort, or knowing how hard you are pushing, will also come in handy as you progress towards the advanced stages of lifting.



Some popular programs encourage lifters to start with a barbell, and methodically progress by adding 5 pounds to the bar every week. Not only is this a huge waste of time (early on) for most lifters, but it's also difficult to practice proper exercise form when the loads aren't at least moderately challenging.

When the weight does become challenging, it becomes challenging very quickly. A trainee can go from "this weight is no big deal, my form seems OK", to "holy cow, this weight is kicking my ass" in a matter of weeks.

At this point linear progression requires that the trainee keep adding weight. The focus is on "add 5-10 pounds" or die (so to speak).

By training in a more intuitive manner, a lifter will be not only working to improve form early on with a more level-appropriate and challenging weight, but they will also be building muscle more optimally by maximizing sets.

The Rep Goal System will build strength just as quickly as a linear progression program, if not more quickly. In addition, a trainee will be building a better overall muscle base that will help with future

strength and muscle gains.

Comparing the Rep Goal System and maximizing sets to linear progression, there are too many advantages for it to be ignored.

- Maximizing sets recruits more muscle fibers, leading to superior muscle gains.
- Maximizing sets ensures that a trainee is progressing as quickly as possible, but not at the expense of less than perfect form.
- Maximizing sets teaches a lifter to listen to their body, which is a vital component of success.
- Maximizing sets allows a trainee to work on exercise form while using a more level-appropriate amount of resistance.
- Maximizing sets is a safer and generally more effective method of training for intermediate lifters.
- Maximizing sets keeps the focus on progressing "one rep at a time, one set at a time." It keeps your head in the game, and on making every set count. You don't need to worry about arbitrary weight increases, but can let the weight come to you - and it will.

## ***How often do I need to switch programs?***

There is no urgent need to switch programs. There is a myth passed around that you must "confuse" your muscles by changing workout programs every 8-12 weeks. This is complete nonsense.

Ignore this myth.

Confuse your muscles by pushing every set for as many reps as possible. Your body can't adapt to this consistently increasing effort.

Using squats as an example, moving reps from 8-12 per set to 5 reps per set might be difficult for you to adapt to for several weeks, but after that point it becomes all about progression of weight again.

I used the same workout program for nearly 20 years. Instead of changing programs, I evolved my program based on needs and body feedback. You should do the same thing.

You can certainly change programs to stave off boredom or to try new things, but don't do so because you feel like you must or gains

will stop.

### ***Can women use these programs?***

Absolutely. Women don't require different types of workouts. If they want to look good and "toned", they must use some form of resistance training.

Women won't get bulky like a man. Heck, most men have a hard time building muscle.

### ***Can I use these programs while cutting?***

Of course, you should not train differently when trying to lose fat. If you train lighter, or switch to higher reps, you are telling your body that your hard-earned muscle isn't as valuable.

"Going light" with high reps while losing fat won't help you get ripped, but it will help you lose muscle mass.

### ***How much cardio do I need?***

You don't "need" any cardio to build muscle. With that said, I still recommend 2-4 cardio sessions per week of 15-20 minutes each. Cardio will help promote better health, and it will prevent you from getting winded during sex - and no one wants that.

### ***What should I do if my gym doesn't have a squat rack/barbells/dumbbells, whatever?***

Switch gyms or buy your own equipment. It's not that hard to find a real gym unless you live in the middle of nowhere.

### ***Can I train while sore?***

Yes. You can still stimulate muscle protein synthesis and make additional mass gains when sore.

### ***So and so said "program X" is more optimal. Should I switch?***

No, not if you are making progress currently. Never fix what isn't

broken. Even if another program is "more optimal" on paper, it doesn't mean it will provide you with a substantial improvement in progress.

An optimal, or better program, might only improve your performance and muscle gains by a few percentage points. In the long run - and we will all be lifting for many years - the importance of this "optimization" is minimal. Everything typically evens out in the end for natural lifters.

In addition, most friends/lifting partners/whatever are not telling you another program is better because they have experienced superior results first hand. They are usually parroting the opinion of another lifter.

### ***How often should I work each muscle group?***

I recommend that beginners start off with a full-body workout, targeting each body part 3 times per week. Once you have established a solid track record of building muscle and strength, say for about 4 to 6 months, then it's OK to progress on to an upper/lower split if that is how you prefer to train. Body part splits can be a good idea once you have built a quality amount of strength, need more

recovery time, and know what your weaknesses are.

***What if I don't feel like lifting and start cutting exercises, sets and missing workouts?***

Then you really aren't committed to the process and will likely quit. If you find yourself missing workouts and disinterested with a program, find a more engaging workout that motivates you to hit the gym.

Lack of consistency is the biggest reason why most people fail. Obvious, right?

Stop complaining and get to the gym. The option is to sit on the couch, remaining weak and looking saggy.

***Can I add in more exercises, sets and training days?***

You can, but why?

Many trainees fall into the trap of wanting to do more work, thinking time in the gym drives results. Meanwhile they remain weak, never focusing completely on progressive overload and maximizing sets.

Get in the gym, work each set, and go home and recover. This works. Adding volume will not speed up the process. If lifting were that simple, everyone would be recommending 6 days of training per week.

Most experienced lifters that I know train a maximum of 4 days per week.

Focus on quality, not quantity. Maximize the workouts in this book. They will help you exceed your goals. I promise.

### ***Are free weights better than machines?***

Yes. Free weights are inherently more challenging. Machines were designed to make the lifting process more comfortable.



This does not mean that machine training is useless. Far from it. It simply means that barbell and dumbbell work should be your first priority, when possible. After your work with free weights has been completed, it's OK to move on to machines, etc.

Remember this truth...if you seek the easy path, your body will show it. Don't run from the difficult exercises, embrace them.

### ***How long will it take to see results?***

The following are general guidelines, not carved in stone rules. They are solid goals for you to shoot for. Here's how much muscle you should aim to build each year:

- **Year 1** - 12 to 16 pounds
- **Year 2** - 6 to 8 pounds
- **Year 3** - 3 to 4 pounds
- **Year 4** - 1 to 2 pounds

As you can see, a lot of muscle can be built in only 2 years. Adding 20-25 pounds of muscle to your frame will completely transform it.

There is virtually nothing you can do to speed up this process. Enjoy the journey, and don't fall into the pit of trying some extreme workout designed to "shock and speed up" gains.

The muscle building process takes years, not weeks.

### ***Can I lose fat and build muscle at the same time?***

Maybe, but know that chasing multiple goals at the same time typically slows down progress for both.

If you are at a more normal weight, but feel flabby, know that adding muscle will make you look leaner. Most of you won't benefit much from a fat loss diet until you learn how to build muscle. Once you learn how to actually build muscle, it becomes much easier to retain muscle mass while dropping fat. Until that point you are likely to lose both muscle and fat during the weight loss process.

Fat loss will not make a frail physique look impressive. On the other hand, adding muscle can turn an average body (with some fat) into a far more impressive physical specimen.

### ***What if I am really overweight?***

Then I recommend losing weight. You will have to train the same, using one of the programs in this book.

Overweight trainees often ask me if they can build muscle while dropping a lot of weight. Maybe. If this is you, focus on the things you can control:

1. Hitting the gym consistently, and getting a lot stronger.
2. Structuring a fat loss diet that is healthy, reasonable and not extreme.

Once you reach a weight that you can live with, assess your physique. Then, at this time, you may benefit from a long-term lean bulk.

***Internet guru (so and so) says that Workout X or Exercise Y is the best ever/worst ever. Should I believe him?***

Fringe or extreme opinions should be taken with a grain of salt.

95% of successful lifters are doing about the same thing in the gym, just in a different format.

Try things for yourself, but always with an understanding of the norm. If 90% of experienced lifters have squatted for a good majority of their lifting career, what does this tell you? That squatting is probably a good choice.

I've read articles telling lifters to avoid leg curls and upright rows because they are "so dangerous." Countering this, some of the strongest and biggest lifters in the history of the sport used these movements as staples.

If you are unsure about an exercise, take things slowly and play around with it for yourself. When it comes to workouts, avoid the temptation to jump ship on your existing program, and off to some *magic workout*. Remember there are no magic programs. There are reasonable structured plans, and then there are crap workouts.

Any reasonably structured workout system that has a track record of yielding results is worth your time. One is rarely better than another. Your consistency and will to get a lot stronger than you are

now are your best weapons in the gym.

***Do I need lower body work?***

No. You can ignore working half of your body if you want.

Do I advocate looking like a cartoon character with twig legs and calves? No. Do I advocate any form of weakness? No.

If you want to look like a chicken-legged twerp, keep half of your body as weak as a 90 year old nun, and decrease your athletic performance...have at it.

Strong legs will improve your leaping ability, sprinting speed and overall sports performance. In addition, powerful legs are sexy.

# NEED HELP?

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