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Muscle Building Introduction

Bodybuilding is the process of developing muscle fibers through various techniques. It is achieved through muscle conditioning, weight training, increased calorie intake, and resting your body as it repairs and heals itself, before restarting your workout routine.

Workouts are designed to focus on specific muscle categories or groups, and foods are consumed with the intention to build the body's metabolism and increase overall mass.

This section will focus on weight training for body builders. Weight training develops both strength as well as the size of skeletal muscles.

It uses the force of gravity to oppose the force generated by muscles through contraction. Weight training uses a variety of specialized equipment designed to target specific muscle groups and movements.

Some people refer to weight training as strength training. While they are not exactly the same, they are both similar to each other.

Strength training focuses on increasing muscular strength and size. Weight training is one type of strength training using weights as the primary force to build muscle mass.

The basic principles of weight training are pretty much the same as those of strength training.

It involves a manipulation of the numbers of reps, sets, tempo, exercise types, and weight moved to cause desired increases in strength, endurance, size, or shape.

The specific combination of reps, sets, exercises, and weight depends upon the desires of the body builder. Sets with fewer reps can be performed with heavier weights but have a reduced impact on endurance.

Equipment used in weight training includes barbells, dumbbells, pulleys, and stacks in the form of weight machines or the body's own weight as in push-ups and chin-ups. Different weights will give different types of resistance.

Weight training also focuses on form performing the movements with the appropriate muscle groups and not transferring the weight to different body parts in order to move great weight.

If you don't use good form in weight training, you risk muscle injury, which could hinder your overall progress.

Another form of weight training is **resistance training**.

Resistance training involves the use of elastic or hydraulic resistance to contraction rather than gravity.

When your muscles are resisting a weight, the overall tone of that muscle will grow over time.

If you are a beginner at weight training, you should not just “jump right in”. You need to build up your strength and over-working your muscles can cause more harm than good.

Some of your muscles might be naturally stronger than others. Building up slowly allows muscles to develop appropriate strengths relative to each other.

Most gyms offer the services of a personal trainer that comes with the membership fee.

These trainers can suggest specific workouts for you to begin with, however the routines featured within this guide will help you develop a solid workout quickly and easily.

In the next chapter, I will break down each of the common workout positions and exercises so that you can fully understand how they are done, as well as the muscle group they target.

Training Exercises

Let's take a look at just some of the most common exercises and routines so you better understand the different techniques used within weight training and overall fitness.

Here are a few of the more common ones:

Dumbbell Bench Press

Sit on the edge of a flat bench with the dumbbells resting on your knees. In one smooth motion, roll onto your back and bring the dumbbells up to a position slightly outside and above your shoulders. Your palms should be facing forwards.

Bend your elbows at a ninety-degree angle with your upper arms parallel to the ground. Press the weights up over your chest in a triangular motion until they meet above the centerline of your body.

As you lift, concentrate on **keeping the weights balanced and under control.**

Follow the same path downward.

Standing Military Press

For this exercise, you will use a barbell. Stand with your legs about shoulder width apart and lift the barbell to your chest. Lock your legs and hips and keep your elbows in slightly under the bar. Press the bar to arm's length over your head.

Lower the bell to your upper chest or your chin depending on which is more comfortable for you.

This exercise can also be performed with dumbbells or seated on a weight bench.

Lying Tricep Push

Sit on a flat bench holding a curl bar with an overhand grip. Lie back so that the top of your head is even with the end of the weight bench. As you are lying back, extend your arms over your head so that the bar is directly over your eyes.

Keep your elbows tight and your upper arms stationary throughout the exercise.

The biggest key to this exercise is keeping your upper arms in a fixed position.

Slowly lower the bar until it almost touches your forehead. Press the bar back up in a slow, sweeping arc-like motion. At the finish, lock your elbows completely.

Side Lateral Dumbbell Raise

Stand upright with your feet shoulder width apart and your arms at your side. Hold a dumbbell in each hand with your palms turned toward your body.

Keep your arms straight and lift the weights out and up to the sides until they are slightly higher than shoulder level.

Then slowly lower them back down to your side again.

Keep your palms turned downward as you lift the dumbbells so that your shoulders rather than your biceps do the work.

Make sure you are lifting the dumbbells up rather than swinging them up. Don't lean forward while doing this either or you risk injury to your back.

Preacher Curls

This exercise is best done with a special preacher curl bench, but you can do this without it with a little modification.

Sit at the end of the weight bench, and place something such as a firm pillow or a few pillows under your armpits on your lap. Hold the curl bar in your hands with palms facing upward.

Don't hunch over the pillow, sit as straight as you can.

Using a shoulder width grip, grasp the bar in both hands. Curl the bar upward in an arc. Be careful not to swing or rock to get the bar moving. You need to be using your muscles to lift the weight, not momentum. The goal of this exercise is to work the biceps.

Bring the bar up to your chin keeping in mind that the resistance is greatest during the beginning of the lift. Lower the bar slowly working the muscle on the way down as well.

You can also do this with dumbbells or work one arm at a time.

Seated Dumbbell Curl

Sit at the end of a bench with your feet firmly on the floor. Keep your back straight and your head up. Start with the dumbbells at arm's length with your palms facing in. Curl the weight up and twist your wrist once they pass your thighs.

Squeeze your biceps at the top and then slowly lower the weight.

Do not swing the dumbbells down; lower them as you are working those muscles! You can do this standing, but the seated position prevents bad form.

One-Arm Dumbbell Row

Start with your right foot flat on the floor and your left knee resting on a flat bench.

Lean forward so that you're supporting the weight of your upper body with your left arm on the bench. Your back should be flat and almost parallel with the floor.

Reach down and pick up a dumbbell with your right hand. Your left arm should be locked at the elbow so it will support the weight of your upper body.

Before starting, look straight ahead instead of at the floor so you can keep your back straight. Tighten your abs to keep your body from turning to the side as you lift the dumbbell.

Concentrate on pulling your elbow back as far as it can go. The dumbbell should end up roughly parallel with your torso.

After you've rowed the dumbbell up as far as you can slowly lower it back to the starting position. Switch arms after one set.

Dumbbell Shrugs

Stand straight up with your feet at shoulder width. Hold two dumbbells with your arms hanging at your sides.

Droop your shoulders down as far as possible. Raise your shoulders up as far as you can go then slowly return to the starting position.

You can also rotate your shoulders by going up in a circular motion from front to back and then back down again. This can also be done holding a barbell.

Standing Calf Raises

This can be done with a specific machine found in a gym, or adapted for use without the machine. Stand up against a wall with your body facing the wall and your palms down on the wall and your feet flat on the floor.

Keep your body straight and slowly lift up your heels until you are standing on the tips of your toes. Hold the contraction briefly then slowly return to the starting position with your feet flat on the floor.

Crunches

Lie flat on your back with your feet flat on the ground, or resting on a bench with your knees bent at a 90 degree angle. If you are resting your feet on a bench, place them three to four inches apart and point your toes inward so they touch.

Place your hands lightly on either side of your head keeping your elbows in. Don't lock your fingers behind your head! Push the small of your back down in the floor to isolate your abdominal muscles. Begin to roll your shoulders off the floor.

Continue to push down as hard as you can with your lower back.

Your shoulders should come up off the floor only about four inches, and your lower back should remain on the floor. Focus on slow, controlled movement - don't cheat yourself by using momentum!

Dumbbell Hammer Curls

With a dumbbell in each hand, stand with your arms hanging at your sides, and palms are facing each other. Keep your elbows locked into your sides. Your upper body and elbows should remain in the same place during the whole lift.

Keep your palms facing each other, curl the weight in your right hand up in a semi-circle toward your right shoulder. Squeeze the biceps hard at the top of the lift and then slowly lower.

Do not turn your wrists during this lift! You can also do one arm at a time and/or alternate.

Incline Dumbbell Press

Sit on the edge of an incline bench set at about a 45-degree angle. Pick up a dumbbell in each hand and place them on your thighs.

Then, one at a time, raise them up to your shoulder level while you press your back and shoulders firmly against the bench.

Press the weights back up to a point over your upper chest, with your palms facing forward. Lower the weights slowly. Inhale as you lower the weights and exhale as you lift.

Barbell Squat

Rest a barbell on the upper portion of your back, not your neck. Firmly grip the bar with your hands almost twice your shoulder width apart.

Position your feet about shoulder width apart and your toes should be pointing just a little outward with your knees in the same direction.

Keep your back as straight as possible and your chin up, bend your knees and slowly lower your hips straight down until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Once you reach the bottom position, press the weight up back to the starting position.

Don't lean over or curve your back forward! You can use a belt to help reduce the chance of lower back injury. You can put your heels on a 1 inch block to further work the quads. You can also use a wider stance to work the inner quads even more.

Upright Barbell Row

Stand upright and grasp a barbell with your hands about shoulder width apart. Let the bar hang straight down in front of you. Keep your body and wrists straight. Pull the bar straight up towards your chin, keeping it close to your body.

Concentrate on either pulling with your traps or the front of your shoulders, depending on what you want to work most. Lower slowly to the starting position. Don't cheat by leaning forward or backward. Don't swing!

Front Dumbbell Raise

Stand with a dumbbell in each hand, palms facing backward. Your feet should be about shoulder width apart. Maintain a slight bend in your elbows throughout the exercise so that your arms are straight, but not quite locked.

Lift the weight in your left hand in front of you in a wide arc until it is slightly higher than shoulder height.

With a smooth, controlled motion, lower the weight while simultaneously lifting the weight in your right hand, so that both arms are in motion at the same time.

Do not cheat by swinging or leaning backwards! This lift can also be done with two dumbbells at the same time or a barbell.

Stiff Leg Barbell

Place a barbell on your shoulders. Keep your head up and your back completely straight.

Bend at your waist with your legs locked, until your upper body is parallel to the floor.

Return slowly to the upper position. This can also be done with your knees slightly bent.

One Leg Barbell Squat

Use a 12 to 18 inch box or bench for this exercise - the higher the box, the more difficult the exercise. Place a barbell behind your head at the base of your neck. Grasp the barbell with both hands with a wider than shoulder width grip.

Stand approximately 2 to 3 feet from the box and turn so that the box is directly behind you. Reach one foot back and place your toe on the box.

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