

# START YOUR STRENGTH PROGRAM RIGHT

There are a myriad of strength training programs and exercises out there. However, the single, most important factor in a great strength program is the REPETITION. You may have the most cleverly designed program since the invention of the wheel, but it is how you perform your reps that will make or break you – literally. With great reps you will develop with *consistency*. Without them, you may make gains at first. But as the weight gets heavier, you'll find that the muscles and connective tissues haven't really adapted (gotten stronger) – since the weight has been bounced, jerked, or squirmed up. At that point, plateau's and injuries come into play.

A great rep means that the lifting technique is perfect, the speed of the bar is appropriate for the lift, each one looks exactly alike, and most importantly that you control the weight (and not the other way around).

Technique will vary from exercise to exercise, but in general no bouncing, or squirming! There are 3 phases of a rep and 3 major categories to each rep.

The phases are:

1. *concentric* – lifting the weight, or the “**explosion**”
2. *static* – the pause at the top of the movement, or the “**stick**”
3. *eccentric* – lowering the weight, or the “**negative**”

The 3 categories are:

1. *Rep Speed* – generally, the concentric should be fast and explosive yet under control, usually about 1-2 seconds in duration. The static should be a dead stop at the top of the movement, count “one thousand one” in your head. The eccentric should be a smooth lowering of the weight usually about 3-5 seconds. In this fashion, each rep should take between 5-8 seconds to complete. Note that for some exercises, your rep speed will vary. For instance, in the Olympic lifts there is no eccentric phase due to the nature of the movement and the speed of the bar is faster than 1-2 seconds. A negative only chin-up contains only the eccentric phase and should take around 8 seconds. Where as a Bench Press will contain all 3 phases at the speed described above.

2. *Rep Range* – the number of reps that make up a set. The important thing to remember here is time under tension. How many seconds do you want the muscle to work for? Generally, low reps (1-5) with high weight = explosiveness and strength, while mid range reps (6-12) = muscular growth, and high reps (12+) = muscular endurance. It is important to classify what your fitness needs are at a particular point in your training calendar and train specifically for those needs – strength is specific!

3. *Intensity* – how hard you work on a given set. Here is the Raider exertion scale:

- *Submax* – you can get 2-3 more but you stop at the indicated rep goal
- *Max effort +0* – all out effort, such that you do not reach muscular failure but you know that you cannot get another rep on your own
- *Max effort +1* – all out effort, you reach muscular failure and your partner has to help you finish the last rep
- *Max effort +2* – all out effort, you reach muscular failure, your partner has to help you finish the last rep, then you perform an extra rep with emphasis on the eccentric phase.

*Submax* is great for circuit training, when you are trying to establish a fitness base, when you are trying to de-load, or certain lifts in-season. *Submax* requires the least amount of recovery time between workouts. *Max effort +0* is great once you are in shape and not trying to get sore prior to a competition, yet want to continue to increase strength (in-season). Or, with certain exercises like the squat; where the hardest you want to go is *Max effort +0* for safety sake (It's no fun getting buried under the bar). *Max effort +1* and *+2* will require more recovery time and will make you sore no matter what your level of fitness. By varying the intensities either within workouts or between workouts you can get very specific and maximize training and recovery time according to your needs as an athlete.

Another key point with reps is recording your progress. This is immensely important; it ensures accurate records and helps to ensure better gains. Key points on recording reps:

- Record only reps where the form is PERFECT.
- Record only reps achieve on your own, and without a spot.
- On exercises where you work one side independently from the other, record the weaker side. For example, on a DB Single Arm Row if you get 80lbs x 10 on the left side, and 80lbs x 9 on the right – **record 80lbs x 9** on your work card.
- When you successfully hit your goal – ADD WEIGHT!

FINAL REP

Know your body, pay attention to detail and be accountable!

We will win...