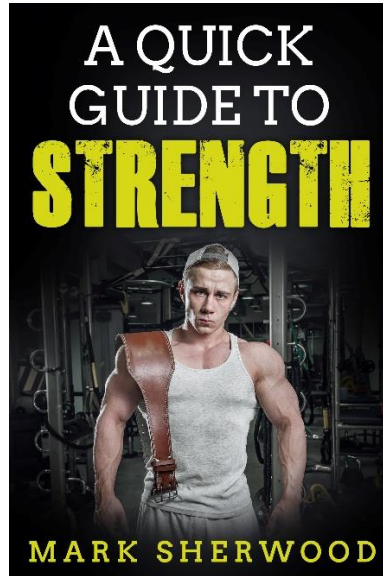


A Quick Guide To Strength



By Mark Sherwood

For more information from Mark, visit

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

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Introduction

Precision: The Master Key To Strength Training Success

If you want to read a long book that goes into elaborate details in regard to how to get stronger, this book is not for you. If you want brief instructions that include the most essential keys for producing steady strength gains, you will find this book to be helpful.

After decades of using tons of different training methods, I have found one key to be more important than any other; that key is precision. If you provide the precise conditions that your body is looking for to gain strength, your training will work. If you violate the precise conditions that your body is looking for to gain strength by training too hard or not hard enough, your training will be compromised with sub-par results.

Precision is based on utilizing methods that help you to train according to the strength specific capacities of your own body. Your body also has a precise goal that it is trying to accomplish when it gains strength and you must learn to train in agreement with the goal that your body is trying to achieve.

Although I believe that training with precision is the single most important key to strength training success, there are five keys that work together to make up the master key of precision training. These five keys are the basis of this book and they are stated below:

1. Pick the best exercises for building overall strength
2. Select the right mix of weights for a workout
3. Be precise in regard to how hard to push yourself when working out.
4. Train in agreement with the main goal that your body has for gaining strength.
5. Add the right amount of weight at the right time.

Instead of going into great detail about each key to success, one of my goals is to keep the explanations as simple as possible without compromising when it comes to the most pertinent instruction that is necessary for your success. I've already said enough. It's time to move onto the first chapter of the book.

Key #1

Choose the Most Effective Exercises for Building Strength



The best exercises for building strength are those that utilize the collective effort of the biggest strongest muscles of the body. Why? Because these muscles have the greatest capacity for increasing in strength. The three muscle groups with the greatest capacity for strength gains consist of:

1. **Chest** muscles (or pectorals)
2. **Back** muscles
3. **Glutes and leg muscles** (quadriceps and hamstrings)

These three muscle groups are often assisted by smaller muscle groups in your arms, shoulders, and core when performing the basic lifts that are recommended in this section. Even though the muscles that assist the bigger muscles are smaller, they also have a substantial capacity for strength gains.

Exercising the strongest muscles of your body is as simple as doing exercises that require pushing, pulling, bending, straightening, and squatting motions. These motions can be accomplished by doing basic barbell exercises which include:

1. Bench Press (or chest press if using machines)
2. Barbell rows (or pulley rows or seated rowing machine if using machines)

3. Squats (or leg presses if using machines)

4. Deadlifts

You can include a huge variety of exercises if you want to, but the vast majority of your improvement is going to come from doing the basic exercises listed. Let me assure you that some of the strongest men to walk the earth have achieved their strength by simply doing squats, deadlifts, and the bench press. If you learn how to do these exercises with good form, and train according to your own physiological strength capacities, the basic exercises are unparalleled for producing strength gains. The next section explains how to do these exercises.

How to Perform Exercises

Some of you who are reading this section may already have a great deal of weight training experience. If this is true, and you have already perfected the proper form needed for the exercises listed, you can move on to the next chapter. If not, then please understand that the better you learn how to perform basic strength training exercises, the better you will gain strength, and you should pay close attention to this chapter.

The advantage to excellent exercise technique is that it positions your body parts for maximum leverage which helps you to lift more weight. It also balances the lifting stress among the working muscles in order to prevent one muscle group from overworking while another muscle group fails to contribute its share to the lift. Perhaps the most important thing is that good exercise technique helps prevent injuries.

The basic exercises that help you gain strength are pictured one at a time. The pictures are accompanied by instructions that explain how to perform each exercise correctly.

Bench Press



Emphasis: Chest (Pectoral) Muscles, Triceps, and front Deltoids

Exercise Instructions:

1. Position yourself on your back on a bench press bench.
2. Use an overhand grip to grasp the bar with your hands a little wider than shoulder width apart.
3. Take the barbell that is on the bench press rack and push it up to arm's length above your chest.
4. Carefully lower the bar down until it is touching your lower chest.
5. Push the bar straight up from your chest to arm's length.
6. Repeat until you reach the desired number of reps and carefully put the bar back on the bench press rack that supports the barbell.

Variations

1. A wider grip with elbows wide to the side during the lift will emphasize the outer chest muscles. Caution, a wide grip with elbows wide to the side can be stressful to the shoulder joint if done too often or with weights that are too heavy.
2. A close grip will emphasize the triceps muscles. Keeping the elbows in close to the body will emphasize the inner triceps on the back of your arms and the front deltoid muscles of the shoulders. Flaring the elbows out to the side while using a close grip will emphasize the outer triceps muscles of the arms.
3. When using a chest press machine, the form is generally similar to the bench press in terms of hand placement and the lifting motion, but many machines require a sitting position instead of a flat lying position for the chest press.

Squats



Upper leg muscles: (quadriceps and hamstrings) glutes, and lower back

Exercise Instructions:

1. In order to use sufficient weight for the barbell squat, you need a squat rack that will hold the barbell just below shoulder level.
2. Position your shoulders under the bar so that the bar will rest across the back of your shoulders as shown in the picture. Push your upper traps and shoulders up into the bar to lift the bar off the squat stands, take two steps back, and set up in a standing position with your feet about shoulder width apart.
3. Keeping your back straight, take a deep breath and squat down until your thighs are parallel with the floor and return to a standing position. Repeat the exercise motion until the desired number of repetitions have been completed.

Tips and Considerations

The ratio between body parts can have a huge effect on your how you squat. Lifters who possess short legs and a long upper body will generally find it easy to squat in an upright position. In contrast, someone with long legs, a long femur (upper leg), and a short upper body will tend to bend over much more. They will also be forced to allow their behind to stick out behind them more in order to keep their balance. A person with very long legs may find that a wide stance is the only way to stay in a fairly upright position with their upper body when squatting. Each person will have to experiment to find a way of squatting that is comfortable for them. If squatting seems very awkward for you, you may need to get help from an experienced lifter, or a coach who understands your body structure and personal needs.

Deadlifts



Emphasis: Thighs, Gluteus and Back

Exercise Instructions:

1. Stand just behind a barbell with feet a little less than shoulder width apart.
2. Bend over forward at the waist while keeping your back straight. Also bend your knees while reaching down to grasp the bar.
3. Let your behind drift back as you bend over. At the same time, do not let your knees move forward over your toes or the bar. Do your best to keep your knees directly over your ankles so that your shins are straight up and down instead of slanting forward at the start of the lift.
4. Grasp the bar with your hands about shoulder width apart using an overhand grip with one hand, and an underhand grip with the other hand.
5. While keeping your back straight, pull upward on the bar while straightening into a standing position with the bar hanging down in front of your thighs.
6. Carefully lower the bar and repeat the lifting motion until the designated amount of repetitions have been completed.

Variations:

If you don't have a squat rack, this exercise can be done by going into a full squat position to begin the dead lift and then lifting the bar into a standing position. Use a wider stance by placing your feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart if you choose this method.

Barbell Rows



Muscles of Emphasis: Back, Biceps, and Rear Deltoids

Exercise Instructions:

1. While keeping your back straight (do not round your back), bend over a barbell that is on the ground and grasp it using an overhand grip with hands spaced about shoulder width apart.
2. While maintaining a bent over position, pull the barbell up until it touches the middle of your waist.
3. While maintaining a bent over position, lower the bar carefully to arm's length.
4. Repeat this motion until you have reached the desired number of repetitions.
5. Keep your back stable during the exercise; be careful not to use your back to jerk the weight up.

Pulley Rows



Muscles of Emphasis: Back, Biceps, and Rear Deltoids

Exercise Instructions

1. Not all equipment for seated pulley rows is the same. The essential concept is to face a pulley device and sit down close enough to grasp the handle (preferably a v-bar handle) at the end of the pulley.
2. Legs should be slightly bent and positioned forward in front of the body with the feet placed forward on the foot platform or crossbar if it is available on the pulley device.
3. Make sure your upper body is positioned upright with the back straight and chest high.
4. Reach forward with both hands to grasp the handle at the end of the pulley.
5. Pull the handle towards your body until it touches the upper abdomen area.
6. Squeeze your shoulder blades together as you pull the handle into your body.
7. Lower the weight by returning your hands and arms to the starting position in front of your body.
8. Repeat pulling the handle into your body and returning it to the starting position for the desired number of repetitions.

For Those Who are New to Weight Training

If you are new to these weight training exercises, it is best to learn the lifts with light weights that are easy to lift before attempting to use weights that are challenging for you to lift. I suggest starting out with an empty unloaded barbell (or very light weight if using a machine) and striving to do each exercise with the best form possible. Do not be insulted by using light weights as many of the strongest men in the world begin each workout with an empty bar to rehearse perfect form before adding weight. You can start by lifting the unloaded barbell ten times in a row before putting it down to take a rest. This would be referred to as doing one set of ten repetitions.

Lifting Speed

When you are first learning an exercise, each repetition should take two to three seconds to perform, and a set of all ten reps should take twenty to thirty seconds to perform, although squats and deadlifts may take a little longer. As you advance, your reps may become faster and only take one and a half to two seconds to perform, but this should never happen at the expense of using good form.

Add Weight to Each Set

After getting the feel of an exercise with an empty bar, you can keep adding five to ten pounds from one set to the next while doing ten repetitions. Continue to add weight only as long as you are able to easily balance the weight and keep it under control while using excellent exercise form. If you reach a weight that causes you to start straining to do ten reps, or the lifting motion feels jerky and off balance, reduce the weight until you can perform the exercise with a smooth even rep pace and good form. Do not do any more than four sets of ten reps for each exercise in your first workout or you may be excessively sore in the days to follow.

Learn Your Strength Level for a 10 Rep Set

Take as many workouts as necessary to learn how to do each exercise with excellent form while using light weights. Once this has been accomplished, your next goal should be to take as many workouts as necessary to find the maximum amount of weight that you can use while maintaining a steady even rep pace with good form for all ten reps.

Warm up With Light Weights and Easy Sets

Before using a challenging weight for ten reps, make sure to do two to three easy warm up sets for ten reps with light weights for the exercise that you doing. After your warm up sets, add enough weight so that it challenges you to perform ten reps.

Train Don't Strain

When using a weight that makes it challenging to perform ten reps, be especially aware of the final reps of the set. If you find that the end of the set is getting harder and harder to the point where you are forced to slow down your rep pace before you reach ten reps, then the weight is too heavy. Do not push yourself to the point where you are forced to struggle with slow strenuous reps at the end of the set.

Maintain a Steady Even Rep Pace for Each Entire Set

Pushing to the point of using slow strenuous reps at the end of a set is not a good long term strategy for gaining strength. It may help you gain strength at first, but it often backfires when you do it over and over again over a long period of time. Your goal is **not** to use the heaviest weight possible for ten reps, but to use as much weight as possible while maintaining a steady even rep pace for all ten reps. If your reps start to slow down at the end of the set, take enough weight off to be able to perform all ten reps using a steady even rep pace.

Once you have learned how much weight you can use for ten even paced reps for each exercise, choose three exercises per workout consisting of:

1. The bench press (or chest press if using machines)
2. A rowing motion (either barbell rows, pulley rows, or seated machine rows).
3. Either squats or deadlifts (You can substitute with leg presses if using machines).

Each exercise should be done for three sets of ten reps. Do the workout every other day (i.e. three times per week) for six weeks to prepare yourself for future workouts when you will be using heavier weights. The heavier workouts will be explained in the section that addresses Key #3.

Key #2

Use the Right Mix of Weights for Your Workouts



The ability to gain strength is augmented by the use of the right amount of weight; and more specifically, the right mix of different weights. Why different weights? Because different weights provide different types of stimulation that contribute to strength gains.

Single Reps

Very heavy weights for **single reps** contribute to strength gains but they don't stimulate as much muscle growth as five reps.

Five Reps

Weights that permit **five reps** are also very good for strength gains and they provide extra training volume that contributes to added muscle growth. Added muscle growth is one of the factors that contributes to strength gains.

Twelve Reps

Lighter weights that permit **twelve reps** also contribute to muscle growth by causing the accumulation of lactic acid and the release of growth hormone. In addition, the higher reps will cause an increase of

blood flow to the muscles, (known as a pump), and stimulate your metabolism and appetite, which will enhance your ability to gain muscle and strength.

Since different amounts of weight trigger different physiological responses that work together to maximize strength gains, I recommend workouts that include weights that correspond to the three following rep ranges when performing sets of an exercise:

1. Heavy single reps
2. Five reps
3. Twelve reps

Key #3

Learn Precisely How Hard to Push Yourself



The workouts recommended in this book consist of sets of five reps, twelve reps, and single reps. In order for these rep ranges to work, they must be done with a precise amount of effort. I can't overemphasize the magnitude of how important this key is. Training too hard can sabotage all of the hard work that you invest into your workouts, and so can training too easy. For consistent strength gains, you must find the right level of training effort.

Since this book is focused on the "how to" aspect of strength training, I will not go into the details of why it is absolutely imperative that you train with precision in regard to the right level of effort. However, if you want to know the details of why this is so important, I have written three free books that explain the physiology and reasoning behind it. These three books include:

Overcoming Strength Training Plateaus

Strength Training Thresholds: The Key to Consistent Strength Gains

Strength Training Capacity: An Individualized Guide to How Many Sets

These books can be found on the internet when you go to <http://www.precisionpointtraining.com/>. The bottom line is that learning to train with the right level of effort leads to long term success, whereas

overtraining and undertraining often lead to a never ending sticking point (or training plateau). This is unfortunate when it occurs because it causes strength gains to cease in spite of consistent training.

Strong Lifting vs. Weak Lifting

Training with the right level of effort is based on pushing to the capacity of what I refer to as strong lifting. There are three types of strong lifting. If you surpass your capacity for any type of strong lifting, you will transition over to weak lifting. The three types of strong lifting that are critical to your success consist of:

1. Strong reps
2. Strong sets
3. A strong lifting motion.

Each of these three aspects of strong lifting will be explained one at a time.

Strong Reps

Strong reps are based on your ability to apply near maximum force, speed, and strength into a rep. Fatigue will hinder this ability and cause weak reps. Weak reps lack force, speed, and strength, and they may consist of longer pauses between reps than normal. When performing a set of an exercise, **strong reps are being done as long as you have the ability to maintain a steady even pace from one rep to the next.** If you exceed your ability to perform strong reps at a steady pace, you will reach a point of fatigue where your rep pace will start to slow down. The slower reps that occur at the end of a set are weak reps. Don't do weak reps as they can hinder long term progress.

Your Last Set of An Exercise Should be for 12 Reps

Always finish each exercise with one set of 12 reps. Never do the set of 12 reps before using heavier weights with five reps or one rep, and only do one set of 12 reps for each exercise, never more. More than one set of 12 reps for each exercise can lead to an endurance adaptation at the expense of a strength adaptation.

The sets of five reps and twelve reps are the foundation of your training and you should do sets of five reps and twelve reps for all three exercises that you do in each workout. You may also add heavy single reps for each exercise once per week, but you should only do single reps within the context of a strong lifting motion. More explanation is needed.

A Strong Lifting Motion for Single Reps

A strong lifting motion consists of **a smooth nonstop lift with perfect form.** When doing heavy single reps, if the weight is so heavy that it causes you to pause or slow down at some point during the lifting motion, the weight is too heavy. Reduce the weight to the point where a smooth nonstop lifting motion can be performed.

By limiting the amount of weight you lift to your ability to stay within the boundaries of a strong lifting motion and perfect form, you will decrease the risk of injury and avoid nervous system burnout from

lifting too heavy. **Heavy singles that are done with a strong lifting motion can be done once per week for the bench press, squat, and deadlift. However, I don't recommend heavy single reps for bent over barbell rows or seated pulley rows. Just stick with five reps and twelve reps for these exercises.**

Strong Sets

A final aspect of strong lifting is to perform strong sets. **As long as you are at full strength while repeating sets of an exercise, you are doing strong sets.** If you repeat sets to the point where you exceed your capacity for strong sets, you will begin to weaken due to fatigue. Any time you can no longer do as many reps as normal with a given weight, you are in a weakened state. **If you are not at full strength when performing a set, you are doing a weak set instead of a strong set.** Do as many strong sets as your personal capacity will allow, but avoid doing weak sets.

Individualizing Your Training

Assigning the same predetermined number of sets to everyone who engages in weight training does not take into account individual capacities. The number of sets that each person should perform should be based on their own capacity for how many sets they can perform at full strength. Some people may only be able to perform two work sets, and some may be able to perform up to four or more. Each person should base the number of work sets that they do on their own capacity to repeat sets as long as they can remain at full strength.

Workouts

At this point, the information given will be based on the assumption that you have already been working out for at least six weeks and are healthy and injury free. If this is true of you, then you are ready for the next part of this section in which two workouts will be listed.

The first workout will include some warm up sets followed by work sets consisting of five reps and twelve reps.

The second workout will also be based on sets consisting of five reps and twelve reps, but will include some heavy single rep training.

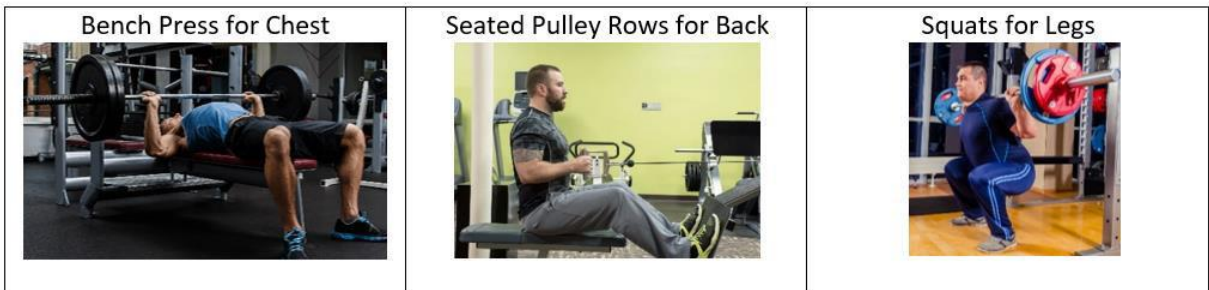
Once you have tried these workouts, you can make adjustments if necessary by doing more or less sets based on your personal capacity for how many sets you can repeat at full strength. The following section contains the instructions for these two workouts.

Workout 1

6 Sets per Exercise

Choose three of the following exercises for your workout:

1. Bench press (or chest press if you are using machines)
2. Squats, or leg press, or deadlifts (choose just one exercise)
3. Barbell rows or pulley rows (choose one or the other, not both)



Sets 1 through 4 are Warm up Sets:

Do 4 warm up sets for each exercise using the number of reps listed for each set:

Warm up set 1: Do 10 reps. Use a weight that allows 30 reps, but only do 10 reps

Warm up set 2: Do 8 reps. Use a weight that allows 24 reps, but only do 8 reps

Warm up set 3: Do 5 reps. Use a weight that allows 15 reps, but only do 5 reps

Warm up set 4: Do 1 rep. Use a weight that allows 8 reps, but only do 1 rep

Rest 60 to 90 seconds between warm up sets

Sets 5 and 6 are Work Sets:

Use the maximum weight that will allow a steady even rep pace for the number of reps listed:

Set 5: Do 5 strong reps

Set 6: Do 12 strong reps.

Important: Rest 3 to 5 minutes before doing each work set.

Training Frequency: Start by doing this workout three times per week. You can then adjust by doing more or less workouts per week according to what you find works best.

Workout 2

8 Sets for a Chosen Exercise

After doing the 6 set workout for at least one month, you can alter the 6 set workout by adding two more sets to make it an 8 set workout. The 8 set workout looks very similar to the 6 set workout except that you will be doing two extra sets which each consist of heavy single reps. The specifics of the 8 set workout are shown below:

Sets 1 - 5 are Warm up Sets:

Warm up set 1: Do 10 reps. Use a weight that allows 30 reps, but only do 10 reps

Warm up set 2: Do 8 reps. Use a weight that allows 24 reps but only do 8 reps

Warm up set 3: Do 5 reps. Use a weight that allows 15 reps but only do 5 reps

Warm up set 4: Do 1 rep. Use a weight that allows 8 reps but only do 1 rep

Warm up set 5: Do 1 rep. Use a weight that allows 4 reps but only do 1 rep

Rest 60 to 90 seconds between warm up sets.

Sets 6 – 8 are Work Sets:

Use the maximum weight that will allow a strong lifting motion or a steady even rep pace for the number of reps listed:

Set 6: Do 1 heavy rep using a strong lifting motion.

Set 7: Do 5 strong reps

Set 8: Do 12 strong reps.

Important: Rest 3 to 5 minutes before doing each work set.

Training Frequency: Do each exercise three times per week, but only use the 8 set workout once per week for the bench press, and once per week for a leg exercise. All other exercise should consist of 6 sets per exercise.

Go Heavy Once Per Week For Each Exercise

The 8 sets workout should not be done for every exercise in every workout; it should only be done once for the bench press, and once for the squat or deadlift over the course of a week. The rest of your exercise should consist of the 6 sets workout. The way you should work the 8 sets workout into your weekly workout schedule is shown below:

Monday

Bench press: Do 6 Sets

Rowing exercise: Do 6 Sets

Squat or deadlift: Do **8 Sets**

Wednesday

Bench press: Do 6 Sets

Rowing Exercise: Do 6 Sets

Squat or deadlift: Do 6 Sets

Friday

Bench press: Do **8 Sets**

Rowing Exercise: Do 6 Sets

Squat or deadlift: Do 6 Sets

Adjust the Workout to Your Capacity for Strong Sets

Do you have the ability to add sets to the 6 sets and/or 8 sets workouts and stay within your capacity to perform strong sets at full strength? If so, then you can add a set, or sets of 5 reps.

The key to knowing whether or not you are still at full strength is to use your last set of an exercise as a gauge. The last set is always done with 12 reps. You must experiment to know ahead of time the exact weight you can use for 12 strong reps for each exercise. Once you have discovered this, you have the option of adding a set or more to the 6 sets workout or the 8 sets workout. If the added set(s) are within your capacity, all 12 reps of your last set will be strong reps and you can keep doing the added set(s). On the other hand, you may find that the added set(s) cause you to weaken. You will know this has happened if the last rep or two of your last set of 12 reps are slower weaker reps. Weak reps are an indicator that you have surpassed your capacity for strong sets and you need to switch back to doing less sets.

Adding Sets of 5 Reps if Needed

If you do the 6 sets per exercise workout, and you find that you can add a set or more while remaining at full strength for a given exercise, the extra set(s) should consist of 5 reps. Do not do extra sets with 12 reps as it may result in an endurance adaptation at the expense of a strength adaptation.

Your Capacity for Strong Sets May Vary According To the Exercise

The maximum number of sets you can do while remaining at full strength may differ according to which exercise you are doing. Squats and deadlifts can tire you out quickly, and you may find that you can do more sets of the bench press at full strength than you can do for squats, or vice versa. Adjust according to the limit of your own capacity for the amount of sets you can do at full strength.

Start With 3 Workouts per Week and Adjust if Necessary

Once you have individualized a basic workout according to your own capacities, simply repeat it three times per week and adjust by doing more or less workouts if it proves to be beneficial. If you are training within your capacities without exceeding them, the workout should start to feel easier and lighter the more you repeat it. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Key #4

Follow Your Body's Goal For Gaining Strength



Imagine that you have a heavy backpack that you must carry. You quickly grow tired under the load of your backpack and decide to open it up and remove a few objects to lighten the load. You put the backpack on again only to discover that it is still uncomfortably heavy. You try several times to take more out, but you find that every time you take something out to make it lighter, the contents actually gain weight and become heavier. Of course this would never happen, but just imagine for a moment that it really did happen.

Think about what you do if your goal was to make the backpack lighter but your attempts to make it lighter actually made it heavier. Would you keep taking objects out if it kept resulting in a heavier backpack? No, because your goal is to make the backpack lighter, and your efforts keep producing the opposite result. Results that contradict the goal of your efforts will make you want to quit. This same principle applies to the efforts that your body is engaged in.

The whole scenario that I just described actually has a point. It is important to understand that your body has a goal that it is trying to achieve when it gains strength. Unfortunately, many people train in direct violation to this goal and their bodies stop gaining strength.

Strength Gains will Lighten the Same Load

Let me put it like this, your body becomes very uncomfortable when you force it to lift heavy weights. Your body would prefer to lift a lighter weight that is more comfortable to lift. Of course your body can't make the weight you are lifting lighter, but it can make the weight feel lighter. If the weight feels lighter, it will also feel easier and less stressful to lift. How can your body make the weight feel lighter? Simple, by becoming stronger. The stronger you become, the lighter a weight is going to feel when you lift it. If 100 pounds feels heavy for you to lift, it will feel progressively lighter as you become progressively stronger. When this happens, your body is accomplishing its goal of making a heavy object feel as though it is becoming lighter and lighter. The lighter it feels, the easier it is to lift.

While it is wonderful that your body can make a weight feel as though it is becoming lighter as you become stronger, you can sabotage your body's efforts. How? By always immediately adding weight as soon you gain strength. Think about it; your body gains strength so that the given weights you are lifting will feel lighter, but if you immediately add weight as soon as you gain strength, the weights will never feel lighter. It's like the guy who keeps trying to unload his backpack to make it feel lighter, but it gets heavier instead.

In my own case, I had been brain washed with the common weight training mentality that I must push hard to keep adding more and more weight as soon as I gained strength. I kept making my workouts heavier and harder which contradicted my body's goal of trying to make my workouts feel lighter and easier. After being stuck at the same strength level for years, it dawned on me that I was training in contradiction to what my body was trying achieve when it gained strength. I knew I had to change my approach. The first thing I did was to stay within my capacity for strong reps, strong sets, and a strong lifting motion. The second thing I did was to purposely repeat workouts with the same amount of weight and reps so that same workouts felt progressively lighter and easier. This is exactly what my body wanted and it led to strength gains.

My change in training strategy went against everything that I was taught in my early years of weight training. It is quite true that constantly pushing myself to add more weight and reps was an effective strategy when I first began to work out, but it stopped working. I had to change my mentality. My new mindset was to keep using the same weight and reps as long as the weight and reps kept feeling lighter and easier to lift. Do I ever add weight to my lifts? Yes, but that comes second, not first. The first thing is to persist until the same weights and reps feel significantly lighter and easier to lift. How long does this take? The next chapter will address this.

Key # 5

Add the Right Amount of Weight at the Right Time



There is no specified amount of time that every person should use before adding weight to their exercises as this will vary from individual to individual. The basic key for determining when to add weight is to only do so as long as you can maintain a steady even rep pace for all your reps. If you feel the same weight is becoming easier to lift, you can try adding five to ten pounds to each lift. If the added weight forces you to do any weaker slower reps at the end of your sets, then you are not ready to add weight and should keep using the weights and reps you have already been using. However, if you add five or ten pounds and you can maintain a steady even rep pace for all of your reps, you can keep using the added weight.

Is there a normal amount of time it takes before lifters add weight? There are normal ranges, but it depends on your personal ability and how long you have been lifting. Beginners and intermediates usually gain strength quicker and will be able to add weight more often. Those who have been lifting for a long time generally gain slower. I will provide some ranges of time that it may take before five pounds is added to each lift for a beginner, an intermediate, and a lifter who has been lifting for a long time. However, the ranges listed are based on common tendencies, not hard fast rules that neatly apply in every single case.

Beginners with one to five months of lifting:

Add weight every one to four weeks

Intermediates with six to twelve months of lifting:

Add weight every three to six weeks

Lifters with more than a year of continuous training

Add weight every five to twelve weeks

You may find that you can add weight at different intervals according to the lift. For example, you may find that you can add more weight, or add it more often to the squat and deadlift than you can to upper body exercises.

Adding the right amount of weight at the right time is a huge key to success. If you become impatient and add too much weight at once, or you add weight too often, you will begin to exceed your capacities for strong lifting. This will cause you to exert too much effort and it is hard to make consistent long term strength gains if you are not precise about using the right amount of effort. Impatience often surfaces when the rapid strength gains that were made in the early stages of training can no longer be made with consistent training. People often assume that their training isn't working anymore when they reach a point where they can't add weight every week or two. However, it is normal for gains to slow down after several months of training. Do not panic with wild training and don't quit. Be patient and give your workouts time to work.

Final Advice

If you are highly interested in strength training, you will probably search out a vast amount of training information if you haven't already. In the process, you will find training methods that consist of enormous complexity and variety. No doubt, complex training can be used in an effective manner to develop strength, but the complex parts must fit together correctly in order for it to work. If you want to avoid the confusion and pitfalls that often accompany complex training, focus on perfecting the most important keys that make the greatest contribution to success when doing simple workouts. This means to use the right exercises and to train with precision in regard to your training capacities for strong reps, strong sets, and a strong lifting motion. Apply these keys for successful training and simple training will work.

The Importance of the Right Mindset

I must warn you that there are two major psychological reasons why people become impatient with the type of training that I have outlined. The first is that you will be repeating the same workouts with the same weight and reps for a time. In the process of doing so, it feels as though you are not making progress because it seems like you are doing the same thing again and again instead of taking steps to add weight. But remember, you will eventually add weight when the workouts feel light enough and easy enough to do so.

The second reason that people become impatient with this type of training is that they constantly want to go for a rep record or a single rep max record to see evidence of progress. To counter this, you will need to develop a new mindset of what it means to break a record. Instead of breaking a record by constantly pushing to do more than you have done before, the record you should try to break is to develop the ability to lift the same weight with less effort than you ever have before. Each time the workout feels lighter and easier, you are breaking a record for how easily you can do the workout. Break this record first, then you'll be able to add weight.

Are there great lifters who have used simple workouts to become enormously strong? Certainly. Andrey Malanichev, Kirk Karwoski, Mark Challet, and Richard Hawthorne are all examples of lifters who have become exceedingly strong by using simple workouts which are focused on basic exercises. If you do them right, simple workouts will work, and they will keep working. Best of Training to you.

About the Author

Mark Sherwood is a long time fitness enthusiast who has pursued weight training and other fitness activities for over thirty years. His educational and professional background include a B.S. degree as an exercise specialist in physical education from the University of Wisconsin Madison, and positions as a fitness instructor and physical education teacher.

One of Mark's passions is to distinguish between strength training concepts that are consistently effective as opposed to those that are effective for a short time period. Through his education, research, and personal trial and error, he has endeavored to gain the necessary knowledge to share effective training strategies with those who desire to maximize their training results.

Mark resides with his family in Southern California. For more training resources from Mark, you can visit www.precisionpointtraining.com. In addition, you can view more books on strength training that he has authored on the next page.

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