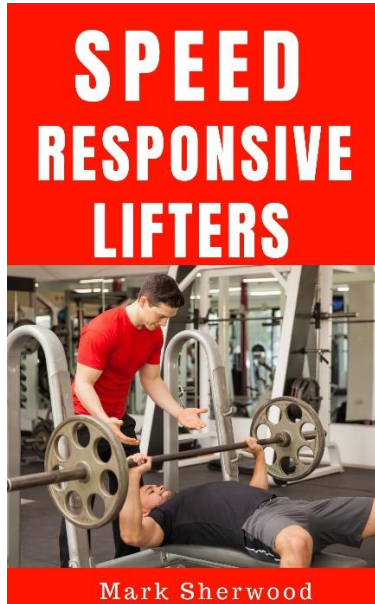


# SPEED RESPONSIVE LIFTERS



Mark Sherwood

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Speed Responsive Lifters

By Mark Sherwood

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## Introduction

The two most common training factors that are used for stimulating strength and muscle size are volume and intensity of effort. High volume is achieved by doing a lot of sets and reps for each body part. High intensity is achieved by either pushing a set for max reps to failure, or by using very heavy loads relative to one's single rep max. A much less recognized training factor is the amount of force and speed imparted into each rep, yet there are some lifters who are highly responsive to this training factor.

Olympic lifters traditionally do a lot of singles. Most do not do a lot of volume by performing a lot of reps within a workout because it is hard to do this when focusing on single reps. At the same time, their workouts are high in lifting speed. You could also say that their workouts often consist of heavy load singles training, but the load can't be so heavy that they are forced to perform their lifts with a slow speed. I have yet to see an Olympic lifter intentionally pull the bar slow. They may do some front squats or back squats at a slower speed when training, but those who focus primarily on the Olympic lifts are focused on fast lifting.

Some Olympic lifters have developed tremendous strength and size with fast lifting. These lifters are speed responsive lifters, which simply means that their muscles respond especially well to explosive lifting. If you happen to be a speed responsive lifter, but you do not include fast lifting within your workouts, you are missing out on one of the types of training that will contribute to your overall strength and size.

As you read through this book, you will find that it provides examples of workouts based on explosive lifting. Once you implement these workouts into your training, you will be able to determine whether or not you are a speed responsive lifter who needs to include explosive lifting into your workouts.

## Chapter 1

### What Is Fast Lifting?

Fast lifting simply means that you lift the bar fast. Some also call it ***explosive lifting*** or explosive reps. This can only be accomplished if you exert maximum force into the bar and lift with as much speed as possible. If you are lifting your body weight, or using resistance training machines, the same rule applies as you must perform each rep fast.

Fast lifting is the exact opposite of how weight training is taught in a lot of fitness centers. The fitness center instructors will often advise their clients to lift the bar slow and to keep the bar under control. This is good advice for the majority of people who train with weights, but it is not optimum for those who respond well to fast lifting. If you include fast lifting in your workouts, lift the weight with as much force as possible, but not at the expense of perfect form. It is possible to get so focused on lifting with speed that you start to ignore proper lifting form. Don't make this mistake.

## Chapter 2

### Exercise Selection: Choose Basic Exercises

Fast lifting works better for some exercises than others. It should be done in conjunction **with basic exercises such as squats, deadlifts, leg presses, and bench presses**. Some lifters may also include speed lifting with pulling exercises such as pulley rows and pullups. However, be cautious about using fast lifting in conjunction with heavy bent over rows. You must keep your form very tight without creating any upward momentum with your lower back when doing fast reps with bent over barbell rows, and I wouldn't do them with more than 70% of your single rep max.

#### **Exercises To Avoid With Fast Lifting**

I do not recommend fast explosive lifting when performing isolation exercises such as curls for biceps, triceps extensions, lateral raises with dumbbells, leg extensions, and leg curls. You can still do these exercises, but I wouldn't use them in conjunction with explosive lifting as most isolation exercises will feel very awkward when you perform each rep as fast as possible.

#### **Use Good Form**

Some lifters ignore good form when performing explosive reps. Do not make this mistake. Keep the bar under control. Learn what each lift feels like when you use light weights and perform the exercise motion slow while using perfect form. Once you have mastered the form with light weights and slow reps, slowly increase the speed of your reps without sacrificing perfect form. You should avoid any twisting or jerking with your body. The bar should always be perfectly even and balanced while lifting, and your body should always be perfectly balanced as well.

## Chapter 3

### Emphasize Lighter Lifting But Include A Little Heavy Lifting

When doing a speed workout, always start with light weights that are about 50% of the maximum weight that you can lift for a single rep. If your best bench press is 200 pounds, start your workout with 100 pounds. If your best squat is 300 pounds, start your workout with 150 pounds or less. Light weights allow you to lift fast. Heavy weights force you to lift slow. Most of your lifting should be done with 50% to 70% of your single rep max if your goal is to lift fast. This will be reflected in the workouts presented in this book.

#### **A Little Heavier Lifting**

You can also include a little bit of lifting with weights that are 75% to 85% of your single rep max, but you will notice that your speed starts to diminish when you get above 70% of your single rep max. Even so, you should try to lift these weights with maximum force and speed. A small amount of heavier lifting will be included in the workouts presented in this book.



## Chapter 4

### Low Reps Per Set

In order to lift with explosive power, your muscles must be at full strength. In contrast, if your muscles are tired and fatigued, your reps will lack explosive power. If you do more than 5 reps per set, fatigue will start to set in and your ability to lift with explosive power will start to diminish. Therefore, you should never do more than 5 reps when using 50% of your single rep max, even though you can do 20 or more reps if you pushed yourself to do as many reps as possible. But remember, your goal is not to do as many reps as possible, your goal is to lift with as much speed as possible. This can only be accomplished if you avoid fatigue by doing no more than 5 reps per set.

While you can do up to 5 reps per set when using 50% of your single rep max, the amount of reps per set should decrease as the weight increases. When you increase the weight to 60% of your single rep max, do not do more than 3 reps per set. When using 70% to 80% of your single rep max, don't do any more than 2 reps per set. When using 85% or more of your single rep max, only do one rep per set.

#### **The CP Energy System**

Explosive lifting is performed by utilizing the creatine phosphate energy system within your muscles. This is also known as the CP system. The creatine phosphate system is able to provide explosive energy to your muscles, but only for brief periods of time. You will find that some of your sets only take a few seconds, depending on whether or not you pause between reps and how fast you can lower the bar while maintaining control of the weight. If your sets take too long, your creatine phosphate system will quickly be compromised and fail to supply the maximum energy that it is capable of releasing. Each set must be brief to train and utilize your CP system properly.

## Chapter 5

### Fast Twitch Fibers

The human body is made up of two different types of fast twitch fibers and is also made up of slow twitch fibers. The ratio of slow twitch fibers to fast twitch fibers will vary from lifter to lifter. Those who possess a high ratio of fast twitch fibers will likely respond better to explosive lifting. However, you won't know if you respond to fast lifting unless you try it.

#### **Different Muscles Have Different Ratios of Fiber Types**

Keep in mind that the ratio of slow twitch fibers to fast twitch fibers may vary from muscle group to muscle group within the same lifter. This being the case, you may find that you respond very well to explosive benching if you have a lot of fast twitch fibers in your triceps, and pectorals. At the same time, you might not get very much out of explosive squatting if you have a higher ratio of slow twitch fibers in your legs. Another lifter may be the opposite and benefit from explosive squatting, but fail to benefit from explosive benching. The only way to know how you will respond is to try explosive lifting with different lifts.

## Chapter 6

### A Basic Speed Workout

The basic speed workouts presented in this book start out with fairly light weights that are only 50% of the maximum weight that you can lift for a single rep of an exercise. Weight is gradually added as the workout continues, but most of the sets and reps are performed with weights that range from 50% to 70% of your single rep max for each exercise. The workouts end with a small amount of reps that are done using 80% to 85% of your single rep max. The process of working up in weight from 50% to 85% of your single rep max constitutes a full workout for each exercise performed. The sets and reps for the basic workout are listed below:

Do the following sets and reps for each exercise performed:

3 sets x 5 reps with 50% of your max

2 sets x 3 reps with 60%

2 sets x 2 reps with 70%

2 sets x 2 reps with 80%

1 set x 1 rep with 85%

You can also do an abbreviated easier version of this workout, and a slightly easier version of this workout by eliminating the heavier weights if you want to just stick with speed lifting and avoid heavy lifting. These two options are listed below as an easy workout and a moderately hard workout:

#### **Easy Workout**

Do the following sets and reps for each exercise performed:

3 sets x 5 reps with 50% of your max

2 sets x 3 reps with 60%

2 sets x 2 reps with 70%

#### **Moderately hard Workout**

Do the following sets and reps for each exercise performed:

3 sets x 5 reps with 50% of your max

2 sets x 3 reps with 60%

2 sets x 2 reps with 70%

2 sets x 2 reps with 80%

## When To Add Weight

One of the possible drawbacks of doing speed workouts with fairly light weights and low reps is that you may find it difficult to know whether or not you are making progress. When going for max reps or a single rep max, it's easy to tell whether or not you are making progress. If you can do more reps than you have ever done before with a given weight, it is obvious that you are improving. Likewise, if you can lift more weight for a single rep than you have ever lifted before, it is obvious that you are improving. However, the only way to determine that you are getting better at your speed workouts is to sense that the weights are feeling lighter and moving faster.

One of the reasons it is good to work up to 85% of your single rep max on a regular basis is that it will help you evaluate your progress. A single rep with 85% of your single rep max is a fairly challenging lift and it will be your slowest lift because of how heavy it is. Since it will be your slowest rep, it is the easiest part of the workout to use for being able to sense when the weight is starting to move faster and easier. When you sense that your single rep with 85% of your max is moving faster and easier on a consistent basis, you can add 5 pounds to your poundages.

## Chapter 7

### Sample Schedules For Speed Workouts

You may wonder how often you should perform speed workouts for each exercise or muscle group. The answer varies according to the recovery rate of each lifter. Most lifters respond best when hitting each muscle group two or three times per week. This being the case, the workouts listed below are designed to be done two to three times per week for each lift.

<b>3 Speed Workouts per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%	2 x 2 80%	2 x 2 80%
1 x 1 85%	1 x 1 85%	1 x 1 85%

If you don't feel as though you are completely recovering between workouts, you can do a full workout on Monday and Friday, and a shorter easier workout on Wednesday. This plan is presented below:

<b>3 Speed workouts per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%		2 x 2 80%
1 x 1 85%		1 x 1 85%

For those who prefer just two workouts per week, you can eliminate Wednesday's workout and just work out on Mondays and Fridays and shown below:

<b>2 Speed workouts per Week for Each Exercise</b>	
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.	
Monday	Friday
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%	2 x 2 80%
1 x 1 85%	1 x 1 85%

## Chapter 8

### High Frequency Lifters

Some lifters can handle more than two or three workouts per week, especially when focusing primarily on speed training. One of the reasons for this is because the weights are fairly light for most of the reps, and fatigue is kept to a minimum within each workout. Some lifters will find that these factors make it easy to recover quickly between workouts. This is one reason why high frequency training is common among Olympic lifters, as many of them do not fatigue themselves by performing sets to failure, nor do they do a lot of total reps per workout.

If you happen to find that you have no problems recovering from three workouts per week, you can experiment with high frequency training. When doing high frequency training, you probably will not be able to do a full workout every day. Most high frequency lifters will need to vary the difficulty of each workout. This being the case, the weekly schedules presented below will consist of workouts based on three different levels of difficulty including:

1. Workouts that are short and fairly easy
2. Workouts that are moderate in length and are moderately difficult
3. Full length workouts that are challenging

As you look at the schedules on the next page, you will notice that some schedules are made up of four workouts per week, some are made up of five workouts per week, and some are made up of six workouts per week. You will also notice that the difficulty of the workouts is varied throughout the week.

If you are considering the high frequency option, I recommend that you start with the four day option, and progress to the five and six day options if you want to try more days per week. If the high frequency option delivers inferior results compared to training two or three times per week, go back to two or three times per week. If one of the high frequency options proves to be the best form of training for you, stick with the option that works best. The high frequency speed training schedules are listed on the next two pages:

<b>4 Workouts per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Monday and Friday	Tuesday	Thursday
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%	2 x 2 80%	
1 x 1 85%		

<b>5 Days per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Monday and Thursday	Tuesday and Friday	Wednesday
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%	2 x 2 80%	
1 x 1 85%		

<b>5 Days per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Mon – Tue – Wed	Thursday	Saturday
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%		2 x 2 80%
		1 x 1 85%



### 6 Days per Week for Each Exercise

<b>6 Days per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Monday – Wednesday – Friday	Tuesday and Thursday	Saturday
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
	2 x 2 80%	2 x 2 80%
		1 x 1 85%

<b>6 Days per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Monday and Thursday	Tuesday and Friday	Wednesday and Saturday
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%	2 x 2 80%	
1 x 1 85%		

## Chapter 9

### Mixed Workouts

There are many of you who are reading this who will find that you are a speed responsive lifter, but you know you will do even better if you include more intensity and volume into each workout.

<b>2 Workouts per Week for Each Exercise</b>	
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.	
Monday Speed work plus 15 reps	Friday Speed plus a heavy set of 5 reps
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%	2 x 2 80%
1 x 1 85%	1 x 1 85%
1 x 15 60%	1 x 5 80%
Notice that you are doing the same basic speed workout that were presented in the previous chapters, but you are adding on a set of 15 reps to Monday's workouts for extra training volume, and you are adding a heavy set of 5 reps to Friday's workout in order to include some heavy intensity training.	

<b>3 Workouts per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Monday Speed work plus 15 reps	Wednesday Easy Speed Workout	Friday Speed plus a heavy set of 5's
3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%	3 x 5 50%
2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%	2 x 3 60%
2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%	2 x 2 70%
2 x 2 80%		2 x 2 80%
1 x 1 85%		1 x 1 85%
1 x 15 60%		1 x 5 80%
This schedule is the same as the previous schedule except that it includes a light speed workout on Wednesday for those who prefer 3 workouts per week. You can also use each Friday as a loading day in which you load weight to your lifts over the course of 3 weeks as follows: Week 1: Do a heavy set of 5 reps with 80% Week 2: Do a heavy set of 3 reps with 85% Week 3: Do a heavy single with 90% or more Repeat the loading cycle every 3 weeks.		

Another option is to keep doing workouts that are focused only on explosive lifting, but include separate workouts into your schedule that are focused on intensity in which you push closer to max reps. An example of this are presented as you look at the following training schedule.

<b>3 Days per Week for Each Exercise</b>		
Do the following sets and reps for each exercise which should include squats or leg presses, bench press, and a back exercise.		
Monday Speed Day Full Workout	Wednesday Speed Day Easy Workout	Friday Heavy Day
3 x 5 50% 2 x 3 60% 2 x 2 70% 2 x 2 80% 1 x 1 85%	3 x 5 50% 2 x 3 60% 2 x 2 70%	<b>Warm Up Sets</b> 2 x 5 50% 2 x 3 60% 2 x 2 70% <b>Heavy Work Sets</b> 3 x 5 80%
<p>Notice that Monday and Wednesday are pure speed days. Friday may appear to be a speed day because the warm up sets resemble the start of a speed workout. However, the warm up sets are not speed sets, they are simply warm up sets that are followed by three heavy sets of 5 reps.</p> <p>Your heavy day does not have to always consist of 3 sets of 5 reps with heavy weights as this is just an example. Another option would be to use a loading scheme and add weight from week to week on Fridays, or you can do a heavy single rep max with 90% of more every Friday. Always adjust and modify workouts according to what you find works best.</p>		

## Chapter 10

### The Speed Lifting Option

An open-minded lifter will have enough curiosity to try different training methods in order to find out what type of training works best for their own physiology. If you try speed training and it proves beneficial, you can incorporate it into your workouts in order to help you meet your training goals. If speed training does not seem to provide any benefit, there are several other training options that you can turn to in order to determine the type of training that your body responds to.

My hope is that the information in this book brings you a step closer to discovering the type of training that works best for the unique characteristics of your own body. Those who are willing to learn, experiment, and form an accurate interpretation of the results of their training are going to make the greatest progress in the end. Be patient, consistent, and systematic in your efforts, as these are the keys to maximizing your potential. I wish you much success and the best of training.

## 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](http://www.precisionpointtraining.com). In addition, you can view more books on strength training that he has authored on the next page.

## Additional Resources

A Quick Guide To Strength

Beginning Strength Training

Boom!

Bottom Up Loading

Cluster Set Training

Density Responsive Lifters

Developing A Feel For Effective Workouts

Easy Progression With Mini Sets

Force And Frequency Training

Frequency Responsive Lifters

Frequent Training Preparation

Fusion 3: Book 1

Giant Pyramid Training

High Frequency Strength Training

High Volume 5's

Heavy Frequency Training

Individualized Workouts For Hardgainers

Intensity Ratios

Intensity Responsive Lifters

Marker Rep Training

Minimalist Responsive Lifters

Never Miss A Lift

Overcoming Strength Training Plateaus

Phase Potentiation

Quick Workouts For Quick Muscles

Rest-Pause Training

Short Cycle Mastery

Speed Responsive Lifters

Strength Challenge 20/20

Strength Training Capacity

Strength Training Thresholds

Strength To The Max

Strength To The Max And Beyond

The 1 x 100 Challenge

The High Frequency Training Pyramid

The Peak Strength Principle

The Redistribution Principle

12-10-8-6: A Workout Plan For Building Size And Strength