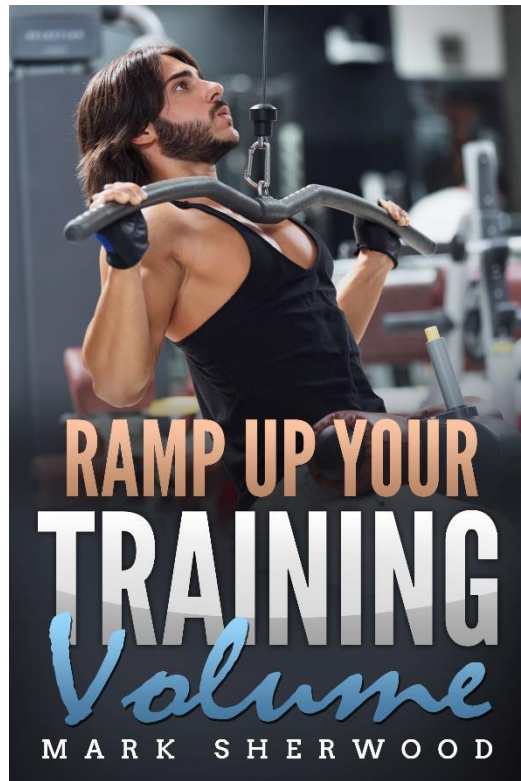


RAMP UP YOUR
TRAINING
Volume

MARK SHERWOOD

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By Mark Sherwood

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: Training Volume

Chapter 2: Basic Concepts For Ramping Up Training Volume

Chapter 3: The One-Week Ramp

Chapter 4: A Two-Week Ramp

Chapter 5: A Three Week Ramp

Chapter 6: Escalating Volume Ramps

Chapter 7: High Volume Ramps

Chapter 8: A Four Week Ramp

Chapter 9: Ramp Up Based On Your Capacity

Chapter 10: Shock Training With Short High Volume Ramps

Chapter 11: Pyramiding Your Poundages

Chapter 12: Ramping Up To High Volume Training

Chapter 13: Volume Ramps With Timed Workouts

Chapter 14: Other Ramping Concepts

Chapter 15: Training Frequency

Chapter 16: Individualize Your Volume Ramps

About The Author

Additional Resources

Introduction

How can you approach your workouts in a progressive manner? The most popular way is simply to increase the weight of your lifts, which is called progressive overload, or “loading.” You will find that there are lifters who deliberately increase other training variables as well. Some lifters gradually increase the number of sets they perform across a given month of training. For example, a lifter may start out with 8 sets at the start of the month and increase by 1 to 2 sets each week until they reach 12 sets at the end of the month. These lifters are progressively increasing their training volume.

Ramping

A term that is sometimes used to address a progressive increase in a specified training variable is the term, “ramping.” Ramping up on training volume is the subject of this book. There are a variety of ways that this can be applied to your training, and several different plans for ramping up on volume will be discussed as you continue to read.

Chapter 1

Training Volume

In order to understand the concept of ramping up on training volume, you must first understand what training volume is. The simplest way to measure it is to count all of the reps for all of the sets performed for a muscle group, and combine the reps into one total. You can also total up the amount of weight used for each rep to determine your total workload for a muscle group. The idea behind volume training is to accumulate a substantial amount of reps for each muscle group.

Volume And Intensity

As you read through this book, you will notice that the weights listed for many of the workouts are somewhat light and only moderately heavy. The reason for this is that lighter weights allow you to perform more reps in order to accumulate more volume. You will also notice that the sets at the start of each workout don't require a high intensity of effort. This will allow you to repeat several sets before you start to grow fatigued.

Repeating too many sets in a state of fatigue causes overtraining. The fatigue should come at the end of the workout as you accumulate volume by repeating sets. In contrast, the fatigue should not come early in the workout from doing high intensity sets that will produce immediate fatigue before you have a chance to repeat more sets. Producing a state of fatigue early in the workout and remaining in a state of fatigue throughout the rest of the workout will only hinder your ability to repeat sets without overtraining.

The Start of the Ramp Is Easier

What will generally happen within a volume ramp is that it will feel pretty easy to perform the prescribed number of sets and reps at the start of the ramp. To put it another way, it won't feel like you are approaching max reps to failure when doing your sets, and the intensity of effort won't feel that high. This is because the beginning of each ramp starts out with a low number of sets.

The End of the Ramp is Harder

As you proceed through the ramp, the number of sets will increase. The more sets you perform for a muscle group, the more fatigue will develop by the time you reach your last set. Because of this, you will come closer to reaching the point of max reps to failure when you do your last set at the end of a ramp.

At this point, you should understand that volume ramps are based on increasing the number of sets as you proceed through the ramp, and you must select the right amount of weight and reps that will allow you to do this without overtraining. There are different strategies that can be used in order to increase the number of sets to form a volume ramp. These strategies will be explained in greater detail as you proceed through the book.

Chapter 2

Basic Concepts For Ramping Up Training Volume

When ramping up on training volume, you increase the number of sets over a designated time span. There are three options for how to do this:

1. Increase the number of sets from workout to workout for a designated number of workouts.
2. Keep the number of sets the same for each workout within the same week, but increase the number of sets from week to week for a designated number of weeks.
3. Increase the number of sets both from workout to workout, and from week to week.

When ramping up on volume by increasing the number of sets from workout to workout, the ramp may only last for three workouts across the time span of a week. In contrast, when increasing the number of sets from week to week, the number of sets are the same within a given week, but the sets increase from week to week. This will create a longer ramp consisting of three to four weeks.

Avoiding Adaptive Resistance

After completing a ramp that increases in volume, you start over with a new volume ramp. The start of a new ramp is generally low in volume in order to allow you to recover from the higher volume that occurred at the end of the previous ramp. The increase and decrease in training volume from ramp to ramp is designed to alternate from low stress at the start of the ramp, to high stress at the end of the ramp. This type of training variability will help you to avoid adaptive resistance which can occur when you constantly train the same way.

When considering whether you prefer a short ramp or a longer ramp, it is best to experiment with ramps that differ in length to see which type of ramp produces the best results. The next several chapters deal with simple ramps of varying lengths, starting with the shortest ramp first, which is a ramp that only takes one week to complete.

Chapter 3

The One-Week Ramp

If you prefer to keep your ramps short, you can ramp up your training volume over the course of a week. The following is an example of a volume ramp consisting of three workouts for each muscle group within the same week. It is based on an increase in training volume by adding two sets per muscle group from workout to workout. When the ramp is complete at the end of each week, you would start over with a new ramp on a weekly basis. An example of a repeatable ramp that lasts one week is presented below:

Workout 1

4 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Workout 2

6 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Workout 3

8 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Chapter 4

A Two-Week Ramp

You can easily stretch the week long ramp listed in the previous chapter into six workouts per muscle group over the course of two weeks. It would be a more gradual ramp than the previous example as you would only add one set to each successive workout, except for workouts 3 and 4 which will be the same workout. This plan is shown as follows:

Workout 1

4 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Workout 2

5 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Workout 3

6 Sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max.

Workout 4

6 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Workout 5

7 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Workout 6

8 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Chapter 5

A Three Week Ramp

If we return our focus to the first ramp which consisted of a ramp of three workouts within the same week, the ramp can be modified by increasing the training volume every week instead of every workout. In other words, instead of doing 4 sets, 6 sets, and 8 sets over the course of three workouts, you would perform 4 sets for each workout in the first week, 6 sets for the second week, and 8 sets for the third week. This is a simple way to convert a ramp that lasts one week into a ramp that lasts three weeks. The three week ramp is presented below:

Week 1

4 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Week 2

6 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Week 3

8 sets x 8 reps for each muscle group. Use 65% of your single rep max

Chapter 6

Escalating Volume Ramps

If you take the concept of ramping up across three workouts within the same week, and combine it with ramping up across three weeks, you have another ramping method referred to as ***escalating volume ramps***. When looking at the ramp presented below, you should notice two things:

First, three workouts are ramped up in volume within the same week,

Second, the workouts are ramped up in volume as you proceed from week to week for three weeks.

This twofold ramping process is illustrated in the escalating volume ramps presented below:

Week 1

Workout 1: 4 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 2: 5 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 3: 6 sets x 8 reps 65%

Week 2

Workout 1: 5 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 2: 6 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 3: 7 sets x 8 reps 65%

Week 3

Workout 1: 6 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 2: 7 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 3: 8 sets x 8 reps 65%

Chapter 7

High Volume Ramps

For those who respond well to a higher volume of training, you can increase from 8 sets per muscle group to 12 sets per muscle group. Those who prefer high volume workouts often train each muscle group only once or twice per week. Those who train each muscle group twice per week could increase the number of sets each workout over the course of four workouts that cover a two week time span as follows:

WEEK 1

Workout 1

8 sets x 10 reps for each muscle group

Workout 2

10 sets x 10 reps for each muscle group

WEEK 2

Workout 3

11 sets x 10 reps for each muscle group

Workout 4

12 sets x 10 reps for each muscle group

Chapter 8

A Four Week Ramp

We can take the same two week ramp that was presented in the last chapter, and stretch it into a four week ramp. Those who prefer to work each muscle group twice per week would do this by increasing the number of sets from week to week instead of from workout to workout. Likewise, those who train each muscle group only once per week would increase the number of sets each week. This would result in the four week ramp listed below:

Week 1

8 sets x 10 reps for each muscle group

Work each muscle group the number of times per week that fits your recovery ability

Week 2

10 sets x 10 reps for each muscle group

Work each muscle group the number of times per week that fits your recovery ability

Week 3

11 sets x 10 reps for each muscle group

Work each muscle group the number of times per week that fits your recovery ability

Week 4

12 sets x 10 reps for each muscle group

Work each muscle group the number of times per week that fits your recovery ability

Chapter 9

Ramp Up Based On Your Capacity

Ramping up on volume will either work or fail based on your ability to individualize it according to your capacities. Ramping does not work by simply following a set of numbers, rather it is a concept that must be individualized to fit your tolerance and capacity for training volume. The information in this chapter is vital for helping you to apply ramping in a productive manner. The danger of ignoring the information in this chapter, is that you will misapply the concept of ramping. This may lead to a bad training experience and cause you to throw your hands up in the air with the conclusion that ramping up on volume is just another worthless idea.

When ramping up on volume, I suggest that you have a good idea of how many sets you can perform at full strength. For example, if you can perform 6 sets per muscle group at full strength when doing sets of 8 reps with 65% of your single rep max, but you start to weaken when you reach your seventh set, your ideal capacity for training at full strength is 6 sets.

Start Slightly Below Your Ideal Capacity

If you design your ramp correctly, you will begin a couple sets below your ability to remain at full strength at the start of the ramp. This means that if your capacity for training at full strength is 6 sets, you would start your ramp a little below 6 sets by only doing 4 sets. The workouts at the start of the ramp should be fairly easy, however, the workouts get harder as you proceed through the ramp.

Finish Slightly Above Your Ideal Capacity

By the time you reach the end of the ramp, you will be doing 8 sets, which will exceed your ideal capacity to remain at full strength for 6 sets. This will cause you to finish in a weakened state for the last couple of sets. The idea is to finish the ramp a little past your capacity to remain at full strength. Notice I said a little beyond your capacity, not excessively beyond your capacity. By pushing a little beyond your ideal capacity, you will be challenging your body to expand its capacity by gaining a little strength in order to handle the total workload easier.

Chapter 10

Shock Training With Short High Volume Ramps

While it is true that you generally have an ideal capacity in terms of how much volume you can tolerate, many lifters can vastly exceed their ideal capacity for a short amount of time without suffering the effects of overtraining. We can use the same example of a lifter whose ideal capacity is 6 sets per muscle group when training over the course of a month. However, this same lifter may benefit from doing approximately twice that much as long as he only does it for a week. His ramp may include three workouts which consist of:

Workout 1: 10 sets x 8 reps with 65%

Workout 2: 12 sets x 8 reps with 65%

Workout 3: 14 sets x 8 reps with 65%

Assuming the lifter's ideal capacity for the number of sets is 6 sets, the ramp listed above would be a form of shock training. Any time you engage in a brief period of shock training, it is important to back off and train within your normal capacity for several weeks before ramping up with shock training again. I would recommend that this type of shock training with a volume ramp only be done once every six weeks or it can backfire. If you prefer doing volume ramps on a regular basis, you can do so, but it should be done with a ramp that fits your capacity. In other words, if your ideal training capacity is 6 sets, you would return to a ramp consisting of 4 sets for your first workout, 6 sets for your second workout, and 8 sets for your third workout each week. The high volume shock ramp would only be done once every six weeks.

Adjusting A Shock Training Ramp

In the example of shock training that lists three workouts consisting of 10 sets, 12 sets, and 14 sets, the shock may be too extreme and backfire. If so, it will be evident by your second or third workout of the week as you will feel weaker and may lose some size. This doesn't mean that you can't do any more shock training ramps in the future, but you may need to adjust it downward in terms of the amount of shock you experience until you find the right amount of sets that will deliver a positive result. For instance, you might be better off doing a ramp consisting of 8 sets, 9 sets, and 10 sets across three workouts. Every lifter will have his or her own sweet spot in terms of the number of sets that works best during a week long ramp of shock training. With this in mind, every lifter will need to go through a process of trial and error while adjusting his or her ramps according to what produces the best result.

Chapter 11

Pyramiding Your Poundages

For those who like higher volume training of eight or more sets per muscle group, it would be wise to consider pyramiding your poundages. In other words, start out with light weight for your first set of an exercise and pyramid up in weight by increasing the poundages from set to set until you reach your heaviest weight over the course of three to five sets.

There are two basic formats for pyramiding your poundages:

The first is simply to increase the weight from set to set while performing the same amount of reps as you proceed from set to set.

The second is to start with higher reps, and to decrease the reps from set to set while increasing the weight for each successive set.

The benefit of pyramiding your poundages is that it allows you to include a lot of volume in your workouts. At the same time, it enables you to work up to a substantial amount of weight and intensity by your last set. For many lifters, this is the best way to include both volume and intensity within the same workout without overtraining. If you watch some professional bodybuilders do their high volume workouts, they pyramid up in weight from set to set while keeping the reps the same each set in order to do a lot of sets without overtraining.

The following workout is an example of a simple 3 set pyramid and it can be used in conjunction with whichever exercise you choose to perform:

Set 1: 8 reps with 45% of your single rep max

Set 2: 8 reps with 65% of your single rep max

Set 3: 8 reps with 75% of your single rep max

You can easily increase the volume of this pyramid by simply adding another set as you work your way up to your heaviest set. The previous pyramid that was listed consisted of 3 sets. The next pyramid is very similar except that a set consisting of 55% is inserted into the 3 set pyramid listed above. The result is the following 4 set pyramid:

Set 1: 8 reps with 45% of your single rep max

Set 2: 8 reps with 55% of your single rep max

Set 3: 8 reps with 65% of your single rep max

Set 4: 8 reps with 75% of your single rep max

Another set consisting of 70% can be added to the 4 set pyramid listed above in order to form the following 5 set pyramid:

Set 1: 8 reps with 45% of your single rep max

Set 2: 8 reps with 55% of your single rep max

Set 3: 8 reps with 65% of your single rep max

Set 4: 8 reps with 70% of your single rep max

Set 5: 8 reps with 75% of your single rep max

A Ramp of 3 Pyramids That Increase In Sets

If you take the three pyramids listed, and use them as three separate workouts, you have a volume ramp in which the number of sets increases from 3 sets at the start of the ramp, to 4 sets in the middle of the ramp, and 5 sets at the end of the ramp.

When you reach the point of doing the 5 set pyramid, you can continue with the ramp by doing two exercises for the same muscle. You would do a 3 set pyramid for each exercise which would form two pyramids. This will result in a workout consisting of a total of 6 sets. If you were to perform squats for your first exercise, and leg presses for your second exercise, the workout would be performed as follows:

1st Exercise Squats

Set 1: 8 reps with 45% of your single rep max

Set 2: 8 reps with 65% of your single rep max

Set 3: 8 reps with 75% of your single rep max

2nd Exercise Leg Presses

Set 1: 8 reps with 45% of your single rep max

Set 2: 8 reps with 65% of your single rep max

Set 3: 8 reps with 75% of your single rep max

If you wanted to, you could continue with this process by doing a 4 set pyramid for squats, and a 3 set pyramid for leg presses for a total of 7 sets in the next workout. If you still wanted to add more sets to the next workout, you would do a 4 set pyramid for both exercises which would result in a total of 8 sets. The example can continue with still another workout consisting of 3 exercises in which a 3 set pyramid is performed for each exercise to reach a total of 9 sets. Hopefully you understand the idea that you can increase the number of sets within a pyramid, and you can add exercises to gradually increase the number of sets performed for a muscle group. By doing this, you will be performing a volume ramp.

Adjustments

You will find that some bodybuilders start out very light on their first set of a pyramid and make big jumps in weight from set to set. Others start out fairly heavy on their first set, but not so heavy that they can't increase their poundages with smaller jumps in weight from set to set before reaching their heaviest set. It's up to you to experiment to find out a comfortable weight to start with for the first set of your pyramid, and to learn how much you want to increase the weight from set to set to reach your heaviest set. If you are ramping up in volume by adding more sets to your pyramid(s), and you reach a point where you are feeling over trained, one option is to work up to the same amount of weight for your heaviest set, but decrease the amount of weight that you have been using for the sets that lead up to your heaviest set. This will help you to avoid overtraining when adding sets.

Another adjustment that you can make to your pyramid is to use the second type of pyramid in which you start with higher reps when using the lighter weights that come at the beginning of the pyramid. As weight is added from set to set, there is a concurrent decrease in reps per set. This type of pyramid is illustrated below:

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Of course, you can add a set to your pyramid to make it a 4 set pyramid, or a 5 set pyramid. These options are presented in the examples below:

4 Sets of 1 exercise per muscle group

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

5 sets of 1 exercise per muscle group

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Set 5: 5 reps with 85%

The last three ramps presented can be done combined to together across three workouts (or three weeks) to create a volume ramp. Notice also that the last set of the pyramid increases in load as sets are added to each pyramid. This particular example illustrates you can ramp up in both volume and load at the same time if you find it to be beneficial.

Chapter 12

Ramping Up To High Volume Training

Some beginning lifters are motivated to work their way up to high volume training. I believe that ramping up in volume with the pyramid method is a good way to work up to high volume training over a long period of time. For example, a beginner who is starting out with 3 sets per muscle group can plan a gradual ramp by using the pyramid method to slowly work his way up to 12 sets per muscle group. The whole ramp would take about 6 months, which seems like a long time, but this is often necessary in order to build up sufficient capacity for high volume training. An example of how to do this is illustrated below:

WEEKS 1 through 3

3 Sets of 1 exercise per muscle group

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

WEEKS 4 through 6

4 Sets of 1 exercise per muscle group

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

WEEKS 7 through 9

5 sets of 1 exercise per muscle group

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Set 5: 5 reps with 85%

WEEKS 10 through 12

3 sets of 2 exercises per muscle group for a total of 6 sets per muscle group

First Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Second Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

WEEKS 13 through 15

Do 7 total sets per muscle group by doing 2 exercises per muscle group as follows:

First Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Second Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

WEEKS 16 through 18

Do 4 sets of 2 exercises for 8 total sets per muscle group as follows:

First Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Second Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

WEEKS 19 through 21

Do 3 sets of 3 exercises for a total of 9 sets per muscle group

First Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Second Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Third Exercise

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

WEEKS 22 through 24

Do 5 sets of 2 exercises for a total of 10 sets per muscle group

Exercise 1

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Set 5: 5 reps with 85%

Exercise 2

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Set 5: 5 reps with 85%

WEEK 25 and future workouts

Do 4 sets of 3 exercises for a total of 12 sets

Exercise 1

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Exercise 2

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Exercise 3

Set 1: 12 reps with 50%

Set 2: 10 reps with 65%

Set 3: 8 reps with 75%

Set 4: 6 reps with 80%

Adjust The Poundages If Needed

As you work your way up in volume, you may reach a certain point in the ramp where you start to feel drained from the consistent increases in volume. Remember, the good thing about pyramid training is that if you are feeling drained from lifting too heavy for too many sets, you can decrease the weight of the sets that lead up to the heaviest set without decreasing the weight of your heaviest set. It is not uncommon for powerlifters and bodybuilders who can lift over 500 pounds to start out with 135 pounds for their first set. This means that many of them start with 25% or less of their single rep max for the first set of a pyramid, and they are often well under 50% for their second set. If you need to start with a very low percentage of your single rep max for the first, second, or even the third set of a pyramid to keep from overtraining, don't hesitate to do so as it is common among elite lifters and bodybuilders.

Identify Your Limit

Another benefit of running a long ramp that gradually increases in volume is that it will help you to find your limit for effective training volume. If your strength and energy begin to wane when you reach a certain number of sets, it's a good indication that you have found your limit for volume in regard to effective training. For example, you may plan to gradually work your way up to 14 sets per muscle group,

but find that when you reach 9 sets, you start to suffer a loss in strength and energy. You can back up to 6 sets and gradually increase the number of sets again in order to give your body more time to adapt to the increase in sets. This may help you to make it past 9 sets while maintaining a positive training experience. However, if you start to lose strength and energy again when you hit 9 sets, you will know that your limit of sets for effective training is somewhere between 6 to 8 sets.

Chapter 13

Volume Ramps With Timed Workouts

There are ways to increase volume other than counting sets. Some lifters prefer to simply get as much volume in as possible within a specified amount of time. When doing a time-based volume ramp, the time period can be increased from workout to workout across three workouts, or from week to week across three weeks. More explanation is needed.

Some lifters set their stop watch for 10 minutes, and count how many reps they can perform for a specified exercise within a 10 minute period. They start out with 5 reps with 70% for their first set, and then repeat sets of 5 reps every 30 to 45 seconds as long as they can complete 5 reps. When they reach the point where it is difficult to complete 5 reps, they switch to a lower number of reps and keep repeating sets until the 10 minute time period is over. While carrying out this procedure, they count the total number of reps performed in 10 minutes. The goal is to improve by doing more reps within 10 minutes. If they can increase their rep total by 6 to 8 reps, they can add 5 pounds.

A lifter who starts with a 10 minute time period for a given exercise can do a second workout for 12 minutes, and a third workout for 14 minutes. If he is doing his workouts correctly, the increase in time for each workout will allow a corresponding increase in training volume for each workout. The increase in volume from workout to workout will create a volume ramp based on increasing time. Of course, you can select whatever time periods that happen to produce the best result for your body. After completing a time-based volume ramp, you can repeat the ramp in order to see if you can improve your rep totals for the time-based workouts.

Chapter 14

Other Ramping Concepts

While the main focus of this book is on volume ramps, it is helpful to know that you can ramp up on other variables such as load and intensity. Not only can you ramp up, but you can also ramp down in regard to different training variables. If we consider this in the context of training volume, some lifters prefer to start out with high volume at the beginning of the ramp, and cut back on the number of sets over the course of the ramp. This would be called ramping down, or a *down ramp*. You can ramp up and ramp down at the same time because one variable can be ramped up while another variable is being ramped down.

If you consider possible training options for your workouts, you can manipulate your ramps and your training variables to facilitate a better response from your body. We will look at a few different ways that you can organize your training ramps in an effective manner.

Light Ramps Followed by Heavy Ramps

Many lifters understand that it is beneficial to follow a period of high-volume training with a decrease in volume and a corresponding increase in weight. This concept can be used in conjunction with ramping by doing a high volume ramp with lighter weights, followed by a lower volume ramp with heavier weights. You can still increase the volume across workouts within the low volume ramp, but the overall volume of the ramp will be lower than the preceding high volume ramp. An example of a lighter high volume ramp that is followed by a heavier low volume ramp is presented below:

Week 1 - Ramp 1: Light Weights High Volume

Workout 1: 5 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 2: 6 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 3: 8 sets x 8 reps 65%

Week 2 - Ramp 2: Heavy Weights Lower Volume

Workout 1: 2 sets x 5 reps 80%

Workout 2: 3 sets x 5 reps 80%

Workout 3: 5 sets x 5 reps 80%

What To Do After A Volume Ramp

Another option is to run a volume ramp the first week, and to follow it the second week with a down ramp that decreases in sets while ramping up with an increase in load. This option is presented below:

Week 1 - Ramp 1: Light Weights High Volume

Workout 1: 5 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 2: 6 sets x 8 reps 65%

Workout 3: 8 sets x 8 reps 65%

Week 2 - Ramp 2: Ramp Down on Volume – Ramp Up On Load

Workout 1: 5 sets x 5 reps 70%

Workout 2: 3 sets x 5 reps 77%

Workout 3: 2 sets x 5 reps 82%

Escalating Down Ramps

Those who prefer down ramps within the same week can still increase the volume from week to week. The number of sets would decrease from workout to workout within a given week, at the same time, the total number of sets will increase from week to week. This strategy is referred to as escalating down ramps. An example is presented in the following three week progression of escalating down ramps:

Week 1

Workout 1: 6 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Workout 2: 5 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Workout 3: 4 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Total sets = 15 sets for week 1

Week 2

Workout 1: 7 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Workout 2: 6 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Workout 3: 4 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Total sets = 17 sets for week 2

Week 3

Workout 1: 8 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Workout 2: 6 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Workout 3: 4 sets x 8 reps with 65% for each exercise

Total sets = 18 sets for week 3

Ramp Down In Volume While Increasing The Load

The ramps listed above can be followed in weeks four, five, and six with down ramps that deescalate in volume while increasing in load as follows:

Week 4

Workout 1: 6 sets x 8 reps with 67% for each exercise

Workout 2: 5 sets x 8 reps with 70% for each exercise

Workout 3: 4 sets x 8 reps with 72% for each exercise

Total sets = 15 sets for week 4

Week 5

Workout 1: 5 sets x 8 reps with 70% for each exercise

Workout 2: 4 sets x 8 reps with 72% for each exercise

Workout 3: 3 sets x 8 reps with 75% for each exercise

Total sets = 12 sets for week 5

Week 6

Workout 1: 4 sets x 8 reps with 72% for each exercise

Workout 2: 3 sets x 8 reps with 75% for each exercise

Workout 3: 2 sets x 8 reps with 77% for each exercise

Total sets = 9 sets for week 6

Why So Many Changes?

Some may wonder what the point is in creating so many changes with ramping up and ramping down while changing the load. Remember that the purpose of ramping is to alternate periods of high stress, medium stress, and low stress. The high stress occurs at the peak of the ramp for the purpose of stimulating a powerful training effect. The high training stress at the end of a ramp is followed by a low training stress at the start of the next ramp. The lower training stress helps to maintain the gains from the high training stress while facilitating recovery. The moderate stress in the middle of the ramp gives your body a chance to transition from the lower training stress to the higher stress that is coming at the end of the ramp.

Chapter 15

Training Frequency

Many of the ramps presented in this book are based on doing three workouts per week for each muscle group. While this is the case, you can use whatever training frequency that corresponds best to your recovery rate. If you prefer to perform two workouts per week for each muscle group because it works better, then you should do so. A ramp consisting of 3 workouts will then last about 10 days instead of one week. Likewise, if you prefer to only do one workout per week for each muscle group, then a ramp of three workouts will take three weeks instead of one week.

Chapter 16

Individualize Your Volume Ramps

The most important thing to understand from the content in this book is how the concept of ramping up on volume works. Once you understand the strategies for ramping up on volume, you can apply them within the context of the number of sets that will fit your capacity. Likewise, you would adjust your training frequency as needed to fit your rate of recovery.

My challenge to you is to take these concepts and apply them to your training in a manner that fits your goals, preferences, and capacities. My hope is that this will improve the quality of your workouts and help you to get stronger. This will take a willingness to go through a process of trial and error while analyzing the results and making adjustments that lead to long term progress. With the right mindset and an attitude of determination, you will be able to do these things and move a step closer to 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. 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

Precision Responsive Lifters

Quick Workouts For Quick Muscles

Ramp Up Your Strength

Ramp Up Your Training Volume

Rest-Pause Training

Self Adjusting Linear Periodization

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

4-Way Loading

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