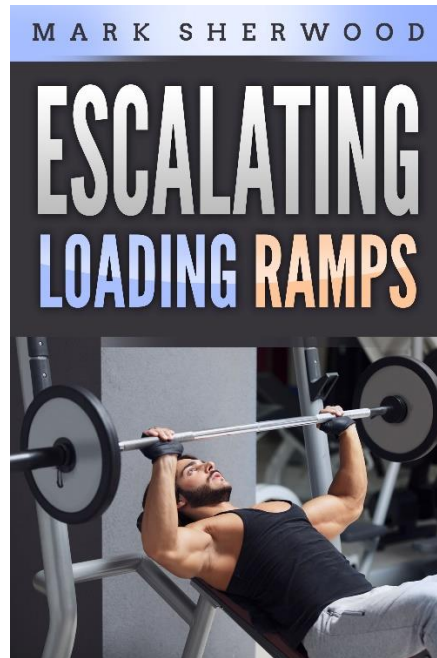


MARK SHERWOOD

ESCALATING LOADING RAMPS



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Escalating Loading Ramps

By Mark Sherwood

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Introduction

A loading ramp consists of a series of workouts in which the weight is increased over a designated time period. Loading ramps can vary in length and be short, medium, or long. When discussing short loading ramps in this book, they will be referred to as mini ramps. The mini loading ramps will only last for a series of three workouts. The weight is increased in each workout of a mini ramp, and the loads of each mini ramp can be ramped up to be slightly heavier than the previous mini ramp. In other words, a series of three workouts forms a mini ramp, and a series of mini ramps are then ramped up to form a longer loading ramp. The whole process is referred to as escalating loading ramps.

The advantage of using just three workouts within each mini ramp is that it provides a balance between volume and load within each mini ramp. Light weights are used in conjunction with higher reps at the start of each mini ramp, and heavier weights are used in conjunction with lower reps at the end of each mini ramp. This allows you to include a substantial amount of both volume and load within a short time period of a week to ten days. Many loading procedures do not do this and have periods within an 8 to 15 week loading process where volume is emphasized at the expense of load at the start of a loading cycle, and load is emphasized at the expense of volume at the end of the cycle. This does not seem to be a problem for some lifters, but others find they need a consistent balance between load and volume within each week or ten day period of a training cycle. One way to solve this problem is to utilize the concept of escalating loading ramps.

If you have failed to see results when using long loading periods in which weight is steadily increased from week to week for 8 to 15 weeks, you may find it beneficial to use the strategy of escalating loading ramps. The goal of this book is to help you understand how to implement this type of training.

Chapter 1

The Basic Concept

The basic idea behind escalating loading ramps can be broken down into two basic concepts:

First, create a short loading ramp in which the weight is increased from workout to workout across three workouts.

Second, increase the weight of your lifts as you proceed from short ramp to short ramp.

Example of A Mini Ramp

If we consider the first concept of creating a short loading ramp, the three workouts listed below would be an example of how to create a mini ramp consisting of three increasingly heavier workouts. The sets, reps, and percentages listed should be performed **for each muscle group** that you will be targeting in your workout:

Workout 1: 3 sets x 12 reps with 65% of your single rep max

Workout 2: 3 sets x 10 reps with 70% of your single rep max

Workout 3: 3 sets x 8 reps with 75% of your single rep max

The Second Mini Ramp

The three workouts that are listed above make up the first mini ramp that would be performed out of a series of mini ramps. The next step is to plan a second mini ramp of three workouts that are slightly heavier than the workouts within the first ramp. This would be done for each muscle group as follows:

Workout 1: 3 sets x 10 reps with 70% of your single rep max

Workout 2: 3 sets x 8 reps with 75% of your single rep max

Workout 3: 3 sets x 6 reps with 80% of your single rep max

You should notice that the poundages ranged from 65% to 75% for the first mini ramp. The weights were then increased to poundages that ranged from 70% to 80% for the second ramp.

Mini Ramps 3, 4, and 5

You can easily create three more mini ramps that each grow successively heavier by doing the following sets reps and percentages for each muscle group as you proceed from workout to workout, and from mini ramp to mini ramp:

Mini Ramp #3

Workout 1: 3 sets x 8 reps with 75% of your single rep max

Workout 2: 3 sets x 6 reps with 80% of your single rep max

Workout 3: 3 sets x 5 reps with 82% of your single rep max

Mini Ramp #4

Workout 1: 3 sets x 6 reps with 80% of your single rep max

Workout 2: 3 sets x 5 reps with 82% of your single rep max

Workout 3: 3 sets x 3 reps with 87% of your single rep max

Mini Ramp #5

Workout 1: 3 sets x 5 reps with 82% of your single rep max

Workout 2: 3 sets x 3 reps with 90% of your single rep max

Workout 3: 1 set x 1 rep. Go for a personal record max with 100% or more

A Full Ramp = 5 Weeks

If you were to perform three workouts per muscle group each week, each mini ramp would only take one week, and the full ramp of escalating mini ramps would take 5 weeks to complete.

A Full Ramp = 7 ½ Weeks

Those who prefer to work each muscle group twice per week would need approximately 10 days to complete each mini ramp. The full ramp of escalating mini ramps would take about seven and one half weeks to complete.

As you proceed to the next page, you will see a table that summarizes the contents of all 5 mini ramps:

5 Escalating Mini Ramps

Perform each workout according to the sets, reps, and percentages listed for each muscle group.
Work each muscle group two or three times per week.

	Mini Ramp 1	Mini Ramp 2	Mini Ramp 3	Mini Ramp 4	Mini Ramp 5
Workout 1	3 x 12 65%	3 x 10 70%	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%
Workout 2	3 x 10 70%	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%	3 x 3 90%
Workout 3	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%	3 x 3 90%	3 x 1 max out

Chapter 2

Training Blocks Within Ramps

You can easily double the length of the 5 week ramp listed in the previous chapter. If you want to double the length of the full ramp, you can do so by maintaining the same basic set and rep scheme for each mini ramp, but instead of doing the sets and reps listed for each mini ramp just once, you would do each combination of sets and reps twice. For example, if the first mini ramp consisted of:

Workout 1: 3 sets x 12 reps with 65%

Workout 2: 3 sets x 10 reps with 70%

Workout 3: 3 sets x 8 reps with 75%

When doing the second mini ramp with the same sets and reps as the first mini ramp, you would increase the weight by 2 to 3 percent for each workout as shown in the example below:

Workout 1: 3 sets x 12 reps with 67%

Workout 2: 3 sets x 10 reps with 73%

Workout 3: 3 sets x 8 reps with 77%

Rep Based Training Blocks

The two mini ramps that are performed with the same amount of sets and reps as one another is called a block. In this case, the block would be labeled as the 12 – 10 – 8 rep block. The next block would consist of 2 mini ramps and would be called the 10 – 8 – 6 rep block because each ramp consists of three workouts that are made up of 10 reps, 8 reps, and 6 reps respectively.

If we were to take this concept and use it by stretching the original 5 mini ramps that were listed into 10 mini ramps consisting of 5 blocks, the whole ramp would be carried out according to the workouts listed on the next page:

5 Blocks and 10 Mini Ramps

Perform each workout according to the sets, reps, and percentages listed for each muscle group.
Work each muscle group two or three times per week.

	Block 1 12 – 10 – 8	Block 2 10 – 8 – 6	Block 3 8 – 6 – 5	Block 4 6 – 5 – 3	Block 5 5 – 3 – 1
	Mini Ramp 1	Mini Ramp 3	Mini Ramp 5	Mini Ramp 7	Mini Ramp 9
Workout 1	3 x 12 65%	3 x 10 70%	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%
Workout 2	3 x 10 70%	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%	3 x 3 90%
Workout 3	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%	3 x 3 90%	3 x 1 95%
	Mini Ramp 2	Mini Ramp 4	Mini Ramp 6	Mini Ramp 8	Mini Ramp 10
Workout 1	3 x 12 67%	3 x 10 72%	3 x 8 77%	3 x 6 82%	3 x 5 85%
Workout 2	3 x 10 72%	3 x 8 77%	3 x 6 82%	3 x 5 85%	3 x 3 92%
Workout 3	3 x 8 77%	3 x 6 82%	3 x 5 85%	3 x 3 92%	3 x 1 max out

Chapter 3

Triple Escalation In Load

The first chapter explained how three workouts can be combined to form a mini ramp, and 5 mini ramps can be combined to form a full ramp. We can take these same 5 mini ramps that were discussed in chapter 1, and reorganize them into three ramps as follows:

Mini ramp 1 + mini ramp 2 + mini ramp 3 = ramp 1

Mini ramp 2 + mini ramp 3 + mini ramp 4 = ramp 2

Mini ramp 3 + mini ramp 4 + mini ramp 5 = ramp 3

A Cycle of Ramps

If you look at the three ramps carefully, you will find that each ramp is slightly heavier than the previous ramp. You can take the three ramps listed above and combine them together to form a cycle of three progressively heavier ramps as follows:

Ramp 1 + ramp 2 + ramp 3 = a cycle of ramps

Triple Escalation

If you carry out the procedure that was outlined above, you have a triple escalation loading process as follows:

1. Three consecutive workouts escalate in load to form a mini ramp.
2. Three consecutive mini ramps escalate in load to form a full ramp.
3. Three full ramps escalate in load to form a cycle of ramps.

The procedure listed above is illustrated in the table presented on the next page:

A Triple Escalation Cycle

3 escalating workouts = 1 mini ramp

3 escalating mini ramps = 1 full ramp

3 escalating full ramps = 1 triple escalation cycle

Full Ramp #1

	Mini Ramp 1	Mini Ramp 2	Mini Ramp 3
Workout 1	3 x 12 65%	3 x 10 70%	3 x 8 75%
Workout 2	3 x 10 70%	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%
Workout 3	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%

After completing the three mini ramps listed above, you have completed the first full ramp and will proceed to ramp number 2 below:

Full Ramp #2

	Mini Ramp 2	Mini Ramp 3	Mini Ramp 4
Workout 1	3 x 10 70%	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%
Workout 2	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%
Workout 3	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%	3 x 3 90%

After completing the three mini ramps listed above that form ramp number 2, you will proceed to ramp number 3 below:

Full Ramp #3

	Mini Ramp 3	Mini Ramp 4	Mini Ramp 5
Workout 1	3 x 8 75%	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%
Workout 2	3 x 6 80%	3 x 5 82%	3 x 3 90%
Workout 3	3 x 5 82%	3 x 3 90%	3 x 1 max out

Chapter 4

Train According To Your Capacities

Setting up a triple escalating training schedule can greatly enhance your training, but it is not the most important training variable. For any program to work, you must do each exercise according to your capacities for volume, intensity, and frequency.

Volume

Training volume refers to the number of sets and reps performed for an exercise or muscle group. If your training volume is too low for your personal physiology, it means that you are training below your capacity and you are not doing enough sets to stimulate strength gains. In contrast, if your training volume is too high, it means that you are exceeding your capacity to recover and are doing too many sets for your personal physiology.

If you look carefully at the workouts outlined in this book, you will notice that three sets are recommended for each muscle group. Many lifters will find that three sets is about right for their capacity, but this is not a rule, rather it is a guideline that works for a lot of lifters. Most lifters are best off if they do two to four work sets for each muscle group. If you find that you are better off doing more than three sets or less than three sets, do what you find works best for each exercise.

You must understand that when it comes to training volume, the ideal is to do enough sets to provide optimum stimulation for strength gains. At the same time, you must avoid doing so many sets that it interferes with the recovery necessary to experience strength gains.

I personally believe that the majority of lifters are best off if they repeat sets as long as the muscle group they are working is at full strength. When you reach a set where the weights become harder to lift, or you can't do as many reps as you could for your previous sets, stop repeating sets for the muscle group being worked. This is not a law that everyone must follow even in cases where something else works better, instead, it is a guideline that will help most lifters dial in to the amount of training volume that matches their capacity for productive training.

Intensity

Training intensity refers to how hard you push yourself relative to the maximum number of reps you can perform within a set. Performing max reps is often called *training to failure*. In contrast, if you stop short of max reps, you have not pushed a set to failure. If you stop one rep short of failure, it is often referred to as leaving a rep in the tank. If you stop two reps short of failure, it is referred to as leaving two reps in the tank, and if you stop three reps short of failure, it is referred to as leaving three reps in the tank. Most of the percentages listed for the workouts in this book are designed to cause a lifter to stop about two reps short of failure.

The ideal amount of intensity for each set is an individual matter. I believe that stopping anywhere from one to three reps short of failure will produce a level of intensity that results in consistent strength gains for most lifters. Constantly pushing every set to failure often leads to overtraining, but there may be some lifters who respond best when pushing all the way to failure. At the same time, there may be others who should never exceed three reps short of failure. Once again, this is an individual matter that each lifter must discover for him or herself through trial and error.

My best results come when I push as set as long as I can maintain a steady even rep pace. I either stop the set after the first rep that starts to slow down, or on the rep before, which is the last rep that I can perform while maintaining a steady even rep pace. This usually results in stopping each set two to three reps short of failure. I may be able to temporarily speed up the strength gains by pushing to failure, but a sticking point will soon follow. The results may come slower from stopping two to three reps short of failure, but the gains will be more consistent over time when considering a long term perspective.

Consider also that you may do best when using different levels of intensity for different workouts. For example, if you are doing a mini ramp consisting of three workouts, you can try stopping three reps short of failure for your first workout, two reps short of failure for your second workout, and one rep short of failure for your third workout. If you find that this combination, or any other combination of workout intensities works better than always training with the same amount of intensity, do what works best.

Frequency

Every lifter should schedule their workouts according to his or her own rate of recovery. Perhaps you respond best when you work each muscle group three times per week, or it may be that you do better when you work each muscle group only twice per week. Most lifters respond best when working each muscle group two or three times per week, but some fit outside the norm and benefit most when working each muscle group four to five times per week, while others fall on the other side of the spectrum and do best when working each muscle group only once per week.

The less often you work out, the longer your mini ramps, full ramps, and cycle of ramps are going to take. Conversely, the more often you work out, the shorter your loading ramps are going to take.

Base Numbers On Your Capacity

When considering the right amount of training in regard to training factors such as volume, intensity, and frequency, the bottom line is to base each training factor on your personal capacities. Lifters often get into trouble when they based all of their numbers off of a generic predetermined program that fails to take individual differences into account. Learn your ideal capacities in terms of the best number of sets, the right intensity, and ideal frequency. If you fail to do this, the programs outlined in this book may fail to work. Conversely, if you will go through a process of trial and error in order to adjust each training factor according to your capacities, you will vastly improve your chances of seeing positive results when using the concept of escalating loading ramps.

Chapter 5

Individualize The Concept

Remember that escalating loading ramps is a concept, not a program with an exact set of numbers that you must follow. You can modify the concepts in this book according to your goals, capacities, and training style. The important thing is to understand that you can combine short term loading periods with longer loading periods, and you can even increase the load of each successive longer loading period. If you want your mini ramps to take two workouts or four workouts, you can make those adjustments. Likewise, if you want to increase or decrease the length of your full ramps or training cycles, you should do so if it proves to work better.

My hope is that the information in this book 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 in order to make 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
Escalating Loading Ramps
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