

Converting The Marker Rep



Mark Sherwood

For more information from the author visit:

http://www.precisionpointtraining.com/

Copyright © 2020 by Mark Sherwood Converting The Marker Rep By Mark Sherwood

The author and publisher of the information in this book are not responsible in any manner for physical harm or damages that may occur in response to following the instructions presented in this material. As with any exercise program, a doctor's approval should be obtained before engaging in exercise.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: Why Your Body Gains Strength

Chapter 2: Strong Reps, Weak Reps, And The Marker Rep

Chapter 3: Converting Weak Reps To Strong Reps

Chapter 4: A Small Change Causes A Big Effect

Chapter 5: Why Allow The Stress To Decrease?

Chapter 6: Identifying The Marker Rep

Chapter 7: Volume And Frequency

Chapter 8: Converting The Marker Rep

About The Author

Additional Resources

Introduction

Many lifters are enamored by the concept of progressive overload which is a great principle when it is working. What happens when it quits working? Then it's time to change the strategy from progressive overload to progressive acclimation by converting the marker rep.

Progressive Acclimation refers to the phenomenon that occurs when you repeat enough workouts until the same amount of weight and reps become easier to lift. Of course, the same amount of weight will only become easier to lift if you gain strength. The key to gaining strength by using the same weight and reps is to be precise in regard to how hard you push each set. This is based on stopping a set when you reach your marker rep. The marker rep occurs at the point in a set where it suddenly becomes more difficult to keep repeating reps.

If you keep stopping your sets at the same marker rep from workout to workout, the sudden increase in difficulty that normally occurs at your marker rep will start to subside. Eventually, the sudden increase in difficulty that occurs at your marker rep will disappear, which means that you have converted your marker rep from a difficult rep, to a rep that is noticeably easier. You will find that the process of acclimating to the weight is most pronounced with the conversion of the marker rep.

The purpose of this book is based on providing you with information that accomplishes two goals:

1. To explain why you gain strength as your body acclimates to the weights and reps you are using.

2. To teach you how to set up your workouts so that a marker rep conversion will take place. This is necessary to make the process of acclimating to the weights as easy as possible.

Why Your Body Gains Strength

People often assume that lifting weights will automatically result in strength gains. If this were true, you would always get stronger every time you did a weight training workout. Most people do start out getting stronger when they begin to train with weights, but then they get stuck and stop gaining strength. This will happen to anyone who lifts weights long enough.

When people get stuck at the same strength level, they can try training longer, they can try training harder, or they can try training more often. Even after trying these strategies, lifters often still fail to gain additional strength. A big reason for this is because they are not training in agreement with the goal that their body is trying to accomplish when it gains strength.

If you begin to lift weights, it will stress your body. Your body will anticipate that you might encounter the same stress again in a future workout. This being the case, your body will want to prepare itself to face the same stress in order to make it easier for you to lift weights in the future. How can your body prepare itself for future workouts? The answer is simple, it can get stronger. If you gain strength, the same weights that you lifted in the last workout, will be easier to lift when you do the next workout.

When You Get Stuck

If you gain strength and increase the weight, your body will try to make it easier for you to lift the weight again by gaining strength again. If you keep adding weight, your body will keep gaining strength to make it easier for you to lift the added weight until you run out of adaptive power. Once the demand of the training stress becomes greater than your supply of adaptive and recovery power, your body will stop gaining strength. At that point, you will need a new strategy. You will need to start training in agreement with your body's goal. Your body's goal is to make it easier for you to lift the same weight. This means you will have to train in a way that allows the same weight to become easier to lift, which is what it means to acclimate to the weight.

A Faulty Mindset

Most lifting strategies are based on constantly pushing yourself to lift more weight or do more reps. This comes from the faulty mindset that your body won't gain strength unless you increase the weight or reps. In contrast, training to acclimate to the weights is based on the mindset that you can get stronger by lifting the same amount of weight and reps.

I must emphasize that you won't gain strength forever by lifting the same amount of weight and reps, but you can get stronger for a time, so why not acclimate to the same amount of weight and reps for a time? This strategy will allow you to train in agreement with what your body wants to accomplish when it gains strength. When your body gains a little strength from acclimating to the same weight and reps, you can add a little weight. When you add a little weight, you must acclimate to the new weight and then add weight again. The process is to acclimate, add, acclimate, add, and to keep on acclimating and adding.

Easier First, Harder Second

Progressive overload is based on the mindset of harder, harder, harder. In contrast, progressive acclimation is based on the mindset of easier first, harder second. If you understand how to design workouts that set your body up to acclimate to the weights, the process of acclimation will be a lot easier. The way to do this is to convert weak reps to strong reps, and more specifically, to convert the marker rep to a strong rep.

Strong Reps, Weak Reps, And The Marker Rep

Strong Reps and Weak Reps

When you push a set to failure by doing as many reps as possible, the beginning and middle of the set will usually consist of **strong reps**. Strong reps are reps that can be repeated using the same rep pace. The end of the set is different because most lifters will reach a point where they can no longer maintain the same rep pace and their rep speed will slow down. These slower reps that occur at the end of a set are called **weak reps**. When pushing to failure for 5 to 12 reps, most lifters will be forced to end the set with 2 to 3 weak reps. The number of weak reps that a lifter can do at the end of a set will often increase when they go into a higher rep range where they are doing sets of 15 reps or more.

The Marker Rep

When acclimating to a specified amount of weight and reps, the goal is to push a set until you reach your first weak rep. This is called the **marker rep** because it marks the first weak rep during the transition from strong reps to weak reps at the end of a set. The marker rep is the point in the set where it takes a sudden increase in effort to keep repeating reps. During the early and middle part of the set, it will only take a little more effort to repeat each successive rep. However, towards the end of the set, the amount of effort it takes to repeat reps suddenly increases when you reach your marker rep.

The marker rep is strategically positioned to allow you to push yourself just hard enough to stimulate strength. At the same time, the marker rep is not so stressful that it causes overtraining. If you stop short of your marker rep when performing a set, the training stimulus will be insufficient to send an urgent signal that tells your body that it needs to adapt to the stress by gaining strength.

You can err on the easy side by not pushing hard enough to reach your marker rep, but you can also err on the difficult side by pushing past your marker rep. When a training stress becomes too severe, the body must make a big adaptation of strength in order for the same training stress to approach a comfortable level. If your body can't make an adaptation that is big enough to ease the discomfort of a high intensity stress, then your body may choose not to adapt at all. This is because if it did adapt to a high intensity stress with a strength gain, it will enable you to use more weight which would stress your body even more. Why would your body enable you to get stronger and use more weight, when it is already overstressed with the amount of weight and reps you are using? The point is that you do need a sufficient amount of training stress without overdoing it with too much training stress. The marker rep will help you to zero in on the right amount of training stress.

Converting Weak Reps To Strong Reps

The marker rep is a weak rep and marks the point in a set where it suddenly requires more effort to keep repeating reps. Your body doesn't like the sudden increase in difficulty of the marker rep, so it will adapt by gaining strength in order to reduce the difficulty of the marker rep. If you gain a small amount of strength, you will be able to do more reps before the set suddenly gets harder. To be more specific, you will be able to perform more strong reps before you start to encounter weak reps which are more strenuous. An example will help to clarify how this works.

We will imagine that you are doing an exercise for 8 reps. When doing the exercise, you can perform 7 strong reps before you hit your first weak rep on your 8th rep. You stop after completing your 8th rep, which is also your marker rep. In this case, the first 7 reps are fairly comfortable, and the 8th rep is the point in the set where the reps suddenly get harder and become more uncomfortable to perform. Stop and think for a moment, if you were to gain more strength, would it increase your ability to do another strong rep? Common sense tells you that it would. Instead of only being able to perform 7 strong reps before it starts to get harder, an increase of strength will give you the ability to do 8 strong reps before it starts to get harder. In the process of this, the marker rep gets converted from being a weak rep to a strong rep. The result is that you are no longer required to strain when you reach your 8th rep.

The Marker Rep Advances to the Next Rep

Hopefully it is clear that gaining strength will give you the ability to perform more reps, and specifically, more strong reps before you encounter weak reps. When you gain the ability to do more strong reps with a marker rep conversion, the marker rep advances to the next rep. This means that if your marker rep initially fell on the 8th rep, an increase in strength will cause your marker rep to advance to the 9th rep. You won't actually be doing a 9th rep because your goal is to stop at the 8th rep until the marker rep converts to a strong rep. However, if you were to do a 9th rep, it would be your new marker rep.

Add 5 Pounds After a Marker Rep Conversion

When you gain enough strength to convert a weak marker rep into a strong rep, you are acclimating to the amount of weight and reps you have been using. The slowness and strain of the marker rep will vanish and the set becomes easier to perform. This is the goal that your body is trying to accomplish when it gains strength, it wants to acclimate by making it easier for you to lift the same amount of weight and reps. The conditions that achieve this occur best when you convert a weak marker rep into a strong rep. After you fully convert a marker rep into a strong rep, you can add 5 pounds to the lift.

A Small Change Causes A Big Effect

Your body actually receives two benefits that it is trying to attain when it converts a marker rep into a strong rep:

First, the marker rep becomes easier.

Second, the body eliminates the sudden increase in strain that occurs at the marker rep. This is because when the marker rep is converted to a strong rep, it no longer suddenly gets more strenuous.

Your body is intelligent. It understands when an adaptation will be very beneficial. As was just mentioned, the conversion of a marker rep to a strong rep produces two benefits. The attainment of two benefits will give your body twice as much incentive to adapt as one benefit. Assuming you are stopping at your marker rep, your body only needs about a 5 pound increase in strength to achieve the two benefits listed above.

Big Effect, Big Reason To Gain Strength

The marker rep occurs at a training threshold. Thresholds are the only points in training where a small change can produce a big effect. When you don't train with thresholds, a small increase in strength will only cause a small reduction in effort. This will only provide a small reason for your body to gain strength. In contrast, when you keep stopping at the same marker rep, a small increase in strength will cause a big reduction in effort as the same marker rep will become significantly less strenuous. Any time a small increase in strength makes a big reduction in the amount of effort, your body has a big reason to gain strength.

The following example will explain why a small increase in strength will only produce a small reduction in effort and strain when you stop your sets short of your marker rep.

We will assume that you can perform 8 reps with the weight you are using, and that your marker rep falls on your 8th rep, however, you choose not to push all the way to your marker rep. Instead you decide to always stop at your 5th rep. If you gain a little strength, the set will get a little easier, but it won't eliminate a sudden increase of effort at the end of the set because you never reach the point where there is a sudden increase of effort. In contrast, when you push to your marker rep, a small increase in strength will eliminate a sudden increase of effort for your last rep after converting your marker rep. This being the case, your body will see that an increase in strength will bring a big benefit, and your body will get stronger.

Partial Conversion

Now we will turn to a second example that goes in the opposite direction as we will assume that your marker rep falls on your 8th rep, but you decide to push past your marker rep and do 9 reps. If you gain 5 pounds of strength, you may convert the 8th rep to a strong rep, but it is likely that the 9th rep will remain a strenuous weak rep. This is only a partial conversion from strong reps to weak reps. In this case, the set will become a little easier, but the increase in strength will not be sufficient to eliminate the sudden increase in effort that occurs at the 9th rep. Since only one weak rep is converted while the other rep still

demands a sudden increase in effort, the benefit of eliminating the sudden increase of effort is incomplete. Smaller benefits provide smaller reasons for your body to make an adaptation that would cause an increase in strength. What you want is for a small strength gain to result in a big benefit to your body's desire to reduce the amount of stress and effort.

Why Allow The Stress To Decrease?

Some would ask why use a system that allows you to eliminate the reps that create a sudden increase in effort? Aren't those hard reps the reps that trigger an adaptation? Why not just keep the training stress high in order to constantly stimulate your body to gain strength? The answer to these questions is that the constant application of a high amount of training stress will cause the pattern that kills progress. This will eventually cause your body to refuse to gain strength.

The Pattern That Kills Progress

What is the pattern that kills progress? It occurs when your body learns that you follow a pattern of training in which strength gains always lead to an immediate increase in weight and training stress. Your body's strategy is to keep gaining strength in an effort to make it easier for you to lift the same weight, but your strategy is the opposite because strength gains always result in harder training due to an increase in the amount of weight you lift. Your body doesn't get stronger because it wants to be more stressed, but to reduce the stress it experiences when lifting weights. If you train to fully convert the difficulty of a marker rep into a less difficult strong rep, your body will learn that your training pattern allows for strength to produce a decrease in effort, which is what your body is trying to achieve.

Believe it or not, a lot of bodybuilders do repeat workouts with the same weight and reps until the workouts get easier, but they don't have a name for it. They will probably never speak with the perspective that you should acclimate to the weights until they become easier to lift, but they may use phrases such as:

"Just keep lifting the same weight until you get better at lifting it. Then increase the weight."

"Don't increase the weight until you truly feel ready."

"I just know when it's time to increase the weight."

All of these phrases are a different way of saying, "Use the same weight and reps until you acclimate and the weight feels easier to lift."

Acclimating to the weights by converting your marker rep is not a peaking method that leads to a sudden burst in strength, but it is based on a long-term training perspective. While converting your marker rep is not based on constantly increasing the weights you are using, it does provide a way to occasionally increase your weights. After you increase the weight, you convert your marker rep again in order to increase the weight again. This is better than constantly pushing to add more weight, only to get stuck and not be able to increase your weights at all.

Identifying The Marker Rep

Most lifters can identify their marker rep by learning to maintain the same rep pace as long as possible until they notice a sudden decrease in rep speed. This system of identifying the marker rep will work for most lifters, but not all lifters. There are some lifters who start each set with slow reps and maintain a slow unchanging rep speed throughout the whole set. The reps never slow down at the end of the set because the reps are slow to start with. Lifters who perform slow reps do not attempt to perform their reps with speed, force, and power, which makes it much harder to identify the marker rep. Such lifters must go by feel and be able to identify the point in the set where they experience a sudden increase in effort.

There are also some lifters who lift forcefully, but they always maintain the same rep speed until they reach failure. For example, if the maximum number of reps they can perform is 10 reps, they will be able to maintain the same rep pace for all 10 reps. If they try to do an 11th rep, they will fail to complete the rep. These lifters don't seem to have the ability to grind out slow reps. If their rep speed starts to slow down, the weight doesn't go all the way up. Such lifters will not be able to use a decrease of rep speed as the identifying mark that indicates the point in the set where the reps suddenly increase in difficulty. These lifters will need to use a different method to identify their marker rep.

Since not all lifters experience a change in rep speed when they reach their marker rep, it is helpful to know that there are at least 5 indicators that signal the point in a set when a lifter reaches his or her marker rep. These 5 indicators are listed below:

1. When repeating reps, the amount of effort it takes to perform another rep suddenly increases when you reach your marker rep.

This first indicator will work for any lifter who develops his or her awareness of changes in effort from rep to rep.

2. When repeating reps, you find the amount of tension throughout your whole body suddenly increases as you reach your marker rep.

The indicator listed above will work for the vast majority of lifters except for those who purposely keep a high degree of tension throughout their whole body from the start to the finish of a set. Conversely, others may teach themselves to try to stay as relaxed as possible until they fail, but this is rare.

3. As you repeat reps, you reach a rep where you can no longer maintain the same rep pace and rep speed suddenly starts to slow down. This first slower rep is your marker rep.

This indicator works well for most lifters, and I believe it is the easiest indicator to see and measure for many lifters. However, some lifters never experience a decrease in rep speed until they reach the point where they can't do another rep. Such lifters should not rely upon this indicator because it is dependent upon reaching a point in the set where rep speed slows down before reaching the point of failure.

4. You reach the point in a set where you naturally pause longer in order to gather your strength right before performing your next rep. This longer pause will come right before your marker rep.

This indicator tends to work for a lot of lifters as it is common to naturally pause longer right before the marker rep. However, there are others who never pause between reps until they fail. Such lifters should not use this indicator.

5. You reach the point in a set where you naturally find it difficult to exhale and breathe out while lifting the weight.

This indicator generally happens when lifters reach their marker rep, but it doesn't work for all lifters as some hold their breath before they reach their marker rep, and others manage to exhale after reaching their marker rep.

I want to point out that we will all sense a slight increase in effort throughout the beginning and middle of a set. Some lifters may interpret a mild increase in difficulty at the beginning or middle of a set as their marker rep. However, this is usually a small increase in difficulty and the lifter should tune in to the point towards the end of the set when they experience a substantial increase in difficulty that comes rather suddenly. Some lifters may also sense that their rep speed is starting to slow down early in a set instead of late in a set. This is usually a slight decrease in rep speed that is only slightly noticeable. The lifter should look for the point in the set where there is a fairly substantial decrease in rep speed. If there doesn't seem to be a distinct place in the set where reps suddenly start to slow down, the lifter should not use rep speed as an indicator that signals the marker rep. It would be better for such lifters to use one of the other marker rep indicators.

Acclimating to the weight by converting the marker rep tends to work much better when a lifter can clearly identify his or her marker rep. However, even if a lifter has the ability to identify the marker rep with great accuracy, the training will only work if the lifter trains according to his or her capacity for volume in terms of the number of sets performed, and according to a training frequency that matches his or her recovery ability.

Volume And Frequency

The number of sets a lifter performs should match his ability to repeat sets at full strength. When strength begins to decrease or dissipate, the lifter should stop training the muscle group that he has been training. A lifter will know when he is weakening when using the same weight from set to set because his marker rep will come earlier in the set. For example, if a lifter has been bench pressing 200 pounds for 6 reps, and his marker rep has been falling on his 6th rep, but he repeats sets to the point where his marker rep starts occurring on his 5th rep, the lifter is weakening and should stop training that muscle group.

Switching Weight and Exercises

Some lifters like to switch the exercises or the amount of weight from set to set. When switching weights from set to set, the marker rep will also change from set to set. This makes it impossible to use the same marker rep from set to set to gauge whether or not he is at full strength. If a lifter switches weight or exercises from set to set, he must rely upon past experience and know where his marker rep normally falls for the exercises and poundages being used. If he repeats sets and the marker rep occurs where it normally does for the weight and exercise that is being used, the lifter can know that he is at full strength. On the other hand, If he reaches the point where the marker rep starts to fall earlier in the set than it normally does, the lifter can conclude that he has started to weaken and should stop.

Frequency

Training frequency refers to the number of times that a lifter trains the same muscle groups each week. The most common training frequencies are based on hitting each muscle group two or three times per week. Some lifters can get by on hitting each muscle group only once per week, and some lifters do best with high frequency training in which each muscle group is trained four or more times per week.

The optimum number of sets per workout along with the optimum number of workouts per week will vary according to a lifter's individual capacity and recovery ability. These factors can also change according to the exercise being performed, and the muscle group being trained. A lifter may benefit from doing more sets of bench presses than squats or vice versa. Likewise, some lifters can bench three times per week, but they can only squat and deadlift once per week. Trial and error is the only way to determine the amount of sets that works best for each exercise, muscle group, and individual lifter. The same holds true in terms of discovering the best training frequency.

When a lifter learns how to convert his marker rep within the context of using an appropriate amount of training volume and frequency, results are amplified. In contrast, overshooting or undershooting on volume and frequency will negate the positive results that can be attained when using a strategy that is based on acclimating to the weights through converting the marker rep.

Converting The Marker Rep

Converting the marker rep from a weak rep to a strong rep will work for beginners, intermediates, and advanced lifters. Beginners will usually convert their marker rep faster and it may only take a week or two for a complete marker rep conversion. It will take a little longer for intermediates, and will take anywhere from 4 to 12 weeks for an advanced lifter to achieve a full marker rep conversion. Whether it takes a long time or a short time to convert your marker rep, it is a system that tends to consistently deliver results in the context of a long-term perspective.

Little By Little

One of the keys to marker rep training is that it is based on pushing just hard enough to force your body to make a small adaptation of strength. Small adaptations are easier for your body to make than big adaptations of strength. Once the small adaptation has been made by converting the marker rep, you add a little weight to reconstruct the conditions that will cause another small adaptation. Little by little your body keeps getting stronger until the strength gains accumulate into a large increase in strength. This goes with the age old philosophy that inch by inch is a cinch, but yard by yard is hard.

Consistent Outlasts Fast

I don't want to make false promises and tell you that converting the marker rep will lead to the fastest results possible. Fast results are often the biggest culprit of premature sticking points that cause you to fall short of your potential. If your goal is to keep gaining over the long term, consider the strategy of acclimating to the weights by using the marker rep conversion method. The main point is that consistent gains will outlast fast gains and lead to more strength in the end.

My hope is that the information presented in this book will help you to get stronger and to keep getting stronger. 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 <u>www.precisionpointtraining.com</u>. 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** Converting The Marker Rep **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 6 – 15 Marker Rep Workout 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