



Rico's Room By Rico Connor

WEIGHT TRAINING – THE SCIENCE AND TECHNIQUE

Let's go over—in layman's terms—the basics of how muscles are built. During a workout, the stress applied to a muscle results in the breakdown and damage of the muscle's fibers. This damage is the muscle soreness that you feel the following day. Your body's task is to recover from the stress and fatigue brought about by training. The body's repair process goes into effect and makes the damaged muscle fibers thicker and stronger than they were before the workout, if you give them the appropriate recovery time and proper nutrition.

When you start working out, you'll notice that the muscle being worked out gets pumped; that is, it physically swells up. This is because blood is being forced into the muscle and brings in fresh oxygen and nutrients. Experiencing a good pump is a psychologically positive feeling. It is also a physically positive feeling because intense training causes the body to release endorphins, which makes you feel good.

As your muscles grow stronger, the only way to make them continue to grow is to increase the amount of work they do. Since you want to stay anaerobic and perform only from eight to twelve repetitions, the way to achieve this is to increase the weight used. This concept is called progressive resistance.

A set of one exercise is made up of a number of repetitions of that particular lift/exercise. Sets usually range from eight to twelve repetitions, or "reps." Usually three to four sets of eight to twelve reps are done per body part when training. This varies, depending on whether you are a beginner, an advanced weight trainer, or are working to build up specific deficiencies.

To maintain progress and strength in any weight-training program, each muscle group should be worked out at least once a week. It is important to work out all of your muscles

each week, not just certain ones. A lot of men overemphasize work on their biceps and chest. They are easy to spot in the gym because they wear long sweat pants, because they have little bird legs. Because we all are unique with different genetics, certain muscles in our bodies grow more easily than others. That's the way it is. It's easy to focus on strong points that come easy and to neglect the weak body parts on which you don't like to work. If your goal is to have nothing but a pair of strong biceps, then you've got it made. The difficult part is focusing

Neglecting certain muscle groups leads to muscular imbalances and postural misalignments. A body with symmetry is a healthy body and one that is pleasing to the eye. To gain symmetry, you need to create a routine that is slanted toward your weakest muscles. These muscles should be worked out first in your routine, while you are fresh. There should be a forty-five to sixty second rest between each set done. This is the time to stretch the muscles being worked out.

When you start a weight training program, there will be a trial-and-error period, where you will learn what poundage to use for each exercise. No matter what your goals, your resistance should be such that the last repetition of each set is all you can do. As a general rule of thumb, you should exhaust the muscle after performing ten to twelve repetitions of one exercise. If you do not, then you should increase the weight. Learn the correct weight for you. The gym is not a contest to see who can throw around the most weight and impress people. It is about using the right amount of weight per exercise to make your body grow and to build lean muscle and burn fat. Don't try to lift a lot of weight if you haven't lifted before or if you haven't worked out for awhile, as you can injure yourself.

The final few reps are always the hardest, but are the most important. Squeezing in the last few is where the muscle building really starts. I am in great shape, but there are some exercises I perform with very small amounts of weight. It is all part of the science of weight training—knowing what to do and how to do it to change your body. As time passes, you will get in touch and in tune with your

body better and better. Various factors—how much sleep you've had, when you last ate, stress, etc.—affect the amount of weight you can lift on a certain day.

Remember, strength training is anaerobic (without oxygen). A waste product called lactic acid builds up in the absence of oxygen. As you get toward the end of a set of repetitions, an excessive amount of lactic acid builds up in your muscle. This is commonly referred to as the burn. The reason you can't do another repetition is because too much lactic acid has built up and you simply can no longer contract the muscle anymore. There is a big difference between good pain, (the next day's subtle soreness and the burn), ...and injury pain. If you feel a different soreness or pain during an exercise, stop immediately. Your body is telling you something is wrong. Don't push when it tells you not to.

Remember, there is a science to weight training and nutrition. Knowledge is power. Learn them both and fast track your way to good health! **SLV**

MYTH: If you stop exercising, muscle turns to fat.

FACT: Muscle is muscle and fat is fat. It is physically impossible for muscle to turn into fat. When muscle isn't used, it atrophies. This might give the appearance that it has turned to fat, because the ratio of fat-to-muscle has increased.

on your weakest body parts. Usually when a body part is weak, you don't enjoy working it out. Once again, this is where your strong mind-body connection comes in. Visualize what your weak body part will look like after you have put some time and effort into training it.

One of my proudest accomplishments is developing my lower body. I had no calves, no thighs and no butt. I mean none. My upper body wasn't that hot either, but I knew it was more receptive to gaining mass than my lower body. That's called genetics. Instead of wearing long sweat pants and hiding my deficiencies, I wore shorts, so I could see my skinny legs everyday. That made me focus on making them bigger. I went from not wanting to work on my weak part, to not wanting my legs to look like that forever. By looking at me today, you tell me, whether I changed my legs or not. It took time and repetition and work. The change was gradual and now I look forward to a good leg workout. What's the moral of the story? You can turn a weakness into a strength.