

**Your shortcut to an AMAZING Body**

**with the 8 'Pillar' exercises that no weightlifter should**

**ever miss out!**

By Marc McLean



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## Introduction

THANK you for downloading my weight training guide explaining the 8 pillar exercises that are an absolute must if you are serious about transforming your physique. You CAN have the body you have dreamed about through weight training...and these exercises will get you there quickest.

If you are just about to take up weight training then this guide is your shortcut to success. It will save you many months, even years, of pain trying to figure out the most effective exercises for building muscle, strength and burning fat. You will know what exercises to focus on from the very beginning – and these alone are enough to get you in fantastic shape.

Just eight exercises. If you never learn another one you will have enough tools to keep you in great shape. (...as long as you put down that cream cake right now and step away from the chocolate).

For novices reading this. Are you frustrated at the lack of good results? Overwhelmed by all the training advice you read in magazines, hear from personal trainers, or other gym goers? Are you confused about what really works? It's time to ease the strain on your brain – and focus on exactly what works best.

And if you are an experienced lifter sitting there strong and smug then these exercises will undoubtedly already be at the core of your workouts.



## Compound Exercises

Unsure of what exercises you should be including in your weights workout? Been trying everything and getting nowhere? Or are you just starting out and want the quickest route to results?

Either way you need *compound* exercises in your life. Now.

Compounds are the elite of weightlifting exercises. Master these (and stick to a clean diet) and you will inevitably end up in great shape. Compound exercises are basically movements which involve working several muscles groups at once. That is why they are far more effective at building overall muscle and strength – and sculpting a well-proportioned, defined and athletic physique.

Let's see this in action with the king of exercises - the squat. Perform a squat properly and you will heavily involve your glutes, quads, hamstrings and calves...and that is only on the way down. As you push back up again you are also tensing your abs, all the while lifting the barbell on your upper back and working your whole core region as you maintain balance. On the other hand, sit on a leg machine in the gym and you will simply be hitting your quads or your hamstrings.



*See, it makes total sense to concentrate on compounds that will deliver a better return for your training investment.*

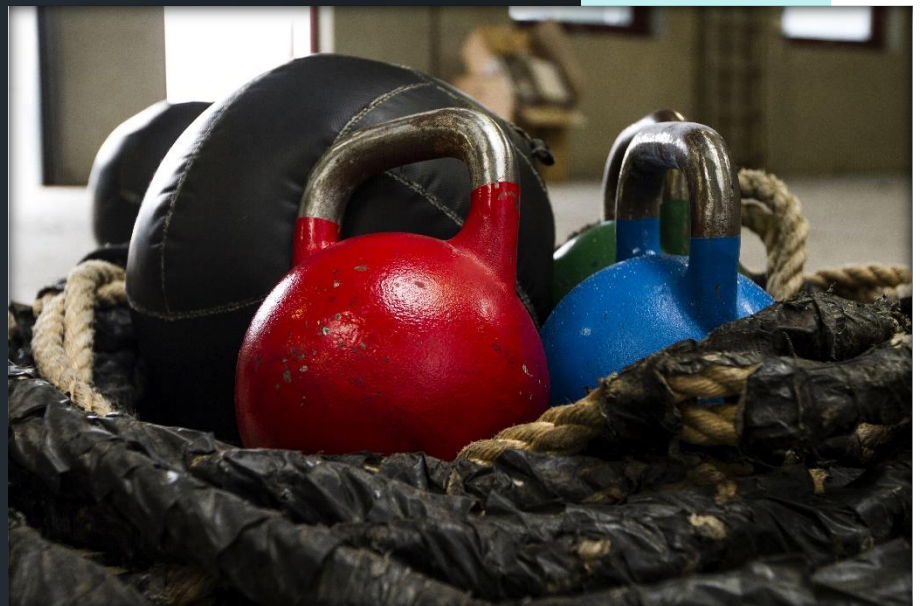
*There are countless muscle isolation exercises to choose from so it is easy to get confused. Fitness magazines are filled with them. There is also always somebody trying some weird new manoeuvre in the gym. Us humans are superhuman at complicating things. **The closer we get back to basics and focus on the exercises that are more efficient – and that have been proven to strengthen and condition your body – the better our results will be.***

*How can you get on the right track – and get ahead quickly?*

*Get stuck into compound exercises because by working several muscle groups at once your body will be getting 3, 4, or 5 x times the return on investment with every single rep.*

*Compound exercises, particularly squats and deadlifts, have been scientifically proven to boost growth hormone and testosterone production. That of course means more muscle, less fat, across your entire body. (Women – don't worry, this doesn't mean you will have grown a beard by Tuesday. You naturally produce 15-20 times less testosterone than men anyway!).*

*Compound movements also promote better body composition by naturally involving several muscles in the one movement. Not only do compounds help build muscle mass, but the short intense nature of the exercises prove a tough test for the cardiovascular system and can have a dramatic effect on improving heart health. And of course, you can complete a full body workout in far fewer exercises.*





## *The 8 Pillars*

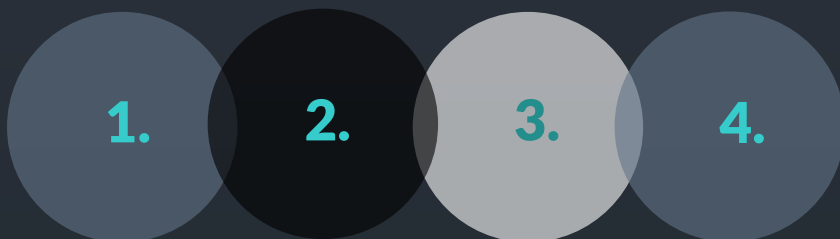
Anybody with half a brain would do any single exercise that worked several muscle groups at once. So I reckon I'll struggle to convince you that I'm starting a new fitness trend here. But it will surprise you how many people miss out all these obvious exercises that give you the big pay-off.

There are countless isolation exercises I could also describe in this book – but I point blank refuse. Why? Because I believe everyone should master the pillar exercises as they are the most important, most effective, and will guarantee much better results if you train using them consistently.

Working hard on these will not only build a solid foundation for progress in weight training, they will quite literally make you solid. If you could only choose a handful of exercises to keep you fit for the rest of my life, it should be a mix of these. And they would be more than enough to keep your entire body strong, muscular and well conditioned.

There are guys and gals I have seen go to the same gym religiously for years, but I've never once seen them lift a barbell on their shoulders and complete a squat. They have wasted years of training in my opinion. But you can avoid making the same mistake - and take a shortcut to success - by focusing on compounds and mastering them.

I won't lie, compounds are definitely tough going. But nothing really worth doing is ever easy. Maybe that's why people avoid them. But there are 8 compound exercises you should never avoid:



**Squats**

**Deadlifts**

**Bench press**

**Bent over row**



**Upright row**

**Pull-ups**

**Chin-ups**

**Clean and press**

## **Good Execution = Great Results**

Proper technique is crucial with any exercise and this section will show you exactly how to execute each of the 8 Pillars correctly. I will also list common mistakes - to help you avoid them. Aside from the slightly important fact that proper form will avoid nasty injuries, it will also help you get the most out of every single rep. Working your muscles hard, through their full range of motion, will deliver best results.

While lifting heavy and increasing the weight is the ultimate aim, that all becomes pretty pointless if your technique goes out the window. So, start lighter at the beginning and always prioritise quality over quantity. Then you will be ready to take it to the next level.



## SQUATS

Squats – the simple motion of bending the knees, dropping and rising again. Add a barbell with heavy weights into the mix and all is not quite so simple. In fact, squats can be pretty damn tough if you are pushing yourself hard enough. But it is not widely known as the king of exercises for nothing. If you are serious about building muscle, losing fat, and changing the way you look and feel, then make yourself an expert at squats.

### Technique:

- Warm up for a couple of minutes doing bodyweight squats, hamstring and quad stretches.
- Place the barbell on the squat rack at shoulder height and add the weight plates to each side. Ensure they are locked on using a collar or clamp.
- Position yourself under the centre of the bar so that it sits on your trapezius. Stretch your hands out and grip the bar at either side at a length that feels comfortable.
- Lift the bar upwards off the hooks and step back with both feet.
- Position your feet in a natural standing position, toes pointing forward and slightly outwards.
- Keep your back rigid, holding the barbell on your trapezius with good posture.
- Staring straight ahead, squat down in a controlled manner until your thighs are parallel with the floor or just slightly lower.
- Keeping your eyesight focused ahead, push back up forcefully through your hips and straighten your legs back into the starting position.

### Common mistakes:

1. **Arching your back during the movement.** This is the easy route to hurting yourself. There are two ways to avoid arching your back and to maintain proper form. First - concentrate on keeping your back rigid throughout. Second – keep your gaze focused on an object directly ahead as lower yourself and until you return to the top again. This is good for balance and staying focused.
2. **Moving your feet.** Once you step back from the rack and you are in a comfortable starting position your feet should not move from that spot. No swaying about with the barbell like a drunkard who has staggered into the gym. Your heels may occasionally lift off the ground as you push upwards with the weight. Do not let this become a habit because it can make you slightly unsteady. Your feet should be planted in the same position until the final rep is done.
3. **Forgetting to lock the weights on to the bar.** Okay, this one is not quite so common – but the warning is important. Casualties might well put your gym membership at risk. By making sure you have put a collar/clamp on the bar you will make sure weights stay safely in place.

*Muscles worked:* The entire lower body, particularly the quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes and calves, abs, erector spinae (group of back) muscles.











## BENCH PRESS

Most folk reading this will already know exactly what the bench press is all about. I'm going to describe it properly anyway to absolve myself of all guilt if you drop a loaded barbell on your cranium. Benching is widely considered the number one exercise for developing your chest muscles, certainly for adding mass. The bench can be set at an incline level to focus more on the upper section of your chest, or decline to hit the lower part.

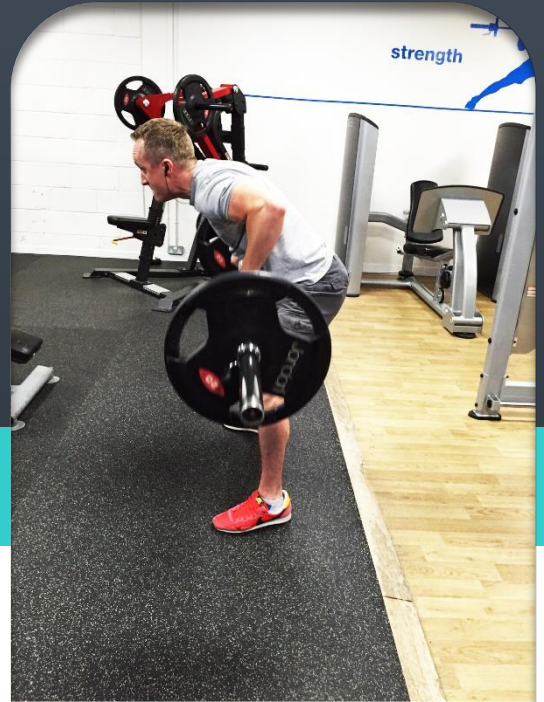
### Technique:

- Lie on a bench under a weights rack with your feet flat on the floor. The barbell should be roughly level with your nose. Your hands should grip the bar slightly beyond shoulder width.
- Lift off the rack and lower to the mid-section of your chest in a controlled manner.
- Push back up forcefully and lock out your arms.
- The first lowering part will take roughly a couple of seconds, but pushing to the top should take only half the time.

### Common mistakes:

1. **Raising your lower back off the bench.** There may be a very slight raise when you first lift the bar off the rack at the start of your set, but do not not arch your back throughout as this will inevitably lead to injury.
2. **Too narrow grip.** This will hit a smaller portion of your chest and will put more strain on your triceps. It will also make the bar more difficult to balance, meaning you will struggle to cope with the same level of weight.
3. **Too wide grip.** This will also result in a limited overall movement, working a smaller portion of your chest. A wider grip also makes the bar more unsteady and harder to balance.

*Muscles worked:* Pecs, anterior deltoids (front of shoulders), triceps.



## BENT OVER ROW

Want the V-shaped torso? Then do not miss this exercise out. Bent over rows work the entire upper back – and your biceps. It is also definitely the number one exercise for developing the lats to taper the back and give it a natural, athletic look.

### Technique:

- With a loaded barbell on the floor, stand with your feet just beyond shoulder width.
- Bend the knees and grab the bar. Keep your lower back arched, chest puffed out and look straight ahead.
- Lift the bar to your lower chest, making sure you keep the static position and don't swing up and down.
- The bar should be brought up hard and fast, but should it should take twice the time to lower the bar under control.

### Common mistakes:

1. **Straight legs during the lift.** This makes the move awkward, unnatural and increases your chance of injury. Keep your knees bent throughout – your back will thank you for it.
2. **Moving upwards during the lift.** After initially lifting the bar from the floor, keep your hips in place and your upper body static. This works your upper back harder, and means you are not compensating by using your hips or lower back to help lift the weight.

*Muscles worked:* lats, traps, biceps, front and rear shoulders.



## UPRIGHT ROW

One of my favourite exercises because you can really feel it shaping your upper body with every rep. The upright row of course works several muscles like the other compounds, but it primarily hits the upper trapezius. This creates the nice sloping look from your upper neck down to your shoulders. I personally saw a noticeable difference in development within a fortnight of first using this exercise.

### Technique:

*Note:* an Ez-bar (pictured) is preferable to a straight barbell for this exercise because it allows for a full range of movement and causes less strain on your wrists.

- Grab the loaded barbell at the two dipped points and have it resting at your knees.
- Keeping your back straight, pull firmly upwards to just under your chin, with your elbows extending outwards.
- Lower the bar in a controlled, slow fashion.



### Common mistakes:

1. **Lifting the bar only to your chest.** This is only half a rep, you must lift higher right up to your chin. Quick tip - try not to smack yourself in the face.
2. **Swinging your body to lift the weight.** Your legs and back must be kept straight throughout to target the right muscles and stay injury free.

*Muscles worked:* Traps, middle of shoulders, biceps.



## PULL-UPS

This is a mammoth exercise that blasts the entire upper back, shoulders and arms. They also work your core area to an extent as you balance your body during the movement. Pull-ups are so effective, but they are not easy and beginners will likely struggle to squeeze out one rep at first. But don't worry about it, we've all got to start somewhere. As you build up your strength you will also naturally increase your reps.

### Technique:

- Grab a pull-up bar with your hands positioned at wider than shoulder width and your palms facing outwards.
- Pull your body upwards and cross your legs as soon as they leave the floor.
- Pull hard until your shoulders are level with your hands and then lower your body to the starting position.

### If you are unable to complete one full rep at first you have two options:

1. Get a friend to stand behind you and assist. They can give your waist a slight lift, giving you a bit of leverage to help you reach the top.
2. Use an assisted pull-up machine. Many gyms have these, I used one years ago when I was first starting out. It is basically a pull-up bar but with a resting pad for your knees. You can choose different weight options and the machine itself gives you support as you pull your body up.

Either of these options are ideal for helping you build up your strength so you can move on to pull-ups with no assistance, and then focus on upping your number of reps. Stick at it and you will be amazed at the progress you have made in a matter of months.

### Common mistakes:

1. **Not dropping your body low enough in the second part of the movement.** Again this is only half a rep and simply won't work your muscles hard enough. Your arms should lock out at the bottom.
2. **Swinging your head and body.** It is not easy to balance your body during pull-ups, but focus on using the full range of your arms to raise and lower your body, rather than trying to 'nudge' yourself upwards at the top.





## CHIN-UPS

Give your biceps a blast with chin-ups. Your lats too. Your lower traps, forearms, and abs as well while we're at it. We have all seen plenty ripped people doing chin-ups on the TV. Soldiers, athletes, Rocky Balboa. No wonder – they're awesome for developing upper body strength.

The chin-up is a variation of the pull-up. In fact, some people switch the names about because they are so similar. The difference between the chin-up is that your palms face inward and you have a narrower grip on the bar. This brings the biceps more into play.

### Technique:

- Reach up and grab the bar above with your palms facing inwards. Your hands should be exactly shoulder width apart.
- Pull yourself upwards and, just like pull-ups, cross your legs as they come off the floor.
- Squeeze your biceps to pull your chin over the top of the bar.
- Lower your body to the starting position in a controlled manner.

### Common mistakes:

1. **Spreading your hands too far across the bar.** This makes the move awkward, putting strain on your shoulders and chest which could result in injury – or a trip to the floor.
2. **Not lowering your body far enough.** Let's not be kidding ourselves now, half reps are not good enough. Get down, lock your arms out at the elbow and drag yourself back to the top with no messing about. Not climbing high enough. Your chin must at least touch the bar, if not go slightly over it. No pretending – the rep won't count otherwise!

*Muscles worked: lats, biceps, lower traps, forearms, abs.*

Chin-ups are fairly tough, but they are slightly easier than pull-ups because the biceps are brought into the action to pull you through. As it is another bodyweight exercise, lighter people will find it easier than bigger, heavier folk. Either way, if you are struggling to manage one or two reps, just take the same progressive approach applied to pull-ups. Get a gym partner to assist you, or use the assisted machine to help you reach the bar. You will be managing it on your own in no time.





## DEADLIFTS

This one is not just for 300 pound guys wearing lycra. True, the deadlift is one of the main disciplines in powerlifting – but it is also a powerhouse when it comes to transforming your body. Main reason for this is that it involves multiple muscles in the upper and lower body. It is also the one exercise where there are countless stories of unbelievable feats of strength. Women lifting double their bodyweight off the floor and bars bending due to the weight of the plates. You may feel like 23,879 workouts away from that right now, but anyone who focuses hard on deadlifts can make amazing gains. As it works so many muscles, it really ramps up growth hormone production and thus packs on muscle while burning fat. The deadlift basically involves lifting a heavy weight off the floor and then standing with your legs straight and shoulders back. This one can be tricky to master though so make sure you start off with a light weight and pay close attention to the information below.

### Technique:

- Stand at a loaded barbell with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width. Bend down and grab the bar with one hand over the top and the other underneath.
- The grip should be just at the outside of your feet and your palms must be facing in different directions.
- With your feet firmly on the floor, pull the bar upwards over your knees. As you rise, push your hips forward and straighten your back.
- The bar should be resting against your thighs as you stand straight with your shoulder pressed back.
- Bend your knees as you carefully lower the weight back down over your legs to the floor.

### Common mistakes:

1. **Do not round your back.** Keep it rigid and focusing straight ahead, rather than on the floor, helps achieve this.
2. **Do not hitch or jerk the bar upwards.** It should be lifted in one flowing, continuous movement.
3. **Do not tip your feet forward – or move them at all – during the movement.** There's a fair chance you will end up faceplanting.
- 4.

*Muscles worked:* Glutes, quads, hamstrings, calves, traps, (lower back), (forearms), shoulders, abs, (obliques).



## CLEAN AND PRESS

Another exercise that is so effective because it works both the upper and lower body. Great for overall composition – and working the cardiovascular system. After one punishing set of these you will feel like you have been running for an hour. The clean and press basically involves lifting a barbell off the floor, hiking the weight up and pressing directly above your head. The clean and press is also a bit harder to get the hang of, so always start with a light weight until you comfortable and ready to add more plates.

### Technique:

- Same starting positioning for a bent over row. Stand over the bar with your back straight at a 45 degree angle.
- Overhand grip for both hands, slightly beyond shoulder width, and with your knees tucked in between your arms.
- Sweep the bar upwards, pushing forcefully through your hips almost in a jumping motion...but keep your feet on the floor.
- As the barbell reaches your chest, flick your wrists so that your palms are now under the bar.
- Then, without pausing, press the bar straight up until your arms lock out at the elbows.
- Bring the weight down to chest again, and then bend the knees as you lower it to the floor in a controlled fashion.

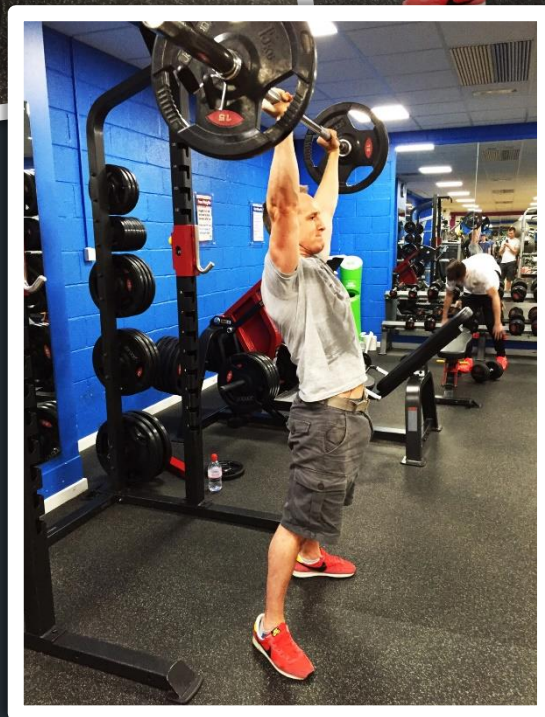
### Common mistakes:

1. **Stumbling forwards or backwards during the exercise.** You should be standing steady and the weight should be under control in one flowing movement.
2. **Arching your back at the beginning of the exercise.** Your back should be at a straight 45 degree angle as you lean over to pick up the bar. Otherwise you are in danger of hurting your lower back.
3. **Dropping the weight on to the floor.** You are not an olympic lifter, yet. It is unsafe to just drop or throw the barbell down once you have raised it above your head. It will end landing on your foot – or on someone else in the gym. Not cool. You should control the weight as you lower it to the floor and your muscles will still be working as you do so.

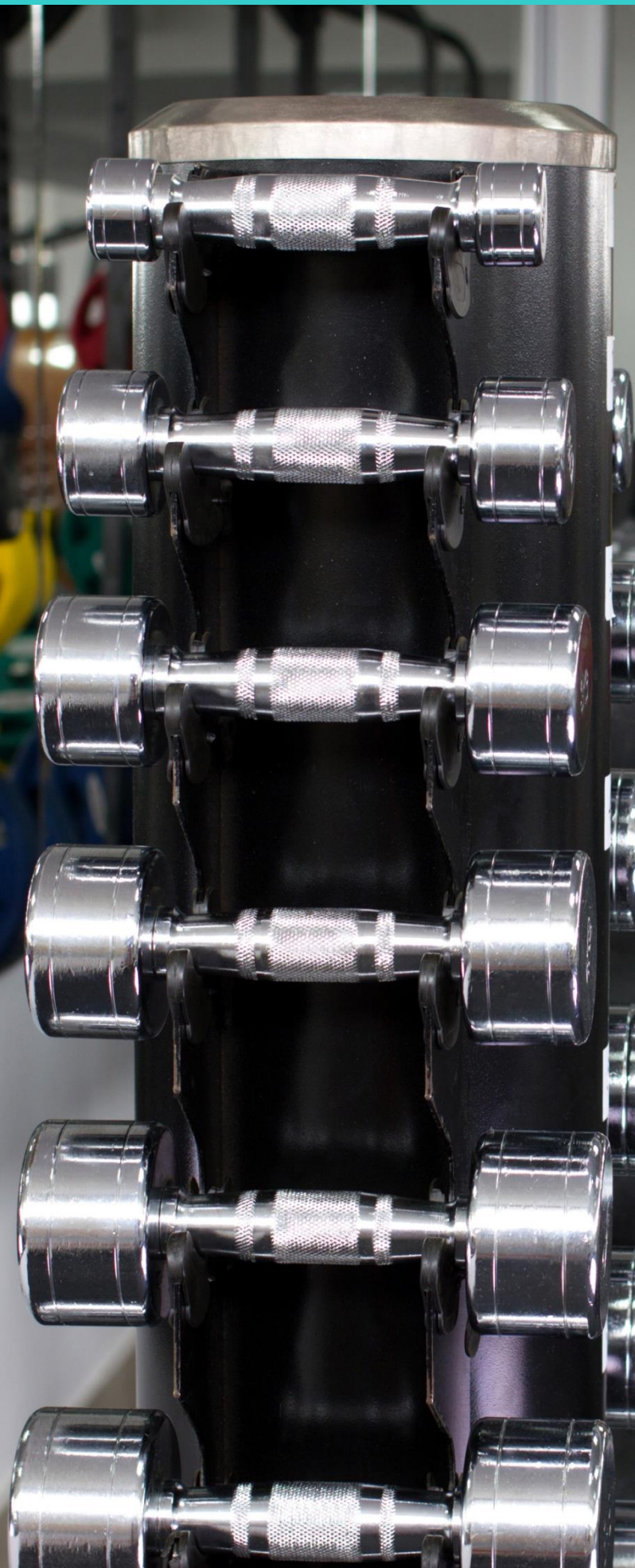
*Muscles worked:* Glutes, quads, hamstrings, traps, front shoulders, triceps, forearms.

Remember: when starting out with the pillar exercises always begin with a light weight – this is so important. Do not care about who is lifting what round about you in the gym, focus only on what you are doing. Go light and get the technique right.

I would suggest focusing on only two or three of the pillar exercises at a time until you have perfect form and feel comfortable doing them. Then move onto the next ones until you master all eight. You could manage this in only a week or two, but it will lay solid foundations for taking training to the next level through 'progressive overload', which we will talk about next.







## **Weight Level, Sets, Repetitions...Getting it Just Right**

Let's be clear from the start: lifting heavy is the only way to go. Whether you are a man, woman, overweight, skinny, 25 or 55...weight training with heavy loads is the most effective method for building muscle, increasing strength and decreasing fat all at the same time.

Lifting light does not have the same effect. This is because each style works different muscle fibres and causes a different type of fatigue.

Heavy weight training targets fast twitch muscle fibres - which are used for strength and power - and the strain caused by the resistance causes tears on these fibres. The body repairs the damage through what is called myofibrillar hypertrophy - which leads to your muscles becoming bigger and stronger. More muscle mass ramps up metabolism - which then makes your body more efficient at burning fat. A heavy weight training session can also keep fat burning for up to 24 hours after you finish your last repetition.

Lifting light and with more repetitions primarily targets slow twitch muscle fibres - which are used for endurance. These take longer to tire and eventually lead to a fatigue called sarcoplasmic hypertrophy. Working out this way increases the size of the muscles for a short period by flooding them with energy-rich fluids. But this is only a temporary pump and does not lead to significant muscle gains. And while calories may be burnt, the duration of the post-workout fat burn is much shorter.



## Progressive Overload

A system of weight training called 'progressive overload' was developed to rehabilitate wounded soldiers after World War II. More than 70 years on, it is still the number one method used by weightlifters to boost muscle strength and size.

The practice of progressive overload simply involves gradually increasing the weight resistance on your muscles. American army physician Thomas DeLorme introduced this form of training, and initially had servicemen doing resistance training for multiple sets of 10 repetitions. He then changed this to three progressively heavier sets of 10 repetitions. This rehab technique was successful in speeding up recovery times of soldiers in military hospitals and DeLorme's programme was referred to as 'progressive resistance exercise'.

The science behind progressive overload is that the added resistance induces muscle hypertrophy, which leads to growth and development. Instead of performing 3 sets of 10 reps of with the same weight for weeks and months at a time, you add more weight as the body strengthens and adapts.

After a set period of doing the same routine with the same weight your muscles get wise to it and are prepared for the next exertion. This does nothing for the development of your physique and will leave your body looking flat. By increasing the weight in stages you are continually causing tears in the muscle fibres, prompting a repair, growth and adapting cycle. But how do you know when to increase the weight?

## Determining Your Weights Level

How light is too light? And how heavy is too heavy? This has been an ongoing subject of debate in the fitness world for a long time, with a rep range of between 6 and 12 for maximising muscle emerging as the general rule of thumb. If you are unsure about whether or not you are training effectively or pushing yourself hard enough then this section will simplify the repetitions and sets question and help you get the most from your workouts.





Before you begin each set, you should be targeting a fairly low number of repetitions. Anything above a dozen is unnecessary when the goal is building muscle and strength. Here are four simple steps to keep your training in check and to accurately determine your perfect weights level:

- Step 1:** First and foremost – always focus on proper form. Poor technique will lead to injury, not muscle gain.
- Step 2:** If you can manage 10 reps or more of any exercise without rest then you are lifting too light. Increase the weight next time.
- Step 3:** If you cannot complete 6 full reps then you are going too heavy. Go a bit lighter for your next set.
- Step 4:** The sweet spot of reps right in the middle is 8 or 9.

It is as simple as that. From years of mixing up my number of reps and sets I have found that 8 or 9 repetitions is the perfect level for inducing hypertrophy – and thus leading to gains in both strength and muscle development.

Most importantly, if you hit 10 or more reps then it is time to step things up and lift heavier next time around. This follows the progressive overload system that Thomas DeLorme proved to be so effective and has been followed by many thousands of

So here are three examples of performance in a workout routine and how you should adjust your weight for each exercise.

- **Bench press.** 1st set – you manage 6 reps of 70kg, 2nd set – you complete 5 reps. Outcome: drop the weight by 10kg for next time.
- **Upright row.** 1st set – you manage 7 reps at 45kg. 2nd set – you hit 7 reps again. Outcome: great result, this is your perfect level for the moment.
- **Bent over row.** 1st set – you complete 11 reps at 50kg. 2nd set – you manage 10 reps. Outcome:

Excellent, it is clearly time to increase the weight. Add the 5kg-10kg next time you do this exercise



## Sets – High or Low?

I always recommend just 2-3 sets of every exercise in your routine. Fitness studies have shown that this is enough – if you complete the exercises properly.

A study carried out in 2010 by JW Kreiger and published in the American biomedical literature resource PubMed showed that to achieve muscle hypertrophy 2-3 sets per exercise were much more effective than 1 single set. Interestingly, the study also demonstrated that there was no significant difference between 2-3 sets and 4-6 sets per exercise.

The conclusion? There is definitely no need for countless sets of the same exercise – especially if you are using compounds and training with plenty of intensity. These two factors alone will guarantee you are working your muscles hard enough and will burn out those fast twitch muscle fibres, making multiple sets unnecessary.





## Keep Mixing Up Your Training Routine

Variety is also key in any weight training regime as the muscles quickly adapt. In order to keep making progress and avoid hitting plateaus, it is necessary to shock your muscles into growth and development.

**This can be done by switching up your training routine in various ways such as:**

- Mixing up the order of exercises
- Adjusting the rest time between sets
- Switch between 2 or 3 sets, occasionally complete a fourth

All of the above will freshen up your training routine and still deliver excellent results. The most important thing is that each new workout is fresh and unique. Never do the exact same workout consecutively because the body gets used to it – and it will get boring.

# Thank You!

I'd like to thank you again for taking the time to check out this free report! I hope you've found some value in it and are ready to put the information to good use in the gym. These 8 Pillar exercises really are the way forward and are central to my own training routine.

If you are just starting out with weight training then these core exercises will get you where you want to be much quicker. And if you are more experienced but frustrated at the lack of results in your training then it really is time to focus on the squats, deadlifts, chin-ups and so on...

This is the same piece of advice I give to anyone – man or woman - stepping into a gym. There are so many options to choose from when you walk through those doors. But why work one muscle group when you can build and tone three, four or more at a time? Why miss out compound exercises when they have the added benefits of better body composition, boosting testosterone, growth hormone, and turning your body into a fat burning machine?

*If you enjoyed this free report please share it with friends and suggest they visit [www.weighttrainingistheway.com](http://www.weighttrainingistheway.com) for more info and articles on lifting weights, nutrition and health.*

**Cheers,  
Marc McLean.**