

## Traditional Strength Building Programs

If you're pursuing strength, nothing beats the traditional staples and strength building techniques. This article covers 5x5 and German Volume Training, as well as drop-sets and rest-pause techniques

### #1. 5 x 5 Training (5 Sets of 5 Repetitions)

5 x 5 training is simply 5 sets of 5 repetitions, executed at approximately 75-80% of your one repetition maximum (1RM). You should rest at least three minutes between these sets. When you incorporate 5x5, you should use compound, free weight exercises and select 2-3 of these exercises within this structure, then you can supplement the workout with additional exercises at lower weight and higher repetition count. You should run this split for 2-4 months, dependent upon your fitness goals and your body's adjustment to the training (plateau).

1. Decide the split that you will execute. In this example, we will use:
  - Monday Push
  - Tuesday Pull
  - Wednesday Leg
  - Thursday Upper
  - Friday Lower
2. Select 2-3 exercises for your 5 x 5. In this example, we will use Monday's Push day.
  - Bench Press 5 x 5
  - Military Press 5 x 5
  - Weighted Dip 5 x 5
3. Seek to increase the weight you can execute 5 repetitions with, for each set. You will induce fatigue as you are working through the 5 sets, but you should seek to increase the weights even if with 2.5lb plates, for all 5 sets.
  - John's 1RM on bench is 200lbs.
  - $80\% \times 200\text{lbs} = 160\text{lbs}$ . This is the starting weight John will attempt for 5 sets X 5 reps.
  - When John can comfortably execute the above, he will then add 2.5 or 5 lb plates (165 or 170lbs) for sets 1, 2, 3 if possible. It is perfectly okay to decrease the weight in sets 4 and 5 to 160, for example.

4. Add 2-3 additional Push exercises on machines or cables, and core workout, for hypertrophy. This completes the Monday push day sample.

## **#2. German Volume Training (GVT)**

GVT is a 10 X 10 split in which you will rest only one minute between the 10 sets, executed with approximately 60% of your 1RM. You need to **prepare yourself for substantial fatigue**, but this structure is a great way to break through strength plateaus. Some experts maintain that this split is more-so for hypertrophy, but studies show irrefutable evidence that GVT increases muscular strength as well. This split should be run for 1-2 months, with the second month decreasing to 6x repetitions per set, instead of 10.

1. Decide the split that you will execute. In this example, we will use:
  - Monday: Chest and Back
  - Tuesday: Legs and Abs
  - Wednesday: Cardio & Recovery
  - Thursday: Arms and Shoulders
  - Friday: Cardio & Recovery
  - Saturday: Optional 2<sup>nd</sup> Legs and Abs
  - Sunday: Recovery
2. Select 2 exercises for your 10 x 10. In this example, we will use Monday's Chest and Back day.
  - Bench Press 10 x 10 (60 sec rest)
  - Weighted Pull-Up 10 x 10 (60 sec rest)
  - Cable Flye 3 x 10-12 (60-90 sec rest)
  - Seated Cable Row or Dumbbell Unilateral Row 3 x 10-12 (60-90 sec)
3. In the same way we increase weights in the 5x5 program, you should also seek to add 2.5 or 5lb plates every 1-2 weeks.
  - John's 1RM on bench is 200lbs.
  - 80% X 200lbs = 160lbs. This is the starting weight John will attempt for 5 sets X 5 reps.
  - When John can comfortably execute the above, he will then add 2.5 or 5 lb plates (165 or 170lbs) for sets 1, 2, 3 if possible. It is perfectly okay to decrease the weight in sets 4 and 5 to 160, for example

## **#2. Strength Building Techniques**

Two techniques are highly beneficial to add to any program with strength-building at its core: 1) Rest-Pause Sets, and 2) Drop Sets

1. Rest-Pause Sets: When you reach failure with a given weight on an exercise, rack the weight and pause for 15-20 seconds. Then, try to achieve 1-2 additional reps and rest for additional 15-20 seconds until the set is complete. Be careful, using a spotter is highly recommended as you are more likely to hit complete failure. Rest Pause sets allows maintained loading intensity.
2. Drop Sets: When you complete a set (example, Set 1 of 5x5 training), immediately reduce the weight by 25-33% and execute the same number of repetitions. This is best utilized on latter sets in a 5x5 (example sets 4 and 5). Drop sets force metabolic fatigue.