

Advanced Training Strategies.

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In this article, we are going to look at some of the most important aspects of training strategies used for advanced fitness training and strength building. Undoubtedly, the concepts we are going to discuss, are often either completely overlooked, or misinterpreted, which may leave them to be used incorrectly, leading to over training and possible injury.

Just like an individual body part, or training plan, where the key is having the knowledge and suitable equipment available, Advanced Training Strategies play a highly important role in the cycle of Training Progression for dedicated trainers. We are assuming as always, that the client has no medical contraindications to undertaking a fitness programme, and will have been shown how to perform any relevant exercises and techniques correctly, in a Slow and Controlled Manner.

Firstly, does your client need an Advanced Training Strategy? In truth, we are going to come up with the answer no, in the majority of cases with the exercising population. Beginners to exercise, those who are on their first training schedule of 8 to 12 weeks, should not be contemplating the following systems at all. Neither should an intermediate fitness or strength trainer, those who are now on their way towards 6 to 9 months of basic training. Only trainers who have already undergone at least 2 upgrades from their original training schedule, with each phase lasting for 8 to 12 weeks duration, of 3 or 4 training sessions per week should be considering these options.

There are over a dozen different Advanced Training Strategies which are all highly effective in the development of either, Strength, Endurance, or Muscular Size and Conditioning. With the techniques mentioned, it will not be about the maximum amount of weight your client is going to lift, but about the Way In Which The Weight Is Lifted. The techniques require the exercise execution to be of the strictest way possible, to ensure muscle overload without injury.

Pyramid Training is the principle of creating muscle overload by increasing the amount of muscular contraction during several sets of an exercise, by increasing the weight with each set. Typically, the Pyramid Principle works best with trainers involved in body building exercise programmes, and can be performed in one of several ways. This is the first Advanced Training Strategy to go for, once the trainer has decided to move up from "Straight Sets" where the weight stays the same for each set to be performed on a given exercise.

As an example, if you were to use Pyramid Training on a large muscle group such as the chest, it may well be possible, and indeed necessary to undertake as many as 5 or 6 sets of the main exercise to be performed on the muscle group. The reason behind this, is because you are then able to gradually warm up the muscle through the first 2-3 sets, before completing your final 2 or 3 “working” sets where the muscle is at a point of continuous overload.

On a 4 Set Pyramid, the repetition range would possibly be in the order of 12, 10, 8, 8, with the amount of weight being lifted on each set increasing, so that by the end of the harder working sets (8 reps & 8 reps), the trainer is at a point near failure at the end of each set. The amount of weight to be lifted on each set is often calculated by experienced trainers on how they feel that night, but can be improved upon by using the WABBA Power Maximum Theory. This has been proven to generate results at all levels of training, whether for fitness, endurance, strength, or muscle size.

When first undertaking the Pyramid Principles, the trainer should already be conditioned to strength training, and used to performing several sets on 2 or 3 exercises per larger muscle group, e.g. Chest, Back, Shoulders & Legs. Once starting on the Pyramid Principle, it may become necessary for the trainer to cut back on the amount of exercises they are used to performing per muscle group, due to the increased level of training intensity.

Each progressive set during a Pyramid Training Session, should also be done whilst the trainer is still in a state of partial recovery from their last set, so as to fully maximise the benefits from the system.

Twenty Ones (21's) are an advanced body building technique for creating muscle overload, through the concept of attacking a muscle group's individual heads. Originally formulated in the early sixties, it is often accredited as one of the main principles of specialist training advocated by Californian based body building guru Vince Gironda, who was famous for turning out amazing physiques. 21's are meant to be used on 3 headed muscle groups, principally the Deltoids with Anterior (front) Lateral (side) and Posterior (rear) heads, and the Triceps with Lateral (side) Medial (middle) and Long heads.

With 21's for the Deltoids, the idea is to Isolate each head of the muscle group in turn with No Rest In between, so firstly select Dumbbells which weigh heavy enough for you to be able to complete 7 repetitions on either Front, Lateral, or Bent Over Lateral Raise movements. (This will mean three different sets of Dumbbells for most people).

Now begin by doing Front Dumbbell Raises for a full 7 repetitions on the first set, before immediately doing Seated (keeps the form stricter than standing)Lateral Dumbbell Raises for a similar count. Complete the first set of 21's by now performing Bent Over Lateral Dumbbell Raises whilst sitting on the edge of the bench for 7 repetitions also. You have now completed 1 set of 21's, your shoulders are already starting to feel the pressure, and there are another 2 or 3 sets to go!

By moving the blood around the entire muscle group, head by head, you are able to train the muscle as a whole in a more systematic way. Seasoned trainers who are used to adopting the 21's theory, will be able to not only complete 3 or 4 sets, but also may be able to use the Pyramid Principles as well.

With 21's for the Triceps, the idea will be to try and predominantly Isolate different major heads of the muscle group in turn with No Rest In between. Firstly set up the high pulley with a straight – bar attachment, ready for Tricep Pushdowns. Now select a weight on an EZ Bar with which you can easily perform the French Press, and finally ensure that the Dipping Bars or a flat bench for Close-Grip Bench Pressing is available, with the bar set at a weight which you can manage very easily. I say very easily, because as your third movement in a row on the same muscle group, it will be difficult to achieve a number of quality repetitions.

Begin by performing Tricep Pushdowns for a full 7 repetitions on the first part of the movement, before immediately lying onto a flat bench and doing a set of Lying Tricep Extensions (The French Press) for a further 7 repetitions. Now complete the first set of 21's on your Triceps, by performing either a set of Parallel Bar Dips, or a set of Close-Grip Bench Presses for a count of 7 repetitions also. After this first set of 21's on your Triceps, they will already feel pumped and begin to feel fatigued, and like Deltoids, there are another 2 or 3 sets to go!

More recently, some modern trainers have started to re-enact the training principles of past decades, claiming them to be new and innovative ways of training. Unfortunately, 21's are such a case, now being touted as a training method which can be utilised on all major muscles groups, but most importantly, Biceps. The Biceps are a two Headed muscle group, and three won't go into two in quite the same way as with Triceps or Deltoids, which the original technique was developed for.

With Biceps, trainers are doing 7 Repetitions Curling the bar up on the first third of the movement only, followed by 7 Repetitions on the last third of the movement only, and then 7 full repetitions on a complete curling movement. Do this technique for long, and yes, your Biceps will appear to have a larger peak, but they will also have shortened to give this appearance. (Ever seen fans of this latest body building craze walking around with their arms permanently bent when they walk?) The truth is, this technique is just a re-hash of an original idea taken to a new sales angle.

Pre-Exhaust Training is among the most intensive methods of Advanced Training Strategies possible for achieving progressive overload from weight training. It is the most advanced method of Super Setting available, and will tax muscles far beyond the normal levels of physical stress, which are associated with progressive weight training.

Originally formulated over half a century ago, along with other Advanced Training Strategies, it should be used on the larger muscle groups, principally the Shoulders, Chest, Back, and Legs (Quadriceps). As an example, if you were to use the Pre-Exhaust Training Principle on your chest, you would perform an Isolation Exercise such as Dumbbell Flyes, followed by the relevant Compound Movement, which in this case would be the Bench Press.

With the chest, if you decide to Pre-Exhaust the upper chest for more size and strength, then you would ensure that both movements (the Flye & the Press) were both on the same Incline bench. With the mid chest, obviously this would mean a flat bench, and for the lower chest (extremely advanced) this would mean the decline bench.

Deltoid Pre-Exhaust Training would be with Seated (keeps the form stricter than standing) Lateral Dumbbell Raises immediately followed by either Dumbbell Presses or the Military Press on the Smith's Machine. Latissimus Dorsi Pre-Exhaust Training for the back would be with Pullovers followed by Seated or Bent Over Rows, whilst Quadricep Pre-Exhaust Training would be with the Leg Extension Machine followed by either the Leg Press Machine or Barbell Squats.

Do not advocate using your normal "Compound Pressing" weights, as your body will grind to a halt within the first few repetitions, as all of the above combinations are extremely tough, and get tougher by the set, so you have been warned! Seasoned trainers who are used to this method of training, will be able to not only complete 3 or even maybe 4 Pre-Exhaust Sets, but also may be able to use the Pyramid Principles on the first one or two sets as well.

Couple short rest periods to good training form on any of the above methods and you will definitely get the results that you are after. It will take some time to adjust to any of these methods of Advanced Training, and you should not stay on any one method for longer than 12 weeks, otherwise over training could become a factor.

Final Thought.

For excellent levels of fitness training with a built-in safety factor at any level, You can use a "watered down" version of Pre-Exhaust Training with all client's using your facility. Just make sure that whenever more than one exercise per body part is performed, that the first exercise is an Isolation, and they do their sets on that first, before going to a compound movement second, and then completing their sets on that exercise afterwards. Do this on a regular basis, and your client's will notice new quality gains in fitness, strength, and endurance from their endeavours.

WABBA are a specialist organisation holding information from around the globe on these subject areas. To learn more about Good Exercise Form, Exercise Choices, and Advanced Training Strategies, why not attend a dedicated course for this.

WABBA course dates are available year round. The Ultimate Weight – Training Handbook, available from WABBA is an ideal starting point. For an application form to join one of WABBA's winning courses, Call: **01529 – 303259** Today.
