



Power Rep Range Shock

Time to Grow
Without Plateaus

by Eric Broser

Photography by Michael Neveux

Take a little trip down memory lane. Remember back when you first started training, when new muscle and more power came almost every week? When the main goal at every training session was simply to add more weight to the bar and get it from point A to B in any way possible?

When every night you'd hop on the scale after the last meal of the night—when you'd be at your heaviest for the day, of course—and be thrilled to see that you weighed half a pound more than the night before? When all you had to do to gain muscle was to eat more, train more, sleep more? Then—*abracadabra, alacazam, presto*—there was more of you.

Ah, those were good times, weren't they? But as all intermediate and advanced bodybuilders know, all good things come to an

end. After about a year of training, gains begin to slow down, weights don't climb quite as easily, and the scale doesn't budge as it once did. Despite your best efforts in the gym, pounding away on the same exercises for the same range of reps on the same days, nothing seems to be happening anymore. What's the deal?

The first thing you must understand is that muscles are not just lumps of tissue. They're extremely complex structures that, like onions, have many layers that you

must peel before you reach the core. So, without turning this into a class in anatomy and physiology, let's take a quick and basic look inside these molehills we all wish to turn into mountains—our muscles.

Muscle is composed of bundles of fibers. In general there are three distinct fiber types found in skeletal muscle. These include type 1, also known as slow-twitch, or red, fibers; types 2A and 2B, also known collectively as fast-twitch, or white, fibers. Type 1 fibers are pure slow twitch and have the highest level of endurance.

They're most active in slow movements and long-term aerobic activities and take a long time to fatigue. Next come the type 2A and the type 2B fibers, which are the fastest and least endurance oriented in the group. They're most active in quick-burst, or power, activities. They're powered entirely through the anaerobic—meaning without oxygen—system and contract nearly twice as fast as slow-twitch fibers, but they fatigue much more rapidly. It's important to remember that within our muscles there are

also “intermediate” fiber types that show both high oxidative and fast-twitch characteristics.

As you contract a muscle, the fiber types are all recruited, one at a time, in a specific order. The smallest, or lowest-threshold, fibers, the type 1s, are recruited first. As the speed or force of contraction is increased, you sequentially recruit the intermediate fibers, then the type 2A and 2B fibers. It may take more than 90 percent of a maximum contraction to recruit the type 2B fibers.

Most muscles contain almost an even split of these basic slow (type 1) and fast (type 2) fibers. There are some genetic variations. Some people are born to run marathons (slow-twitch dominant), while others are born to run sprints (fast-twitch dominant—and very lucky if they get into bodybuilding).

Although the type 2 fibers have the greatest potential for hypertrophy, it's imperative that we regularly train all of our muscle fibers to get maximum muscle size. Why limit ourselves to maximizing the potential of only a portion of our fibers? Doesn't it make sense to get at every last fiber in each muscle?

Enhanced muscle size also occurs by way of increases in mitochondrial enzymes, increases in stored ATP and phosphocreatine, increases in stored glycogen and triglyceride and the laying down of additional capillary beds.

So how do you go about successfully working all of your muscle fibers while stimulating all of the other pathways associated with maximum muscle hypertrophy? Variation! After you've laid a foundation in your first couple of years of lifting, you need to vary your training. Too many misguided trainees use the same exercises, in the same order, with the same rep tempo, rest between sets, training techniques and rep ranges day after day, week after week and month after month. The human body is an incredibly adaptable machine and will quickly cease to respond to stimuli that it's exposed to time and again. Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result is just plain craziness.

How do you achieve op-

Rope Pushdowns



You must train all of your fibers to get maximum muscle size.

Model: Marvin Montoya

Lying Extensions



As you contract a muscle, the fiber types are all recruited, one at a time, in a specific order.

Model: Mike Morris

timal variation? The answer lies in something called power/rep range/shock, or P/RR/S. What the heck is it? It's a method of cycling workouts that I developed after lifting weights for more than a dozen years. In those 12-plus years of training I went from a 125-pound weakling who could barely bench-press a 45-pound bar to a 225-pound title-winning bodybuilder who could bench-press more than 400 pounds—all without the aid of drugs. Although I had done nicely, adding about 100 pounds to my frame, I still wanted more, but I wasn't getting it. I'd hit a wall. That forced me to examine everything I was doing in order to come up with a new plan of attack.

Over the course of several months I developed a program that had me gaining again, and before I knew it, I was up to 250 pounds and feeling stronger than ever. I have used P/RR/S for four straight years now, and I keep getting bigger and better. Of course, the system has continued to morph along the way as I tweak it to make it even more efficient at stimulating hypertrophy.

So, are you ready to grow? Let's go.

Week 1: Power

The goal during this week is to make a direct attack on the type 2A and 2B muscle fibers, with an emphasis on the 2Bs. Those are the higher-threshold fibers, and the way we get at them is with heavy weights. Use weights that let you get four to six reps before you hit failure. How you perform your reps is of great importance: Use an eccentric, or negative, contraction of about four seconds followed immediately by an explosive concentric, or positive, contraction. Even though you'll be attempting to explode

with the weight during the positive portion of the rep, it won't move very quickly at all due to the heavy load you're lifting.

Rest between sets is also very important. Since you want to be able to lift as heavy as possible during this power-building week, you should rest about four to five minutes between sets in order to fully regenerate ATP and creatine phosphate stores in the muscle cells. Choose basic or compound exercises, like bench presses, squats, deadlifts, military presses and bent-over rows. You won't get a tremendous pump, but your muscles will feel as if they've been smashed with a wrecking ball.

Rep goal: 4-6

Rest between sets: 4-5 minutes

Lifting tempo: 4/0/X

Exercises: Mostly compound

Here's an example of a typical power workout for chest:

- Bench presses 4 x 4-6
- Incline dumbbell presses 3 x 4-6
- Weighted dips 2-3 x 4-6

Week 2: Rep Range

The goal here is to show no mercy to the intermediary fiber types that lie along the continuum between type 1 and type 2 muscle. You accomplish that by using three distinct rep ranges on three separate exercises for each bodypart. You do the first exercise to failure in the seven-to-nine-rep range, the second to failure in the 10-to-12-rep range and the final exercise to failure in the 13-to-15-rep range. You also change your rep tempo. The eccentric and concentric portions of each rep should take you two seconds each, and you should hold the midpoint, such as the top of a leg extension, for one full second.

Use both compound and isolation exercises, with free weights, machines and cables all being fair game. One particularly effective approach is to choose a free-weight compound movement for seven to nine reps, a free-weight isolation movement for the 10 to 12 reps and a machine or cable movement for 13 to 15 reps.

Rest two to three minutes between sets. You can expect a tre-

mendous pump and some deep muscle soreness in the days that follow—but we love that kind of pain, don't we?

Rep goal: 7-9, 10-12, 13-15

Rest between sets: 2-3 minutes

Lifting tempo: 2/1/2/1

Exercises: Compound, isolation, machine or cable

Here's an example of a typical rep-range workout for shoulders:

- Military presses 4 x 7-9
- Seated laterals 3 x 10-12
- Reverse pec deck flyes 2 x 13-15

Week 3: Shock

In my opinion, this week is the most intense and excruciating. It separates the men from the boys, the freaks from the fakes. The goal is the utter annihilation of every fiber, from slow-twitch right to the fast-twitch type 2As. You'll force your body to release growth hormone like water from a collapsed dam.

Each grueling session contains two different types of supersets and a punishing drop set for each major bodypart. The first superset is pre-exhaust style: Do an isolation movement first, followed immediately by a compound movement. The sec-

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Weighted Dips

The goal during power week is to make a direct attack on the type 2A and 2B muscle fibers, with an emphasis on the 2Bs.



Model: Berry Kabov

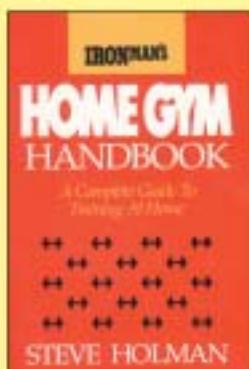
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- Which butcher-knife exercises etch deep cuts, striations and crevices into your muscle structures for an eye-popping, rock-hard look (see page 15).



IRONMAN Training & Research Center member Mervin Petralba before Size Surge 2 (left) and 10 weeks later (right). "This program works!"

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Incline Presses



The goal during shock week is the utter annihilation of every fiber.

Model: Steven Sagers

During shock week every workout will leave you breathing like a steam engine and with a burn that will reach your very core.

Warning: Be prepared when you enter the gym during shock week because every workout will leave you breathing like a steam engine and with a burn that will reach your very core. Fun!

Rep goal: 8-10

(drop set is 8-10, drop, 6-8)

Rest between sets: cardiovascular and mental recovery

Lifting tempo: 1/0/1

Exercises: Compound, isolation, machine or cable

Here's a typical shock workout for triceps:

Superset

Rope pushdowns 2 x 8-10

Lying extension 2 x 8-10

Superset

Close-grip

bench presses 2 x 8-10

Undergrip pushdowns 2 x 8-10

One-arm overhead

dumbbell extensions

(drop set) 1 x 8-10(6-8)

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ond superset is post-activation, which was made famous by *IRON MAN* author Michael Gündill. In postactivation supersets you do the compound movement first, followed by an isolation movement. Each superset provides a unique stimulus for your muscles and your nervous system. Once you've completed your supersets, you finish with a drop set.

Reps for each exercise will be in the eight-to-10 range, and the tempo will be rhythmic: one second up and one second down, no rest (as long as you can handle it) at the top or bottom. Do your reps in a pistonlike fashion. Rest long enough between sets to catch your breath fully, as well as to prepare your mind for the next onslaught. Use free weights, cables and machines.

Model: D.J. Green

One-Arm Overhead Extensions



Do your reps in a pistonlike fashion.

Time to Grow Without Plateaus

After you complete the three-week power/rep range/shock cycle, return to the beginning and repeat. Do your best to increase the weights you lift and/or the reps you achieve. After three cycles take off one full week from the gym before returning to the program. After your break you might want to switch up some or all of the exercises that you used in the preceding cycle.

If you've been training for some time, are stuck in a rut or are looking to take your physique to the next level, power/rep range/shock training may just be your first-class ticket to Freakville. Enjoy the ride, my friends.

Editor's note: For individualized P/RR/S programs, online personal training, nutritional guidance or contest-prep coaching, contact Eric Broser at bodyfx2@aol.com. **IM**

Additional Fiber-Type Training Info

For more information on training multiple fiber types with abbreviated-style training, see "Mass Hysteria" on page 98.