

General Guidelines for Training Programs

Everybody's searching for the holy grail of hypertrophy training programs, but it doesn't exist.

There are hundreds of ways to design an effective hypertrophy program.

That doesn't mean "anything goes." **Good hypertrophy programs have certain characteristics in common.**

Characteristics of Good Hypertrophy Programs

All of my training programs on this site share the following characteristics:

- **Progression.** You should always be striving to improve upon the weight and/or number of repetitions for each exercise you do. My programs give a certain rep range. Once you exceed the prescribed rep range with a particular weight, increase the weight by 5-10%.
- **RPE-Based.** Some programs based their effort or intensity levels off a percentage of 1-rep max (1-RM). The problem with that is that different people can do a different amount of reps with a given percentage of 1-RM. For example, 10 reps at 70% 1-RM might be hard for one person but easy for someone else. To get around this problem, my programs base effort level off of **Rate of Perceived Exertion** or RPE. RPE is a scale of 1-10 that dictates how hard to work on each set, where 10 is a maximal effort to muscular failure. I program most work at an RPE of 8-9, meaning you leave a rep or two "in the tank" and train to near failure on most sets.
- **Volume.** Most people will get the most "bang for their buck" in terms of hypertrophy versus time investment with a weekly training volume of 10-20 sets per muscle group. Thus, most of my programs involve these volumes.

For more information on this, check out my [Volume Bible](#).

- **Frequency.** Most people will get the best results by training each muscle group 2-4 times per week. Most of my programs train each muscle group 2-3 times per week. For more information on this, check out my [Frequency Bible](#).

Warming Up

It's important before a training session to warm up properly. Warm muscles not only produce more force, but they are also more compliant and resistant to injury. Warming up also helps prepare your joints for activity.

Warmups don't need to be fancy. A good warmup is comprised of increasing your body temperature, then performing the specific activity with a few sets of lighter weight.

Example

Perform 5-10 minutes on a stationary bike to elevate body temperature.

Let's say your first exercise is bench press. A warm-up progression might be:

1. Bar only (15 reps)
2. 50% of work weight (8 reps)
3. 75% of work weight (4 reps)
4. Work sets

If you train similar muscle groups later in the session (such as chest or triceps), you don't need to do warmups for those same muscle groups.

Progression

Progression is the cornerstone of any weight training program. You won't gain muscle over the long term if you aren't striving to improve upon the number of reps and/or weight that you use in your exercises.

Each exercise in the programs on this site come with a certain rep range. Once you can exceed the prescribed rep range with a particular weight, increase the weight by 5-10%.

Rest Intervals

In most cases, rest intervals should be long enough to where you feel fully recovered for the next set. This means you aren't huffing and puffing and struggling to catch your breath. This is typically around 1-2 minutes for isolation movements and 2-3 minutes for compound movements. If you want to maximize hypertrophy, weight training sessions shouldn't turn into cardio sessions. For more info on this, check out my [evidence based guide on rest intervals](#).

To save workout time, you can superset opposing muscle groups while taking 60 seconds between exercises. This works best for isolation movements. For example, you can superset triceps and biceps work like this:

1. Triceps exercise
2. 60 seconds rest
3. Biceps exercise
4. 60 seconds rest
5. Triceps exercise
6. ...and so on

Training Programs

Here's some example training programs that follow these general guidelines.

- [2-3 Day Per Week Whole Body Beginner Hypertrophy Plan](#)
- [2-3 Day Per Week "Busy Man" Hypertrophy Plan](#)
- [4-6 Day Per Week Upper/Lower Hypertrophy Split](#)
- [6-Day Per Week Push/Pull/Legs Hypertrophy Split](#)