

10 Rules For Mass Building

Mass is no mystery. Attaining it is quite simple and straightforward. All you have to do is bust your gut and apply the following 10 basic rules.

1. Use free weights for all heavy sets

As heavy as some machines might feel, they do not involve as much of the ancillary muscles areas as do free weights and, therefore, do not build as much compound mass.

2. Utilize compound movements

How you perform an exercise is perhaps the most important dynamic in building mass. If you want full, hard bulk, do not isolate. Instead, use what Dave Draper calls 'body thrust' to compound the involvement of all the muscles in the area. Also, don't fall for the theory that cheating robs you of separation. On the contrary, it augments the compound benefit and builds even greater size so that there's more muscle in which to carve separations.

3. Find areas of improvement

Assess your physique to determine which muscle groups need to be brought up in size, then go to the gym with that in mind, concentrating on working those areas first. Begin your workout with a barbell movement and follow with dumbbells. If you use cables, do so at the end of your workout. Never count cable sets as mass building sets.

4. Experiment to find your best mass building exercises

I used to perform lots of squats, and I became incredibly strong with them, going as high as 40 reps with 315 pounds. But there came a point where, even at that level of intensity, my legs weren't growing to my satisfaction. I discovered that my lower back and hips were taking too much of the stress; the solution lay in working my quads more exclusively. I therefore stopped squatting and switched to leg presses and hack squats instead. My legs are now better than ever.

5. Avoid injuries

Be wary of dangerous exercises. Squats and flat bench presses, for example, possess the highest injury potential, so I stay away from them. I can't count the number of individuals whose bodybuilding careers were ended by torn pecs, slipped discs or strained erectors. With proper knowledge and execution, you can get commensurate or even better growth from exercises that work those muscle groups thoroughly without placing undue stress on tendons and ligaments.

6. Utilize optimum sets

Use a range of 16 - 20 total sets per body part.

7. Don't count exercises

There is no optimum number of exercises. Most bodybuilders prescribe four sets each of four or five different exercises per body part, but for some muscle groups, there might be only one or two movements that work them effectively. In those cases, you should do 16 - 20 sets of one exercise, or 8 - 10 sets each of two exercises.

8. Perform optimum reps

I like to train heavy, but I also like to use lots of reps. I recently performed incline barbell curls with 405 pounds for 10 reps, but I consider that to be medium to light weight, and, therefore, not mass training. My favorite number of mass reps on a regular basis is 10, to failure, of course. However, that doesn't mean you should avoid going as heavy as possible now and then.

9. Flirt with maximums

Check out your strength levels every so often by maxing out with one or two reps. Remember, though, that any time you play around with bench press poundages above 405, you flirt with danger. The body cannot consistently take that type of training. When you want to test your max, do not take big jumps. Rather, work up gradually to keep your body accustomed to the changing forces and their deflections at each level. For example, I go up to 500 pounds for two reps on the incline barbell press, but I do not jump directly from 405 to 500. Instead, I make sure I can do 465 for at least four reps before I go to my max.

10. Eat your meat

The more protein you eat, the better, and the best form of protein for mass is meat, especially red meat. That's where you get your muscle building nutrients, your strength reserves and the necessary fats for joint protection. Make all of these tenets second nature to your bodybuilding lifestyle and you will gain good solid mass.