

# **Progressive Training**

**By**

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Muscle size and strength is obtained through the practice of progressively taxing the muscles beyond the point they have become accustomed. Perhaps no better story projects this than that of Milo the Olympian athlete. Although this story has been around for years, there are so many versions that determining the original version would be hard to do. Different details, but each version recounts the same story.

Centuries ago in Ancient Greece, Milo of Croton trained for the Greek Olympics by hoisting a baby bull calf upon his shoulders and walking up and down a hill until exhausted. Each day his muscles adapted to the ever increasing weight of the bull. Milo continued this training regimen until the calf was a fully grown bull. As the bull grew heavier and larger so did Milo's muscle size and strength.

Nice story eh! Perhaps it is just that, a story. Perhaps it is true. Fact, fable, or fiction, the lesson is accurate; resistance progression is required for gains in both size and strength. Without such one hits a point of no gain, the infamous "sticking point". The story of Milo can also represent another perspective... that of over-training. Sticking-points and over-training are other topics for another day and not the focal point of this article however.

Progressive training in principle is easier than in practice, especially for those of us who train instinctively. This is because on a rigid progressive program you would normally associate performing the same movement for each body part session. For example; if you are training biceps twice per week (Monday and

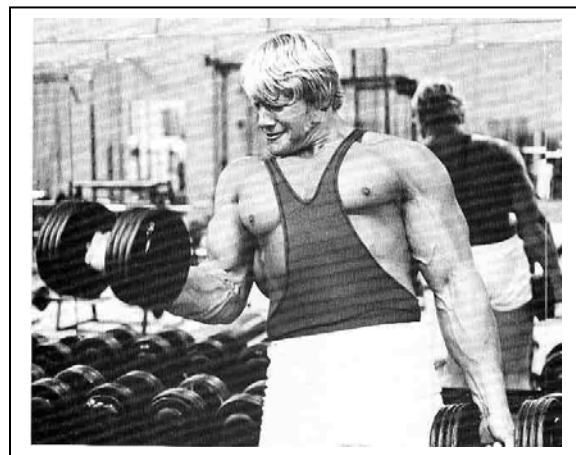
Thursday), you would perform the same movement and each workout, or each week, increase the resistance a small amount and continue in this manner. Remember, resistance is not brought about solely by increasing weight; increasing reps, and reducing time does the same thing. However, I have always preferred the increasing reps and weight approach.

Here is an approach I have used to progressively increase the workload I place on my muscles. You can apply this method to any exercise and any body part. The single most important point to remember is this; don't try to rush into higher reps too fast. Doing so will result in getting to a point where your muscle, mind, and nerve connection will not function properly and thus you will not see the results. You'll find you get to a point that prohibits continual progress.

Again, using biceps for the body part example and standing alternate dumbbell curls as the movement, here is how you would proceed based on five sets using fifty pound dumbbells.

#### Standing Alternate Dumbbell Curl

6x50, 6x50, 6x50, 6x50, 6x50  
7x50, 6x50, 6x50, 6x50, 6x50  
7x50, 7x50, 6x50, 6x50, 6x50  
7x50, 7x50, 7x50, 6x50, 6x50  
7x50, 7x50, 7x50, 7x50, 6x50  
7x50, 7x50, 7x50, 7x50, 7x50  
8x50, 7x50 ... etc



Dave Draper performing heavy standing alternate dumbbell curls.

I would follow such a pattern until I was able to complete ten reps for five sets with fifty pounds. I would then add five pounds and begin all over with five sets of six reps using fifty-five pound dumbbells. This has always been my favorite method of progressive training for a number of reasons. It's safer than

other methods. It provides adequate time for the body to adjust to the resistance load. It provides time for mind and muscle connection to take place.

You can speed the process up somewhat in that you will discover at a certain point instead of strictly staying to the progression listed above you might be able to advance the number of reps for more than one set. Example:

6x50, 6x50, 6x50, 6x50, 6x50  
7x50, 7x50, 7x50, 6x50, 6x50

Notice in the second line. Instead of the normal single rep increase in a set I increased a single rep in the first set, as this method requires, and I also increased the second and third set by one rep.

The actual number of sets and reps all depends on you... it is totally an individual choice based on how things are going. I normally started with five reps and would work up to a maximum of ten. Increase the weight and reduce the reps back down to five and work up again. Occasionally I would rep out to a maximum of twelve to fifteen reps on chest, back, and legs as they were larger muscle groups.

Mentally I had three highlights to this method of training.

1. In the beginning, when I was performing five reps, the workouts were shorter and more intense... liked that!
2. When I reached the maximum number of reps for all sets (10 to 15), it was a sense of accomplishment.
3. Once I had achieved the desired number of sets and reps I realized new size and strength.

It's another way to stay interested and not become bored with training. Each workout allowed for a new goal to be set and obtained. Thinking a championship body can be developed in a few short weeks is a marketing gimmick, it's not reality. It takes time, effort and consistent dedication. It's not who starts the race that counts but who finishes it.

This method allows for gradual increases. This helps produce a much better strength and muscle gain process. The body is far better able to adjust at a pace that is sensible. Some feel compelled to try and add ten, twenty or more pounds each set and each workout. A bodybuilder would soon discover the mistake in doing this.

Planned steady progression is the way to go. Regularity and workout consistency produces results.

Steady ahead! Consistent and sure! Have a great one!

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