

Training Legs Differently

by

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I'm not going to get into the fact most neglect their legs and focus a disproportionate amount of time to chest and arm work. Sad but true and I will remain silent on that subject for now, although that's hard for me to do.

Leg presses, squats, hacks, extensions, leg curls; these are movements that dominate leg workouts for the great majority. Secondary movements are Smith Machine squats, front squats, and lunges. Rarely performed and almost over-looked are the Sissy Squats, Farmers Walk, and Dumbbell Squats. I don't know why, these are excellent movements for producing size, shape, and cuts. They can be used for shape and definition routines as well as building mass and, they definitely help get you out of a rut from doing the same thing week in and week out. Versatility my friend and we have all faced boredom in our training from time to time.

Continued growth requires taxing the muscles in a progressive manner each workout. We also know that sticking points and boredom are real killers to any bodybuilder's life. Changing exercise movements is definitely one way to keep motivated and progressing forward. Selecting new movements is relatively easy for most body parts like arms, chest, shoulders, and back but for some reason, legs present a little more of a challenge, there does not seem to be the variety of movements to select from like there is other body parts. Most bodybuilders are constantly working to increase leg mass. They hit the squats, hacks, extensions and curls. They may change the set and rep sequence, maybe increase the weight and cut down the rest between sets. Maybe even change the order they perform the movements. By in large however, they stay with the same exercises.

The following program may be a unique twist compared to what most have been doing. As outlined, it can be used as a mass building routine or modified for shape and cuts. I will be the first to say you need to perform squats in your workouts to get the most mass possible. Still, if you have been doing squats and need a change or if for some reason you are unable or do not want to do regular back squats, you may just find this routine something to your liking. I am not addressing the calf muscles in this article only the Quads and Hams.

Legs will be worked two times per week. You must leave enough time between sessions to allow for proper rest and repair. If your first workout is on Monday, your next workout should be on Thursday. If it is on Tuesday, then your next workout will be on Friday.

Workout 1: To be performed the first leg workout of the week.

1. Leg Extensions 1 x 15, 1 x 12, 1 x 10, 1 x 8, 1 x 6
2. Dumbbell Squats 1 x 10, 1 x 8, 1 x 8, 1 x 6, 1 x 12
3. Leg Curl 3 – 4 x 10 – 12

Workout 2: To be performed the second leg workout of the week.

1. Sissy Squats 4 x 15
2. Stiff Leg Dead Lift 3x10

You will have to rest longer between sets for legs, compared to other bodyparts, but continually strive to reduce your rest between sets taking just enough time to catch your breath and not longer. Instead of keeping the same poundage on each set, pyramid, each set adding weight. Do not sacrifice form for weight however, as this will always result in diminished results and gains as well as open the door to injury.

Leg Extensions. Chances are you will not be able to do much about the position of this movement as most machines have a fixed position except for the adjustment up and down of the seat and also the length of the leg attachment. If however, you are able to

adjust the back position, drop it back so you are at about a 55-degree angle. If you are working out at home or on a machine that does not have a back support, lean back at approximately the same angle. The pads, where the backs of the knees rest, should be adjusted so that when you extend your legs, your feet should be positioned above the waist, not horizontal with the floor.

Dumbbell Squats. Chances are you have never heard of dumbbell squats let alone used them in your workouts. They are not that popular a movement but I can assure you; they do produce results and are an excellent change of pace from the exercises usually associated with leg workouts.

Begin with a stance you would normally use for squats placing your feet approximately shoulder width, or slightly less, apart. Toes should be pointed outward, just a little. Now holding a dumbbell in each hand, arms straight down at the sides, squat down. Once below parallel, come back up. Use the very same form you would use for a regular back squat, keep the back straight, head up, and breathe in on the way down and out on the way up.

Leg Curl. Not much can be altered here. You will be performing the movement on a seated or laying machine, a standing unit, or using a dumbbell between your feet. Older leg curl machines are designed so that you are laying flat. New models are designed so the upper torso and head are in a declined position, permit the movement to be performed while sitting, or allow you to stand up and use one leg at a time. In any case, the movements will work the hams regardless of the bench you use or just using the dumbbell between your feet. I have personally used each of the methods just described and find them all productive and basically left up to an individuals taste.

Sissy Squats. This one is extremely difficult to describe. Begin by spacing your feet a little less than shoulder width apart, place your heels on a block of wood about four to six inches high. Leaning back, lower the knees forward while keeping the upper body

at an angle forcing the front thighs to do the work. Coming up reverse the movement and in the top position do not lock the knees but keep constant pressure on the quads.

Stiff Leg Dead Lift. This movement is to be performed off the end of a flat bench. Grasp a bar slightly wider than shoulder width. Now move forward so that your toes are at the end of the bench, lock your knees and bend over, just like toe touches, as far as you can. You are not trying to get the pull in your lower back as when performing a dead lift for the back; this movement is to stretch your hamstring muscles so concentrate on the pull to the back of the leg. I repeat, do not employ this movement as the conventional dead lift for the back, it is to be used to stretch the hams.

Not a complicated routine by any means yet extremely productive. As with any routine, it can be modified for your particular needs and body type. Try it for about four to six weeks and you might just see results in the leg department you didn't think possible.

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