

Youth and Beginner Bodybuilding / Weight Training

by
Alan Palmieri

Before you begin any exercise or diet program consult your doctor or health care professional.

Although worded for the pre-teen or a teen beginning to take up bodybuilding, this routine is the same one adults, female and male beginners should follow. As mentioned in the text, diet is the key for either gaining or losing weight. In the beginning the exercises would be the same.

Recently I've had larger than normal requests from parents regarding bodybuilding and weight training for their children. I'm talking about pre-teens and teenagers, 12 years old and up. The main reason seems to stem from the parents desire to help their children prepare for some sporting activity or help them with self-confidence and self-esteem issues. They believe, and rightly so, that bodybuilding and weightlifting can help put weight on their frames, increase their muscle size, give them more strength, and build self-confidence and self-esteem. All of which can be accomplished through bodybuilding and the hoisting of barbells and dumbbells, if properly done.

The biggest problem I always face in these instances is not with the parents but with the children themselves. Teenagers run wide open all the time. They either have an abundance of energy or they have none at all. It's never half way. Their enthusiasm is great but it needs to be tempered especially when we are talking about training. Teenagers will also push themselves beyond what they should be doing. They want to test their power, lift their maximum, doing things that to be honest, can harm or damage

them permanently. There's an old saying, "You can do whatever you want when your young but you'll pay for it when you're older". Oh how true that is. Along with heaven knows how many other sayings, I can attest to that one as being accurate and have the aches and pains to prove it.

Youngsters with their indestructible attitude sometimes have no fear or no worries about pushing themselves not only to their limit but also beyond. Experience tells us that this is both good and bad. There is a time and a place for such an aggressive attitude. Bodybuilding and weightlifting at their age is definitely not the time or the place for such. A young teenagers skeletal, muscular, nerve, and organ development is not developed to a degree that would allow heavy lifting safely. Temporary or permanent damage and problems can occur. Naturally there are the exceptions. We've all heard about a sixteen year old who lifted enormous weight in the bench press, squat or other movement. Or even the eighteen year old who was built like a Mr. America. These are the exceptions and you have to remember they are genetically gifted, not that they didn't work hard and long to get to where they are but they are, I repeat, the exceptions.

It's old school I know but believe me, forty plus years has taught me it's still the best way. Build your foundation first. Now day's people want to start on the top floor. They forget that no house can stand unless it is built on a solid foundation. That was one of the great things about the bodybuilding mail order courses of years ago. Weider, Jowett, Atlas, you name them, they all started out gradually. The first lesson in each one was that of informing the student of proper form and technique, proper diet and nutritional information, muscles of the body and anatomy. They spent more time on telling students what was healthy and what was not than they did on actual exercises. They all laid a solid foundation and each started with freehand exercises. Each week presented a new lesson with more information and also more progressive exercises than the week before.

Today people rush out and get a book and do what they want... hang the fundamentals and foundation building, that takes too long. Forget the important health,

form and technique information. Jump in and get right to it! Do what you want not what you are supposed to do. For teenagers it's the fundamentals and foundation exercises that should be important. They need to develop the mind and muscle control. It's important they learn how to use the stabilizer muscles. They should know enough about anatomy and kinesiology to know the fundamentals of the basic movements. All this takes time. When people rush through or don't even attempt to consider these points a great deal is lost and harm can be done.

I would never suggest a teenager follow what they read in a bodybuilding magazine. It's too much! A more modified routine designed to coax and develop the body is what should be provided. Something that includes all the muscle groups and works them from a variety of angles. It is also important not to overload their system. Rome wasn't built in a day and believe me, you can't build your body that fast either. Teenagers have the capacity to eat tons of food, healthy or unhealthy. If they need to lose weight or gain weight the exercises need to stay the same only the diet needs to be altered to accommodate their needs. Naturally if one desires to drop weight they need to include additional calorie burning activities such as walking or jogging while reducing their fat, carbohydrate and calorie intake. If they want to gain weight they need to reduce calorie burning activities outside of their workouts and consume more nutritious protein foods with higher calorie content. In either case, teens should consume a minimum of 10 glasses of water every day.

It is advisable for teens to use a variety of movements in their workouts so they can start developing the mind / body connection mentioned earlier. Also mentioned was the importance of developing the stabilizer muscles. None of this can take place unless different movements are incorporated into a routine and these movements are repeated many times over.

It is also not advisable to lift weights everyday at the beginning. I know that enthusiasm runs high and the energy is there but that is not what the body needs, especially for the group we are talking about. A fundamental principle almost always left

out of any advice for beginners is this: Bodybuilding, weightlifting, and exercise, does not develop the muscles. It conditions them and actually tears down muscle tissue. It is during the rest and recuperation stages that muscles are built. Provided that is, sufficient protein and other important nutrients are consumed.

The following is a routine I would suggest a beginner or teenager should start with.

Monday:	Wednesday:	Friday:
1. Bench Press	1. Dumbbell Bench Press	1. Incline Barbell Press
2. Dumbbell Flyes	2. Barbell Pullover	2. Dead Lift
3. Bent Over Row	3. One Arm Dumbbell Row	3. Dumbbell Shrugs
4. Upright Row	4. Barbell Shrugs	4. Dumbbell Press
5. Military Press	5. Side Lateral Raises	5. Squats
6. Squats	6. Dumbbell Lunges	6. One Leg Calf Raises
7. Calf Raises	7. Seated Alternate Dumbbell Curl	7. Concentration Curl
8. Barbell Curl	8. One Arm Triceps Extensions	8. Triceps Kickbacks
9. Triceps Extensions	9. Wrist Curls	9. Reverse Curls
10. Reverse Crunches	10. Crunches	10. Crunches

How much weight, how many sets and reps are normally the next most logical questions. The sets and reps part is relatively easy and should follow the schedule I have provided. This systematic set and rep approach is designed to gradually increase your workload. As a reference, 1 x 10 stands for 1 set of 10 repetitions. So 2 x 10 is 2 sets of 10 repetitions and 3 x 10 is 3 sets of 10 repetitions. In the beginning, the amount of rest between sets should be about 1 to 1 ½ minutes. Always work to reduce this down. Try to set a goal of resting no longer than 30 seconds between sets, just long enough to catch your breath.

Week 1: 1 x 10

Week 2: 2 x 10

Week 3: 3 x 10

Week 4 through week 6: 3 x 10

After the sixth week, adjustments need to be made depending on progress made up to this point. The next progressive sequence would be a four-day per week schedule working specific muscle groups together. By six weeks I mean six weeks of workouts without missing any sessions. If a person has to miss three workouts or more in a six-week period they need to stay on the outlined routine for another week. Also, if you miss a workout do not think you can go back and make it up by doing double the next workout or the next day. A workout missed is a workout lost. There is no such thing as a makeup day.

As for the amount of weight to be used, depending on the age of the individual, care must be given as to not overload the resistance in any movement. Performing maximum lifts should be completely discouraged. Using poundage that allows ten repetitions to be performed is what the goal should be. If twelve or more repetitions can be performed the weight is too light. On the other hand if only eight repetitions can be performed the weight is too heavy.

Each movement should be performed through a full range of motion, full extension and full contraction. No half or partial movements are to be used. Beginners often abbreviate a movement because they feel it allows them to use more weight. The same holds true for cheating. Some will actually thrust or jerk the weight. This not only opens one up to injury but also takes the stress off the muscle being worked. These two situations are absolutely to be avoided.

Some may question why only one exercise for the biceps and one for the triceps as big arms are usually one of the first body parts beginners try to build. The truth is, this routine actually provides much more than one exercise for the bicep and triceps in each workout. They are not however direct but indirect movements. Take Monday's routine for example. The Bench Press, Military Press, Triceps Extensions, all work the triceps while the Bent Over Row, Upright Row, Barbell Curl all work the biceps. So the arms are definitely getting a good workout, but not being overworked. Beginners naturally drift

toward what they like rather than what should be done. This is why it is important to follow the outlined routine just as outlined and in the sequence listed.

Do not at any time, strain in lifting the weights. This is not what you should be doing. Straining can result in harm and damage internally as well as externally. The body will not respond well if you strain and it will hinder your progress and slow your results.

Tips for success

1. Once beyond beginner status, diet will account for 75% or better of your bodybuilding progress.
2. If you desire to gain weight, add additional calories and carbohydrates to your diet. Get additional rest and do not participate in calorie burning activities.
3. If you desire to lose weight, consume less calories and carbohydrates in your diet. Add additional calorie burning activities to your daily activities.
4. Never strain while performing any movement, train do not strain.
5. Pay attention to your daily hygiene.
6. Eat well-balanced meals.
7. Snack on wholesome foods, fruits and vegetables.
8. Drink at least 10 large glasses of water daily.
9. Get 8 hours of good sleep each night.
10. Avoid all tobacco and alcohol products.
11. Avoid all drugs.
12. Keep a positive outlook.
13. Don't miss workouts.
14. Use each day to learn something new.
15. Set goals and reach them.

Exercise Description Chart

Exercise	Muscle Worked	Description
Barbell Curl	Biceps, Forearms	Stand up straight with a shoulder width grip on a barbell. Arms hanging straight down with the bar across your upper thighs. Keep your upper arms pinned against your body throughout the movement. Moving only the hands and forearms curl the bar up in a semicircles from your thighs to your chin. Lower the bar slowly and repeat.
Barbell Pullover	Chest, Triceps, Serratus, Upper-Back	Lie on your back on a flat bench. Position your head so that it is at the very end of the bench or hanging over just a little. Have a barbell positioned on the floor behind your head. Reach back and grasp the bar with a grip that is slightly narrower than shoulder width. Pull the bar over your head while keeping your elbows bent throughout the movement. Lower and repeat.
Barbell Shrugs	Trapezuis, Neck, Upper Back	Stand erect holding a barbell with hands spaced about shoulder width apart and at arms length in front of you. Shrug your shoulders up like you are trying to have them touch your ears. Do not bend the elbows during the movement. Lower and repeat.
Bench Press	Pectorals, Deltoids, Triceps	Lying on your back on a flat bench, grip the barbell slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Lower the bar until it touches the middle of your chest. Do not allow the bar to rest on your chest. Be sure your upper arms travel directly out to your sides and you keep your elbows back. Return to the starting position and repeat.
Bent Over Row	Primarily for the Latissimus muscle of the upper back, Trapezius, Erector Spinae, Posterior Deltoids, Biceps	Begin with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Bend over at the waist until your upper torso is parallel with the floor. Bend your knees slightly to relieve stress to the lower back. Grab the barbell with a shoulder width grip; your palms should be facing your legs. Making sure your upper arms travel out to your sides and keep your elbows back, pull the bar up until it touches your stomach. Lower and repeat.
Concentration Curls	Biceps	In a seated position bend forward with your upper arm braced against the inside of your thigh. Holding a dumbbell in your hand curl it up while keeping your upper arm locked against your thigh. Lower and repeat.

Crunches	Upper Abdominals	Lie flat on the floor with your arms folded across your chest, your feet resting on a bench and knees bent. Curl your shoulders and upper body up toward your knees, lower and repeat.
Deadlifts	Back, especially the lower back, Hip, Thigh	Stand with a barbell in front of you. Bend down and grip the barbell having one palm facing you and the other facing away from you. From this squat like position with your arms straight, back straight and head up; lift the weight up keeping the bar in constant contact with the body. In the standing erect position squeeze your shoulders back. Lower and repeat.
Dumbbell Bench Press	Pectorals, Deltoids, Triceps.	This movement is performed just like the barbell bench press only you will be using a dumbbell in each hand. This allows you to bring the weight lower as there is no bar to touch your chest. The dumbbell press requires more practice and balance.
Dumbbell Flyes	Pectorals and Frontal Deltoids	Lie on your back on a flat bench with a dumbbell held in each hand at arms length above your chest. Bend your elbows slightly. Lower the dumbbells out and away from your body until your upper arms are below your bodyline and you feel a good stretch in your chest. Do not allow the dumbbells to go below your bodyline as that is an excessive stretch and places too much stress on the muscles and joints. Return and repeat. Your movement should resemble that of your attempting to hug a huge tree. Keep arms fixed throughout the movement.
Dumbbell Lunges	Thighs, Quadriceps, Buttocks, Hips, Hamstrings	Stand erect with a dumbbell in each hand holding them at arms length at your sides. Start with your feet together, chest held high. Step forward with one foot until your upper thigh is parallel with the floor and your back knee is just touching the floor. Do not allow the knee to rest on the floor. Push back up and return to the starting position. Switch back and forth with each leg until the desired number of repetitions are completed.
Dumbbell Press	Deltoids, Triceps, Trapezius	Sit up straight at the end of a flat bench with a dumbbell in each hand at shoulder level, the inside plates of the dumbbells should be to the outside of your deltoids. The palm of both hands must be facing forward. Now press both arms straight up and overhead. Lower and repeat.

Dumbbell Shrug	Trapezuis, Neck, Upper Back	Stand erect holding a dumbbell in each hand with your arms extended straight down by your side. Shrug your shoulders up like you are trying to have them touch your ears. Do not bend the elbows during the movement. Lower and repeat.
Incline Barbell Press	Pectorals, Deltoids, Triceps	Lie on an incline bench that is set at an angle between 25 and 45 degrees. Taking a grip wider than shoulder width, remove the bar from the rack and lower it to your upper chest. Return and repeat.
Military Press	Deltoids, Triceps, Trapezius	Stand erect with your feet spaced about shoulder width apart. Bend the knees slightly. Take a shoulder width grip on a barbell, palms facing away from the body. The bar should be resting across your shoulders and upper chest. Press the bar upward over your head until your elbows lock. Lower and repeat.
One Arm Dumbbell Rows	Primarily for the Latissimus muscle of the upper back, Biceps	Position yourself bent over with your left knee and left hand on the edge of a flat bench. Reach down and grab a dumbbell. Pull the dumbbell up to your body. The motion is similar to that of trying to pull start a lawnmower. Perform the desired number of repetitions and switch to the other side.
One Arm Triceps Extensions	Triceps	Sitting on the end of a flat bench while holding a dumbbell in one hand, raise the arm holding the dumbbell straight up overhead. Keep your upper arm in close to your head throughout the movement. Bend you forearm at the elbow and lower the dumbbell behind the held. Return and repeat.
One Leg Calf Raise	Gastrocnemius, Soleus	Stand erect holding a dumbbell in your right hand arms length at your side. Your right foot should be on a 2 x 4 block of wood. Heel on the floor with only the toes and ball of your foot on the 2 x 4. Stabilize yourself by holding onto something with your left hand. Curl your left leg behind you. Now rise up on your toes as high as you can. Lower and repeat for the desired number of repetitions. Change sides and repeat the process for the other side.
Reverse Crunch	Lower Abdomen.	Lie flat on your back on the floor. Bend your knees and begin to lift and curl your feet and knees up and toward your upper torso. Try to touch your upper thighs with your torso, almost like you are doing a leg-lift only more of a curl is required.

Reverse Curls	Forearms, Biceps	Stand erect while holding a barbell at arms length in front of you, the bar touching your upper thighs and your palms facing your thighs. This is a reverse grip from the barbell curl. Keep your elbows fixed to your sides and curl the weight upward.
Seated Alternate Dumbbell Curl	Biceps, Forearm	Sit on the end of a flat bench, arms straight down to your sides with a dumbbell held in each hand. Curl one dumbbell up to your shoulder. Then, as you lower that dumbbell, curl up the other one in an alternating manner.
Side Lateral Raises	Side Deltoids	Stand erect with a dumbbell in each hand touching in front of you. Keep your elbows slightly bent. Simultaneously raise the dumbbells out from the side of your body until they are above your shoulders. Lower and repeat.
Squats	Thigh Muscles, Hips, Buttocks, Hamstrings, Back, Abdominal, Heart and Lungs	Stand erect with your feet flat on the floor and a little wider than shoulder width apart with a barbell placed across your lower neck resting on your trapezius muscles. Look forward and up, keep your eyes and head looking in this position throughout the movement. Lower yourself into a full squat. Keep your head up – back straight - upper torso upright. On your way down, once your thighs have dipped below parallel with the floor, come up to the starting position. Those who are not flexible in the ankles may wish to place their heels on a 2 x 4 until they develop more flexibility.
Triceps Extensions	Triceps	Standing erect with feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent. Take a close grip on the middle of the barbell with your index fingers being approximately six inches apart. With your arms straight above your head, keep your upper arms still your elbows pointing up throughout the movement. Bend your elbows and lower the barbell in a semicircular arc until it goes back over your head. Return and repeat.
Triceps Kickbacks	Triceps	Holding a dumbbell in one hand bend over at the waist until the upper body is parallel with the floor. Use your other hand to hold onto a bench. Keep your upper arm fixed against the body and do not allow it to move, straighten out the forearm as you are taking the dumbbell back and slightly upward. Lower and repeat.

Wrist Curls	Forearms	Sit at the end of a flat bench with your forearms lying flat on the bench. Your wrists and hands hanging over the end of the bench, palms facing up. Take a close grip on the barbell; the little finger (pinky) of both hands should be approximately 8" apart. Flex your wrist as you curl the bar up as high as possible, lower and repeat.
-------------	----------	--

The descriptions listed are general and many variations of not only the body position but also the actual movement may be used at some point in time during your training. In the beginning, the descriptions listed should be used.

General Glossary

Abs - Abbreviation for abdominal muscles, the stomach.

Barbell – A bar used for exercising. The bar is usually four to seven feet in length with plates on both ends.

Bi's – Abbreviation for biceps.

Burns – Three to four partial (1/4) reps of a movement performed at the end of a set.

Cheating – Calling upon assisting muscle groups to help perform a movement because the weight being used is too heavy.

Delts - Abbreviation for deltoids or shoulders.

Dumbbell – A short bar used for exercises usually about fourteen inches in length.

Forced Reps – Abbreviation for forced repetitions. Performing additional repetitions of an exercise by relying on assistance when the muscle can no longer complete the movement on its own.

Gluts – Abbreviation for gluteus maximus (buttocks).

Hams – Abbreviation for hamstrings. The group of muscles located at the back of the thigh.

Lats – Abbreviation for latissimus dorsi. The large back muscle.

Lay Off – Taking time off or away from training.

Obliques – Abbreviation for external obliques. The muscles located on the side of the waist.

Over Train – More commonly known as over training. When an exercise program becomes too strenuous causing a lack of progress, loss in size, strength, or mental drive.

Partial Reps – Performing an exercise without going through a complete range of motion.

Peak Contraction – Exercising a muscle by using shortened movements causing the muscle to cramp.

Pec's – Abbreviation for pectoral. The muscles of the chest.

Pump – Exercising to increase the blood supply to a given muscle group thus making it become larger and the skin tighter.

Reps – Abbreviation for repetitions. The repeating of an exercise movement.

Set – A fixed number of repetitions. For example six repetitions make one set.

Split Program – A form of training in which you divide muscle groups to be worked at different times or on different days.

Sticking Point – When progress or gains in training come to a halt.

Supersets – Alternating back and forth between two exercises until the prescribed number of sets is completed.

Traps – Abbreviation for trapezius. The large muscles located at the back of the neck.

Tri Sets – Alternating back and forth between three exercises until the prescribed number of sets is completed.

Tri's – Abbreviation for triceps. The group of large muscles at the back of the upper arm. Also abbreviation for Tri Sets.

© Copyright 2005 Alan Palmieri