

# Back Training

Training your back effectively is one of the most difficult and complex tasks you will encounter in the gym. Sure other body parts can be tough, but not like back – for three big reasons:

1. In contrast to most other body parts, the back is comprised of a large number of individual muscle groups. This translates into having to train multiple muscles to develop a balanced back.

2. You can't see your back (unless you starred in the Exorcist or Beetle Juice) so it's hard to establish that 'mind muscle connection' and feel the movement correctly.

3. Simply put, the sheer effort required to grow a good back is tremendous.

So the question is, given these three points, how can we design an effective back training program? Let's address the issues in sequential order:

Since the back is made up of a number of smaller muscles, it would stand to reason that a variety of different exercises would be required to adequately stimulate all muscle groups. While this is true to an extent, for practicality we can broadly split back exercises into "thickness" and "width" exercises. Using this generalization, thickness exercises would include things like deadlifts and horizontal rows that mainly hit the inner or medial groups of back muscles, while width exercises would be primarily vertical pulldown movements that target the outer or lateral muscles like your lats. During your workout you can alternate thickness and width exercises or do all of one type together, whatever you prefer. Also, depending on which you need more (thickness or width), you can tailor your program accordingly and emphasize those exercises that will address your weaknesses.

Onto the problem of feeling the back muscles work. This is probably the most common difficulty people have in regards to training back properly. Unfortunately, by habit most people use their arms instead of their back to move the weight. Horrendous form is also prevalent in back training, which exacerbates the inability to feel the target muscles work. In contrast to most other muscle groups, it takes a deliberate effort to feel the back working during an exercise. To learn how to properly isolate your back, first off you need to decrease the amount of weight you typically do for an exercise by 50%. Yes, I said 50%. Don't worry about your ego at this point – the goal is to teach you to contract your back muscles, not impress your friends. Close your eyes, and SQUEEZE the back during each concentric movement. Make the movement SLOW and DELIBERATE. NO cheating. THINK about the movement and FEEL the back working. CONCENTRATE little grasshopper! Seriously though, once you get that feeling, only then do you increase the weight. If you lose the feel, go back to the lighter weights until you get it again. It will take time so be patient, but the benefits in terms of growth will far outweigh the temporary drop in weights. And who knows, you'll probably get a better workout using the reduced weights anyway.

Now the third issue: Effort. Such a simple word but such a hard thing to do consistently, day-after-day and workout-after-workout. We all know what it takes to train a bodypart like legs, and we need the same intensity for back training. If you don't know, I can't really help you. You need to attack those weights like they're your mortal enemy. Whatever you need to do to get fired up, do it. Read some Animal ads, listen to some motivating music, get angry, and kick some ass. It's as simple (and sometimes as difficult) as that.

## **Example back workout #1**

**Weighted chins 3 x 6-20**

**V-pulldown 2 x 6-8**

**Deadlift 3 x 6-12**

**Bent-over bar row 1 x 10-12**