

7 WAYS TO MAKE **YOUR WORKOUTS... BETTER**

If you haven't figured it out yet, the human body is a marvel of creation. Not only is it beautiful and resilient, but it's also an energy-conserving, self-preserving organism that does all it can do to adapt to the demands that are placed on it.

For example, each time you lift a certain weight, fewer muscle fibers are recruited to perform the lift. Your body doesn't like stress, so it quickly gets good at lifting the weight. It goes without saying then that you have to make changes to your routine every now and then if you want to activate new muscle fibers and create new growth and strength.

It only takes small modifications, or "tweaks," to turn the old exercises you've been doing for months without results into effective mass makers. I'm going to show you how to create a variety of completely new exercises that will bring major changes in your overall performance and gains in the gym.

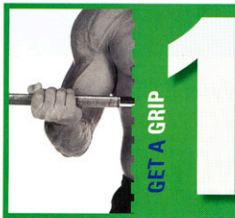
Training for hypertrophy, or increased muscle size, can be very confusing with

**TWEAKING YOUR
WORKOUTS CAN
LEAD TO
MASSIVE GAINS
BY CLARK BARTRAM**

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAY RIUSOVICH
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so many "expert theories" circulating in the different magazines. My suggestion is to not get too hung up on any one of these programs for too long. Many are valid and have helped countless people gain size and strength, but variety is the spice of life and is also the key to a successful exercise program.

What follows are some of the various tweaks I've learned over the years to power up my workouts. Try them for yourself and use them as a foundation to create other small changes that will lead you to the big results you're looking for.



▲ One of the simplest alterations you can make to any exercise that requires you to wrap your hands around a bar is to change your grip. When you're doing barbell curls or performing bench presses, for example, moving your hands closer together or farther apart will stress your muscles in different ways.

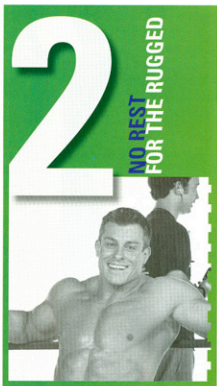
Similarly, most triceps pressdown and lat pulldown machines come with a variety of different handles that allow you to hit your muscles from different angles. Be sure to take advantage of these different handles from time to time. If you're doing triceps pressdowns, for instance, one day you can use a straight bar, one day you can use an angled bar, and another day you can use a rope handle.

You can even surprise your body by changing your grip for dumbbell exercises. Have you ever gone to a different gym and used a different type of dumbbell? The first thing you probably said to yourself was, "Man, this feels weird!" That's because your body was used to the size and shape of the dumbbell handles at your old gym.

Now, I realize that most gyms don't change their dumbbells every few weeks, but here's an easy way to change your grip: Take a small workout towel and wrap it around each dumbbell handle. By creating a larger surface for your hand to wrap around, you'll cause your body to recruit new muscle fibers to perform the lift. Trust me, this works great—on dumbbell and barbell exercises. Try it for a few weeks, then go back to the normal handles and see what happens.

▼ Another very simple alteration you can do to boost your gains in the gym (and reduce the effects of lactic acid buildup) is to cut down your rest time between sets. This requires some concentration—I know all too well how easy it is to get caught up in some stupid conversation with someone after a great set and wait way too long before hitting the weights again.

The next time you go to the gym, put on your Walkman or simply avoid making eye contact with Chatty Cathy and get down to stimulating some serious fast-twitch muscle fibers. If you work out with a partner, use the "I go, you go" method. You do your set, he immediately does his, then you go again right away and so on.





▲ Many people get stuck in the mentality that you have to do three sets of 10 repetitions for each exercise. Now don't you think that after all these years in the gym, your body—incredible organism that it is—has figured out your boring routine and is basically asleep at the wheel? I'm telling you that you'll never activate any new growth if you get stuck in this rut.

It's time to increase the number of sets you do. Take any given exercise—let's use the bench press as an example. Choose a weight that's 80 percent of your one-rep maximum (1RM). Do 10 sets of 10 repetitions on the bench press with a rest period of no more than 60 seconds between sets and get out.

That's it! Your body will freak out and have to respond differently than normal. You obviously won't do this every time you hit chest, but throwing this tweak in the mix every now and then will force you to grow. Try it with leg extensions as well.

"DO 10 SETS OF 10 REPS ON THE BENCH PRESS WITH A REST PERIOD OF NO MORE THAN 60 SECONDS BETWEEN SETS AND GET OUT."

▼ Time under tension is a principle that many trainees often overlook, simply because they get caught up in the mindset that how much they can lift is more important than how well they lift a weight. But with time under tension, you eliminate the use of momentum and you won't be able to lift much weight.

Let's say you're doing squats. On the eccentric or negative part of the movement, slow your tempo down to a snail's pace. Have your partner time you and take a full 60 seconds to complete the eccentric portion of the squat before performing the concentric part of the movement at regular speed. Be sure to maintain perfect form all the way through and try to do at least eight to 10 repetitions.



► This is a tweak I toyed around with back in my competition days. I'd choose one exercise for a specific body part and do 100 reps non-stop.

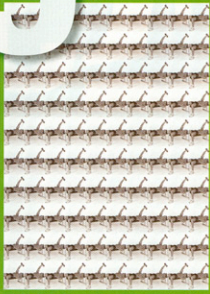
Obviously, you'll be using a much lighter weight to accomplish this extreme task. Use your instincts to select a weight that allows you to complete at least 70 reps but no more than 100 reps. If you want to feel like you just filleted the muscle right off the bone, then I dare you to give this a try?

▼ We talked about going super-slow, and now it's time for a fast alternative. After you perform the eccentric portion of a lift at a regular or slow speed, explode through the concentric phase as hard and as fast as you can without sacrificing your form.

There's a principle taught in the training community referred to as SAID, which stands for Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands. In other words, a muscle will adapt to whatever type of training stimulus you give it. If your training objectives, lifestyle or particular sport require explosive or sudden bursts of strength, then this is a great tweak for you.

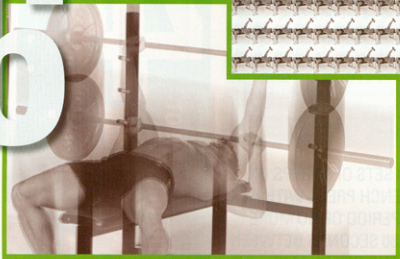
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100 IN A ROW



GO BALLISTIC

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► Sometimes you have to make wholesale changes to your program to energize your mind as well as your body. A challenging new workout can go a long way toward alleviating the boredom that sets in with the same old routine.

Last week I made a tweak that absolutely kicked my butt! Instead of my typical one-muscle-group-per-day routine, I did whole-body circuit training on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and took spin classes on Tuesday and Thursday.

The circuit training hit every muscle group with three sets. One day I did the three sets for each body part consecutively, and on the other two days I did the entire circuit all the way through, three times in a row.

Adding the spin classes gave a boost to my cardio program, in addition to killing my quads and calves. There's really no science behind this one—just be creative to alleviate some boredom.



**LEARN WHAT
WORKS
FOR YOU**

**7
SHAKE THE
BLUES**



Your unique genetic makeup determines how you'll respond to different training protocols. Some of the tweaks I've described may work better for you than others, but try them all and see how you respond. Then, when it comes time to make some tweaks again, you can use the ones that worked best for you and come up with some new ones that you think might be beneficial.

Never limit yourself by sticking with the same exercise program for too long. Even if you're making great gains on a program, at some point your body is going to adapt and you'll need to make changes. Getting "tweaked" now and then will shock your body into new growth, and will allow you to make even bigger gains when you go back to your old program. ⇄



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