

# **How to build a bigger bench press**

By Stuart McRobert

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First follow “The Program” detailed in Chapter 17 of **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT**. Only after the minimum period of 12 months on “The Program” should you consider implementing this bench press specialization program.

## **Introduction**

If you’re a bodybuilder you’ll want to develop as good a physique as possible, but not everyone wants to develop their muscles or bench press to the maximum. Whatever your training-related goals are, **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** shows you how to achieve them.

The chances are you don’t have the freaky genetics required for a huge bench press like the monster benchers have, but everyone has potential for improvement.

Most trainees have the potential for substantial improvement in their bench press provided they haven’t already trained successfully for many years. But a few trainees are so genetically unsuited to the bench press that they make very slow progress, and have only moderate ultimate potential. For them, the exercise is frustrating. They may be better off using an alternative but comparable exercise that’s more rewarding for progress in strength and muscular development -- the parallel bar dip, in many cases.

**Although your heredity is out of your control, your training, recuperation and dedication are FULLY IN YOUR CONTROL.** And what you DO with your heredity is more important than the heredity per se.

Everything you need to know to build the best physique that’s possible for you is included in CS Publishing’s books and the back issues of **HARDGAINER** magazine.

**BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** is the single most complete instructional guide on strength training and body

transformation. Much of the guidance in that book isn't common practice, but it **WORKS WONDERS** when implemented correctly.

### **General comment on specialization programs**

If balanced routines are used -- like in "The Program" detailed in **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** -- and each exercise is trained with comparable effort, all bodyparts and exercises will develop as well as they can according to individual genetic potential. But if some areas are neglected, they may lag behind other areas, comparatively speaking.

One of your bodyparts (and the exercises that train it) may be more responsive to training than the rest of your physique, because of a greater genetic potential in the former. There may be a big difference. For example, a few people have huge calves even though they have never done any exercise for them other than everyday activities. Some people have potential in several bodyparts that's out of proportion to that of the rest of their physiques.

If you have a lagging bodypart or exercise because of neglect, you may be able to bring it up to the level of the rest of your physique if you train it progressively for long enough. But if the imbalance is genetically determined, and substantial, it may not be fully correctable no matter how much specialization is done.

A specialization routine may help to correct or minimize a lagging bodypart or exercise. If, however, the specialization work is overdone, it will hinder progress, not help it.

## **The bench press program**

Building a bigger bench press is dependent on the quartet of technique, training program, progression, and patience.

### **TECHNIQUE**

If you've been arching your back, or bouncing the bar on your chest, you need to retreat a step before you can start moving forward. That incorrect technique, while perhaps boosting by a few pounds what you can currently handle, greatly increases your chance of injury together with not actually stimulating much if any strength or growth increase. And if you get injured, you won't make any progress. Everyone who uses sloppy technique in the bench press gets hurt, **EVENTUALLY**.

## **EXERCISE TECHNIQUE PRIORITY!**

Properly done, weight-lifting is safe, but the use of correct exercise technique is the exception in nearly all gyms. Gyms are usually terrible places for learning correct exercise technique. Few trainees practice correct technique because hardly anyone knows what it is, and this includes most gym instructors, and personal trainers. Exercise technique isn't secondary to program design, and training intensity. Technique comes first!

Exercise technique isn't simple. It requires detailed instruction, and serious study, if you're to master it.

I sustained most of my training injuries because I used incorrect exercise technique. All of these injuries were avoidable.

*See **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** for extensive detail and many photographs on the correct technique for safe, effective bench pressing. No other book covers exercise technique with the same care, thoroughness and accuracy.*

## **TRAINING PROGRAM**

Most people bench press too often, and use too many assistance exercises. As a result they stagnate because they exceed their bodies' abilities to cope.

Make the bench press (including the close-grip bench press) your **ONLY** chest and triceps work. This may appear radical, but it will produce the attention you need on the focus movement -- to produce harder training and less overall demand on your recovery ability (from reduced training volume).

**The close-grip bench press is a misnomer. It shouldn't actually involve a close grip. Use a shoulder-width grip. Some trainees use a closer grip, but that commonly irritates the wrists and sometimes the elbows, too, and it causes balance problems. The shoulder-width bench press is safer and more effective.**

To begin with, bench press three times every **TWO** weeks -- for example, Monday, Friday, Wednesday, Monday, and so on. But alternate two different workouts. You'll bench press at alternate

workouts only, which means you'll bench press three times every two weeks. Follow the split routine given on page 487 of **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT**. Of course, use the bench press not the parallel bar dip -- that split routine provides the option of the bench press **OR** the parallel bar dip.

Before each workout, do a general full-body warm-up for at least five minutes, using an elliptical, ski machine, or rower, for example. Do enough to break you into a sweat.

At the workouts where you bench press, bench press **FIRST**, when your energy and focus should be at their peak.

For your first bench press workout, and with a helper to give you feedback on your forearms positioning and technique as a whole, perform six sets of five reps with 50% of your usual work-set poundage for five reps. Learn the new, correct exercise technique as described in **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT**.

Thereafter, at each bench press workout, perform two or three warm-up sets plus three work sets (and later on, just two) of five to eight reps each. Choose the rep count you feel most comfortable with. Some people are better reppers than others. Some, for example, can progress well on sets of five reps but really struggle with higher reps.

For the non-bench-press exercises, perform just one per bodypart: warm-up work plus two work sets each of your preferred rep count. Aim to make slow but steady progress in strength on each **ONLY** during the first half or so of the bench press specialization program. Thereafter, when the bench press training will be very hard, **back off everywhere else, to FOCUS on your bench press in order to keep progress happening there**. During the latter period, just **MAINTAIN** your strength elsewhere -- use **CONSTANT** exercise poundages.

Progressively add weight each bench press workout **WITHOUT** compromising on the new, correct technique. Time things so that in the seventh workout -- fifth week -- you **APPROACH** working hard, but **NOT** at your limit. You should be able to make, for example, your three work sets of five reps with the **SAME** poundage, with four minutes rest between sets. The first set will feel easier than the third, but don't rep out more than your target reps. Thereafter, the rate of poundage increase should be slowed, as shown in the illustration.

Keep accurate records of your workouts.

## PROGRESSION

Here's an example, imagining that you can currently bench press 225 for a single, full-bore set of five reps, albeit with loose technique:

### *Bench press workout 1*

Perform sufficient sets with 110 pounds to learn the new technique.

### *Bench press workout 2*

110 for two sets of five reps, 150 for three sets of five reps  
*Extra sets for technique practice should be performed, if required.*

### *Bench press workout 3*

110 x 5, 135 x 5, 160 for 3 x 5

### *Bench press workout 4*

110 x 5, 135 x 5, 170 for 3 x 5

### *Bench press workout 5*

110 x 5, 145 x 5, 180 for 3 x 5

### *Bench press workout 6*

110 x 5, 155 x 5, 190 for 3 x 5

### *Bench press workout 7 (fifth week)*

110 x 5, 165 x 5, 200 for 3 x 5

At this workout, and every bench press workout thereafter, include the close-grip bench press (actually, **SHOULDER-WIDTH** bench press). After the final set of regular bench presses, rest four minutes and then do a single set of close-grips. Through initial trial and error, find the weight reduction relative to the regular bench press that produces the poundage that **JUST** permits one set of five reps in the close-grips. **Then thereafter apply the same poundage progression to the close-grips that you do to the regular-grip bench press.**

### *Bench press workout 8*

110 x 5, 165 x 5, 205 for 3 x 5

Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5

### *Bench press workout 9*

110 x 5, 175 x 5, 210 for 3 x 5

Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5

*Bench press workout 10*

110 x 5, 175 x 5, 215 for 3 x 5

Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5

*Bench press workout 11*

135 x 5, 185 x 5, 220 for 3 x 5

Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5

**You must train hard to stimulate progress. See page 499 of **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** for valuable tips on how to train hard but with discipline.**

*Bench press workout 12*

135 x 5, 185 x 5, 222 for 3 x 5

Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5

*Poundage progression has been reduced to two pounds. The slowing of progression would have occurred earlier if the five-pound increments couldn't be sustained. Find the rate of progression that's suited to YOU.*

**Because the bench pressing has now become intensive in this illustration, it's from now until the end of this specialization program that you should back off the rest of your training. Just MAINTAIN your strength levels in the non-bench-press work -- make no effort to progress there. Focus on the bench pressing and making consistent progress there.**

*Bench press workout 13*

135 x 5, 190 x 5, 224 for 3 x 5

Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5

*Bench press workout 14*

135 x 5, 175 x 5, 200 x 5, 226 for 3 x 5

Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5

In this illustration you're now just beyond your former 225 x 5 level, but it's for multiple sets, and in correct technique. You've built the foundation for sustained progress.

**Now, train twice a week only, alternating the two workouts. Thus you'll shift to bench pressing just ONCE per week. Continue to add two pounds per bench press workout.**

***Bench press workout 15***

**135 x 5, 175 x 5, 200 x 5, 228 for 3 x 5**

**Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5**

***Bench press workout 16***

**135 x 5, 175 x 5, 205 x 5, 230 for 3 x 5**

**Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5**

***Bench press workout 17***

**135 x 5, 175 x 5, 205 x 5, 232 for 3 x 5**

**Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5**

***Bench press workout 18***

**135 x 5, 175 x 5, 210 x 5, 234 for 3 x 5**

**Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5**

**Now, reduce the work sets for the regular bench press to two.**

***Bench press workout 19***

**135 x 5, 175 x 5, 210 x 5, 236 for 2 x 5**

**Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5**

***Bench press workout 20***

**135 x 5, 175 x 5, 210 x 5, 238 for 2 x 5**

**Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5**

***Bench press workout 21***

**135 x 5, 175 x 5, 215 x 5, 240 for 2 x 5**

**Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5**

***Bench press workout 22***

**135 x 5, 175 x 5, 215 x 5, 241 for 2 x 5**

**Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5**

***Poundage progression has been reduced to one pound. How do you add just one pound at a time, or two pounds? See BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT. The slowing of progression would have occurred earlier if the two-pound increments couldn't be sustained.***

***Find the rate of progression that's suited to YOU.***

**Then after nine further bench press workouts . . .**

### *Bench press workout 31*

135 x 5, 185 x 5, 220 x 5, 250 for 2 x 5

Close-grip bench press: 1 x 5

**Again, keep accurate records of your workouts.**

These 30 bench press workouts would equate to 26 weeks of training.

The above is an illustration of excellent, real-world progress. Something similar is realistic for you IF this is the first time you've used abbreviated training and small poundage increments, IF you're fully dedicated to your training and the components of your recuperation, and IF you've not already realized your full potential for the bench press.

**Resist any temptation to add sets, exercises or workouts. Instead, add more focus and effort to the bench press!**

You must get everything right **OUT OF THE GYM**, or the good work in the gym will be negated by poor recuperation. If you cut corners with your nutrition, sleep, and rest in general, your body will cut corners on your progress in the gym.

### **PATIENCE**

There's no fast way to build a bigger bench press. Adopt the program as written, and plug away at it. You must be patient and persistent. And if you can keep the poundage increments happening, albeit at "just" one pound a week, don't stop the program. Keep it going.

## **FURTHER HELP . . .**

**See BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT for all the details on how to train, and a treasure trove of everything related to training. At over 600 pages, and with nearly 400 photographs, this is the most complete book on body transformation. But if you don't agree, you may return it for a refund.**

For further information, visit

[www.hardgainer.com](http://www.hardgainer.com)

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