

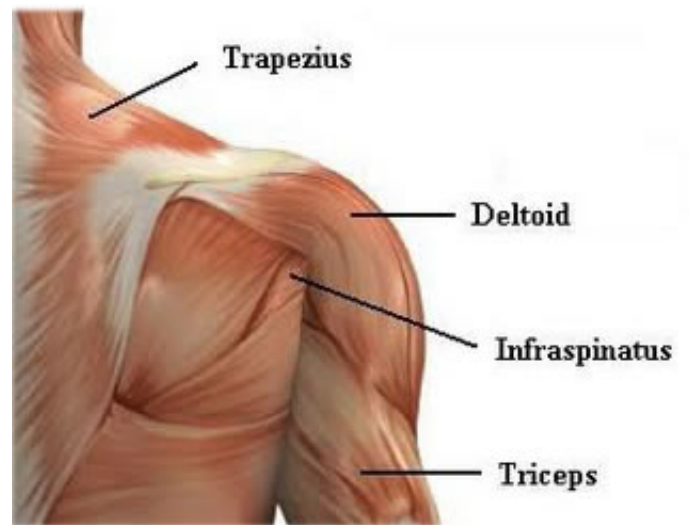


Muscle Focus: Shoulders

Luke Barden, April 2014

The shoulder is made up of three main muscles: The Deltoids, the Rotator Cuff and there is also the Trapezius (traps).

Although the traps were mentioned with the back, they are also a key part to the shoulder, so are worth considering with this body part. They have been explained in the previous muscle focus for the back however, so this article will focus on the deltoids and the rotator cuff (Teres Major, Minor, Sartorius and Infraspinatus).



The Deltoids

Made up of three distinct heads, the anterior, medial and lateral deltoids, the deltoids are the prime mover in arm abduction, though it is an antagonist when using the pectorals (chest) or latissimus dorsi (back).

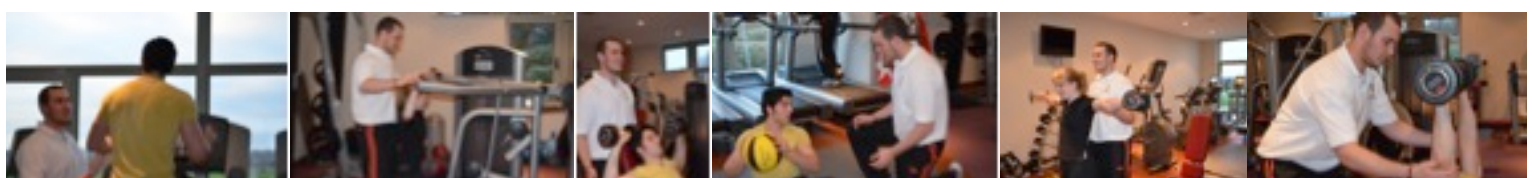
To work the deltoids, you can either use compound movements, or isolation movements to attempt to focus on each of the three heads individually. That is, to work them with multiple muscles (hanging clean and press, upright rows) or to focus the movement on only the shoulders (front raises, side raises, reverse flies).

Rotator Cuff

The rotator cuff is a group of four muscles (supraspinatus, infraspinatus, teres minor and subscapularis) and tendons responsible for stabilizing the shoulder joint. It also aids somewhat in shoulder movements, and should therefore be warmed up before your workout.

To work the rotator cuffs, ensure you start with a very light weight, maintain perfect form and use high rep ranges. Slowly increase the weight once you are comfortable with the movements.

Using a dynaband to begin with, and working up to cables once you are confident, stand side on to the resistance. Keep your elbow by your side with a 90 degree bend, tight to the body and rotate the shoulder until the palm of your hand would be facing forwards. You should feel a tight contraction in the back of the shoulder joint





Training the shoulders

I have mentioned exercises that train each muscle above, and now will explain a bit about training the shoulders.

Compound movements work best with developing muscles. They allow you to work multiple muscles over multiple joints, i.e. the shoulders, traps and triceps, worked through the spine and the shoulders for hanging clean and presses. They also allow you to get stronger quickly, therefore improving the connections between all the muscles and their ability to work together. With shoulders it is always important to keep perfect form, with much lighter weights if necessary, to get the best contraction.

Some quick pointers on two key shoulder exercises:

Hanging Clean & Press

Hanging clean and presses are a shorter version of the Olympic 'clean and press' exercise. To learn this correctly technique is essential, with vital points being:

- Keep the back as straight as possible throughout the movement, do not arch!
- Keep the bar close to the body, bringing the elbows high then flicking them under the bar at the top.
- Keep the head upright & chest out, do not face the floor.

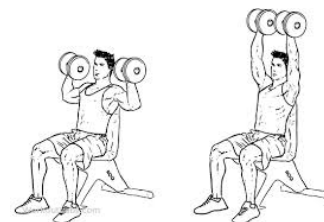


Grasp the bar and pull firmly, to allow all the muscles to tense, before fully exerting your strength into lifting the bar. Aim to push the floor away, as apposed to pull the bar up. Keep your chest up, and tense your core throughout.

Dumbbell Presses

Less weight will be used with dumbbell presses than if you were to use a bar, however they allow a larger range of motion, which is important for full development.

- Use a bench, and perform them seated
- Bring the dumbbells from level with your ears to full arm extension above the head



Dumbbell presses are very effective when working the shoulders, as you can use all the heads of the muscle. Using a bar forces you to come down in front or behind the head, focusing on the front or rear heads.

