

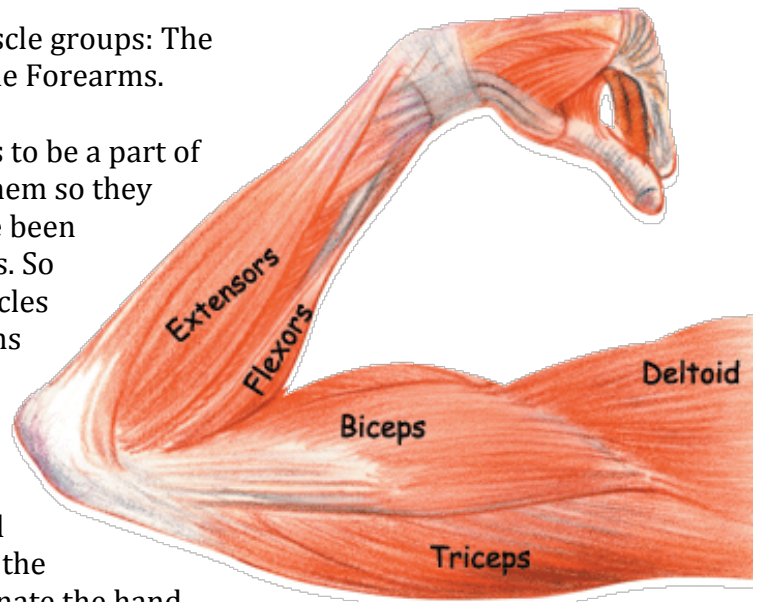


Muscle Focus: Arms

Luke Barden, May 2014

The arm is made up of three main muscle groups: The Biceps, the Triceps and there is also the Forearms.

Although some consider the shoulders to be a part of the arms, we have already looked at them so they will not be mentioned here. They have been explained in the previous muscle focus. So this article will focus on the main muscles in the arm; biceps, triceps and forearms (extensors and flexors).



The Biceps

The Biceps Brachii, is a two headed muscle that connects the shoulder and the forearm. The primary functions of the biceps is to flex the elbow, and to supinate the hand.

The biceps also work with the back with the pulling movements used to train it. To work the biceps, you can either use compound movements, or isolation movements to attempt to focus on them individually. That is, to work them with multiple muscles (close grip pullups, close grip rows) or to focus the movement on only the biceps (bicep curls). When working the biceps, for the most part, maintaining perfect form with a lighter weight is a much more effective way to train them.

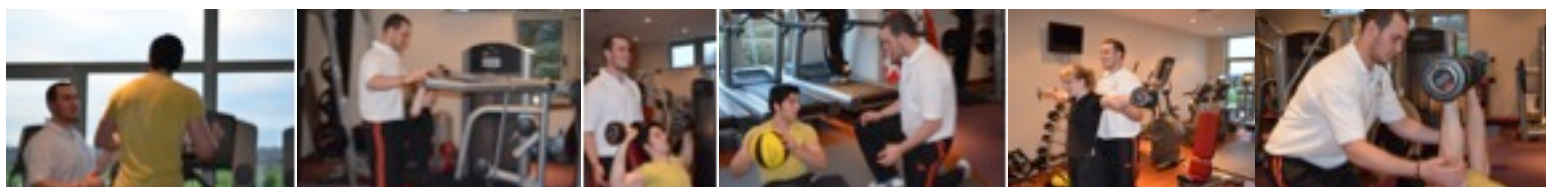
The Triceps

The triceps brachii is a three headed muscle on the back of the arm that makes up the larger part of the top of the arm. It is primarily responsible for extending the elbow joint. It therefore aids somewhat in chest movements that use a pressing motion (press ups for example).

To work the triceps, ensure you start with a very light weight, maintain perfect form and use the full range of motion. Slowly increase the weight once you are comfortable with the movements.

The Forearms

Made up of extensors and flexors, the forearm will be used in all exercises where you grip something firmly, to specifically build them, do both pronated and supinated wrist curls.





Training the arms

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

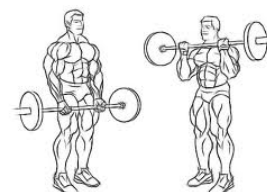
Compound movements do normally work best with developing muscles. They will work multiple muscles over multiple joints. However, although they should be included for the arms, I will explain isolation exercises to really focus on the part of the arm you are trying to work. With arms it is almost always important to keep perfect form, with much lighter weights if necessary, to get the best contraction. There is a time for cheat reps, but that is much further down the line when you already have significant arm development.

Remember to vary your rep ranges, from low with heavy weights, to high, lighter reps. Some quick pointers on two key arm exercises:

Bicep Curls

Although close grip pull-ups would be the compound movement to work the biceps, we will look at curls. To really get the most of curls technique is essential, with vital points being:

- Keep the back as still as possible throughout the movement - do not swing!
- Go through the full range of motion, from full extension to tightly squeezing at the contraction.
- Vary the hand position, supinated, hammer and pronated curls are all essential (palms facing the sky, each other, the floor).



Grasp the bar and stand tall. With the bar resting against your leg, curl up until your arms are as contracted as possible with the bar by your shoulders. Squeeze the biceps hard at the top, then lower back to the starting position under control. A good way to vary this is to use barbells, dumbbells or cables.

Tricep Extensions

Although dips are the compound movement for triceps, we will look at tricep extensions. Again, technique is essential:

- Use the full range of motion, from stretched to squeezing them at full contraction
- Work them from a variety of angles, arms by your sides with cables, arms over your head with dumbbells or cables.

Again use bars, dumbbells and cables, and these can be done lying or standing. Vary it up to work the muscle from all angles available to you.

