

# Mix it up! Continued

*Luke Barden, September 2013*

Following feedback from the last article asking for examples of ways to mix up training, this month we will look at 5 ways you can shock the body in your weights routine, which should leave you feeling it again.

## 1. Supersets

Supersets are not only a great way of mixing up your workouts, but they can also help you get your weeks training done quicker than normal if you are pushed for time.

There are two methods to a superset. You can either work with one muscle group, or two opposing muscle groups (e.g. chest & back, or quads & hamstrings)

With a single muscle superset, pick two exercises where the second will be a lighter weight and preferably will work the muscle in a different way (e.g. squats followed by leg extension, or chest press into flyes). This will enable the muscle to reach failure in the first exercise, then when you move straight into the second exercise, due to the decreased weight and new movement, continue to work for almost double the amount of reps.

This results in a large intensity being placed on the muscle you are working, so is best saved for the end of the workout, and should not be done in more than one or two workouts a week to ensure you do not put too much stress on the body.

With an opposing muscle superset, you should be able to go from one muscle group to the next without rest, as while the first reaches failure, the second has not yet started to work. Although this will not stress the individual muscles as much as the single muscle superset, this method of training increases the intensity of the workout as a whole, as every fresh exercise can be a superset.

## 2. Drop sets

Drop sets, like supersets, enable the muscle being worked to reach failure, and then be pushed on for a few more reps.

With a drop set you would take an exercise, for example a chest press. If you can do 10 reps with 50kilos, you would do execute that set, and instantly drop it to 40kilos and carry on for as many reps as you can manage, before finally dropping to 30kilos for the final push of as many as you can do.

This technique really allows you to feel the burn in your muscles, pumping them up and pushing them hard! They are very intense on the body and immune system when recovering though, so make sure you only do them with your last exercise, and only one or two workouts a week. Every exercise or even every workout can make you start to feel overly achy and run down.

### 3. German volume training

German volume training (GVT), as designed by strength training guru Charles Poliquin is comprised of using a compound exercise (a large movement over multiple muscles and joints) and performing 10 sets of 10 reps, with a 60 second rest between each set.

You take 60% of your 1RM, and stick to that weight throughout even if you find you stop being able to make it to the ten reps you are aiming for.

This method allows you to move more total weight than a standard 3 sets of 8 or 5 sets of 5 with a heavier weight. This will shock your nervous system, which can result in progress if you have found yourself stuck for a while; but don't expect to gain strength from it, as you are not lifting heavy enough to get stronger.

### 4. Opposing for time

Similar to GVT above, opposing for time uses a ten minute limit.

You can either pick two antagonistic movements (bicep curls/tricep extensions or bent over row/bench press) or two more separate movements (pullups/dips or shoulder press/bicep curls)

Simply go to failure on one exercise, then swap straight to the other, and continue to swap for the whole 10 mins with no rest if you can manage it. Record the amount of reps you hit in each set and add the end total them all up.

This is now a target for you to aim to beat next time you do the workout! Again, this will probably not aid in strength much, if at all, but it will allow you to totally shock your body and your muscles!

### 5. 21's

21's can be used on any exercise, but like drop sets, should always be done at the end of the workout.

The way to perform a set of 21's is to split an exercise into the top half, and the bottom half. The set itself is split into 3 movements.

For the first 7 reps, perform the bottom half of the movement (e.g. for bicep curls, from a fully extended arm, to a 90 degree bend at the elbow).

For the second 7 reps, perform the top half of the movement (from the 90 degree bend in the elbow position to the fully contracted position).

For the final 7 reps, perform full range of movement reps (full extension of the arm to full contraction).

These sound simple, but are very difficult, especially after a hard workout! Be sure to start with a weight you are very comfortable with, or you may not be able to finish.