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# The End.

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## Natty Maximization

Get  
The  
Gains  
and  
Leave.



a book by [nattyornot.com](http://nattyornot.com)

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# The Eternal Cycle of the Fitness Industry

## The world of muscle construction operates as follows:

1. Men running on the self-improvement treadmill join the “fight against atrophy” in the hope to acquire a killer body.
2. On day 1, the muscle industry welcomes the recruits with open arms and begins rewiring their brains as required by the agenda. The noobs adopt the notion that hard work can bring them the unnatural physiques and strength promoted by the media.
3. The muscle apprentices start fighting hard, but the expected transformation never fully manifests. They complain.
4. The PR branches of the muscle industry explain the lack of gains with improper training and nutrition and advise the users to examine their muscle-building protocols.  
  
To monetize muscle hypertrophy, the industry keeps selling gym memberships, overhyped training programs, useless supplements, crazy nutritional plans, and weird lifting equipment.
5. The users re-inject themselves with hope by finding a new blueprint designed by another professor who’d allegedly found the secret to animalistic natural growth.
6. After another unavoidable disappointment, the cycle repeats.

**The template above stays the same because it has been working exceptionally well for decades. The only element that changes is the infrastructure delivering the inspirational/brainwashing material.**

In the past, the means of communication were movies and magazines. Nowadays social media, forums, and YouTube do the work.

If you search for muscle-related material on Instagram, for example, your front page will eventually get flooded with imagery of muscle constructors doing easy home workouts while displaying a musculature unachievable naturally.

## **Perpetual repetition + Recycled Content**

The world of muscle on YouTube is a perfect indication of the fitness industry's stagnation:

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*Every day a new guy uploads a video teaching you how to squat, bench press, and deadlift.*

*Every day a new professor of growth tries to pump you up by making a transformation video showing how he went from an anorexic drug addict to a man bigger than Frank Zane – all naturally, of course. His secret? Just watch his videos, the ads in them, and smile.*

*Every day the experts are finding a new angle from which you should attack your muscles.*

*Every day they remind you that there is a secret hypertrophy hack that will lead you to unreal muscular growth and strength (e.g., 400lbs natty bench press) if you lift with prolific determination for an unknown amount of time.*

*Every day you get spammed to death with pointless drama that doesn't do anything other than distract you from the reality of life.*

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### **Did time freeze?**

If you remove all dates from muscle content and begin reading the popular outlets, you would have a hard time figuring the year and maybe even the decade when the content was produced.

Part of it is the fact that many muscle-building topics are evergreen, but this phenomenon is also a sign that the world of fitness operates like a ceaseless loop that never evolves...just like politics.

If you stop following all fitness content creators and return after 1,2,3 or even 5 years the entire industry would be practically the same. The curve is flat.

Why? Because the master plan has been operating sufficiently well and will continue to do so due to the inherently immobile social dynamics.

### **People wake up but...**

Some see through the plot relatively quickly. Yet they stick around because a part of them is still convinced that a miracle is going to happen; the hope that another training program will finally activate the growth mechanism dies hard.

But even if those people were to just quit, their absence wouldn't matter because every year a new generation of kids turns 16 and joins the army of muscle constructors.

### **A Hard Red Pill**

A few years ago, a reader contacted me and told me that he wants to "help me take down the industry" by exposing all fake natties. I instantly recognized my initial rage in him.

### **The truth, however, is that exposing fake natties does nothing to the industry.**

Even if all fake natties come out and admit publicly that they've been injecting steroids in their precious glutes, the industry would still be profitable.

### **Why?**

Four reasons.

#### **1. Gym culture has infiltrated the base layers of our society.**

The Internet amplified the popularity of lifting to unreal proportions. Some of you may not believe it, but in the past, very few men were obsessively doing resistance training.

Today, the gym is the main sports activity of most men including teenagers. Many young men are entirely foregoing traditional sports like basketball, football and volleyball in favor of lifting and developing a thicker musculature.

This aftermath isn't an accident. It's happening because we live in a highly visual world obsessed with appearance. In the area where I live, I routinely see high-school male students who clearly pay more attention to their looks than our generation did. Many of them have sophisticated haircuts and follow a dress code taken straight from a fashion website.

Social media is the main culprit. Back when I was in high school, we didn't have that. You weren't constantly on display, and people didn't have the chance to judge each other with such ease.

Nowadays, it's different. Young people are decimating each other on social apps non-stop. Hence why people invest so much time into their visual tune-up. They want to satisfy their peers/critics.

Of course, social media isn't the only factor. Self-improvement is a huge catalyzer of gym slaving too. I've never heard of a self-improvement program for men that doesn't include lifting weights or at least some form of resistant training.

I get it. Men have to be strong. But a problem occurs when people embrace a pipe dream.

In the past, a natural physique built with pull-ups, dips, and running was sufficiently athletic to be categorized as fit. Currently, the requirements are far higher. You have to be notably stronger and more massive.

## **2. People would rather live in a fantasy.**

Think of motivational seminars. More often than not, the speakers at those events use extremely wealthy and famous people as examples of what a man can achieve after acquiring a "proper mindset" and building "the habits of a winner".

Yet it's rather obvious, to men who aren't under hypnosis, that it's impossible for all people to be winners regardless of how hard they try or what habits they form.

The aristocracy of a nation can only be so big and behavioral hacks are rarely if ever the key to the success promoted at similar events.

**In most cases, nature rather than nurture is behind the heroes of our day.**

But many people keep going to those seminars thinking that a few tweaks here and there will catapult them into extraterrestrial glory.

Of course, constructive habits have a positive effect on one's life. If you stop smoking and lose weight, for example, you would become a more attractive version of yourself.

If you stop wasting hours every day on social media and YouTube and use that time to work on another venture, whatever it might be, you would progress in that direction. You may even achieve goals that surprise you.

However, the effect will not be as extreme as advertised. Good luck joining the ultra-rich by waking up at five in the morning, taking cold showers, meditating and listening to subliminal messages while you sleep.

Natural lifting shows a similar delusion. People know that their idols are on steroids and owe the majority if not all of their extra muscle mass to roids and yet the worship never ends.

The kids continue to think that by adjusting their reps and sets as suggested by the new hero of the day something magical will happen.

It won't. If you work hard, you'll see some gains, but they won't be on the level that you expect. You can be known as a fit dude within the limits of your social circle, but no one would invite you for a cover photoshoot.

### **3. The users are brainwashed into thinking that they hold the entire responsibility for their failure.**

**Whenever a program fails to deliver the expected mutation, its creators put the entire responsibility on the user/lifter and walk away with no repercussions.**

Conversely, if a lifter experiences an unreal transformation, the engineers of growth feature it on their online platforms and take as much credit as they want even if the actual engine behind the growth are the superior muscle-building genetics of the individual and/or persistent cycling with anabolic steroids.

The exact same principle is observed in the "get rich courses". People are spammed with an allegedly revolutionary system that could make them very wealthy if they just follow it. The



credibility of the product is reinforced with testimonials that are either fake, exaggerated, or exceptions.

Then, when most customers inevitably fail to make the promised or any money, the professors explain the lack of results with failure to follow the manual as outlined.

In most cases, the criticism is very vague.

**E.g.,** You didn't work hard enough.

Precise explanations are rarely present because they could expose the impotence of the program.

#### **4. We refuse to admit defeat.**

Quitting isn't marketable and is therefore absent from the motivational manuscripts glorified on morning TV shows. Those who quit are criticized, ridiculed, and labeled as losers who should never serve as an example of what to do.

It is expected of you to have a one-dimensional outlook on failure. You're supposed to see it only as a necessary initial obstacle before your big breakthrough.

But there's another side to failing and quitting that people rarely talk about. When you fail, you receive clear feedback indicating that your plan isn't working.

If a person is resilient enough, they will keep trying. For a while, that extra fight is healthy as it builds your character. But if the battle continues for too long without any sign of progress, then your failures transition from an expression of resilience into stubbornness and inability to decode the battlefield.

Surprisingly or not, some people find it easier to keep fighting than to leave the arena. Admitting that you've been tricked by the industry hurts more than stagnation. People would rather keep pressing against the wall than derive wisdom from their unsuccessful attempts and move on to something else.

Many naturals operate on the same principle. They keep jumping from one program to another in the hope that a new blueprint will finally unlock the gate leading to animalistic hypertrophy. Don't be one of them.

**A parallel between dating and lifting illustrates the aforementioned phenomenon very vividly.**

I invested years in online dating. And when I say years, I really mean years. One day, I asked myself what have I ever gotten in exchange for my sacrifice. The answer was painful – only wasted hours and a few shallow experiences that I'd rather erase from my memory.

Ultimately, the road that I was on led to an emotional void that will need a divine intervention to heal.

So, what did I do? I quit and left behind all of it. As the saying goes, my only regret is that I didn't do it earlier.

Many naturals operate just like men trying to score on a dating app without a chance of ever doing so. We keep changing our pictures and tuning our bios according to the wisdom of random people on the Internet who'd allegedly cracked the code, but the plan never quite works as advertised.

**The Game Never Ends. You just get smarter and quit.**

If you've spent any time on Instagram browsing through pages glorifying the so-called "hustle culture" and self-improvement, you've probably heard the saying "Winners never quit. Quitters never win."

The claim is technically correct. Only someone who is still playing can win. And a quitter cannot win because he's no longer participating in the race. But this "ultra-wise" quote is describing only two characters, namely winners and quitters, even though there are three.

**The third are those who never quit but also never win.** This group includes a very large percentage of the contestants, but the industry purposefully ignores them completely or tries to rewire their brains.

The goal is to make those men see themselves as potential winners even though that possibility does not exist in the realm known as reality.

Somewhat ironically, people progress the most in life after dropping the stagnant activities and refocusing on more advantageous endeavors.

The full quote is as follows:

**“Winners never quit. Quitters never win. But those who never win and don’t quit lose two times.”**

## **If Something works at all, it works QUICKLY.**

**One of the biggest misconceptions in the world of muscle and life, in general, is that results take forever.**

Many muscle constructors think that one day they will experience a sudden metamorphosis and transform into incredibly muscular individuals if they just work hard and long enough.

I disagree. It’s my observation that if something works at all it shows promise quickly. Yet the system wants you to believe in the opposite in order to keep your battery levels up and continue to extract resources from you over an extended period.

They don’t want us to see that we’re walking on a dead-end street because similar realizations could trigger a rearrangement of the societal layers.

I will illustrate this notion with two examples.

The first is in the realm of muscle. The second in the world of money.

Many years ago, when I was still dreaming, I watched a video of a popular YouTube muscle constructor. In the clip, he was holding a bucket to illustrate how muscle gains happen. His idea was that if you lift long enough, you can fill the entire bucket with muscle by adding small bits over the course of many years.

And while it’s true that success is the result of many small wins which accumulate over time, the bucket concept is a dangerous one to embrace because it leaves you with the impression that progress never stops. Well, I’m almost sorry to inform you that it does.

**Here’s the truth – you will make 90%+ of your gains during the initial beginner period which lasts no more than 2 years if you don’t stop training. Realistically, you will max out earlier – around the 18-month mark.**

**Past that point, the muscle that you'll add to your frame will be slim to non-existent and every major gain will come mostly as a result of bulking and placebo.**

**Yet the professors want you to believe that you can keep gaining muscle mass for 10+ years straight. The chances of that happening are zero.**

To some, 18-24 months of training may seem like a very lengthy period, but when you realize that this is how long it will take you to achieve your ultimate natural physique, the timeline is no longer excessive.

The next rule is crucial. I have witnessed it from the first row in many walks of life.

Here it is:

**Success is linear once you're on the right track.**

It may take you a while to discover a winning strategy (in lifting or another aspect of life), but once you do – it will show great potential in about 2-8 months. During that period of time, you will notice a slow but steady upward curve.

### **Basic Examples**

1. If your arm routine and nutritional protocol are ever going to make your arms bigger, you will be gaining a couple of millimeters every 4-8 weeks. This process will continue for a fairly long time before gradually slowing down to non-measurable progress.
2. If the strategy that you've adopted for getting dates with women will work at all, it will show great potential in 1-3 months.

### **Examples on a Higher Scale**

Another very clear illustration of this phenomenon would be the success of legendary sports stars and businesses.

The biggest victors don't need a lot of time to reach the throne. For instance, the popular arm wrestler John Brzenk was already a champion at 21 years of age and remained on top throughout his entire career.

Ed Coan, the most accomplished powerlifter of all time, was also a champion at 19.

Lionel Messi was considered a prodigy when he was a teenager.

Of course, those men have “outlier genetics” and have found themselves in the right activity at the right time. It would be naive to expect the same performance from everyone.

But many of their colleagues who aren’t on the same level but highly skilled nonetheless exhibit envious growth too. Ultimately, all professional sports players show great potential fairly quickly after entering an activity.

Business ideas are another example. If a business is going to work, it usually shows it in less than 18 months.

I had the opportunity of witnessing the business development of two food corners in my neighborhood.

One failed massively; the other blossomed. Both events happened within a year. The difference between the two was the location. One was in the middle of nowhere whereas the other one was on a busy street with lots of traffic.

### **Examples in the Online World**

If a venture is going to work, you’ll know within a year provided that all the necessary work is done. I’ve witnessed this effect with my own website.

NattyOrNot.com started in February, 2014 and peaked in May 2015. Today, the site is nowhere nearly as popular as it was before and will never reach its previous fame.

I can lie and say that I will resurrect it to its former grandeur, but I don’t think it’s possible even though my content is levels above what it used to be in the beginning.

YouTube channels that actually make it showcase similar growth. They get very popular within the first 12 months and eventually plateau.

Yet many people think that if they keep uploading content for an unknown number of years one day their channel will become super big. Not the case.

### **Success Is Never Sudden. It just appears this way.**

Nobody goes to bed as a loser and wakes up as a winner. If your arms are 12 inches, and you start training them hard, people won’t notice until the tape jumps to 14-15 inches.

Then, all of a sudden, you will go to the gym and those who'd seen you before will report the change. But nobody will say anything during the building process.

Success operates the same way in other aspects of life too.

**The key point, however, is that there is gradual and persistent growth the entire time.**

**Success is an upward curve which may of course include some peaks and downs, but its overall direction is always up.**

**If you have given a venture enough time to work, and yet it keeps failing, it's time to move on.**

But many minions refuse to see this truth. Unsurprisingly, I was one of them. When I began lifting, I believed in all the lies for significantly longer than a sane brain would normally do. I refused to admit the obvious even though my line of progress was as flat as a desk.

Progress and success are very similar to the growth of a child. It takes at least 16 years for a kid to reach its full height, but it grows the entire time. One day, however, the process comes to an inevitable end.

**If the plan that you're following will get you anywhere, it will showcase similar traits - slow but also undeniable growth until the point of maximum capacity.**

Somewhat ironically, many gurus directly or indirectly propagate the opposite. The system always tells people in a losing position that if they keep trying harder, one day they will be winners. That's a big lie, especially to those who've been following a path for a little too long.

It's true that it takes a lot of time to max out a project, but there's more to the story. A professional sports player may need 10 years of consistent work to reach his peak form, but that doesn't mean that he spends every second before that point as a loser. Quite the opposite. His life is filled with many wins accumulating over time. Before you can be a world champion, you first have to be a local winner.

# The Corrupted Gym Culture

Gym culture comes with a very unrealistic code of conduct based on wishful thinking, purposefully promoted misconceptions, false positivity, and a healthy dose of lies. It quickly traps you and begins abusing your mind and body.

Before you know it, your overall happiness will become dependent on satisfying the barbell numbers put out by other men who allegedly have the key to male ascension.

**Here's the truth – their ultimate goal isn't to make you a better man. Before all, the fitness/muscle industry is a business. Its main mission is to generate profit.**

The first step is to indoctrinate beginners.

Noobs are the most lucrative group in every niche. They have the highest motivation, the least amount of knowledge and the greatest willingness to drop money on miraculous quick-gains products.

Conversely, experienced people have the smallest incentive to purchase new stuff. They are already close or at their limit and know how to get around specific problems without dropping extra cash on overhyped gadgets.

**For that reason, it is of utmost importance for every fitness brand to recruit beginners. This is where the money is.**

How do they accomplish this? By producing a great product?

It certainly helps to have a great product, but it's not enough. As expert marketers will tell you, ideas and people sell better than goods. Therefore, the ultimate way to get a clientele is to offer them an "ascended lifestyle".

The plan works.

When we look at a muscular dude, we don't see just muscle mass. We see a peculiar mixture of glory, strength, hope, purpose and before all non-stop happiness.

**That's how they get you.**

At the end of the day, the muscle industry doesn't sell muscles but the **ultimate fix**. Hence why many people count on gym-based improvements to repair almost every avenue of their existence.

The final part of the blueprint is the emotional attachment to a specific sensei and his lifting templates. The noobs have to see the author of their doctrine either as the ultimate authority or a father figure.

If the muscle apprentices are arguing and passionately defending the adopted training methodology, then the indoctrination has truly reached their deepest layers.

At that point, the recruits turn into real soldiers helping their general (lifting expert) conquer new territory.

Unless you want to be an unpaid promoter, it's best to distance yourself from all the madness. This is one of those games that can be won only if you don't play.

Don't be on anyone's side or else you risk getting sucked into the politics of lifting. This path leads to nothing but endless hours of online and offline fights meant to determine who's following the best leader.

## **People Lie**

The numbers that people throw around are often far away from the truth.

All the superheroes lifting unreal weights in the comment sections are very often boosting their stats by a significant margin.

But even if they weren't, those men represent an incredibly small percentage of the population and could be classified as an odd exception.

Moreover, the Internet forms high concentrations of outliers by connecting people with similar interests from all around the globe.

As a result, many naïve beginners are left with unrealistic expectations in regard to strength and muscular growth. The inevitable failure to satisfy the criteria triggers self-loathing.

Some may say that this effect has motivational value, but those optimists forget one thing – motivation disappears fast in the absence of results.





## Natty Gains = Misery

Many people will try to convince you that naturals can gain an extraterrestrial amount of muscles mass, but the reality of natty lifting is dark.

**Most naturals rarely if ever gain more than 20lbs/9kg of actual muscle mass throughout their entire life.**

Of course, this number doesn't apply to malnourished cadets *a.k.a.* people who are severely underweight for their height.

If you are 6'2"/188cm tall and weigh 130lbs/59kg, you would be able to gain more than 20lbs, but some of the gains would come solely from calories rather than barbell-triggered hypertrophy.

**Once you've reached an average bodyweight for your height, you'd be lucky to add more than 20lbs to your frame.**

Some of you may describe this statement as a sick joke. After all, we've been promised a whole lot more if we just keep squatting, deadlifting and bench pressing while following high IQ programming produced by the greatest minds in the history of lifting.

Yeah. Keep dreaming. You can certainly add a lot more bodyweight than 20lbs, but it won't be lean muscle tissue. It will be a mixture of fat gains (predominantly), water and glycogen.

If your ego is heavily intoxicated by the lies, it may start to convert some of the fat gains into muscle, especially if you have a favorable body fat distribution. But when you start cutting, the truth will unleash its painful reality.

Don't listen to the overly-optimistic promoters of unreal natural hypertrophy. Most of them are either ignorant, blatant liars on steroids or just satellites repeating corrupt concepts that have infiltrated their right brain hemisphere.

Why so little? Because the body is not designed for endless hypertrophy.

**Even in the presence of a growth stimulus (training) and anabolism (calories and protein), the organism halts protein synthesis to avoid getting unnaturally big**

**because such musculature is non-sustainable and detrimental to endurance a.k.a. humans' greatest physical asset.**

**Steroids fix that by "bribing" the cell to generate more protein. Neither training nor nutrition can do that because they are incapable of causing the necessary changes on a cellular level.**

You can think of it this way – even if you have the necessary workforce (builders) and materials (bricks) to build a house, nothing other than an accumulation of resources will take place if the law prohibits construction at that site.

Yet the sorcerers of natural hypertrophy keep thinking that they can somehow "brute force" their way into extra growth by eliciting more stress and gathering building blocks.

The idealism is appreciated, but the game doesn't work like that. All efforts to break the natty plateau will end up in stagnation or painful fat gains.

### **The Good News**

This information sounds terribly depressing to the "blue pill" neurons found in the craniums of many muscle constructors, but it has a positive interpretation too – you can get the gains quickly and leave for good.

### **Many Will Try to Change Your Mind**

Various people will come out of nowhere to tell you how they've gained 50lbs of actual muscle mass or that they know someone who knows someone who's done it.

Ironically, those people are not trying to convince you but themselves. They are in the rage phase, looking for a hack, a pathway that will somehow change reality into something more appropriate. Unfortunately, nothing will do that. There are no routines or nutritional regimens that can help you escape the natty confinement.

Many representatives of the industry will disagree with this declaration because it doesn't match their narrative. They are doing it not because they want to help you ascend, but because they benefit the most when you are in the labyrinth. The longer you stay there, the more they profit off of you. Hence why they do everything in their power to keep your expectations up.

# The Plan: Get the Gains and Leave

**Ignoring the truth about natty lifting was one of my biggest mistakes.**

I wanted to be wrong. I had to be. After all, so many people were showing success on social media and in the gym. There was only one explanation – I was “doing it wrong”; they were “doing it right”.

I was indeed doing it wrong, but not for the reasons that the mainstream loves to point out. The main flaw of my tactic was my refusal to adapt to reality.

Eventually, however, I came up with a blueprint, which in my opinion, is a very logical way to play your “natty cards” and get the most out of the situation.

**The method contains three simple phases:**

**Phase 1:** Motor pattern development

**Phase 2:** Specialization

**Phase 3:** Maintenance

## Phase 1: Motor Pattern Development

The purpose of this phase is to learn how to perform the main exercises correctly. For that reason, the outlined schedule is similar to a classic full-body routine.

All the lifts are done with a high frequency to reinforce the motor pattern and speed up the learning process.

If you have never done a squat before, frequency will teach you the fastest.

**Below is a hypothetical schedule with 3 training days:**

### Phase I: Part 1

Day 1	Day2	Day3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Squat – 5x5-8 Bench – 5x5-8	Rest	Squat – 5x5-8 Overhead press– 5x5-8	Rest	Squat – 5x5-8 Bench – 5x5-8	Rest	Rest

Deadlift – 3x5-8		Pull-ups – 3xF		Deadlift – 3x5-8		
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If you're a total beginner, start with an empty bar for all lifts except the deadlift. Deadlifts are easier to learn when there's an actual load on the bar. 95lbs/40-45kg is a good start.

**(Tip:** If the 25lbs plates in your gym are small, put plates under them to elevate the bar to where it will be when you begin using 45lbs plates).

**Progression:** Add **10lbs/5kg** to the deadlift and **2.5kg/5lbs** to all other lifts.

**Duration:** 8 weeks

The first part of *phase I* starts with a decent amount of squatting and deadlifting volume.

This may be a little contradictory to people familiar with my stance on lower leg specialization, but the purpose of this segment isn't to build muscle mass. The goal is to get acquainted with the movements.

After 4 weeks, the deadlift frequency drops to once a week, and the sets are reduced to 1x5-8. The objective is to make the workouts shorter and prevent overtraining of the lower back. You can also decrease the numbers of squat sets from 5 to 3 to save time.

The upper body volume can stay high because the exercises aren't as stressful on the central nervous system.

**Here's how the schedule will look for the final 4 weeks.**

Day 1	Day2	Day3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Squat – 3x5-8 Bench – 5x5-8 Deadlift – 1x5-8	Rest	Squat – 3x5-8 Overhead press– 5x5-8 Pull-ups – 3xF	Rest	Squat – 3x5-8 Bench – 5x5-8 Dips – 5xF	Rest	Rest

If you start with the empty bar for all exercises except the deadlift, the lifts by the end of this phase will be near the following:

**Squat.** This segment contains up to 24 squat workouts. Therefore, if everything goes according to plan, the final day should consist of squats done with 165lbs/75kg (24 workouts x 5lbs + 45lbs bar).

**Bench press.** The bench press sessions are 16 which should result in a 125lbs/57.5kg bench press.

**Overhead press.** The overhead press is done for only 8 workouts and should end up around 80lbs/37.5kg.

**Deadlift.** The deadlift workouts are 12. If you start with 95lbs, the final poundage will be about 215lbs/97.5kg.

**Those numbers are not impressive, but they are not supposed to be.**

This is just the beginning. Hence why this segment is so similar to 5x5 routines and Starting Strength. As much as I don't like those programs, and the mentally that they spread, I can't deny that they are a good way to learn how to do the basic lifts thanks to the high frequency that they provide.

**Note:** Don't consume a huge number of calories during this phase to avoid turning into a fatso swine. Nobody needs 7000 kcal a day to deadlift 215lbs. If you're already fat, you can complete this phase in a caloric deficit because it isn't super demanding.

## **Phase 2: Specialization**

**The second phase of the plan is specialization. During this part, the lifter selects a couple of muscle groups and starts training them exclusively three times a week with basic movements.**

If you're a male, it makes the most sense to focus on your arms, chest, and lats. Those are the muscles that will have the greatest impact on how you look. If they're not developed, you will never have the appearance of a man who lifts.

Some professors may disagree, but I don't care. A man's physique is judged by his upper body. Legs are nice and all that, but it's the arms, the chest and the lats that create the most impression.

The deltoids are important too, but they take plenty of beating while training the rest of the upper musculature and rarely if ever require special focus.

### **The Reasons for the Early Specialization**

Many people say that beginners should not specialize before they've achieved some arbitrary strength numbers such as 2-plate bench press, 3-plate squat and 4-plate deadlift.

**I disagree. Specialization should start early while you're still motivated and haven't fully maxed out your potential gains.**

Moreover, you don't really need to get super strong to reach your potential.

**Advanced natural strength gains are the result of neurophysiological adaptations and an improved ability to overclock your CNS rather than hypertrophy.**

One rep maximums (1RMs) and low reps, in general, are the purest expression of wasted time and energy when your goal is to stimulate muscular growth.

A clear illustration of this phenomenon is chest development. Back in the day, I really wanted to improve my bench press numbers and dedicated a lot of time to the lift.

Unfortunately, my anthropometry is anti-bench. I have long arms, small wrists, and mediocre shoulder width. Nonetheless, eventually, I benched more than my bodyweight for a few sets. And yet my chest didn't report much growth because I was using a close grip and doing very little volume.

My pectoral muscles were obviously working since it's impossible to bench without your chest, but they weren't receiving optimal stimulation due to my form.

When I switched to bodyweight training, I experienced more chest gains from push-ups and dips than I ever did from the bench press.

Why? Two reasons – higher volume and a technique forcing the chest to work harder.

I don't think that the bench press is a bad chest exercise, but a problem occurs when you begin chasing numbers rather than chest stimulation.

Most people can reach their chest potential without ever benching over 200lbs if the exercise is done for high reps and with a pause at the bottom.

### **Effective Energy Management**

Every program that you do has an impact on your body and central nervous system. By the time you've done all the "rite of passage" routines, your capacity would be close to depletion.

The question is, why should one postpone the "fun" routines? Why not attack what you want as soon as possible? Why do you have to meet some made-up criteria?

### **Focus**

**The reality of the situation is as follows: you can't generate and maintain the intensity necessary to build up your upper body if you're constantly draining your adrenal glands and central nervous system with squats, deadlifts, and other hip dominant lifts.**

Of course, if leg development is your ultimate goal, it makes sense to specialize in similar lifts. But this isn't the case for most men even though many claim otherwise.

Most squat fanatics are hypocritical liars. They make fun of people curling in the squat rack and yet the same permabulkers would happily trade a plate or two from their squat 1RM in exchange for a nice set of biceps.

### **Gains Maximization**

Here's a hidden truth – past a certain point it's quite difficult to build up a body part without focusing deliberately and routinely on it.

In theory, if you're a "pure bodybuilder", you should show equal love to all muscles. But in practice, this is difficult to do because you have limited time and only one central nervous system which works all the time.

**As the saying goes – "every day is CNS day". Therefore, if you want to maximize the growth of a muscle group, it has to become an unquestionable priority.**



For example, if you want your arms to grow, you have hit them hard and directly instead of hoping that “squats will build them because you are holding the bar” as some 5x5 promoters propagate.

**Ultimately, specialization is the only way to maximize the growth of a muscle group and bring it to its full natural or unnatural potential.**

### **Upper Body Specialization = the Logical Male Choice**

Squat fanatics, muscle hypertrophy experts, and other authoritative bodies in the muscle community glorify lower body training and shame those who don't train their legs hard or at all.

“Never let bros skip leg,” say the experts.

Cool. But here's the truth – leg development has a smaller visual impact on a man's physique. If you want to maximize the dividends that you derive from your physique as a man, you'll have to focus on the lats, chest and arms.

The industry will shame you, but they're all liars. They want big arms too but don't openly admit it. I know because I was following the same code of conduct.

Back in the day, when I was chained to a squat rack and mindlessly trying to reach some stupid numbers to become “a real man”, I used to scrutinize those around me and ridicule the upper body specialists in the gym. But deep down inside, I knew that I wanted to have big arms and the rest of the extras.

If you want to maximize your upper body potential, you will have to put leg training on the back seat regardless of what people say.

1-2 leg days a week are enough to avoid the “chicken leg syndrome” while still preserving plenty of mental and physical resources for upper body construction.

### **Below is the full list of reasons to specialize in upper body training:**

#### **1. Leg training is too draining.**

Lower body lifting is a “power-hungry app”. The quickest way to overtrain mentally is to do lower body specialization.

## **2. Unless you build up your calves, you will always have chicken legs regardless of how much you squat.**

No amount of upper leg training can compensate for skinny calves. If your lower legs are thin, people will always consider you a “leg day skipper”.

One of the reasons for that is that calves are the most exposed leg muscle. Calves are also the foundation supporting the entire body. Hence why baby calves allude to the lack of overall strength.

The size of your calves is largely genetic. If you can't get big or at least semi-decent calves just from existing, exercising won't do much for your calves from a visual perspective.

Resistance training will strengthen the calf muscles, the tendons, and the connective tissues surrounding them, but extraterrestrial growth will not occur.

Brutal upper leg training won't fix that problem. If anything, bigger thighs will just accentuate a set of thin calves. Many men squat decent weights but have poor calves due to genetics. The end result is a set of “goat legs” – noticeable development up top but nothing downstairs.

## **3. This is the only way to maximize your upper body size.**

Mastery requires focus and dedication to a single goal. If you're a golfer, you have to play golf. If you're a gymnast, you have to train like one. If you're a swimmer, you have to swim. If you're an arm wrestler, you have to train your arms.

The same applies to muscle construction. If you want to maximize your upper body size, you have to devote yourself to upper body training. Don't listen to the people shaming you for skipping “manly” exercises like squats and deadlifts.

Only specialization will allow you to hit the desired body parts with enough volume, intensity, and frequency. Training your arms or chest as an afterthought after 5 sets of heavy squats does not compare to smashing the upper body parts directly.

## **4. Big Upper Body = Manliness**

Everybody has heard of the **Captain Upper body** title given to men who have thin legs and large upper bodies. It's considered one of the ultimate insults to lifters and a strong stimulus to do your squats.

Well, there's another prestigious title – the **Centaur Brah**.

It belongs to people who engineer their existence around squatting and bulking. The final result is a man with somewhat muscular fat legs, a big belly, droopy pecs, and toothpick arms. Most of his free time is devoted to forums and subreddits frequented by barbell worshippers in the process of becoming functional.

Here's the truth. The first title (Captain Upper Body) is better than the second one if you want to look like a powerful man who lifts. Manly strength is strictly linked to the upper musculature.

A set of big arms, a wide back, a protruding chest due to extra muscle rather than lard, a thick neck, and before all massive forearms demand respect like nothing else.

Can you say the same about quads, glutes and hamstrings? [Be honest]

Many squatting permabulkers will try to convince you that women are killing themselves over their ultra-sexy and simultaneously manly “squatter glutes”, but that isn't true. Moreover, many of those guys have fat rather than muscular legs.

Women don't like permabulkers. If a woman is with a fatso, it's despite the fact that he is one rather than thanks to it.

Secondly, the glutes are some of the easiest muscles to develop and you certainly wouldn't have to devote your life to lower body training to improve them to acceptable levels.

### **Why does the upper body hold so many manly points?**

Because it's “androgenic”. It separates men from women. Most women can construct a respectable set of legs without lifting ultra-heavy weights. What they cannot do is build up their upper bodies as much as men. Good luck finding a natural woman with 14-inch arms that aren't ultra-fat. For that reason, the upper body has the “beard effect” – it alludes to your inherent manliness.

Legs can't create the same aftermath. I would even go as far as saying that tree trunk thighs are not aesthetically pleasing and make you look like a fat clown, especially when you wear clothes.

## **5. Working Smarter > Working Harder**

I used to detest curlers. They were barely training while I was literally squatting with blood coming out of my nose.

The squat journey was fun until I hurt my hip. But the worst of it all wasn't the injury, it was the realization that I didn't look like a lifter despite my bloody sacrifices.

One time, I accidentally caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror while deadlifting. The first thought that came to my mind was – "Those are some skinny arms and forearms."

Yet I was holding around 400lbs in my hands, albeit with a hook grip. In the meantime, a curl bro was playing on the cable machine. He had arms that looked capable of breaking skulls.

I felt stupid but didn't want to admit defeat just yet and continued riding the powerlifting wave. The true disgust infiltrated my psyche on the day when I pulled my best deadlift – a little over 440lbs for two singles with a short pause between them.

While taking a shower back home, I felt a tingling sensation around my spine.

I compared my form to previous PRs. My technique wasn't perfect but acceptable. What I couldn't accept, however, was that I didn't look bigger than my 3-plate-deadlift self.

I had to admit the defeat. I was playing the game of human crane wrong.

## **The Specialization Routines**

Below you will find a few specialization routines that have one main goal – to maximize the strength and size of the upper body. The routine consists of three days. You can certainly train more often, but it's not necessary.

### **Option 1: Basic Lifts**

This variation of the routine includes the basic lifts (squat, bench press, deadlift)

I prefer the Romanian deadlift because it offers the benefits of a regular deadlift while minimizing CNS fatigue. But if you want to, you can, of course, do a regular deadlift. Just keep in mind that the recovery will be longer due to the lack of a stretch reflex and the heavier load.

Day 1: Push + Arms	Day 2: Legs + Arms (light)	Day 3: Push + Pull + Arms
Bench press – 3x8-12	High bar squats – 1x8, 2x10 (lighter load)	Romanian deadlifts – 2x8 or Regular deadlift – 1x5
Biceps curls – 3x8-12	Chin-ups – 2xF*	Bench press – 3x8-12
Hammer curls – 3x6-8	Dips – 3xF or Overhead press – 2x8-12	Chin-ups – 2xF
Triceps extensions – 3x8-12	Biceps curls – 3x12	Biceps curls – 3x8-12
	Hammer curls – 3x8-10	Hammer curls – 3x6-8
	Triceps extensions – 3x10-12	Triceps extensions – 3x8-12

2xF\* stands for two sets to failure. In this case, failure doesn't involve the imagery that you see in CrossFit videos, however. As soon as you feel that the next repetition will be a danger to your form, stop the set even if you can technically finish it.

### Progression (Upper Body Lifts)

Once you can complete the higher number of reps (12) with good form, increase the weight, switch to 3 sets of 6, and try to add reps over time.

The bench press, the overhead press, and the isolation lifts can benefit from smaller jumps e.g., 1kg/2lbs.

If you don't like tiny jumps, you can progress by increasing the reps per set to 12 with the same weight, repeating the workout 3-4 times, bumping up the weight, and dropping the reps to 6-8 on the heavy day.

**Note:** You can make fraction plates by cutting a bicycle inner tube, filling it with sand, shaping it as a circle with a diameter that would fit on a barbell, and then wrapping it with duct tape.

This is a high repetition routine except for the squat and deadlift which include sets of five.

## **The main reasons for choosing high repetitions are:**

### **1. Greater Blood Supply**

Low reps done with heavy weights do not develop the capillary system because the time under tension is too short.

The functional professors may say that high-reps produce non-functional “bodybuilding” muscles, but this isn’t really true.

First, naturals will never have the problem of looking stronger than they are. Second, the increased blood supply accelerates the recovery process and pushes nutrients into the muscle and tendons. Heavy low rep sets don’t have the same effect as they end too quickly.

### **2. High-rep sets spare the central nervous system.**

Low rep strength training requires heavy overclocking of the central nervous system.

Developing the ability to “stim yourself” is useful when training to maximize your 1RM, but it is unnecessary when your goal is to build muscle mass. And since this isn’t a powerlifting routine, it makes sense to avoid the unnecessary mental torture that comes with ultra-heavy barbells.

### **3. Less stress on the joints**

High reps require lighter loads. In consequence, the stress on the joints is lower even though the number of repetitions per set is higher.

Also, the lighter loads are less likely to seduce you into using bad technique. If you feel that you have to sacrifice too much to complete a repetition, end the set.

### **4. Less ego**

If you’re a natural following this program, your work weights will not be super impressive. That’s intentional. I don’t encourage heavy lifting anymore.

It’s pointless for the following reasons:

#### **a. You will not be breaking records.**

You read that correctly. Regardless of what the experts say records aren't natural. One doesn't have to be a genius to decode this truth.

The lifters competing on the highest levels are genetic freaks on steroids. Therefore, even if you're genetically gifted, you'll still fail to surpass their accomplishments unless you follow the path of the needle.

And if you don't plan to do that, you might just as well stick to lighter loads and stop daydreaming. The movies aren't real.

### **b. Maximum results can be achieved with lighter loads.**

The purpose of the system outlined in this booklet is to maximize one's gains by training intelligently and without superfluous complications. Lighter loads fit the formula because they can build just as much mass as heavier loads while sparing your body and mind.

If you decide to switch to pure strength training, you can easily do so.

### **Start with Lights Weights**

If you've never trained your arms directly, this routine will make them very sore in the beginning. The tendons and the connective tissues will need a while to adapt. Hence why it's recommended to begin with light weights.

### **Can you over-train on this program?**

It depends on your condition, but in general, the body can adapt to very repetitive training. Moreover, the arms are a small muscle group that recovers fast.

But if you find that the program is too demanding due to a condition or a physical job interfering with your training, you can drop some exercises or even an entire day.

Fatigue and time management are some of the reasons why the second day calls for light arm training.

Drop the weight that you lift on Day 1 by 20%. This deload will act as active recovery for the arms while still adding to the weekly tonnage.

### **De-loading and Periodization**

I don't know about you, but I've never fulfilled the numbers outlined in an Excel spreadsheet written by some programming genius.

At first, I was always blaming myself, but eventually, I saw the obvious truth in front of me – I'm not a robot. And neither are you.

Your body and mind do not care that someone wants you to lift 220lbs on Monday and 240lbs on Friday.

Having said that, it's still beneficial to have a programming plan even if it's not extremely precise.

The routine illustrated above uses a **repetition-based progression** and relies on high-rep sets.

The upper body exercises are unlikely to necessitate a deload for quite a while because this training approach calls for a rather slow increase in weight. It's best to go by feel until you get clearly stuck.

If you feel that you're overtraining, and your reps aren't progressing steadily, drop the weight and the reps by 10-20% and begin building up again.

### **Squat and Deadlift Progression**

The squat and the deadlift are done with heavier loads. They require more frequent deloads and more precise programming. In most cases, a simple linear cycle works best.

#### **Example:**

The squat is done for a single work set plus two back-off sets. The work set is the main indicator of progress.

Let's say that you begin the program with a 150lbs squat. An 8-week progression will look like this:

**Week 1:** 150x5

**Week 2:** 155x5

**Week 3:** 160x5



**Week 4:** 165x5

**Week 5:** 170x5

**Week 6:** 175x5 – it's getting hard to complete the reps, but it's still possible

**Week 7:** 180x5 – it's even harder

**Week 8:** 185x3 – Two reps missed. Time for a deload. Start a new cycle with a slightly heavier load.

**Here's how the next 8 weeks could look:**

**Week 1:** 160x5 – Note that the starting weight is heavier than the first cycle.

**Week 2:** 165x5

**Week 3:** 170x5

**Week 4:** 175x5

**Week 5:** 180x5

**Week 6:** 185x5

**Week 7:** 190x4 – 1 rep missed time for a new cycle.

The deadlift could follow the same template with a higher jump – 5kg/10lbs.

### **Chin-ups and Dips Progression**

Chin-ups and dips can be used as main lifts, but they aren't such in this particular context. In this program, they're done without added weight.

The progression method is as simple as possible – just add 1-2 reps to a set when you can.

That's it. When the numbers reach 10 reps per set for pull-ups and 15 reps per set for dips, the progression stops and maintenance mode begins.

Or in other words, you do 3x10 pull-ups and 3x15 dips without adding weight or reps.

The reason for this approach will become clear in a few pages.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What kind of biceps curls should I do?**

It does not matter as long as you can perform the variation painlessly and don't replace it too often. Frequent "exercise swaps" make it difficult to track progress.

Many people believe that barbells curls are magic, but that's incorrect. Honestly, most lifters shouldn't even do barbell curls due to the common forearm and wrist pain that starts as soon as you end the set.

EZ-curl bars reduce some of the discomfort but don't always eliminate it. For that reason, dumbbell curls stand supreme. They allow the wrist and elbow to find a groove matching the available joint flexibility.

### **Why are hammer curls included?**

Because they hit the brachialis and brachioradialis harder than regular curls. Also, they allow you to get a little more arm volume when the biceps are already fatigued.

### **What kind of triceps extensions should I do?**

PJR pullovers are one of the best options because they hit all heads of the triceps, allow a very long progression thanks to the large amount of involved musculature, and don't place as much negative stress on the elbows as other triceps isolation exercises.

### **Can I replace the bench press with another movement?**

Yes. Some of the options are weighted push-ups, ring-push-ups, incline bench press with dumbbells, or a barbell.

## **The Point of Diminishing Returns**

The point of diminishing returns is a simple and yet very powerful concept in life that can be applied to virtually everything.

The definition is as follows:

**The point of diminishing returns is the moment when the results do not justify the effort output anymore.**

Or simpler terms – eventually, doing more does not give you more.

A simple example would be reading. If you are not familiar with a certain book, reading it even without a lot of concentration would result in a significantly greater insight than if you were to never open it. However, each subsequent reread of the same book would give you less new information.

The same concept is seen everywhere.

Let's say that you return from a long day spent in the mountains riding a bike, running or hiking. Taking a 5-minute shower would be significantly more beneficial than not taking one but extending the procedure to 1+ hour wouldn't be wise from a time management perspective.

**The principle of diminishing returns has to be applied to training unless you want the industry to take you for a fool forever.**

Here's how to do that.

**Once you reach a certain level of development, reduce the intensity of your progression gradually and switch to maintenance mode.**

I understand that this goes against the mainstream teachings, but that fact doesn't concern me as deeply anymore because I know that this is a very intelligent approach to natural training – one that is going to save you time, frustration, self-doubt, self-hatred and potentially injuries.

The modern world is all about pushing the envelope. They want you to be in a permanent state of “crushing it”, but that isn't possible.

They will try to convince you that you can reach some insane numbers naturally (e.g., 500lbs bench press), but that isn't going to happen unless you're willing to weigh about as much.

In reality, the game of weights works as follows: you begin lifting and progress well for 6-12 months. Then, everything slows down tremendously, but you still enjoy a personal record every 2-3 months of training.

Soon enough, you hit a hard limit that requires around six months to break. No problem right? After all, six months are a drop of time in the sea of lifting years ahead of you?

You mute the joint pain and continue because you're dedicated. You don't want to disappoint the wise men on YouTube overloading your mind with ultra-high IQ lifting advice.

So, what do you do?

You examine your form under a microscope and begin lifting again. You break the old PR. It takes you around 8 months, but it's worth it because this time you have a bit less joint pain, and the next de-load doesn't have to be as intensive.

And if you add the magical corrective exercises promoted by the shredded YouTube brah that has been cruising on low doses of testosterone and a sprinkle of trenbolone for the past 10 years, you will be finally on route to lifting glory.

Sounds familiar?

This is a perfect example of training beyond the point of diminishing returns. All that effort invested into adding some miserable 5-10lbs to the bar is just not worth it, especially when you take into account the joint stress and the possibility of pursuing more fruitful ventures.

### **When does the point of diminishing returns begin in the world of lifting?**

Back in the day, I made dips and chin-ups my main upper body lifts for a couple of years.

I began with a few bodyweight sets of 5-6 repetitions after a long layoff from training.

I built my way up to weighted pull-ups and dips with 45kg/100lbs for a set of 2-3 reps. Sadly, my musculature did not reflect the increase in strength. I didn't look different than the time when I was doing bodyweight pull-ups for a few sets of 10.

**Why? Because natural growth equals misery unless you're born with a big skeleton and full muscle bellies. And if that's the case, you would be pretty big even without lifting.**

My father is built this way. He has carried more muscle than me throughout his entire life without indulging in resistance training. The only form of exercise that he can recall doing

is yoga back when he was a young man. Yet thanks to his thick skeleton he'd always dwarfed me.

His neck is thicker than mine was even when I was doing neck curls with 45kg/100lbs for sets of 20. His calves are 2.5 times bigger than mine because he has long muscle bellies and super thick ankles. The only place where he is lagging is the chest. But that's to be expected because the chest is difficult to grow without training.

This is the moment when the experts would tell me that I have a defeatist mindset. They'll advise me to bring my lifts to "something respectable". I disagree.

Do you remember what I told you in the beginning?

**If something works, it shows promise fairly quickly.**

**If getting my pull-ups from 0kg to 45kg results in no visible difference, continuing to train the lift in the expectation that a miracle is going to happen would be an illogical choice for me.**

Sure, I could probably get my pull-up to 55kg/121lbs if I focus on the lift and remain patient, but the mental and physical resources invested into this progression would be too big in comparison to the potential minuscule gains that would come from that pursuit. Not to mention the increased chance of damaging the connective tissues involved in the lift.

**All of this results in a painful realization – leaving my pull-ups at 10 reps per set and letting them "rot" there is the wisest approach because it takes full advantage of the law of diminishing returns.**

**Besides, where do you draw the line? How much weight does a man have to lift to earn his muscles?**

If you allow the "gatekeepers" to control you, they will make you feel inferior forever by continuously telling you that you're weak. They'll just keep encouraging you to chase unnecessarily high numbers.

**You will never be strong enough to deserve muscles in the book of the gatekeepers because they need you in the loop.**

**For the reasons above, I recommend entering maintenance mode once you reach the following numbers:**

<b>Squat</b>	1.5-1.8 times your bodyweight
<b>Deadlift</b>	1.8-2 times your bodyweight (with a regular grip)
<b>Bench press</b>	1-1.5 times your bodyweight
<b>Pull-ups</b>	10-15 reps in one set
<b>Dips</b>	15-20 reps in one set

The squat, deadlift, and bench press should be done for at least 1 repetition with perfect form. In the ideal scenario, you'd hit a set of 5, but it's not needed.

As far as the isolation exercises are concerned, don't even bother setting precise numbers. Just let them fall where they want while boosting the compound exercises to the limits presented above.

Most people would achieve the numbers in the table within 1-2 years of training. Depending on your anthropometry, you may find yourself falling a little short or reaching beyond on certain lifts. That's fine.

I fully realize that many would mock the presented numbers, but trying to go further would result in unnecessary struggle, frustration, and wasted time. More importantly, the gains that would come from the extended battle won't be worth the pain.

## **Maintenance Mode**

### **What does a man have to do to maintain his lifts?**

Not much. You don't have to perform a lift more than once a week to maintain your strength and the muscle mass that you've built from it.

However, it's not recommended to always perform at your peak because you will burn out even if you're just maintaining.

**It's better to follow small 4-8-week cycles leading to the weight that you want to maintain instead of lifting the same poundage every week.**

The heavier the weight, the longer the cycle will have to be to effectively reduce the stress on the joints and build momentum.

For instance, if you want to preserve a 300lbs squat done for 5 reps, you can do the following cycle:

**Week 1:** 275x5

**Week 2:** 280x5

**Week 3:** 285x5

**Week 4:** 290x5

**Week 5:** 295x5

**Week 6:** 300x5 (optional)

End of the cycle. Repeat.

In theory, you could also maintain by repeating the same workout over and over again while lifting weights 10-20% under the number that you aspire to preserve.

However, that approach doesn't work particularly well for lifts like the deadlift which drains your CNS and stresses body parts that recover slowly (the lower back).

For that reason, it's best to cycle off the intensity, especially if you want to maintain a rather big lift e.g., a 500lbs deadlift.

Many will consider this style of training boring, but the goal of the blueprint is to "get the gains and leave" rather than to entertain yourself.

If you want more variety, you could introduce some skill work into your training such as handstand practice or an actual dynamic sport like swimming, cycling, boxing...etc.

### **How often? How much?**

The minimum effort needed to maintain a lift is one work set a week. You can certainly do extra, but it's technically not necessary.

### **What are the downsides of this method?**

The first one is stagnation. You're consciously accepting that you won't be making progress. For some, this is a rather painful thought that goes against the current social dynamics encouraging you to be a hardcore brah in every venture of life.

The next one is that you will lose top-end strength. Or in other words, you won't be maintaining your absolute best but a number close it. This is done intentionally to prevent burnout.

The third downside is that you will face strong criticism from all the bros who are allegedly "killing it" every time they hit the gym.

**Additional Tips for Proper Maintenance**

- 1. Maintain lifts that you've done with close to perfect form. For example, if your best deadlift is done with acceptable but undeniable form breakdown, go lower for your maintenance number.
- 2. Even though you're maintaining, you can go for a PR once in a while if your cycles are going strong, and your body is simply asking you for more. However, don't expect miracles.
- 3. Don't try to maintain a lift by maxing out because 1-rep-maxes are too stressful on the CNS without offering much in return.

**Example Maintenance Program**

**Option 1: Once a week**

This version calls for one training day a week and is designed to take full advantage of the law of diminishing returns.

Day 1: Full Body
High bar squats – 1x8
Bench press – 1x8
Romanian deadlift – 1x8
Chin-ups –1x10



Triceps extensions – 2x10
Biceps curls – 2x10
Hammer curls – 2x8

### Option 2: Twice a week

This version splits the workout into two shorter ones and allows you to get more accessory work done too if you so desire.

Day 1: Legs + Arms	Day 2: Pull + Push
High bar squats – 1x8	Deadlift – 1x5
Biceps curls – 1x12	Bench press – 1x8
Hammer curls – 3x8-10	Chin-ups – 1x10
Triceps extensions – 3x10-12	Dips – 1x10

### Rotation/Semi-maintenance

Another possible approach is to put in maintenance mode only the body parts and lifts that you don't care about.

For instance, if your main target are your arms, you can keep hitting them 2-3 times a week with high-volume while trying to progress on the movements that involve them.

The rest could be put in "sleep mode" by following the aforementioned principles.

This method seems very logical and almost reminiscent of a happy ending, but it completely ignores the law of diminishing returns.

Nonetheless, it's a beneficial approach if you want to take a body part or a lift to the absolute max and keep it there for as long as possible. The extra gains that you get after the initial build-up may, however, be a little disappointing.

The program below puts everything on maintenance while blasting the arms:

Day 1: Push + Arms	Day 2: Legs + Arms (light)	Day 3: Pull + Arms

Bench press – 1x8	High bar squats – 1x8	Romanian deadlift – 1x8
Biceps curls – 3x8-12	Chin-ups – 1x10	Biceps curls – 3x8-12
Hammer curls – 3x6-8	Dips – 1x15	Hammer curls – 3x6-8
Triceps extensions – 3x8-12	Biceps curls – 3x12	Triceps extensions – 3x8-12
	Hammer curls – 3x8-10	
	Triceps extensions – 3x10-12	

**Note:** The routines above outline only the work sets. Warm-up sets are obviously still required except for the chin-ups and dips.

## How Much Strength Do You Need?

Our ancestors had no idea what a deadlift is. Yet their lives didn't suffer as a result of their barbell ignorance because the quest for gym glory wasn't part of their culture.

But we aren't like them. We're part of the lifting generations. We've been artificially wired to experience guilt when our lifts don't progress.

Today, lifting is included in the modern self-improvement template and seen as necessary to become the best version of yourself. In consequence, we get sad when the plates on the barbell aren't multiplying.

To fix the problem, we go to experts who allegedly have all the keys. What do they tell us? To keep pushing, eating and dreaming as if perpetual progress exists in reality.

**After acquiring a basic level of strength, a fanatical pursuit of extra weight on the bar leads to injuries and frustration rather than the promised transcendental growth.**

Be prepared. People will strength shame you, especially those that you meet online.

Why?

Two reasons:

### 1. The Internet = High Concentration of Winners

The Internet creates unnaturally big clubs of people with the same interests.

For example, a popular YouTube channel with thousands of subscribers has successfully gathered a crowd bigger than multiple Olympic stadiums.

**The larger pool results in a high concentration of outliers creating unrealistic expectations.**

Yes, some individuals bench 2-plates for reps at 14, but they are within a very small minority and owe their strength largely to genetics. You have nothing to learn from them.

## **2. People on the Internet lie.**

Why would someone with a digital mask lie to you? Because the ego doesn't leave us even when we are anonymous. At the end of the day, comments and forum threads are made by real people experiencing real emotions. Therefore, one should expect the full palette of human characteristics when communicating with online strangers.

### **Gym Strength Isn't as Practical as They Want You to Think**

Barbell worshippers often present strength as the highest virtue in the world, but I never quite bought that idea.

The gym is a sterile environment with equipment designed for one reason only – to be lifted. For example, a 135lbs deadlift (1-plate) is considered very light but only because the barbell is already 15cm or so off the ground and comfortable to grab and hold. The knurling on the bar helps too by making it easier to hold on to the bar.

If you try to lift and carry a 135lbs stone, you would quickly change your idea of heavy numbers.

Lifting doesn't prepare you for everything in life regardless of what the iron gurus say. If you need specific strength, you have to practice the activity that you want to excel at rather than hoping that a deadlift or squat would have an enormous carryover to your goal.

### **Natty Strength Is Not a Good Self-defense Weapon**

Many strength publications are implying that strength increases your chances of winning a fight.

That's probably true if your opponent is excessively weak (e.g., can't do 10 push-ups) and doesn't have a weapon, but strength, especially the barbell kind, won't do much to stop a vicious attack from someone who isn't a weakling.

Who has a better chance of winning a fight? A 170lbs natural with a 200lbs bench press or a 170lbs natural with a 300lbs bench press?

Yeah, that's a stupid question because strength metrics become irrelevant after the base phase.

Many people like to make fun of bodybuilders who get owned by smaller fighters in Internet clips. The goal is to paint excessive muscle mass as useless in a fight.

While that may be true when the subject is untrained and facing a skilled opponent in specific settings, larger muscles are actually a decent form of self-defense for one simple reason – they greatly reduce the number of people willing to confront you.

Who would you rather rob? The 170lbs skinny-fat natural with functional, “real” muscles built under the dictation of online powerlifting geniuses or the “weak” 250lbs bodybuilder?

Don't lie!

The extra “CNS strength” that one builds from devoting their life to the barbell is surprisingly useless mainly because it's hidden.

You may be a strong man with a 3BW deadlift, but when you don't look big at the right places, you're still a target. It's better to invest in building the visible muscles that command respect among men.

If I have to narrow it down, I'd give it to the neck/traps, arms and forearms. A thick neck makes you look powerful regardless of what you're wearing whereas massive arms and forearms quickly infiltrate the deepest layers of men who aren't fighters.

Ultimately, however, nothing beats skill development. If you're strength training or muscle building to be better at defending yourself, turn your training into GPP and join a gym that teaches a practical martial art such as boxing or kickboxing.

Don't bother with martial arts that focus on energy and other abstract notions. Learning how to throw a punch and defend yourself from one is more useful than heavy deadlifts and martial arts that resemble dancing rather than fighting.

### **Forget About Getting Super Lean. Don't Bulk.**

Unless you're predisposed to maintaining a ridiculous state of leanness, you would have a really hard time getting to a single-digit body fat. I would even go as far as saying that most naturals won't ever get there because the process is very challenging both physically and mentally.

You will look like a malnourished cadet, apart from some flattering selfies, and people will start questioning your sanity. Honestly, your critics would have a point. Making ultra-leanness the cornerstone of your existence when it doesn't come naturally to you is a goal that can truly drive you crazy.

But even if you somehow manage to reach those mythical numbers, staying there is the true test. Good luck living like a hungry skeleton all the time.

Many naturals who claim to have single-digit body fat are either fatter than they think (e.g., 12% body fat) or lying drug users who owe their physiques primarily to chemical substances.

For that reason, it's advisable to abandon the dream of seeing the split between your biceps heads. More than likely, it's not going to come true.

Of course, the statements above shouldn't be used as an excuse to start an epic bulking journey. Bulking when natural equals getting fat while convincing yourself that the extra lard is functional barbell muscle. All attempts to jump-start some epic growth by force-feeding yourself will result in fatness.

At the end of the day, it's best to stay in the 12-15% body fat range. This is the golden ground. You will not be super lean and won't even have a full six-pack of abs. But in exchange, you would get to preserve your sanity and won't torture yourself unnecessarily in the hope of achieving a state that you cannot hold on to.

### **Don't Waste Your Time with Olympic Lifts and Weird Exercises**

Back in the day, the gurus convinced me that I must do an Olympic lift variation to be considered a “real lifter”. Naturally, I decided to go with the power clean. My only Oly experience prior to my new journey had been DB snatches done at home. But I was motivated and quickly learned how to do a power clean with mediocre but acceptable technique.

Honestly, it added no value to my training whatsoever. I don’t blame the lift, though. After all, the main purpose of the Olympic lifts isn’t to build muscle. Before all, they are a power stunt. Performing Oly lifts to develop big traps is similar to joining the local swimming team to get bigger lats.

If you have an affinity for the Olympic lifts, go to an Oly club even if you’re an adult. You will learn more from the coaches there than online videos anyway.

In all other cases, do yourself a favor, and don’t be the guy doing power cleans in a commercial gym without a platform and bumper plates.

The same applies to weird, odd lifts such as deadlifts between the balls, isometrics in the power rack, 1-inch rack pulls, behind the back deadlifts...etc.

Those movements are unnecessary, harder to track than the regular versions, and needlessly uncomfortable.

### **Do Your Deadlifts with a Regular Grip**

Everybody says that PRs done with straps do not count, and yet a hook grip is seen as a legal method even though it doesn’t require more grip strength than strap lifting.

The pain that you experience when pulling with a hook grip is not in the forearm muscles. It comes from your smashed thumb. Therefore, the only bodily adaptation elicited by a hook grip are dead nerve endings and high tolerance to forces squeezing your thumb.

The mixed grip variation requires more grip strength, but it’s asymmetrical, lengthens the pull, and increases the chances of tearing a biceps. Honestly, I don’t even know why it’s popular.

Due to the reasons above, the best approach to deadlifting is to use a regular overhand grip *a.k.a.* the grip that everybody runs away from because you can’t lift as much weight.

At first, it will feel weird to do all your sets with a normal grip if you are used to one of the cheat methods, but you will quickly adapt and reach surprising numbers.

This approach has the following benefits:

1. It will build up your support grip.
2. You will feel better about yourself.

Honestly, deadlifting with a hook grip has always felt like cheating to me.

3. Your grip will act as a natural limiter preventing you from going too heavy. Or in other words, the weakness of your grip muscles will reduce the chances of exposing your back to unnecessarily heavy weights.

4. Deadlifting lighter loads will reduce CNS fatigue.

**Note:** Deadlifting with a regular grip won't limit the back development that you get from the exercise.

### **The Importance of Posture**

A good posture is of utmost importance for your appearance because it acts as an envelope for your entire body.

Lifting experts may tell you that you need to "hit your back hard" to improve your posture, but honestly, that's just not true. You don't need big muscles nor mutant strength to stand tall. Some correctional exercises could be helpful, especially if your scapula stabilizers are out of tune, but ultimately, posture comes down to two things – habits and confidence.

Self-love, overall success and consistently reminding yourself to push your chest out when you walk will do more for your posture than all the tricks you could find on YouTube.

Stretches done throughout the day are, of course, helpful but nothing will have the effect of improved confidence.

And by the way, a massive deadlift does not equal a good posture either. Many years ago, I saw a local powerlifter on the bus. I recognized him from his YouTube videos. At the time, he had a RAW deadlift well over 300kg and a massive upper back. Yet his posture was ridiculously bad. For that reason, it's irrational to think that your posture would suddenly improve once you reach a certain deadlift or barbell row number.

**Pushing your chest out and going for a walk, preferably in an environment that has a negative effect on your confidence, is the best posture exercise.**

**P.S. Squats don't work either.**

## **You Can't Hack Natural Muscle Growth "Scientifically"**

Over the last few years, many experts have been trying to resurrect the Natty Hope through scientific research. This is a very effective marketing approach, but its on-field effectivity is pretty low because no amount of science can make you **naturally** grow past what **nature** has predetermined for you.

And yet people convince themselves that the natty numbers can be maximized by analyzing science material focused on factors that may or may not influence muscle growth.

The new-age scientific tweaks don't deliver the expected progress due to their inherent impotency. Despite the failure, the findings are heavily embellished for marketing purposes.

For example, the mainstream megaphones routinely cite studies about training and nutritional protocols capable of catalyzing extra muscle protein synthesis, but the glorious report often omits to inform you that the increase is too small to make a practical difference.

But since there is no way of accurately measuring the boost, they present it as game-changing. Hence why the information provides only theoretical gains that never manifest in reality.

Despite the obvious shortcomings of science-based natty ascension, the professors won't stop putting words like "scientifically" in the titles of their videos because the noobs still believe that one can become a monster with a few genius adjustments.



My advice is to stop reading scientific journals related to muscle-building in the hope to become big naturally. The outcome of such research will always be confusion rather than tangible results.

Scientific revelations may be useful when writing an article for a mainstream muscle-building magnate, but from the perspective of an average bro, it's all meaningless. As long as you know the basics, everything else is semantics.

### **The Protein Obsession**

*"How much protein do I really need to grow," Harry typed, clicked Enter and began waiting for the words that were going to push him closer to enlightenment. His eyes were still red.*

To monetize hypertrophy through powders, the industry encourages excessive protein consumption.

It's clear as a day that a natural lifter does not need the buckets of protein promoted by the so-called experts. But they want you to think otherwise because their goal is to suffocate you with guilt every time you fail to supply your body with "the nutrients that it *really* needs to grow".

Not only that, but they also want to convince you that it's impossible to consume the hypertrophy-triggering amounts of protein that they recommend without supplements because we live in a stressful, busy world.

Seriously? How did men survive without whey protein? And were the times before the era of the smartphone any less stressful?

The experts will say that our ancestors weren't bodybuilding at the time. And while that's true, it doesn't change the fact that a man building muscle naturally cannot take advantage of the recommended protein doses.

### **Routines That Would Make the Industry Mad**

The routines below will make many people in the industry hate me, but that's fine. After all, has anyone ever satisfied the society of muscle?

#### **Routine 1: Dumbbells + Bodyweight**

Contrary to popular opinion, there are many reasons to skip leg day.

Leg sessions are draining and steal mental and physical resources that can be donated to the upper body.

Also, the leg juice that you lose when submitting yourself to light forms of medieval torture such as squats can be used for more adventurous activities (e.g., running, cycling, swimming, or hiking)

The industry wants you to believe that you will look really funny if you don't train your legs with conventional movements, but that isn't true for most people.

It may come as a surprise to the brainwashed zealots, but nature's chicken leg prevention is food rather than squats.

Unless your bodyweight is excessively low (you've been on a low-calorie diet), it's really difficult to have those ultra-skinny legs that everyone is so afraid of.

As long as you consume sufficient quantities of food and exist, your legs will not look nearly as skinny as the squat fanatics predict.

Here's the routine:

Day 1: Chest + Arms + Back	Day 2: Shoulders + Arms + Back	Day 2: Back + Arms + Chest
Weighted push-ups – 3x12	Dumbbell Overhead press – 3x8-10	Non-supported DB rows – 3x12
Bodyweight dips – 2xF	Bodyweight chin-ups – 1xF	Bodyweight dips – 2xF
Bodyweight chin-ups – 2xF	Bodyweight dips – 2xF	Bodyweight chin-ups – 2xF
DB Biceps curls – 3x8-10	DB Biceps curls – 3x8-10	DB Biceps curls – 2x8-10
DB Hammer curls – 3x8-10	DB Hammer curls – 3x8-10	DB Hammer curls – 2x8-10
Triceps extensions – 3x8-10	Triceps extensions – 3x8-10	Triceps extensions – 2x8-10

The routine above works the upper body three times a week. All workouts are similar to each other. The only difference is that every day has a slightly different emphasis.

The intention of this routine is to build up the show-off muscles with minimal equipment.

The program does not require a lot of tools – only dumbbells, a backpack for the weight push-ups and a way to do dips and pull-ups.

On the off days, it is advisable to do some sort of leg training that doesn't require a lot of input from the upper body. Cycling, jogging or sprinting are all suitable options.

This routine has an undeniable downside – the only exercise effectively stressing the spinal erectors are the non-supported dumbbell rows done on Day 3.

To increase the spinal erector volume, you could perform T-Handle or kettlebell swings on the off days. You can make a T-handle out of old steel pipes and a couple of connection joints.

For triceps, you can do PJR pullovers with a dumbbell.

## **Routine 2: Dumbbells + Bodyweight Simplified**

The next routine is quite similar to the previous one, but it's simplified even further.

Day 1: Chest + Arms + Back	Day 2: Chest + Arms + Back	Day 2: Chest + Arms + Back
Push-ups – 3x12	Bodyweight chin-ups – 1xF	Push-ups – 3x12
Bodyweight dips – 2xF	Bodyweight dips – 1xF	Bodyweight dips – 2xF
Bodyweight chin-ups – 2xF	DB Biceps curls – 3x8-10	Bodyweight chin-ups – 2xF
DB Biceps curls – 3x8-10	DB Hammer curls – 3x8-10	DB Biceps curls – 3x8-10
DB Hammer curls – 3x8-10	Triceps extensions – 3x8-10	DB Hammer curls – 3x8-10
Triceps extensions – 3x8-10		Triceps extensions – 3x8-10

This version of the routine is more accessible because it requires even less equipment. It's advisable to do some swings on the off days.

**Routine 3: Got neck?**

Compound exercises like the deadlift can indirectly stimulate the neck, but there are no guarantees that it will grow sufficiently.

And since the neck is of very high importance to your overall look, it makes sense to train it directly if it's a weak body part of yours.

You don't need many movements to build up the neck. Curls to the back and to the front are sufficient.

If you have the money, I recommend using a quality harness for the curls to the back. But if you don't have access to one, you could use bands.

The front curls (pulling the chin towards the upper chest) are difficult to do with most harnesses, however. In my experience, it's better to use the cable machine at the gym for that movement.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Dips – 2xF	Neck curls with a harness –3x12-20	Chin-ups – 2xF	Neck curls with a harness –3x12-20	Dips – 2xF	Neck curls with a harness –3x12-20
Push-ups – 3x12	Front curls with a band or a cable machine – 3x12-20	Dips – 2xF	Front curls with a band or a cable machine – 3x12-20	Push-ups – 3x12	Front curls with a band or cable machine – 3x12-20

Chin-ups – 2xF		DB Biceps curls – 3x8- 10		Chin-ups – 2xF	
DB Biceps curls – 3x8- 10		DB Hammer curls – 3x8- 10		DB Biceps curls – 3x8- 10	
DB Hammer curls – 3x8- 10		Triceps extensions – 3x8-10		DB Hammer curls – 3x8- 10	
Triceps extensions – 3x8-10				Triceps extensions – 3x8-10	

### **Disclaimer**

Always consult your physician before beginning any exercise program. If you experience any pain or difficulty with these exercises and/or training routines, stop and consult your healthcare provider. NattyOrNot.com is NOT responsible for any injuries that can occur during your training. Reliance on any information provided by this book or the author is solely at your own risk.

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