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CALISTHENICS DOMINATION



HOW TO STRUCTURE & PROGRAM
YOUR CALISTHENICS TRAINING
ACHIEVE RESULTS FASTER IN LESS TIME
TRAINING APPROACH
PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD
RECOVERY
& MORE

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Introduction

Disclaimer

The information found in this eBook is designed to provide helpful insights and guide you in the right direction on the subject discussed. The author is not responsible for any injuries, damages and general health related problems that can occur following the information in this eBook. Use the information at your own risk.

What you'll learn

In this book you will learn:

- How to approach training
- How to structure and program your training for best efficiency
- How to minimize time spent training and get results faster
- 3 different ways to adjust intensity
- 6 different ways to progress with bodyweight training
- And more

Thank you

First of all I'd like to sincerely thank you for purchasing this eBook. A lot of time, research and effort have gone into making it. Over three years' worth of experimentation and countless hours of bodyweight training in one eBook. Source of information from books, online studies, paid training programs and courses but most importantly my own experience.

Why you should listen to me

Over the past 4+ years I have been training calisthenics. I have experienced through trial and error, what works and what doesn't. I do understand that everybody is different and different approach in training will work for different people, however if you follow the steps in this eBook I can guarantee you that you will speed up your process and achieve your goals much faster.

Michael Kandrak

How To Approach Training

Don't just do, feel

First thing I want to touch on is mind muscle connection. You may have heard this term already and it is important. You need to be feeling the muscles involved in the movement, not just pulling or pushing. Feel the muscles working, feel the contractions happening, squeeze as much as possible. Properly contracting and activating your muscles will pay dividends to your gains.

Professional athletes that compete, practise posing and often times they get sore the following day just from the intensity of flexing. Now, if you can get sore from only flexing, can you IMAGINE if you did all that contracting with all the equipment that you use. Pull up bar, dip bar, gymnastics rings, barbells, dumbbells, rope, whatever the tool you name it... remember the purpose behind these tools. Tools are there for us to add more resistance, cause more tension and stress on the muscle. It is important to use the tools as intended, to contract muscles with higher intensity.

As you contract muscles overtime, you will notice you can feel the muscles more and your mind muscle connection will develop. Your mind muscle connection will eventually get so strong, you will be able to feel each individual muscle being worked even in compound exercises.

Mindset

You have to think positively and believe in yourself. If you don't believe in yourself, you are setting yourself up for a failure. Our thoughts create our reality. If you are going for that heavy pull, an endurance set or anything else in life, it all starts in the mindset. If you believe in yourself, chances of you achieving your goals are greatly increased. That's because you are in the right state of mind and you will truly give it your all. Keep in mind that a positive mindset will certainly help, but it is not a superpower that will achieve your goals for you overnight. We live in a world where everybody wants instant gratification, unfortunately that is not the way fitness, world,

and life works. You need to give something to get something back. You got to be able to play the long game, things take time, accept it, embrace it, and work it. One key factor I want to mention however is that thinking positively is only the first step. Just thinking, isn't enough. **Only intentions and words can't bring reality to your arms, you have to take action, you got to put in the work.** Be realistic, set goals and deadlines and have a can do attitude and you will achieve whatever it is you want.

“Our thoughts create our reality”

Consistency

You cannot expect great results without putting in consistent work, it's just how it is, I'm sorry to break it to you. Working out sometimes is just not going to do it. You will not achieve your goals overnight, make peace with that, the sooner the better. You have to put in work consistently, over a long period of time, in order to achieve anything noteworthy. There is this theory that states that it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert at something. 10,000 hours is excessive and not everybody wants to become an expert. There is another theory that states it takes 1000 hours to become great at something. That is still a lot of time and again, not everybody wants to become great at something, however it is much more achievable. Everybody wants to achieve their goals though right? How long will it take to achieve your fitness goals? It depends how big your goals are but I would say no more than 250 hours for most goals. Most of the time it is a lot less, 250 hours is 5 hours a week for a year. Now that doesn't sound so bad, does it? You can achieve a lot in a year, and most likely you can achieve all your fitness goals within a year. Yes, you will have good and bad days, however, bad days don't matter, what matters is consistency. If you stay consistent and continue to put in effort, you WILL reach your goals, no ifs, no buts.

*“Success is the sum of small efforts,
repeated day in and day out.”*

- Robert Collier

*“I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000
kicks once,*

*but I fear the man who has practiced one kick
10,000 times.”*

- Bruce Lee

Form

In order to maximize your gains, it is necessary to be aware of the correct scapula positions for various exercises. The four main scapula positions include:

1. Protraction
2. Retraction
3. Elevation
4. Depression

By using [the correct scapula positions](#) for various exercises, you are correctly recruiting the muscles and placing yourself in an advantageous state to perform the movement.

As well as using the correct form and scapula positions, it is important to train your sets until performance failure. What I mean by performance failure is, train with strict form and stop when your form is no longer the same as the first rep. This will ensure that all of your reps are quality form and you aren't cheating by swinging, leaning or allowing other muscles to assist. Train with strict form and you will get stronger faster as the targeted muscle is being worked harder.

Strength Training vs. Hypertrophy training

Decide whether you want to focus on building strength or building muscle. Strength training works in low rep ranges, usually in 1-5 with emphasis on very high intensity, whereas hypertrophy training focuses on maximum muscle growth, working in the 8-15 rep range. Speaking from my personal experience, having done both, I don't see one superior to another. It truly depends on your goals. If you want to achieve a muscle up or any other explosive movement, you will have to strength train in order to get there, meaning low reps and high intensity. With hypertrophy training, I found that increasing overall working volume and time under tension resulted in massive gains every time. The more volume and the more time under tension, the more muscle stimulation. Finally I found that if you train on the [gymnastics rings](#), the gains are greater. This is due to all the stabilizer

muscles being worked a lot more compared to doing the exercises on stable bars.

In Summary

Just to sum up the training approach:

Don't just do, feel. Remember to use the tools for their purpose, to add more resistance, cause more stress on the muscle. Squeeze the muscles as much as possible on each rep.

Have a positive mindset. Scrap the negative talk – “I wish, maybe one day”, start using positives I will, I can, I GOT THIS! Believe in yourself.

Stay consistent. I don't mean workout every day but don't skip workouts. Stick to your programme and trust the process. Achieving your goals will take time.

Use correct form and scapula positions and focus on quality reps, stop when your last rep no longer looks like the first. Quality over quantity always.

How To Structure Your Training

What not to do

Come into the gym and train whatever you feel like. Not track anything down. Stick with your current training plan and work your new goals on top of that. If you do any of these, you are setting yourself up for a failure. This is where most people go wrong, they try to maintain all their strengths and learn new skills on top of it. We are humans not robots, we have limited recovery capacity. Take some exercises out to make room for new strength.

I tried to make myself the ultimate training program, balance of push and pull and legs, balance of horizontal and vertical pushing and pulling, balance of bent and straight arm work, balance of skill work and reps, balance of mobility, flexibility and training... I quickly realised it is not possible. Perfect world doesn't exist. It is impossible to maintain every aspect of strength, flexibility and mobility and gain new strength and skills on top of it. You have to make sacrifices. You may lose a rep or three from your max pull ups or push ups but in return you will gain new strength or a new skill. Is the trade worth it? Every time.

How to structure your training

You need to have a goal in mind and on paper. The goal in mind always needs to be there, you need to know what it is you are trying to achieve, what it is that you are working for. I've read in a book that "there's something magical about writing your goals down", I don't believe in magic but for sure it makes the goal more real. By writing your goal down, you show that you are serious about achieving it and your mind tends to focus more on it. Place it somewhere so that you see it every day. This will help you stay focused.

I always recommend having one push, one pull and one leg goal. Every training session you have, you will work towards your goals. Only train exercises that will get you closer to achieving your goals. If you are training exercises that will not get you closer to your goals, what is the point? If somebody told you or you read somewhere that exercise X, Y, Z must be

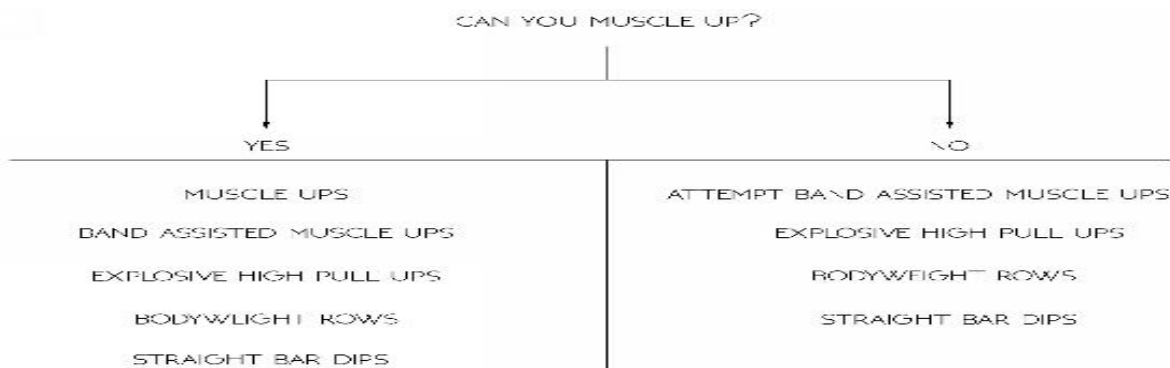
trained no matter what, that's absolute bullshit. Remember every exercise you do, will impact your recovery rate. If you are training exercises that won't help you achieve your goals, you are just accumulating extra fatigue for no reason and this will sacrifice your performance in the exercises that actually matter.

Once you achieve your goals, if you wish to maintain your strength only train these exercises once a week and set a new set of goals and start working towards them. If you don't maintain your strength don't worry, as you have reached new level of strength, coming back to it will be a lot easier due to muscle memory.

The way to structure your training to achieve your goals the quickest, is that you should always start with training your goals most intense exercise that you can currently do, followed by supplementary exercises.

1. Goal exercise
2. Mimic goal exercise
3. Supplementary exercise one
4. Supplementary exercise two

Below is a training diagram with intentions that your goal is 5 muscle ups. First exercise should either be your goal or an easier variation that mimics the movement as much as possible. In this scenario, if you can do muscle ups do them if not, attempt band assisted muscle ups until fatigued. If you can't do band assisted muscle ups do high explosive pull ups. Now you have done your most intense exercise, you move onto supplementary exercises. Supplementary exercises should be exercises that are an easier version of your goal or work the same muscle groups. Do the same for your push and leg goals.



I understand that not everybody wants to learn muscle ups, levers and planches. If your goal is to simply put on some muscle, following any calisthenics training program will do you good. Avoid doing random stuff as that will get you random results. Stick to a training plan and track your progress. It is important to remember that you must be increasing the intensity overtime to continue making gains. In the next chapter you will learn three different ways to increase intensity.

Adjusting Intensity

There are multiple ways you can adjust intensity with calisthenics:

Feet positioning

You can make the intensity more or less difficult by changing your posture. There are 3 positions you should be aware of:

1. 90 degree knee bend
2. Straight legs
3. Feet elevation

The 90 degree knee bend is the least difficult. It allows for your legs to support the lower body therefore leaving you with only pulling or pushing around half of your bodyweight which is why this is great position to use when starting calisthenics or learning new exercises. Many people use this position when learning push ups, they start push ups on their knees. It's also great for bodyweight rows.



The straight legs position is slightly more difficult than the 90 degree knee bend. This is also the standard form when speaking of push ups or bodyweight rows etc. The straight legs position still gives your lower body a little bit of support so you aren't pushing or pulling your entire bodyweight just yet.



Finally there is the feet elevation. The higher your feet are elevated the more difficult the exercise. This is the hardest difficulty relating to your posture. It is commonly used to overload exercises. Feet elevation is one of the best ways to progress towards a full handstand push up.





EASY



MEDIUM



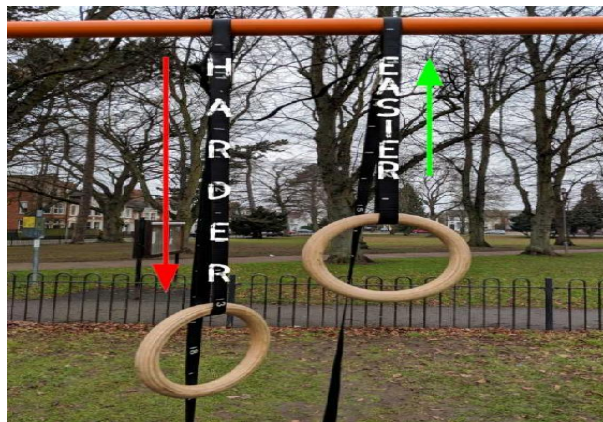
HARD



Changing the intensity relating to your posture works for all exercises not just the exercises shown. Push ups, rows, ring rollouts, tricep dips, chest flies and many more.

Height of the rings

Length of the straps on the rings plays a part in the exercise intensity. This is why some straps come numbered when buying gymnastics rings. They don't come numbered so it's easier for you to align them up (yes this too) but the numbers are there so it is easy to track down your intensity. The shorter the straps the easier the exercise, the longer the straps the more difficult the exercise is. This is due to longer straps providing more instability.

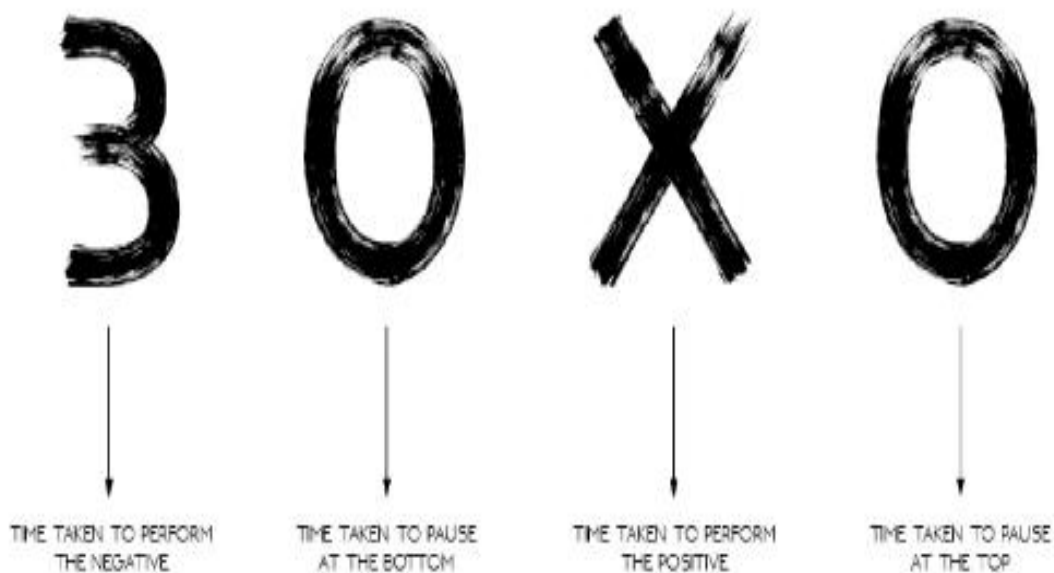


If you have ever had the rings set up literally just underneath at the point of attachment, you can probably agree that it is almost identical performing a pull up on the rings compared to a traditional pull up bar, the only difference is that rings allow rotation. Now if you look at Olympic gymnasts, their rings straps are 3 meters long which makes everything so much more difficult. Try a dip or a pull up on your rings with rings set up at their highest point and lowest point and feel the difference. See how much more you swing and wobble when rings are at their furthest point from attachment.

Tempo (time under tension)

Tempo is the rate of speed at which an exercise is executed. It is another way you can adjust the intensity of the exercise. By slowing down the tempo, we are increasing the intensity of the exercise. For example, if you do 5 pull ups and take 3 second to do each pull up, that's 15 seconds under tension. If you slow down the tempo and take 4 seconds to do one pull up, the same 5 pull ups will now take 20 seconds, that's 5 seconds of additional time under tension. It may not seem like a lot but give it a try and see for yourself how much more difficult it is. The most common practise is to explode up on the positive and slow down on the negative. This is pretty effective as it builds power and control and you are getting the best of both worlds and it's great for hypertrophy training.

Tempo is typically used in a four number system such as 30X0.



Using the 30X0 as an example, you would perform a 3 second negative with

no pause at the bottom, followed by an explosive positive and no pause at the top.

One important factor from tempo I want you to take away is that you will not build explosive power if your tempo is not explosive. It is so simple but yet so many get this wrong, I see many people trying to learn a muscle up yet they are training sets of 10 pull ups. Muscle up is an explosive movement so regular pull ups are not going to translate towards the muscle up. Want explosive power? Train explosive tempo, pull as high as you can in the shortest time possible. Want complete control throughout the entire range of motion? Slow down the tempo.

How To Progress With Training

Progressive overload

It is important that you are aware of progressive overload if you want to reach any of your goals. In short it means increasing intensity overtime. Without progressive overload, your muscles are doing what they're used to, therefore there is no need for any new adaptations. If you are constantly doing the same thing without making it more challenging, your muscles are saying "oh, this again, I got this..." but increase the intensity and your muscles will come back at you like "damn, we need to get stronger..." and they will be forced to adapt to the new circumstances. The common misconception is that the only way to progressive overload is to keep increasing the weight and this is wrong. Progressive overload can be achieved multiple ways: Increased volume, increased range of motion, increased tempo, etc. In conclusion, in order to get stronger or build muscle, we must continue to put our muscles under severe stress to force them to adapt to new circumstances.

Progressive Overload Example One				
	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 4
Week 1	8 pull ups	8 pull ups	8 pull ups	8 pull ups
Week 2	9 pull ups	9 pull ups	8 pull ups	8 pull ups
Week 3	9 pull ups	9 pull ups	9 pull ups	9 pull ups

Progressive Overload Example Two				
	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 4
Week 1	8 reps +20kg	8 reps +20kg	8 reps +20kg	8 reps +20kg
Week 2	5 reps +24kg	5 reps +24kg	5 reps +24kg	5 reps +24kg
Week 3	6 reps +20kg	6 reps +24kg	5 reps +24kg	5 reps +24kg

Progressive Overload Example Three				
	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 4
Week 1	FL hold 4 sec	FL hold 4 sec	FL hold 4 sec	FL hold 4 sec
Week 2	FL hold 5 sec	FL hold 4 sec	FL hold 4 sec	FL hold 4 sec
Week 3	FL hold 5 sec	FL hold 5 sec	FL hold 4 sec	FL hold 4 sec

Tracking your workouts

You may have heard the quote “what gets measured, gets managed” and it is accurate. If you are serious about your goals you have to track your workouts. Every exercise, every rep, every set and the rest in-between sets. If you want average results, you put in average effort. I know you don’t want average results, you want better, exceptional results, and that is why you have to put in above average effort. Tracking your workouts is extra work and very few do it therefore very few people get the results that they want. By tracking down your workouts, you will be able to see what you have done on any given day, week, month, year. It is vital as this training log will tell you whether you are doing great, slacking or the program isn’t working for you. Here is what your training log is telling you:

1. If you are doing more reps or sets or the intensity is higher, than you were doing two weeks ago then you are making great progress.
2. If you are doing the same reps or sets or the intensity is the same, than you were doing two weeks ago and you aren’t struggling then you are slacking. Work harder.
3. If you are doing the same reps or sets or the intensity is the same, than you were doing two weeks ago and you are struggling, try a deload and then try again. If it still isn’t working then the program isn’t working for you, you need to try another way.
4. If you are doing fewer reps or sets or the intensity is lower, than you were doing two weeks ago, you are burnt out and you need to deload and try again.

If you don’t have a training log, you can’t tell whether you’re making progress or not, you can say “last month I did 4 sets of 6 of these if I remember correctly” **with a training log you cannot argue, the facts are on the paper.**

It can also be very beneficial to track measures of stress, how hard or heavy the exercise feels on any given set, also known as the rate of perceived exertion (RPE). By tracking this on a log each time you train, you can gain a deep insight into your actual progress overtime. For example, if you do

20kg pull ups for 5 reps on two separate occasions, you may feel like you have made no progress until you look at your RPE and see that your second training felt easier than the first. You can measure the difficulty on a scale of 1-5, 1 being the easiest, 5 hardest or any other way you want to measure that's better for you.

To save you the hassle, I made a training log template for you to use, this is how much I want you to succeed so please use it. It will truly make a difference to your training progress. Download the training log template [here](#).

Concentrics

The concentrics also known as positives and lifting of the movement are king. It's where the contractions occur. It's where you make the most gains. Some people argue that negatives are better for muscle building but look at deadlifts, arguably one of the greatest muscle building exercises there is and many people only perform the concentric and drop the weight. Similarly look at a pull up, you cannot learn a pull up by only doing the negatives, you need to be pulling up! If negatives were truly that important, they would be used more. When people ask me, why can't I handstand push up or why can't I pull up? I ask are you training the concentrics? Every time they answer with a no. **Training just the negatives will not teach you the movement!** You ever seen someone doing pull up negatives for months and they still can't do a pull up today? That's because they aren't training the concentrics. When learning a new exercise, we are often not strong enough to perform the positive and this is why you need to use some sort of assistance to help you do the positive. This can be using a [resistance band](#) or a buddy spotting you or doing an easier variation of the exercise.

Eccentrics

The eccentrics also known as negatives and lowering of the movement are good for two reasons. They are used for progressive overload and injury prevention. By slowing down the negatives, you are increasing the time under tension therefore progressively overloading. On the other hand it is important to control the negatives for injury prevention. If you do not control the negative and just let the gravity take over, you are putting yourself at serious risk of an injury. Absolutely do not do this, for maximal strength and hypertrophy control the negative at all times.

Studies have shown that our bodies can tolerate 1.75 times more weight eccentrically than concentrically so therefore eccentrics are great for beginners, when learning a new exercise and used to progressively overload.

Statics

Isometrics also known as holds or statics are underestimated and are most commonly only associated with the bigger movements such as levers and planches. They can also be used throughout any exercise at any point to help you become stronger within a certain range of motion. If you have a weak spot in the movement, for example half way through a pull up, you can perform a static hold there to become stronger in that position. Additionally from my own experience, when learning levers I have seen way better progress from performing static holds compared to dynamic movements. In my case, front lever raises (dynamic movement) did absolutely nothing for me, however holding straddle front lever for time and also band assisted front lever for time, worked a treat so keep that in mind. Finally, the one leg progressions for levers with one leg tucked in and the other extended are useless. Don't waste your time doing them, if you want solid lever training do tuck holds followed by advanced tucks, straddles and finally, full levers.

Different Ways To Progress

Weighted reps

The most common go to method for overloading is to [increase the weight](#). Used in the gym all the time, this method also works wonders with calisthenics. Adding weight to your calisthenics will result in massive strength gains in a short period of time, not to mention it will make you feel super bad ass pulling and pushing extra weight on top of your bodyweight.

Overloading by adding weight is one of the simplest and most effective ways to progress. It is very easy to track, numbers speak for themselves. I recommend first having a solid 10 reps of a given exercise before moving onto weighted. E.g. have strong 10 bodyweight pull ups first, before moving onto weighted.



I highly recommend adding weight to your calisthenics training if you want to build strength and explosive power. As this approach is very intense, I would recommend training it once a week for push and pull, it is enough to force adaptations if you train consistently. This method works very well with pull ups, push ups, dips, rows and muscle ups.

Here is the approach I took in my weighted calisthenics phase. I aimed for 4 sets of 5 reps with a given weight, when achieved, I'd increase the weight otherwise I'd continue training with the same weight until I got 4 sets of 5 reps. You don't have to follow the exact sets and reps I have used, it will work with any as long as you are progressively overloading overtime. In the below example, I would not increase the weight and would try the same weight again next week.

Set 1 – 5 pull ups

Set 2 – 5 pull ups

Set 3 – 5 pull ups

Set 4 – 3 pull ups

Set 5 – 2 pull ups

However, if the following week I hit all 4 sets with 5 pull ups, I would increase the weight for the next training session and train until I hit 4 sets of 5 pull ups with the new weight.

Pause reps

Paused reps are very underestimated and not commonly practised by many. I recommend using pause reps if you are plateauing or wish to make your movement smoother. They are super effective for improving your sticking points. Your sticking point is your weakest link in a movement. By working on your weakest links, expect to make huge strength gains and make your movement more efficient. Pause reps work because you are breaking the momentum, there is no kinetic energy, no kipping, no bouncing, you are generating power from a static position. Pauses should be one to two seconds long, any longer and you are doing a static hold. Remember the point of pause reps is to pause until all momentum is broken and then generate force. For example in a pull up, the start of a pull up can be a sticking point for many just as you engage your back, pausing there and then pulling up will strengthen your pull ups.

Pause reps can also be used to learn to generate power within a specific range of motion. For example pausing half way through a pull up, and then going into a muscle up. There are limitless possibilities, whatever exercise, whatever range of motion!



Increasing range of motion

Are you learning a new exercise? Increasing the range of motion is a good way to go about it. Let's break down a dip as an example. When you start learning dips you start on the parallettes with legs in front of you for support. A good way to progress is to increase the range of motion on the dips by increasing the height of the parallettes or dip station. By doing so you will be getting less and less support from your legs and eventually becoming able to do a dip without any leg support at all. The key here is to increase the range of motion each session. Make sure you are tracking the increase of the range of motion or try to use a reference point of some sort or film yourself each week. You always want to track down the increase on the range of motion whenever possible.

Increasing the range of motion is also a brilliant way to prepare yourself for the next progression within a given exercise. This is where increasing the range of motion really shines to help you make great progression. For example, let's say you can do handstand push ups and your goal is to learn a 90 degree handstand push up, going from a handstand push up straight into 90 degree handstand push up is a huge transition and not a realistic way to make sufficient progress. Breaking it down into smaller steps is the right way to go about it, this can be done by increasing the range of motion. Elevating your handstand push up by 5cm to begin with and continually increasing the elevation ([5,10,15,20cm](#)) will fasten your progression to the 90 degree handstand push up and prepare your shoulders and triceps for it.



Change of tempo

If you want to build complete control throughout the entire range of motion or explosive strength, tempo training is for you. Use of tempo can help build better mind muscle connection, body awareness as well as dramatically improve your stability and control of movement.

By changing the tempo you are either shortening or lengthening the time under tension. Both can be useful depending on your training goals. **If you want explosive strength, you have to train explosively! If you want great control, you have to train with a slow tempo.** Many get this wrong and expect explosive strength from training regular tempo. As already mentioned, a common example is people training pull ups with expectations to learn a muscle up. How can you expect to learn a muscle up if for one you're not even training the movement and second you are not training explosively. There is no carry over of strength, its two different tempos, two different muscle fibres being worked. By training explosively you are training those fast twitch muscle fibres, this is the only way you will be able to generate more power. If you train with a slow tempo, you are training your slow twitch muscle fibres. You can't use slow twitch muscle fibres to generate power.

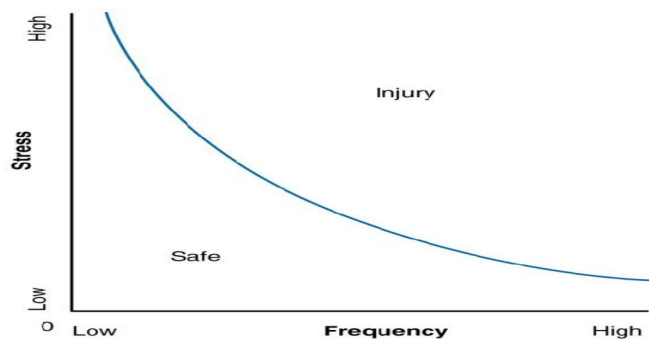
Look at your goals and pick a tempo that will work with your goals. Use the chart below as a general guide based on different goals.

Goal	Positives (seconds)	Negatives (seconds)
Power & Strength	Explosive	1-2
Hypertrophy	1-2	2-4
Endurance	1-2	2-6

Frequency

Increasing the frequency of training works wonders for skill training, also known as greasing the groove. I recommend increasing the frequency of training if you wish to learn skills quickly. Skill training such as handstand balancing, levers and planches all require a lot of practise and therefore by training more frequently you are building those neurological pathways as well as your body awareness and coordination. **Train a little but train often, without going to failure.** Skills such as handstand balancing can be trained everyday because it is very low intensity. Infact that is how I learned to handstand. I used to train about 10 minutes every day, as well as doing a handstand every time I walked up the stairs or the classic beat the kettle game, try to balance a handstand until the kettle boils.

For other skill work such as levers and planches, this can also be very beneficial, however as these skills are a lot more intense, be careful with how intense you make the training. Just remember the key is to not go to failure, so you can afford to train again the following day or the day after. We are training the nervous system and teaching the muscles to work efficiently in the position required. Think of it the same way as learning a language. If you practise once a week, you may learn something but it will be hard to remember, however if you practise more frequently, chances are you will remember more.



Different grip

It doesn't matter how long you train for, chances are you have some lacking body parts and or muscle imbalances. This is where use of different grips is great. Adaptations happen when change happens. By using a different grip, you will be recruiting different muscles or hitting the muscles from a different angle. Different grips are useful for enhancing your physique by bringing out your weaker areas. The beauty of different grips is that you can do the same exercises you are doing just with a different grip whilst simultaneously building more muscle mass in your weaker areas. There are three different grips: pronated, supinated and neutral grip.

Supinated grip also known as underhand grip or chin up grip, will put more stress on your biceps. If your biceps are lagging, or you wish to put a little size on them, using a supinated grip will do just that. Combine supinated grip along with a slow tempo and high volume and you have a recipe for killer arms. Be careful with using a supinated grip as it can cause wrist injury, this is why I highly recommend that you use rings as you can start with a pronated grip and rotate as you go up in a chin up into a supinated grip to keep those wrists safe.



Neutral grip also known as parallel grip or palms facing in, will mostly work on the brachialis. Brachialis is a small muscle that sits in between the biceps and triceps, right in the middle. If you want that 3D arm look, definitely include some neutral grip pull ups or rows in your workout routine.



An advertisement for 'COFFEE FOR ATHLETES FIGHTER FUEL'. On the left is a product shot of a black and white packet. The main text reads 'COFFEE FOR ATHLETES' in large white letters. To the right, a list of benefits is shown with green bullet points: 'High Energy with ZERO Crash', 'Promotes LASER Focus and Alertness', 'Optimal Performance', and 'Fights Fatigue'. Below this, it says 'GIVES YOU THE EDGE YOU NEED TO GET UP AND WIN!' in white. At the bottom, it states 'All Natural 100% Arabica Coffee + Ginseng' in green and 'YES, I WANT TO WIN!' in white on a red arrow-shaped background.

Finally there is the pronated grip also known as overhand grip or pull up grip, the most common grip used in calisthenics. The most natural feeling grip and most flexible. Pronated grip will mostly target your back but also some arms. You can go close, normal and wide without feeling any discomfort. Use pronated grip to do some wide grip pull ups to bring out your lats.



Importance Of Deload

Each training you accumulate fatigue. You take rest days but after weeks, months of overloading, the rest days just aren't enough. You're constantly pushing your body and demanding more from it, without giving it enough time for recovery. The average fitness enthusiast probably trains around 5 days a week with 2 days rest. There's nothing wrong with that, the only problem is that many do that week on week for months and still haven't had one full week off training. You want an extra rep, more weight, week on week in your training, you can only do that for so long before your progress comes to a halt due to fatigue from all the weeks before hand. I truly believe that there are very few people that are overtraining, most whom stopped making progress are overreaching. Overreaching is not necessarily a bad thing, it's basically what we do to make progress, we demand more from the body than it is capable of but constantly overreaching will lead to training in an under recovered state. Training in an under recovered state equals no more progress. A deload allows you to rest your central nervous system, drop fatigue, give your muscles, tendons and joints a break that they deserve.

Muscular recovery

A deload will allow your muscles recovery time to fully repair the broken down tissue. Not giving enough time to fully recover can negatively impact your muscular development. Think of all the hours spent training, whilst potentially wasting some gains. We all want a 100% return on investment, we don't want to leave any of it out.

Central nervous system recovery

Central nervous system needs a break too. The difference between muscular and central nervous system recovery is that the central nervous system impacts the entire body, not just muscles. You will feel overly tired from head to toe. You will be weaker and slower in all movements, body coordination will suffer as well as balance. Important thing to remember is that central nervous system stress is not only caused from physical exercise,

but outside sources too, e.g. financial problems, break up, etc. that's why it's important to give it a break from at least one source (training) which you can prevent.

Joints & tendons recovery

The most forgotten one out of them all. If nothing else has convinced you to take deloads, maybe this will. Think of all the ranges of motion you put your body through or the times when you feel joints and tendons overworked or pain. They need a rest too! Joints and tendons take a lot longer to recover compared to muscles. It's important to allow joints and tendons to fully recover, mostly for injury prevention. Injuries such as shoulder or elbow tendonitis take a very long time to recover from so remember, it's easier to prevent it than it is to treat it when it happens.

How To Deload

I understand it can be hard to not go and train if you're in the rhythm but it is for the greater good. You can either **stop working out completely or cut your workout volume and intensity in half** if you really must train. As an example, if you're doing 4 sets of 10 pull ups +10kg, do 2 sets of 10 pull ups with +5kg. How often you should deload varies from person to person but generally one deload every 6-8 weeks is a good time frame.

Get plenty of sleep

[Sleep is king](#) for recovery. Lack of sleep will affect your training massively and also slow down your recovery dramatically. Mood and work ethic will also suffer. I am sure you have trained before when you only got like a 4-5 hour sleep the night before and your workout has suffered. That was just from one night of less rest, imagine if you got a full 8 hour sleep every night for a week. We all waste so much time on our phones and laptops, put them away at least for one week and get some extra sleep, your body will thank you for it.

Eat quality nutrients

Feed your body quality nutrients, this doesn't just go for deloads but in general. Feeding the body quality nutrients will affect your performance, recovery, mood. It is very understated, I myself need to improve my eating habits, when I do eat good, I am much more energetic and overall happier.

Try to avoid caffeine

In a world full of coffee shops and energy drinks left right and centre, it can be beneficial to let your body do its thing naturally, without the aid of caffeine. Caffeine helps us perform and focus however when you aren't really doing anything physically intense, is it really necessary to intake caffeine? As you intake caffeine you become less tolerant to it and it takes more and more of it to have an effect on you so taking a week off it can help build some of that tolerance back and help you in the gym once again. If you really need a coffee, go decaff, swap energy drinks for smoothies or something healthier and hide your pre workout out of reach.

Deload tip

Here is a little deload hack. If you're a lover for training and you really must train, plan your deloads for when you go on holidays. Swap your training for alternative ways of exercising such as walks, hiking, swimming. Key is to keep it low intensity. Nature will replenish your energy.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”

- Benjamin Franklin

Final Words

Now that you understand that progressive overload is a must to continue making progress and you have learnt different ways to alter the intensity and different ways to progress, I encourage you to sit down and have a think. Think about your current situation, where you are at the moment and where you would like to be in the next month or two.

Do you want to learn a skill or progress in training? Do you want to gain strength or muscle mass? Think of 3 goals. One push, one pull and one leg. Write these 3 goals down and make a detailed plan on how you will go about achieving those goals. Which exercises will you use to achieve your goals? Which method will you use to increase the intensity overtime? Write down exercises which you are currently training which will not help you get closer to your goals and eliminate them. Do you have any muscles that are lagging, if so, do you wish to develop them? Be serious about this, and you will see serious results.

Do not cause yourself paralysis by analysis. There is a lot of information out there and it can be truly confusing. However as I keep mentioning, different methods work for different people, everybody is different and there isn't a single best way to do things for everyone. This is why I taught you different ways to progress. I recommend you read through this book again but this time you highlight the bits that appeal to you the most in yellow, copy them onto a separate word document along with your goals and go from there. A plan of action, execution and tracking your progress is truly the best advice I can give you. They go hand in hand, you need all three to achieve and/or make great progress towards your goals.

I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed reading this book and most importantly have learnt something out of it. I once again thank you for supporting me and wish you the very best with your training!

For all enquires, questions and feedback, please message me on [Instagram](#).

Best,
Michal.