

Triad
Muscle
Revolution

3.0

By Matt Schifferle

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Hello and welcome to the Triad Muscle Revolution! My name is Matt Schifferle and I'm very excited to present you with this simple, yet effective method.

This program started off as a little experiment in my basement about 10 years ago. Since then, it has grown and evolved through my friends and clients and has spread all around the world. The inspiration for this program came from two guys who were nothing short of phenomenal in both ability as well as appearance.

I first met Phil when I was fairly new to training over 10 years ago. He was a devoted pull up master in the true sense of the word. At the time, he was training to attempt the world record for the most pull ups in 1 hour. Phil was so strong he would do pull ups without letting his body come straight down from the bar. He would pull his chest to the bar and then push himself away from the bar at a 45 degree angle so the bar was as much in front of him rather than above him. Blasting out over 30 of these "angle pull ups" was a nightly show he would put on for the gym. Not only was his strength impressive but his physique was unmatched. His biceps and shoulders looked like he tucked softballs under his skin and his back was so wide I'm sure he created extra wind resistance while going for a run.

And then there was Marc. Marc came into my life about 5 years later when I was co-managing a gym in Burlington Vermont. From the moment he walked in through the door you knew he had to be one of the strongest guys in town. He easily could have rivaled any bodybuilder and some people would even ask me if he was some world class lifter who had strolled into town. What was even more impressive was Marc's routine. He would come in and do some jumping jacks to warm up and then camp out on the chin/dip stand for over an hour banging out dips, pull ups and push ups.

First he would warm up doing these moves with just his body weight. Then he would slap on a 40 pound weight vest and keep going. After about 20 minutes he would take off the 40 pound vest and put on the 60 pound vest all the while making each rep look effortless. To finish off his routine he

would put the 40 pound vest on top of the 60 pound vest for a total of 100 pounds and even then he still made his dips and pull ups look easy.

Both Marc and Phil were on my mind when I began my experiment on a cold November night in my basement many years later. The purpose of the experiment was to discover the best bodyweight based exercises to pack on as much muscle and strength as possible. I had already tossed aside the heavy weights and machines for bodyweight training about a year prior and was absolutely loving the results. Even though I had a lot of success, I started to wonder, what if I just wanted to pack on muscle and strength as efficiently as possible through body weight training how would I do that?

At the time, I was friends with a small group of powerlifters at the gym and I loved their approach to fitness. Their whole routine was focused on mastering 3 basic moves with a little bit of accessory work thrown in to fill in the cracks. This simple approach was in stark contrast to the body weight routine I had been doing which consisted of many variations of push ups, row, pull ups, squats and core work. So I got to thinking, was there an equivalent of powerlifting in the body weight world? It was that train of thought that made me think of Phil and Marc and their simple, yet incredibly effective training style.

Why these 3 moves?

The Triad Muscle Revolution is the result of over 5 years of testing and trial and error. I've tested various forms of this program on myself, my clients and throughout the internet. It's a program that continues to change and evolve to this day hence the latest version (3.0)

These three moves, Dips, Lunges and Pull ups have been selected because they all share the following characteristics:

#1 They all place your entire body directly against gravity for maximum resistance.

#2- Each one is complex enough to offer a lot of potential progression, yet simple enough for most folks to quickly get started with them.

#3- All of your major joints including your knees, hips, shoulders and elbows go through a very large range of motion providing not only a lot of flexibility, but also maximum tension through key muscles.

#4- These three moves are the easiest body weight exercises to load with extra weight if necessary. Unlike heavy squats, lunges don't require a room full of weights or a rack to substantially load up the legs. Both the pull ups and dips only require a rope or chain and some light weight. This makes loading these exercises much cheaper and easier compared to heavy weight lifting especially if you're using rings or straps for the upper body. Most folks won't need any more than 30-40 pounds of weight. You can use objects you have on hand such as books, rocks and even other people. When I was in Japan I used to do lunges while carrying my host family's 3 and 5 year old children.

Why build muscle through body weight training?

Like many weight lifters, I spent years believing that heavy weights were superior to body weight training, especially when it came to building serious muscle and strength. I was forced to change my tune however when I took on a 30 day bodyweight challenge in an attempt to heal by body and mind from the stresses of lifting. You can imagine my surprise when I came out of that 30 day challenge bigger and stronger than I had ever been under the iron.

While both bodyweight training and weight lifting can pack on muscle, I've found some unique advantages to including body weight training in a muscle building program.

#1 Body weight training makes it easier to maintain a consistent training schedule.

As I'll discuss a little later on, consistency will make or break your muscle building success regardless of what methods or programs you use. The bottom line is that in order to build muscle, and maintain it, you must develop exercise habits you can maintain day after day, week after week

and month after month for years on end. Nothing is effective when it's done in a here-and-there fashion.

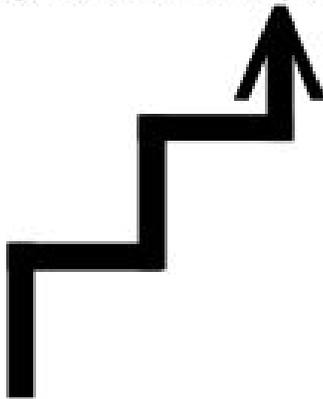
Body weight training is by far the easiest training method to maintain due to the fact that it is so efficient and doesn't require nearly as many hoops to jump through. So while all your friends have their on-and-off attempts at building muscle you can stay the course no matter what life throws at you.

#2- Lots of room for progression

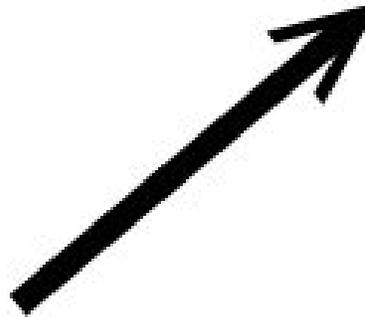
Back when I was lifting weights I mistakenly believed bodyweight training had very limited potential for progression. I now believe there is actually *more* potential for progression with body weight training than with weight lifting. This is largely due to the fact that you can adjust the resistance with bodyweight training two ways rather than just one. With weight lifting, the primary mode of adding resistance is to lift more weight. With body weight training you increase the resistance on a muscle through a slight change in technique. Doing things like adding more range of motion or shifting your body weight to one limb will increase the tension on your target muscles. In addition to that, you can also add extra weight to any body weight move through weight vest, dip belts, chains and other toys.

The ability to alter your resistance through technique does take some practice but I promise you it's well worth it. In weight training you typically have to adjust your resistance in steps, like with dumbbells that jump up in 5 pound increments. Body weight training is more like a smooth slope of progression. Just moving your hand or shifting your weight a few inches allows you to dial in the perfect amount of resistance to maximize progress yet minimize risk.

Progression with weights



Progression with calisthenics



#3- Technical convergence

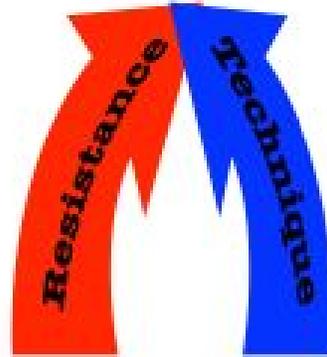
Technical convergence is a term I came up with when I realized that in order to place more resistance on my muscles I had to use better technique. Improving things like my range of motion and controlling momentum did wonders for how much tension my muscles were under and this directly lead to better results.

I found the opposite to be the case with weight training. For years I was under the false assumption that my muscles were working harder if I just put more weight on the bar or if I was doing as many reps as possible. What I didn't know was that while I was lifting more weight, my technique was paying a steep price. This meant that even though I was technically lifting more weight, I wasn't putting that much more tension through my muscles and thus I wasn't really getting any stronger. So with weight lifting the resistance I was using and the quality of my technique seemed to be in a tug of war. However body weight training was a situation where better technique and more resistance went hand in hand.

Technical Divergence



Technical Convergence



#4- Less risk of injury and pain

I get emails from many people asking me how to build muscle even though they suffer from various forms of joint pain. I hate to be the messenger of bad news, but you simply cannot build nearly as much muscle and strength if your body is hurt. It's just not possible. The best thing you can do with pain is to fix the issue as much as possible. If you don't, or can't, you'll always be at a massive disadvantage.

The primary reason why I changed over to body weight training was because I was plagued by a host of nagging aches and pains mostly due to that technical divergence. Even at 30 years of age, I felt like an old man who had his best years behind him.

Thanks to the technical convergence of body weight training, I was able to stress out my muscles without stressing the joints nearly as much. It's important to understand that body weight training isn't risk free. There is always the risk of injury, and I have had a few aches over the years, but that risk is a fraction of what most folks experience with heavier forms of training.

I could go on about the muscle building benefits of body weight training, but the above examples are more than enough reason to give body weight based power lifting a shot. All of those advantages boil down to a simple muscle building strategy. With a little practice and patience, body weight exercises make it easier and much more convenient to bring any muscle in your body under a lot of tension for a very long time. If that's not a recipe for success I don't know what is!

The case for mastery

The ultimate reason why the Triad Muscle Revolution works is because it forces you to stay focused within a very narrow range of training. While many might see this as a bad thing, the truly elite will instantly recognize it as a blessing.

The whole point of this program is to turn you into a pull up, dip and lunge master. Like all paths to mastery, this one will take time, patience and discipline but it will put you on a level far above most folks both in performance and appearance. There is a lot to discover with each exercise. You can potentially spend the rest of your life just mastering pull ups alone so this PDF and the accompanying videos are just a starting point. It's in no way an exhaustive explanation on how to do pull ups, dips and lunges. If I'm lucky I might just scratch the surface. This rabbit hole is deep for those who have the courage and discipline to venture down it.

The three essential aspects of successful training

I love body weight training, but any form of training can be a roaring success or complete failure depending on how you use it. If you incorporate the following 3 training aspects you will be successful. However if you leave

out even one of these essentials out you will fail.

The first essential component is that consistency I mentioned. You cannot get very far if your workouts and training are done in a here-and-there fashion.

The reason is simple. No matter what you do and no matter how much blood, sweat and tears you pour into a single workout its effect is relatively small. The only way your workouts can bring big results is if they can build upon one another through a lot of repetition over time.

The second essential component is progression. Your workouts simply must improve over time.

I always tell my clients to never rely on hard work alone. Sure a sweat dripping workout that leaves you sprawled out on the floor gasping for breath feels great, but all that effort only brings results if it's a step above what you did before. Trust me, it's certainly possible to consistently work your tail off for years and never get very far. There is absolutely no guarantee that a workout is effective no matter how hard you work at it. Hard work holds no promise of results but progression does. So don't make the mistake I did. Seek out progressive performance rather than just a good hard effort.

The third and final component is that of enjoyment. It's a complete myth that exercise needs to be drudgery to be effective. If anything, the opposite is the case. Exercise you enjoy and find pleasure in is exercise you'll spend more time and energy doing. Just think, if you hate running it's going to be like pulling teeth to run twice a week for even 15 minutes. However if you love riding your bike then you'll ride for hours every day if you can.

As I said, these three components are all essential. Leave just one out and your chances of success plummet. Include all three and you're on the fast track to gains.

The reason for this is because all three of these components build up momentum from one to the next. The more consistent you train, the easier it is to make progress. The more you progress the more enjoyment and satisfaction you'll gain. And the more enjoyment you experience the more

motivation you'll have to keep your training consistent.



This is also what makes the TMR so effective. It's a program that's focused on fulfilling all three components as well as possible. The simple and efficient nature of these moves means you can continue your training year round regardless of what happens to your lifestyle. In addition, all three techniques have a lot of progressive potential. No matter how long you practice these moves there will always be another level you can work towards. Lastly, these moves are just fun and cool to do. Pull ups and dips have that cool factor which is why they are featured in almost every movie training montage. You can do these moves in the great outdoors with the sun on your face or in your own home with your own music blaring. If there was ever a program designed around consistency, progression and enjoyment this is it.

So that's the basic reason behind the creation and effectiveness of the Triad Muscle Revolution. Now let's get down to brass tacks and discuss the actual nature of the exercises.

The upper body squat: Dips

The dip is often classified as either a triceps or a chest exercise. In truth,

it's fantastic for both the chest and triceps as well as the shoulders, back and even the abs. There is hardly a single muscle in your torso that isn't involved with the dip.

Myths

The dip is also a move that's shrouded in myth and controversy. One of the biggest myths is that it's great for the triceps or chest but that's about it. To the skilled dip master the entire upper body is equally hit. Like the other two moves in the program, all of your muscles receive an equal and brutal dose of muscle building tension. You might feel it more in your weaker links at first, but in time the dip should be an overall exercise rather than just a triceps or chest exercise.

Another myth is that dips focus on the lower pecs and can cause so called man boobs or "moobs." Nothing could be further from the truth! If you do a simple Google image search for dips, you'll find loads of images of guys doing dips with their entire chest tight and flexed. In addition their shoulders and triceps are also going crazy. As a matter of fact, I had always struggled with building a full slab towards the top of my pecs but that changed pretty darn fast when I focused on dips.

Lastly, the dip is a common scapegoat for shoulder injuries. I admit that I sometimes felt some tenderness in my shoulders after a hard dipping session. What I didn't know was that it was because my technique wasn't very good and that was the reason behind the issue. When done well, the dip actually fortifies the shoulder joint and prevents injury. Of course there are exceptions like if you have a preexisting injury or some sort of structural blemish that causes your shoulders to work in a risky way. If you're unsure please ask your doctor or physical therapist. Always remember, pain is Nature's way of telling you that something is wrong.

Technical considerations of the dip

There are many things to consider when doing dips and you can spend a lifetime mastering them all. Even so, here is a short list to get you started.

- Use your lats to pull those shoulders down and keep them tight. One of the most common issues is having the shoulders move up and forward as you lower yourself down. Not only does this cause far more stress in the shoulder and spine, but it also dramatically reduces the amount of tension in the chest. The ideal dip should have zero scapular movement from top to bottom.

- When you dip down try to move your elbows backwards as much as possible. Many people dip just like they do push ups and bench press, with their elbows flaring out to the side. Again, this causes stress in the joints and removes tension from key muscles.

Your elbows don't need to go straight back and probably shouldn't be narrower than your hands on a set of dip bars. However take a video of yourself doing dips or do them in front of a mirror. It can be enlightening to see where your shoulders and elbows really do go when you lower yourself down.

- Avoid excessive leaning forwards. A lot of folks will actually dip forwards rather than dip straight down. Once again, pain and loss of tension can result. Some of the best dippers move with their hands running right along the sides of their body and coming almost into their arm pit.

- Work on keeping tension in the chest, triceps and shoulders through the full range of motion. I highly recommend what I call air dips which is just

going through the dip motion while trying to tense your muscles as hard as possible. Many people discover they have trouble keeping their triceps, deltoids or chest fully engaged all the way from top to bottom.

- Use what range of motion you prefer. Lots of folks advocate not coming down past parallel in a dip. Others can drop their shoulders far past their elbows without a problem. I'm a big believer that more range of motion is always best, provided the tension on the muscles is fully maintained the whole time. So use whatever range you can with full tension and work on it over time.

- Avoid bouncing or swaying out of the bottom position. This is another issue that is almost guaranteed to rip your shoulders to shreds. It involves dropping down fast and then bouncing or swaying the body to generate some momentum out of the bottom position. Besides being hard on the joints, momentum robs your muscles of that precious tension which is the root cause of growth. So dip down with smooth control, pause a second at the bottom, and then push yourself back up without any movement or twitching from your legs or torso.

- Lightly tuck your feet. I like to use dip bars or rings that allow me to start off with my feet on the ground. This way, there is no jump or drop from the bars which means it's easier to dial in the tension for that first rep and no jarring motion at the end of the set when muscles are spent. When I start a set I simply lift my feet up sort of like a plane lifting the landing gear. This gives plenty of room for the dip while also placing light tension on the abs. When you're done you simply "land" by placing your feet back on the floor.

- Start at the bottom. This applies to all pushing bodyweight exercises. I place my body in the bottom position for the dip. This is the hardest part of the exercise to engage your muscles and position your body. By starting at

the bottom you can get everything set and perfect rather than trying to figure out what needs to happen on the way down.

Complimentary exercises.

Dips work a massive amount of muscle, but it might be helpful to shore up some weak links by adding in a few sets of the following exercises.

- Push ups. Some folks enjoy doing classic push ups as a way to add variety to their routine. I use push ups to really focus on having control with things like the shoulder and back. If you're struggling to improve your dips, try making the improvement happen with push ups and you'll find the change carries over to dips.

- Triceps extensions. The triceps are a classic weak link in dips. The telltale sign is when people struggle to fully straighten their arms at the top. Triceps extensions on the straps or rings (refer to video on arm work) will strengthen up those triceps and get them strong as iron!

- Handstand work. Next to the triceps, the shoulders are often a weak point for many folks. Simple handstand and shoulder work, like yoga chaturanga, will do wonders. There are plenty of videos at www.reddeltaproject.com for this style of training.

The exercise you were built for: Pull ups

The pull up is a minor miracle in the world of strength. No other back exercise works as much muscle through as much of a range of motion with

the level of safety and comfort as the pull up.

It places a lot of mass building tension through every muscle in your back while also hitting your biceps better than curls. Even your forearms become fantastically strong. Unlike free weights, and even weight machines it places all of this tension on your muscles without any stress on your lower back and spine. You don't have to balance the risk to your back with how hard you can work your muscles. Now you can work your muscles with as much intensity as they can stand.

Reaching up and hanging is a natural trait we primates have in common. Just looking at the way the back muscles are designed is testament to this fact. The majority of back muscles run from the shoulders down towards the lower back. There are relatively few back muscles that pull the shoulder straight back or even upwards. The design of your shoulders, arms and even your hands is such that you can easily reach up and grab something and then hang with a high degree of comfort. No other form of back training can make such claims.



Looking at the muscles in the back, it's apparent that the majority of muscles run from the shoulders downward. The pull up is your best chance to take advantage of your anatomical construction

Unfortunately, our modern society doesn't require us to reach up and hang

very often. As a result most folks never develop even a fraction of their pulling potential. The good news is that all of that power and muscle evolution had bestowed you with is just lying within you, waiting to be unleashed.

Myths:

The pull up also has a lot of myths surrounding it. The first being that different grips and hand positions specifically target different muscles. While this might be true to some degree, your mission is to ensure an equal application of tension from your hands to your lower back. Your biceps, lats, grip and shoulders should be pretty blasted no matter how you do them.

Another myth that drives me crazy is this debate between the term chin up and pull ups. People swear that a certain grip is a chin up and a different grip is the pull up. Problem is, no one can ever agree which is which and as far as I know there is no definitive pull up guru sitting on a mountain top setting the record straight.

I just keep it simple. Anything that involves grabbing onto something and pulling yourself up is a pull up. After all anything with your hands on the floor and pushing up is a push up. It's not like keeping your hands wide is a push up but a narrow hand placement is a "chest up." Besides, I don't like the idea of a "chin up." It conveys the idea that the goal is to bring your chin over the bar, which is just cutting the range of motion a few inches short.





A “chin up” on top and a “pull up” on the bottom. Also note the ability to further pull the elbows back against the torso which results in more muscle engagement through the upper back.

Technical considerations:

- Keep your elbows from flaring out to the side. Again with the flaring! It’s popular because it’s easier to do than trying to pull your elbows in. Even with a wide grip, bringing in your elbows an inch or two will do wonders.

- Keep those legs down! Many folks kick their legs up as they pull up. This isn’t bad it’s just that it makes the move easier. I’ll allow many people to start lifting their legs if they are just starting. Once they break into the double digits those legs are down and locked. If you really want to ramp things up use the muscles in your butt and hamstrings to pull your legs down. You’ll be amazed how much harder this makes the pull up.

- Aim for a slight arch in the back. Just as people lift their legs up they also often round their back forwards. There are some cases where this is a good idea like when doing muscle ups, but I find that the muscle activation is just much more complete over the whole back (even the upper traps) when those shoulders are down and tight.

- Use a full range of motion. Ah yes, the bane of pull ups everywhere. Almost everyone and their mom can do a ton of pull ups.....as long as they don't go all the way down or up. A full range of motion is simply the biggest range you can move in while applying tension to the muscles. Things like "dead hangs" are discouraged because they require muscular relaxation to achieve that last inch of motion at the bottom. Plus it places needless tension on the joints.

A good range to aim for is where you come down to fully strait (but still tense) arms but your shoulders are still down and tight. At the top you want to aim to bring at least the top of your chest to the same height as your hands kind of like the position you would have at the top of a biceps curl. This sort of range will bring far more tension to your muscles and build fantastic upper body control as well.

Complimentary exercises:

The pull up is the most complete back exercise in existence. Nothing else comes close to combining the intensity and range of motion of pull ups. Still, it may be a good idea to accessorize your pull up routine with the following:

- Body rows. This is actually a form of pull up but you're pulling on a horizontal rather than vertical plane. Some folks find it can target the upper back and shoulders a little easier. I often use this move to teach people how to use their shoulders more so that activation can carry over to vertical pull ups.

- Strap curls. Strap curls are one of the best exercises for targeting the biceps. They place much more consistent tension on the biceps when compared to classic freeweight curls. Beware though to not over do this

move. I admit I used to spend far too much time doing curls hoping to build up my arms. Truth is, too many curls just stresses out the elbow and wrist and steals energy from the actual pull up. So limit yourself to just a couple of sets.

-Strap Rear fly. This is a great move to tighten up weaknesses in the shoulder and upper back. Just like with curls, the strap version places more even tension on the target muscles than freeweight versions.

See the supplemental moves video for more information.

Building wheels of steel with lunges

Squats are often considered the king of lower body exercise and for good reason. There's no doubt they are fantastic and I practice a weekly diet of single leg and body weight squats as well. With that said the lunges have some great advantages over the squat.

There are a few reasons for this. The first is the efficiency factor. Big heavy squats require a lot of time and energy to prepare for. With lunges most folks can just start stepping. Squats also require some serious weight and equipment. So you're either going to a gym or putting a squat rack in your home. This was the very reason why I sold my own bed in my apartment after college. That squat rack had to go someplace!

And then there's the whole natural nature of the lunge. We humans were built to squat, but you're going to spend a lot more time placing one foot in front of the other. Squatting also requires that your feet remain underneath you which is fine, but human locomotion almost entirely involves having

your feet either in front of you or behind you. Learning to handle resistance with your foot in front or behind you is key in preventing injury and building strength you can use in sport.

Lastly the lunge can become a seriously intense exercise with some light dumbbells or even carrying a rock. No rack, barbell, plates or spotter and less strain on the lower back, knees and feet required.

Myths:

One of the biggest myths surrounding lunges is that they are bad on the knees. Like all forms of exercise, stress on any joint can result, but it's often comes from either poor technique or overloading with too much weight. Make no mistake, if there is pain in the joint something is off and it needs to be corrected ASAP! Once the cause is found and corrected, lunges will actually make your knees stronger and more resilient.

The second myth is the idea that squats build more muscle because they can place more tension on the legs. This is simply, not true. Sure, you can move more weight with a heavy squat, but that's because the squat technique is mechanically more powerful. So even though you can move more weight, the actual tension on the muscle, which is all that matters, is actually the same. In some cases it might even be less!

Lastly, the lunge is often thought of as a move that you can't really progress. I used to believe this for a long time, but there are plenty of ways you can progress the simple body weight lunge as I'll discuss in the video.

Technical considerations:

- Don't lunge when you lunge. The lunge is actually more like a big step rather than a lunge like what you would see in fencing. Ideally you step forwards and then sink your weight down until your back knee is almost as the floor or lighting touching. I often see folks step and then their weight continues to almost fall forwards with their upper body bending forwards.

Work towards keeping your shoulders stacked right over your hips through each and every step.

- Keep that front heel down. Along with too much weight moving forward the typical lunges also had their heel lift or even "dance" above the floor.

- Pull with the front leg. The front leg is the primary working leg with lunges. It takes the weight of the body when you step down, but it also pulls your upper body forwards through using the glutes and hamstrings. Sometimes you'll find folks who push off of their back foot when they step. This isn't bad, but it takes a lot of tension away from the powerful hips and hamstrings of the front leg.

- Keep feet about shoulder width. You don't need to do lunges with super wide stances unless you're playing with a stretching method or something. You also don't need to keep walking a tightrope as well. Just keep your feet at about the width they would be as if you were standing at attention.

Complimentary exercises:

There is really no need for a "leg day" with a plethora of leg exercises to work every conceivable motion. Just adding in one or two of these moves to

fill in any cracks will be more than enough to turn your legs into stone.

- Squats. Squats and lunges go together like chocolate and peanut butter. I often have clients start a set by doing 10-20 squats at one end of the room and then lunge to the other end. Once they are at the other end they do another set of squats before lunging back. This workout is great because the two exercises build off of each other for a more intense workout.

- Calf raises. Lunges already work the calves, especially when going uphill. Still, some folks like a little extra calf work to give their legs that finishing touch for the beach. They don't hurt with explosive leg power either.

Calf training is an art unto itself but simply standing on the floor and rising up on the balls of the feet for a minute or two will be enough for most folks.

- Hip circles. Your legs are only as strong as your hips, just as your upper body is only as strong as your shoulders. These hip circles are a simple way to hit your hips from a variety of angles and promote balance and flexibility as well. Those Thighmaster style machines you see at the gym have nothing on these which will have your hips screaming in no time!

Bonus exercise to unlock your muscle building potential.

Wouldn't it be great if there was just a switch you could throw to make every exercise you do more effective for building muscle?

Well there is just such a switch! When you throw it, you'll potentially put more tension through every muscle in your upper body and also remove loads of stress from your joints and back. It also eases tension from all of that sitting that's so common in modern society.

This “switch” is simply thrown by engaging your lats to pull your shoulders down and back. The opposite is the classic kyphotic posture or “slouch.” There’s a good reason why your mother always told you to sit up straight. It wasn’t just proper manners. It was all about teaching you how to be jacked as hell!

When your shoulders are forwards almost everything in your upper body essentially turns off. This is why I call it the “off posture”. The muscles in your lats, chest, shoulders core and even your legs have considerably less tension running through them. However, stress that’s not running through your muscles still has to go someplace so it usually ends up in your joints including your shoulders, spine, hips and lower back.

Once you get into hold the “on position” the situation is reversed. All of that tension goes into your muscles and relieves stress from your joints.



The “off” position on the left vs the “on” posture on the right. Note the relationship of the head and the top of the shoulders. “Cheek bones over collar bones” as they say.

The only problem is the on position is not the easiest to learn. Just trying to sit up straight only works as long as you concentrate on it. So unless you’re willing to focus on your posture all day little will improve. That’s

why I created a simple exercise known as the lat bridge.

The lat bridge is an easy, low stress exercise that trains the muscles in your back to pull your shoulders and spine in to that on position. Once you get the hang of it, you'll be able to hit that position during any exercise making it much safer and far more effective. As a side benefit you'll also strengthen the muscles to work more against gravity so they don't work as hard to maintain the on posture when standing upright.

Here's how it works.

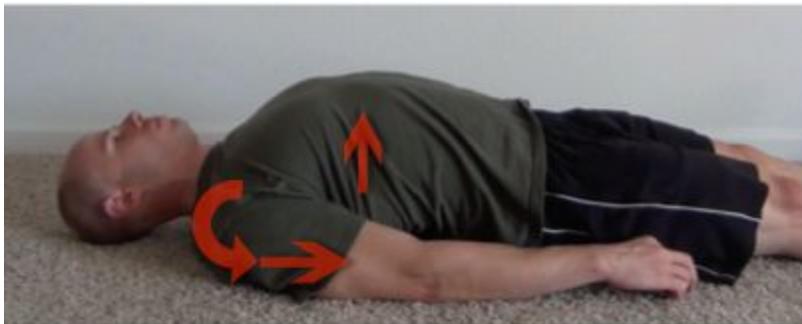
Step 1. Lay down on your back on the floor with your arms down by your sides as relaxed as possible.



Step 2. Circle your shoulders forwards and up towards your ears kind of like what you're trying to prevent during a dip.



Step 3. Continue circling your shoulders down and back while tucking your shoulder blades under you as much as possible while also bringing them together. Think of your shoulders as tucking your t-shirt down towards your lower back and spine. Hold this position for a few seconds turning on the tension with your entire back from your shoulders to your tailbone.



Step 4. Relax and let your shoulders reset and then repeat.

Once you get the idea, you can also do this standing throughout the day. Within a week you'll have a much better command of your entire back and spine allowing you to get into the on position for any exercise.

I know it might not seem like much, but trust me. If you make a habit of

doing this you'll bring every exercise you do to a whole new level and your physique will do likewise.

A few words on loaded body weight exercise

As I mentioned earlier, these three moves are really easy to load with extra weight. Just holding something heavy will work for lunges and a simple rope or chain will serve as a dip belt for the pull ups and dips. If you're using straps or rings you'll find you don't need very much weight thus bringing a lot of tension to your muscles but less stress to your joints.

With that said, there is a risk to weighted, or loaded calisthenics that I must mention.

It can be easy to get sucked into that idea of technical divergence with loaded calisthenics. With pure body weight training, extra tension on the muscle is generated by an improvement in technique. When you start adding weight, it can be easy to start sacrificing technique in the name of adding more weight or reps.

The key thing you want to focus on is always your technique. Technique isn't everything, *it's the only thing*. It doesn't matter if you're adding weight or reps. If they come at the cost of your technique then you're going backwards.

Weight doesn't create tension in your muscles, only your mind and the quality of your technique can do that.

The entire purpose of adding weight, or pushing your repetitions is to

challenge your technique. For example, say you can do 10 pull ups with a full range of motion with bringing your chest right to your hands. By adding an extra bit of weight you're further challenging your ability to bring your chest to your hands. The more you strive to maintain the best technique possible the more strength and muscle you'll build.

Sample workouts

Okay, now that we've gone through the basics, let's play with a few ways you can mix the basic ingredients of the TMR into a recipe for muscle and strength.

I often find people get far too hung on up finding that perfect routine. Every day people ask me for the best routine for building muscle or strength. I've learned that the potency isn't in the routine, but rather those basic principles I discussed earlier. If you do your lunges, dips and pull ups on a consistent and progressive manner you will gain results regardless of what your routine looks like.

With that said, part of the allure of a simple program like this is you can use the basic exercises so many different ways. There are thousands of ways you can use these moves in a consistent and progressive workout. You don't have to stick to the same old 3-sets-of-10 style routine.

Here are a few examples you can try out:

-Total reps workout-

This is simple, You just see how many reps you can do for each set. Rest periods are freestyle and not structured.

Example:

Dips- 13,13,12,11

Pull ups- 14,12,10.12

Lunges- .5 round trip up the basketball court X 6

-Total reps with timed rest periods-

This the same thing as above but you time how long you rest in between each set. You can also shorten the rest time as a way to increase intensity without adding extra weight.

Example:

Dips- 10,8,7 with 30 second rest periods.

Pull ups- 12,10,10 “ “

Lunges- 1 round trip up back yard with 60 second rest in between each trip.
(5 rounds total)

-Volume for time-

This workout is done with a set time limit and your mission is to see how many reps you can get within that time. Common examples include 1,3,5 and 10 minute sets. Just set the timer and go!

Example:

Dips- 3MT (3 minute test) 28

Pull ups- 3MT 17

Lunges- 5MT (5 minute test) 8.5 round trips up and down the length of the classroom.

This is one of those workouts that can really test your technique. As you push against the time limits your technique will naturally erode. Your mission is to fight that erosion rather than sacrifice technique for the sake of getting more reps during the time.

-Time for Volume-

This is a flip from the previous workout. You still race the clock, but now you're looking to see how fast you can do a set volume of work.

Common examples are how fast you can do 25, 50, 75 and 100 reps. With lunges you may look to see how fast you can cover a set distance.

-Volume for timed rounds-

This workout is another fun way to race the clock. You'll need to use a clock with a sweeping second hand or an interval timer. There are all sorts of smartphone apps that can come in handy for this workout. I recommend, and use the gymboss app myself.

In this workout you select a set number of rounds with a consistent time for each round. Examples can include 5 X 30 second rounds, 8 X 60 second rounds and 10 X 30 second rounds.

Your mission is to complete a set amount of reps for each round. For example, I enjoy setting the timer for 10 X 30 second rounds. My mission is to do 5 pull ups during each 30 second round. When the timer beeps that's my signal to jump up and try to do 5 more pull ups before the next round starts.

This is a great workout to progress gradually. When I first started doing it, I could get 5 reps for the first 7 rounds but only 4 reps during the last 3 rounds. Then I was able to get 5 reps in 8 rounds, 9 rounds and then up to 10. Once I was able to get 5 pull ups for all 10 rounds then I added a 6th rep to the first round and so on.

Again, be creative and play around with the number of rounds and the time during each round.

- Increasing volume for timed rounds-

You set up this workout just like before only this time you don't have a set number of rounds. Instead the rounds just keep counting up until you can't take it anymore. With each round you add one more rep so the volume keeps growing within the dedicated time limit of each round. So you do one rep during the first round, 2 reps during the 2nd and so on. In the Crossfit community they often call this "death by pull ups, dips, ect."

Rounds usually last anywhere from 30-60 seconds. 45 and 60 second rounds are very popular.

I like this kind of workout because it has a built in warm up. The first few rounds are a breeze as you do little exercise with plenty of rest time. However, as the rounds click by you're asked to do more work with less rest

and you'll soon be pushed to your limit.

-Tech workouts-

Tech workouts are a different animal altogether. The entire goal of a tech, or technique, workout is to keep the volume and intensity relatively low so you can really focus on dialing in your technique. Rep ranges are usually around 3-5 reps. 6-8 for walking lunges. Sets are usually pretty high, around 5-10 or until your technique starts to erode due to fatigue. This sort of workout is good to do every 2 weeks and as a "light" workout when you're feeling like scaling back a bit. When you demand a higher level of technique during these workouts, you can then demand that same level of technique when you're applying more frequency and intensity in your other workouts.

- Speed workouts-

These workouts take advantage of large changes in speed. Most people tend to use a moderate speed when doing their exercise. Not too fast, not too slow, just right. The goal of these workouts is to purposely move really slow or really fast to use your muscles in a new way.

There's some debate over whether fast or slow exercise is best, but both have their advantages. Slow exercises are great for generating a lot of time under tension. Moving slow is also a great way to dial in your technique and to strengthen weak areas in your range of motion. Moving fast is a great way to generate more intensity or tension within the muscle. It's also beneficial for building explosive power for sports.

You can do speed workouts in a number of ways. One of which is to use a dedicated speed for a single workout.

Example:

Slow (3 seconds down, pause 1 second, 3 seconds up)

Dips- 6,6,9

Pull ups- 8,8,8

Lunges .5 round trips up and down the gym floor.

Fast as possible

Dips- 11,10,8

Pull ups- 9,9,7

Lunges- 1 round trip

The key is to use a speed that is slow or fast *to you*. Don't get too caught up in how long a slow rep or how quick a fast rep should be. Slow might be a 3 second rep or a 6 second rep. Just move at a speed that challenges you.

You can also vary the speed in between sets so you do one set fast and then one set slow. Be aware that the slow set is usually half as many reps as the fast set.

Example:

Dips- slow/fast 5/9, 5/8

Pull ups- Slow/fast 4/8,4/8,4/7

Lunges- Fast up, slow down trips of the weight room X 4

Lastly, you can even change the speed of an exercise during the same set. This is done simply by going one speed for a few reps and then changing right over to the other without resting.

Example:

Single set fast and then slow

Dips- 5-4, 5-4, 6-4

Pull ups- 3-4, 3-3, 3-3

Lunges- 10 steps fast- 10 steps slow X4

Again, you can be creative. You can do the fast reps first and then the slow reps second or you can switch it around. You can also alternate back and forth so you do a couple of reps fast, then slow, then fast again. You can also play a game where you do one slow rep followed by a fast rep. Rest 15 seconds and then do 2 slow reps and 2 fast. See how many rounds you can do.

There is no limit to how many mini workout you can create. You can adjust time, load, speed and rest periods in any number of these combinations as you wish. Don't be afraid to be creative and use your imagination. As long as you progress your workouts in Frequency, Intensity and Technique you'll build muscle and strength.

Once you have a menu of mini workouts, you can arrange them in a general order or structure for a weekly routine.

Here are a few common examples:

-The 3 day plan-

This workout is popular for those looking for a general level of strength and muscle over time. It's also popular with the weekend warrior.

This workout is done with all three exercises in the same workout and the workout itself is done 3 days a week on nonconsecutive days. A Monday, Wednesday, Friday schedule is pretty popular.

You can do this workout in a few ways. You can do one exercise thoroughly and then move onto the next, or you can build a circuit with one set of each exercise done one right after the other.

A popular example would be to do a 3 minute test for each exercise on Monday, a loaded version on Wednesday and then a tech workout on Friday.

-The push/ pull/ legs plan-

This is my current workout plan which uses a 3 day split that's done twice a week. On day one you do pushing (dips), day 2 is pulling (pull ups) and day 3 is legs (lunges.) You rotate this workout twice through each week which leaves you with one rest day. It can take a lot of energy since you're working out almost everyday, so be sure your recovery is just as much of a priority as the workouts themselves.

-The light / heavy plan-

This is a new style I've been playing with and it make great use of the TMR freestyle programing.

The general idea is simple. You dedicate a workout to lifting heavy with low reps and then a separate workout to light loads with high reps. You can alternate the heavy/ light workout on a daily, weekly or even monthly basis.

Example:

Monday: Dip/ pull-up heavy.

Tuesday: Lunges heavy

Wed. Rest.

Thursday: Dip pull up light

Friday: Lunges light.

The above example is done using the push/ pull split but you can apply this to any of the workouts. The key is to use a similar strategy to the speed training where you go from one extreme to the next. Don't go "heavy" with 8 rep sets and then "light" with 12 rep sets. Throw the pendulum from one side to the next so heavy is 3-5 reps and light is 15-20 or even 30 if you're up for it.

Keep in mind that heavy and light is relative. What's light for one person might be heavy for another. It's also important to know that the rep range you use don't make an exercise heavy or light. The loads or intensity are what make it such and the lower and higher reps are reflective of the load. So doing a set of dips for 5 reps means you use a load that you can only lift 5 times.

-Fast / slow plan-

This workout is just like the heavy/light workout only this time you're alternating between the speed at which you move rather than the load.

Again you can alternate the speeds on a day to day, week to week or month to month schedule.

Example:

Monday- slow dips

Tuesday- Slow pull ups

Wednesday- Slow lunges

Thursday- Fast dips

Friday- Fast pull ups

Saturday- fast lunges

Sunday- Rest

Above all, be flexible with what sort of workouts you select. Sometimes life isn't so predictable and it might make sense to change things up. In my case, I like to use the 3 day split, but that only works best when I know I have time and energy almost every day to workout. When I recently moved out west I found my time and energy was largely taken up by the move. This made it much more difficult to stick to the 3 days split so I changed gear to the full body workout plan. By doing all 3 exercises in a workout, I could keep my bases covered when I did get the chance to workout rather than hit one muscle group hard and neglect the others. All workouts are effective when done with progression and consistency. The one's that work best are the ones that work best for your tastes and resources.

Basic lifestyle rules for muscle growth

Your workouts are only part of the picture. Your progress also depends on your habits outside of the training hall. Be sure to pay attention to these. Many folks train their tail off only to shoot themselves in the foot with

detrimental lifestyle habits.

#1- The better you recover, the harder you can train.

Diet and sleep doesn't actually build muscle, that's what exercise is for, but they do make or break your recovery. In turn, when your recovery is compromised then so is your workout and hence your muscle building potential.

#2- Sleep is a necessity, not a luxury.

The whole point of a healthy and strong lifestyle is to make you feel good and healthy. Constantly feeling stressed and tired are not the characteristics of a muscle building lifestyle. Sleep is one of the most effective ways to ensure your stress levels stay low and your energy levels are high. Don't play the game of "who's tougher" by going with less sleep. Sleep is just as important to muscle building as your very workout. There's nothing wimpy about getting a good night's sleep.

#3- Don't try to eat your way to muscle and strength.

They say you can't out-train a poor diet. That may be the case, but you also can't out-diet poor training. Food doesn't tell your body to build muscle, only exercise can do that. A good diet is all about *supporting* your workouts. That's the role a healthy diet plays in building muscle.

With that said, don't get too caught up in all of the dietary dogma floating around. You're dietary mission is to select foods and portion sizes that give you energy rather than drain it. If you're feeling sluggish and tired after a meal, something is off. Food is supposed to make you feel good and ready to rock and roll.

Some of the obvious nutrition ideas work well. Focus on nutrient dense

foods and portion sizes that satisfy you without making you feel full or deprived. A diet that leaves you feeling deprived and unsatisfied steals energy right from your workout.

#5- Always, always, always keep a workout log

Progression can be a slow process. Sometimes it creeps along at less than 1% with every workout. This can especially be the case as you gain more experience. The best way to ensure you still gain that little tiny bit of improvement is to keep a log. In a way your log is an exercise GPS. It tells you where you've been, what you're doing and helps immeasurably in trying to figure out what to do next. Without that log you're literally flying blind with your workouts.

#6- Your energy level is your single most important muscle-building asset.

Anything that drains your energy, outside of your workout, robs you of muscle building potential. Your success depends 100% on how much energy you bring to every rep and set you do. If you can't pour more focus and tension into an exercise it simply won't be as effective.

Making your energy level your highest priority is the best way to guide your diet and recovery efforts. The more energy you feel, the better your workout. *Anything that drains your energy is a threat to your muscle building potential.* You won't be able to rid yourself of all energy draining people and events in your life, but by being aware of your energy level can do wonders to weed out energy suckers. Common culprits include watching too much TV, eating too much, drinking too much alcohol, eating a lot of junk food, and negative attitudes from people and the media. It's amazing how people will focus on how they work out but then go home and eat junk food until they are stuffed while watching the News for 2 hours. It's just one step forward and 2 steps back.

Lastly, I know you might be wondering where to start. Should you start with doing the 3 exercises in each workout, or is a split routine best?

When people ask me where to start I always give the same answer:

Start anywhere!

Like all journeys, building strength and muscle is more about the direction you travel rather than where you actually start. In mountain bike racing, it's not uncommon for the beginner to shoot off the start line with everything they have. They shove other's aside and treat that first mile like it's the most important stage in the race.

The thing is, no one ever won a race in the first mile, but many have lost a race in that first mile. They come off the line with so much enthusiasm and aggression that they exhaust themselves, crash or even run off trail and get lost.

No one ever won the race to a fit body within the first few months of a new workout program, but countless people have lost the race during that time. So when starting out, take your time and enjoy yourself. Even scale back a bit and don't work too hard. When I have clients do a 3 minute test for the first time, I tell them to take it easy. I might even stop them with 30 seconds to go. This sets them up to easily beat their record the next time they workout and helps to build up progressive momentum. Each time they workout they know they can go a little further without killing themselves.

Start anywhere you like, doing anything at all. Then build on it during the next workout. Your success is 1% about where you start and 99% about where you go from there. As long as you keep a log and progress you will see results.

I wish you all the luck in the world with the Triad Muscle Revolution. If you ever have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact me for any reason at all. I also love hearing about the success stories the TMR has inspired, so feel free to hit me up and brag about your progress. In my mind, building muscle and strength takes an uncommon level of commitment and discipline thus you have a right to brag a little about your success.

Be Fit & Live Free,

-Matt Schifferle

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