

PowerPacked

ALL YOUR WEIGHTY BODY BUILDING QUESTIONS ANSWERED

When you want fast results it pays to ask the experts. Sagar Katurde, trainer with Gold's (Bandra) and two-time winner of the National Body Building championship title ('08 & '09) knows exactly what guys are asking in the gym and where they are going wrong in their quest for the perfect body. Here he clears the air on some critical issues that dog the average exerciser as well as the amateur body builder.

How often should I vary my routine?

There's no cut and dried rule for how often you should change your programme, but every 4 to 6 weeks is a good idea. You can even do it every 2 weeks. Muscles become accustomed to your exercise programme and may stop responding to it. If you aren't feeling sore after a workout, and there's little change in your measurements, it's time to tweak it. Bringing in variety to your programme is pretty simple. There are 5 variables that determine the results you'll see with your weight-training programme:

- ▶ The exercises you do
- ▶ The order in which you do them
- ▶ The number of sets you perform
- ▶ The number of repetitions/amount of weight you lift (higher weights mean fewer reps)
- ▶ The amount of time you rest.

Changing these throughout the year will bring you the best results without the risk of overtraining.

Is circuit training a better option than regular weight training for body building?

Circuit training is a full-body workout in which you perform a single set of several different strength exercises, one right after the other, without rest. One time around of all the exercises is one circuit.

Circuit training won't build as much size or strength as straightforward weight training will. But it's useful if you're pressed for time. And it is an excellent approach if you're new to exercise. Studies show that in people who haven't weight trained before, circuit training can improve strength, muscle endurance and even body composition, and prepare your body for the more intense exercises of body building. But regular weight training is a must if you want to take it to the next level.

What are drop sets?

A drop set is an additional set that's performed right after you've completed your regular set of a particular exercise. It is done to squeeze a little extra work out of a muscle after it's been put through its regular paces. For e.g., say you're bench pressing: Do your usual number of sets at your usual weight then, without resting, reduce the weight by 25% and go for 12 to 15 reps at this weight. Then reduce the weight by another 10 per cent, perform another 12 to 15 reps at this lighter weight. Repeat the process if your muscles can take it.

Drop sets are ideal if you want to shake up your routine occasionally. Don't overdo this strategy however, because it may lead to over training and injury. And because they're tough, use machines, which are easier to control when your muscles are tired.



Why don't some guys see results even though they're lifting heavy?

Exercise apart, two important ingredients for muscle growth are adequate rest and diet.

It is when you sleep that the body repairs the damaged muscle cells. If you're into intense weight training, a day or 2 of rest is advisable between workouts to prevent overtraining.

The other major factor that influences muscle growth is diet. If you aren't taking in enough carbohydrates and protein, it can hinder muscle growth.

For instance, if you've upped your barbell press number from 50 lbs to 80 lbs, but continue to eat the same way as you used to when you were pressing 50 lbs, you may not only retard your muscle growth, but may even lose muscle as the body burns it to produce energy.

You may also need to introduce some variety into your workout. A mistake that I committed in my early days as a body builder was over doing one particular exercise. I bench pressed with barbells and dumbbells not realizing that doing so offered no extra benefits. If you have 10 exercises to perform break them up into a 5-5 a combination of dumbbell and barbell exercises and change this routine every 15 days or a month.

Finally, it's possible you may have reached your genetic potential. If your parents aren't very big, then it's possible your muscles have reached their maximum size.

How and when does one work the smaller muscles vis-à-vis the big muscles?

A simple rule to keep in mind is, that since the smaller muscles tire out earlier, it's best to work the big ones (e.g. quadriceps & hamstrings) before the small muscles (e.g. calf).

But rather than concentrating on smaller or bigger

muscle groups, a better way is to divide your routine into pushing exercises – e.g. bench press (that works the chest), shoulder press, triceps extension, and pulling exercises – e.g. seated cable row (for the back), biceps curl and lateral pulldown (for the shoulders/deltoids). If you maintain this format, you can also avoid muscular imbalances between various opposing muscles.

How does one divide a 3-days-a-week routine and a five-day one?

A three-days-a-week workout in a week can be divided as follows: Day 1: Chest and shoulder. Day 2: Back and biceps. Day 3: Legs

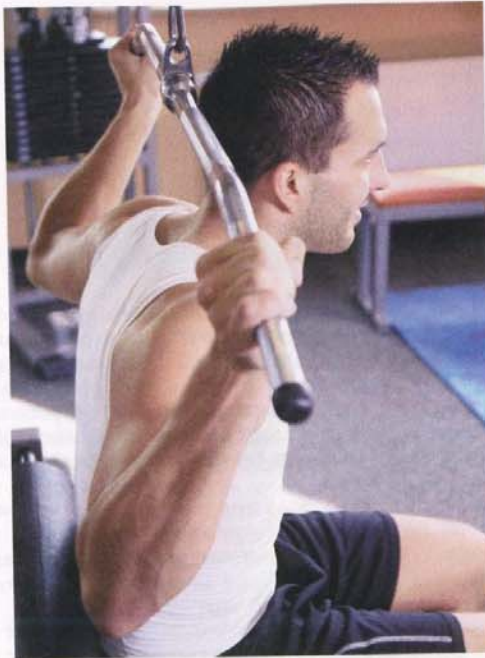
In a five-day workout there are chances of overtraining so it's advisable to include a day for cardio without weight training. The programme can be divided as follows: Day 1: Chest. Day 2: Shoulders. Day 3: Cardio. Day 4: Back & Biceps. Day 5: Legs.

The sets and reps for each exercise can vary between 8 to 10 reps of three sets or 5 to 6 reps of four sets.

If you want serious muscle you have to take weight lifting seriously – it's a question of investment and returns. Generally when you're performing an exercise, some of the muscle fibres of a muscle group don't fire until a significant load has been placed on them. This



GOT BEEP?
Sagar Katurde
Flexes His Muscles



usually happens from the 3rd set onwards. Hence the need for multiple sets. But if you just want to stay in shape, even one set will do.

How does one determine the speed with which weights should be lifted and lowered?

No two people can lift the same weight with the exact same speed. More than speed it's the intensity of weights lifted that makes the difference. The longer you hold the weight the more you work your muscle. So make sure you give each half of your rep equal time. If you're lowering the weight too quickly, you're shortening that negative phase where major strength and size gains occurs.

How does one work a muscle from "different angles"?

Muscles are more complex than you think and they need to be challenged from a variety of angles in order

to grow. A flat bench press, for e.g., mostly works the *vertical* fibres in the pectoralis major (i.e. chest muscle). With the incline bench, you hit greater number of the *horizontal* fibres in the pecs. So no single exercise can hit both sets of muscle fibres.

A biceps curl performed with an underhand grip emphasizes the short head of the biceps; the hammer curl (palms facing toward each other) works the long head of the biceps.

That's why you need to work a muscle from different angles to develop the entire muscle.

Which exercises offer maximum returns in minimum time?

You should look at exercises that work multiple muscles simultaneously. For example the squat works the quads, hamstrings, glutes and core. A lunge is tougher but also hits the quads, hams, and core muscles that stabilize the body. Leg extensions and leg presses focus on quads, and step ups attack glutes and quads. All four exercises combined will not only hit the quads from different angles, but work the entire lower body.

Is it possible to work the legs without expanding the upper body?

Yes, it is possible but it can only be done once your upper body is truly in good shape. In fact it's one of my own strategies. You need to perform leg exercises on alternate days to give them more attention. You can opt to work only the quads on one day, hamstrings and calf on the third day with an upper body workout sandwiched in between. Putting more focus on my lower body has helped me tone my legs and gain more muscle overall.

Why do some guys end up with "boobs" instead of toned pecs?

Unlike the belly the chest is not usually a storehouse of fat, at least for men. But some guys may have a tendency to develop pockets of fat in that area – a condition called gynecomastia. And when the pec muscles are developed this tends to get more pronounced. More often, however, the problem is due to muscular imbalances – focusing more on chest

