

8 Sets of 8

The Way Vince Instructed

By
Alan Palmieri

About The Author

Alan Palmieri has a diverse background. In addition to being a five term mayor he has credentials in the field of business as well as politics. He operates his own business and has held positions in corporate management; conducted professional development, government, political relations and business management classes at the University of Tennessee.

At one time the owner operator of a 30,000 square foot gym, one of the largest and best equipped in the southeast. For about two years he operated his own Karate / Self Defense studio. Alan wrestled professionally for a short while and worked as a bouncer and bodyguard. Over the years he has trained countless individuals and has conducted seminars and lectures on bodybuilding, as well as being the author of several published articles, courses and bodybuilding publications. He has appeared in various magazines and newsletters on bodybuilding and has appeared on TV as well as being interviewed on the radio.

He has personally trained winners of major local and state bodybuilding events, high school and college athletes and teams, professional athletes and entertainers. He has served as a judge for numerous bodybuilding events as well as promoting and holding several bodybuilding contests. He is the past State of Tennessee President of the IFBB and was awarded the prestigious IFBB Certificate of Merit.

Alan began his bodybuilding endeavors in the early 60's during what many consider bodybuilding's "Golden Era". Back in those days you had so many greats like Draper, Scott, Pearl, Poole, Sipes, Yorton, Zane, Ortiz, Pearl, Howorth, Oliva, the introduction of Schwarzenegger just to name a few. No period in time saw so many greats that stood as inspiration for so many. It was a time when bodybuilders had to work, go to school and sometimes both. It was a simple time with a lot of unity. People did not understand what bodybuilding was all about. Bodybuilders were more misunderstood than understood. Times have changed.

No longer as active in bodybuilding, Alan continues to receive requests for information and guidance from people concerning bodybuilding and weightlifting. He has always talked against the use of drugs and steroids in the sport and promoted natural bodybuilding.

Not as intense or regular with his training, the following represents the measurements Alan possessed while he was active in bodybuilding. The before column are measurements before Alan began training. The after column represents measurements obtained at, what he considered was his peak.

<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>
Height: 5'9"	Height: 5'11"
Weight: 87 lbs	Weight: 230 lbs
Neck: 11"	Neck: 19 ½"
Chest: 30"	Chest: 52"
Biceps: 7 ½"	Biceps: 19 ¼"
Waist: 26"	Waist: 34"
Thigh: 13"	Thigh: 28"
Calf: 7"	Calf: 18 ¼"

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During his time, Vince Gironda was credited with turning out more Mr. America winners than any trainer in the sports history. True, Vince was perhaps one of the most, if not the most, controversial person ever in the field of bodybuilding. Some of his ideas on training, nutrition, and supplements were viewed as outright ridiculous. Yet years later, many leading authorities have confirmed much of what Vince stated thirty or so years ago and have proven much of what he said as fact today.

People tend to love or hate Vince. In either case, each side either built him up larger than life or cut him to the bone. In reality, Vince was deserving of both, but only to a certain extent. Vince, as with all high profile people, was neither as bad as those that disliked him said he was nor as good as those that loved him said he was. My personal relationship with Vince was middle of the road. I felt the sting of his sharp tongue on occasion and I was also the recipient of his goodwill and kindness. I liked Vince, respected him, and wanted to know what he had to say about things. I will be the first to admit I did not follow everything he said but I would never tell him that, I did however listen to all he said.

I believe one of Vince's favorite routines for the advanced bodybuilder was the 8 sets of 8 reps program. Vince was convinced this was the best routine for maximizing muscle growth in the shortest possible amount of time. It is designed to rapidly build muscle while at the same time reduce body fat. As all advanced trainers know, either one of these is a difficult thing to do by itself, let alone simultaneously. The 8 x 8 is also a wonderful program to follow when you hit a sticking point and need to shock muscles into a new growth pattern, whether it is an individual muscle or your entire body.

I have seen and heard many variations on Vince's 8 sets of 8 routine. Some suggesting performing 8 x 8 on each movement; others selecting two movements and performing 4

sets of each for a total of 8 sets. Some have suggested using three or four movements per body part. Some recommend only one movement per body part. I even read one article that stated Vince prescribed performing two movements for the chest and back, three movements for the legs, and one movement for all other body parts. Others have advised the routine be followed 3 days on and 3 days off. Some suggest following the program for 3 weeks then taking 1 week off. Some claim you are to train once per day, some twice per day and still others, three times per day. Who's right? Which way is the real 8 x 8 to be followed? As I stated, I have seen and heard almost every variation you can think of being associated with the 8 x 8, those listed as well as others and still, I am sure, some I have not heard of.

I can only tell you what I was told. I am not trying to suggest Vince did not advise some of or even all of the above, perhaps even other variations I did not list. Knowing Vince, he modified almost everything based on the individual and the results desired so, I can see him prescribing what I was told as well as all of the above. Vince would experiment with not only exercises, nutrition, and supplements but also people as well. He would use himself and others to test his ideas. Besides, if Vince was around today and he thought his 8 x 8 routine was causing a controversy or confusion, boy would he add more wood to the fire... he would love it.

Recognizing variations do exist, with not only the 8 x 8 but other routines as well and, acknowledging the fact I know Vince adjusted things according to ones need. I am going to outline the information provided to me for the 8 x 8 routine.

1. You must move quickly with minimum rest during the entire workout. Each session should last no longer than about thirty minutes. The speed in which you perform each movement should be quick but not jerky and you must adhere to strict form and rest no longer than 15 seconds between movements.
2. Do not drink water during your workout session or immediately after. Wait at least forty-five minutes after your session and then sip water slowly.

3. Concentrate on each movement. No outside distractions and no talking during the workout.

4. Follow the routine exactly as outlined and do not adjust the order in which the movements are listed.

5. Intermediate trainers should follow this routine 1x per day. Advanced trainers could follow it 2x per day. Pro's could follow it 3x per day.

6. One with less than two solid years of training behind them should not attempt the 8 sets of 8 routine.

7. Vince advised taking a nap after each session to help the body recuperate and recover.

8. This is important for understanding the 8 sets of 8 and how to perform it, at least the way it was given to me. Take the chest for example. You will perform one set of 8 reps of Barbell Bench Press To The Neck then immediately, super-set fashion; perform 8 reps of the "V" Bar Dips. Rest a maximum of fifteen to thirty seconds; you will then repeat this sequence. Perform it four times. In other words, you do not perform 8 sets of presses and 8 sets of dips; you actually perform 4 sets of presses and 4 sets of dips for a total of eight sets.

The exception to this is the Wednesday and Friday leg workouts. On these days, you perform 4 sets of each exercise listed in straight set fashion. Occasionally I would perform them in giant set fashion but you had better be in shape because it will really drain you. I use to perform them in giant set fashion on Saturdays only, because I knew I would get an extra day of rest on Sunday with no workout scheduled and believe me I needed it. Only the most advanced trainer should attempt performing them in giant set fashion.

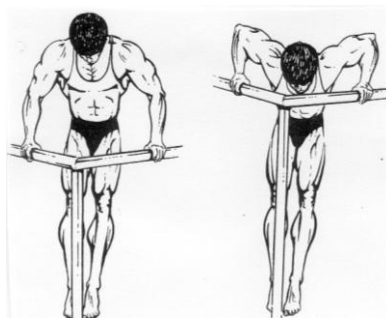
Monday & Thursday

Chest – Back – Shoulders

1. Chest: Barbell Bench Press To The Neck. Assume the normal bench press position using a wide grip. Keep your feet off the floor. Bring your legs up above the bench and your body crossing your legs at the ankles. This helps isolate your pec muscles in the movement and prevents using the floor and your legs for additional assistance. Lower the bar so that it just touches, not rests, on the lower neck. Press back up to starting position. Focus on the pecs working not the delts or triceps.



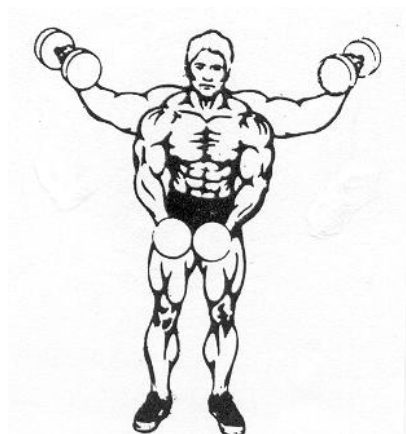
2. Chest: “V” Bar Dips. This movement works the chest best if performed on “V” Dipping Bars because your hands need to be spaced about 32” apart. If you do not have access to “V” bars use regular dipping bars. Lower your head and place your chin on your upper chest. Cross your feet at the ankles and in front of your body. Lower yourself all the way down and use your pecs to press yourself up. Try to make the pecs do the work and not the triceps.



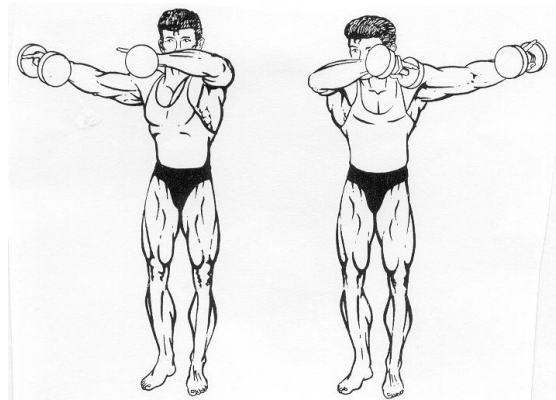
3. Back: Chins performed Gironda style (Sternum chins). Take a less than shoulder width grip on a chinning bar. As you pull yourself up, lean your head back as far away from the bar as you can, arch your back and bring yourself up so that the bar touches your lower pec line. Your body should be in a 45-degree angle to almost parallel with the floor in the top position. This is extremely difficult to do and takes a lot of practice. Concentrate on using your lats to pull you up, not your biceps and keep your upper arms tight against the body bringing the elbows back as you pull up. This movement can be performed using either an over-lap or an under-lap grip

4. Back: Wide Grip Pulldowns. Using a wide grip, pull the bar down until it touches the upper pec. Do not swing or arch backward in an attempt to jerk the bar down. Do not extend the arms completely when lowering the weights. Keep the elbows slightly bent. At the beginning of each rep, make the lats start the movement not your arms.

5. Shoulders: Lateral Raises. Stand with feet about shoulder width apart and bend your upper torso over slightly at the waist. Have the dumbbells in front of your body with palms facing each other and all four bells touching. Elbows should be bent. Without jerking, raise the dumbbells focusing your mind on the elbows coming up first. Do not start the movement with your hands. Doing so takes the resistance off your shoulders. At the top position your little fingers should be slightly higher than your thumbs. Like you have heard before, imagine you are pouring water from a pitcher.



6. Shoulders: Dumbbells Swings. Oh that Vince! How in the world did he think of these things? This is very hard to describe so I trust with this description and the accompanying illustration you will understand the movement. Begin by standing with your feet slightly apart. Raise the dumbbells together putting them in a “drawn – bow” position. Like you were pulling back on a bow. Now let the arms come down and switch sides. Your palms must be facing down at all times and the movement is a continuous up-down swing switching one position for the other.



Tuesday & Friday

Biceps – Triceps – Forearms

1. Biceps: Barbell Body Drag Curls. This movement, performed correctly, will require you to use less weight than you normally use for the regular barbell curl. Start in the same position you would for the standing barbell curl. Back straight and the bar touching your thighs. Your feet should be about shoulder width apart and your hand spacing should be such that they are just outside your thighs. Now drag, do not curl the bar up, keeping it in constant touch with your body all the time making certain to keep elbows back. Bring the bar up to your lower pec line and squeeze your biceps. Lower the bar while continuing to keep it in constant touch with your body. The bar must stay in constant touch with your body throughout the entire movement. Keep your elbows back and do not let them drift outward. For variation, I would sometimes bring the bar all the way up to the base of my

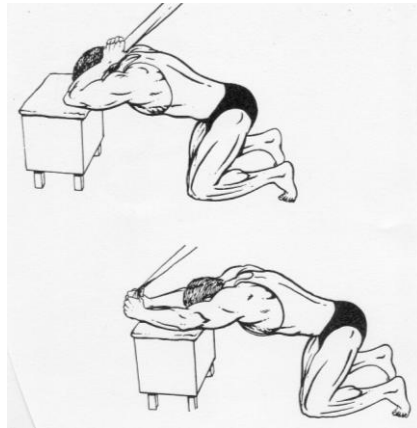
neck while keeping the bar in constant touch with the body. Doing this requires dropping the elbows below the bar once you pass the lower pec line.

2. Biceps: Seated Dumbbell Curls. Sit on the end of a bench and curl the dumbbells up while keeping your upper arms tight against your body. Do not swing the weights up; curl them using the strength of your biceps only. Vince advised crossing the legs while performing this movement as it keeps them out of the way while curling, not a bad little adjustment. I personally like to place my feet on a small stool instead of the floor. It helped my concentration and seemed to prevent my body from swinging the dumbbells up.

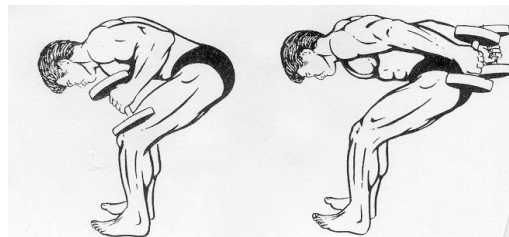


3. Triceps: Triceps Rope Pulls. Vince had a special “V” bench for this movement. The head would rest below the elbows. The cable is not to be more than 5’ high above the floor. Chances are you will not have access to a “V” bench so use a flat bench, rest only your elbows on the bench with your head under the bench or no higher than the bench itself. The purpose of the “V” bench is to keep the head out of the way of the movement so you can get a better stretch and extension. You also most likely will not have access to an apparatus that allows a cable to adjust so that it is just 5’ above the floor. Use what you have. Most will perform the movement using a regular lat pulldown machine. If you do not have extra cable wire attachments so that you can perform the movement kneeling on the floor with your elbows on a bench, simply bend the body forward at the waist so that your upper body is parallel with the floor. Use a rope hooked to the cable. Now fix the upper arms and elbows, keep them stationary. Allow only the hands and forearms to

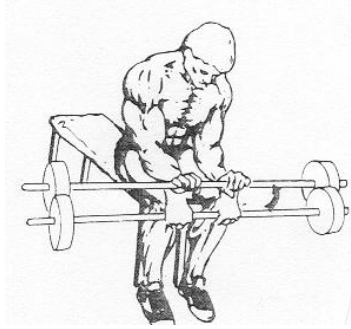
move. Let your hands go back over your head and stretch your triceps fully then bring your hands forward just short of lockout and squeeze the tri's.



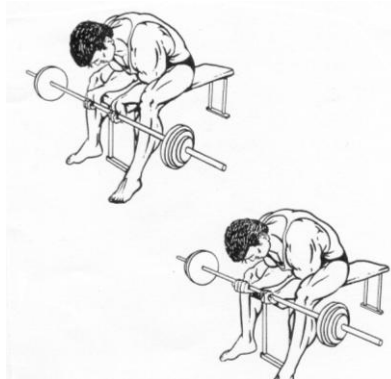
4. Triceps: Dumbbell Kickbacks. Vince advised performing the movement with both hands at the same time. You can perform the movement lying on a bench if you wish or standing bent over. Keep your upper arms in tight against the body only allowing your hands and forearms to move, use your elbows as the pivot point.



5. Forearm: Reverse Wrist Curls. While holding a barbell in your hands, place your forearms on a flat bench. Palms facing down toward the floor now curl your wrist back, lower and repeat. Some may wish to rest your forearms on your thighs with your hands out over the knees. I did it both ways. Don't know what Vince would say about it. Can bet since he didn't say to rest them on the thighs he would pitch a fit if he saw it.



6. Forearm: Wrist Curls. Perform this movement on the end of a flat bench. Hold the barbell in your hands with your forearms resting on the bench, wrist and hands hanging over the end of the bench. Your hand spacing on the bar must be six to eight inches apart, no more and no less. Your forearms should be snug against the inside of your thighs. Curl the weight up. As you lower the weight, let the bar roll down your fingers.



Wednesday & Saturday

Thighs – Calves

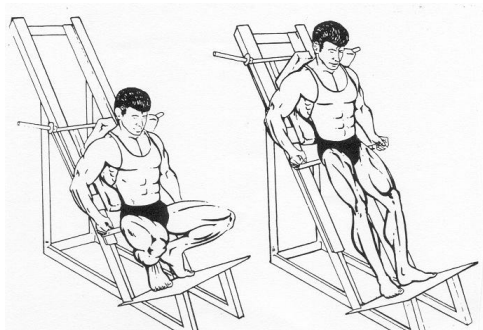
On leg day workouts, all movements were performed in straight set fashion. In other words, complete all four sets of one movement before starting the next one.

1. Thighs: Sissy Squats. This is a very complicated movement if performed exactly as Vince prescribed it. In fact, I honestly believe not everyone is physically capable of performing the movement, at least not in the manner Vince demanded. The execution of the movement, Vince's way, actually has three parts. Vince called them The Knee Drop,

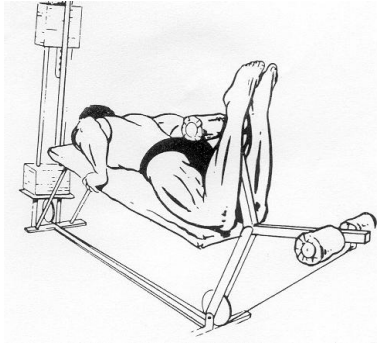
The Burlesque Bump, and The Flush Out. Certain body types, due to how their hips are, simply would never be able to do the movement. It requires a lot of practice, patience, coordination and, a certain body type. What I did was begin by placing my heels on a block of wood about four to six inches high. Leaning back, I would lower my knees forward while keeping my upper body at an angle forcing my front thighs, quads, to do the work. Coming up I would reverse the movement, once at the top making certain not to lock the knees keeping constant pressure on the thighs at all times. As I progressed, I held a plate across my chest to add additional resistance. In short, I was performing a more common version of the Sissy Squat.



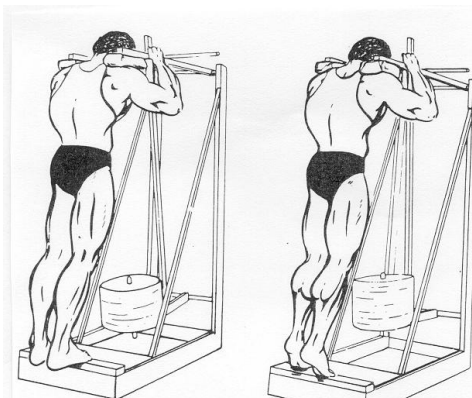
2. Thighs (Quads): Hack Squats. This movement is performed with your feet back and the heels placed close together, about six inches apart. Toes should be pointed outward. Lower yourself down and return. As with the Sissy Squat, do not lock out your knees in the top position as you want to keep constant pressure on your muscles.



3. Thighs (Hams): Leg Curls. It is most important you perform this movement without any jerking whatsoever. Keep the movement smooth getting a full extension and full contraction on each rep.



4. Calf: Standing Calf Raises. Make certain you are standing on a block at least three to four inches off the floor. Only the toes and balls of your feet should be on the block and Vince wanted the movement performed without socks and shoes because you can get a much better stretch and contraction without them. Back straight, keeps knees slightly bent throughout the movement. Your toes should be pointed outward. Rise up as high as you can, keep the weight on the big toe and the toe next to it. At the top contract the calf tightly, when you come down, lower your heels to stretch your calf as much as possible. No fast jerky bouncing movements permitted. Slow deliberate full extensions and contractions only.



As I stated earlier, Vince had several variations of his 8 sets of 8 routine and I am confident they all produce results. If what I have shared here is different from what you have read or heard, I can't help that. I'm just sharing what I know and that's all I can do.

The 8 sets of 8 routine is an excellent one for doing many things for the body. It will add muscle, burn fat, increase endurance, provide cardiovascular benefit, create muscle separation and task you mentally and physically. It is not designed to increase strength although some actually will find an increase as an added benefit.

In addition to the diet and supplements I was taking, I found it wise to make certain I consumed about 30 grams of protein every three hours. This I did on my own, and not instructed to do so. I also increased my intake of Vitamin C and E while on the 8 sets of 8 routine. Usually I took 500 mg of C daily. When I was on this routine, I increased that to 1500 mg daily. I also increased my intake of Vitamin E from 400 I.U to 800 I.U daily. Today, if I were to include the 8 sets of 8 in my workout schedule, or any of Vince's routines that taxed the cardio system, I would also include Coenzyme Q10. I believe, from what I have learned, Q10 would be of great benefit combined with any routine that provided cardio benefit.

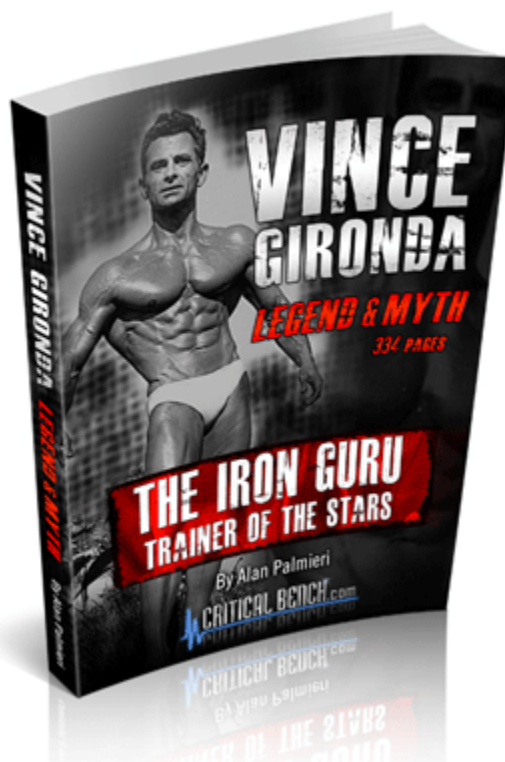
Did the adjustment to my supplement intake make any difference? I really can't say whether it did or didn't. Just as with many of Vince's methods of training, I found the 8 sets of 8 a hard hitting, result producing routine. I felt the adjustment in supplements was needed to help provide an additional edge.

If you intend to add the 8 sets of 8 to your workout schedule, I would suggest taking a full week off from your present routine to help build a reserve of energy. Don't just sit around that week, perform some stretching movements and get ready mentally to hit it hard. Good Luck!

[Vince Gironda - Legend and Myth](#) [New, Updated Version Contains over 300 Pages!](#)

Vince Gironda Legend and Myth by Alan Palmieri is the most complete and comprehensive writing on Vince Gironda...Ever! This is a must read for anyone interested in Vince Gironda. The "Iron Guru" was perhaps at his pinnacle of fame in the "Golden Years" of bodybuilding, the 1960's. During that time, Vince dominated the scene and Vince's Gym, was known as the Mecca of bodybuilding.

Not only champion bodybuilders trained at Vince's Gym, movie stars were also regular visitors to seek Vince's advice and training. People like Eric Estrada, Clint Eastwood, Clint Walker and many others. Hollywood studios used Vince and his gym to shape up their stars.



This Updated eBook contains over 300 pages of text, drawings, and pictures in PDF format. It contains a wealth of information on and from Vince Gironda. There never has been, and presently there is nothing in existence, that can compare with the Updated Vince Gironda Legend and Myth for information on and about Vince Gironda, his methods, and concepts.

Vince Gironda Legend and Myth contains interviews with Larry Scott - Don Howorth - Dick Tyler - Bill Pearl - comments by Dave Draper.

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