

 **CRITICAL BENCH.com**

*presents.....*

# **50 Keys To A Bigger RAW BENCH**



*By Mike Westerdal & Ben Tatar – All Rights Reserved*

## About The Authors

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Ben Tatar



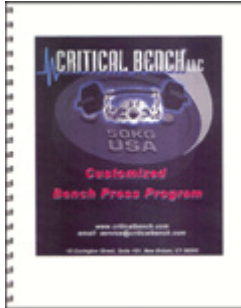
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***\*\*Always consult your physician before starting any exercise program.\*\****

## **Has Your Bench Press Flat-Lined? Than It Is Vital You Get The Critical Bench Program.**

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The Critical Bench Program was first made available to the public in 1999.. We didn't create it by reading magazines and reports. It's a direct result of our own blood, sweat and tears. Our program stands out from the crowd because the weights are customized. You tell us your max, and we give you the program with the exact weights you'll be lifting. Strictly following the regiment will ensure that you up your max fifty pounds. This program has you lifting five days a week, and only one of those is for chest. You're right it is asking a lot, but if you're a hard worker and have the desire to improve we can help you.

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Mike,

*"Just wanted to tell you how much I love the [Critical Bench Program](#). The setup of the exercises is great without the structure of the workout I probably would not have finished. I'm 33 years old I quit smoking in Sept. of 04 with the thought in mind of getting back into the shape I was in ten years ago when I got out of the Army. But after ten weeks and the Critical Bench Program I'm benching more the I was then you helped me to increase my one rep max from 170 to 260. YEP 90 lbs in 10 weeks. Thank you. I'm now doing a 18 week program, the Optimum Anabolics workout. After that I'm going to order the Critical Bench program to increase once again I know I will not see a 90 lb gain again but i know i can get the 50 lb increase. With my main goal being to bench at least 350 by the time I'm 35. Again thank you and I will be in touch."*

Thanks,  
**Rich Hayden**

*P.S. The girls on the site are the hottest. Especially Nikki Warner.*

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# 50 KEYS TO A BIGGER BENCH PRESS

## 1) Start With a Clean Slate

The first step to achieving a bigger bench is to empty your mind of all the useless information that you have learned. Many of the articles on the Internet confuse the raw bencher because we read about methods that conform to the serious competitive shirt benchers. However, raw benching and shirt benching are completely different games. In raw benching, the bottom half of the bench press needs to be trained heavier and you need to pay a lot more attention to training the shoulder muscles. The overall technique is different and the volume of training in raw benching must be lower, yet very intense.

In this report, we are going to explore many different--but all very important factors--for achieving a stronger bench press without the assistance of a bench press shirt. Follow all these steps, apply all of them into your routine, and you will make some *serious* gains with the [Critical Bench Program](#).

## 2) The Bench Press Starts With the Grip Strength

If you look around gyms today, most successful benchers train their backs, chest, triceps, and legs and they get fairly strong. However, what limits them and prevents them from getting even stronger is that they forget the importance of grip strength.

In order to achieve a bigger bench and to develop complete confidence, I believe that the first thing a bencher should do is to squeeze the bar as hard as he can. As soon as the bencher starts to squeeze the bar, he no longer has to think about "missing" the weight or the weight being too "heavy". His will naturally be focused on squeezing and blasting the weight to lockout.

The harder you squeeze the bar the more muscle fibers you will recruit and the more lockout power you will have. How do I know? Well, take a weight that is about 20lbs below your bench max and try to bench it without squeezing hard. What has just happened? You probably failed or moved it very slowly. Now squeeze the bar as hard as you can and you'll see what happens? You blasted the weight!



### 3) Hold the Weight at Lockout

When you bench you should always take time to hold the weight for 2-4 seconds before lowering the bar. The reason why you should hold all weights at lockout is because the smaller weights will actually help you get stronger for the bigger weights.

Lots of benchers kill their lockouts with fast reps when they aren't doing speed days or bottom half reps. For example if your bench max is 405, don't just do 225 for fast reps of 10, hold it at finishing position to build your lockout power and tendon strength. You should treat 50% of your max the same way as your max. This will improve your technique and bench strength when it really counts.



### 4) Develop Bottom End Strength

Bottom end strength is very important, especially so in raw benching. When you attempt the critical bench program, exercises like close grip benching, benching with pauses, heavy dumbbell presses, incline barbell presses, floor presses, weighted chins and chambered bar bench presses will give you new explosiveness off of your chest.

You should also start doing heavy seated dumbbell presses, and lots of shoulder work. These exercises will give you the shoulder strength to have greater bench press starting power. Critical Bench will automatically train the rear deltoids, the brachialis, through hammer curls and all of your muscles and nervous systems to

get stronger. Train these exercises hard because unlike with a shirt, in raw benching you need to be strong from the start of the lift as well as the finish.

The start of the lift doesn't only get the weight started but it determines whether or not you have enough speed and gas in your tank to lock the heavier weights out. So many guys can lockout 500 but cannot bench 365 all the way down and this is because they haven't worked the bottom phase of the lift. If you want to bench 500 for a full rep, then this is just what you will need to do.

## 5) Speed Benches

Speed benches are another invaluable exercise to help you develop. Attach bungee bands onto the bar, do 9 sets of 3 reps, using 40% of your 1 rep max while resting 30 seconds between sets. If you don't have bungee bands, then just use bar weight. Although critical bench doesn't offer these you could add them into your assistance bench press days on Fridays, which are optional. Only add these, if you feel like all of the weights that you are moving are very slow.

If your heavy bench presses look like they are traveling in slow motion, then speed days might be just what you need. For more information on bands see this page <http://www.criticalbench.com/bungeebands.htm>



## 6) Bottom Half Reps

We often hear coaches telling us to work our lockout, however, if you are doing critical bench without a bench shirt you need to be strong from the very start throughout the entire lift. A popular exercise that we recommend to improve starting strength is taking a weight and pressing it only half way up. Go for a pump and use moderate weight and reps on these exercises. As you get better at these you will have more explosive power to accelerate through the bottom

phase of the bench press and the top end. This will not only make you stronger at benching but it will make you stronger at every single lift you perform.

### **7) Bring the Weights Down Slow**

When you do incline bench presses, make sure that you bring the weight down to your chest in a controlled manner. Also lower all your weights slowly in a controlled fashion and then explode the weight up fast. I will say it again “bring the weight down with control, but on the way up try to smoke the weights like they are the bar.”

It sounds hard and annoying to bring the weight down slow, and sometimes we have to drop the weight that we are using, and that's tough on the ego.

Finally, remember every tough rep determines the big picture in the end. Make sure your form is strict, enjoy the process and enjoy every single gain. When you take the path of most resistance you'll have even more to be proud of when you succeed. As you get stronger you will discover that by using good technique you actually reached your goals sooner than you predicted. You will look back and thank yourself for making this decision when you are a bench press champion.

### **8) Full, 75%, 50%, 25% Reps**

This is great plateau breaker. It is very similar to the famous “21s” exercise for biceps. Here's how it works. Bring the barbell down 75%, then press it up. Then bring the weight down 50% then press the weight up. Then bring the weight 25% down then press the weight up. Then bring the weight all the way down and explode the weight up. Do this 10 times or whatever it takes until you reach failure. For example let's say you bench 365, then 225 might be a good weight to use on this exercise. If you bench 315, try it with 185 and if you bench 225, try it with 135, as a general guide.

### **9) Top End Strength**

A lot of raw benchers forget the importance of triceps which is why they can't lockout 385. If you are a raw bencher and find that you struggle at the lockout phase of the bench press, then you need to work your lockout (makes sense).

To work on your lockout strength you can set up inside of a power rack or squat rack. Roll the bench inside of the cage. Now set the pins so that when you were to lower the barbell the pins would stop it half way down. Performing repetitions restricted in this manner really puts the focus on your top end strength, and conditions your triceps to handle heavy weight.



### **10) Be Careful Not To Overtrain**

If you want a big bench then you're probably determined to get one. It's that same determination that will be your struggle. The more you want it, the harder you want to work and the longer you want to stay in the gym. This is going to lead to overtraining which will stunt any strength gains you've made and delay any dreams of an even bigger bench.

**How do you know if you're at risk of overtraining?** If you feel run down after a workout, notice that you aren't making any gains, you always do forced reps, you're not getting enough rest, your diet stinks, you have a bad attitude or you aren't motivated you're probably overtraining. Insomnia is another big sign. Put it this way, if a weight continually feels heavier than normal, chances are you haven't gotten weaker, you just haven't recovered from previous workouts.

Focus on quality not quantity. Doing more is not the answer. Let's see if you have the discipline to perform less sets, and perform the sets you do train at a higher intensity level.

### **11) Blast Your Triceps**

You already know triceps are important in development of the bench press. Have you ever tried drop set dips to torch your tris?. Have a spotter put four 45lbs plates, 35 or 25lbs plates on your lap as you have your hands on one bench and your legs on another bench.

Now perform dips and have the spotter remove the plates as you continue to fail. Remember, it's not so much the exercise but the intensity that you put forth in this exercise. Always make sure that you train your triceps with complete focus and intensity just like any other muscle group.



## 12) Work Your Back

You don't just need a strong chest and triceps to bench big. You also need a strong upper back to keep your body tight and stable. Concentrate on barbell rowing, seated rowing, and pull-ups (or pull-downs) to build a big strong back. In addition to stability, this will also go a long way in keeping your shoulders healthy (and your upper back looking nice and thick). Don't be one of those guys from the gym that completely neglects the back muscles. If you do your bench will pay the price.



## 13) Thoroughly Warm Up

Many benchers suffer from nagging shoulder pain and as a result their bench press careers end before they hit their primes. Other lifters go through their bench press training days and they always have bad shoulder pains.

After every hard bench day, before you go home make sure you stretch the shoulders, ice them and rest them to keep your shoulders, fresh, strong and healthy so injuries won't happen to you.

A huge mistake is jumping into an attempted one-rep max on the bench without warming up. When you max out, your muscles need to be thoroughly warmed up but not excessively warmed up. In other words you don't want your muscles to be tired when you start your session but you also need to make sure they are thoroughly warmed up. To warm up you can do rotator cuff exercises, push ups, light overhead presses and or some dynamic stretching.

#### 14) Floor Presses

During your current workout you might find a specific weakness along the way. One weakness that benchers run into is a sticking point about two inches off the chest. If this is one of the weaknesses that you run you can add floor presses to your routine. To perform the floor press, lie down on the floor, lower the weight until you elbows touch the floor, then explode the weight up. This will strengthen your bench where most benchers struggle, two inches above the chest.

#### 15) Bench Press Bands

Bands aren't totally needed to bench big. If you take Mike MacDonald and all of the raw champion benchers of the past, I don't think they used bands and they were some of the most powerful benchers of all time. However, if you do have bands they can definitely help--just like any other technique--if used correctly.

When you are using bands during the eccentric (lowering phase) of the lift, the bands are pulling the bar down to the ground. This teaches you to build kinetic energy to explode the weight up on the concentric (upward) phase of the lift.

Every inch that you press the bar up the bar will get heavier since the bands are anchored to the ground. This teaches your muscles how to work harder (then if you weren't to use bands at all). At the end of the lift with the usage of bands you should develop much greater finishing power than if you were to never use bands at all. The bands are also much easier on the pecs and shoulders than old conventional training giving benching a safer groove and making you stronger at the same time.



#### 16) Chains

The purpose of chains in the bench press is to build speed (accelerating quickly off your chest) and learning how to explode the weight as you hit the lockout (the finish) of the bench press. As we bring the weight to our chest the chains will roll into a pile on the floor. As you press the weight up, the chains then come off the floor with the bar making creating added resistance at different phases of the lift.

The typical Westside Chains are 45lbs each, creating a total of 90 lbs of extra weight lockout. For example if you have 225 on the bar with the Westside chains, you will be holding 305 at lockout and only 225 off your chest. As the weight comes up to the 25% phase of the lift you should be moving 250, at the half way point 275 and at the finish 305. You are literally overcoming every sticking point during the full range of motion of the bench press.

With chains we are now forced to build explosion off our chest and greater lockout power as the weight automatically becomes heavier, which conventional bench press training cannot do.



### **17) Board Presses**

Boards are a very common way to improve sticking points. Not only do boards help the lifter overcome his or her sticking point, but boards will also build an amazing lockout. Generally boards are broken into numbers like: 3, 4, 5 and 6 boards.

The 3 will train the bench press movement a few inches off of your chest, four boards will train the half way point and the six boards will train the lockout. We should use boards an inch below our sticking points. For a full article on using bench press boards and building your own set visit this page for a free article by 800 pound bencher Shawn Lattimer.

<http://www.criticalbench.com/board-press.htm>

### **18) Press The Bar In A Straight Line**

Pull your shoulder blades together, tuck your chin and elbows, and bring the bar to your upper abdominals or lower chest. This will minimize the pressing distance and reduce the amount of shoulder rotation and strain. Tip from Dave Tate.

## 19) Nutrition

Away from the gym, it's very important to rest, eat and grow. We need to eat for repair, recovery and growth. We need to eat to build our bodies. This means we need the right carbs for energy, a high amount of good quality protein to recover, and healthy fats for long-term energy and to keep joints healthy.

We should be consuming 6-8 meals a day eating every 2-3 hours. You should also drink at least a gallon of water every day to absorb the protein properly and keep you hydrated. The way we eat will determine how we perform, so keep the protein high and the carbs colorful.



## 20) Build An Iron Mind

The bench press brings out the best and worst in men, and the results--whatever they may be--are clear for all to see, whether on TV, in a meet, in a gym, or in the reality of the event.

This is what scares people most, the ability to be judged directly on their performance, to open themselves up to the probability of criticism and possibility of failure. You alone have sole control over victory over the bench press, and bear the sole blame for defeat. It's that harsh reality that separates the men from the boys, and shows a person's true character--someone who is willing to meet the challenge head on, and put himself on the line.

Before attempting a max attempt negative thoughts can creep into your head. Instead of focusing on negative thoughts, reverse the process. Instead of wondering what will happen if you miss the weight ask yourself what you can do

to get this weight up. You have just visualized something positive rather than negative. This alone increases the odds of a successful lift. You can then use your nerves and a healthy dose of adrenalin to help you propel the weight.

Finally, remember to practice mental imagery and visualization/meditation techniques frequently. By playing successful memory videos in your head, asking helpful questions, and by believing in yourself, will allow you to reach heavier and heavier bench press levels. Great bench pressers are made not born!

## **21) Keep A Training Log**

Keeping track of your training and nutrition is literally a science. Every successful powerlifter, bodybuilder, and athlete logs their workouts. Think of this training journal as your report card or job performance review. You can look back from week to week and see what's been working best for you. What's the point of training if you aren't measuring your results?

Goals create energy and motivation. Goals get you out of bed in the morning and into the gym. The secret to staying motivated all the time is to set emotionally charged goals and to stay focused on these goals day and night. A goal is the fuel that propels you forward and this workout log is the first step of your journey. Don't head out to sea without a compass.

You can start a free online training log at the Critical Bench Muscle Forum.

<http://www.criticalbench.com/muscleforum>

## **22) Set Realistic Goals**

*"The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it." –Michelangelo*

High achievement always takes place in the framework of high expectation. In the long run, you'll always hit what you aim at. So why not aim high? Your limits are nearly all in your mind. What you envision you can do, you can do if you set a goal and work daily towards it. Start thinking of yourself as a great athlete. Success is a state of mind.

Your long-term goal(s) may be to make it to the professional level or to make the starting line up of your current team. Short-term goals should be set daily or weekly and should lead you closer to achieving your long-term goals. Each short-term goal must have action steps. They describe the steps that need to be taken to accomplish the short-term goal. Here is an example of a goal setting plan including long term and intermediate goals plus the short-term goals and their action steps.



**Long Term Goal** – I will be the best bench presser on my current team.

**Intermediate Goal** - I will report to pre-season practice in excellent physical shape. I will run the 40yd dash in 4.35. I will bench press 300. I will run a mile in 5:15. (set specific measurable goals)

**Short-term Goal** - I will improve my lower and upper body strength.

**Action Step 1** - I will follow my weight-training program in my summer manual.

**Action Step 2** - I will complete my exercise routines on the lower body lifting days.

**Action Step 3** - I will complete my exercise routines on the upper body lifting days.

Some important points to remember when setting your goals and assessing your progress:

- Your goals must be challenging.
- Your goals must be realistic, measurable and attainable.
- Your goals must be positive (i.e., things to achieve rather than things to avoid).
- Write down your goals and your progress towards them. If things are going well consider new targets. If things are going badly, assess why progress has not taken place, you may have to set more realistic goals.
- Set your goals in areas of weakness as well as areas of strength.

Success is yours if you want it bad enough, and are willing to pay the price. Set your goals high! You are capable of being extraordinary. Believe it, and achieve it!



### **23) Keeping It Simple**

A lot of people believe that getting a bigger bench press is about genetics, but it's really mostly about attitude. Take two guys with similar genetics, who have both been training for ten years and both of these guys share a goal to achieve a bigger bench press.

First we have guy A- This guy desires a big bench press and he has a lot of work ethic. He benches twice a week and trains all of his muscle groups twice a week. He trains for two hours every single day and he seems to know his stuff about training and he has an amazing work ethic. Not only that, but he does interesting exercises. He can be seen using skull crushers with chains, JM presses, kettle bells and all kinds of fancy training methods. He also does lots of cardio and he tries to be the best at everything.

Then we have guy B- This guy also desires a bigger bench press. He only does 3 sets of bench presses and two different intense assistance exercises and then he is done. He gets plenty of rest between workouts, between sets and eats a lot.

Guy A, looks at guy B as if he is lazy and that he doesn't work hard. Guy B looks at guy A as if he is brain washed and confused by all the information out there. Well guess what?

Guy A is only benching 300lbs and guy B is benching 500lbs and they have the same genetics. Why is this? It's because guy B is training "for a bigger bench press" and he continues to see progress. Guy A is frustrated and all the information that he is applying and the more work that he is applying is just confusing him.

Always remember, let the beast spark, it's not all about the information, not in raw benching at least, it's in the simplicity. It's in doing less, pushing yourself, being aware of your weak points and overloading your muscles. Don't let information be your excuse for what is really most important "lifting heavier weights" and getting out will work better then reading more info and training longer.

### **24) Steroids?**

Taking steroids is a personal choice. It's up to the lifter what he wants to do with his body. Even though steroids will maximize your gains, they can destroy your mind, health, body and life. We don't recommend them. Steroids are not necessary. If you apply all the critical bench steps here and take advantage of the critical bench supplement recommendations then you will get better bench press results then what steroids could bring to you.

After all, Anthony Clark was the best bench presser in the world at one time and he was drug free. Glen Chabot broke Kaz's record in the bench press and he was drug free. Mike MacDonald benched well over 500 at 165lbs and he was drug free. That is more than most roided professional bodybuilders can bench. If you do decide to use them remember to be smart and that you are responsible for the potential consequences and side effects that may they have.

## 25) **Overload Your Muscles**

The best way to cause growth is to overload your muscles! Our muscles get stronger when they adapt to a stress. Lighter weights don't really increase strength. Studies have shown that big lifters should skip light days and use them as days to recover. Remember when you bench with reps in the 1-3 rep range you will increase tendon strength. When you get your tendons, ligaments, and all of your attachments stronger you will naturally be able to bench more.



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## 26) Patience Is A Virtue

Patience is one of the most important virtues when it comes to getting that bigger bench press. In fact, so many lifters are so desperate to get to 225, 315 and 405lbs that they destroy their wishes because they lack patience.

Lifters start to put their feet on the bench and arch their back, they have their spotters assist their reps, they bounce the weights off their chest, and they start to perform only partial movements. This will always hurt the lifter in the long run and it will lead to a life long plateau and potential injuries. Don't let impatience ruin your bench press dreams! The secret is in the 2.5, 5lbs plates, the gradual build up and by having enough self-discipline. You don't have to add 20 pounds to your bench every week.

## 27) Reliable Training Partners

Why are coaches and partners so important? If you have a coach he can find your weaknesses, help you with technique and push you past them. Training partners also help you with your benching. They can spot you, put a bench shirt on, support you, and motivate you.

Remember to get partners that support you and not partners who bring you down. A great training partner also holds you accountable. You are a lot less likely to miss a workout when someone is relying on you to be there. Nothing beats training in an environment that supports excellence. Find someone stronger than you and learn from their experience.



## 28) Find the Right Gym - Atmosphere

I think where you train can influence how well the [Critical Bench Program](#) works for you. Try to find a gym that has attitude. If you are at a gym that makes you feel comfortable, where you are very distracted and where you feel like you must tone down your training, then look for other gym options.

If you bench more and are driven through others, then try to train around others. In fact, a recent study reported that many people can bench a whopping 75lbs more or at least push themselves that much more when they are being watched.

If you **aren't** one of the people that falls into this statistic and don't want to fail in front of others than do the critical bench program in your basement. Then you can create your own rules, turn up the volume as loud as you want and create as much attitude in the environment you created.

Attitude comes in different forms. Whether you are the king of your fitness center, or learning from the hardcore lifters in your basement gym, just make sure that you know that you are training in an environment where you can work hard.

## 29) Preparation

*"Failure to plan is planning to fail."*

When you're completely prepared you will be confident and ready to win. If you want to go far with your training you must be consistent. You need to eat 6-8 meals throughout the day approximately every 2 to 3 hours, all year long. You have to be in the gym even when you want to be doing other things. Every choice you make has a reaction whether it is good or bad. It has been said if you miss a workout it puts you 2 weeks behind schedule. Serious business people don't miss meetings, athletes don't miss practices and serious lifters don't miss training sessions.

## 30) Attitude

*"You have to visually see yourself locking the weight out." If you've successfully completed the movement over and over in your mind prior to the lift, nothing will stop you. **Attitude is everything** and will always be the most important tool you have. Your attitude can take you to places and open doors others thought impossible. That's what makes the difference between a champion lifter and an average lifter. Attitude takes you beyond your potential. Apply a positive attitude from the time you get up in the morning to your final thought before you retire at night. Attitude can reach deep into your soul causing an adrenaline rush taking you to unbelievable heights of success. Push your attitude before, during and after training, and the weight will increase." –700 Pound Bencher Mark Carter*



### 31) Heavy Negatives

Let me give you a few examples of conditioning your body with an overload. A basketball player who is shooting jump shots while he is wearing ankle weights.

A swimmer who does laps wearing pants and a t-shirt.

A football player preparing for camp by running in the middle of the afternoon during a 90-degree summer day.

A sprinter that runs with a parachute tied to his back.

How about a powerlifter that does negatives with a weight that is much heavier than his one rep max?

Are you beginning to see the correlation? When you run in 90-degree weather, practice in 80-degree heat doesn't seem so bad. When you shot jump shots with ankle weights, you feel pretty light and explosive when you take them off. When it is time to unload in each situation the body can perform better because it has been strengthened by the overload.

You get the point. Let's say your goal is to bench 400 lbs. If you've never tried it, the initial shock might surprise you. If you've felt the weight of 450 lbs and done negative sets with it, your mind and your muscles will be preconditioned to handle the 400 you were aiming for. You've felt heavier weight, making this weight seem lighter. Your muscles need to feel the shock of heavy weight to prepare for a max. Heavy negatives will accomplish just that.

A negative rep is simply an eccentric contraction. When you lower the weight towards your chest during the bench press you are performing a negative.

### 32) Use The Right Barbell

*"A bar's knurling is the roughened grip characteristic of most bars. If you do heavy deadlifts, you're well aware of knurling, as most of the skin of your shin can be found in the indentations of the bar. The amount of knurling that a bar contains often becomes a tradeoff between getting some hand grip and not losing all of the skin on your shins! No such issues in the bench, though.*

*If you use a bar that's shiny or slippery, you lose too much energy fighting the lateral hand slip, even when using chalk. If you want to keep your hands soft for your girlfriend, like the slimy character in "Of Mice and Men," you don't have to use the roughest bar. But you want one that provides an adequate grip. I find that a slippery bar can cause you to lose up to 5% of your 1RM." – Dr. Ian King*

### 33) Use Your Feet

*“Make sure your feet are planted FIRMLY on the floor and do not come up during your bench attempts. They should also not be moving around. This creates a stable base and foundation, which makes your bench more powerful. The whole body must be stable during a bench press and the feet are a huge part of that. In addition, when benching you can learn to kind of “push” off with your feet for additional power. Try this during your normal chest workouts until you can get it down, then use it to help [increase your max](#) on bench!” - Anthony Church*



### 34) Don't Bounce The Bar

*“Most bench press injuries occur during the transition between the eccentric and concentric phase, according to Dr. Sal Arria, Executive Director of the International Sports Sciences Association. A common technique flaw involves the fatigued lifter allowing the bar to “bounce” or “chop” down onto the chest, which subjects the pectoral attachments to sudden loads, which is often the stimulus for injury. A 200 pound bar lowered very slowly exerts about 200 pounds of pressure. But this same bar lowered quickly, may put many hundreds of pounds of tension on the target muscles and their attachments.” – Charles Staley*

### **35) Try Pre-Exhausting Your Muscles**

This is a great plateau breaker. Since the bench press is the favorite exercise for many lifters it's usually the exercise performed first. Exhaust your chest by doing incline dumbbell presses first, then doing flys, and finishing with flat bench. Your flat bench will be much worse than usual because it is already exhausted from the previous two exercises.

However after doing this for a few weeks you can once again start with the flat bench and you'll see an immediate increase in your poundage. Can your ego handle lifting lighter weight on the bench press for a few weeks in order to make some real gains?

### **36) Posture**

*"Laying your back as flat as it will go to get a "full range of motion" is wrong, making your upper arms stretch back further at the bottom only places greater stress on your front deltoids and those tie-ins. Take at least a natural arc in your back, but it's better to place your shoulders and ass as close together as comfortably possible, so that you reduce front delt stress at the bottom."*

– Alton Hare

### **37) Don't Be Fooled**

One major thing to remember is that the biggest guys in the gym won't always be doing the most weight. This means that just because someone is doing a lot of weight, doesn't mean they are strong or that they are doing it correctly. So don't go in the gym and wish you were like the big guys.

Rather, go into the gym and watch others to see if the guy doing the "big weight" is doing it right. The people that you want to take advice from are the ones doing it right and moving the big weight. Someone who is doing half a curl on the preacher bench with 155 pounds, talking trash, and walking around like they are "King Shit" is exactly the person you don't want to take advice from on how to get out of your plateau.

### **38) Education**

This is the most important part of power training. Education is the key to success. Since change is a big key to success, education gives you options. How many times have you been training, become stale, and didn't change because you had nothing to change?

Common problem, simple answer. You can't stick to a routine for months and months because the body will become used to it, and progress comes to a grinding halt. Variety is very important and keeps the body fresh and strong.

Getting out of a rut is sometimes very difficult--the only solution is change. Even though there is no simple answer to why you can bench 375 twice and can't do 405 for a max, there are things you can try to accomplish this.

Changing something simple in the routine, such as the day you bench, might be the key. With education come options. When you have the options it cuts down on the time you are stale. Plus, when coming out of a training cycle there will be a place to go. You will know exactly how to come down after the contest and how to get started going into the next one.

Everything works, but nothing works forever. Just because you've hit a plateau doesn't mean your program sucks. Just give another program a try for a while and then you can go back to yours. Here's one you can try – [CLICK HERE](#).



### **39) Don't Bench Directly To Your Chest**

*“When you bench directly to your upper chest, it puts a strain on the shoulders/rotator cuff. When you work up to doing heavier weights, you increase the chance of getting a rotator cuff injury. You need to bench below your lower chest. You get more explosion as well as strength that way.”*

**– Curtis Dennis Jr.**

#### 40) Abs & Glutes

Contract your abs and squeeze your glutes. This will cause a slight arching in your lower back. Contracting the abs will create a greater internal pressure within the viscera. This greater internal pressure will better support the spinal column and create a stronger bridge between the lower and upper body.

#### 41) Oxygen Is NOT Your Friend

Typically we inhale during the eccentric phase of a lift and exhale during the concentric phase of the lift. Throw this out the window. When maxing out, you need to take one BIG air and hold it the entire lift. This keeps you tight, solid and gives you a stable base to push from.

#### 42) Lie To Yourself

*“This technique works well for some people if they can be really convincing and are good at lying to themselves and making themselves believe it. Before you attempt a max bench press, lie to yourself about the weight (fake it till you make it). Say you have 200 pounds that you are about to try to bench. Lie to yourself and tell yourself that it is nothing and that you've done it before. Or, pretend that it is only 150 pounds. This may help you get that weight up!” - Anthony Church*



#### 43) Keep Warm

*“Since you need to take the extra time to rest between your heavy maxing sets you need to make sure that your body does not cool down. You should stay warm throughout the session and not let your body get cold. Wear hooded sweatshirts and sweatpants; wrap towels around your legs, whatever you have to do to stay warm.” - Anthony Church*



#### **44) Don't Use A False Grip**

Make sure you wrap your thumbs around the bar. Don't put your thumbs on the same side of the bar as the rest of your fingers. Even Scot Mendelson--one of the world's greatest benchers--advises against this. It's far too dangerous. The bar can easily slip and crash onto your ribs. We have seen it happen. Always put safety first.



#### **45) Gain Some Muscle Weight**

If you don't mind gaining some weight it will certainly help your bench press. That's why the heavyweights have all the heaviest records. Just add an additional 100-250 calories per day to your diet. A protein shake per day could do the trick. We're not talking about fat here. Adding some muscle to your frame will improve your leverages.

#### **46) Reduce Your Cardio**

When training for strength you shouldn't do a lot of cardiovascular work. This burns too many calories and energy that you will need for your muscle building workouts. In fact, if you are trying to lose body fat and increase your bench press at the same time, this could be considered a conflicting goal. When you're trying to up your max, take it easy on the cardio and save your energy for benching.

#### **47) Rest Between Sets**

The one-minute rest won't get it done on a heavy bench day--2 to 3 minutes is more like it. In fact, many advanced lifters insist on up to a 5-minutes of rest between heavy sets.

#### **48) Let Your Nervous System Recover**

80% of initial strength increase is determined by nervous system motor unit recruitment. A motor unit is a nerve and all the muscle fibers innervated. Heavy tension is required for the recruitment of high threshold motor units- these are fast twitch fibers--the ones that tend to grow, (increase in mitochondria and supporting cytoplasm).

Heavy Benching is very taxing on the nervous system. Overtraining is a common mistake as trainees don't take into account nervous system recovery!



Yours Truly, Mike Westerdal

#### **49) Stable Shoulders – Stable Gains**

The following is a link to a very useful rotator cuff handout. If you suffer from sore or aching shoulders these exercises may be just what the doctor ordered.

<http://familydoctor.org/handouts/265.html>

## 50) Get A Roadmap!

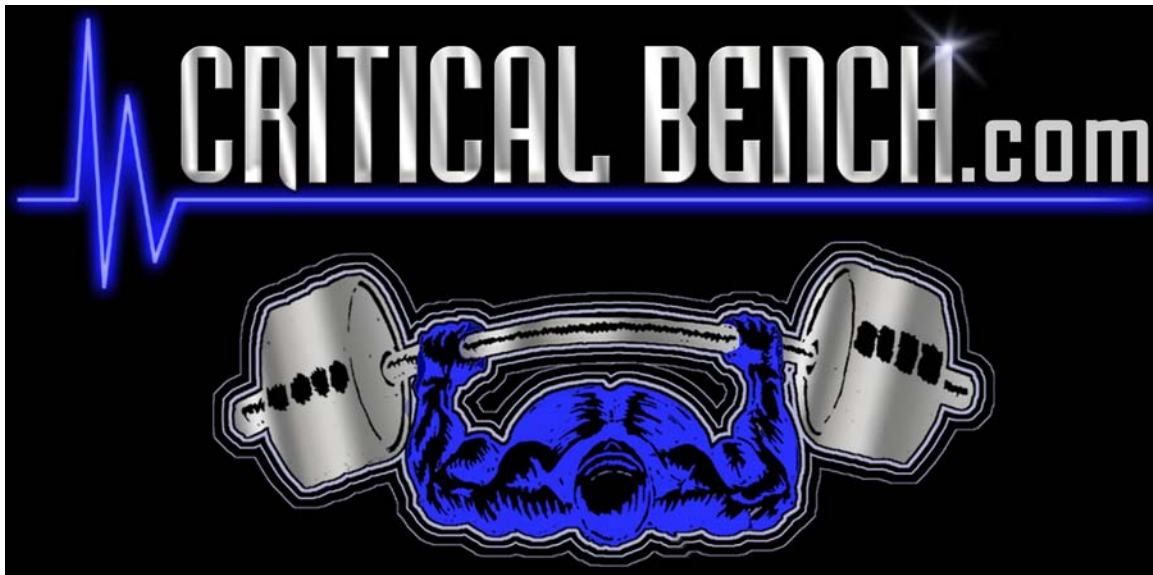
### [Critical Bench Program](#)

If you would like to implement the techniques you have just read about this program has it all mapped out for you. It's more in depth and covers all aspects of the bench press. This bench press program is a power program designed to help you increase your one rep max by an average of fifty pounds during the ten week training cycle.



It is different from other programs because you are provided with the actual weights you will be using on bench day and given a full body lifting split to follow. Over 5500 powerlifters, weekend warriors, and athletes have had success with our system. Get more in depth information by clicking [here](#) or Visiting: <http://www.criticalbench.com/program.htm>

- 
- Ask your peers what they think. If you haven't done so stop by our [message board](#) for some valuable feedback.
  - Visit our library of [training articles](#). You'll find new articles added weekly.



**Are You Ready To Join The Club? [Start The Critical Bench Program Today!](#)**