

BENCH PRESS

FIELD GUIDE

THE BENCH PRESS IS THE FIRST LIFT TO TEACH YOU WHAT "HEAVY" FEELS LIKE, AND IS THE PRIMARY LIFT FOR RAW UPPER BODY STRENGTH. THE BENCH PRESS CAN BE SURPRISINGLY TECHNICAL. USE THIS AND OUR OTHER RESOURCES TO BUILD A BIGGER, BETTER, STRONGER BENCH PRESS.

SETUP



EYES LOWER THAN THE BAR

LIE DOWN SO THAT YOUR EYES ARE LOWER THAN THE BAR (TOWARD YOUR FEET), ENSURING YOU WON'T HIT THE RACK OR HOOKS.

COMPRESSION GRIP

GRIP THE BAR AS CLOSE TO YOUR WRIST AS POSSIBLE. ROTATE YOUR HANDS INWARD AND SQUEEZE. TRY TO LEAVE FINGERPRINTS ON THE BAR.

UNRACK WITH STRAIGHT ARMS

STRAIGHT ELBOWS WHEN THE BAR TRAVELS OVER YOUR FACE AND NECK.

SET YOUR ARCH

RETRACT YOUR SHOULDER BLADES AND ROTATE YOUR CHEST UP. THINK ABOUT BRINGING YOUR SHOULDERS AS CLOSE TO YOUR BUTT AS POSSIBLE.

FEET FLAT. KNEES AT 90 DEGREES

FOOT POSITION IS NOT SET IN STONE, BUT FLAT FEET GIVE YOU BETTER CONTACT WITH THE FLOOR. PLACE PLATES OR BLOCKS UNDER YOUR FEET IF YOU HAVE SHORT LEGS.

EXECUTION



EYES ON THE CEILING (NOTE THE BAR'S STARTING POSITION)

FOCUS ON THE CEILING FOR THE ENTIRE SET, NOTING WHERE THE BAR STARTS AND ENDS EACH REP. BE CONSISTENT AND THROW THE BAR TO THE CEILING THE WAY YOU THROW A DART OR BALL AT A TARGET.

BIG HELD BREATH

BEFORE EACH REP.

TOUCH YOUR CHEST

"PULL DOWN WITH YOUR ELBOWS" AND TOUCH YOUR MID-STERNUM TO ACHIEVE A CONSISTENT AND SAFE TOUCHPOINT ON YOUR CHEST.

LEG DRIVE

USE YOUR LEGS TO PUSH YOUR BODY UPWARD ALONG THE BENCH AND THROW THE BAR BACK TO THE STARTING POSITION AGAINST THE CEILING. MAKE SURE YOUR BUTT STAYS DOWN AND IN CONTACT WITH THE BENCH.

TIPS & TRICKS

KEEP YOUR SHOULDERS RETRACTED

"SHOULDERS PINCHED" DECREASES THE RANGE OF MOTION WITHOUT DECREASING THE EFFICACY OF THE LIFT, AND THIS POSITION HELPS YOU KEEP YOUR CHEST UP, MAKING YOUR BENCH PRESS MORE EFFICIENT. IF YOU LOSE YOUR SHOULDERS-BACK POSITION, RESET AT THE TOP.

FOREARM POINTS THE WAY

YOUR ELBOWS SHOULD BE SLIGHTLY IN FRONT OF THE BAR AT THE BOTTOM. THE CORRECT BAR PATH IS A DIAGONAL LINE FROM YOUR TOUCH-POINT TO THE LOCKOUT. YOUR FOREARMS SHOULD BE ANGLED ALONG THAT SAME LINE.

ELBOWS DOWN

THE MOST COMMON BENCH PRESS MISTAKE IS TO FLARE YOUR ELBOWS ON THE WAY UP. IMAGINE YOU ARE TRYING TO "BEND THE BAR" IN HALF TOWARD YOUR FEET ON THE WAY DOWN AND KEEP "TIGHT ARMPITS" ON THE WAY UP.

LEG DRIVE TROUBLES

IF YOU ARE HAVING TROUBLE USING LEG DRIVE. USE YOUR LEGS TO HOLD YOUR BODY MOTIONLESS ON THE BENCH INSTEAD. LESS DYNAMIC, HOLDING YOUR BODY STILL WILL REQUIRE SIMILAR USE OF YOUR LEGS AND TRANSLATES WELL TO LEG DRIVE LATER ON.

TROUBLESHOOTING



SHOULDER PAIN

SHOULDER PAIN CAUSED BY THE BENCH PRESS IS OFTEN DUE TO YOUR GRIP WIDTH OR YOUR ELBOW POSITION DURING THE MOVEMENT. TRY NARROWING YOUR GRIP A FINGER-WIDTH AT A TIME, AND NOTE WHETHER THIS ALLEVIATES THE PAIN. ALSO, HAVE A COACH CHECK YOUR ELBOW POSITION. IF YOUR ELBOWS ARE TOO HIGH AND FAR AWAY FROM YOUR BODY, YOU MAY BE AT RISK OF INJURY.

STICKING POINT 4 - 6 INCHES OFF FROM YOUR CHEST

USUALLY A BAR PATH ISSUE. YOU MAY BE PRESSING THE BAR TOO VERTICALLY OFF YOUR CHEST, PRESSING FARTHER AWAY FROM YOUR SHOULDER JOINT. “PRESS BACK” TOWARD YOUR SPOTTER OR “FLOAT THE BAR BACK” TOWARD YOUR SHOULDER JOINT ON THE WAY UP.

BUTT LIFTING OFF THE BENCH

IF YOUR BUTT COMES OFF THE BENCH, THIS IS INDICATIVE OF AN INEFFECTUAL SETUP OR USE OF LEG DRIVE. REVIEW YOUR “CHEST UP” AND “SHOULDERS TUCKED” POSITION. THEN, HAVE A FRIEND BLOCK YOUR SHOULDERS SO YOU CAN PRACTICE LEG DRIVE.

ACCESSORY LIFTS



USE OF EACH ACCESSORY LIFT SHOULD FIT YOUR CURRENT PROGRAM AND NEEDS WITH RESPECT TO YOUR STANDARD BENCH PRESS.

IMPROVE YOUR LOCKOUT

PIN BENCH PRESS
BOARD PRESS
SLINGSHOT PRESS

SMASH YOUR STICKING POINT

FLOOR PRESS
BANDED OR BENCH PRESS WITH CHAINS

USEFUL VARIATIONS

CLOSE GRIP BENCH PRESS
PAUSED BENCH PRESS
INCLINE BENCH PRESS
DB BENCH PRESS

AUXILLARY LIFTS

BARBELL ROW
CHIN-UPS/PULL-UPS
ROLLING DUMBELL EXTENSIONS
DIPS

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HELPFUL VIDEOS

"COMPRESSION GRIP," FROM COACH JAYSON BALL

"DON'T PUNCH THE BENCH," FROM DR. SULLIVAN AT GREYSTEEL

THE BARBELL LOGIC BENCH PRESS PLAYLIST

HELPFUL PODCAST EPISODES

#63 – THE BENCH PRESS

#196 – THE SECRET TO A BIGGER BENCH? LEG DRIVE

BARBELL LOGIC ARTICLES

BUILD YOUR BENCH PRESS ARCH

FINDING THE TOUCH-POINT FOR YOUR BENCH PRESS

HOW TO PROGRAM ASSISTANCE WORK