

# Dips and Dipping

by

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I'm not the originator of the saying but I certainly subscribe to it; "If you only have time for two upper body movements, make them chins and dips." Chins work the back, delts, biceps, forearms and to a certain degree abs. Dips work the triceps, pec's, delts, and again to a certain degree, abs. That's pretty much your entire upper body. No, it's not a specialization approach but if you're in a hurry or if you need a break from your normal routine chins and dips may be just the thing. Dips can be performed so they place more emphasis on the pec's, or with an adjustment, the triceps. It all depends on how you position your hands and body.

Vince Gironda as well as others have promoted varying hand positions and widths for performing dips for the chest. Vince recommended performing dips on "V" bars. This is an apparatus that allows your hand spacing to be 32" apart while holding on to the bars. It is built so the inside is closer and it gradually widens at the opening, it looks like a V, hence the name "V" Dipping Bar. I am convinced that dips on the "V" bars with hands spaced 32" apart is the best for pec development. Hand spacing however, is not the only positioning that needs to be adhered to for dips to work the pecs to their fullest. The entire body must be positioned correctly. The same holds true for triceps. Although the "V" bar is not recommended for triceps work, parallel bars are better; the body must be in the correct position so the triceps get the most from your efforts. Hand and body positioning is crucial when performing dips for either the pecs or the triceps.



This is a picture of my homemade adjustable “V” Dipping Bars.  
I can adjust the height and width as well as the angle.

Realize and understand, I never have and at this point in my life, don’t ever expect to claim there is only one way to perform any movement. I have always advocated change, experimentation, adjustment, and modification to all movements. What I am going to describe is one way in which to perform dips for the triceps and another for the chest. These descriptions can and should be modified to best suit your individual make up. What I am presenting is the way I perform the movements because I have found they work best for me. Even with that being said, I still change things from time to time for variety.

*\*\*\* Due to the fact I am the author of this article, I believe it entitles me to make a comment normally not included in descriptive writings. Rather than take new pictures illustrating dips using a model more appealing than I am, I am using some showing yours truly performing the movements. Just to clarify things, I am not as fat as the warm-up suit indicates in these pictures. In my own defense, the warm-up suit is baggy because I like it that way. Thanks for your indulgence. \*\*\** Now then, I feel better... even though most won’t believe me!

### **Dips For The Chest**

As mentioned, I personally prefer a “V” dipping bar station for pec work. You will also need to use a station that will allow you to keep your body vertical, from head to toe, even in the lower position. A station that requires you to bend the knees in the lowest

position will not work. Position yourself so your hands are 32” apart. Place your chin on your chest. Extend your feet in front of you so they are not directly under your body but rather in front of your body. Do not move your head or feet from their position throughout the movement.

As you lower yourself keep your elbows out to your sides, not in close to the body. In the bottom position, stretch your pec’s. Your first action coming up should be the contraction of the pec’s, not the triceps. When you are in the up position squeeze your pec’s forcefully and lower yourself back down. Repeat for the desired reps.

A twist is to place your hands in the reverse position as shown. Those who do not have a lot of flexibility in the wrist region may find this extremely difficult to do. As with all movements, if you practice you will eventually get it down right. The reverse hand position is tough, no doubt about it, but once you are able to perform the movement in this manner you will be well rewarded.



Start position for chest dips on “V” bars



Finish position for chest dips on “V” bars



Reverse hand position for chest dips

## Dips For The Triceps

Unlike chest dips, your hand and body position is completely different so the movement can stress the triceps, not the pec's. Unlike dips for the chest, when performing triceps dips you can use a station that requires you to bend your knees when in the lowered position. Do not perform triceps dips on a "V" dipping station. For this movement you need to use parallel bars.



Start position Triceps Dips on parallel bars



Finish position Triceps Dips on parallel bars

In the upright position with your hands straight down alongside your body, tilt your head back and lower yourself. Keep your elbows in close to the body and your head back at all times. Once in the lowest position, forcefully press yourself back up using the strength of your triceps. Return to the starting position and repeat for the desired number of repetitions.

Hand and body positions are essential when performing dips. The difference dramatically impacts the muscle group you desire to work. Sometimes I used dips first in my workouts for chest or triceps. At other times I would use them as a finishing movement. At one point in my training I set a goal of performing six reps of dips with my bodyweight hanging around my waist. I never did get to three sets of six with that much weight but even one set along with three additional sets using lighter weights blew my triceps and pec's up like balloons.

People often overlook the dip because it is thought of as a free hand exercise, using bodyweight only. Even when using your bodyweight only, dips can be a challenging exercise. They can be a very rewarding movement and I've always found them to be productive regardless of which way they are performed.

Happy Dipping!

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