

Grouping Body Parts for Training

Question & Answer

by
Alan Palmieri

Exercises such as chins and bent over rows can take the wind out of your sails and also place an overload on the biceps. So why work biceps the same day you do back? Why work triceps the same day you do chest as any work for the chest also works the triceps? Good question!

Chins and bent over rows are exceptional movements for the back. Working biceps immediately after training the back will definitely reduce the poundage you can use for exercises on your biceps. Does this mean you should change your workout so you do not work biceps on back days? The bench press and dips are great movements for the chest. Working triceps immediately after training the chest will reduce the poundage you can use for exercises on your triceps. Does this mean you should change your workout so you do not work triceps on chest days? Many have asked the question and seem confused by the fact some routines instruct biceps to be worked immediately following back exercises or triceps to be worked immediately following chest exercises.

Here is an actual question I received in a letter this week along with my response.

Q. First let me complement you on a great Website. I enjoy reading your material because I know it comes from your personal experience. Second, I have a question about training that is confusing to me. I've read where you, and others, have sometimes grouped back and biceps / chest and triceps together in workouts. It seems to me if you do this, by the time you're finished working the back your biceps will be wasted before you even get to them. Certainly you won't be able to use as heavy a weight. The same is true for triceps after training chest. I don't see how you can use maximum poundage

since the biceps are so heavily used in back work and triceps in chest work. Am I wrong in my thinking? – V. Pace, TN

A. Thanks for the kind words regarding my Website. I try to provide information I believe people want. Also thank you for a great question and one I have been asked on more than one occasion.

I have and do suggest working back and biceps as well as chest and triceps in the same workouts. When you work your back heavy and hard you're right, you can't use maximum weight in movements for your biceps and the same is true when working chest, you can't use maximum weight on the triceps. But there is a reason I would sometimes suggest this type of training and I might add, a system I've used successfully over the years but not exclusively.

In working these muscle groups together you are working the larger ones first. Back and then biceps, chest and then triceps; the smaller muscles follow the larger muscle. Let's take back and biceps. After you have thoroughly worked your back, you take a break and proceed to your biceps. Never jump to your biceps immediately after your last back movement, always allow some time for your biceps to recover, maybe five to ten minutes. Because your biceps have already received a good workout, a short warm up is all that is required before moving into your routine. In most instances I don't even bother with warming up the biceps as they were sufficiently warmed up from working the back.

Working back and biceps / chest and triceps is not a program designed to allow maximum poundage in the secondary muscle group, biceps and/or triceps. This type of muscle grouping is designed to pump up the secondary muscle group (biceps & triceps), but not designed for maximum poundage use in movements. You might wonder why any routine would not allow you to use your maximum weight. First of all, all out – heavy as you can go workouts each session are not the wisest way to train. Second, if a person is susceptible to sore elbow joints, this grouping system can be a lifesaver. I developed very

sore and tender elbows that actually prevent me from performing triceps extensions but find I can do them if they are sufficiently warmed up from doing my chest workout first.

The muscle grouping we are talking about can be very effective. Some may find working the secondary muscle, biceps or triceps, actually allows them to feel and concentrate on the muscle better than if they trained them separately. I have always found this to be the case. True, maximum weight can't be used but the feel of the muscle and concentration you can experience is exceptional. The reason... you have to use a lighter weight and this provides for a better feel, control and contraction. You are using a weight that allows you to perform the movement in a different productive manner. You will be placing a more direct load on the muscle itself not the tendon or ligament and that happens frequently when you use maximum poundage in some lifts.

There is not one single routine or system that I would recommend following exclusively. I strongly advocate changing everything around from time to time. In addition to the pull push method just discussed; I have also trained grouping chest and biceps, back and triceps together. Sometimes I've grouped biceps and triceps together. I've never been married to a single way of training and I think that is one key to continued progress.

I hope this helps answer your question and good luck with your training.

© Copyright 2005 Alan Palmieri