

Instinctive Training

By

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Believe it or not, some people simply refuse to train instinctively, including some of the world's top champions. They feel they need the regimen of a routine, following a planned program written down in a journal. Some, including the "Iron Guru" himself, Vince Gironda, even spoke against incentive training stating it was for people who didn't know what they were doing or how to train. The truth is instinctive training can be one of the most rewarding workout concepts in bodybuilding. It can keep your enthusiasm level high, ward off burnout, increase your energy level, and promote new growth and gains. I know some who train every workout instinctively and wouldn't train any other way. Now I don't subscribe to doing that but I definitely feel at various times in your training, doing so instinctively is a great approach and one that is well worth considering.

I have never understood the fear some have of training according to how the mind and body leads them. After all, experimentation, trail and error, are by far the best teachers in determining what is best for each of us. There are numerous movements for every muscle and every muscle group, why limit the selection to the same two or three time and time again? That doesn't make any sense to me. No one can doubt the superiority of a mature muscle and muscle maturity is the result of many years of training. Training that consists of employing many different movements, not the same one or two over and over.

Some bodybuilders have found they can use the same exercise every workout and still get results. Some can use the same exercises for maybe six months before changing both exercises and routines. At different points in my training I continued to get results

from performing some of the same movements for months at a time. Once I hit upon a sticking point however, I often trained instinctively for an extended period of time and experienced exceptional results. With age and muscle maturity I found instinctive training more beneficial.

Over the years I've followed all kinds of training principles. I have said many times that some were productive and others were not so productive. Having a comprehensive degree of training behind me, I've come to notice a difference in the affect exercise has on me today compared to years past. At one stage in my training I could use the same movement for months on end while still gaining benefit from it. Today however, I don't find that to be the case. It seems like with age and perhaps exercise experience, my muscles adapt much more quickly to an exercise than in the past and require constant change. Some people find this true early on in their training whereas for me, I must have been a late bloomer.

Don't get me wrong, this is not a bad thing, in fact I find it helpful. My attention span has never been very long and the older I get the shorter it becomes. What keeps me motivated and enthused is that I rarely do the same workout twice in a row anymore. I constantly change things around whether it is the exercise itself, hand – feet – or body position, muscle groups, sets, reps, super-setting, push - pull routines, you name it. I've also come to discover my muscles respond best if I do not use the exact same movement more than three consecutive times. If I continue to use the same exercise more than that I lose the pump faster, don't progress as much and become stale.

I would not recommend instinctive training for a beginner or intermediate bodybuilder. These two groups still need the foundation that can only come from a basic and fundamental routine. In the early stages, the body and mind have not yet come to a point of sufficient experience to benefit from instinctive training. They still need to follow an all around program designed to work all the muscle groups as they should be. Advanced bodybuilders on the other hand, have already developed the skills necessary to benefit from instinctive training.

Some may not be familiar with instinctive training and yes... the definition of instinctive training varies somewhat from place to place. Like the old saying goes, “it all depends on where your feet are”. What I’m talking about when I say instinctive training is simply this. With no predetermined exercise sequence, sets and reps in mind, you enter the gym knowing that for this session you will work the chest. You start your warm-up doing a couple of sets of crunches – leg lifts and stretching. As you prepare your descent to work the chest, instead of performing bench presses you feel like doing incline dumbbell presses... well, do them.

Perhaps it is the day you are supposed to train your arms. They feel sore and you don’t feel like a full bi and tri workout. Fine, instead... work another muscle group that, in a more discrete and less direct manner, hits the bi’s and tri’s. Chest and back for example. Anything you do for the chest will work the tri’s and anything done for the back will work the bi’s. Perhaps instead of a heavy workout, perform a high rep one, performing 50 to 100 reps with a light weight. In other words... do what you feel like doing not what you feel you should do.

The one word of caution I always insert in anything related to instinctive training concerns the legs. Do not allow the sheer “toughness” of leg work become an excuse to skip leg workouts. Certainly it is okay to use the instinctive approach for training legs and, if on certain occasions you feel the need to avoid doing leg work altogether, that’s fine. Just don’t let laziness be the reason you skip leg work or any other body part for that matter.

When using instinctive training, don’t workout your biceps everyday just because you feel like it and don’t perform some silly workout scheme that you know is not beneficial. That is not instinctive training by any definition. Know what body parts are going to be worked, that’s all you need to know when you enter the gym. You don’t need to have a pad and pen ready to follow and record a certain routine, let your mind and body guide you. It can be a real uplifting experience.

Once I had just come off a regimented routine I had followed for about five weeks. I was happy with it but knew it was time for a change. For the next six weeks I trained instinctively. I decided I would train Chest, Delts, Tri's on Mondays and Fridays. Back, Bi's, Calves on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Quads, Hams, Abs on Wednesdays and Saturdays. A completely different set up from what I had been doing and that's all I knew. I had no set idea of the exercises, no set scheme of sets and reps and no idea of the weight I would use. The only thing I knew was the bodypart I was going to work. It was a real joy, a break from the norm. Every time I have followed an instinctive session I've enjoyed it and made additional gains.

Although I prefer to train alone, I am more inclined to enjoy training with two other partners during sessions of instinctive training. If it's chest day, we each pick a movement and the others follow. It's also a great time to work in super-sets or tri-sets. If two people are training, each picks a movement for a super-set. If three people are training each picks a movement for a tri-set. You can have some darn good workouts and fun at the same time.

The most common super-setting is the training of the same bodypart with two different exercises, for instance bench presses followed by dumbbell flies. This type of intense training though very effective, should only be done for a couple of weeks at a time. Burnout is a definite possibility from the sheer intensity and muscle stress it produces.

The super-set method I prefer involves working opposing body parts, antagonistic muscle groups such as biceps and triceps. Training in this manner, you allow one bodypart to rest while working another. I use this method a lot when incorporating super-sets into my program as it allows me to really crank up the intensity.

As soon as you complete your first exercise, immediately go into the next one. After you complete your first super-set of performing the desired number of repetitions for both movements, rest briefly. Always have your equipment set up and ready to move

immediately into the next set of exercises. It is important you do not waste time between super-sets.

Tri-setting is followed using the exact same principle as those outlined for super-setting, the only difference is you select three different exercises instead of two. You might say it is a more advanced method of super-set training.

The wisdom of instinctive training allows a great amount of flexibility and provides time for the body/mind connection to be experienced, something all great bodybuilders have. Learning to control and work the mind during sessions of instinctive training provides extraordinary results. It is during these sessions many find the mind/body experiences the most receptive.

Those that label instinctive training with caution are right if the individual attempting to follow the method is not mature and honest enough to know what body parts need work. Again, advanced bodybuilders should be not only mature enough but also capable of honest evaluation of their physical condition. If not, they shouldn't attempt instinctive training.

Don't allow the freedom and flexibility instinctive training provides take you in the wrong direction. It can sometimes be easy to fall into some problem situations such as, not working all muscle groups as you find enjoyment working certain ones more or, over training which can easily happen. Instinctive training means you are going to have to use your mind and senses more than you might with a regimented program. Instinctive training does not give you a pass for not using your head.

Not only the individual movements but also their tempo, sequence, sets and reps should be performed instinctively. Don't be afraid to mix it up, heavy – light, fast – slow. Maybe throw in some exercises you don't like or that you don't usually use in a workout. Try a different hand position or way of performing one of your favorite movements.

Change it around and experiment. No telling what you might discover once you get away from the safety your regimented program provides.

Body Part Exercise Chart

This chart lists some of the major muscle groups and provides various movements used in training for mass, power / strength, and shape. Naturally there are many other muscle groups and many more exercises that can be used. This chart however, provides some of the best movements.

Body Part	Mass	Power / Strength	Shape
Chest	Bench Press Flat Bench Dumbbell Press Incline Bench Press Incline Dumbbell Press Chest Dips Dumbbell Pullover Barbell Pullover Power Rack Bench Press Smith Machine Bench Press Decline Press Decline Dumbbell Flyes Smith Machine Press	Bench Press Incline Bench Press Power Rack Bench Press Vertical Machine Press Power Rack Half Bench Press Power Rack ¼ Bench Press Chest Dips Smith Machine Press	Bench Press To Neck Dumbbell Press Incline Dumbbell Flyes Flat Dumbbell Flyes Chest Dips Pec Dec Flyes Cable Crossover Barbell Pullover Dumbbell Pullover Machine Bench Press Vertical Machine Press Decline Press Decline Flyes Dumbbell Crest Cross Over Smith Machine Press
Shoulders	Standing Dumbbell Press Seated Dumbbell Press Press Behind Neck Side Lateral Raises Front Barbell Press Bent Over Laterals Seated Smith Machine Press Alternate Dumbbell Press Standing Dumbbell Upright Row Barbell Upright Row Barbell Raise Incline Dumbbell Raises Lying Bent Over Laterals Low Pulley Raises	Military Press Press Behind Neck Power Rack Press	Standing Side Lateral Raises Seated Side Lateral Raises Front Lateral Raises Bent Over Lateral Raises Lying Lateral Raises Cable Lateral Raises Seated Smith Machine Press Alternate Dumbbell Press Standing Dumbbell Upright Row Barbell Upright Row Barbell Raise Incline Dumbbell Raises Lying Bent Over Laterals Low Pulley Raises

<p>Biceps</p>	<p>Cheat Barbell Curl Barbell Curl Barbell Preacher Curl Standing Alternate Dumbbell Curl Seated Alternate Dumbbell Curl Incline Dumbbell Curl Hammer Curl Seated Barbell Curl Spider Curls Lying Dumbbell Curls Kneeling Close Grip EZ Bar Curl</p>	<p>Cheat Barbell Curl Barbell Curl Seated Barbell Curl Standing Dumbbell Curl</p>	<p>Close Grip EZ Curl Barbell Curl Incline Dumbbell Curl Concentration Curl Cable Curl Dumbbell Preacher Curl Spider Curl Seated Alternate Dumbbell Curl Spider Curls Lying Dumbbell Curls Kneeling Close Grip EZ Bar Curl</p>
<p>Triceps</p>	<p>Close Grip Barbell Press Weighed Dips Standing Extensions Nose Busters Kneeling Triceps Extensions Tricep Pressdowns Single Dumbbell Tricep Extensions Decline EZ Bar Tricep Extensions Kneeling Low Pulley Extensions</p>	<p>Close Grip Barbell Press Weighed Dips</p>	<p>Standing Extensions Seated Extensions Lying Extensions Dumbbell Extensions Tricep Pressdown Kickbacks Bench Dips Kneeling Triceps Extensions Single Dumbbell Tricep Extensions Decline EZ Bar Tricep Extensions Kneeling Low Pulley Extensions</p>
<p>Forearms</p>	<p>Palm Up Wrist Curl EZ Palm Up Wrist Curl Dumbbell Wrist Curl Hands Behind Back Wrist Curl Reverse Curl Leverage Bar Wrist Curl Wrist Roller</p>	<p>Wrist Curl Reverse Curl Leverage Bar Wrist Curl Wrist Roller</p>	<p>Palm Up Wrist Curl EZ Palm Up Wrist Curl Dumbbell Wrist Curl Hands Behind Back Wrist Curl Reverse Curl Leverage Bar Wrist Curl Wrist Roller</p>
<p>Back</p>	<p>Bent Over Row "T" Bar Row Chins One Arm Dumbbell Row Lat Pulldown To Front Stiff Leg Deadlift Barbell Shrug Dumbbell Shrug Long Lat Rows Hyperextensions Lat Pulldown To Back Bent Over Dumbbell Row Standing Bent Over Low Pulley Row</p>	<p>Deadlift Power Clean Bent Over Row Chins Barbell Shrug</p>	<p>Lat Pulldown One Arm Dumbbell Row Bent Over Row "T" Bar Row Stiff Leg Deadlift Dumbbell Shrug Hyperextensions Long Lat Pull Chins Hyperextensions Lat Pulldown To Back Bent Over Dumbbell Row Standing Bent Over Low Pulley Row</p>
<p>Thigh</p>	<p>Full Squat Front Squat Hack Squat Leg Press Leg Curl Sissy Squat Lunges One Leg Squat Smith Machine Squat</p>	<p>Full Squat Half Squat Quarter Squat Leg Press</p>	<p>Full Squat Front Squat Hack Squat Sissy Squat Leg Curl Leg Extensions Lunges One Leg Squat Smith Machine Squat</p>

Calf	Standing Calf Raises Donkey Raises Toe Press On Leg Press Seated Calf Raises One Leg Calf Raises w/Dumbbell	Standing Calf Raises	Standing Calf Raises Donkey Raises Seated Calf Raises One Leg Calf Raises w/Dumbbell Toe Press On Leg Press Front Toe Raises
Abs	Contrary to what most people think, improper training of the abs can actually make them larger thus increasing the size of the waist. Diet is the key element in achieving ab definition.	Bent Leg Sit Up Bent Leg Lifts Crunches	Crunches Hanging Leg Raises Bent Leg Raises Kneeling Cable Crunches
Neck	Wrestlers Bridge Head Strap Neck Raises Barbell Shrugs Dumbbell Shrugs	Wrestlers Bridge Head Strap Neck Raises Barbell Shrugs Dumbbell Shrugs	Wrestlers Bridge Head Strap Neck Raises Barbell Shrugs Dumbbell Shrugs

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