

**7**

**ADVANCED  
STRATEGIES  
FOR PACKING ON**



**SERIOUS  
MUSCLE**

**JOEL MARION  
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## ADVANCED STRATEGIES FOR PACKING ON **SERIOUS MUSCLE**

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## #1 - DON'T Change Your Exercises

Think changing your exercises every 4 weeks is the key to variation and continued progress? Consider this:

Your body adapts to the stress placed upon it, not to the means which provide that stress. When you train biceps, your body doesn't know if you are doing barbell curls or preacher curls—nor does it care to know. Simply changing exercise selection isn't going to do anything to promote further progress. It does nothing to change the stimulus to a given muscle, and actually derails your long-term strength gains by taking away from the principle of specificity.

You want a stronger bench press? Try actually performing it for more than four weeks at a time! This is a major problem; rarely does the average trainee conduct an exercise long enough to actually get good at it.

So, if you're looking to avoid adaptation and spark continued growth, forget about changing your exercises and instead go with something that actual works: switch the set/rep scheme. By making adjustments to your set/rep scheme, you'll **automatically** manipulate what matters most—the stress related variables. These are variables that actually have an impact on the adaptation process because they are directly related to the stress that is placed on the working muscles. Stress related variables include:

1. Load
2. Time Under Tension
3. Rest Periods
4. Density (work per unit time)

As an example, if changing from a higher-rep, lower set scheme (5x10) to a lower-rep, higher set scheme (10x3), the load increases (heavier weight is used with lower-rep programs), the time under tension per set

decreases (due to lower-reps), the rest periods between sets increase (longer recovery is needed between sets), and the density per workout decreases (workouts are longer due to greater rest periods and more sets).

This simple switch completely changes how your muscles are stimulated, exactly what you want to avoid adaptation—new stress! And when you're not habitually changing exercises, you can expect strength to skyrocket along with your size gains.

## #2 – Diversify Your Repertoire

You've probably often heard or read that sets of 8–12 repetitions are the be all and end all of hypertrophy training. In fact, the 8–12 repetition range has even been coined as the “hypertrophy range” with the terms having been used more or less synonymously during bodybuilding discussion for years.

Unfortunately, you've only been told a very small part of the story.

Now, before you tune me out completely for raining down on what is hailed as one of the most fundamental bodybuilding truths, let me just say that yes, working in the 8–12 range will undoubtedly promote gains in muscle mass—there's no refuting that (and I'm not attempting to do so). But the fact of the matter is this: hypertrophy can and does occur over a very broad spectrum of repetition ranges (provided you set things up correctly, which we will discuss shortly), and if you are looking to achieve the **greatest possible gains** in both size and strength, you absolutely **must** be attacking your muscles with a highly varied arsenal of repetition ranges.

The major reason is this: varying repetition ranges offer varying hypertrophic and physiological benefits and adaptations. By training in

only one range, be it 8–12 or any other range, you miss out on the plethora of unique benefits that other repetition ranges offer.

For example, the 8–12 range does a superb job of “filling you out” through the hypertrophy and proliferation of things like cellular sarcoplasm, mitochondria and capillaries. This is termed “sarcoplasmic hypertrophy” and while it does indeed translate to an increase in muscle size, it leaves another area of hypertrophy somewhat overlooked.

Enter low rep training.

Lower repetition training (sets consisting of 5 or fewer repetitions), sparks a different kind of hypertrophy known as myofibrillar hypertrophy. The myofibrils, also known as the contractile filaments of muscle tissue, greatly contribute to overall force production during muscular contractions. When myofibrillar size increases, not only will you experience the obvious increase in muscle mass, but you’ll also experience substantial increases in strength as a result of the role of the myofibrils in the contraction process.

Going back to setting things up correctly, the major problem most individuals make when switching to low repetitions is a failure to maintain a high volume output. For example, when you perform 5 sets of 10 repetitions, your total volume is 50 repetitions. If you were to keep the number of sets the same while switching to sets of 5 repetitions (5 sets of 5), you’re now only performing 25 total reps. In other words, you just cut your total volume in half.

This again is the major reason why individuals fail to see substantial size gains from lower rep training—they’re simply not doing enough sets. To avoid this, simply reverse the sets and reps from the first example (i.e. instead of 5 sets of 10, now do 10 sets of 5). You still maintain the same total volume (the most important variable in the hypertrophy equation) while adding the benefit of training with heavier loads. The result is even greater gains in size and strength.

## #3 - Specialize for Concentrated Growth

Whether you have several lagging body parts or just want to pack on major mass to a particular area, specialization programs allow you to put heavy concentration on one or more muscle groups to promote extraordinary gains in a short period of time.

To effectively specialize, pick **one** large or **two** small muscle groups that you'd like to experience exceptional growth.

Just to clarify, I've included a table below breaking various body parts into categories of large and small:

Large Muscle Groups	Small Muscle Groups
Chest	Biceps
Back	Triceps
Quads	Shoulders
Hams	Traps
Glutes	Calves

Once you've selected the body parts you'd like to specialize, increase the total volume and/or frequency for these muscle groups dramatically while decreasing volume and/or frequency for all other muscle groups to compensate.

You can do this a couple ways. One option is to add more sets to the muscle groups in question while decreasing sets for all other muscle groups. Another option is to set up separate sessions for the specialized group.

Personally, I recommend the latter approach as separate sessions will allow you to solely concentrate on the specialized group with specific trips to the gym. With the former methodology, although more sets are

completed, total effort is watered down by fatigue from work done for non-specialized muscle groups in the same workout.

Some general guidelines for specialized and non-specialized muscle groups include:

1. Train specialized groups with 2-3 intensified, highly-concentrated sessions weekly. Use a variety of repetition ranges to stimulate the broadest spectrum of adaptations (strength, myofibrillar hypertrophy, sarcoplasmic hypertrophy, fast-twitch fibers, slow-twitch fibers, etc).
2. Train non-specialized groups with a basic strength, moderate-volume approach. Only one session weekly is needed for “maintenance” of non-specialized muscle groups.

## #4 - Up Your Frequency

If you are only working each muscle group once or even twice per week, you are absolutely, positively achieving less than optimal results. When it comes to the ultimate hypertrophy, strength, and size gains, high frequency training rules. In fact, the program that I've had the most success with (with both myself and my clients) requires that you work each muscle group 5 times each week!—with each workout still being less than 45 minutes each.

Principles of High Frequency Training.

1. Workouts must be short. Daily long and exhausting sessions are a sure way to annihilate your central nervous system and perpetuate overtraining. Keep your workouts short (less than 45 minutes) for optimal results.



2. Utilize BIG Movements. Big movements, such as the squat, deadlift, bench press, pull-ups, etc, that work a large degree of muscle at one time allow you to achieve mega stimulation while still keeping workouts short.

3. Go with full-body or half-body workouts. With full body workouts, you can hit each muscle group up to 5 times a week. If going with a half-body, upper/lower split, you can still stimulate muscles up to three times weekly while training with even greater intensity than with a full body set-up. Both approaches have unique benefits and both should be used as part of your training arsenal.

Now, if you're worried that muscles won't have enough time to recover when going with a high frequency approach, you're worrying about a non-issue. So long as you are keeping workouts short (to prevent central nervous system overtraining and burn out), and are getting your workout nutrition, higher frequency workouts will help you grow bigger and stronger—*faster*.

The more often you can stimulate muscles with a fresh CNS, the more you will grow. Period. Remember that.

## #5 – Use Your Antagonists

Anytime you do an exercise, two muscle groups contract simultaneously – the *agonists*, or the working muscle groups, and the *antagonists*, or the opposing muscle groups. Exercise physiology geeks call this phenomenon antagonistic co-contraction.

In plain English: Do a biceps movement and the triceps also contract, a chest movement and your lats also contract, a hamstring movement and your quads contract. You get it.

The problem is that contraction of the antagonists limits force production of the working muscles, making you weaker. Essentially, it's like running against the wind, driving with the emergency break on, or having someone pull one way as you pull another.

And this happens *every time* you perform *any* exercise.

To circumvent this phenomenon, you can use a technique called antagonistic supersets. Do a biceps exercise and then *while the biceps are still fatigued* perform an exercise for the triceps. It doesn't have to be immediately after the biceps set (give yourself a bit of time), but it should definitely be before the biceps have had time to fully recover.

Because the biceps are fatigued, they won't be able to fully contract, allowing you to move more weight, produce more microtrauma, grow larger and stronger. "The breaks are off", so to speak.

In addition to the strength and hypertrophy benefits, using this technique will also automatically shorten your workouts as it calls for you to work one muscle group while another recovers. If you are performing 20 sets per workout and are able to shave one minute off your rest time for each set by use of antagonistic supersets, you just saved yourself 20 minutes.

Achieve more in less time; put antagonistic supersets to work for you.

## #6 - Go "Carb-Crazy" on Workout Days

What I'm about to share with you is going to prove to be one of the greatest mass gaining tips you have ever received if your goal is to achieve *maximal* gains in size while keeping fat gain to an absolute minimum.

The procedure is rather simple: on training days, you will eat *all* of your carbohydrates (with the exception of greens)—and *a lot* of them—within 2 ½ hours of conducting your first work set (that’s 2 and ½ hours from the *start* of your workout, not 2 and ½ hours post-workout).

The best carbohydrates to consume are those high on the Glycemic and Insulin indices, with the majority of those being in liquid form. I first tested this approach myself and to say the results were pretty awesome would be an understatement. I then used this exact approach to help one of my clients gain 27 lbs of muscle in just 12 weeks. And now I’m using it in various forms across the board with my muscle-building clients, all of whom are **loving** it.

To give you an idea of just what this looks like, here’s an example training day from my food log:

**8:00 am:** Low-carb protein shake with added fiber; 2 tablespoons of olive oil

**10:30 am:** 4 XL eggs plus 4 whites scrambled with 2 slices of cheese; 8 strips of bacon; 1 package of frozen spinach

**1:00 pm:** Low-carb protein bar; 2 oz of dry roasted nuts

**3:00 pm:** 2 McDonald's double cheeseburgers minus the bun; large salad with very low-calorie dressing

**4:45 pm:** Protein bar (35g carbs)

**5:00 pm (immediately pre-workout) :** Quickly digested protein/carb beverage with added maltodextrin (90g carbs)

**During workout:** Maltodextrin sports drink (100g carbs)

**6:15 pm (immediately post-workout)** : quickly digested protein/carb beverage with added Maltodextrin (90g carbs)

**6:45 pm:** Mass MRP (such as N-Large 2; 85g carbs)

**7:15 pm:** 4 oz of pasta (dry weight); 8 oz of chicken breast; 3 slices of 12-grain bread; package of frozen broccoli (135g carbs)

**10:00 pm:** Low-carb protein shake with added fiber; 1 tablespoon of olive oil; 2 cups of green beans; 20 grams of fish oil

**NOTE:** Do not directly copy my diet as it likely calls for far too many calories for your size and build. Instead, copy the structure and the overlying principles based on your own calorie needs. Also, it is fundamentally important to consume just as many green veggies throughout the day in non-workout meals, as is apparent in my example above.

As you can see, we're not talking a targeted ketogenic diet amount of carbs here. We're talking *a lot* of carbs (40% of total calories) in a very short period of time.

With this approach, you spike insulin with a tremendous amount of carbs during the most anabolic part of the day while keeping insulin low at other times. The result is lean mass gain with minimal adipose storage.

In order to get the full anabolic benefit, however, you must consume all carbohydrates within 2 ½ hours following the *onset* of your training session (this is how this recommendation differs from virtually everything else that is out there).

One very important point—this only works with very high volume, high intensity workouts. If you are performing something relatively low-volume, or if you're someone who habitually half-asses your workouts, this will make you one thing: fat. To use a tactic like this, you have to “earn” it by first busting your butt in the gym.

That said, if you choose to give the approach a try for the next couple weeks, I guarantee this one simple piece of advice will be responsible for greater pumps and more muscle gain than any supplement you've ever taken (just be sure you going high volume with limited to moderate rest; nothing longer than a minute).

## #7 – Embrace the Power of Strategic *Under-eating*

While the initial thought of eating large quantities of food each day may seem very appealing, take it from me, doing so gets old fairly fast. Several weeks into any high-calorie muscle-building diet, it's not unlikely that you'll find yourself struggling to continue to eat the appropriate amount of calories to support your efforts in the gym, and in fact, it's not at all uncommon for trainees to simply lose their appetite.

Regardless of your goals, you shouldn't have to force-feed yourself or be uncomfortable day in and day out to achieve them.

And, moreover, doing so is counterproductive.

Research has shown that after only several weeks of high-calorie eating and intense weight training, anabolic hormone output reaches its peak and actually begins to decline thereafter. Empirical evidence also seems to validate this data with trainees experiencing slowed gains and a drop in workout intensity several weeks into a muscle-gain phase.

If you continue to “push through” at this point, you'll simply be achieving less despite your efforts. Become frustrated and work harder, even less. Diminishing returns, my friend—it's your body's way of regulating changes in body composition in an attempt to maintain homeostasis, and

it happens just about every time you put on a few pounds of muscle mass.

But the good news is, you can seriously lessen this phenomenon when you learn how to implement strategic *under*-eating as part of your mass gaining program. By periodically consuming less calories you can actually achieve more by a) making your body more responsive to surplus levels of calories, and b) keeping fat gain to an absolute minimum as you attempt to put on muscle mass.

Here are some general guidelines for strategic under-eating:

1. Consume maintenance or slightly below maintenance calorie levels.
2. Decrease training volume during periods of undereating.
3. Cycle under-eating days into your regimen 2 out of every 7 days (weekends) or one out of every 4 weeks (3 weeks surplus; 1 week under-eating).

I can guarantee that using this approach will have you achieving your body composition goals faster. It allows you to use short bursts of concentrated effort (which have been proven most effective for goal achievement in just about every area of life), while avoiding or at least decreasing the effects of regulatory feedback.

Any way you look at it, the result is more muscle and less fat—a scenario which, well, need I say more?

## About Joel Marion, CISSN, NSCA-CPT



Joel Marion has been recognized by *Men's Fitness* magazine as one of America's top 50 personal trainers, and even more, America's #1 "Virtual" Trainer.

When it comes to getting results with clients, regardless of location, Joel delivers, time and time again.

As a nationally published author and fitness personality, Joel has appeared on such television networks as NBC, ABC, and CBS, is a frequent guest on SIRIUS satellite radio, and has been featured in the pages of more than 20 popular national newsstand magazines including *Men's Fitness*, *Woman's Day*, *Maximum Fitness*, *Oxygen*, *Clean Eating*, *MuscleMag International*, and *Muscle & Fitness Hers*.

His other accomplishments include winning the world's largest Body Transformation contest for "regular" people, the Body-for-Life Transformation Challenge, as well as graduating Magna Cum Laude from a top-20 Exercise Science program and being certified as both a sports nutritionist and personal trainer through the nation's premier certification agencies.

Learn how you can work one-on-one with Joel for less than the cost of a local personal trainer by visiting the Premium Web-based Coaching page [here](#).

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