

## **6 Tips for Continued Progress**

by  
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Once you have established consistency in your workout routine it is time to figure out ways to make continuous progress. One of the biggest mistakes that I see average gym goers make is that they perform the same workouts over and over. You have to remember that our bodies are very smart and that they adapt to the demands that we place on them. Therefore, if we want to continually improve then we must always try to place our bodies under more demanding circumstances. The goal of this article is to provide you with some simple solutions to continually force your body to adapt. There are several methods that we use to make your workouts incrementally more demanding.

### **1) Increase the load**

The first method that most people think of when making their lifting more demanding is using more weight. Obviously one of the goals of strength training is to gradually use more weight over time. This is one of the simplest ways to force your body to adapt. Just a slight increase of 1-5 lbs is enough to stimulate your body to change. These little gains will eventually add up over time.

### **2) Increase the volume**

Another way to increase the demands of your workout is to increase the volume. Volume is simply the amount of work that you are doing. In order to increase the volume of a workout you could do either more reps per set at a given weight or you could do more sets with a given weight. This is a great way to make progress when you have begun to use heavier loads that are very challenging. It is not always the amount of weight that you lift that must increase. If you can do more work with the same weight then you have also increased the demands placed on the body.

### **3 ) Decrease the rest**

Another great way to increase the demands of the workout is to decrease the rest periods between sets. By decreasing the rest periods you are going to be performing more work in less time. The rest period is probably the one variable that can change the intensity of the workout more than anything. If you don't believe me then try performing all of your next workout without any rest and you will see what I mean. The amount of rest that you take is also the variable that determines the hormonal response to the workout.

### **4) Increase the work capacity**

Increasing work capacity is what Crossfit is all about. Work capacity is simply the amount of work that you can perform in a given amount of time. This is also referred to as workout density. The basic premise is to pack as much work as possible into a given amount of time. This method uses the above three methods to increase work capacity. For instance, if you can do 20 pullups in 5 minutes, then there are several ways to increase the work capacity. You could perform 20 pullups in five minutes with 5 lbs of additional weight on you, another option would be to perform 21 pullups

in five minutes, or you could perform 20 pullups in 4 minutes. Any of these methods would increase your work capacity. The formula that I offer is: what if you could perform 21 pullups with 5 lbs additional weight in 4 min? Then you would increase all three areas.

#### **5) Increase the time under tension**

The time under tension is also another variable that most people do not think about. The time under tension is the amount of time that is spent lifting the weight. For example, if it takes you 20 seconds to perform 10 repetitions of an exercise, you could increase the demands of the exercise by having the set last for 30 seconds instead of the 20. This could be done by slowing down the eccentric (negative portion of the lift), or by putting a pause in a disadvantageous position of the lift. An example of this would be pausing at the bottom of a lunge or squat. These are ways to increase the time under tension. Manipulating the time under tension is a great way to continue making progress as you become a more advanced lifter.

#### **6) You can change the exercise**

Another variable that many people do not consider is changing the actual exercise or the variation of the exercise. The example that I will use here is the pushup. How can we progress the pushup? If you have trouble doing pushups you can start in a standing position and do wall pushups, which most everyone is able to perform. Once you have mastered the wall pushup with all of the progression techniques listed earlier, then you can perform pushups on your knees. The knee pushups will be harder and they will force your body to adapt. Once you have gone through all of the progression techniques for knee pushups then you can progress to pushups on your toes. Once you have mastered pushups on your toes then you can begin to elevate your feet by placing them on a box or bench. Once you have mastered elevated pushups then you can move onto bar dips which are a harder exercise for the same muscles. Once you have mastered bar dips then you can move onto ring dips. Ring dips are much more demanding than bar dips. By simply moving to harder exercise variations you are going to be constantly changing the demands placed on your body.

Progressions are the key to long term success in the gym. This is what Kaizen is all about. If you are not familiar with Kaizen then check out the old articles on the main page. Your goal should be to always make some kind of progress in every workout. If you gain 1% in every workout then your gains will add up quickly. Just remember that in order to continually make progress, consistency is King. Proper rest is also an important factor. If you cannot achieve a new best then it may be time to take a day off.