

PRIME-X MUSCLE GUIDE

Do you want to learn the basics of muscle growth? This is a primer on how to build muscle the right way. See my posts and videos for more details but consider this a Cliff Notes guide to getting started.

1: Goals and expectations

As with anything worth doing well, the first steps are to set your goals. Then we will discuss setting appropriate expectations.

Determine your goals for muscle growth, fat loss, weight gain/loss, heart rate, and any other fitness goals and write them down! Review them every day.

Determine what days you will be working out, what type of work out you will be doing each day etc. and not only write it down but add to your calendar just like everything else.

Get a training book and write down everything for each day of the week. I know, that sounds like work, but guess what? It is!! It takes hard work, discipline, consistency, and accountability to reach ANY goal you have. Write down what you eat, how you feel, how you slept, your mood, major events that happened that day etc. This way you can look back at all this and compare to your workout days and make adjustments.

Keep a log of everything that you're doing during your workouts- the weights you used, progressions you make, frequencies of workouts, how you felt during and after each workout and so on. If you track it you can change and improve it!

Expectations

Set expectations that are realistic yet challenging. If you are in your 20s and just starting out with training you can easily gain 10 to 20 pounds of muscle in a year. However, experienced trainees, older individuals, or if you have any health issues, you may only gain a few pounds or at most 10 pounds in the first year of training.

For the beginner you should be able to progress most training loads on a week to week basis and gain 1 to 1.5% of your bodyweight each month. Intermediate lifters may make progressive increases in volume and loads on a month-to-month basis and can expect to gain 0.5 to 1% increase in body weight on a monthly basis. Advanced trainees will see more gradual progress over months or even years and can reasonably expect to gain only up to about 0.5% of their body weight on monthly basis. These are averages of course but realistic.

2. Pyramid of Importance

In descending order of importance is: adherence, volume, intensity and frequency, progression, exercise selection, rest periods and tempo. The Muscle and Strength Training Pyramid by Mike Nelson and his crew provides a very detailed explanation of this.

3. Adherence/Consistency

Similar to step one, make sure your goals are realistic, flexible and enjoyable. If you don't like weight training then don't force yourself to go to the gym. Instead, do body weight training, yoga, interval training swimming, or some other modality.

If you have a busy schedule and a family to take care of, don't expect to hit the gym six days a week like younger gym rats can do! Going two to three times a week is probably best for you. Make sure your training fits with your lifestyle, likes dislikes etc. Just like a diet, if it's not something you're going to follow long term it's just not going to work.

4. Volume

In general, 10-20 sets per muscle group per week are sufficient for most. If you're training for hypertrophy, 1/2 to 3/4 of your volume should be in the 6 to 12 rep range with the rest of the volume in the 1-6 and 12-20 rep range.

5. Intensity and frequency

It is definitely advisable to perform a de-load week or recovery week at least every 4 to 6 weeks. This is important for recovery, muscle growth and continued progression.

You can use a RPE (rate of perceived exertion) scale as well as "reps in reserve" as a guide to intensity. Some people, especially those in the powerlifting and strength world use one rep maxes or three rep max and this is certainly fine as well.

For reps in reserve, you want to lift to the point where you have 1 to 3 reps left on each set to ensure you're getting maximum intensity. In other words you lift the weight 5 times but feel you could do another 1-3 reps before failure. This will allow maximum intensity without going to failure.

There is no need to go to failure all the time. Doing so every now and then is ok, especially if it's your last week of a training cycle before you de-load or take a week off. Otherwise it's not necessary and may be detrimental to your growth and recovery.

6. Load

Most resources recommend lifting heavy or in the "hypertrophy range." True lifting heavier loads is fantastic for hypertrophy but it's also true you can build muscle with lighter weights and higher reps (think 30% of 1 rep max or more for 20 reps or more). This is often easier on your joints and is best for some people for this reason. Either way it is advisable to do this type of lifting periodically to mix it up. For maximal muscle gain, strength, connective tissue growth and neuromuscular improvement it's best to add some heavy training as well; unless of course you simply can't do it because of an injury or other joint related issues.

So feel free to rotate rep ranges every few weeks or even every workout. As long as you are lifting with focus and intensity all rep ranges will work. One day do lighter weights for reps of 12-15 or 15-20 and another day do heavier weights for 9-10 reps. Yet another day do lower reps of 4-6. Mix it up, have fun and grow!

7. Frequency

In terms of training frequency two to three times a week is best. One option is doing an upper/lower split where you do upper body on Monday, lower body on Tuesday, then rest Wednesday/Saturday/Sunday. You could also do a full body routine Monday, Wednesday and Friday and take the weekend off. Simple and effective.

8. Progression

Progressive overload is crucial for hypertrophy. If you're doing the same exercises for the same reps over and over again you're simply not going to progress. The key to progressive overload is to increase reps, weight used, number of weekly workouts, decreasing rest periods, or any combination of these. Muscles need consistent stimuli to grow.

You can increase the weight each week or every workout or every other work out depending on your overall condition.

So for example:

Day 1: 8 reps with 90 pounds.

Day 2: 8 reps with 95 pounds

Day 3: 8 reps with 97 pounds.

Or you can also increase repetitions with the same weight from work out to work out. Your rep range is 8-12, so:

Day 1: 8 reps with 90 pounds

Day 2: 9 reps with 90 pounds

Day 3: 10 reps with 90 pounds etc.

Once you hit 12 reps go back to 8 reps, increase the weight and start over.

Another option is simply to increase volume. So:

Week 1: 8 sets of each muscle group each week

Week 2: 10 sets of each muscle group each week

Week 3: 12 sets of each muscle group each week

However, increasing volume all the time is not always the answer. Only do this when everything else is in your life is dialed in and you are stalled on progression. If you are sleeping well, diet is on point, stress is minimized, then go ahead and increase volume. Otherwise tweak other variables as previously discussed (rep ranges, frequency, rest periods and so on).

Lastly, don't expect or try to progress every single workout or even every week. Our bodies are not machines. Focus on maximizing your workout as best as you can; if you have an off day or week just do what you can and move on. If you just don't feel it, if you are fatigued or didn't sleep well the night before, take a rest day or modify your planned routine and get on with your day.

9. Exercise Selection

In terms of exercise selection this is highly variable. Compound movements are the most effective way to stimulate multiple muscle groups at once. Focus on lifts such as squats, deadlifts, pull-ups/chin-ups, rows, decline presses, dips, and military presses.

Sprinkle in some isolation work (biceps, triceps, calves) and you are good to go. If you have a particular issue to prevent you from doing say, squats or deadlifts, then modify the movement or swap out another lift. There are many other options available.

10. Diet

This is crucial for muscle growth and a topic in and of itself. See my other articles on this subject. Suffice it to say if you are not eating enough or the right kinds of food, you will not grow!

You have to eat slightly above maintenance to add weight/muscle. However, this is a much lower number than you think; you can't just eat and eat on a "bulking" diet and gain only muscle. You will add fat too. However, by only adding *100-200 calories a day* above your maintenance needs, you can add muscle and minimize fat gain.

Eating the right foods and nutrients at the right times is also vastly important. See my other articles on this subject; the summary is to focus on a whole food based diet, eat most of your carbs post-workout, stay hydrated and supplement wisely.

11. Sleep and Stress

Yes, this is another topic for another day but the bottom line is that you need to recover and sleep well in order to grow! Shoot for 7-8 hours a night.

Make sure you are taking rest days each week and do walking, stretching, sauna use, cold showers, getting a massage, and any other technique that will facilitate recovery and allow you to maximize your time in the gym!

Taking time to relax, meditate, and clear your mind on a daily basis is key to stress reduction. Have a nightly routine to unwind and prep for sleep. Take an Epsom salt bath or hot shower, read, meditate,

pray; whatever you need to do to chill out. Magnesium, theanine, chamomile tea, and GABA are all useful as relaxation aids. [Try my Meta-3 PM Formula for sleep optimization and adrenal support as well.](#)

12. Check your hormones and other critical labs

This should be done now and 1-2 times a year. Get a baseline now and see how your results change with your training, lifestyle, diet and more. Achieving maximal muscle growth and body composition is highly dependent on optimal hormone levels and low to zero inflammation.

Reach out to me for more details and for any questions! Go to www.drericprimex.com to sign up for a consultation!

LIVE GREAT,

DR. ERIC

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