

ADVANCED AESTHETICS

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE FOR BUILDING A RIPPED AND MUSCULAR PHYSIQUE



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Yo... what's up my fellow Physique Artist? My name is Scott Tousignant. I'm a graduate of the University of Windsor Human Kinetics program with honours in Movement Science '99.

I'm a Physique Coach with 17 years experience helping regular men and women build ROCK solid aesthetic muscle with chiseled details.

I'm also an Elite Natural Bodybuilder with the UFE, and creator of the [Aesthetic Muscle Plan](#).

I view training as an art form and your body as a work of art.

I believe that the art of molding and chiseling an aesthetically pleasing physique with spectacular symmetry, proportions, and carved out detail is one of life's most rewarding and fulfilling experiences...

...It's an opportunity for self growth and self discovery that will impact every area of your life.

Most important... I'm 100% committed to your success.



Let's Connect On Social Media

[Metabolic Masterpiece blog](#)

[Facebook Closed Group: Physique Artist Nation](#)

[YouTube Channel](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Scott's Story](#)

WELCOME

Welcome to Advanced Aesthetics! Grab a protein shake, pull up a bench, and prepare to get your anabolic juices flowing.

Seriously, I'm stoked to share this journey with you. Getting ripped and building a rock solid physique is freak'n awesome, but it's a million times more rewarding when you share it with fellow physique artists who *'get it'*. The men and women who understand your drive and passion to look your best while feeling on top of the world.

That's why I created the [Physique Artist Nation](#). A closed Facebook group where you can surround yourself with like-minded physique artists who love the feel of cold steel in their hands, the sound of clanking iron, and the smell of sweat in the air. Your peers who embrace the challenge of getting ripped and the process of slabbing on aesthetic muscle.

It doesn't matter what stage you are at in your journey toward getting ripped and muscular. Whether you feel like you're stuck in a rut, your progress has stalled, or you're already kick'n ass and want to crank things up a notch. We're here for you. We're all in this together.

This lifestyle is about becoming the best version of yourself. Enhancing all areas of your life along with the lives of those around you.

Now after devouring this guide, take a moment to introduce yourself to the [Physique Artist Nation](#). Share your goals, your struggles, your victories. Let us know what you love most about this lifestyle and how it's impacted you.

We're looking forward to hearing from you and sharing this journey together.

THE AESTHETIC PHYSIQUE

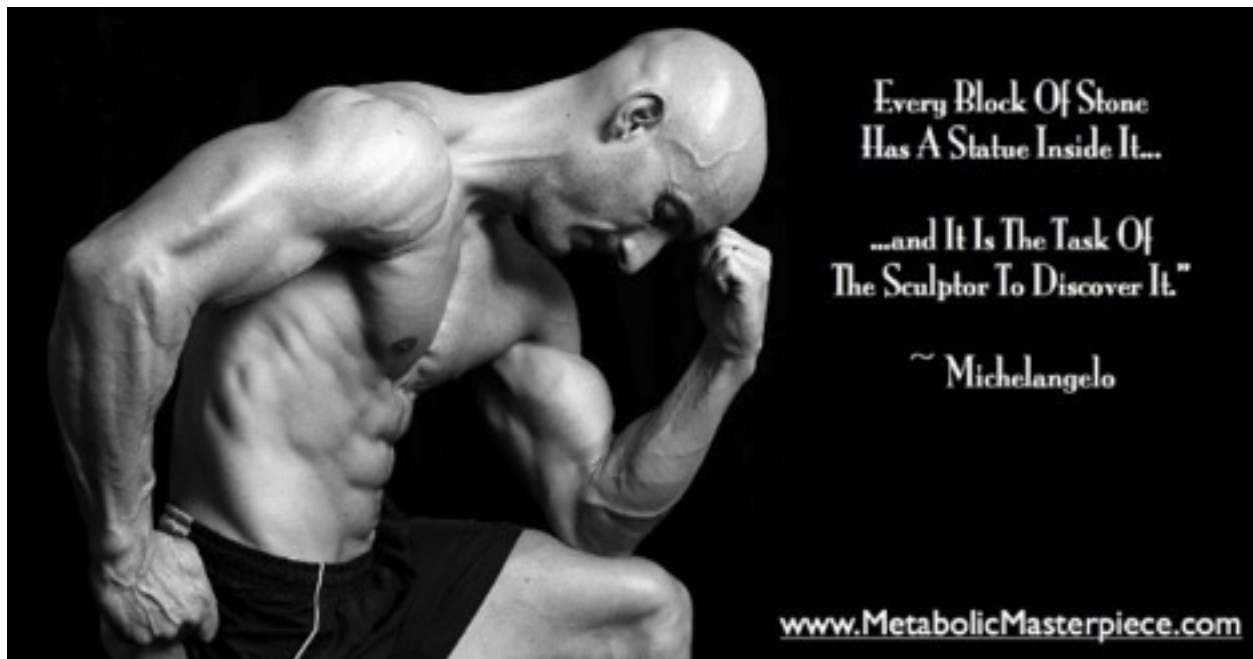
Aesthetics is defined as;

“The philosophical theory or set of principles underlying and guiding the work of a particular artist or artistic movement.”

This resonates deeply with me, as I view training as an art form, the body as a work of art, and our community as Physique Artists.

As Physique Artists, we share a similar mindset as a sculptor. Our masterpiece consists of a form that is symmetrical, proportionate, balanced, and detailed. It's eye catching and awe inspiring.

While a sculptor carves his masterpiece out of stone using a hammer and chisel, you and I carve out our masterpiece using dumbbells and diet.



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to provide you with a clear picture of what it takes to carve out a ripped and muscular physique while living your life to the fullest.

No fluff or filler to distract you.

No 'secrets' or 'weird tricks' to confuse or overwhelm you.

We're simply going to get straight to the point and lay out all of the key elements to help you sculpt an impressive physique.

After reading Advanced Aesthetics, you'll understand;

- 1) **How to structure your nutrition for optimized fat loss during a cutting phase or muscle gains during a building phase.**
- 2) **How to design your training for maximum aesthetic results.**

With the direction and guidance you take from Advanced Aesthetics, you will have everything you need to create your own personal plan.

However, if time is an issue and you're too busy to create your own personal plan based on the strategies outlined in this book, I have some options that will make things more convenient for you.

Option 1: FREE 4 Week [Upper & Lower Body Split Routine](#)

You'll get to experience some of the advanced training tactics shared in this book and see how I manage training volume with an increase in training frequency.

Option 2: [Aesthetic Muscle Plan](#)

A 16 week body sculpting blueprint. You get to experience how 4 unique training plans work synergistically together to help you build a ripped and muscular physique.

Includes 4 different training phases, utilizing 4 unique training frequencies, and designed with a large variety of advanced training tactics.

Option 3: [Physique Mastery Movement](#)

A group coaching experience with professional guidance from myself and fellow Physique Coach Bryan Krahn to help you build your ripped and muscular physique faster.

Includes a unique workout plan of the month that you get to follow along with your fellow physique artists (including myself) at the same time. Supporting and encouraging each other along the way.

Also includes weekly Q&A's and other bonus material.

Option 4: [1-on-1 physique coaching](#)

If 100% personalized programming and attention is what you desire, then 1-on1 coaching is the way to go.

No question, this is the most direct and fastest way to achieve your goal because it's catered to you're goals, needs, and lifestyle. It's adaptable based on how your body is responding to the programming.

Now onto the 'meat' of Advanced Aesthetics...

LIFESTYLE

We'll begin this guide with the most important factor in a successful body transformation. Your lifestyle.

If you're running around like a chicken with it's head cut off, juggling a million knives at once, and you're sleeping like crap, you need to get your shit together before you ever thinking of taking your physique to the next level.

Trying to get ripped while you're life is crazy and your sleep sucks will just feel like you are adding one more stress to your life.

Stress

We all experience some stress in our lives. That's normal. Our body does a great job of helping us handle stressful situations. Acute stress can actually be a good thing. Working out is a stress. Your body is being broken down after all. Yet it comes back stronger and more muscular. It's really impressive when you think about it.

It's when stress becomes chronic that we have a problem. Chronic stress can increase your appetite and cravings, especially for your favourite comfort foods. It can also zap your motivation and desire to move.

Now when your life gets "Flipped, turned upside down", (said in a Will Smith voice from the theme song of the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air), you need to take a step back, evaluate the situation, and create a solution.

Now some of this may sound like new-age hippie shit, but it's pure gold if you are serious about transforming your physique while living life to the fullest. This is physique mastery!

Tips to manage chronic stress;

- Take some time to organize yourself to become more productive with your time. To-do lists are great, but they can overwhelm you if you have a million things to do. Prioritize your list and focus on tackling the big 3.
- Eliminate distractions, by limiting your time on social media and turn off your social media alerts on your cell phone.
- Reduce the amount time you spend watching television.
- Go for a daily brisk walk without your phone. Forget about the chaos of your life for just 30 minutes. Become present in the moment and soak up your surroundings. Listen to the sounds. Smell the fragrances in the air. Spot the little creatures around you.

Ya... all that hippie shit. It will work wonders for you. Next to the time I spend in the gym, going for my daily 30-40 minute brisk walk with my dog is my favourite part of the day.

The same can be said for your workouts. Leave your shit at the gym door. When you're working out, focus inward. Feel every stretch and contraction. Feel the blood pumping through your veins. This is your time. Take advantage of it.

- Start a gratitude journal. When life is crazy and sometimes feels hopeless, starting your day writing about some of the things you are grateful for in your life will totally reframe your attitude for the day and has been shown to reduce stress.
- Reduce alcohol consumption.
- Take Vitamin C.

Sleep

Lack of sleep is a stressor on your body. It can also increase your appetite and decrease your performance. That's a double whammy. Increased caloric intake from the increased appetite and decrease in caloric burn from the poorer performance and reduced activity.

Not to mention a slew of other negative consequences associated with poor sleep habits, such as reduced focus and productivity.

Quantity and quality of sleep should be a top priority when you are building a ripped and muscular physique. Here are a few tips to help improve upon both;

- Set and keep a regular sleep schedule.
- Turn off all electronics (television, phones, computer). There's nothing worse than trying to sleep after getting into a heated discussion on social media. Avoid that kind of stuff well before bed time.
- Write out your to-do list for the next day and prioritize it.
- Do a brain dump. Write down everything that's on your mind. Get it all out there before you get to bed. Often times you can't sleep because you have a million things on your mind. Doing a brain dump will alleviate this.
- Watch the sunset and chill.
- Avoid caffeine in the afternoon. Reduced caffeine intake in general or even go so far as eliminating it.
- Avoid alcohol.

- Take a warm bath an hour before bed. Even go so far as turning off the lights and lighting some candles. (ya... hippie shit).
- Keep the temperature of your home cooler at night.
- Make sure your room is dark.

As you can see, stress and sleep go hand in hand. Reducing stress can help you sleep and sleep can help reduce stress. Both are key contributors to a successful body transformation.

As you can also see, there are many simple things you can do to reduce your stress and improve your sleep.

The best part is that these things make life more enjoyable. They help you live your life to the fullest.

GET LEAN! STAY LEAN!

This is the #1 rule of aesthetics for two very important reasons;

1) Visual Impact

If your abs are covered in a layer of fat and you are looking soft, you lose the aesthetic quality of your physique and have no business trying to gain weight. Your complete focus should be dedicated toward getting lean.

When you get lean you will increase your aesthetic appeal in addition to creating the illusion of having a much bigger physique.

To give you an example when I was 40-50 pounds fatter most people were pretty good at guessing my weight. Yet, ever since getting ripped most people guess that I am 20-30 pounds more muscular.

But there are even more important reasons for getting lean first other than vanity.

2) Optimized Hormones

When you begin a muscle building phase with a lean physique, a larger portion of your gains will be in the form of lean mass.

The predictor of the percentage of muscle vs fat you will gain during an aesthetic muscle building phase is referred to as the partitioning ratio or p-ratio.

There are multiple factors at play here, one being insulin, which delivers glucose to your cells. Your level of body fat determines which cells the glucose will be delivered to first.

When your body fat is higher, the glucose gets delivered to your fat cells first, which signals your body to store fat.

When your body fat is lower glucose gets delivered to your muscle cells first.

Therefore, when you get lean and stay lean (approximately 8-12% body fat for men or 16-22% for women) a greater percentage of your weight gained during a building phase will come in the form of lean muscle tissue when you keep your caloric surplus in check.

Getting lean and staying lean is how you will gain more bang for your buck from your effort to build a ripped and muscular physique.

OPTIMAL RATE OF PROGRESS

Fat Loss

For optimal results during a fat loss phase you should aim for a rate of weight loss of approximately 1% of body weight per week.

Note: The first week of your fat loss phase you will likely lose more than the recommended amount due to less food volume in your digestive system, reduced water weight, and reduced glycogen stored in your muscles.

Once you start dipping below 10% body fat you should slow down the rate of weight loss to approximately 0.5% of your body weight per week for maximum muscle retention.

Muscle Gain

For optimal results during a muscle building phase you should aim for a rate of weight gain of approximately 0.5% - 1% of your body weight per month to ensure lean muscle gains with minimal fat gain.

Practical Application

Use these numbers as a guide. If you are losing weight faster or slower during a cutting phase or gaining weight too quickly or not quick enough during a building phase, simply eat less or more to hit your target.

NUTRITION

Nutrition plays a major role in the process of getting lean during your fat loss phase and staying lean during your building phase. Consuming fewer calories than you burn is necessary for fat loss. Consuming slightly more calories than you burn will aid in your muscle building efforts.

It's important to know your numbers! Sure you could guess your way to a better body, but why leave things to chance when you can be more precise in your actions?

The following guidelines will increase your chances of successfully building a ripped and muscular physique

QUANTITY Matters

Step 1: Calorie Intake To Maintain Your Weight

The first step is to figure out approximately how many calories you can consume in order to maintain your weight.

We'll use the Harris-Benedict Formula as an example.

Calculation For Men

$66.5 + (13.75 \times \text{weight in kg}) + (5.003 \times \text{height in cm}) - (6.775 \times \text{age in years})$

Calculation For Women

$655.1 + (9.563 \times \text{weight in kg}) + (1.85 \times \text{height in cm}) - (4.676 \times \text{age in years})$

This will provide you with an estimation of your Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR), which is how many calories you would burn if you didn't move at all throughout the entire day.

Now you need to factor in your activity for the week in order to determine your Total Daily Energy Expenditure (TDEE).

The moderate activity factor seems to work best for most Physique Artists. If anything it will cause you to slightly undershoot your caloric target, which is better than overshooting when you are in a cutting phase.

You will calculate your TDEE by multiplying your BMR by the moderate activity factor of 1.55. ($TDEE = BMR \times 1.55$)

Step 2: Caloric Intake For Fat Loss

A 20% caloric deficit is a good place to start during your fat loss phase. From there you can make any necessary adjustments based on how your body is responding.

Simply multiply your TDEE by 20% and subtract that number from your TDEE.

$$TDEE \times .20 = 20\% \text{ deficit}$$

$$TDEE - \text{deficit} = \text{Daily Caloric Intake}$$

Step 3: Caloric Intake For Muscle Building

A 10% caloric surplus is a good place to start during your muscle building phase. From there you can make any necessary adjustments based on how your body is responding.

Simply multiply your TDEE by 10% and add that number from your TDEE.

$TDEE \times .10 = 10\% \text{ surplus}$

$TDEE + \text{surplus} = \text{Daily Caloric Intake}$

I prefer to look at my diet on a weekly basis rather than daily. Basically, take your TDEE and multiply it by 7. That's your weekly target.

Some days you may not be quite as hungry and can get away with consuming fewer calories. Other days your appetite may be a bit larger and you may end up consuming more calories. This is kind of an intuitive calorie cycling approach. As long as you achieve your caloric target for the week your golden!

NOTE: As with all caloric intake calculators, this is simply an estimation. You could use more detailed equations or the most basic formula of multiplying 12 x bodyweight for men and 11 x bodyweight for women.

Either way, this is simply your starting point. From here you will need to pay close attention to how your body is responding to the caloric intake. If you are within the target weight loss or weight gain range for the week... Great! If not, make the necessary adjustments.

MACROS Matter

After setting your caloric target it's time to give yourself some macronutrient targets to aim for.

Here's a simple starting guideline for you;

Macros While Cutting

Protein grams = $1.2 \times \text{bodyweight}$

Fat grams = $0.3 \times \text{bodyweight}$

Carb grams = remaining calories

Note: Protein and carbs have 4 calories per gram, whereas fat has 9 calories per gram.

Macros While Building

Protein grams = $1.2 \times \text{bodyweight}$

Fat grams = $0.5 \times \text{bodyweight}$

Carb grams = remaining calories

With a greater caloric intake during a muscle building phase, you now have more room to consume healthy fats, such as nuts and avocados. Your carbohydrate consumption will go up a bit as well. This will help fuel your performance during your training and aid in recovery post workout.

Note: I'm not rigid in my approach. These are more like ball park goals to me. As long as I'm not too far off for each macronutrient and I hit my caloric target for the day, I don't get overly concerned or stress over it.

It's also important to note that these guidelines are simply meant to be a starting point. Awareness is your greatest asset throughout your transformation process. Pay close attention to how your body is responding and make necessary adjustments.

Some people do better with more carbs than others. Some people do better with more fat in their diet. Make small adjustments and see how your body responds.

TRACKING Matters

This will either make you jump up for joy because you are a number crunching freak who loves to create flow charts and pie graphs...

...or make you cringe and think, *“Oh no! Here we go again. I don’t have time to track my food and count calories.”*

If your thought process is inline with the latter, take a deep breath and relax. This is only for the short term. I don’t want to see you tracking for more than 4 weeks unless you thrive from it.

As much as many physique artists don’t enjoy tracking their food intake, they gain great value from it that will serve them over the long term.

When you first start out (the first week or two), I do recommend that you use a food scale to weigh your food portions.

Hey! Don’t roll your eyes at me :)

Yes. I know it’s a bit anal. But trust me. It’s a very eye opening experience in regards to portion sizes and portion control. You’ll find it to be an incredible education in and of itself.

Nowadays with apps on your cell phone it’s ridiculously easy to track your calories and macros.

I track my caloric and macro intake with [MyFitnessPal](#). It’s not a perfect tool, but it’s helpful.

With these apps you can either do a simple search for the foods you consume, or better yet, scan the bar code and it will automatically enter the calories and macros into your food journal.

The vast majority of foods I consume have bar codes. Even the natural foods such as eggs, oats, frozen fruit and veggies, Greek yogurt, etc.

Scan a food item or enter it into your food journal once and it'll be saved to your favorite foods or meals list.

After a month of tracking your caloric intake you should become quite good at eyeballing your portion sizes and have a good estimation of how many calories you've consumed throughout the day even without looking at your calorie counting app. Especially if you tend to eat many of the same foods each week.

You can now begin weening yourself off caloric counting. Tracking the foods you consume is meant to be an educational experience, not a lifelong chore.

Every so often spend a week tracking your calories. This will keep yourself honest.

QUALITY Matters

Nutrition is much more than just calories in vs calories out.

The food you eat fuels your physique artist lifestyle!

We've seen people (including doctors and professors) lose weight while consuming Twinkies, McDonalds, and other 'junk food' diets.

The trouble with this approach is that many of these foods contain inadequate amounts of micronutrients (vitamins and minerals), which help you function and perform at your very best.

Consuming nutrient rich foods will have a positive impact on your workouts and your recovery. You're sculpting a high performance machine! It only makes sense to consume high performance fuel.

For this reason, I recommend you consume quality, nutrient-rich, minimally-processed foods 90-95% of the time, whether your cutting or building.

The remaining 5-10% can come from your favourite not-so-healthy treats.

That's responsible flexible dieting!

ENJOYING YOUR FOOD Matters

My #1 diet rule is that you **MUST** enjoy every meal you eat.

My Instagram feed is flooded with young guys going through their first contest prep. Every meal consists of plain chicken and broccoli or tilapia and asparagus.

If you enjoy these foods, all the power to you! But most of these guys complain about it every day, yet wear it like a badge of honor. If you don't enjoy those foods, don't eat them.

There are countless recipes that are both healthy, nutrient rich, and delicious. You could probably find dozens that you crave just as much as the treats you enjoy.

Here's a playlist from my YouTube channel where I share some of my favourite [**Aesthetic Muscle Meals**](#).

There's no better way to comply to your diet over the long term than to enjoy the foods you eat.

PLANNING Matters

I tend to be a creature of habit with nutrition. I eat many of the same meals whether I'm in a fat loss or muscle building phase. The portion size is the only thing that differs.

There are three meals that I eat most days of the week. They are;

Meal 1 – Eggs and Veggies

351 calories | 20g carbs | 13g fat | 39g protein

8 egg whites

1 whole egg

1/2 tbsp coconut oil

Spinach

Red pepper

Mushrooms

Ketchup or salsa

Meal 2 – Oats, Blueberries, and Protein Powder

435 calories | 60g carbs | 4g fat | 36g protein

2/3 cup oats

1/2 cup blueberries

1 scoop protein powder

Meal 3 – Greek Yogurt and Berries

265 calories | 32g carbs | 0g fat | 32g protein

285 grams plain Greek yogurt

1 cup mixed berries

I crave each of these meals. I have a tough time going without either of them.

Once or twice a week I may substitute the scrambled eggs and veggies for three sunny side up eggs with two slices of toast, which is another meal that I absolutely love.

Having three staple meals in my nutrition plan makes it easier to follow. It's somewhat mindless. Dinner is where I get creative and add some variety.

Up to this point in my day I have consumed approximately 1051 calories, 113g carbs, 18g fat, and 107g protein. Basically half of my daily calories and macros are remaining when I'm in a deficit. I can either have a large meal for dinner or a moderate meal and decent size snack.

Refeeds During a Cutting Phase

Refeeds or calorie cycling can be a useful tool for helping you comply with your diet during a cutting phase. Increasing your calories up to your TDEE once or twice a week will refuel your body, which will improve your performance during your workouts. It's also a great mental break from dieting.

In the beginning when you have more fat to lose, keep your refeeds to just once per week. As you get leaner you may increase your refeeds to twice per week.

Is There An Ideal Meal Frequency?

This is largely going to come down to your lifestyle and personal preferences. Some people prefer fewer meals that are larger in volume, while others prefer to spread their meals throughout the day.

Pre-Workout Nutrition

Most Physique Artists will do just fine by consuming a balanced meal prior to their workout. Some prefer a carb heavy meal pre-workout while others complain that consuming carbs prior to their workout makes them feel sluggish and crash before the end of their workout.

Awareness is key. Listen to your body.

The timing of your pre-workout meal is very individual as well. Some Physique Artists perform better when they consume a meal 30 minutes prior to training. Others may find that if they eat too close to a workout it causes nausea.

Go with what suits you well. This may mean a normal size meal 2 hours prior to your workout and a small snack 30 minutes before you hit the gym.

If you perform your resistance training workout first thing in the morning, you may find that a light meal, such as Greek yogurt with berries, or a shake suits you best prior to lifting.

Post-Workout Nutrition

The anabolic post-workout 'window of opportunity' has come under question lately.

Many-a-bodybuilder have lived in fear that their potential gains would be lost forever if they didn't raced to chug back their post-workout shake seconds after their training session has ended.

It was believed that the evidence supported this practice. However, a recent review of the literature has revealed that the 'window of opportunity' is influenced by the timing of your pre-workout meal.

It's a good practice to consume your pre and post workout meals within 4 hours of each other. Therefore, if you consumed your pre-workout meal 1 hour prior to training and your workout lasted 1 hour, your 'window of opportunity' is more like 2 hours instead of the typical recommendation of 45 minutes.

Both your pre and post workout meal should include 0.18 - 0.23 grams of protein per pound body weight.

Personally, I love the ritual of consuming a post-workout shake. It's a reward of sorts, for putting forth my very best effort. It's refreshing and it's something I really enjoy.

I'm not consuming it out of panic or fear. I simply love the act of nourishing my body immediately after a workout. Not to mention, I'm typically ravenous after I train.

Although the evidence suggests there is no need to panic and rush to consume your post-workout meal, it certainly won't do any harm to consume it immediately after your session ends.

Do I Need To Eat Breakfast?

Once again, this is very individual. Breakfast has been a hot topic in recent years and has even come under attack in some cases. As much as I love breakfast and as much as I see the positive impact it has on my performance throughout the day, I have witnessed some people who perform better by skipping breakfast.

I used to be the trainer who tried to get all of his clients to eat breakfast. The vast majority of them benefited from this recommendation. Yet for some their workouts suffered when they ate breakfast. I have even

witnessed clients and family members become nauseous when they tried to eat breakfast. However, these cases appear to be few and far between.

Bottom line, if you typically enjoy breakfast and perform well throughout the day when you consume breakfast, please continue to make breakfast an important meal in your day. However, if breakfast does not agree with you, listen to your gut (pun intended).

TRAINING

I rarely write programs for clients any more. My passion and pride comes from developing systems to help my clients maximize their potential over the long term.

A program is a snapshot in time. On its own it can work for the short term, typically 4-8 weeks.

A system on the other hand takes a big picture approach, strategically piecing together programs so they work synergistically and feed off each other.

A program on it's own can produce results. Multiple programs built into a system will produce results at an exponential rate!

Building systems allows you to optimally manipulate each of the following training variables in a strategic manner to amplify aesthetic muscle gains.

- Frequency
- Volume
- Intensity
- Exercise Selection
- Rest Periods
- Training Tactics
- Tempo

Frequency

Frequency is not only how often you train per week, but how often you train each muscle group per week.

Unfortunately, many lifters get stuck in a rut and either don't think about manipulating frequency or they have deep rooted beliefs about frequency of training, which prevent them from making adjustments.

**BODY PART SPLIT
ROUTINES**

VS

**HIGH FREQUENCY
TRAINING**



When you review the large body of research, you'll see the overwhelming evidence suggest that the optimal training frequency is anywhere from **once every 5 days up to 3 times per week**, with twice per week showing the strongest support.

You'll notice how it's not a single training frequency that's best. It's an **optimal range** for you to work with.

And if you think about it, both body part split routines and high frequency training fall into that range.

You see, body part split routines are much more than the workouts you come across in the muscle mags that have you only training a muscle once every 7 days.

The truth is, there are **a variety body part split routines** you can perform. Most of which have you training each body part once every 4-5 days. Some even have you training each muscle twice per week.

On the other end of the controversy, high frequency training has become popular lately thanks to a recent Norwegian study that has you performing full body workouts 6 days per week.

But the truth is, there are **a variety of high frequency training routines** you can perform.

The most popular being three full body workouts per week. But you can also perform a variety of upper/lower or push/pull/leg splits that have you training each muscle 2-3 times per week.

As you can see, body part split routines vs high frequency training isn't so black and white. In fact, there's a bit of overlap between them.

So right out of the gate, the first thing that is wrong with thinking that high frequency training is better than body part split routines or vice versa, is a narrow minded point of view in defining what they actually are.

When you have an open mind and you look at the big picture like this, you open the doors to maximizing your genetic potential.

Now let's dig a bit deeper into the impact training frequency has on building your ripped and muscular physique.

TRAINING FREQUENCY

WILL HELP YOU

**MAXIMIZE YOUR
MUSCULAR POTENTIAL**



At the heart of the controversy between body part split routines and high frequency training is the muscle building process called **Muscle Protein Synthesis (MPS)**.

During your workout you are in a process of **Muscle Protein Breakdown (MPB)**.

After your workout when the muscle protein breakdown has finished, MPS skyrockets and remains elevated for approximately 24-48 hours in novice lifters or 12-16 hours in advanced lifters.

Now that's the common stuff you'll see taught and it's what many workout programs are based on. As you'll see it's why they are leaving serious results on the table.

Here's where things get interesting.

MPS is regulated by the myonuclei within your muscle fibers. The number of myonuclei within the muscle fiber is a strong determinant in how big your muscles can grow.



More Myonuclei = Greater Growth Potential

The great news is that you can add more myonuclei to your muscle fibers by causing substantial muscle damage through high volume workouts.

This is crucial for your long term muscle gains, because the more myonuclei within your muscle, the greater potential your muscle has for growth.

Now that may have been a bit technical, but here's where you will make sense of it all. This is where you will discover why it's wrong to think that either Body Part Split Routines or High Frequency Training are the best for building a ripped and muscular physique.

Pros and Cons of High Frequency Training

The main benefit of high frequency training is that you spike MPS and the muscle building process more often throughout the week.

The downside of high frequency training is that you need to reduce the amount of muscle damage that occurs with each workout in order to allow you to recover before your next workout.

These lower volume workouts won't cause the amount of damage necessary to add more myonuclei to the muscle fibers.

Therefore, with high frequency training your growth is limited to the current number of myonuclei in your muscle fibers.

Pros and Cons of Body Part Split Routines

The main benefit of body part split training is that it allows you to perform higher volume workouts, adding more myonuclei to the muscle fibers.

The downside of body part split routines is that the higher volume workouts require more rest between workouts. The longer rest won't allow you to spike MPS and the muscle building process as often, which will limit your growth potential.

As you can see, both high frequency training and body part split routines have their pros and cons.

You can also see that if you get stuck thinking that either body part split routines or high frequency training is better than the other, you are leaving serious results on the table.

The truth is, if you want to optimize your training and gain the maximum benefits from your workouts, **you must strategically periodize your training frequencies.**

That's how the best physiques are being built!

Trouble is, manipulating your training frequency is easier said than done.

The biggest challenge I see most guys like you face when changing training frequency is **managing muscle damage and recovery.**

When changing your training frequency you need to adjust your training volume and intensity accordingly.

Volume

Training volume is defined as (weight lifted x sets x reps)

It's important for you to view your training volume from both a weekly and per workout perspective.

If all you've ever done is body part splits and you're used to annihilating your muscles once a week, it can be a challenge for you to dial back the volume per workout when switching to a higher frequency plan.

It's a mindset thing more than anything. If you aren't hobbling around for days after a leg workout you may feel like you didn't train hard enough.

But if you maintain this mentality with a higher frequency training plan the muscle damage will be too much for you to recover from before the next workout.

You'll be breaking the muscle down again, before the rebuilding process has been complete. This is absolutely detrimental to building the ripped and muscular physique you desire.

What you need to realize is that you end up getting in the same or potentially more total volume at the end of the week when you increase your frequency intelligently.

Adjusting training volume and frequency while managing recovery really is a delicate balancing act that requires a keen sense of awareness.

This is where the help from an experienced Physique Coach, like myself will really pay off.

Here's a short and simple guideline for optimizing training volume...

Optimized Training Volume Guidelines

- You will want to aim for training each muscle with 40-70 reps two to three times per week.
- If you're following a higher frequency plan, where you're training each muscle more than 2-3 times per week you'll have to reduce the number of reps you train each muscle per workout.
- If you are following a lower frequency plan you can train each muscle with more than 70 reps per workout.

Gradually increasing your training volume over time is key to the long term growth and improvement of your physique.

Now the second important factor you must adjust accordingly when fluctuating frequency is training intensity.

Training Intensity

Here we're talking about intensity measured in the percentage of weight lifted, not intensity measured in how hard you push yourself during a workout.

The intensity you choose to use while performing an exercise will cause a unique adaptation with your physique.

Neurological Adaptations

Neurological adaptive responses occur in the low rep range (1-5 reps).

Benefits include; increased strength, power, and ability to recruit more muscle fibers.

Trouble is, lifting heavy can put a strain on your nervous system when performed frequently and can really beat your body up while increasing the risk of injury.

But this does not mean you should avoid lifting heavy. Frankly, that would be a big mistake. You just need to take a smart approach in programming these heavy lifts into your training system.

Our goal as Physique Artists is to achieve your aesthetic muscle potential. Neglecting any aspect of your training will result in gains being 'left on the table'.

Becoming stronger and stimulating the adaptive responses of your nervous system will work synergistically with the other rep ranges for MAXIMUM muscle gains.

Metabolic and Cellular

Metabolic and Cellular adaptive responses occur in the moderate (6-12 reps) and high (13+ reps) rep ranges. The greatest amount of hypertrophy is experienced in the moderate rep range, but it's still crucial to include some high rep sets for maximum muscle gains.

It's important to note that your muscles do not simply flip a switch and change from neurological adaptations to metabolic and cellular adaptations when performing 5 rep sets to 6 rep sets. It's more like the spectrum of a rainbow where the colors blend from one to another.

The adaptations are still neurological as you enter the moderate rep range, but begin to become more metabolic and cellular. As you increase the reps for a set the adaptations will become more metabolic and cellular and less neurological.

Finally, in the high rep range, the adaptations will become purely metabolic and cellular.

Rep Ranges also influence the type of hypertrophy that occurs within a muscle cell.

Sarcoplasmic Hypertrophy

Sarcoplasmic Hypertrophy is an adaptive response which occurs in the upper limits of the moderate rep range and in the high rep range, causing the volume of non-contractile muscle fluid to increase.

This muscle cell fluid, which contains water and energy sources such as glycogen, ATP, and creatine phosphate can make up 25-30% of your muscle size.

As you can see, neglecting the moderate to high rep ranges will cause you to leave some serious results on the table.

You may have heard some muscle building coaches jokingly refer to this type of hypertrophy as “All show and no go”. They suggest that this type of ‘pump work’ will only result in acute gains, which are only noticeable temporarily after a workout.

However, recent research has shown the affects of sarcoplasmic hypertrophy to be more long-term.

Myofibrillar Hypertrophy

Myofibrillar Hypertrophy is an adaptive response which occurs in the upper limits of the low rep range and in the moderate rep range, causing the muscle fibers to increase in size and density.

The greatest gains in myofibrillar hypertrophy tend to occur in the 6-8 rep range, which is still some pretty heavy ass weight that you’ll be lifting, resulting in the best of both worlds... strength and hypertrophy.

But just because you experience the most bang for your buck in the 6-8 rep range does not mean you should neglect the other rep ranges. Remember, with a goal of MAXIMUM muscle gains you need to experience the full spectrum of adaptive responses.

Again, our muscles do not have a switch that flips from myofibrillar hypertrophy to sarcoplasmic hypertrophy. It’s a spectrum with crossover between the two types.

When it comes to myofibrillar hypertrophy we can break it down even further by muscle fiber types and how the various rep ranges impact them.

Fast Twitch (Type IIa) Muscle Fibers

Fast twitch (type IIa) muscle fibers have a fast contraction speed. They can use aerobic energy sources (oxygen dependent) and anaerobic energy sources (no oxygen used), which is why you may hear them referred to as a hybrid muscle fiber. Hypertrophy of the fast twitch (type IIa) muscle fibers occurs in the moderate rep range. These fibers have the greatest capacity for growth.

Fast Twitch (Type IIb) Muscle Fibers

Fast twitch (type IIb) muscle fibers contract very rapidly with great force. They can only use anaerobic energy sources and fatigue quickly. Hypertrophy of the fast twitch type IIb muscle fibers occurs in the lower rep range.

Slow Twitch (Type I) Muscle Fibers

Slow twitch (type I) muscle fibers contract slowly. They use aerobic energy sources and can withstand contractions over long durations. Hypertrophy of the slow twitch type I muscle fibers occurs in the high rep range. These fibers have the least capacity for growth, but when your goal is MAXIMUM muscle gains you must not leave any muscle fiber untouched.

An intelligently designed physique training system involves a strategic combination of all the rep ranges. The bulk of the attention is placed on the moderate rep range where you experience the most 'bang for your buck', causing both neurological and metabolic adaptive responses. Increasing both myofibrillar and sarcoplasmic hypertrophy while activating the muscle fibers with the greatest capacity for growth.

Bottom line... you're going to build a BIG, STRONG, and aesthetically pleasing physique.

Exercise Selection

Exercise Selection plays a crucial role in not only maximizing your muscle gains, but also to ensure you are building a physique with massive aesthetic appeal, (symmetry and details).

The foundation of any great muscle building program focuses on the BIG compound lifts, such as Squats, Deadlifts, Bench Press, Barbell Rows, and Overhead Press. This is where you will make your greatest gains.

Some suggest these lifts are responsible for 75-80% of your results, which is enough reason for certain muscle building coaches to focus solely on the big lifts. Some will even go so far as to say isolation exercises are a waste of time.

But as you can clearly see, avoiding isolation exercises is a guaranteed strategy for leaving serious results on the table. Why settle for 75% gains when you can go for 100%?

Furthermore, when training for aesthetic purposes, isolation exercises are an absolute necessity for the arms and shoulders. Several muscles make up the shape of your arms. It's more than just biceps and triceps. Even more important, these muscles consist of multiple heads. The biceps has a long head and a short head. The triceps has a long head, lateral head, and medial head.

Thanks to EMG and MRI research, the Physique Artist has become aware of 3 key variables, which can have a significant impact on muscle fiber recruitment and cause greater emphasis to be placed on certain heads of a muscle.

Grip

Grip can be manipulated either through varying your hand position (pronated, neutral, supinated) or your grip width, (wide, middle, narrow) in an effort to target certain aspects of a muscle or place greater emphasis on a different muscle group.

For example; when performing the Barbell Curl, a wide grip will place greater emphasis on the short head of the biceps, while a narrow grip, (a little less than shoulder width apart) will place equal emphasis on both heads of the biceps along with the brachialis.

When performing the Bench Press with a narrow grip it shifts the emphasis away from the pecs and places more tension on the triceps.

Performing Pull-Ups with a pronated grip places more stress on the lower aspect of the trapezius in comparison to the neutral or supinated grip. The brachialis and brachioradialis are the elbow flexors most involved with this grip type.

When using a supinated grip, often referred to as Chin-Ups instead of Pull-Ups, the biceps brachii and the pectoralis major have significantly higher activation compared to the other two variations.

Using a neutral grip activates the rhomboids and brachioradialis to a higher extent compared to the other two variations.

These are just a few examples of how grip width and position impact your muscle building efforts. For MAXIMUM muscle gains with MASSIVE sex appeal, you must strategically vary your grip throughout your training plan.

Angle

Angle is another variable which can be manipulated to target certain aspects of a muscle.

It's common to see lifters use various angles with the Bench Press, (incline, flat, decline) in an effort to place more emphasis on either the upper pec along the clavicle bone or the lower aspect.

Changing the angle of the pulley (high, middle, low) when performing Cable Fly's will also have an impact on where the emphasis is placed with the pecs.

It's not so common to see lifters manipulate the angle at which they perform the Wide Grip Pulldown. Performing a Multi-Angle Rest-Pause set you can experience the tension on your back muscles shift as you vary the angle from the upright position down to a position which appears more like a row.

Manipulating the angle of shoulder flexion and extension when training biceps by utilizing the Preacher Curl, Barbell Curl, and Incline Dumbbell Curl will alter the muscle recruitment patterns.

Triceps Extension is another great exercise to manipulate the angle. You can perform them on an upright bench, incline bench, flat bench, or decline bench.

Again, these are just a few examples. You'll get the full experience while following the Aesthetic Muscle Plan during the next six months.

Stance

Stance can also be manipulated in an effort to alter motor recruitment patterns. We tend to be creatures of habit and approach leg exercises with a stance that feels more 'natural' to us.

How often do you change your foot positioning on the Leg Press platform? Although it's a predominately quadriceps engaged movement, by placing your feet wider with your toes pointed outward, your adductors (inner thighs) can become activated as well. Same goes for the Squat and Deadlift.

As you can see, if you're not strategic in your exercise selection you run the risk of over developing certain aspects of a muscle, causing the other aspects to lag behind. In time this will throw off the symmetry of your physique, while reducing the aesthetic appeal.

Rest Periods

Rest Periods are a training variable, which when manipulated will impact muscular tension and metabolic stress. Both of which are important for hypertrophy.

Maximum muscle tension is experienced with long rest periods of 3 minutes or more which allow for full strength recovery, enabling the lifter to use maximum force from set to set, while performing more repetitions than they would, had they reduced their rest.

Maximum metabolic stress is experienced with short rest periods of 30 seconds or less, creating a very anabolic environment in your body.

As with the previous variables mentioned above, the adaptive responses of the muscles are experienced across a spectrum. With long rest periods the adaptive response is maximum muscle tension. As the rest period decreases, muscle tension decreases while metabolic stress increases.

Once again, the moderate range allows you to experience the best of both worlds. It's been shown that lifters regain most of their strength after 1 minute of rest. Therefore, resting between 1-2 minutes allows the lifter to recover enough to generate significant muscle tension, but the rest is short enough where metabolic stress occurs.

Your physique training system should involve a strategic combination of rest periods to MAXIMIZE muscle gains. The bulk of the sets utilize 1-2 minute rest periods, while the remainder of your workout will strategically incorporate some longer rest periods and short rest periods.

Training Tactics

Training tactics are a variable which can be manipulated for specific adaptive responses. Varying these tactics from month to month is also a great strategy for maintaining high levels of enthusiasm toward training, while preventing workout boredom.

Here are some of my favourite training tactics;

Straightsets

Straightsets may be the least sexy of all training tactics, but they are very useful.

Perform an exercise. Rest for the prescribed amount of time. Repeat exercise.

Supersets

Supersets can be performed for the same muscle group (agonist), which cause a great deal of muscle fatigue or opposing muscle groups (antagonist), which allow for time efficiency while still allowing each muscle group to experience sufficient rest between sets.

Perform an exercise, then immediately perform a second exercise without any rest. Then rest for the prescribed amount of time. Repeat superset.

Trisets

More frequently than not, trisets are performed for the same muscle group to cause serious muscle fatigue and metabolic stress.

Perform an exercise. Immediately perform a second exercise without any rest. Immediately perform a third exercise. Then rest for the prescribed amount of time. Repeat triset.

Dropsets

Dropsets are a great way to cause intense muscle fatigue and metabolic stress while targeting both fast twitch and slow twitch muscle fibers..

Perform an exercise for the designated rep range typically 8-12 reps. Reduce the weight and immediately perform a second set. Reduce the weight and immediately perform a third set. Reduce the weight and immediately perform your fourth and final set.

Dropsets are great for hypertrophy and make for a fantastic finisher at the end of a workout to completely exhaust a muscle. Or they can be used at the beginning of a workout to pre-exhaust a muscle, which is incredible for enhancing your mind-muscle connection for the rest of the exercises.

Ascending Dropsets

With ascending dropsets the reduction in weight will be more significant. With each drop in weight you will be increasing the number of repetitions you perform.

6 reps, 10 reps, 15 reps, and 20 reps.

Rest for 2-3 minutes and repeat when prescribed.

Power Micro Dropsets

Power Micro Dropsets is an advanced training tactic that works with heavy loads. It's a completely different experience from how most dropsets are performed.

Select a weight that you can perform 6 reps with for your first set. Then you'll be making VERY small reductions in weight for each of the 4 dropsets, which allow you to perform 1-3 reps per set.

There is no rest between dropsets other than the time it takes to strip the weight. I highly recommend that you have a workout partner and spotter for these.

6 reps

1-3 reps

1-3 reps

1-3 reps

1-3 reps

Rest for 2-3 minutes and repeat when prescribed.

Rest-Pause Sets

Rest-Pause is an advanced training tactic that's fantastic strategy for extending a set and maximizing muscle damage.

Perform an exercise for the designated rep target. Take a few deep breaths (no more than 10 seconds). Perform as many more reps as you can. Rest for the prescribed amount of time. repeat rest-pause set.

Typically you'll be able to perform approximately half the number of reps you performed for the initial activation sets after the 10 second rest.

Extended Rest-Pause Sets aka Disgusting Sets

As the name eludes to, this is a disgustingly intense advanced training tactic that takes rest-pause training to a whole new level.

Select a weight that you can perform the exercise for 12 reps. Rest for 5 seconds. Perform as many more reps as you can. Rest for 5 seconds. Perform as many more reps as you can. Keep going until you can no longer perform single rep set with quality form.

Multi-Angle Rest-Pause Sets

This advanced training tactic allows you to target different aspects of a muscle while extending a set.

Perform an exercise. Adjust the angle and immediately perform a second set. Adjust the angle and immediately perform a third set. Adjust the angle and immediately perform your fourth set. Rest for the prescribed amount of time. Repeat multi-angle rest-pause set.

An example of this is the Incline Bench Press. Start with a 45 degree angle, then 20 degree, then flat, then decline while keeping the same weight.

Cluster Sets

Select a weight that you can perform 10 reps with. Perform 4 reps Rest For 10 seconds. Perform 4 more reps. Rest for 10 seconds. Perform 4 more reps. Rest for 10 seconds. Perform 4 more reps. Rest for 2-3 minutes and repeat two more times for a total of 3 sets.

Advanced Light Weight Training Tactics

Advanced light weight training tactics allow you to create serious metabolic stress and muscle fatigue while using light weight. They don't leave a single muscle fiber untouched.

They are easy on the joints, allow you to enhance your mind-muscle connection, and produce a sick muscle building pump!

Myo-Reps Sets

Perform an activation set for the target reps typically 12 or 15 reps. Rest for 5-10 seconds. Each set afterward is referred to as a Myo-rep set, where your goal is to hit a specific rep (typically 3 or 5 reps) for as many sets as you can. When you can no longer hit that target rep, the exercise is complete.

100 Rep Sets

Perform an exercise for 20 reps. Rest for 5-10 seconds. Perform as many more reps as you can. Rest for 5-10 seconds. Perform as many more reps as you can. Repeat until you hit 100 reps.

8 sets of 8

Perform an exercise for 8 reps. Rest for 15 seconds. Repeat for a total of 8 sets.

In order to get through all 8 sets you should select a weight which is approximately 60% of what you would typically lift for 8 reps.

The first 4 sets will feel pretty easy. By the 5th and 6th reps you should be starting to feel fatigued. The 7th and 8th set should be killer. You should be

able to complete the 8th rep of the 8th set and have nothing left in the tank to perform a 9th rep.

Blood Flow Restriction Sets

With blood flow restriction (BRF) training you will use 3 inch elastic knee wraps to occlude the venous blood flow while perform either biceps, triceps, quadriceps, hamstrings, or calve exercises.

For the arm exercises you will wrap the elastic band at the highest point of your upper arm. For the thigh exercises you will wrap the band just below your glutes. For your calves you will place the wrap just below your knees.

Don't wrap your limbs too tight though. On a scale of 1 to 10, it should feel like 7. It's bearable, but not pleasant, especially during final couple sets. It should be tight enough to prevent blood from escaping the the working muscle, but loose enough to allow the blood to flow to the working muscle.

You will select a light weight which will allow you to perform 20-30 reps for the first set.... rest for 30 seconds and aim for 15-20 reps... rest for 30 seconds and aim for 15-20 more reps... rest for 30 seconds and aim for 15-20 reps once again for the final set.

It's pretty brutal and causes a great deal of metabolic stress. What's amazing about BFR training is that even though you are using light weight (which is easy on the joints), the muscle gains are similar and sometimes greater than heavy weight training.

When I first came across BFR training I was very hesitant to try it. The thought of occluding venous blood flow made me feel squeamish. After a couple months of studying the literature and listening to feedback from some of my colleagues who have successfully applied BFR in their training, I decided to give it a go and boy am I ever glad I did. It's been a fantastic

addition to my training, especially my calves, which are my most stubborn body part.

Intraset Stretch Dropsets

Perform an exercise for 15 reps. On the 15th rep hold the stretch portion of the movement for 30 seconds. Reduce the weight and immediately perform a second set. Once again holding the stretch on the last rep for 30 seconds. Reduce the weight and immediately perform a third set, holding the 30 second stretch on the final rep. Reduce the weight and immediately perform a fourth set. Reduce the weight immediately perform your 5th and final set.

Peak Contraction Sets

This is one of my favourite techniques for enhancing my mind-muscle connection at the beginning of a workout.

Hold the contraction of every rep for 5 seconds while squeezing the target muscle intensely. You'll need to select a weight that is a little lighter than what you would normally use for the target rep range.

Tempo

Tempo is the repetition speed. The rate at which you lift and lower a weight is another variable that can be manipulated. A general guideline is;

3 seconds to lower the weight (eccentric contraction).

No pause.

1 seconds during the lift (concentric contraction).

No pause.

You may see this written as 3-0-1-0

This tempo allows for explosive concentric contractions and muscular tension during the controlled eccentric contraction.

I'd rather have you focusing on 'feeling' the tension in the muscles while enhancing your mind-muscle connection instead of counting your tempo in your mind. Simply perform each rep in a controlled manner.

Recap

When designing your yearly training plan where results are maximized, you will want to vary the training frequency from time to time.

Volume per workout will need to be adjusted accordingly when varying the frequency. Volume should gradually increase over time as you become more experienced.

It's also important to note that volume should be reduced from time to time in order to prevent over-training.

Each training plan should include a variety of training intensities.

- Moderate Intensities in the 6-12 rep range 75% of the time.
- High Intensity in the 1-5 rep range 10% of the time.
- Low Intensity in the 13+ rep range 15% of the time (mainly utilizing the advanced light weight training tactics).

Adequate recovery between sets is typically achieved with 2 minute rest intervals and should be utilized most of the time.

When performing high intensity exercises you may require longer rest in order to recover. Short rest intervals definitely have their place and are best utilized with the light weight advanced training tactics.

Varying some of the exercises in your training plan each month will ensure that every aspect of every muscle will receive the appropriate amount of stress for maximum gains with impressive carved out details..

Varying some of the training tactics in the workouts each month will keep your enthusiasm at peak levels, which triggers maximum effort. Each training tactic will stimulate your muscles in unique ways, prompting different adaptive responses, while maximizing your potential for growth.

Tempo can be varied from time to time. Slowing it down to 'feel' the tension in the muscle and enhance your mind-muscle connection or speeding it up for explosive strength.

As a result of the strategic manipulation of the above variables not only are your muscles going to grow big, but they're going to look even bigger. Thanks to the aesthetic factors of symmetry, proportion, and details.

Progressions

You need to give your body a reason to GROW! You can't continue lifting the same amount of weight for the same number of reps on any given exercise and expect your body to improve.

Progressively overloading your muscles is going to be a big key to your success.

There are three variables we manipulate to trigger progressive overload as Physique Artists;

Intensity

Each exercise has a designated rep range. Your goal is to select an appropriate weight to successfully stay within that range. For example if the Dumbbell Shoulder Press has 6-8 reps as it's designated rep range, your goal is to select a weight which allows you to perform at least 6 quality reps with controlled form, but no more than 8 reps.

There are two ways for you to progress by means of intensity. Using the example above, if you performed 6 or 7 reps of the Dumbbell Shoulder Press this week you would aim for 8 reps the following week. Once you hit 8 repetitions you will increase the weight. Just be cautious not to increase the weight to the point where you can't perform at least 6 reps with quality controlled form.

Density

Each exercise also has a designated rest period. To increase the density of the exercise or set, you will decrease the rest period from week to week. For example; when 30-60 seconds is indicated as your rest period, week 1

you could take 60 seconds rest, week 2 take 50 seconds rest, week 3 take 40 seconds rest and week 4 take 30 seconds rest.

Rep Quality

Rep quality is the key to longevity in the recreational sport of bodybuilding! Keeping you injury free and helping you squeeze the absolute maximum benefit from every rep.

In the initial stages of training your rep quality progression will occur by mastering exercise technique (form).

The greatest progress in rep quality will occur by mastering your mind-muscle connection. The finer details, which go unnoticed to the naked eye. Steering neural drive and muscle activation exactly where it is meant to be stimulated.

For example; you could have two lifters execute impeccable form on the bench press. While one of them 'feels' the stretch and contraction in their chest, the other experiences more of a burn in their anterior deltoid. With practice, the second lifter can learn to steer the tension away from the anterior delts and shift it onto the pecs where it should be felt.

Mastering the mind-muscle connection requires a great deal of focus. But before you can master the mind-muscle connection, you must first master the art of focus.

Initially some lifters try too hard to focus. You can see it in their facial expressions; squinted eyes, wrinkled forehead, and a look of anger and frustration as they attempt to 'will' a feeling of tension in a muscle. But that's not how focus works.

The key to focus is to first clear your mind and put your 'blindness on' to block out all distractions. You won't be able to optimally 'feel' the maximum amount of tension in a muscle if you are thinking about past or future events.

If you want to experience a quality rep, you need to be truly present in the moment. It's a heightened sense of awareness and it's in this state of mind where you will experience the greatest joy from training.

My buddy Shawn Phillips refers to this as Focused Intensity Training (FIT). In his book *Strength For Life* he says, "As you begin to master FIT, harnessing your power to focus, expect to enjoy an increasing state of flow during your training. This is that "in the zone" state that athletes often speak of - the place where time seems to stop and what was once work becomes effortless grace."

It may seem counter intuitive to experience, peace, serenity, and joy while you are under a bar loaded with heavy ass weight. But as you begin to master your mind-muscle connection and block out all distraction, you too will realize that physique training is one of the greatest forms of meditation.

The beauty of this 'In the moment' experience is that it breeds a sense of playfulness in your training. When you are in this focused state of mind, free from distraction. A simple shift in how you squeeze the bar or where you direct the pressure across the soles of your feet can make a world of a difference in where you 'feel' the tension. This is what is meant by 'steering the muscle activation'.

IFBB Pro Bodybuilder Ben Pakulski refers to this as MASS INTENTIONS. For example, creating an inward intention by squeezing your hands toward each other (without actually moving your hands), while performing the Bench Press.

Or creating outward intention by trying to pull the bar apart, while performing Wide Grip Pulldowns.

Or creating inward intention by squeezing your heels together while performing a wide stance Squat (with toes out).

To onlookers, your form stayed the same. They can't see the difference with the naked eye. It's the magic that's occurring in your mind that turns a decent rep into a high quality rep.

Your mind-muscle connection is something you can always improve upon. Even the most experienced lifters have room for improvement. I've been training for over 20 years and had always prided myself on having a powerful mind-muscle connection. But I received a big wake up call when I began posing practice for my first Natural Bodybuilding Contest.

I had the toughest time opening up my shoulder blades in an effort to get my lats to flare out during the Front Relaxed Pose. I thought to myself, "If I can't control my body without weight, what's happening when I have a heavy barbell in my hands?" I realized that my scapula mobility absolutely sucked during every back exercise. I wasn't protracting them to gain a maximum stretch and I wasn't retracting them to begin all back exercises by actually engaging my back muscles. I was doing what you see many lifters do in the gym. Begin every back exercise by engaging the biceps.

When it came to the back poses I had a difficult time flexing my hamstrings. I thought I was contracting them, but my posing coach would tap them and they would jiggle. They weren't contracted at all, which would kill my chances of placing high in a bodybuilding contest. It was a cue from IFBB Pro Ben Pakulski that made things finally click. He said, "Pretend you are trying to scrape gum off the bottom of your shoe." BOOM! I could instantly feel my hamstrings contract.

As I learned to control my physique while experiencing intense contractions during posing practice I began to notice how it carried over to my training. My enhanced mind-muscle connection was allowing me to feel greater muscle tension throughout the full range of motion of every exercise.

This is why I believe every Physique Artist should practice the mandatory bodybuilding poses, even if they never plan on competing. You'll be surprised at how exhausting it is and how much thought is required to go into every pose. The contractions are intense. Holding those contractions for extended periods of time will really test your muscle endurance. Some physique competitors believe that posing practice helps bring out the details of your muscles. Sculpting even deeper cuts and striations.

Another strategy for improving the quality of every rep is to take a moment between sets to visualize yourself executing an exceptional rep. The simple act of visualizing a few reps of the exercise you are about to perform will cause the same motor units of the target muscles to fire in the same sequence as when you actually lift the weight. This will prime your muscles for an incredible set.

Denis Waitley referred to this as Visual Motor Rehearsal. In his book *Psychology of Winning* he shares, "We took Olympic athletes and had them run their event only in their mind, and then hooked them up to sophisticated biofeedback equipment. Incredibly, the same muscles fired in the same sequence when they were running the race in their mind as when they were running it on the track. How could this be? Because the mind can't distinguish whether you're really doing it or whether it's just a practice. If you've been there in your mind you'll go there in the body."

In another study conducted by Dr. Blaslotto at the University of Chicago, a group who visualized themselves making free throws for an hour a day improved just as much as a group who actually practiced free throws for an hour a day.

Your mind is the most powerful muscle in your body. You need to train it just like all of your other muscles. But unlike other muscles, the stronger your mind-muscle becomes, the more every other muscle in your body will benefit and improve.

CONDITIONING

Your top priorities for building your ripped and muscular physique are resistance training and nutrition. Cardio is used to accelerate the process.

Cardio should be used as a means of;

- 1) Improving your workout performance.
- 2) Active recovery.
- 3) Enhance your overall quality and enjoyment of life by increasing your energy, health, and vitality.
- 4) Calorie control.
- 5) Lean gains.

Cardio For Improved Workout Performance

The benefits of including the proper dose of cardio in your training plan can become very noticeable during the demanding strength focused workouts in the Aesthetic Muscle Plan. Heavy Deadlifts can have you sucking wind and seeing stars even when you're in decent cardiovascular shape.

Improving your VO2 Max by adding cardio to the mix, will allow you to perform better during the workouts. This will have a direct impact on your muscle gains.

Cardio For Improved Recovery

The benefits of including some Low Intensity Steady State (LISS) cardio, such as brisk walking or a leisurely bike ride can become very noticeable post workout as well.

The high volume hypertrophy workouts in the Aesthetic Muscle Plan can cause some serious DOMS (Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness).

Strategically incorporating low intensity cardio will help your muscles recover from these intense workouts, reducing DOMS and muscle stiffness.

The greatest benefits that strategic cardio has on carving out a ripped and muscular physique is a result of an increase in capillary density, which enhances nutrient exchange.

This AMPLified delivery of nutrients will nourish your muscles better than ever before, while becoming more efficient at the removal of waste products, such as lactic acid from your muscles during and after your workout.

Cardio For Stress Management

Cardio also has the potential to improve your mood and reduce stress when you perform cardiovascular activities that you enjoy. Studies have found stress management to play an important role for both fat loss and muscle building.

Cardio For Calorie Control

During a cutting phase including cardio will;

1) Create a greater caloric deficit if you keep your food intake the same. For example, consuming 2000 calories per day is a 500 calorie deficit for me. If I burn 300 calories with cardio while still consuming 2000 calories, I now have an 800 calorie deficit for the day.

2) Maintain your caloric deficit while eating more food during a caloric deficit. For example, if I wanted to maintain a 500 calorie deficit, burning

300 calories from cardio would allow me to consume 300 more calories for the day.

This is definitely the case when you are in a muscle building phase. You absolutely must eat more to make up for the caloric burn from cardio if you want to remain in a slight surplus.

Cardio For Lean Gains

Research has shown that men with a higher aerobic capacity (VO2 Max) tend to gain less fat mass when following a caloric surplus diet. The good news is that it doesn't require a great deal of time or excessive amounts of cardio to improve your VO2 Max.

When Is The Best Time To Perform Cardio?

The best time to perform cardio is mainly lifestyle dependent. You could;

Add cardio to the end of a resistance training session, which means fewer trips to the gym, but extends the time you are at the gym.

Performing High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) after a leg workout is a great way to finish them off with an intense burn and pump.

This option also provides full recovery time between workouts and doesn't interfere with your workout performance. You may want to consume a post workout shake between the resistance training and cardio session.

Split up your cardio and resistance training session by performing cardio first thing in the morning and resistance later in the day or vice versa. This keeps your training sessions shorter, but increases the number of trips to the gym.

What Is The Best Type Of Cardio?

Most of the studies I've come across, which have shown increased muscle gains from adding moderate amounts of cardio to a resistance training program, have involved cycling as the training method. Jogging appears to interfere with muscle gains.

Most Physique Artists hit the weights hard 5-6 days per week. In this case I find it most beneficial to utilize LISS. I find it's more complimentary to your training goals, whereas MISS and HIIT have a greater potential to interfere with your training if they are not strategically structured and you aren't paying close attention to your recovery ability. HIIT is time efficient, but also increases the risk of injury, which would interfere with your training goals.

Recommendations For Low Intensity Steady State Cardio

- Brisk Walking (outdoors) - active recovery
- Biking at a leisurely pace (outdoors, spin bike, stationary bike)

AMP Recommendations For Moderate Intensity Steady State Cardio

- Stairclimber
- Biking at a moderate pace

AMP Recommendations For High Intensity Interval Training

- Biking (outdoors, spin, or stationary bike)
- Battle Ropes
- Jump Rope
- Kettlebell Swings
- Hill/Bleacher Sprints

What's The Optimal Dose Of Cardio?

Frankly, it's a delicate balancing act. Although cardio can accelerate your fat loss and help increase muscle gains it can also hamper them if the dose is too high.

The safe bet is to perform the minimum amount of cardio necessary to take advantage of the fat management and muscle building benefits shared above.

It's important to pay close attention to how your body is responding to and recovering from the addition of cardio to your resistance training. The last thing you want is to have your cardio interfere with your resistance training performance.

If you begin to notice that performing cardio more than twice per week is negatively effecting your energy, strength, performance, or overall lifestyle, simply cut it back a bit and utilize LISS cardio as your main method.

Take note of any differences in recovery ability during the different phases of the Aesthetic Muscle Plan. You may find it easier to include cardio during phase 3 and 4 when each muscle group is less frequently. At this point you may be able to bump up your cardio if your recovery ability has improved.

Pay close attention to your energy and activity level throughout the day. Performing too much cardio can make you feel run down and exhausted.

During one of my contest preps I made the mistake of doing too much cardio. I fell into the trap of waking up early to get in my first cardio session of the day and then did a second cardio session after my workout later in the day.

Here's what I noticed;

- It cut into my sleep. This had a negative impact on my recovery, energy, focus, and performance.
- I may have burned 300 calories or so per session, but outside of the gym I was basically useless. I just wanted to sit on my butt and do nothing.
- My appetite increased big time.
- My stress levels went through the roof. It was a mental stress to get up earlier. The time it took away from my family stressed me out. It was a stress on my body. I was starting to dread exercise.

Cutting back on my cardio and performing the minimal dose necessary to take advantage of the fat burning and muscle building benefits I noticed;

- I had more energy throughout the day.
- My workout performance improved dramatically.
- It was easier to control my appetite.
- I was getting better quality sleep.
- It improved my stress management.
- My overall lifestyle became WAAAAAY more active. I was doing more around the house, playing with my kids, and taking part in several other activities that I really enjoy.

Basically... my N.E.A.T. (Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis) went through the roof. Bottom line, I was burning more calories living life to the fullest.

SUPPLEMENTS

There is a reason why I placed supplements last in this guide. They are meant to do exactly what their name states... Supplement your nutrition.

If you are thinking about supplements before you begin putting real work into your training and nutrition plan, you are setting yourself up for serious disappointment.

I often get asked, “Do I Need To Take Supplements?”

The short answer is no.

You can build aesthetic muscle and get ripped by consuming nothing but whole foods. The benefit of consuming supplements is mainly convenience.

However, the addition of certain supplements can provide you with a slight ‘edge’ in your muscle building and fat loss efforts in addition to improving your overall health and well being.

Whey Protein

Whey is a fast acting, quality source of protein. It’s convenient and a fairly cost effective way to consume an adequate amount of protein to fuel muscle growth. There have also been many health benefits associated with the consumption of whey protein.

Creatine Monohydrate

Creatine is already stored in your body (as creatine phosphate) and works to generate adenosine triphosphate (ATP), which is the energy source used in weight lifting. Trouble is, creatine is in limited supply in our body.

Ingesting 5 grams of creatine daily, will increase the amount of creatine stored in your body, which allows for faster and greater recharging of ATP... resulting in the ability to perform more work (increased reps, sets, or weight lifted), during your training session. It's that extra work, which promotes muscle growth.

Creatine may also increase the hydration of your muscle cells, making your muscles appear fuller... which is a very good thing and one of the key ingredients we are aiming for as Physique Artists.

There's no need for the fancy, dressed up creatine blends. Simply opt for creatine monohydrate. It's inexpensive and has the most research behind it.

Fish Oil

In addition to the health benefits of consuming a fish oil supplement, research has also reveals fat loss and muscle building benefits when the concentrated dose is approximately 4 grams, containing 1.86 grams EPA and 1.5 grams DHA.

Consuming concentrated fish oil appears to have both an anti-catabolic effect and anabolic effect on muscle.

Vitamin D3

Studies are beginning to reveal an increase in the rates of vitamin D3 deficiency. This can have a negative impact on your hormones, immune system and performance in the gym. It's a good idea to get your blood work checked for vitamin D3 deficiency.

During the winter months when you are less exposed to the sun's rays, it's typically a good idea for many of us to supplement with vitamin D3.

Multivitamin

Consuming a daily average dose multivitamin, especially during a fat loss phase is your insurance policy just incase you aren't absorbing enough vitamins and minerals from the foods you are consuming.

On The Radar

Magnesium

Zinc

Vitamin C

Melatonin (occasional sleep aid)

Questionable Supplements

Branched Chain Amino Acids (bcaa's)

There is very little research to support the use of bcaa's, especially when you are consuming an adequate amount of protein in your diet. But still, the anecdotal evidence seems to be climbing.

I for one enjoy consuming bcaa's during a fat loss phase. When I consume them between meals it curbs my appetite and quenches my thirst. When I consume them during a workout I find that I perform better. Is it the placebo effect? I'm not so sure.

Beta-Alanine

The benefits of beta-alanine include increased muscle endurance and decrease in muscle fatigue. This translates into more work being done (volume) during your workouts, which is what leads to increases in aesthetic muscle gains.

Beta-Alanine is the ingredient in pre-workout supplements that gives you that tingling sensation on the surface of your skin. Maybe this sensation is why lifters feel that the beta-alanine is doing something for them in that moment while they are training.

But after digging through the supplement research I discovered that Beta-Alanine is not timing-dependent. Meaning that no matter what time of day you consume it, you will still experience the same benefits of increased muscle endurance and decreased muscle fatigue.

According to the research, an optimal dose of Beta-Alanine is 2000-5000mg. Yet after reading the labels from many of the top pre-workout supplements I discovered that the most common dose is 1500-1600mg, which falls short of the mark. This means that you would need to purchase more beta-alanine if you wanted to consume the recommended effective dose.

Citrulline Malate

Citrulline Malate is a supplement I've been hearing a lot about lately and it seems to be showing some promise, but I'm not entirely convinced about using it yet, especially when it appears to have similar benefits as creatine and beta-alanine. Again, it's one of those supplements that helps reduce fatigue, muscle soreness, and helps you train at a greater volume.

Citrulline Malate is also timing-dependent, so it makes sense to include it in a pre-workout. According to research, the optimal dose of Citrulline Malate is 6000-8000mg and is recommended to consume 60 minutes pre-workout. Higher doses may cause digestive issues. If this is the case for you, it's recommended to split the dose and take half 60 minutes prior to training and the other half 30 minutes prior to training.

Supplement Scams - Who To Trust?

The supplement industry can be shady. There are plenty of hucksters out there who want nothing more than to dip their hands in your wallet.

Do your research. Not just in regards to a supplement, but the company as well.

I'm fortunate to be in a position where I get to know many of these supplement companies on a personal level. It's been easy for me to separate the ones who operate with integrity and those who are preying on the consumer.

My top recommendations for supplement companies who operate with integrity are;

[ATP Labs](#) is a young company which has impressed the heck out of me with their passion for bringing quality to the industry. I have enjoyed their whey protein, bcaa's, vitamin d3, and fish oil.

I recommend ATP Labs because I love their products and what their company stands for, but it's important to note that I am affiliated with them. If you click through the link above and decide to purchase any of their products I will receive a small commission for the referral.

[Citadel Nutrition](#) is another great young company with the only pre-workout supplement that actually contains the proper dose of every ingredient. No fillers. I also love that they have a limited product line. They aren't trying to sell you everything under the sun. I am not affiliated with Citadel Nutrition in any way.

[Full Strength](#) is a nutrition shake created by my buddy Shawn Phillips. It's a premium shake that's absolutely delicious. Shawn is a stand up guy who

prides himself on integrity. I am not affiliated with Full Strength at the moment.

Once again, I just want to make it clear that supplements are not necessary when your nutrition is on point, but they do

- Offer convenience.
- Can give you a slight edge.
- Can offer insurance if you aren't sure if you are consuming adequate nutrients. Especially during a cutting phase.
- Can help with any deficiencies you may have.

If you have any specific questions about supplements, please do not hesitate to ask.

CONCLUSION

I hope you have found great value from this free guide and immediately begin applying these strategies to your training and nutrition.

As stated at the beginning of this guide, with the direction and guidance you take from Advanced Aesthetics, you will have everything you need to create your own personal plan.

However, if time is an issue and you're too busy to create your own personal plan based on the strategies outlined in this book, I have some options that will make things more convenient for you.

Option 1: FREE 4 Week [Upper & Lower Body Split Routine](#)

You'll get to experience some of the advanced training tactics shared in this book and see how I manage training volume with an increase in training frequency.

Option 2: [Aesthetic Muscle Plan](#)

A 16 week body sculpting blueprint. You get to experience how 4 unique training plans work synergistically together to help you build a ripped and muscular physique.

Includes 4 different training phases, utilizing 4 unique training frequencies, and designed with a large variety of advanced training tactics.

Option 3: [Physique Mastery Movement](#)

A group coaching experience with professional guidance from myself and fellow Physique Coach Bryan Krahn to help you build your ripped and muscular physique faster.

Includes a unique workout plan of the month that you get to follow along with your fellow physique artists (including myself) at the same time. Supporting and encouraging each other along the way.

Also includes weekly Q&A's and other bonus material.

Option 4: [1-on-1 physique coaching](#)

If 100% personalized programming and attention is what you desire, then 1-on1 coaching is the way to go.

No question, this is the most direct and fastest way to achieve your goal because it's catered to you're goals, needs, and lifestyle. It's adaptable based on how your body is responding to the programming.

Let's Connect On Social Media

[Metabolic Masterpiece blog](#)

[Facebook Closed Group: Physique Artist Nation](#)

[YouTube Channel](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Scott's Story](#)