

How Much Weight Should I Use for *The Challenge*?

So you're ready to do the work, but you're not sure what weights do you use?

I find most people are not lifting enough weight. In fact, University researchers in the Midwest studied 30 men and women, asking them to choose their weights for five different exercises. The majority of them chose weights that were too low (42% - 57% of their One-Rep Max) to result in any physical gains.

This is particularly true of women, as they are often afraid to use as much weight as needed to obtain benefits because they're concerned about building large muscles. *You need to understand that a regular strength training workout will not bulk you up*, and this is mostly true for women because their body does not produce enough hormones that allow bulking up. Strength training requires the weights used to be heavy enough for the muscle to be challenged. Weights that are too light will not challenge the muscles and therefore will not change their appearance.

Using too-light weight is particularly evident with people who train at home: most will buy 3 or 5 pound dumbbells – too light for anyone! - and they wonder why they aren't making any real gains in their exercise regime!



One Rep Max: This is the gold standard for determining what weight you should be lifting. The One Rep Max (1 RM) is the highest possible weight you can lift for one rep, but it can be dangerous, so I don't recommend it.

Near Failure: There's another easier and *safer* way to figure out your optimum lifting weight. Simply find a weight that you can lift (with proper form) at least 8 times, but no more than 15. It takes a bit of time, but it's the method most people use. We call this *going to near failure*.

When do I increase the weight? If you're new to weight training, don't go to *near failure* for a few weeks, until your body adapts to training. Once you've been at it for a few weeks, then you can go to near failure...when you can complete 10-15 reps (however many reps the trainer has set out for you), it's time to increase the weight.

How much do I add? With upper body, I find adding 1-3 pounds is enough, whereas with legs you can add 5-10 pounds. And while the 15 rep range is good for building strong ligament and tendons, after a few weeks, it's time to get down to serious toning, which is 4-6 sets of an exercise for 8-12 reps, with the last rep being difficult to complete. We'll be doing this in **The Challenge** as we progress.

And write your weights down, every time, so you don't forget them!