

Great Guns in 12 Weeks - Phase 4

by Ian King | Fri, Aug 04, 2000

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Would you rather have *strong* arms or *large* arms? Lucky for you, the Great Guns program will give you both. In fact, after you complete this fourth and final phase, I'd expect you notice a visible difference in the size of your guns, as well as a marked increase in strength!

Provided you followed my recommendations and didn't overtrain in the earlier phases, you can expect to hit some pretty good loads in this phase. Before we get into it, I want to stress this: Just because we're going to be going heavy in this phase, I don't want you to go as heavy as possible from the outset. Just in case you don't have this memorized by now, remember that you should start light enough in the first week so you can increase the load each subsequent week. Avoid going to total muscular failure in all but the last week on this stage. Got it?

The reality is you can easily overtrain during high load phases, in effect, totally frying your nervous system. The symptom? You first feel like you're getting weaker by the week, then by the day, and then you fear that as every hour passes you may be slipping further into a state of perpetual puniness! Then one day you'll find yourself listening to boy bands and renting far too many Leonardo Dicaprio movies. Seriously, if you don't respect this phase, you'll only find yourself getting weaker. But if you behave yourself and play by the rules, expect personal bests in the primary lifts (the first exercise on each day) within a few weeks!

In **Phase I** of this program, I had you training bi's and tri's on both arm-training days each week while using slower tempos and higher reps. This phase also involved exercises using a greater range of joint angles. Biceps received a slight prioritization via the sequence. In **Phase II** you trained your bi's and tri's on separate days and used lower reps, a lower volume and a lesser range of joint angles. This provided a real shock in training methods. In **Phase III** we went back to a program that looked a lot like Phase I in terms of rep ranges and volume. By now you've probably guessed we're using a form of alternating periodization. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that we're going to do things in Phase IV similar to the way we did them in Phase II. In other words, get ready to go heavy!

This program was written as a true arm specialization program. When you specialize you need to be prepared to put all other muscle groups either on maintenance or low volume training. If you've followed my guidelines on this and kept the training for the remainder of the body to a minimal, you can expect great gains in arm development.

Now, unless you're planning on walking on your arms, it may make sense at the end of this final stage to either go back to a more balanced program, or a program that prioritizes a

different muscle group. This would be an optimal time to try my **leg specialization program**.

Also, don't forget that each phase has two arm workouts (A and B), one to be performed early in the week and another to be performed a few days later.

Enough talk, let's head to the gym and make some noise!

Workout A

As per Phase II, the reps you're about to do are a lot lower than in Phase III. Don't panic about finding your optimal weight in the first week of this stage. In week one of a new program, it's better to go too light than too heavy. Remember, if you train sub-maximally (which I recommend in the first week) you'll make significant strength gains the next time you do the same workout. This is due in part to motor learning and in part to physiological adaptation. It's not important which, as long as the gains from workout to workout are significant. In fact, these workout-to-workout gains are much more important than how many plates you pack on the bar in the first workout! Now, let's shut up and start lifting already!

Warm-up: Perform 10 minutes of light aerobics (optional) and 15 minutes of upper body stretching (compulsory).

Standing EZ-Bar Curl, Medium Grip: Grip the EZ-curl bar about shoulder width using an underhanded (palms up) grip. Your wrists are allowed to be slightly internally rotated. You'll start the lift with the elbows beside the body, but I'm going to allow you to do some cheating in this exercise for the sake of lifting a bit heavier. In other words, you may allow the elbows to drift forward a little. Only do this in reps or loads that require it and use it only in a manner that allows you to still feel maximal work in the muscle. I still want a full stretch at the bottom along with a short pause. Bend your knees slightly and posteriorly rotate your pelvis a little to minimize the back extension. (There may be *some* back extension with an excessive cheat technique, but I don't want you to go there too often!)

After the warm-up sets you're going to do four sets of four reps. I want them wave loaded, too. Here's an example:

1 x 4... 65 pounds
1 x 4... 75 pounds
1 x 4... 70 pounds
1 x 4... 80 pounds

See what's going on? You're going to do one set of 4, and then increase the load and do another set of 4. However, on your third set, you're going to use a load that's between the load used for the first and second set. Then, on the fourth set, you'll go up again.

Just follow the example above and plug in the numbers that reflect your personal poundages. Note you'll be using longer rest periods here due to the heavier load (see charts below). After the four sets, I want you to do an eccentric-only set. This will involve you lowering a load that you cannot lift concentrically. Your training partner is to do most of the work. In fact, do

not try to do the concentric (lifting) phase as a training contraction at all. Get your partner to do it for you, just don't let go of the bar.

Your job is to put all your efforts into lowering the bar over a count of four seconds. If the bar speed in this lowering portion isn't smooth (e.g. you lose it at the bottom) it's time to terminate the set. If this occurs before the required four reps, you went too heavy. You're looking to use about 10-20% more weight in this set than your final four rep work set. In the example above, you're looking to use about 90 to 100 pounds. However, you be the judge as you know the quality of lowering and time frame required.

Standing Ez-Bar Curl, Close Grip: Here you'll use the same underhanded (palms up) grip and body position as above, but your grip will be closer. Grip the bar so that your hands are about six inches apart. On most EZ-curl bars, this will have the closer kink in the bar sitting in the webbing between your thumb and first finger.

I like to do warm-ups on everything, but if you're young and feeling invincible I understand that you may pass on this. (I give a lengthy explanation for my warm-up approach in an upcoming issue of my "Heavy Metal" column here at *T-mag*.) If you're concerned about warm-ups causing fatigue, you can use a rep number that is lower than the rep number in the work set, but stay with the same guidelines. If only one warm-up set is suggested, use about 50-60% of the load intended for the first work set.

You can do one or two work sets on this exercise; however, if you know you have limited recovery ability, stick to only one. In fact, if you're in this category and are having a "flat day," you may choose to do little more than the first exercise. If you decide to use two sets, look to go slightly heavier on the second set.

Standing Ez-Bar Curl, Very Wide Grip: Again, everything is the same except for the grip. This time you'll be using a very wide grip. For most people, this will mean a grip where the outside of the hands will touch the inside of the sleeve on the end of the EZ-curl bar. Again, if you're going to do two work sets, note the second work set will be a slightly lighter load.

Here's a summary of workout A:

Standing Ez-Bar Curl, Medium Grip

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Palms up, grip just outside shoulders	1 x 10, 1 x 8, 1 x 6	4 x 4, using wave loading as described in the text, 1 x 4 eccentric-only	211* in the 4 x 4, 400 in the eccentric-only set	3-4 minutes

Standing Ez-Bar Curl, Close Grip

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Palms up, grip just inside your shoulders, hands 4-6 inches apart	1 x 3-6	1-2 x 6-8	211	2-3 minutes

Standing Ez-Bar Curl, Very Wide Grip

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Palms up, grip the bar as wide as you can while remaining comfortable	1 x 6-10	1 x 10-12, 1 x 15-20	211	1-2 minutes

*Check our new **FAQ** section if you aren't familiar with tempo prescriptions.

Workout B

Warm-up: Perform 10 minutes of light aerobics (optional) and 15 minutes of upper body stretching (compulsory).

Close Grip Bench Press, Shoulder Width Grip: Grip the bar at about shoulder width, i.e., your arms should come up straight from the body onto the bar. You're going to need a spotter on this because when the triceps fatigue, they *fatigue!* No cheating options on this one either. Keep the body still, bum on the bench, and pause briefly on the chest. I like to avoid full lockout when benching because it can cause protraction of the scapula, so keep those shoulder blades together at all times throughout the lift. If you want to exploit the loading use an arch as described in my earlier article **15 Secrets to a Bigger Bench Press**.

After the warm-up sets you're going to do four sets of four reps. Again, I want them wave loaded. Here's an example:

- 1 x 4... 100 pounds
- 1 x 4... 110 pounds
- 1 x 4... 105 pounds
- 1 x 4... 115 pounds

I'm dealing in what appears to be bigger jumps (in absolute terms), but in relative terms it isn't so different than the loading shown for the bicep curl. After the wave loaded set, I want you to do an eccentric-only set. Just as you did in the first biceps exercise above, you'll be lowering a load that you cannot lift. Just make sure your partner has his hands close under the bar during the lowering, especially as the bar travels the last third of the lowering portion.

Again, put all your efforts into lowering the bar at about a four second count. If the bar speed isn't smooth (e.g. you drop it on your chest and bruise a lung) it's time to terminate the set. If this occurs before the required four reps, then you went too heavy. Try to use about 10-20% more in this set than your final four rep work set. So in the example above, you're looking to use about 125 to 135 pounds.

Close Grip Bench Press, Close Grip: This is the same body position as above, but the hands should be about six to eight inches apart. In extremely wide and close grip benching, there's an argument for externally rotating the lower arm so that the thumb is released and the bar rests diagonally across the palms as opposed to being perpendicular. This can relieve stress in the wrists brought on by the extreme rotation position required to grip the bar conventionally

(thumbs around). If you needed a spotter in the above, you *really do* need a spotter on this variation!

Same rules as before. If you know you have limited recovery ability, do only one set of this exercise. If you have great recovery ability and are feeling full of piss and vinegar, you may do two sets. If you choose this option, look to go slightly heavier on the second set.

Close Grip Bench Press, Very Close Grip: Again, everything is the same except for the grip. This time grip so close the thumbs are touching. The spotter? Keep him close! Same guidelines about regarding warm-up and work sets. If you're going to do two work sets, note the second work set will be a slightly lighter load.

This is a summary of workout B:

Close Grip Bench Press, Shoulder Width Grip

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Grip the bar in line with your shoulders	1 x 10, 1 x 8, 1 x 6	4 x 4, 1 x 4 eccentric-only	211 in the 4 x 4, 400 in the eccentric-only set	3-4 minutes

Close Grip Bench Press, Close Grip

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Grip the bar so the hands are about 6"-8" apart; a thumbs-out grip is fine	1 x 3-6	1-2 x 6-8	211	2-3 minutes

Close Grip Bench Press, Very Close Grip

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Grip the bar so close the thumbs are touching; a thumbs-out grip is fine	1 x 6-10	1 x 10-12, 1 x 15-20	211 in the 4 x 4, 400 in the eccentric-only set	1-2 minutes

Conclusion

And that's it! After a few weeks on this phase you'll have completed what may be the most comprehensive arm specialization program you've ever attempted. If your diet has been adequate and you've been faithful to the Great Guns program, then you'll now have room to get that tattoo of your girlfriend on your upper arm. Actual size, of course!

