

# Bigger Bench!!! Guaranteed Ways to Improve Your Bench Press

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Probably the most widely used and familiar exercise out there...the "bench press". But not everyone knows how to train or perform the exercise to reach their maximum potential or those who just want to improve. Here are a few routine tips and lift techniques that will help you reach your maximum potential in this foundational exercise.

## Routine Tips:

1. **Change your grip-width.** When performing your bench pressing sets it's a good idea to change up your grip width for a more fully developed press. The three standards grips I use are the A. traditional grip; hands slightly wider than shoulder-width. B. narrow grip; hands slightly inside the shoulders. And, C. wide-grip; hands placed on the bar as wide as they can go (use the rings on the bar as a reference) maintaining your entire palm on the bar while keeping the forearms parallel to each other when the bar reaches your lower chest. Use sub-maximum loads on this exercise (45-60%) for higher reps.
2. **Train the Triceps.** If you think your chest is the only muscle used in a bench press...guess again. The triceps play a major role in your ability to complete the lift. When training the triceps you need to perform lifts where you can handle heavy loads during the extension of the elbow. Along with other various extension movements, the two exercises I find work best are the "narrow grip bench-press", described above (B.) and "french presses" (a.k.a. skull-crushers).
3. **Row, row and more rows.** When I speak of the rowing movement for the lats (latissimus dorsi) I am talking about "bent-over barbell rows." Why you ask? When you are on a bench your body is in a horizontal plane, so to insure proper balance, perform your back exercises in this plane...better balance will equal better control!

## Lift Techniques:

1. **Maintain tight shoulder blades.** When you keep your shoulder blades tight you are creating a more stable surface to push off of. Also when you squeeze the shoulder blades tight you will expand your chest creating a shorter distance for the bar to travel.
2. **Keep your elbows tucked in.** This technique works along with the technique described above. This will allow you to use the lats (routine tip 3.) to drive the bar off the chest with more force than having the elbows wide which can put your shoulders in a vulnerable position when handling maximum weight loads.

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