

PERFORMANCE 101: Should you Do High Reps or Low Reps when you are Muscular Conditioning

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Many who do resistance train and other forms of muscular conditioning are often plagued by what repetition (reps) scheme to follow. A question I get often is **Should I follow high reps or low reps?** The most common suggestion is that if you want to gain strength go low reps with high weight and if you want to gain muscle mass then go higher reps with lighter weight. The problem is that going heavy for some may increase the risk of injury or decrease compliance. The good news is that many studies suggest that what matters most is going to volitional failure whatever the sets, reps, and load. ([Study](#)). Even if you are experienced in training going with higher repetitions, up to 15 to 25 reps, can deliver strength and muscle gains. Another important point is that if you are worried about injury with heavy loads you can use lower loads to failure and get results. Lastly, an average person just looking to get fit who follows a simple routine performed to volitional fatigue (momentary failure) a couple days per week can produce noticeable results. **The bottom line: Many studies found training to failure is more important than the load and repetitions. In other words to increase muscle mass and to get stronger, train to failure with lower or higher reps and it does not need to be every set.** Research: Several studies have found that training with low-loads (30–60% 1RM) results in similar hypertrophy (muscle growth) to training with moderate and high-loads (>60% 1RM) when volitional fatigue occurs [[REVIEW](#)]. [See more at our muscular fitness training page.](#)

Momentary muscular fatigue — also known as training to volitional failure or “maxing out” — simply demands performing movements until you can no longer do them without compromising form. ... “It’s the founding principle of all athletic training, or really, all physiological processes in the human body.”