

PERFORMANCE 101: Should You Do High Volume or Low Volume when you are Muscular Conditioning?

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Training with Low Reps versus High Reps has been discussed previously ([article](#)). As mentioned the key is reaching failure if it is low or high reps. Although reaching momentary failure is key reaching a point of volitional fatigue at all times is not necessary to make significant gains, especially when training with high-loads is considered. Evidence indicates that significant muscle growth occurs when the majority of training sets are performed with ~3–4 repetitions in reserve (with moderate to high-loads) ([research](#)). **Another issue that is plagued by those who follow a muscular conditioning program is that of Volume, which is the combination of Load x Sets x Repetitions x Exercises.** Traditionally bodybuilders use high volume in their training, while strength athletes would use lower. Bodybuilders would typically keep repetitions on most exercise moderate to high at 8 to 15 reps with **many sets** (3 or more per exercise) and exercises per body part (3 or more for the larger body parts: chest, back, legs and 2 or more for the smaller ones: biceps, triceps, shoulders, calves), while strength athletes would be much lower. In other words body builders and those looking to shape and tone their muscles use considerably more volume. **Recent research supports body builders training training if the goal is increasing muscle mass. It suggest that muscle hypertrophy (muscle mass gains) follows a dose-response relationship, with increasingly greater gains achieved with higher training volumes ([Study](#)).** Researchers recommend a training volume of 4-6 sets per exercise if the goal is growth, where individuals should train at 40-80% of their 1-repetition maximum, using loads greater than 60% if strength is also a target goal ([research](#)) per training session. Another important consideration: whether you want to train all your body parts together on one day or split it up. Training sessions per muscle group generally occur 2 to 3 days per week because of the need for recovery. **The bottom line: To gain muscle mass increase Training Volume.** [See more at our muscular fitness training page.](#)

Resistance training volume (RTV) is the amount of total work performed during a session of lifting and is commonly expressed as the product of repetitions X number of sets X intensity load. Any one of these variables can be adjusted to increase volume in a resistance training program. For example, one can increase RTV by performing extra sets of an exercise, adding more repetitions, or increasing the weight being lifted.

MORE DETAILS: Studies that have tried to find an optimal hypertrophy training volume have gotten all kinds of results, from less than 10 to more than 30 sets per muscle per week. A meta-analysis found that doing more than 10 sets per week per muscle is more effective than doing five to nine, which in turn is more effective than doing one to four. This relationship was also found to be stronger the more advanced the subjects were, with novice trainees not benefiting at all from doing less than five sets per week.