

THE 9 LAWS OF BUILDING MUSCLE *WITH CALISTHENICS*



MATT SCHIFFERLE

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Any individual attempting to do so at their own risk. Consult with your physician before
beginning an exercise regimen.

Greetings my friend and welcome to the Red Delta Project!

I'm your host and coach, Matt Schifferle, founder of the R.D.P.

I've been using calisthenics as my primary training method for both myself, and my clients for over 15 years now. Bodyweight training has helped me achieve many fitness goals, improve performance and erase joint pain. But I would say the biggest benefit of calisthenics training has been it's ability to build and shape my physique.



Granted, I used to be one of those guys who swore it would be impossible to build much muscle without a gym full of free-weights and machines. That's why I seldom used bodyweight training for over a decade at the start of my career.

However, years of lifting iron took their toll on my body and I tentatively gave bodyweight training a shot. I didn't think I would keep much of the muscle I had, but I needn't worry because not only did I keep my muscle, but I built even more than before!

And it makes sense when you think about it. Calisthenics has many muscle-building advantages, it's very efficient, making it easier to stick to a routine, plus it often exposes weaknesses and imbalances that can hold you back. And yet many people still struggle to build muscle with weight training.

One of the biggest reasons is that I cover nine principles I cover in the following pages. I also included an audio coaching MP3 that goes into why these things are so important in more detail. So consider this PDF more of a quick-reference guide.

I've created this PDF and MP3 download for two reasons. 1) This is an introduction to my methods and approaches to bodyweight bodybuilding. My methods are a bit different from what you may see on social media, but they are based on fundamental science. 2) Many people take a hit-or-miss approach to learning about bodyweight bodybuilding. They read a book here, or follow an influencer on social media there. These fundamental principles will give you a more solid foundation to build off of. These will also help you assess the quality of information you come across.

So welcome my friend and I wish you nothing but the best of luck in your training.

Be Fit, Live Free,

- Matt Schifferle

LAW #1

Building Muscle With Calisthenics Is Fundamentally The Same As Building Muscle With Weights.



Calisthenics *is* weight lifting; only now you're the weight!

Many people make the mistake of changing their programming and movements from weight lifting when they switch to calisthenics. This is the main reason why they don't get the results they want. It's not because they are doing a different style of lifting; it's because they changed how they use their body on a fundamental level.

Use the same number of sets, reps, routines, and movements with calisthenics as you would with weights.

You still adjust your resistance by adjusting the weight you lift. You just do it a different way with calisthenics. We'll explore how you do this in a bit.

LAW #2

Your Training Objective is to Stimulate Hypertrophy By Challenging Your Muscular Work Capacity.



Building muscle is less about what exercises or how many sets you do and more about making your muscle work to a high degree of fatigue.

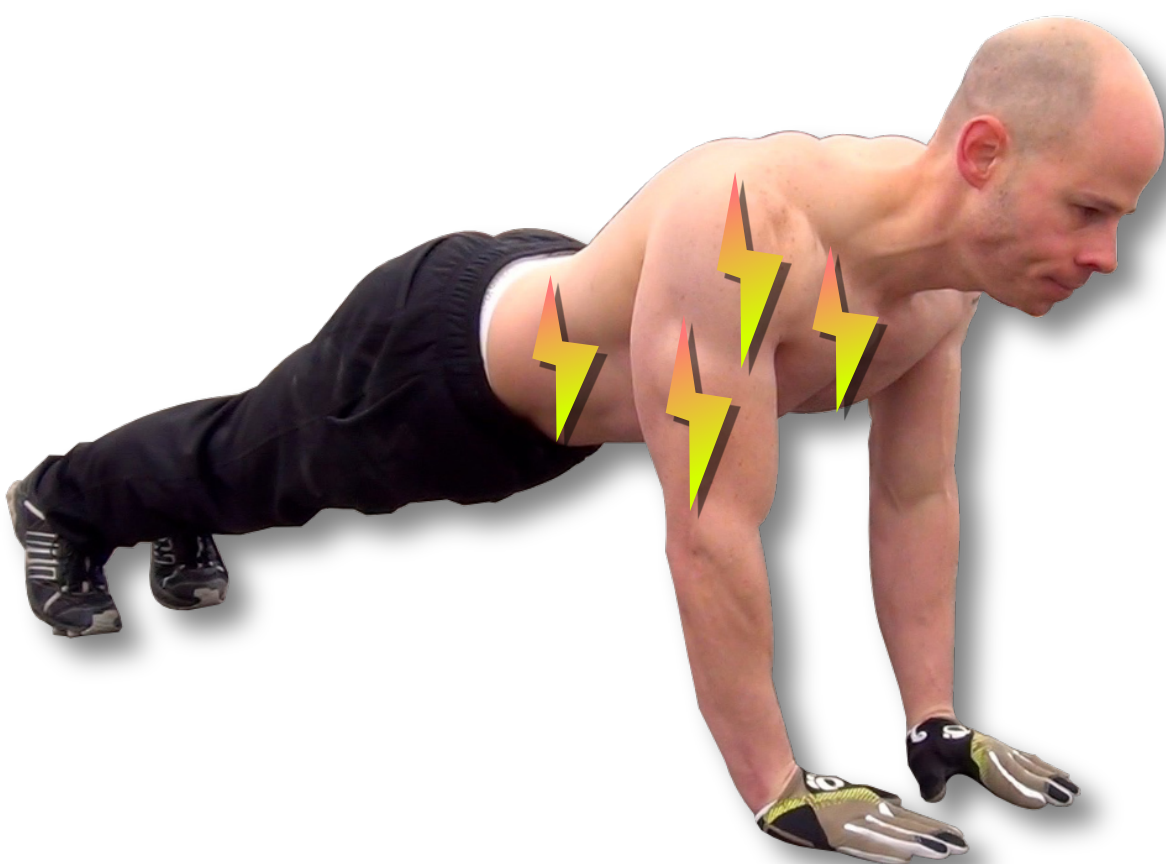
Your muscular work capacity is influenced by how much tension you create in a muscle, and how much volume, or time, you can produce that tension for relative to rest.

This doesn't mean you always need to lift to failure, but it does mean you want to make pushing your muscles to a high degree of fatigue the main objective of your workouts.

You can accomplish this objective through various workout methods, like high volume training, split training, or circuit training. You can also do many various methods and fail to challenge your muscular work capacity to a high degree.

LAW #3

You Can Only Contract A Muscle To The Degree You Can Proactively Engage It.



Fundamentally, your muscles are driven by your nervous system, not the exercise you do or the weight you lift.

Your ability to effectively work your muscular work capacity first depends on how well you can purposely engage and contract your muscles. It doesn't matter if you call it tension control or the "mind muscle connection." You can't build a muscle if you have a hard time contracting with a high degree of tension.

Sadly, many modern sedentary habits erode your tension control making it all the more difficult to effectively challenge your muscular work capacity.

That's why my programs like [Grind Style Calisthenics](#), [Overcoming Isometrics](#) and even my P.T.R method are designed to not only ensure you properly contract your muscles; but also improve how well you can do so.

LAW #4

**Your Training Volume is Limited
By Your Degree of Stability.**



**You're only as strong as you are stable. You're going to have a heck of
A time challenging your muscular work capacity when stumbling about.**

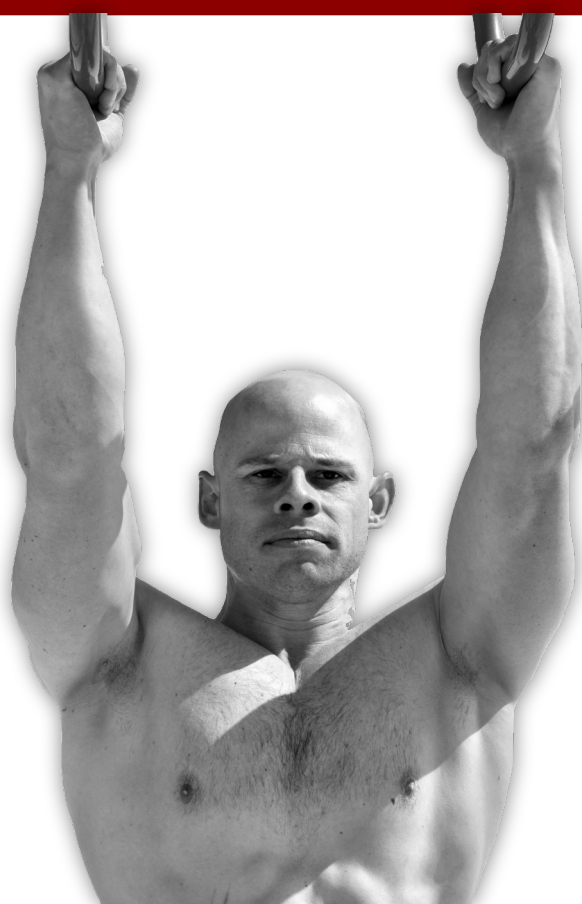
Many fancy calisthenics skills challenge your stability at the expense of your work capacity. Free standing handstands, pistol squats, and shaky core training look cool, but it can be hard to challenge your work capacity with such techniques.

That's why I include stability exercises, like shifting squats and T-planks in my warm-ups. It's also why I often use a bit more support for single leg training to ensure balance isn't a limiting factor.

Most of all, I employ exercises that require some degree of intramuscular stability, like ring push-ups, to promote stability without the liability of an unstable environment.

LAW #5

**Focus on “Boring” Exercises Over
Flashy Skills.**



**Fancy skills may gain a lot of attention and likes on social media, but they
are not the most direct way to challenge your muscular work capacity.**

“Boring” and simple techniques like dips, pull-ups, lunges, and leg raises may seem simple, but they make it a lot easier to engage your muscles, and keep your stability. That's why it's easier to challenge your work capacity and stimulate hypertrophy with the most basic movements.

Focusing especially on your pushing, pulling, and squatting movements will bring the most value to your workout for your time and effort. That's why I wrote [Push, Pull, Squat](#) to bring more attention to the efficiency and muscle-building value of those technique. Plus you can apply that approach to any training style you like.

LAW #6

Use Single-Joint “Isolation” Exercises To Grow Stubborn Muscle.



Employing basic bodybuilding techniques, like biceps curls, triceps extensions and chest flies can do wonders to level-up your physique.

It's true that basic compound exercises are your bread and butter, but don't forget to spice up your routine with some classic bodyweight bodybuilding. single joint exercises can help ensure you're challenging the work capacity of a specific muscle; especially if you're not producing enough of a stimulus from basic compound exercises.

Some may claim that you cannot isolate muscles with calisthenics, but this is a myth. Not only is it possible, but some of the most effective single-joint techniques are bodyweight-based. Triceps presses, sissy squats, and even a lot of abdominal-focused techniques are great examples from the golden age of bodybuilding.

LAW #7

Employ Progressive, Weighted and Suspension Calisthenics.



Using a wider variety of tools, techniques, and training styles affords you every opportunity for growth while weeding out potential weaknesses

Progressive calisthenics adjusts resistance by primarily shifting your weight from one part of your body to another. It's ultra-efficient but it also requires a good deal of proficiency.

Weighted calisthenics is technically more simple, but you do need weights, vests, bands or even some machines to practice it.

Suspension calisthenics offers more resistance adjustment for both weighted and progressive calisthenics, plus more bodybuilding style techniques. It does however require some rings or straps and an open place to hang them at a decent height.

LAW #8

Use Adjustable Levels of Volume And Intensity



Achieving your objective, or challenging your muscular work capacity may require different amounts of volume or intensity from one workout to the next.

Sometimes you may be able to work with more resistance and handle more intensity. Other times, you may not have the time or energy to practice a lot of volume.

Working with a given level of resistance or an amount of training volume can be a good general guideline, but don't be dogmatic about it. Your success depends on consistently achieving your training objective, and sometimes you're going to do that more if you change your volume or resistance.

If you burn out your muscle in three sets, then there's no need to do more. If your joints struggle with heavy dips then push-ups may be better. Make the objective the goal, not an arbitrary number.

LAW #9

Eat To Satisfy, Rest To Recover



It's hard to recover quickly and have productive workouts without rest and a satisfying diet.

That's why you want to rest enough, both between sets and between workouts so you can attack your next bout of exercise. Just don't wait too long as you could lose momentum and start to cool down.

Don't worry about eating a ton of protein or stuffing yourself with junk food. Eat enough to satisfy your hunger, while also nourishing yourself with nutrient-dense food.

You don't need to follow a restriction-based diet. Diets are not only unnecessary, but they are also designed to make you lose weight. Not gain it.

So rest as needed, and go when you can, while eating to satisfy your appetites and cravings.

So there you have it, the nine fundamental laws of building muscle with calisthenics training.

Keep in mind that this guide is only a general overview of these principles. Please refer to the accompanying audio session for more in-depth detail on each lesson.

I also invite you to explore the RDP YouTube Channel, Podcast and Library for more information on how to apply these principles in your training. There are many ways you can apply these laws, even without calisthenics training. You still have a lot of untapped potential, even if you've been training for several years. I want to help you unlock that potential with the rest of the R.D.P resources:



PODCAST



BOOKS

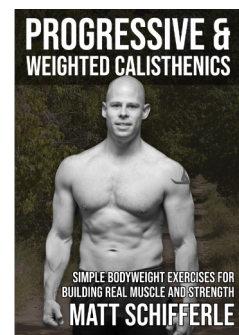


VIDEOS

Next steps:

If you're new to calisthenics training I recommend my book, [Progressive & Weighted Calisthenics](#) to build a solid foundation of muscle-building calisthenics techniques.

You can also check out the Progressive & Weighted calisthenics playlist on the RDP YouTube Channel for plenty of training tips, workouts, and training ideas.



If you're looking for a more personalized approach, I offer several coaching opportunities to fit any experience level, budget, and even location. You can learn more about my in-person, remote coaching, and micro-coaching programs [here](#).

I would love to hear from you anytime at reddeltaproject@gmail.com. I'm always here to help or lend a hand with anything you need.

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-Matt Schifferle

