

Why we use Stop Watches vs. Counting Reps?

By Richard Berle

Many clients have asked this question.

Many assume that the goal of performing an exercise is to simply make the weights go up and down. They think they're supposed to lift and lower the weights as many times as they can within a certain range of repetitions. As they start to reach muscular failure, they attempt to move faster while losing their form all for the sake of completing their targeted number of reps. Viewing the completion of those reps as the end all of the set, can create a problem with your training technique and focus. In an attempt to complete the set, all form goes out the window and the rep becomes sloppy, careless and reckless. At this point you are not thinking about how the muscles are working.

People who do it this way – perform it as though they are trying to beat the weights. However, simply making the weights go up and down is not the goal of performing an exercise. Each repetition is simply a means to accomplish the real goal: **stimulating the muscle**. In other words, the real objective is not to just “*lift the weights*”, as it is to “*work the muscle*.”

Another focus problem is using the repetition count as a means of measuring your training progress. It is easy to assume that if you can lift the same weight more times using the same exercise that you've gotten stronger. Exercising under this assumption, leads one to sacrifice form for the sake of a few extra fast, sloppy, unproductive reps. Getting back to TIME UNDER LOAD (TUL – stopwatch theory) – this means that it's not the number of reps that is important but the time that the muscles are actually contracting. Research shows that for most of the machines that 60-90 seconds is the optimal time under load for the exercise to be done. The main point to be made is that the focus while working out should be on a quality muscular contraction each time the weights are lifted. To rush a set just because you are almost at the end in an effort to complete some number of repetitions is self defeating. With the TUL your form should be under control and focused throughout the set. **One should get as much muscular stimulation as possible out of every second of the exercise rather than simply trying to complete each rep for the sake of completing it.**