



7 MINUTE MUSCLE

Power7[®]
Density Training
System



JON BENSON | Creator of *Fit Over 40*

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A Note to The Reader

UNLIKE MY OTHER BOOKS TO-DATE, *7 Minute Muscle* has no pictures or graphs. My fitness pictures are on my websites (7MinuteMuscle.com, FitOver40.com, and JonBenson.com), if you are interested in the results brevity training can produce or if you are skeptical.

I have endeavored to keep this book short and to the point, although a good deal of background was necessary to cover. I wanted you to see why I came to this conclusion rather than merely present it to you. It may have a more “scientific” tone to it in parts as compared to my earlier works. I wanted this to be exactly what it is: A supported thesis on ultra-brief training that produces serious results. Just saying so was not enough. I wanted you to know where I was coming from, and why.

Nonetheless, I have (hopefully) kept this book light and friendly in tone, while still denoting the research to support my hypothesis. The original number of cited studies numbered well over 100. I thought that was a bit too much, so I condensed the work into what you see today.

Also, as I will cover in detail, *7 Minute Muscle* is not my only mode of training. I occasionally enjoy higher volume training and longer hours in the gym. The majority of my muscle mass was built using these brevity training principles. Variety is the spice of life, and of training, so by no means assume this is the only workout you’ll ever need. It will become your foundational system of training—I’m confident of that—but I will also recommend other training systems to use every 12 weeks or so, just to give your body and your mind a bit of a rest.

I use the abbreviation “7MM” frequently as not to keep typing *7 Minute Muscle* hundreds of times. Also, “et al.” is used when referencing studies done by more than one researcher. This is just a way of saying, “Dr. X and team.”

Finally, there are surely typos. I find these little suckers escape even the most prudent of proofreaders. Feel free to email me a list and I’ll be sure to correct them in Version 2.0

Here’s to your training success!

Jon Benson

April 2007

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not one bit simpler.”

— Albert Einstein

Introduction

THERE IS NOTHING MORE VALUABLE ON THIS EARTH THAN TIME. Of all the treasures in this world, none hold a candle to the sands that are, at this very moment, draining toward the bottom of mortality’s hourglass. As Shakespeare once wrote, “Time is the justice that examines all offenders.” My friend Tim Ferriss, author of the landmark best-seller, *The 4-Hour Work Week*, echoes this by saying, “Believe it or not, it is not only possible to accomplish more by doing less, it is **mandatory**.”

You have many goals to achieve. Equally, you have a finite number of minutes in which to get it all done. No one is above this law. No man or woman can ever change what must be. Break the law of time and justice will have its say.

My interest in saving time was sparked long ago by the realization that I was wasting it en masse. Can you relate? Between the daily distractions broadcasting on the hour via the television in the living room to the latest Internet “tool” (often mere fodder for my time-killing nemesis) I was being buried in hours upon hours of non-productivity and inefficiency.

Changes had to be made. I started with the big black box in the den. I eliminated cable television, and later network television. As Clint Eastwood in character once said, “A man has got to know his limitations.” My limitations was, and still is, voluntary discipline, at least when it comes to media. I kept my DVD player so I could watch the occasional movie when I so desired. My productivity increased two-fold just from this small change.

I took this a step further—I resigned from every blog (except my own) that I was co-authoring and every forum I posted to. In order to do this successfully, I asked the site owners to literally change my password(s) for me. This would ensure my inability to dive back into the discussions no matter how intellectually challenging they were.

Radical success often requires radical action.

A few years ago, I began looking at my favorite hobby with the same timesaving scrutiny—bodybuilding. I make my living as a fitness and nutrition writer, so one could easily discount the hours upon hours spent in my week training in the gym as nothing more than a job requirement. But doesn't any job worth doing demand it be done with utter efficiency? Why apply efficiency principles to every area of my life except one?

After decreasing my workout time by more than half—and seeing better results—I decided to take this endeavor to its logical conclusion by asking one powerful, overriding, definitive question. That question was the impetus for this book and for the rest of my fitness career. The same question, answered correctly, will literally add years to your life—

“What is the least amount of time required in the gym to see the greatest results possible?”

Of course, this sounds like a reasonable question, yet it's one that most people never ask. They do not ask their trainer, their fitness mentors, or even the person looking back at them in the mirror.

The problem started at the very beginning; the time we decided to change our bodies through the rigorous joys of physical exercise. We asked a well-meaning friend perhaps, “What do you do in order to keep so fit?” Or, perhaps we picked up the latest copy of *Health & Muscle & Nonsense*, devouring every word of the so-called “champion's routine” and taking it as Gospel. Perhaps we consulted a trainer, a man or woman naturally fit from birth and indoctrinated with many of the myths this book will try to debunk.

Whatever the source of your beginning, it was probably much as my own...

You Started In The Middle

Most beginner workout protocols advise multiple sets for each lift. Of the seventeen different “official” beginner routines I analyzed for this chapter, fifteen of them recommended three sets for each exercise. Some made the distinction between warm-up sets; others did not.

The average time for these beginner workouts, roughly estimated, was *thirty-seven minutes*. Mind you, this is a beginner’s weight lifting program.

If all seventeen of these expert trainers were in front of me now, I would ask them one simple question: “Why not *thirty-six* minutes?”

Most would laugh and concede the obvious: “Yes, that would be just fine.” But let’s keep going, shall we? Thirty-five minutes? Thirty minutes? Twenty minutes? At what point would they say, “Whoa guy...that’s just not enough exercise.”

The answer is part of the problem—there is **absolutely no basis** for any such distinction. The numbers are arbitrary, utterly and completely. They are unsubstantiated by any research and upheld only in the court of some fictitious trainer/trainee hierarchy. (We will look at some case studies here in a moment.)

In other words, it’s utter bullshit—if you’ll pardon my French.

How Much Is Enough?

In any sane discussion of time or effort necessary to achieve a desired result, one would start at the *least* degree of effort and work his or her way forward. Doesn’t that make sense? So why on earth do we have beginner weight trainees starting off with multiple sets—and often multiple exercises per body part?

Now, before you jump to the conclusion that I’m in the “one set only” camp, read on. This is far from the truth, although single-set training can be highly effective. I will cover this more in detail later on. This is more of a philosophical approach that

you may find useful as you read through the pages of *7 Minute Muscle* (7MM). It is also the basis for its creation; a System that is grounded in science, common sense, practicality, a focus on results, and perhaps above all, *saving you valuable time*.

Why 7 Minutes?

Perhaps you are now asking yourself, “Why not 6 minutes, Jon?” Good! I want you to think along those lines. The reason may sound a bit strange to you until you read **The Mental Equation** segment, starting on page XXX. However, I will answer this question in shorthand for now: Numbers are powerful.

No, I am not a numerologist by any stretch. I am not superstitious, and I personally ground my life in the nature of reason. It is by that reason I understand our long-standing affection with certain numbers. Prime numbers appear throughout written history as “numbers of the gods.” The number 7 is found in heavy rotation in nearly every holy book ever written. The Greek philosophers and mathematicians had a certain fondness for 7, as for most of the first series of prime numbers. Not surprisingly, 7 is also the most popular “favorite number”, closely followed by 3.

Seven is just a really cool number. How’s that for a scientific answer?

Of course there are practical reasons as well. In the section entitled **Theta Power** you will discover that our minds have a limited capacity for focus. People who make tremendous progress rapidly are in a state of heightened theta waves. A child’s brain usually has a higher output of theta waves, especially during their formative years. This allows them to learn languages with relative ease and master new tasks at accelerated rates when compared to adults.

Elevated theta waves are one of the reasons people, especially athletes, get into that mystical state called *flow*. Being “in the zone” is often not the result of traditional focus, where one tries hard to concentrate, but of “non-focus”, or *hyperfocus*, where the world seems distant and time seems to slow down. For the elite-level athlete, this state can last for hours. For the rest of us, given our other life concerns, 7-21 minutes is just about right. And, this happens to be the duration of the three 7MM

training protocols. For most trainees, a mere 7 minutes is all that's required to do the job. For intermediate or advanced bodybuilders, I suggest 14-21 minute protocols. Experiment to see which protocol works best for you. Absolute beginners will actually be starting with a whole-body routine found on page XXX. This will allow you to learn the basic moves before proceeding into the first stage of 7MM.

You Must Be Willing To Fully Engage

Many of you may be tempted to bypass the wordy bits on the mind, or the history of 7MM (including the many influences who I properly credit), but I would prefer that you decide here and now to *fully engage*.

Let me be blunt—a simple seven-minute workout protocol is easy to develop. Making it work as well or better than well-established, longer protocols, and for the masses, takes a bit more effort. And, without your full cooperation—and that means taking the mental chapters as seriously as the lifting chapters—you will not see the results you desire.

To this fact, there is no negotiation.

I will be presenting a case for the power of hyperfocus. I will demonstrate, using both research and common sense, how a mind properly focused can direct the body to achieve more results in less time. Without knowing how to enter this state (which is partially built into the 7MM System to make things easier) you will not progress nearly as fast, and perhaps not at all.

The full extent of the mental component to 7MM will be the subject of study in the near future. As for today, I have been graciously provided some of the most cutting-edge research in the field of *psychophysiology*, or the mind's affect on the body (and vise-versa.) However, I can tell you from practical experience in sharing this protocol with others prior to its international release that those experiencing radical results took the mental component as seriously as the physical. You must do the same.

Deal?

How This Book Is Organized

I will begin with a brief discussion on the pros and cons of brevity training. Who are the proponents, other than myself? Who are the detractors? It is important that you see both sides of this fascinating debate.

From there, I will cover the 7MM System in overview: The principles involved, the history of its development, and the core factors behind its efficacy, including the principle physics of time, energy and force.

The following sections will be devoted to the specifics of the 7MM System. We will discuss the science behind power of *flow* and how your mind factors into the results and efficacy of the System. This will be followed by the specifics of the 7MM Protocol and what you can expect from each session. I will then discuss how to personalize the 7MM Protocol for intermediate and advanced trainees.

Again, it's suggested that you read this book from start to finish rather than skipping ahead to the workout section. This cannot be emphasized enough.

About My References

Originally, I had almost one hundred references for the final pre-edited copy of 7MM. I decided that some of these were redundant. After all, this is a book about saving time, so why waste yours with needless padding? Therefore, I stripped the book down to what I consider to be the bare essentials. All references to studies and books cited are found in-line. This is not a collegiate thesis, and frankly I never read the damn footnotes anyway! However, for the scholars, you can find most every study and reference using the in-line data provided.

The psychophysiology component of 7MM is somewhat theoretical. While I have applied these theories to my own training, as have my test subjects, the basis for the theories, while rooted in published studies, are still the subject of considerable debate. The best thing I can advise you to do is try it for yourself. Prove they work, or prove they do not.

This is not to say I am reaching lazy conclusions based on faulty research. Just the opposite—I believe the research points to the conclusions I will draw. The challenge in this area of study is falsifiability and practicality. I will cite many studies done with athletes who were hooked up to EEG machines. These machines graph the areas of the brain being utilized during a given task. However, no study has been done to date using these specific protocols on weight trainees. Still, the results with *skilled athletes* should prove even more valuable to the casual weight trainee. Precision is not of such demand in our sport of choice.

The Top Ten Benefits of 7MM

I wanted to end this introduction with a list of benefits my 7MM System can offer over that of traditional workout protocols. They include:

1. **Timesaving power.** This routine can save you literally weeks of time every year when added up. This can become months, even *years* over the course of a lifetime. What would that be worth to you?
2. **Measurable progress.** The largest failing among trainees is the lack of progressive resistance. “More weight” is but one of the many variables a trainee must account for in a successful protocol. Time, rest, intensity, and many other variables must also be verified if progress is to be continual. 7MM strips this down to *one simple goal per workout*. This creates less mental resistance to tracking progress.
3. **Multiple variations of resistance.** A muscle grows due to a variety of factors. Most protocols account for only a few. 7MM accounts for most every factor, and does so in a way where you do not have to think about it. Your focus is where it should be.
4. **Limited, intense focus.** Focus (or specifically, hyperfocus) is the secret behind getting more accomplished in less time. 7MM takes this to a whole new level with the use of specific mental exercises done *during* your workout which forces both left and right brain synchronicity. This state can increase theta wave output and place you effortlessly into that wonderful, productive zone we call “flow.”

5. **Less strain on your joints.** 7MM uses “heavy” weight, but heavy is relative. In reality, you will be using weights far lighter than you may be accustomed to. The protocol will allow that weight to ‘become’ heavy over a specific time period. The result is the same as you would achieve from lifting maximum poundage, but without the needless stress on your joints, ligaments, tendons and even your central nervous system.
6. **Decreased stress hormones.** Increasing your theta wave output along with training for a much shorter period of time can decrease the output of certain stress-related hormones like cortisol. These hormones often aid in the storage of body fat and serve as *catabolic agents*, destroying the muscle you are trying to build.
7. **A targeted challenge.** With 7MM, you never have to wonder about your workout: What you will do or how you will do it. Your focus is narrowed down and highly targeted. Your challenge is so specific it cannot be overlooked. You will have no room, nor time, for needless distractions.
8. **Workouts are easily altered.** When you get bored, or reach a momentary peak, you can simply add a Phase to your workout (more on this later) or change the way you train.
9. **Weekends off!** The default workout schedule for 7MM is Monday through Friday, leaving the weekends open for your enjoyment. This schedule can be modified as you will see in the chapters ahead if need-be.
10. **Improved sleep.** One of the unexpected benefits reported by 7MM trainees is that their sleep has improved. This is probably explained by the increase in theta waves. Each workout is almost like a mini meditation session, although it will certainly not feel or look like one! Being “in the zone” is a form of self-meditation, and as research has shown, meditation has a profound impact on our health, well-being and sleep patterns.

Let's get started!

“Your progress depends upon your degree of sustained intensity in a given direction.”

— Roger McDonald

A Case For Brevity

IT WAS A LANDMARK DAY IN THE FIELD OF SPORTS. It was the day when one of the most controversial studies on human performance was published. The author was an Olympic speed skating coach from Japan—Dr. Izumi Tabata.

Tabata et al. (1996) published their findings on the efficacy of extremely brief yet extremely intense cardiovascular exercise. The study and consequent applications have become known as *The Tabata Protocol*.

Using a mechanically braked cycle ergometer, Tabata compared a traditional cardiovascular protocol (moderate intensity, 60 minutes, 5 days per week) with his own medieval construct: 20 seconds of maximum intensity followed by 10 seconds of rest. These intervals were repeated eight times for a total workout time of *only 4 minutes, five days per week*.

After six weeks of testing, Tabata noted a 28% increase in anaerobic capacity along with a 14% increase in V02Max (a measure of aerobic fitness.) To demonstrate these results on *any* protocol would have been monumental—but in only four minutes? Even more shocking was the fact that these results were demonstrated in elite-level athletes. Most studies of this nature are done with untrained or moderately trained athletes who have more room to expand their fitness levels.

The Tabata Study is not the premise of 7MM—but it was a primer. Without a doubt, the long-established relationship between time and exercise began to blur.

Before Tabata, few studies were conducted that demonstrated such radical change in such minimal time. In the bodybuilding world, abbreviated training routines had been around decades prior, but they were rarely the subject of peer-reviewed study. The exception to this was the infamous Author Jones *Nautilus Study*, but this study

has come under some degree of scrutiny. Nonetheless, a comprehensive study examining abbreviated training routines was submitted to the *Journal of Exercise Physiology* by Carpinelli et al. (2004) documenting the validity of single-set, moderately intense training protocols. In their conclusion, the authors state:

“The preponderance of resistance-training studies shows no difference in the gains in muscular strength, hypertrophy, power, or endurance as a result of performing a greater number of sets.”

Most of the routines and studies examined utilized training protocols that called for training a muscle group two to three times per week. Indeed, this is a productive way to train if you have the time to do so. But, is it necessary to train muscle groups more than once per week? I believe the practical answer is no, despite the results such training may produce.

For starters, far too many bodybuilders (myself included) train their body parts only once per week and have achieved ample muscle mass. Obviously if it were not possible, I would still be Charles Atlas’ prestige, the scrawny guy on the beach who received weekly doses of sand to the face. Also, training more frequently creates a time drain. You simply have to be willing to engage in longer workouts in order to reap the benefits.

I have tried single set full body workouts and split workouts. I find them tedious, even if they are effective. The lack of enjoyment precludes me from using them myself except during periods of recovery or when my training routine becomes stale.

Brevity Training Critics

Two of the guys I respect the most in my field are Tom Venuto and Dr. John Berardi. Not only are they accomplished athletes and trainers, they are also experts in the fields of biomechanics and bodybuilding training. They are also personal friends of mine.

The routines they advise work, and they work well for many people. They often involve longer training sessions (Dr. Berardi recommends no less than five hours per week of exercise), higher caloric consumption (using more exercise to burn fat rather than reduced calories), and greater volume.

Venuto does advocate brief, intense weight workouts as “perfectly reasonable,” and employs them in his own routine. However, his preference for building muscle and burning fat is akin to Berardi’s: *Longer duration, high intensity, and higher calories.*

I have Tom and John’s permission to share an excerpt from Venuto’s Burn The Fat Blog pertaining to this subject. Ironically, John mentions a “seven minute” routine in his discussion, although I doubt he is referring to 7MM. The context of the discussion is fat-burning, but the hours both men suggest that are optimal is what we want to consider:

Tom Venuto: *It’s pretty obvious that our society has a quick fix mentality. I’ve noticed now more than ever that the fitness industry seems to be pandering to this attitude by trying to come up with programs that get more done in less time. In one regard, I think this is great—up to a point—because it helps people avoid all or none thinking and it helps people like executives and busy moms stay fit.*

Unfortunately, I see this “less time = more results” attitude getting taken to ridiculous extremes with a never ending stream of “revolutionary” new workout programs based on “just minutes a day” and just a few days a week. What are your thoughts on the marketing of these super brief exercise programs and realistically, what can the average Joe expect from a minimal time commitment?

John Berardi: *I’ll always laugh when I see these short programs (I think I saw a 4 minute and a 7 minute program recently) because they remind me of the 6-minute abs skit from the movie, There’s Something About Mary. Of course, I’m also laughing because I know they don’t work.*

Now, don’t get me wrong—I can respect someone who says, “I’m not willing to commit to more time so I’m OK with very small changes.” However, what drives me nuts is

when folks expect huge returns on small investments. This is self-deception at its worst. Remember the 5-hour rule. That's the starting point for long-term health, body comp, and performance results.

I have already advised both Tom and John that I will be sending assassins over to their respective places of residence shortly.

Of course, I'm joking. I think it's vital that you consider both sides—and that you understand the reasons behind my protocols and preferences. From there you can make up your own mind as to which system works the best for you.

Like I said, the workout protocols that Berardi and Venuto discuss work—no doubt about it. But the time requirements can be massive, and the vast majority of trainees (in my experience) simply do not want to trade off a large portion of their lives for routines that may be *slightly* more effective.

I say “slightly” in that I have no direct comparison. All I know is that both 7MM (and other brevity-based routines) and those recommended by experts like Berardi and Venuto both work. It comes down to a personality issue. If you enjoy longer workouts, more time in the kitchen, and six or more smaller meals per day, go for it. If you're like me and enjoy shorter workouts, preferring a moderate to lower-calorie diet to burn off the fat, then 7MM is ideal for you.

There are two areas of disagreement. The first involves the number of hours necessary to train in order to achieve any fitness-related goal and/or greater health. The second is that shorter routines “do not work.” They not only work, but they often produce superior results as Tabata demonstrated.

Let's look at a few more studies that focus on abbreviated training, plus a few case studies involving real-world role models.

Is Five Hours of Exercise Required?

Dr. Berardi references “five hours of exercise” in the excerpt above. This comment probably stems from several studies from 2006 that suggested a minimum of five hours per week of moderately intense exercise for total health. Several called for much more than this if someone is currently obese. Or this could be John’s personal experience with his athletes, which is vast and highly respected.

We have to look at several variables. First should be total health—heart, lungs and otherwise. Second should be fat-burning. Finally, we should look at the time required to gain muscle.

Exercise Time and Total Health

Duscha et al. (2005) working with the Duke University Medical Center recently published a study in *CHEST*, a peer-reviewed physicians journal. Dr. Duscha, himself a picture of health (I always enjoy studies done by doctors who actually exercise!) found that **simple** exercise had a profound effect on total health. Ironically, this study was published under the premise of time over intensity! What I found striking was the time Duscha recommends: *only 125 to 200 minutes a week*.

This moderate amount of exercise done at medium intensity significantly improved his subject’s aerobic fitness and reduced their risk of cardiovascular disease. More was “slightly better” (longer duration, higher intensity), but not significant enough to affect the conclusions. Also, BMI changes were evident at the low end of the spectrum as long as intensity was fairly high, equivalent to walking brisk up hills or light jogging.

This amounts to only 18-28 minutes **per day** of moderate exercise to achieve greater health and a decreased BMI (lower body fat.) Duscha went on to say, “If you distill our results down, the public health message is: You only need to walk briskly for 12 miles per week or for approximately 125 to 200 minutes per week to improve your health. This sheds more light on the question, “What is the minimum amount of exercise I need to do to get a health benefit?” (Does that question sound familiar?)

Duscha went on to say, “Although our results did point toward amount being more important, it is very likely fitness levels can be improved by increasing **either** amount or intensity.” Remember this comment when looking over the 7MM protocols.

My guess is that participants achieved their results because of the ease of the protocol as well as the exercise itself. Being able to stick with an exercise program is absolutely vital. This is yet another benefit of shorter duration training.

Is 7 Minutes Enough?

You may be wondering if 7MM qualifies as a heart-healthy fitness program since it is, at its most basic level, only seven minutes in length. The answer is both yes *and* no.

If we take the Tabata findings and (a few pages later) Dr. Winett’s GXP, we have to admit the health benefits of intense, brief exercise. But the Tabata Protocols are not practical for most trainees. They are *too intense*. Tabata himself said his athletes were often on the ground gasping for air after a workout! Most people will never go to that extreme. GXP is a more reasonable and equally tested protocol that is between nine and fifteen minutes in length. I am certain this approach offers the best of both worlds—short on time, high on results. When combined with the walking routine I recommend, 7MM is arguably *healthier* than traditional workout programs. There is less stress on the joints and nervous system.

So, why do I say “no”? I do so because I’m honest. The answer is more accurately, “I’m not sure.” I realize that some of you may opt for the minimum seven-minute protocol and be done with it. I remain unsure if this alone combines enough intensity (well over that mentioned by Duscha) with sufficient exercise time. I suspect that training of any kind will produce greater health, and I can say seven minutes is all that’s needed to build lean muscle. If your nutrition plan is solid, this may be all you need for total health.

7MM was designed to produce the most muscle in the least amount of time. If this is *all* you can do, it’s far better than nothing, and you will most certainly achieve the

physical goals most people are after. I recommend adding just a few more minutes to the end of the workout solely for your heart—but only 2-3 days per week. That's a reasonable request, wouldn't you agree? For those who want total health along with the better body, add my walking and dietary recommendations. You'll be set for life.

For the intermediate and advanced levels of 7MM, the answer is *absolutely* yes, as these levels fit the recommendations for exercise duration perfectly. I would still include the cardio suggestions I discuss if you have the time. You will only see better results, and this will all but ensure you are taking a totally healthy approach to fitness.

I have to admit it—studies do not often persuade me. For most every study out there, you can find another that contradicts it. There are often too many variables in play, plus it can be difficult to accurately monitor a participant's activity if the study requires off-site training or dietary practices.

This is where I turn to role models. These are everyday people who have used brevity training successfully over a long period of time. While there are many to choose from, my two favorites are Clarence Bass and Dr. Richard Winett.

Clarence Bass: Ultra-Fit and Muscular At 70

I have been following Clarence's training career since I was in college. His high intensity, low-volume training approach made sense to me. Even more, his track record of superior fitness and health for more than 50 years speaks for itself.

Clarence speaks about his most recent training protocol:

I began doing weights and aerobics back-to-back, on consecutive days. I did weights on Saturday and high-intensity aerobics on Sunday. I walked Monday through Friday. It worked surprisingly well.

Clarence has also experimented with very long periods of rest between body parts—over twenty days! While this did not prove successful in the long term, his low-set approach most certainly has. Clarence probably trains with weights less than 70

minutes per week while maintaining a physique most teenagers would envy, and the heart health to boot. It is important to note that Clarence walks nearly every day. I recommend the same for fat burning and health. However, it cannot be rationally argued that one must train for hours and hours a week to see results when one looks at Clarence Bass as a role model. You can see for yourself at CBass.com.

Dr. Richard Winett: Ageless Athlete and Single-Set Advocate

Dr. Winett, Heilig Meyers Professor of Psychology and the Director of Clinical Science Training at Virginia Tech, has been an advocate of single-set, relatively brief training protocols for many years. Richard was one of the authors of the *Journal of Exercise Physiology* study on exercise protocols. He is also the author of *Master Trainer* (Ageless-Athletes.com), a wonderful periodical on practical fitness.

Dr. Winett discussed the summary of this report in *Master Trainer* (Dec. 1997):

“...24 out of 25 strength training studies reported that there was no significant difference in the magnitude of muscular strength or hypertrophy (when it was measured) between training with single versus multiple sets.” [quoting Dr. Carpinelli]

Richard’s own routine is a bit different than Bass’ routine. He prefers four workouts per week of as little as thirty minutes each. His physique and health, like Bass’, speaks for itself. If we could all be so muscular and fit in our golden years!

Dr. Winett is also responsible for a more reasonable version of the Tabata Protocol that I have used for years called GXP, or *Graded Exercise Protocol*. GXP is not merely a guess on Winett’s part, but a protocol that has been university tested and proven to produce results. (ASPIRE Program; *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*.)

Dr. Winett states the following:

“My aerobic training consists of performing the Graded Exercise Protocol (GXP). I do a five-minute graded warm-up to reach about 75% of my aerobic capacity. I then perform a five-minute work part at about 80% of my aerobic capacity, followed by a 5-

minute cool-down that reverses the warm-up. I perform this twice per week on the Concept 2 Rower about 15 minutes after upper-body training. On one of the sessions in a week, usually the second session, I may do the work part of the GXP at 85% of my aerobic capacity.”

This is just another example that shatters the myth of extended periods of cardiovascular training being necessary for improved heart health and lung capacity.

Is This An HIT Manifesto?

By now you may be wondering just how serious I was when I stated that 7MM is not about “HIT” or single-set training on my homepage. It is not, although it uses what I feel is the best of the HIT world—*systematic undertraining*. It is my position that the results people see from single-set training are less related to the number of sets as they are to the shorter training time. The central nervous system is easily taxed. Once strained, muscular gains come to a halt. HIT-style training can go a long way to preventing this from occurring. And, I do believe HIT-specific training is a great way to go, with the exception of two problems: Injury and mental burnout.

I trained in a strict HIT fashion for two years. During that time, I built some descent muscle mass. However, as careful as I trained, I experienced nagging injuries that often necessitated layoffs in order to recover. Also, I found myself dreading my workouts. Knowing that every set had to be an all or nothing effort was just too much to deal with after a long day at the office or in the middle of life’s many challenges. I needed something a bit more practical, but I did not want to dismiss the obvious benefits HIT (or single-set training) has to offer.

In fairness to HIT, protocols can be altered to reduce the intensity required. However, for myself, I found these to demand more time in the gym, not less. My passion was, and is, to discover the *least amount of work necessary*.

Nonetheless, these studies and role model examples prove the validity of shorter workouts with fewer sets, each resulting in improved health and fitness.

What About Volume?

Always the troublemaker, I now have to part ways with my own role models and state that *volume is important*. While studies have shown single-set training to be effective, some of them rate effectiveness only in terms of strength. And, as stated earlier, studies often contradict one another. When so many athletes use volume (more sets) in their training, one must examine why. Could it be the majority of trainees are deluded, or does volume have a legitimate role in building muscle?

Schlumberger et al. (2001) analyzed single set versus multiple set training in females. Their findings suggest superior strength gains occurred following 3-set strength training compared with single-set strength training in women with basic experience in resistance training.

Ostrowski et al. (1997) demonstrated that two or three sets (9-12 RM) were superior to one set (9-12 RM) with regards to gains in triceps brachii muscle mass. In fact, many studies show volume to have a pronounced effect on strength, which plays a role in long-term muscle growth.

We now have two studies that give some validity to greater volume. However, there's much more to the story...

Training Loads

In a similar study involving the tricep muscle, Moss et al. (1997) found that specific *load* (the relative amount of weight used) had a demonstrable effect on muscle growth. Using three-five sets, researchers demonstrated that 35% of one rep maximum (1RM) load for seven repetitions resulted in muscle growth—but no growth was seen using 90% for two repetitions or 15% for ten repetitions. While Moss et al. did not compare these results to single-set protocols, the results of *load on hypertrophy* may factor into the volume equation. Obviously, a single set of only 35% 1RM for seven repetitions is not enough to produce momentary muscular failure, or even close to it.

Daniel Moore and Ron Sowers at HypertrophyResearch.com analyzed many controlled studies focused on hypertrophy and the variables required to achieve it. Their conclusions:

“Looking at this body of work it seems pretty clear that adequate work would be necessary to increase the hypertrophic response to training. The volume used would be dependant on the load or the intensity of 1RM. It appears that as long as the work output is matched that hypertrophy would increase independently among intensity used, within a varying range from 60% to 100%+.”

While I will be covering hormonal responses to training later in the book, I did want to mention a particular study that seems to shed light on both the single-set, high intensity approach and the volume approach to training. Hormones are responsible for muscle growth, fat burning, and a host of other metabolic functions. Human Growth Hormone (GH) in particular has a profound effect on both muscle and fat.

With this in mind, Goto et al. (2003) and their study on intensity training and GH demands attention. Researchers found that a single set of low intensity resistance exercise immediately following high intensity resistance exercise stimulated growth hormone secretion in men—but GH elevation was **not seen** when participants stopped after a single, high-intensity set.

Now we’re getting somewhere.

We have the basis for the foundations of 7MM. We have a case for single-set (higher intensity) training, moderate volume training, and the effect of load relative to *both* on muscle growth *and* hormone release. Each of these principles, including density and the physics concerning time, energy, and force, will be discussed in the following chapter as we piece together the ideal combination, with minimal time for maximum results being our foremost priority.

“The whole is more than the sum of its parts.”

— Aristotle

The Building Blocks of 7MM

WHILE LOOKING AT THE DATA ON VARIOUS TRAINING PROTOCOLS, I had to keep reminding myself of my true objective: To create a routine that would produce the most results in the least amount of time. Within this framework, certain concessions were necessary in order to achieve the greater good.

For example, let's consider John Berardi's approach of “more food, more training.” I believe that this may produce superior results when compared to 7MM and my particular style of eating. However, the trade-off makes it impractical. The time it takes to consume six or more meals per day is simply not worth the marginal increase in results, at least for me. Also, lower calorie intake is often associated with longer life spans and decreased disease. Excessive food, no matter if it's being used as fuel or stored as fat, has a stressor effect on the internal organs.

Besides, cooking is a pain in the butt. I have better things to do.

The same principle of end/means was used for every other training variable as well. Intensity (single versus multiple sets), volume, load, and time were all taken into consideration. Sacrifice a bit here to gain even more there—that was my axiom.

The end-result is a program rooted in synergy on every level, taking what I found to be the best of the mix required to produce maximum hypertrophy in minimal time. The routine is a combination of multiple variables as well as the purposeful exclusion of others that, while effective, betray the overall goal of time-sparing efficiency.

Let's take a look at our building blocks, or *variables*.

The Laws of Physics

There's a simple equation at the heart of 7MM: **Power = Work / Time**. Our goal is to increase power output, which will lead to an increase in muscle mass. This must be done within the construct of this basic equation, which effectively states:

More work in less time = more power.

With this in mind, let's look at our training variables.

Intensity

Intensity is a fundamental variable in any solid workout protocol. The question becomes how much intensity, and for how long. The greater the intensity, the less time you can spend producing it.

Intensity is not the end-all be-all of weight training. The HIT guys like to make this assertion, but it is (like all other variables) nothing more than a tool. We will use it wisely. The 7MM training system is very demanding. Some will consider it the most intense workout they've ever experienced. It's damn hard work! But it is not *continual* intensity. As we saw from the Goto study, a non-intense set following an intense set produced elevated levels of GH, a critical mass-building and fat-burning hormone. As you will see, the second Interval of the 7MM protocol (The Mass Interval) will help balance the extreme level of intensity toward the end of the first Phase and help the body enter into this GH-producing state.

Intensity is primarily generated in 7MM via the use of extended rest/pause sets. Rest/pause (traditionally) are essentially one long set that continues past the point of momentary failure by means of a short rest interval. So, for example, once you max out at eight reps, you rest for a few seconds, and then try for one or two more reps. This is a very intense way to train; however 7MM does not utilize a traditional style of drop sets in its approach, as you will soon learn.

How Much Intensity?

Intensity is a tricky beast. You must employ enough to force the body into adaptation, but not so much that you wreak havoc with your central nervous system and begin to dread your workouts.

Most single-set (HIT) protocols call for training to *failure*, or momentary muscular fatigue. It is the state where you can no longer lift the weight you are using without assistance. Many HIT advocates go many steps further and employ forced repetitions, rest/pause repetitions (similar to 7MM in ways; different in others), and so on. These trainees have an entire arsenal of mega-intense weaponry at their disposal. Unfortunately, most trainees shoot themselves in the foot rather than hit the bulls-eye with these techniques.

So, how much is enough? Izquierdo et al. (2006) devised a study that examined the efficacy of eleven weeks of resistance training to failure versus non-failure, followed by an identical five-week peaking period of maximal strength and power training for both groups. They wanted to measure the underlying physiological changes in basal circulating anabolic and catabolic hormones. If catabolic hormones increase, the training will not be successful. If anabolic hormones increase, you're a happy camper.

Strength training leading to failure resulted in *reductions* in resting concentrations of IGF-1 and elevations in IGFBP-3 (not good), whereas non-failure training resulted in *reduced* resting cortisol concentrations as well as an *elevation* in resting serum total testosterone concentration. It appears the body does not respond well hormonally to training to failure.

IGF-I is a major component of the growth hormone axis, a system of growth mediators, receptors, proteases, and binding proteins that control somatic and tissue growth in many species. IGF-I also plays a central role in exercise-associated muscle hypertrophy. The last thing you want is a *decrease* in IGF-1.

Their investigation also demonstrated a potential benefit for non-failure training on improving strength and power, especially during the subsequent peaking training period. Only local muscular endurance increased when training was taken to failure.

7MM encourages you to avoid failure, for the most part, like the plague. However, you will come close to it, especially on your last repetition of both your intervals. It should be noted that taking your last repetition to failure may in fact prove beneficial. The study cited above took multiple sets to failure. So, if you do happen to end your 7MM intervals with *positive* failure (no forced repetitions are allowed), you should be fine. Just do not overdo it.

There will be moments in your intervals where another rep seems next to impossible, but you go for it anyway in order to beat your previous best. I advise you to curtail your enthusiasm and rack the weight just before this moment occurs, unless you are on the last repetition of your interval. Your hormones will thank you.

Intervals will be explained in detail in the chapters ahead.

Intensity cannot be sustained over duration. Smilios et al. (2003) looked at eleven men to monitor their hormonal releases after varying numbers of repetitions. They were put into three groups. The first group used five repetitions with three-minute rest intervals at 88% 1RM. The second used ten repetitions with two-minute rest intervals at 75% 1RM. The third group used fifteen repetitions with only one-minute rest intervals at 60% 1RM.

The research showed no differences in testosterone levels in any of the groups, however GH and cortisol increased with the ten and fifteen repetition groups after additional sets. HGH and cortisol responses stopped increasing after the fourth set for the ten-rep group and sixth set for the fifteen-rep group. This study shows that when training in the medium repetition range, multiple sets seemed to stimulate a hormonal adaptation, but only up to a point, varying due to intensity and 1RM.

In short, the greater the intensity (from either weight or training to failure), the *shorter* your workouts must become.

Load

Load refers to the amount of weight being used relative to your 1RM (one-rep max) for that lift. If you can bench press 100 pounds for one repetition, your 80% 1RM weight would be 80 pounds, which you could only do for a few repetitions. 40-55%

1RM will be your target weight for all 7MM lifts. Therefore, the load may be less than what you are used to. That's okay—remember the Moss study? Moss' subjects realized their best (and only) gains in muscle size with decreased loads.

7MM will maximize the load/intensity equation through the use of two timed intervals—Power and Mass. Both intervals are explained in the chapters ahead.

Volume

Volume represents the total amount of work done in a given period of time. While there are fancy equations to determine actual volume, I find them unnecessary. I define volume simply as the aggregate total of weight lifted in a given session.

If you lift 100 pounds for three sets of 10 reps, you have lifted 1000 pounds for three sets ($100 \times 10 \text{ reps} = 1000$) for a total of 3,000 pounds of volume (3 sets $\times$ 1,000 pounds per set.) Adding a fourth set of five reps would increase the total volume from 3,000 pounds to 3,500 pounds.

Many trainees think of volume as simply the number of sets performed. *Low* volume training is often defined as workouts using a limited number of sets, often as few as one set as we have discussed. *High* volume is a workout consisting of multiple sets (4 to 10 or more.) While this is generally accurate, I do not find it helpful when attempting to determine what volume protocol is right for you.

For example, a high volume workout may be 20 sets of chest work. But what if each set used only 10% of your 1RM? While 20 sets looks like a lot of work, at 10% 1RM it would be child's play, especially if rest intervals were kept at, say, 60 seconds.

It makes more sense to think in aggregate terms when it comes to assessing volume. Multiple sets can be low volume, and minimal sets can become higher-volume protocols depending on load. Lifting 300 pounds for 2 sets (traditionally low-volume) produces a greater aggregate, or volume of work (600 pounds lifted) than 100 pounds for five sets (traditionally a higher volume set scheme.)

In 7MM, aggregate volume is *crucial*. It will become the most important factor in how you gauge your progress from week to week.

Density

Density is one of my favorite variables, and one of the least understood. Density echoes back to our laws of physics, as it is the relationship of **volume to time**. If you do 2 sets of curls with 50 pounds, your volume is 100. If you achieve this in 60 seconds, your density is greater than if you achieve it in 90 seconds. The more work you can do in the least amount of time gives you the greatest density.

Vince Gironda was a pioneer in the field of density training, although he never gave it that title. Legendary strength coach Charles Staley popularized the term *density training*, although Joe Weider made a passing mention of it in the early 80s. “German Volume Training” ala Charles Poliquin was another way of saying the same thing: More work in less time. But the pioneer was Gironda, and I personally consider him to be the guru of density training. All others, including myself, are walking in his shadow. I owe much of my inspiration for 7MM to the late Vince Gironda.

Vince became relatively famous in the bodybuilding community with his initial density protocols. 8×8 (eight sets of eight reps with the same weight and almost no rest) was around decades prior to German Volume Training. Vince had many variations on this theme: 10×10 , 15×3 , and so on. The idea was always the same: *Increase the total energy output.*

Notice the difference in performing 8×8 Gironda-style as opposed to what we see in a traditional bodybuilding set/rep scheme. Granted, eight sets is pretty high volume in a traditional workout, but there are guys who do that level of work.

In Vince’s world, this workout would be over in *less than seven minutes!* Obviously a lower 1RM was used. Traditionally, this workout may take at best 13.5 minutes assuming total focus. In reality, 18-20 minutes is more likely.

Let me show you how a typical Vince Gironda density-style workout would compare with a more traditional set/rep scheme:

Dumbbell Presses: 8×8 with 15-20 seconds rest, 50% 1RM = 50lbs

Total volume = 3,200 pounds (8 reps x 50 = 400 pounds x 8 sets = 3,200 in 6.5 minutes.) Your **density score** would be $3200/390$ (seconds) = 8.2. Make sense?

Now, let's compare this to traditional training. In order to achieve eight sets with eight reps in a standard set/rep protocol, you would be forced to start with a low 1RM for a set or two (50 pounds). By resting 60 seconds, you could increase this weight as you progress. Perhaps the third set would be with 55 pounds, the fourth with 60 pounds, and so on. However, you would quickly find that one-minute rest intervals would not be sufficient to continue increasing the load. Longer rest would be required (90-120 seconds), or a leveling off/reduction of weight...

1x8x50 = 400 (rest 60)

1x8x60 = 480 (rest 60)

1x8x60 = 480 (rest 60)

1x8x65 = 520 (rest 90)

1x8x70 = 560 (rest 90; max weight reached)

1x6x70 = 420 (rest 120; reduce weight to achieve reps; rest longer)

1x8x60 = 480 (rest 90)

1x6x60 = 360 (end; peaked at six reps)

810 seconds = 13.5 minutes; volume = 3,700 pounds

Your **density score** would be $3700/810 = 4.6$ -- nearly *half* the density factor of the Gironda protocol. Even increasing the weights substantially over the estimated load factor would not make a significant difference in your density factor!

The 7MM System endeavors to improve on the Gironda protocol by selecting a slightly heavier load and varying the rest intervals sufficiently to force **lower repetitions** as both the Power and Mass Intervals proceed. This increases the demands on *both* Type IIA and IIB muscle fibers. Type II fibers have the highest potential for hypertrophy. When stimulating these fibers you need to keep them under tension for about 20-60 seconds. Lower reps hit the Type II B fibers, while higher reps attack the Type II A. The Power Interval will force you to keep your reps as high as five but as low as one, while the Mass Interval will have you hitting ten reps max. This will result in greater hypertrophy while still keeping all the benefits of density training.

Time

As you may have guessed by now, *time* plays a vital part in the 7MM System. Each of the two intervals are designed to force you to achieve a greater aggregate volume from the previous workout by increasing your total reps within a specific period of time. More work in less time equals *more muscle*.

The Power Interval is five minutes long; the Mass Interval is two minutes long. These are done back-to-back, resulting in a seven-minute “superset”.

Intermediate and advanced trainees can experiment with repeating these intervals using different exercises. I will provide routines for 14 and 21-minute workouts. However, this is not encouraged until you see how well you do with the seven minutes protocol. Remember—start at the beginning, not in the middle.

Force

After reading The Mental Equation section of 7MM, the term *force* may never sound the same to you. For now, we will discuss force as it applies to lifting technique.

In physics, **Force = Mass x Acceleration**. This means the amount of force you generate during weight lifting can be increased by either lifting more weight *or* by lifting the same amount of weight at a faster speed. You will soon see how this principle of force can apply over a macro period as well as a micro period; over a group of sets combined into one interval set.

Force can also change during each repetition based on the speed and power applied to lift the weight. This is one of the most crucial aspects of building muscle. You must *explode up and slow down*. Both the positive lift (concentric) and negative, or lowering of the weight back to your starting position (eccentric) have specific growth-producing properties. The concentric phase should be explosive, while the eccentric phase must be more controlled, and thereby longer in duration.

Explode Up

The concentric portion of your lift should be explosive. Many trainees use a similar cadence between their concentric and eccentric lifting, which I believe is a grave

mistake. Concentric explosiveness results in greater power, as well as a surprising benefit: A boost in metabolism.

Mazzetti et al. (2007) discovered that participants in the squat exercise using explosive contractions and moderate intensity induced a greater increase in the rate of energy expenditure than those who squatted using slow contractions or high intensity. This was documented in every test subject. By using explosive contractions and moderate exercise intensity, you can increase your energy expenditure during and after resistance exercise, which will help you in your fat-loss endeavors.

Bigland et al. (1987) demonstrated that explosive training stimulates an increase in rate coding, which may work in conjunction with motor unit recruitment to provide optimal neural adaptations for increased power production. Ariel et al. (1976) showed conclusively that variable resistance during sets led to greater gains in strength. To facilitate maximum muscular involvement, you must vary the resistance. One way to vary your resistance without touching the weight on the bar is vary *time*. Both exploding up and lowering down can alter resistance.

Slow Down

Animal and human studies have documented that protein synthesis rates increase dramatically after eccentric exercise when compared to concentric-only exercise. When eccentric only training has been compared to concentric only training, several researchers have discovered that eccentric training yields greater increases in strength and muscle mass than concentric. However, the combination of both is essential in continual progress and maximum hypertrophy.

Hortobagyi et al. (1996) looked at six weeks of eccentric versus concentric training in women. After the training, the concentric group improved strength 36% while the eccentric group had a 42% increase. Similar findings were reported by Farthing et al. (2003), LaStayo et al. (2003), Seger, et al. (1998) and Hortobagyi et al. (1997).

So what about muscle size? The stimulus for muscle growth is *microtrauma* to the muscle following exercise. The process of lengthening during a contraction, which is greater during the concentric portion of a lift, increases the amount of microtrauma experienced by the muscle. This stimulates the muscle to increase muscle fiber size in

order to handle future loads. While concentric training does induce some microtrauma, eccentric training is more effective for promoting muscle growth. These findings were documented by Farthing et al. (2003) and LaStayo et al. (2003).

Hypertrophy: Your Ultimate Goal

The end result of any weight lifting workout should be *hypertrophy*, or an increase in muscle mass. As I have demonstrated, load and volume have a direct correlation to hypertrophy when factored with intensity variables.

It is incorrect to say high or low-volume training produces greater hypertrophy without adding some important caveats. Total load in relation to 1RM is a crucial variable. If the total load is too great, overtraining sets in quickly and hypertrophy is stalled. If too little, there is insufficient intensity to create a biological adaptation demand (i.e. increase in muscle mass.) Personal preference, motivation, nutrition, and stress all play into the equation as well.

Hypertrophy remains somewhat a mystery. Reviewing what we have learned, there are studies that show hypertrophy resulting from loads as low as 40% 1RM (with sufficient volume) and as great as 100%+ (with governed volume.) Others clearly show that single-set training can increase hypertrophy. Clearly there is not one superior way to achieve hypertrophy. Therefore, it makes the most sense to employ *all* of the training variables possible in each session, allowing variation for each based on individual tolerance, preference, and results. That is what 7MM provides.

7MM achieves hypertrophy by utilizing all the variables shown to increase muscle mass. You will be training for aggregate repetitions (covered later) using the lower end of your 1RM, or about 40-50%. Using the principles of time and energy, you will be creating a greater demand on the muscles as each 1RM interval progresses, reaching 100% intensity in your *relative* 1RM.

Relative 1RM is different from your literal 1RM. As your 7MM intervals progress, your r1RM will decrease. What was once your 40-50% 1RM weight becomes a weight you cannot lift for more than a single repetition. Using r1RM protocols is

more conducive to joint safety, removing inertia from your lifts, and increasing your mental focus. It is easier to focus on your visualized objective (say, a larger chest or more toned legs) if your concentration isn't solely focused on lifting a heavy weight from point A to point B.

There's a common expression among bodybuilders: "Decide if you want to be a powerlifter or a bodybuilder." Powerlifters focus all their energies on lifting heavy objects at nearly any cost. Bodybuilders (or bodyshapers, if you prefer) must visualize the muscle working, focusing their mind as much on the *reason* for lifting the weight as on the weight itself.

Your muscles have no idea how much weight is on the bar. Making 50 pounds as challenging as 100 pounds is the art of smart training. In this example, 50 pounds would be your r1RM.

Novice weight trainers demonstrate about twice the improvement in half the time when compared with stronger experienced weight trainers (Hakkinen et al. 1987.) As you progress, your body's ability to recuperate is often less than your ability to adapt to longer workouts. Advanced trainees must workout *smarter*, not longer, if their goal is to increase muscle mass.

Now, let's get to the heart, or rather the *head* of the matter. It is simply not enough to train with all the proper physical variables in place. You must learn to master your thoughts during your workouts. This alone will increase your results, and it is a key factor in the success of the 7MM System.

*“Our limitations and success will be based, most often, on your own expectations for ourselves. What the mind dwells upon, the body **acts** upon.”*

— Denis Waitley

The Power of Flow

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT WE HAVE APPROXIMATELY 65,000 thoughts each day. Ninety-five percent of those thoughts are the same thoughts we had yesterday, and the day before that and the day before that. And most of the thoughts we have, be they positive or negative, elicit specific *physical* responses. It makes sense to look into this.

Before we get into the science and specifics necessary to think your way to faster results I want to utterly convince you that success begins and ends *between your ears*. If you have any doubts as to the validity of this claim, read on.

The Mind and Weight Loss

Crum et al. (2007) studied whether the relationship between exercise and health is moderated by one's mind. Eighty-four female room attendants working in seven different hotels were measured on physiological health variables affected by exercise. Those in the informed condition were told that the work they do (cleaning hotel rooms) is good exercise and satisfies the Surgeon General's recommendations for an active lifestyle. (This, of course, is not true.)

Examples of how their work was exercise were provided. Subjects in the control group were not given this information. Although actual behavior did not change, four weeks after the intervention, the informed group perceived themselves to be getting significantly more exercise than before. As a result, compared with the control group, they showed a **decrease** in weight, blood pressure, body fat, waist-to-hip ratio, and body mass index. These women thought they were exercising and

consequently lost weight, despite the fact that they were doing *nothing* out of the ordinary whatsoever.

Beck et al. (2005) tracked 105 obese individuals. Sixty-two of them participated in three hours of *cognitive therapy* per week for ten weeks, while the rest served as controls. Cognitive therapy helps isolate negative thoughts, such as “I cannot lose weight” or “I will always be fat.” Eighteen months after the therapy ended, those in the cognitive therapy group had lost an average of 23 pounds, while the control group *gained* an average of 5 pounds.

The Mind and Performance

Marchant et al. (2005) wired test subjects up to weight machines that monitored levels of electrical activity in their biceps. Subjects were then asked to **think** in two different ways while exercising. One was not targeted while the other was specific to *how* the muscle was feeling and functioning during the movement. Researchers found that the subject’s muscles worked more when they focused on what the muscles were doing. Results indicated that potentially greater strength would result from engaging in this practice of putting your “mind in your muscle.”

There’s more. Scientists in South Africa discovered something peculiar about fatigue: It doesn’t begin in the muscles. You know that burning feeling you get in your muscles toward the end of a hard set? It comes from your **mind**. Biopsies of exhausted marathoners showed plenty of glycogen (the body’s main fuel) and ATP (a chemical that stores energy), despite the fact they “hit the wall”. Their conclusion: Fatigue sets in not when your muscles run out of gas, but when your brain tells instructs them to conserve energy.

How powerful is the mind? Australian psychologist Alan Richardson chose three groups of students at random. None of them had any experience with visualization. The first group practiced free throws every day for twenty days. The second group basically did nothing at all. The third group spent twenty minutes every day *visualizing* free throws with **no** additional practice at all.

Twenty days later, the group that practiced daily improved twenty-four percent. The second group didn't improve at all. But the visualization only group improved *twenty-three percent*—almost as much as the group that actually practiced! Richardson later noted that the most effective visualization occurs when the participant both **feels** and **sees** what they are doing in their mind prior to any physical engagement.

That's not all—Smith et al. (1997) demonstrated that participants who weight trained over a twelve-week period achieve a 30% increase in strength. Those who only visualized themselves going through the same training circuit experienced a 16% increase in strength in the same movements.

Now do I have your attention?

Are you ready to find out how to fully maximize the power of that wonderful computer between your ears and use it to make greater gains in less time?

I thought so.

How Your Mind Fits Into The 7MM System

Your mind, properly focused for just seven minutes, will enable you to produce far greater physical, measurable results than sixty minutes of half-ass focus punctuated by cell phone use, gazing at attractive gym members, or reliving the day's problems as you proceed to the next set. Hopefully this is common sense.

However, there's more to this story—a part that is not so common. Specific thoughts trigger specific reactions in the body, and those actions have intense effects on everything from hormone secretion to mood. We will be looking at some of the science behind this phenomenon. For now, all I ask is that you fully realize the **futility** of merely going to the gym, working hard for seven minutes, and expecting incredible results *without* fully utilizing every tool at your disposal.

Your greatest tool, bar none, is your **mind**. Let's dig in...

No Ducks Allowed

I stumbled on much of what I will reveal in the following pages by accident. I applied the techniques first, saw the results, and then looked to science to explain them. Granted, this is the exact opposite of the scientific method, but I think you will find my conclusions well grounded and supported by evidence.

The area of science I turned to was *psychophysiology*. This is the study of how thought affects motion and vice-versa.

There is probably more pseudoscience and quackery in this field of study than actual science. Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference. I will try to stay on the path of the straight and narrow, but I will submit a few hypotheses of my own. Test them for yourself. You are the best laboratory in the world.

The actual data is very impressive, if not sparse. Naturally there exist some gaps, as the science is relatively new. The technology is difficult to implement in real-world scenarios, and the brain is a very complex organ. Measuring exact responses can be tricky and imprecise.

That being said, we will look at some of the cutting-edge research pertaining to athletic performance to seek out the variables that can help us achieve our physical goals. I only request that you to proceed through this section with the acceptance that your mind has more control over your body than you realize.

Our Objective

The objective of this section is not to kill space or to chat psychobabble. The objective is to learn how to almost instantly enter into the most productive, powerful and physically transcendent state of performance. If you want to get the same results in minutes as you do in hours, entering into this state is mandatory. This state has definitive and measurable characteristics involving whole-brain thinking, specific brain wave patterns, and accelerated focus. **This state is called flow.**

What Is Flow?

On November 15, 1993, Dr. Tom Amberry made 2,750 consecutive free throws and stopped without a single miss. He was seventy-two years old at the time and had only been practicing for a year and a half. How did he accomplish this?

“When I’m shooting a free throw, I don’t think of anything else. I am 100% positive I will make the basket. Never have a negative thought on the free throw line. I know it’s going in the basket. I don’t have to hope or pray.”

When asked why legendary basketball star (and dismal free-throw shooter) Shaquille O’Neal has so much trouble at the line, Amberry simply replied, “He has other thoughts.” He went on to say, somewhat jokingly, “If you had \$120 million, you’d have other thoughts, too.”

Dr. Tom is a textbook example of the power of flow. Did he practice? You bet, but certainly no more than professionals like O’Neal. His results are not just amazing—they are *virtually* impossible. On top of it all, he’s seventy-two years of age.

The legendary soccer player Pelé described his experience with flow (also known as “being in the zone”) saying, “I felt a strange calmness...a kind of euphoria. I felt I could run all day without tiring, that I could dribble through any of their team or all of them, that I could almost pass through them physically.”

Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term flow, describing it as a state of deep focus that occurs when people engage in challenging tasks that demand intense concentration and commitment. Wikipedia.org defines **flow** as:

“The mental state of operation in which the person is fully immersed in what he or she is by a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity.”

Those who get things done both rapidly and efficiently, whether on the athletic field or the business arena, are in a state of flow. They are not concentrating intently for hours at a time, as this is practically impossible. They are *selectively processing* and using

the power of both sides of their brain. This is called **bilateral stimulation**, or whole-brain thinking.

Star tennis coach Scott Ford is a member of the United States Tennis Professionals Association (USPTA) and the European Registry of Tennis Professionals (RPT). He calls his brand of winning tennis “whole-brain tennis”, saying...

“I found that the normal state of consciousness we experience as humans is created by an asymmetrical cognitive pattern. Asymmetrical in that one hemisphere of the brain dominates the cognitive process while the other hemisphere acts in a subordinate role. Translated to the tennis court, this means that when you play tennis in your normal state of consciousness, you are playing tennis in an asymmetrical or half-brain dominant cognitive state. Half-brain tennis. Not a very efficient way to play the game of tennis, but easily the most common. The act of on-court visualization, however, engages the subordinate hemisphere of the brain while simultaneously quieting the dominant hemisphere. This effectively creates a cognitive pattern of hemispheric non-dominance or equivalence—a symmetrical cognitive pattern; a whole- brain state. And with this whole-brain state comes its accompanying altered state of consciousness. Translated to tennis, this means that the altered state of consciousness you experience when you play tennis in the zone is a symmetrical or whole-brain cognitive state. Whole-brain tennis. Not the most common way to play the game of tennis, but easily the most efficient.”

Flow is more than a buzzword—it is a mental state that has some rather definitive characteristics. Whole-brain synchronicity is evident in most every clinical and practical example of flow. Flow also produces a measurable and elevated output of *theta waves*. Theta waves are associated with deep states of meditation. Ironical, that this is the state commonly seen in athletes who are doing, seemingly, the most non-meditative things.

I believe this state of flow is the difference between those who choke at the free throw line and those who can make every shot with ease. One person is *trying to focus*. We will soon see that this is not the best approach. The other is hardly trying at all.

I also believe that flow is the difference between those who succeed massively on the 7MM System and those who do not.

There are **three steps** necessary to enter into a state of flow: Accelerated focus, visualization, and bilateral stimulation. Accelerated focus allows you to bypass the rigors of your day so that you can selectively direct your energies toward your goals. Visualization taps into your right brain and encourages the release of theta waves. This process helps put you into an almost meditative state, similar to self-hypnosis but without the deep relaxation. Finally, bilateral stimulation is required to ensure both hemispheres are stimulated throughout the process. These three steps are covered succinctly on page XXX.

7MM is the first program of its kind in that it incorporates specific mental parameters *into the protocol* that encourages the state of flow. Only by doing so we are able to achieve our goal: more results in less time. The mind and the body working together in an optimal state of **ruthless efficiency** will deliver the results we seek.

First we will examine the science of flow and how it works to accelerate results and increase performance. Then I will outline my **3-Flow Process** in greater detail.

The Science of Flow

Flow is a product of specific brain wave patterns. There are four distinct patterns of brain waves. Alpha waves are what we experience during our normal, non-aroused waking state. Beta waves, which oscillate at a greater frequency, are produced during states of arousal or anxiety. Delta waves occur during deep sleep. That leaves theta waves. Theta waves are associated with varying states of meditation. They help our immune system, enhance memory, increase brain functions, increase libido, help with pain reduction and improve sleep patterns.

All four brain waves are essential to our survival, but *theta waves* are most essential when it comes to entering a state of flow. As you will soon discover, theta wave output is often directly related to superior athletic performance. Since whole-brain

processes increase theta wave output, and theta waves increase performance, it makes sense to maximize their functions during our training sessions.

Experts in the field of psychophysiology suggest that theta waves may be the result of whole-brain synchronicity. Crews et al. (1993) demonstrated that golfers who perform best tend to make a rather dramatic switch from dominant left-brain processing to right-brain processing within 1-4 seconds of hitting the ball. Crews determined that these elite-level golfers were using left-brain, or logical processes, to analyze the shot and handle the mechanics. However, mere seconds before the shot was made, their right-brain processes took over.

I believe these athletes shifted from a *performance* paradigm to a *goal* paradigm. Goals, visualized targets and desired objectives are the domain of the right brain. Just hitting the ball correctly was not enough to ensure the best shot. The more skilled golfers “saw” the shot happen in their minds. By doing so, they engaged whole-brain processing and entered into a state of flow.

Theta Waves and Self-Sabotage

Performance is not limited to athletic pursuits. Often our minds interfere with our best efforts despite physically going through the motions. As we saw in the maid study, if the mind believes something strongly enough, be it positive or negative, corresponding physical results will be made manifest.

The most destructive force by far in the quest for fitness is **self-sabotage**. I am not too proud to admit that I have struggled off and on with self-sabotage since I was a child. It has manifested in a variety of ways, from over-eating to socially destructive patterns of behavior such as extreme isolation. Engaging in whole-brain thinking has been the only thing I have found to tame the demons of self-sabotage. Recently my solution has been confirmed by research.

Dr. Thomas Budzynski, a professor of psychology at the University of Washington, is one of the pioneers in the science of biofeedback. A noted researcher in this field, Budzynski claims that critical and self-sabotaging mechanisms associated with left-

brain thinking are **bypassed** in an elevated theta wave state. “When theta power is high, a lot of work gets done very quickly,” says Budzynski. That sounds like just what we’re looking for—more results in less time.

Budzynski and other researchers theorize that people who experience longer states of flow are also experiencing increased right-brain activity. Since left-brain activity is a given in performance-oriented tasks, this can only lead to one conclusion: Whole-brain synchronicity. And, among the byproducts, we experience less self-sabotage.

I maintain that whole-brain synchronicity can and **must** be artificially encouraged. This not only helps us bypass self-sabotage, but also enables us to perform at a higher level. 7MM incorporates this form of encouragement into its workout structure, which we will shortly cover in my *3-Flow Process*.

Which Comes First?

We know theta waves increase during certain conditions of performance-oriented tasks and not so much in others. What I found striking when reading through the literature is that theta waves were often associated with superior performance and generated when the subject was required to think in *both* logical and creative means.

The question is, “Which comes first?” Is the brain reacting to specific demands due to increased performance and producing greater theta (and alpha) waves accordingly, or is it the other way around? Could the artificial stimulation of theta waves via the use of whole-brain synchronous thought **prior** to the event increase performance?

I believe the answer to that second question is yes, and I will soon be engaging in university testing of my hypothesis. The results out of the laboratory have been remarkably convincing. Still, no matter how this state is achieved, it is clearly beneficial to performance, speed and accuracy. Athletes in flow **are** increasing theta wave output either by the nature of the mental state flow demands or by the physical task itself.

It cannot hurt to **encourage** the process.

Is Flow a Form of Self-Hypnosis?

Have you ever driven home without remembering most of the trip? (Let's assume you were not intoxicated.) Have you ever been on the golf course and made almost every shot, almost without effort? Have you ever tried for a maximum lift or a personal best in the gym, only to find out it felt like you were lifting air? You may have simply been *hypnotized*.

Self-hypnosis is nothing to be afraid of. We are in various states of self-hypnosis many times every day. Dr. Roland Carlstedt is a clinical sports psychologist with Capella University in New York City and author of the book, *Critical Moments*. Carlstedt studied critical moments during athletic competition, such as the “clutch catch” and the “must-make basket” in order to organize data on peak performance.

One of the distinctions in his research was what he called “Hypnotic Susceptibility”, or the ability to be hypnotized. Carlstedt links this condition with the ability to enter into a state of flow. He notes that from this state excellence in athletic completion seems to occur with very little perceived effort.

Obviously this is self-hypnosis, as none of the athletes were visiting Kreskin prior to their events. Rather, this is a natural state—one that readily manifests itself in elite athletes, yet one that requires more effort on the part of athletes with average genetics or susceptibility for self-hypnosis.

Guys—before you say, “This sounds crazy!” you may want to consider this tidbit. In a controlled study of 79 men with erectile dysfunction from no known organic cause, only hypnosis proved more effective than a placebo, boosting sexual function by eighty percent! (*British Journal of Urology*, Feb 1996).

Flow and self-hypnosis walk hand-in-hand with superior performance—apparently in every area of our lives.

The 3-Flow Process

Step One: Accelerated Focus

To enter into a state of flow you must first learn the skill of *accelerated focus*. The average human can concentrate intently for only a few seconds. We spend most of our days comfortably within the genetically determined better half of our brain. Some folks are left-brain dominant—more logical in nature. Others are more creative and expressive, or right-brain dominant.

Most people try to force their minds to focus if they need to get in a workout after a long and busy day. This is not the best approach. Forcing *anything* can be an exercise in counter-productivity. Yet we obviously need to focus. The question we'll address is how to do it effectively.

I divide focus into three categories. Common focus is the ability to concentrate on a specific task or even. Common focus is rather limited and measured in the seconds. Targeted focus is like focus on steroids. This occurs when you absolutely must figure something out or dire events will take place, such as finding your keys in a dark alley when you hear footsteps approaching. Targeted focus allows us to concentrate for longer periods of time, but it is not conducive to performance.

Accelerated focus is the ticket, and the first step you will take to enter into flow. Accelerated focus is achieved by selectively accelerating your core objective or goal, mentally pushing it past all other issues. Perhaps you have a deadline that is pending, a grocery run to make after the gym, and a child with a slight fever; yet it's time to hit the gym. Most people will experience transient common focus at best. Likewise, they will experience a dissatisfying workout. Accelerated focus is designed to peacefully allow the goal of your choice to take center stage.

How To

Take a few deep breaths and picture the events that are circulating in your mind. Allow them to be present. Your goal is not to get rid of these events, as that is just common focus and force. What you want to do is mentally *advance* your present goal—that of a great workout—ahead of the others. Picture it like cutting in line but

with full permission. The other thoughts are there, but they are willingly giving up their spot in line for your workout. Assure your self that you will return to these other important events as soon as your workout is completed.

Here's what I say to myself after taking ten deep breaths:

"I give myself permission to fully engage in my workout. I allow this important event to accelerate and temporarily move in front of all other equally important life events, all of which I will return to after I enjoy myself and my workout. My workout will also allow me to manage my other events in a far more productive fashion. I now see my workout move to the front of the line. This is desirable and fully permissible."

Sounds silly and overly simplistic, but it works. Try it yourself and see.

Nothing Negative

Did you notice the words I chose in the accelerated focus exercise? There was not one negative phrase. Everything was phrased in the affirmative. Our minds respond better to the positive, but often responds in the exact opposite direction when we use negative imagery and self-talk.

Here's a test:

Do not think of a dog.

How did you fair? Rover probably leapt into your mind. If you will recall, common focus is the opposite of flow. Flow is a whole-brain activity, while focus is predominately left-brain in nature and can actually detract from your performance. Common focus usually employs the use of negative states, or *false conditions*. One might say, "I really need to concentrate on this term paper, so I cannot allow myself to be distracted." That person usually ends up distracted. The mind skips right over can't, don't, and no. It seems to hear only the subject.

The Irony Effect

Wegner et al. (1998) conducted a fascinating experiment on how not to think. (See? I'm really asking you to think!)

Two test groups were given a makeshift pendulum—a weighted object at the end of a nylon string. Below the object was a grid with x and y (horizontal and vertical) axes and a green target area clearly displayed.

One group was merely instructed to hold out their arm straight and keep the pendulum within the green target area as long as they could over a short period of time, about 30 seconds. The second group was given the same instructions but with a caveat: “Do not let the pendulum move in the direction paralleling the horizontal line.” This was a *false condition*, or negative suggestion.

The results? Those give the ‘forbidden axis’ instructions performed poorly, allowing their pendulums to drift horizontally. However, their *vertical* movements were slightly less than the other group. The take-away lesson here: Trying to avoid a certain outcome or behavior often elicits the exact *opposite* response.

Step Two: Visualization

We have already seen the power of visualization demonstrated in the studies on page XXX, and again inferred with the Crews study on page XXX. Visualization is nothing more than shifting your thoughts from what **is** to what **can be**. (I'm sure that experts in the field may balk at my rather simple explanation, but it works well enough for our purposes.) Making this shift from attention to projection enables the right brain to kick in, allowing you to transition into a bilateral mental state necessary for flow.

The Science Behind Visualization

Visualization appears to be connected to a shift in **attention**. Athletes shifting from internal to external attention usually perform at a higher level as they enter into whole-brain synchronicity.

In the majority of humans, the left hemisphere is dominant for internal attention and the right hemisphere is dominant for directed external attention. Internal attention is the epicenter of focus for most weight trainees. They often concentrate on how their body is moving rather than on what they want to achieve from that movement. For absolute beginners, internal attention is important; however, for anyone beyond the rudimentary basics of learning how to perform a lift, external attention becomes vital to superior performance.

External attention involves focusing on either the goal of your movement or upon something outside of the motion of your body. Anything other than your physical parameters qualifies as external.

Wulf et al. (1999) had participants without golf experience practice pitch shots. One group was instructed to focus on the pendulum-like motion of the golf club (external focus), while the second group was instructed to focus on their arm movements (internal focus). The results showed that the external focus group was considerably more accurate in their shots than the internal focus group.

McNevin et al. (2003) theorized that advantages associated with external attention was due to the utilization of more natural control mechanisms, and that conscious attempts to **control** movements interfere with productivity. This idea supports the concept that *trying* to do something is less productive than simply doing it. This could also be seen as the difference between forcing an outcome and *experiencing* a result.

Mentally forcing something to happen is a left-brain process that is especially apparent in weight lifting. Can you think of another sport or activity that demands as much force of will than lifting an object off of your chest that has the potential to harm you?

It only makes sense that few trainees master external focus given these extreme physical demands—yet it is crucial to do so if we are to enter the flow state. However, there is a learning curve for all absolute beginners that demands a degree of internal (body movement) focus. After the initial stage of learning, one should make the shift to external, goal-oriented attention. In fact, information overload can result in lessened performance.

One study in particular looked at focusing on muscle action versus the *goal* of the action. Marchant et al. (2004) examined soccer players. His team researched the area of focus the test subjects chose as they made penalty kicks. Here's what they found:

*“When [successful] athletes are at the starting line they are primarily focusing on the end of the track rather than what their legs are doing...If they focused on the actual movement in their legs they probably would not perform as well... don't [ask the athlete] to think about the muscle because it will go wrong. Instead, focus on the **goal**.”*

Internal focus (on the motion of the legs) was inferior to focusing on the outcome of the kick.

Poolton et al. (2006) analyzed the data from dozens of studies on internal versus external attention. Several studies demonstrated equal benefit. Others demonstrated that absolute beginners should focus internally. However, the majority of these studies helped to uncover something that, at first, seems contradictory: More knowledge is not always beneficial. In fact, it is counter-productive.

The researchers stated the following:

“Evidence is accumulating to support the premise that presenting a performer with a large explicit knowledge base through learning is, paradoxically, not the most productive method of acquiring a motor skill.”

How To

External focus in weight lifting and bodybuilding can actually sound like internal focus. However, there is a powerful distinction.

First: Prior to each lift, I want you to clearly see your purpose for engaging in the exercise. Your purpose is greater than lifting a weight from point A to point B. In fact, this is not your purpose at all! Your purpose is greater muscle mass and definition. *This is the only purpose.* The weights and exercises are mere tools in the journey toward that purpose; certainly not the destination. This is the crucial distinction between being a bodybuilder/bodyshaper and merely “lifting weights.”

If there is one secret I would love to share with the world, it is this. Allowing your mind to see your purpose rather than focusing on the mechanics involved will accelerate your gains and your performance beyond your wildest expectations. Your mind is more interested in the challenge of **becoming** than the challenge of doing.

Second: During each lift, I want you to accelerate your focus more specifically—to the muscle being worked. Rather than focusing on the mechanics involved, choose to focus on how the muscle *feels*. Experience the contraction and tension, the blood rushing into the muscle, and the joy of the process itself.

As you will soon learn, 7MM incorporates visualization and creative adaptation into every rest period, as well as demanding many left-brain activities. In order to do the program, you are coaxed into a state of flow whether you know it or not.

Step Three: Bilateral Stimulation

The third and final step one must take when entering a state of flow is to engage both sides of the brain. This is called *bilateral stimulation*. We have already examined this process in detail, but in order to make our 3-Flow Process complete, we need to maintain both creative and logical thought processes throughout our workout.

Flow and Creative Selection

Kerick et al. (2006) showed that elevated mental conditions imposed on soldiers shooting at targets resulted in greater theta power. As mental task demands increased during the shooting exercises, such as having to deduce a friendly target from an enemy target, theta power increased accordingly, as did their performance. Mental tasks assigned included multiple targets, discerning an enemy target (and taking action), or discerning a friendly target and *not* taking action.

The task that increased both theta and alpha responses was the focus on the enemy target. Making a decision to shoot increased both theta and alpha waves, each specific to certain physiological functions required to perform the task.

Creative selection is a primary component of the 7MM System. During your rest intervals you will be required to creatively analyze your next set in specific ways designed to stimulate whole-brain synchronicity.

How To

During your 7MM rest intervals you will be asked to determine the duration of your rest period. Unlike traditional protocols that have fixed rest intervals, you will engage in *creative rest intervals*. The rest will vary from one mini-set to the next and from one workout to the next based on your primary goal (covered in the next chapter.)

As you will see, this process is both logically and creatively challenging. As I have demonstrated, when the mind is engaged at this level, performance often increases. The stage is set for flow to occur.

Pre-Planning: Tap Into The Flow

On page XXX you will find your 7MM Workout Journal. This journal was designed to facilitate entering into a state of flow by **pre-planning** your workouts. If you want to make even faster progress, spend a few minutes before each workout and analyze your previous performance (left-brain.) Visualize yourself exceeding this performance (right-brain) as you plan your reps and rest intervals. Knowing your

exact goal before you walk into the gym is another one of those “closely guarded secrets” so many experts fail to mention. While I do not literally consider this a *secret*, I do consider it a treasure worth its weight in gold when it comes to making faster progress and entering into the state of flow.

This is just one of the many ways my 3-Flow Process is built into the 7MM System. I wanted you to understand why you will be asked to creatively and logically think throughout your workout rather than just instructing you to do so. You should find yourself entering into a state of flow almost habitually after a few sessions of 7MM. This increased mental focus will help you accelerate your progress beyond that of anything you have experienced.

Conclusion: The Philosophy of Doing

Let’s put all the science of flow and whole-brain synchronicity aside for a moment and look at the *philosophy* behind the creation of 7MM:

People will progress faster by doing less more often than more less often.

Perhaps I could have made this entire chapter that simple and my point would have been made, but I found the science behind whole-brain training too compelling to ignore. The mental edge 7MM delivers is measurable in the loftier principles of flow and theta waves, but grounded in the simplistic philosophy of *anti-perfectionism*.

Consider the following scenario:

Bill is a gung-ho guy who hits the gym with fervor. His workouts are brutal. Four days a week, he burns the weight room with his intensity for 45 minutes a shot. During some of his workouts Bill finds himself in flow, able to selectively focus for almost the entire. Other days, Bill is less than successful, but still opts to grind through his workouts out of a sense of obligation and diligence.

Bill averages about 30 minutes of focused training 4 days per week and **three hours** of training total. This is being somewhat generous, as most trainees cannot sustain even that degree of focus unless they are genetically gifted or competitive athletes.

About ten to twelve weeks into this cycle, Bill's mind and body are fatigued. His gains have slowed down, or perhaps even come to a stop. His mind is just not as focused, and he feels less than motivated to go to the gym. Bill decides he needs a break, so he takes a week off.

If Bill is fortunate, having both the genetics for recovery and the mental ability to renew, he will come back to the gym renewed—and then *repeat* this cycle. However, if he is like the **vast majority** of trainees and does not possess the natural genetic gifts for physical and mental recovery, Bill will stop training for months. (The average layoff under these conditions is *nine weeks*.) So, let's assume Bill trains for seven months out of the year of *consistently*. Again, this is optimistic.

Now let's compare Bill's approach (one of which you are probably familiar) with 7MM training. Sue, a 7MM trainee at the same intermediate level as Bill, would be spending between seven to fourteen minutes in the gym five days per week, or about **one hour per week**, with every minute spent in hyper-focused flow. Layoffs are *scheduled* and last for only a week. With the occasional use of an alternative program for variation and additional recovery (I recommend one in the next chapter) Sue will experience ten to eleven months of consistent progress.

Bill's traditional protocol was hit-and-miss approach, with weeks, even months spent idle in-between training sessions. This forced him to spend a good deal of his hours in catch-up mode. Sue was in progression mode virtually all year long.

Who do you think is the **happier** trainee?

I take this same anti-perfectionist approach when it comes to nutrition as well, as I will cover in the Practical Equation chapter. While it is optimal to eat six or more meals per day, I know for a fact 95% of the people in the world will never do it. That makes prescribing such a protocol borderline nonsensical unless your audience is that elusive 5%.

I am not that 5%. ~~We~~ are not that 5%.

We are the *95%* who demand more out of our lives than the mental drudgery caused by endless hours in the gym every day and even more hours in the kitchen.

Yet this approach is not mediocrity—just the opposite. I firmly believe that intense, moderate exercise and reasonable nutrition will *elevate* your results well beyond what you would experience on traditional protocols, simply because **you will do it.**

Doing is the ultimate expression of excellence, and the foundation for all results. Doing *well* is the antithesis of mediocrity. Doing *consistently well* puts you square on the path of **mastery**.

Now, let's get to the *doing*—the 7MM Training System.

“Innovation is the whim of an elite before it becomes a need of the public.”

— *Ludwig von Mises*

The 7MM Protocol

Think back to the last time you went to the gym. Did you write down your workout? Did you progress from your previous session? If you said “yes”, are you *sure*? Consider all six 7MM hypertrophy variables we covered earlier before you answer:

- Did you increase your *intensity*, or the effort of your work?
- Did you increase your *load factor*, or more weight?
- Did you increase your *volume*, or your total workload?
- Did you increase your *density score*, or your volume/time?
- Did you change your *time*, affecting your total energy output?
- Did you maintain your *force*, or the tempo of your repetitions?

This seems like a lot of information to regulate, doesn’t it? The good news is 7MM does most of it for you by allowing you focus on one simple objective:

Increase your aggregate repetitions from your previous workout.

That’s the golden egg. One simple number, and that’s all. Except for load, all other factors are built into the System itself.

Aggregate Repetitions (AR) is simply the number of repetitions you achieved during your previous 7MM workout. Obviously you will have to perform a starter workout to get a baseline, but after a few sessions you’ll know exactly how to track your results. Let’s take a look at how AR works within the 7MM Protocol. Then I’ll explain how all six hypertrophy variables (except load) are taken care of for you.

The Basic Structure of a 7MM Workout

There are three levels of 7MM: Level 1 (beginner), Level 2 (intermediate) and Level 3 (advanced). Most trainees will do fine on the Level 1 for building or maintaining muscle mass and getting the fastest workout possible. Unless you are a seasoned trainee, I suggest starting at Level 1, which is the 7-minute workout.

Each workout requires a **stopwatch** or a watch with a digital counter. You will also need your **7MM Workout Journal** found on page XXX so you can notate your total rep count and any notes on weight, rest intervals or intensity you wish to record.

3-FLOW

Describe the 3-Flow Process again. XXX

LEVEL 1

You will perform **two** compound exercises for each primary muscle group per day, training Monday through Friday. Each workout (after warm-ups and excluding cardio) will be timed and will not exceed 7 minutes in length. These exercises are divided into two *phases*—The Power Phase comes first and is 5 minutes in length. The Mass Phase follows without rest for 2 minutes.

During each of your two Phases you have what's known as a **window of repetitions rule**. For your Power Phase your repetitions are limited to **five or less**, but you must not get 5 reps on your **last mini-set** (explained below.) You must train for 5 minutes with no less than 5 reps to start your Power Phase, but no more than *four reps* (preferably less) at the end of your Power Phase. Make sense?

You will not be changing the weight during any of your Phases. This is important—your focus will be on density over sheer load.

Here are the rules for the Power Phase:

1. Warm up. Stretch the muscle group you are working and perform a few very light sets to get your blood flowing and your joints loose.

2. Select the proper weight. I suggest starting with 55% 1RM. You can test yourself and get an exact weight, but this is not necessary. Just use a weight that you can get about *ten repetitions* with and you should be fine. You may need to slightly increase or decrease the weight until you find the ideal weight for you.
3. Start your watch. You must stop at the five-minute mark—no questions asked. Be sure to use your **visualization exercises** described in the 3-Flow Process prior to each set.
4. You will not be counting sets at all. Each Phase is a series of *mini-sets*. This is like doing a few long sets with brief rest periods in-between. You will do nothing but count repetitions.
5. You **must** achieve at least 5 repetitions on your first mini-set. If you cannot achieve 5 reps, the weight is too heavy. You will probably get 5 reps for your first 2-3 mini-sets, which is fine. **You cannot exceed 5 reps no matter what.** The first few sets will feel fairly light.
6. Write down the number of reps you get on *every set*. This is not an option. Your progress will be based solely on your AR and increasing your load over time.
7. Rest intervals are designed to *evoke a right-brain response*. You will be thinking creatively during the entire duration of each phase, determining how much rest you should take prior to your next mini-set. Most trainees start at about **20 seconds**. I personally find this rest interval just about right. However, you should not be able to maintain this short rest period between mini-sets for your entire Phase. That's where the creativity comes in. Do you rest longer and get more repetitions on your next mini-set, or do you rest less and go for fewer repetitions? **The only thing that matters in the end is that you exceed your previous AR.** Whatever works—less reps and less rest, more reps with more rest, or a combination. Can you see how this workout demands whole-brain synchronization? (Trust me—this gets to be second nature after 3-4 workouts.)
8. Your only other rule is this: **You must get less than 5 reps on your last set.** If you can get 5 reps on your last set, the weight was too light. Increase it next time (this is where load comes into play; you **MUST** increase your weights whenever possible.) *This is where your power is really increased.* Your reps should be low toward the end of the 5-minute Phase. Many trainees are down to 1 or 2 reps. That is all they can do! The combination of short rest

intervals and mini-sets create your r1RM (relative 1 Rep Maximum). You will find training with lighter weight but still “heavy” will preserve your joints and help ensure your safety.

This concludes your Power Phase. Total the number of reps from all your mini-sets. This is your new AR for the Power Phase for this exercise.

Here’s an example of how a typical Power Phase (5 minutes) may look. I have rated intensity only to illustrate how difficult the given mini-set will be. Notice how the rest intervals are not consistent. In fact, they can decrease *then* increase depending on your creativity and AR goals. This is a major factor in establishing flow. Your force factor is about five seconds—four seconds down and one second up. This does not have to be timed precisely, but you should think *slow down, speed up*.

Reps	Intensity	Rest	Total Time
5	2	20 s	:45 (5 reps x 5 secs = 25 + 20 rest = 45)
5	3	20 s	1:30 (5 reps x 5 secs = 25 + 20 rest = 45 + 45 = 1:30)
5	4	30 s	2:25 (5 reps x 5 secs = 25 + 30 rest = 55 + 1:30 = 2:25)
4	3	25 s	3:10 (4 reps x 5 secs = 20 + 25 rest = 45 + 2:25 = 3:10)
3	4	30 s	3:55 (3 reps x 5 secs = 15 + 30 rest = 45 + 3:10 = 3:55)
2	3	20 s	4:06 (2 reps x 5 secs = 10 + 20 rest = 30 + 3:55 = 4:25)
1	4	10 s	4:25 (1 rep x 5 secs = 5 + 10 rest = 15 + 4:25 = 4:40)
1	5 (failure)	15 s	4:40 (1 rep x 5 secs = 5 + 15 rest = 20 + 4:40 = 5:00)

Power Phase AR = 26

Notate the AR in your training journal. You should target 27 *or higher* for your next week’s workout if you use the same exercise and the same weight (load). That is how you measure progressing using only one variable!

When To Increase The Weight

The easy answer is “when you can get 5 or more reps on the last set,” but I prefer that you increase your weight before this happens. If you notice that you can get 3 reps fairly easily, increase your weight the following week. Weights should increase

by 2.5-5%. You will have to play around with the ideal amount of weight to use for your increase based on the rules laid out above. If you need to *decrease* your weight, use the same 2.5-5% gauge. Just remember the **window of reps rule** and you'll do just fine.

The Level 1 training split is:

<i>Monday</i>	Chest
<i>Tuesday</i>	Back
<i>Wednesday</i>	Shoulders
<i>Thursday</i>	Legs
<i>Friday</i>	Arms

Abdominal training is included two-three days per week as part of your cardio workout. You can also do abdominal work prior to your 7MM as a warm-up. I will cover my three-minute abdominal workout at the end of this section.

Calves are sacrificed on the Level 1 protocol. If you want to train them, you can add a few minutes at the end of any workout and train them 1-2 times per week. I will cover my ultra-short calf workout at the end of this section as well.

You may be wondering why I left off calves and abs. Two reasons: First, most beginner trainees will get plenty of abdominal and calf work just from the 7MM leg workouts and arm workouts. Both indirectly hit the calves and abdominals. Diet is the major factor in seeing abs, not training. Most trainees who want to build their abs are not adverse to adding three minutes at the end of this protocol, or simply opt for the Level 2 or Level 3 protocols which include these muscle groups.

The 7 Minute Muscle System is designed to allow you to focus on one primary goal—increasing your *aggregate repetitions* (AR) from your previous workout. Your goal in 7 Minute Muscle training will sound very simple at first: "Up The Number." Simply put, your goal is to exceed your "AR" -- the total number of "Aggregate Repetitions" from your previous 7 Minute Muscle training session for that same

body part. Or, if you choose, you can reset your AR and increase the amount of weight used in one or both the movements used in the session.

No matter which method you choose -- increasing your AR or increasing the weight you are using, your goal is the same: Progression by overload. While you can gain significant muscle size and strength in a very brief seven-minute session, you cannot do so unless you focus on progression, and that means an increase in AR or the amount of weight used in the exercise.

The good news is that 7 Minute Muscle makes progression easy and viturally automatic.

The Secret of Pre-Planning

While changing exercises is a good and often vital component to progression, we still must look at the big picture question: Have you consistently increased the weight and/or repetitions you are using in your primary (compound) exercises over time? If you have answered yes, have you tracked these results accurately, or are you going by memory and "feel"?

I want to challenge you to take the 7 Minute Muscle Journal Challenge. See how much faster you progress simply by taking the time to journal your training. Yes, you will have to carry around a notebook (or a clipboard, which I find easier to manage) and notate your workout. And, yes, this may look strange to some people.

The question is: Do you want to 'look' like those people who give you the funny looks, or do you want to progress faster and with consistency and watch their looks turn into stares of envy? It may be hard to believe something as simple as writing your workout details down can produce incredible results, but it's true. It's one of the most valuable secrets I can share with you. In fact, 7 Minute Muscle goes a step further and requests that you "pre-plan" your workouts.

The power of pre-planning taps in to your subconscious mind, utilizing visualization and affirmational psychology to empower the mind and body. Seeing the workout before it happens, down to your AR on specific exercises, will create enthusiasm and "mental momentum" that can make your workouts more enjoyable and productive.

I have found that when I take just ten minutes before a workout and write down the exercises, weight goals and repetition goals I wish to achieve, using my previous workout for that same bodypart as a guide, I achieve these goals 95% of the time. Just for grins, I compared this success with some of my past training journals made during a time where I did not pre-plan my workouts. The success rate, measured by increases in weight and/ or repetitions, as well as decreased rest intervals, were less than one-third that of my pre-planned sessions!

Can you see why 7 Minute Muscle builds pre-planning into the equation? What's more: 7 Minute Muscle sessions are next to impossible to do 'without' pre-planning, as you will soon see. That's right: I am forcing the issue! You will thank me for later.

The Overload Principle

The principle of overload -- increasing the amount of repetitions and/or resistance to force a muscle to increase in size and strength over time, is nothing new. Most intermediate and advanced weight trainees know this principle well. The question is simple: Are you taking full advantage of it? Most trainees are not. Progression requires patience in traditional training schemes as well as careful planning. Many trainees, myself included, find it a bit easier at times just to switch exercises around to avoid having to journal "X weight for X repetitions" every single workout.

I have found that most trainees looking for a quote-unquote "more shapely body" tend to ignore this absolute necessity of progress. Hard-core bodybuilders tend to respect this foundational principle more than the casual trainer, but even these athletes can get carried away with changing exercises too frequently or perhaps a "comfort factor" with a given weight and exercise and fail to use the principle of overload to achieve even greater gains.

In his book, "Education of a Bodybuilder," Arnold Schwarzenegger makes mention of the fact that he overlooked the overload principle when it came to training his back. His exercise of choice was the barbell row. Arnold had been rowing with 225 pounds for a long time. Had it not been for another bodybuilder who used far more weight -- and who had the back thickness Arnold desired -- he may have never developed his back to the degree his later-day pictures reveal.

Never forget: Progression and overload are not optional principles. Whether it's four pounds of muscle you desire or forty, overload is the key.

7 Minute Muscle is designed to literally 'force' the issue of overload, encouraging you to focus on progression each and every workout. Unlike traditional training methods where progress can be hit and miss, 7 Minute Muscle ensures that progress is your number one objective, and does so in a way that is very easy to measure.

NOTE: You should refer to the "How To Progress" chapter in 7 Minute Muscle to determine if you should move up in weight. If you decide it's time to move up in weight, your AR may drop. That's fine -- just reset your AR goal to this new number and that will be your new target AR to exceed during your next training session for that body part.

The Two Intervals: Power and Mass

The concept for 7 Minute Muscle is based on using AR over a fixed set of two timed intervals. The first interval is a duration of 5 minutes, proceeded by the second interval, without rest in-between intervals, for a duration of 2 minutes. Do not exceed these time limits. If you cannot complete a given interval, notate the length you were able to train in your training journal with the total number of reps completed.

The two intervals are The POWER Interval (5 minutes) and The MASS Interval (2 minutes). These 2 intervals make up the Primary Set (1st set) in the 7 Minute Muscle protocol.

NOTE: For most trainees, the Primary Set is all that is required to achieve significant gains in size and strength. However, for high intermedite trainees and advanced bodybuilders, we have included a Secondary Set and Refinement Set protocol as well. These will extend your 7 Minute Muscle program past 7 actual minutes to 14 and 21 minutes, respectfully. All you will need to know in order to train in accordance with the 7 Minute Muscle protocols, however, is contained within these videos, all of which will cover only the Primary Set. Instructions for the

Secondary and Refinement Sets are found within the 7 Minute Muscle instruction manual which came with these videos.

We should define the word "set" as used in the 7 Minute Muscle sense of the term. "Set" refers to the two timed movements, 5 minutes and 2 minutes in duration. In the Primary Set, both movements will work the same bodypart using two different compound (non-isolation) exercises. Each of these exercises will target the muscle from different angles, therefore maximizing growth potential during the entire 7 minute long set.

The only rest allowed during these seven minutes is "between" repetition counts -- and these rest intervals must be carefully monitored and maximized in order to progress effectively. As you will soon see, your rest intervals within the sets are the key to the power behind the 7 Minute Muscle system.

Let's break down the two components of the "Set" -- The Power Interval (5 minutes) and the Mass Interval (2 minutes), as well as how to begin your 7 Minute Muscle session.

NOTE: It will take you 2-4 sessions before you master how to use these protocols. That's fine -- be patient with this small learning curve. After you master these principles, you will never look at weight training the same way again, and you will make more gains in muscle and strength faster than you ever thought possible.

The first step is to choose your exercise weight for both movements in your Primary Set. (Please refer to page XX for the movements to use in 7 Minute Muscle.) For our example, we will focus on chest training, which is day one of the 5-day 7 Minute Muscle training system.

The two exercises we will use for our example session are Flat Bench Dumbbell Presses followed immediately by Low-Incline Smith Machine Presses.

NOTE: We have selected movements that can be done in relative safety without a workout partner or spotter. However, we HIGHLY encourage you to train with a partner or have a spotter during the first month or so of training under the 7 Minute Muscle system to ensure your total safety. Until you get a good feel on how hard to

push yourself, even dumbbell movements can prove to be risky. If you do NOT have access to a training partner or a spotter, please refer to the "Solo Exercises" section on page XXX to help ensure greater safety.

Your first goal on Day 1, Week 1 is to determine how much weight you should use for each of the two movements of your Primary Set. We will be using the first 3-week repetition guide: 5 reps maximum for the first movement and 10 reps max for the second movement in the Primary Set. The second 3-week training period increases these rep ranges to 10 reps and 20 reps respectively in order to fully maximize training in both Type 1 and Type 2 muscle fibers.

Remember, you will never change weights on any movement during your intervals per training session. In other words, you will not start your Primary Set with, say, 50 pound dumbbells and increase the weight as you would in traditional training. However, you cannot 'decrease' the weight either during the session, unless you are experimenting with how much weight to use of course. Once this weight is selected, you should only change it if (a) an increase in weight is called for as you progress, or (b) the repetition count changes. Otherwise, stick to the same weight for the entire duration of your Power Interval as well as the weight you select for your Mass Interval.

Let's begin by selecting the weight for your Power Interval (5 minutes.) We suggest you begin by selecting a weight that you can do for TEN (10) repetitions, even though you will only be targeting a maximum of FIVE (5) reps before resting. Obviously, this means your first few series of reps will be relatively easy. However, over the duration of the 5-minute Power Interval, this weight will become more and more difficult to manage. Eventually you will be forced to lower the repetitions below 5 in order to continue -- and that is perfectly fine. In fact, that is optimal. You should conclude your 5-minute Power Interval with single repetition lifts. At that point, you know you have selected a weight that is ideal for your goals.

NEEDED:

Journal, stopwatch or watch with stopwatch feature, clock/watch, guts

Forces you to be focused and creative (both sides of the brain) for 7 minutes

PRE-WORKOUT PLANNING

Yes, you **MUST** pre-plan your workout. The few minutes you will expend prior to your 7 minutes of actual training can be done at any time prior to the workout. They are absolutely essential to your progress. You cannot train using the 7 Minute Muscle protocol and "wing it." The seconds go by too quickly.

Do not worry if you "mess up" your plan for a given workout. Just notate where you made a few mistakes and correct them in your next session. No big deal. Also, give yourself at least 2-4 workouts for each bodypart to properly learn how to plan and execute a 7 Minute Muscle workout.

To pre-plan, you must first have a workout under your belt for that bodypart. Here's how you do your **FIRST** 7 Minute Muscle workout. (instructions here)

You will want to get an accurate AR for each body part in order to properly pre-plan your next workout.

VISUALIZATION

During each and every repetition, you should visualize the way you wish that bodypart to look. With each completed rep, say "YES!" in your head (or outloud if you are not easily embarrassed!) and anchor that statement to what you have visualized in your mind. Do **NOT** overlook or discount the power of visualization during your training. The mind is one of the key factors that separates the folks you see in the gym who seem to train "hard" yet never change much. Their minds are often somewhere else -- thinking about their bills, their stresses, or even chatting with friends in the gym. 7 Minute Muscle is not a "chat-it-up" system of training. It demands your 100% focus for at least 7 minutes!

COUNT

After completing a series of repetitions, you must stop, think, count and calculate. If this seems like too much work, go back to traditional training and sacrifice the results! The extra effort is well worth it, and you will **NEVER** feel as connected to your goals and your training as you will during the 7 Minute Muscle protocol. It literally forces you to engage fully with your training, and that focus will show itself in impressive results.

PRE-PLANNING STRATEGY FOR WORKOUT NUMBER 2

This is just an example how you might target at least 32 for your next AR. Look at the results of your first Power Interval (above.) Notice that the first recorded FOUR (4) reps were at an intensity level of only 3. You also allowed yourself 30 seconds of rest afterwards. Do you think you could increase this number to FIVE reps with the same 30 seconds of rest and still manage to get 4 reps following? If so, and assuming you complete the rest of the Power Interval using the same reps and rest, you have now succeeded in increasing your AR.

Another thing you may try is to get one more group of 2, replacing one of the three groups of 1 rep. You can also combine these strategies if you are feeling strong and increase your AR by 2 full reps.

This is how you progress, gaining strength and muscle during each and every 7 Minute Muscle workout!

SAMPLE BEGINNER SCHEDULE (Monday-Friday; 7 Minutes total training time.)

MONDAY: Chest

Incline Smith Machine Press (5 minutes/5 rep max)

-- superset --

Dumbbell Flat Bench Press (2 minutes/10 rep max)

TUESDAY: Back

Narrow Grip Lat Pulldowns (5 minutes/5 rep max)

-- superset --

Low Pulley Rows (2 minutes/10 rep max)

WEDNESDAY: Shoulders/Abs

Dumbbell Military Presses (5 minutes/5 rep max)

-- superset --

Lateral Raises (2 minutes/10 rep max)

** Abs can be done during rest periods of more than 20 seconds, or as an addition to the 7-minute protocol. Exercise: Hanging Leg Raises. Timed intervals of 20 or more seconds for as many sets as time allows - OR - if trained separately, 3 sets of 6 reps, 8 reps, and as many reps as possible for the last set.

THURSDAY: Legs

Leg Presses/Leg Curl (5 minutes/5 rep max)

-- superset --

Smith Machine Squat (2 minutes/10 rep max)

* Do calf raises during all rest intervals, taking the final set to failure.

FRIDAY: Arms

Incline Dumbbell Curl (5 minutes/5 rep max)

-- superset --

Smith Machine Close Grip Bench Presses (2 minutes/10 rep max) *

* Switch 5 minute and 2 minute exercises the following week so you focus on triceps during the 5 minute interval and biceps during the 2 minute interval.

MULTIPLE TRAINING SESSIONS PER DAY

Following the increase in GH secretion associated with a bout of aerobic exercise, GH release transiently decreases. As a result, 24-hour integrated GH concentrations are not usually elevated by a single bout of exercise. However, repeated bouts of aerobic exercise within a 24-hour period result in increased 24-hour integrated GH concentrations. Because the GH response to acute resistance exercise is dependent on the work-rest interval and the load and frequency of the resistance exercise used, the ability to equate intensity across different resistance exercise protocols is desirable. This has proved to be a difficult task. Problems with maintaining patent intravenous catheters have resulted in a lack of studies investigating alterations in acute and 24-hour GH pulsatile secretion in response to resistance exercise. However, research using varied resistance protocols and sampling techniques has reported acute increases in GH release similar to those observed with aerobic exercise. (Sports Med. 2002;32(15):987-1004.)

Contact Me!

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