



YOU'RE LIFTING WEIGHTS. YOU WANT RESULTS FAST. WHOA THERE! HERE'S WHY YOU NEED TO SLOW DOWN.

Speed Limit

are varied: Some folks are afraid they'll look strange in the gym; others aren't open to any idea that requires using less weight than they're used to (though using less weight can build endurance. See p. 30.). Moreover, most people assume that super-slow workouts take too long (in fact, because fewer sets are required, they actually take less time). And then there's the obvious issue: You must be more disciplined to train slow.

So is slow-mo really the way to go for the average Joe (or Joan)? The way I see it — yes. As a rule, it works better than moving fast. Why? Because the faster you move, the more different muscles you use, and the more different muscles you use, the less you stress the specific ones that you're trying to work. For example, if you move quickly when performing a biceps curl, you're likely to shrug your shoulders, bend your legs and arch your back. And the more you do, the less involved your biceps will be in the lift. Conversely, when you move slowly, the muscles you target do more work. Not only that, but you're less apt to suffer from tears and overstressed joints.

FEELING YOUR WAY

Working out slowly also has meditative effects. As you focus on moving slowly, you'll be more conscious of how you feel, and paying attention to how you feel is going to improve your results.

It's considerably harder to focus when you lift weights at a rapid speed. When your mindset is "loose" about being positioned correctly and about how movements feel, your mind is more likely to wander (which makes you more vulnerable to getting hurt). You will also tend to miss details that are critical to your success — for example, stabilizing your joints and avoiding momentum when starting a lift.

In addition, I've found that when people do weight-training workouts at rapid speeds, they finish them feeling fatigued, but not in the right way. For example, they're frequently out of breath and complain about pain in their joints. Instead of feeling the muscles they've targeted, their whole body feels tired and sore.

MAKING IT COUNT

How slowly should you move, then, to achieve your best results? Experts don't always agree about this and you're bound to hear different things, but I've found that, in general, the lifting phase should be four to six seconds long. The lowering phase should always be about six to eight seconds long (this will vary depending on how far you have to move; for example, the greater the movement range, the longer each movement will take). Presumably, this is much slower than the two/four count you usually use when training, so →

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Present-day theories on how to lift weights are diverse, to say the least. With so many folks saying so many things, it's hard to know what to believe. For example, while some experts claim that it's best to lift weights at a rapid speed, others believe moving slowly results in the greatest and fastest gains.

Except for when it comes to certain sport-specific training endeavors, I'm in the slow camp. In fact, I've found that moving too fast is a very common "UFO" (Unidentified Fitness Obstacle). Muscle tears and joint strains are just two examples of the many troubles that can result from rapid lifts. But progress plateaus, poor focus and poor results are by far the most common outcomes.

SLOW GOING

Proponents of lifting weights slowly often suggest that it's something new — as if it's some radical, groundbreaking thing that has just recently been revealed. The truth is that super-slow training has been making waves for the past two decades, though only in recent years has it gotten much press. Now, advocates of slow training are getting more opportunity to make their case, the most well-known being Ken Hutchins, who actually coined the term "super slow."

Despite all the hype and "newfound" research supporting slow-movement techniques, believers in this way of training are (and may always be) on the fringe. The reasons for this