

The Brookbush Institute publishes "Unstable Load Training"

Publication of a research review of dozens of studies that imply that unstable load training may result in significant improvements in stability & performance.

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-- - Excerpt from the Article: [Unstable Load Training](#)

- Included in the Course: [Lower Body Exercise Progressions](#)

- Included in credits toward the [Certified Personal Trainer \(CPT\) Certification](#)



Unstable load training - <https://brookbushinstitute.com/articles/unstable-load-training>

New Article Highlights Research Demonstrating the Benefits and Limitations of Unstable Loads in Resistance Training:

“

Integrating these unstable loads has been a ton of fun, has added a new direction for many of our exercise progressions, and has led to new personal records (PRs) among our athletes and staff.”

Dr. Brent Brookbush, CEO of Brookbush Institute

A recent article examines the impact of unstable loads—such as weight hanging from bands, flexible barbells, and surge pipes—on muscle activation and performance. The findings reveal significant increases in core and stabilizing muscle activity but note limitations for high-intensity strength and velocity-focused training due to lighter loads and increased sway. Specific exercises, including lower body movements, chest presses, and rows, are analyzed, offering practical strategies for progression. This research provides critical insights for integrating unstable loads into training, advancing evidence-based practices in resistance training and exercise science.

RESEARCH-BASED SUMMARY STATEMENT (From Article):

Unstable loads, including weight hanging from bands, flexible barbells, and surge pipes, are likely to result in a significant increase in core and stabilizing muscle EMG activity. Further, stability may be challenged by progressing from a barbell to a barbell with weight hanging from bands, hanging weight from lighter bands, or hanging weight from a flexible barbell (e.g., Earthquake Bar). However, unstable loads may require the use of lighter loads (decreasing prime mover activity), significantly increase sway during repetitions, and decrease force output, implying use during high-intensity max strength and max velocity training may not be appropriate.

- Legs: Unstable loads (weight hanging from bands or surge pipes) during lower extremity exercise are likely to result in a significant increase in core and stabilizing muscle activity and an increase in sway but may result in a decrease in force output that is not ideal for high-intensity max strength and max velocity training.

- Chest and Shoulder Press: Performing a chest press with a flexible barbell (e.g., Earthquake bar) or load hanging from bands (weight plates or kettlebells) may result in a significant increase in bar sway and EMG activity of stabilizing muscles and hanging weight from lighter bands may result in further increases.

However, the slower rep speeds and lighter loads (decreasing prime mover activity) may be inappropriate for use during max strength and max velocity training.

- Shoulder Press: The one study investigating the shoulder press (Williams et al., 2018) demonstrates findings that are congruent with the results from previously mentioned research investigating leg and chest exercises; however, this study did add the additional findings that stability could be challenged by progressing from a barbell, to a barbell with hanging weight, to a flexible barbell (e.g. Earthquake bar) with hanging weight.

- Rows: The limited research available implies that EMG activity of latissimus dorsi, scapular stabilizers, thoracic extensors, and hip extensors may be higher when comparing rows with a suspension trainer to rows with more stable loads.

Check out the full article for more, including "Wobble Lunge" video and instructions, an annotated bibliography, and additional exercise recommendations.

Brent Brookbush

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