

The Brookbush Institute Publishes a New Article: "Should You Perform Sets to Failure?"

Sets-to-failure or reps-in-reserve (RIR)? Training recommendations for hypertrophy (muscle growth), strength, endurance, power, and athletic performance.

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- Excerpt from the term: [Should You Perform Sets to Failure?](#)

- Related pre-approved course: [Acute Variables: Performing Sets to Failure](#)

- Related to: [Reps in Reserve \(RIR\)](#)



Should You Perform Sets to Failure? -
<https://brookbushinstitute.com/articles/should-you-perform-sets-to-failure>

INTRODUUCTION

Should you push every set to failure, or is it more effective to leave a few repetitions in reserve? Which approach is better for building strength, hypertrophy, or power? These common



Methodological issues plague the research. Despite these challenges, the conclusions in the statements in this article are well supported when carefully considering the findings of all studies,"

Dr. Brent Brookbush, CEO of Brookbush Institute

questions in resistance training are often met with incomplete or inconsistent answers that fail to consider the full breadth of available research. Drawing from the Brookbush Institute's systematic review of peer-reviewed studies and the course Acute Variables: Sets to Failure, this article examines when and why to perform sets to failure, the advantages of reps-in-reserve, the influence of key variables like volume and repetition velocity, and evidence-based recommendations for various training goals.

EVIDENCE-BASED SUMMARY STATEMENT FOR SETS TO FAILURE:

Based on a systematic review of all available peer-reviewed

and published research, the Brookbush Institute recommends performing repetitions to failure per set (reps-to-failure/set) for optimal improvements in hypertrophy, strength endurance, and maximal strength. However, repetitions in reserve per set (reps-in-reserve/set) are recommended for enhancing power outcomes and for athletes engaging in high-frequency training with the intent of improving sports performance, hypertrophy, strength, or power. Performing 1–2 reps-in-reserve/set, along with 1 additional set per exercise, maintains exercise volume (an influential acute variable), sustains rep velocity and force across multiple sets, and reduces post-exercise performance decreases and long recovery periods associated with reps-to-failure/set.

It is also important to note that for most training goals, reps-to-failure/set is not the most influential variable. For example, performing 1 set to failure is less effective than performing 3 sets with reps-in-reserve for improving hypertrophy, strength, or power, as total training volume has a larger influence on outcomes. Similarly, training load is a more influential variable for improving strength, and contraction velocity is more influential for power development.

Reps-to-failure/set recommended for

- Hypertrophy
- Strength Endurance
- Max Strength

1-2 Reps-in-reserve/set and an additional set/exercise is recommended for:

- Power
- Athletes performing high-frequency training (with hypertrophy, strength, or power goals).

Acute variables that are likely more influential than sets to failure:

- Volume: 1 set-to-failure is less effective than 3 sets-not-to-failure.

Load: Load is more influential than reps-to-failure/set for strength goals.

- Velocity/force (repetition tempo): Concentric velocity and force production are likely to have a larger influence on strength and power (and potentially hypertrophy) than reps-to-failure.

DEFINITIONS

Sets to Failure (reps-to-failure/set): Sets-to-failure is a resistance training strategy in which an individual performs repetitions of an exercise until they can no longer complete a repetition. The word "failure" in this context may include....

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