

The Brookbush Institute Publishes a New Article: "Optimal Rest Between Sets is NOT Determined by Goal or Load"

What is the optimal rest time between sets? Does rest between sets change if your goal is strength, hypertrophy, power, endurance, or weight loss?

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Dr. Brent Brookbush, CEO of Brookbush Institute

- Excerpt from the article: [Optimal Rest Between Sets is NOT Determined by Goal or Load](#)

- Related to the course: [Acute Variables: Rest Between Sets](#)

- Approved for CECs and credits toward: [Certified Personal Trainer \(CPT\) Certification](#)

INTRODUCTION

How long should an exerciser rest between sets (for the same or similar muscle groups)? Most companies

providing personal training and strength training certifications have published recommendations; however, these education providers continue to make the same mistake. They suggest that rest between sets, or inter-set rest periods, should be based on training goals. For example, individuals with the goal of muscle endurance or fat loss would benefit from shorter rest periods, and individuals looking to increase hypertrophy or maximal strength would benefit from longer rest periods. These recommendations miss the fact that weight loss is not correlated with rest between sets, neither is building muscle mass, and even the relationship between strength (lifting heavier weight) and rest between sets falls apart if a long rest period is standardized.

Some publications have suggested that rest between sets may be based on the repetitions per set, which is likely closer to optimal but still misses a key variable that has a significant influence on ideal recommendations. An interesting topic related to shorter rest or longer rest is what to

do during rest times (e.g., active recovery, active rest, compound sets, super-sets, circuit training, etc.). Does filling rest periods with additional activity increase metabolic stress, decrease the performance of compound movements, increase muscle soreness, or have a significant effect on strength gains and other chronic adaptations (the answer to this question below)?



Optimal Rest Between Sets is NOT Determined by Goal or Load -

<https://brookbushinstitute.com/articles/Rest-Between-Sets-Not-Dertimined-by-Goal-Volume>

Courses are started by performing a systematic review of all the peer-reviewed published original research that could be located on the topic (Call this the "anti-cherry-picking initiative").

While developing the course "Acute

Variables: Rest Between Sets" a strange trend in the research was noted. Like many movement professionals, we had been taught that our rest between sets recommendations should be based on goal or load (e.g. short rest for endurance, long rest for max strength and power). However, fairly early in the review, the research did not support this recommendation. The first hint that something was wrong, was that generally, longer rest between sets resulted in better outcomes for every goal; not just max strength and power, but strength endurance and hypertrophy as well. The epiphany came when a few studies compared various rest between set durations and reported the number of reps performed in each subsequent set. The problem with earlier recommendations was not that the duration was too long or too short, the recommendations were being determined based on the wrong variable! If recommendations based on specific training goals were replaced with a more general goal of optimizing the highest quality repetitions per set and volume per routine, recommendations would have achieved far more accuracy.

Note, acute variables, like rest between sets have an impact on almost every fitness, strength, sports performance, and physical rehabilitation routine. Every sports medicine professional (personal trainers, fitness instructors, physical therapists, athletic trainers, massage therapists, chiropractors, occupational therapists, etc.) should familiarize themselves with the research and annotations described below.

BROOKBUSH INSTITUTE'S POSITION STATEMENT

Rest between set durations should be based on sets/exercise (volume), and not load or training goal. General recommendations include moderate (2 min) rest between sets if performing 2 sets/exercise, long rest (3 min) if performing 3 sets/exercise, and very long rest (> 4 min) if performing 4 sets or more/exercise. Further, longer rest between set durations may have a

larger influence on strength endurance training (high rep; 12 - 20 reps) than maximum strength and power training (low reps; 1- 6 reps). It may be reasonable to conclude that very long (> 3 min) rest between set durations is only necessary when performing 3 or more high rep sets (> 15 reps), and that no additional benefit will be attained for rest between set durations longer than 2 minutes during very high-intensity training (< 6 reps/set). It is likely more accurate to think of rest between sets in terms of work/rest ratios; however, for practical purposes, the rest between set durations recommended below will result in the same outcomes.

REST BETWEEN SET RECOMMENDATIONS

General:

- Long (3 min) rest between set durations

Specific

- 2 sets/exercise: Moderate (2 min)
- 3 sets/exercise: Long (3 min)
- 4 or more sets/exercise: Long (3 min) or very long (> 3 min)
- Alternative: Circuit training with short (1 min) rest between exercises
- Additional Strategy for Power: Inter-set rest of 10 - 20 seconds (sec)

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