

1x20 – An Introduction.

This write-up is intended for powerlifters primarily, and also beginner athletes in general. Before I get into the details of what the training program is, a little background on why I use it is instructive. In August of 2015 I dropped training cold turkey. Why this happened is irrelevant. In January of this year, I was 223 pounds and roughly 16% BF. I was out of shape, very out of shape. I needed to do some preparatory training to get myself back into training shape to start powerlifting again. Circumstances allowed me to train roughly 5 days a week, and I needed flexibility in the schedule of when I trained as well. This is the same as many of you, with revolving class schedules and demanding work hours. Enter the application of the 1x20 method.

I have been running a preparatory training program written by Dr. Michael Yessis called the one by 1x20 method. The book Dr. Yessis wrote on what it is and the science behind it can be found [here](#). What is it? It's exactly what it sounds like. You do one set of twenty (ish) reps for each exercise in each training session. There is some variation available here, +/- 3-4 reps. Exercises are selected by muscle group. For example:(this is the set of exercises I have been using for 16 sessions)

- Chest – Bench press
- Delts – lateral DB raise
- Biceps – Curls
- Triceps – Dips
- Upper back – Pull Ups
- Lower Back – Back Extensions

Glute/Ham - GHR
Quads (+ other inferior limb muscles) – Squat
CORE – sit ups

As you see, the variation of the training (keeping your body from experiencing diminished returns from training) is done by changing the exercises, not changing the sets and reps. What do I mean, take the following example for the legs –

I have been squatting for my main leg exercise, coupled with GHR for hamstrings. After approximately 3 sessions of doing 1 set of squats (after 2-3 warm up sets) at 20 reps, I went from using 275 pounds to using 295 pounds. I could only do this weight for 18 reps during session 4. So in session 5 I hit 19 reps, then 20 in session 6. As the progression goes, I continually changed the exercise intensity, but left the rep scheme the same. I may not have been able to get to 20 reps on each session, but the progress of being able to do more reps session after session demonstrates trainedness and improved strength. This is why you leave the weight the same and strive to hit that 20 rep mark. I hit 20 reps with 315 on squat today. Yes it was hard.

Don't forget, that after a certain period of time the body will adapt to using the same exercise and you will simply stop getting stronger. You won't be able to do more reps, you won't be able to do more weight. You will experience a plateau, and this won't be solve able using the above mentioned means. You will need to use a completely different exercise, HOWEVER you will still do 1 set of 20 reps. Another example is instructive –

I used dips for my triceps exercise from session 1 through session 13. I added 1 strand of 30lb chains to my dips, and hit

20 reps in session 10. Then 23 reps in session 13, then instead of adding more weight or more reps, I changed my triceps exercise to dumbbell floor press. I did this for two reasons. Adaptations (PR's) occur when you are able to apply a greater stimulus to the body than it is used to. You can do this by increasing volume and intensity or you can do this by changing the exercise. I changed the exercise. The second reason I picked floor press with dumbbells is specificity. Generally, you want to pick non-specific exercises for your first period of 1x20. When you need to change the exercises completely (not just the volume or intensity) you usually want to pick a more specific exercise to your sport. For a powerlifter, floor press is going to be more specific to the bench press than dips. It isolates the triceps more than dips, and it mimics the mode of muscle work for the triceps in the bench.

GETTING STARTED WITH 1X20

You will select one exercise for each gross muscle group. Feel free to use the muscle groups I have outlined above. Keep in mind that if you choose to do lots of pressing (i.e. presses for lower pec, presses for upper pec, presses for shoulders) you run the risk of damaging your shoulders. The same is true for any joint. Once you have selected somewhere in the ballpark of 7-10 exercises, you will do 1 set of 20 reps for each of those exercises 3x a week. For example, (this is my weekly structure)

Monday – 1x20 for every exercise.

Wednesday – 1x20 for every exercise.

Friday – 1x20 for every exercise.

You will track your reps and weight for each exercise for each training session. As you reach 20 reps in each exercise, change the weight of that exercise slightly. Be aware that for delts, you may not be able to do this at 20 reps. You may need to work your way up to 23 or 25 reps with 10 pounds, then go to 15 pounds. This is because the increase from 10-15 is much greater than say, 200 to 205 in bench press.

WHEN DO I CHANGE EXERCISES?

Don't. As a general rule, don't change them. I have been running 1x20 for almost 5 weeks and still increase my weight or reps in every exercise I chose at the beginning. I changed dips because, as I outlined, my progress was stalling out. The only time you need to change your exercise is if you have not improved in either reps achieved or weight added for 3-4 sessions in a row. This would be grounds for finding another exercise to use in place of what you are doing.

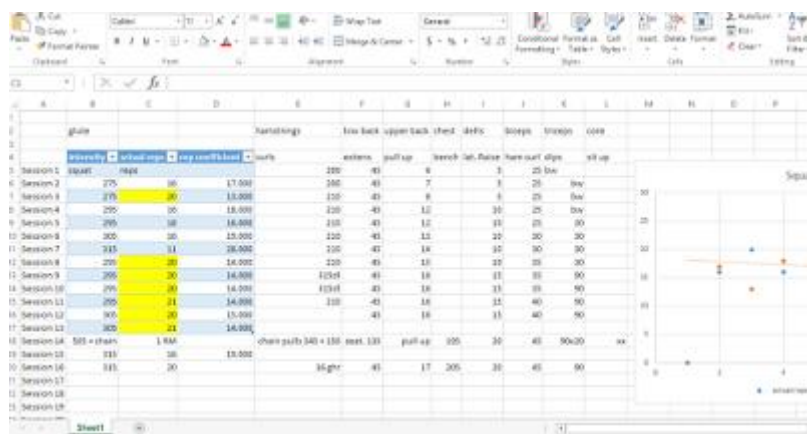
WHAT KIND OF RESULTS CAN I EXPECT?

Deads against Chains test on 3.23.2016 (after roughly 14 sessions)

In 16 sessions of training, I have gained about 10 pounds of muscle, tied and broken my squat and deadlift against chains PR's from when I was training full time in 2014, and also feel much more mobile and healthy. You should expect great increases in strength. You should also expect to add mass. You will be training all of your muscles 3x per week. This is much more frequently than you were ever doing before, I would almost guarantee that. So mass will come.

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S WORKING?

Don't worry about it, you'll get stronger. But, if you are like me and that's not good enough do the following- establish an exercise that is very specific but not your sport exactly. For me, this is full single-ply, straps up, knees wrapped squat and deadlift against chains. Against lots of chains. Squat I use 240lb. of chain and deadlift 150lb. of chain. And no I don't wrap my knees when I deadlift. So for you, it may not be this exercise but something else. I have always noticed that when my chain squat or pull goes up in training, so does my meet PR. You will probably want to run 1x20 for awhile, 10-15 sessions, before testing. I did this, tested, and plan to now go roughly 20 sessions before I test again. Maybe even 30 sessions. Test your specific exercise and assess where you fail. Do you fall forward when you attempt to break your old PR in that exercise? Maybe you need to change your back exercise. This is the type of assessment that I think would be made. That's just my opinion though. You will need to figure out what areas of your sport performance are lacking (weak areas for powerlifters) and then change them to fix it.



An Example of what your training tracking sheet could look like. This demonstrates progress over time.

I find that this way of thinking protects me against over training. How? Some of the benefits of attempting to pass out

by doing 20 reps of squats is that it forces your body to pump blood to areas of the muscle that didn't require it when you were maxing out at 8 reps. This builds capillary density and subsequently helps you heal faster. Also, you won't be able to do maximal intensity work for 20 reps. Period. This protects you from a wide variety of over training and use injuries. Among them joint pain, muscle tightness, tears, strains, and catastrophic injuries like separations and ruptures.

If you find you need questions answered about this method, please feel free to comment below.