

Basic Barbell Training

The key to the whole method is looking at the fixed position and not the moving bar. If you use a fixed reference for the bar position, you can make it go to the same place each rep, but if you follow the bar with your eyes you will have no way to direct the bar to that fixed, correct place since you are looking at the thing you are moving and not the place you want it to go. Oddly enough, this is the same principle as is used to hit a golf ball or a tennis ball: the implement moves to the target, and the target is the fixed object of the eye gaze. Granted, tennis balls move while golf balls don't, but the brain coordinates the hands to go to the target with the club, or racquet, or bar because the target is the reference for the eyes. When a tennis ball moves, the head and eyes move with it rendering it a stationary focal point. Fortunately, most ceilings don't move in most weight rooms, so our task is easier than McEnroe's, but it is similar in that we are driving an object in our hands toward a stationary thing we are actively looking at.



There are similarities between seemingly diverse activities, all of which involve movement directed by the eyes. Whether the object of the movement is stationary or in motion, the eyes focus on the point where the implement in the hands is going.

This little eyeball trick works 90% of the time the first time it is used to produce a correct bench press bar path. Even if you are “poorly coordinated”, you should be able to do a fairly good bench press within a couple of sets using this technique. “Groove”, as the bar path is often referred to by bench pressers, is the first and most frustrating problem that novice trainees will experience, and by focusing your eyes on the ceiling you can eliminate this problem the vast majority of the time. If the bar finds the groove automatically, as it does with this method, your attention can be directed to other aspects of the exercise that might be a problem.

Do another set of five with the bar, reinforcing your eye position, and then rack the bar. This is done with locked elbows after the last rep is finished, by moving the bar back to the uprights, touching them with the bar, and then setting it down in the hooks. Should you have a spotter, this movement back to the rack should be covered. Add weight a little at a time for the next sets of five reps, 10 pounds at a time for smaller kids and women, 20 or even 30 pounds for bigger trainees, until the bar speed begins to slow and form starts to change. Stay there for two more sets of five, and that is the first workout.