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You've been spending regular time training in the vicinity of your gym's powerlifters for weeks now. You're aggressively trying to gain muscle mass, but as far as you can tell, you haven't added an ounce. The fact that your best efforts have resulted in zero muscle growth has you feeling quite frustrated, and your most recent conversation with the grizzled personal training director in your gym hasn't helped matters. "You're an ectomorph, kid," the trainer chuckled confidently. "That's just your natural body structure. You can't really build muscle. If you want my advice, you should stick to what you're best at. Embrace your low body weight. Become a runner. Leave the weightlifting to the big guys." You'd love to simply dismiss this conversation and get back to lifting, but it sticks with you. What if he's right? Are you saddled with a body type won't let you build muscle mass, and you should just take a sad walk back to the cardio room? And speaking of body type, that's nothing that was ever covered during your high school physical education classes. If you truly are an ectomorph — whatever that is — how do you arrange a diet and exercise plan that can help you gain size in spite of your body structure? What are the body types? When people in the fitness realm reference the three body types, they're usually referring to a set of terms used to place people into one of three categories: ectomorph, mesomorph and endomorph. These three body types have been generally accepted by fitness experts as a simple way of classifying people in order to understand the advantages and challenges they might have with respect to weight gain and weight loss. They are also often applied to performance advantages and disadvantages based on natural physical frames. Endomorph Body Type If you're an endomorph, you're characterized by the ability to quickly gain and retain size, whether it's fat mass or muscle mass. This can be viewed as a negative trait, particularly when it comes to the retention of body fat and the overall quality of body composition. People with the endomorph body type predominate in power sports, or at power-oriented positions within specific sports, like football. General features of an endomorph will include a medium frame with wide hips, broad shoulders, thick arms and legs, and the ability to rapidly pack on size across all of these areas. While the gains in size come quickly, endomorphs also tend to accumulate more fat than other body types. This also means that when it's time to lose weight, fat loss tends to come slowly for endomorphs unless they make major changes to their nutrition and training routines. Mesomorph Body Type It is often said that the mesomorphic body type is the envy of people who inhabit either of the other two body types, and this is because mesomorph will have a much easier time gaining size than an ectomorph, and also a far simpler ability to lose body fat than an endomorph. In sports, mesomorphs usually excel at positions that reward speed, power, and endurance. They have narrower hips than endomorphs, but often retain the broad shoulders, and the ability to grow thick muscles with relative ease. In essence, when it comes to building muscle mass while shedding unwanted fatty tissue, mesomorph body types have nothing to worry about. In addition, when they turn their attention to fitness, people with mesomorphic bodies frequently end up with the most aesthetically balanced physiques because they combine the wide shoulders and hips of an endomorph with the most aesthetically balanced physiques because they combine the wide shoulders and hips of an endomorph with the most aesthetically balanced physiques because they combine the wide shoulders and hips of an endomorph with the most aesthetically balanced physiques because they combine the wide shoulders and hips of an endomorph with the most aesthetically balanced physiques because they combine the wide should be added by the should by the should by the should be added by ectomorph, it's easy to evaluate yourself through a negative lens. This is most common if your goal is to gain size, because you may discern that your body type is a permanent curse preventing you from fulfilling much of your athletic potential. This negative lens. arms and legs, and a generally skinny frame. When you're engaging in a physical pursuit that rewards a genetic predisposition toward a large frame and rapid size gains, these traits can work against you. On the flip side, if you simply examined your plight from a balanced perspective, you would see that there are advantages to having a physique that tends toward skinny. Most endurance athletes are skinny, and it can clearly be advantageous in several sports to be tall, thin, and agile, with long limbs. On top of that, if you intend to bulk up an ectomorph body, the gains may come slowly, but you are also more likely to make gains precisely where you want them, without becoming overwhelmed by unwelcome size gains in the wrong areas. Where did the body types come from? Ironically, the lumping of human beings into three body type categories is a product of the research of psychologist William Herbert Sheldon. Also a eugenicist, the New England doctor proposed a classification system for the human physique based on body types primarily so that he could also extrapolate and attribute psychological traits and behavioral tendencies to each group. For example, Sheldon believed endomorphs were friendly, laid back, and lazy. He further posited that mesomorphs were friendly, laid back, and lazy. three groups, but were introverted and anxious. Over time, these psychological presumptions fell by the wayside, but the physical groupings lingered in the fitness realm. Sports medicine has progressed to the point where few people view Sheldon's classifications as fundamental truths about physical characteristics. However, the three groups still have enough basis in observable reality that the fitness industry has found them useful for tailoring nutrition and exercise plans to people with these basic body types. How to train if you have an Ectomorph body type If you're still reading at this point, you're probably convinced that you fall into the category of having an ectomorph body type. Congratulations! Acceptance is the first step to change. So now we need to get a handle on exactly what you should be doing in the gym to offset having a lean build that makes it difficult to gain weight, and particularly when it comes to building muscle. Resistance Training for the Ectomorph Body If the characteristics of an ectomorph best match your body type, then muscle growth is most likely to be stimulated by heavy lifting. This means your exercise routine will have to include intense training, particularly with exercises designed to increase strength. The first step to building muscle is breaking your existing tissue down through physical activities that challenge it. Fatigued and strategically damaged tissue gets repaired while you rest, enabling you to come back and subject it to another round of training, prompting the cycle to begin once again. In this case, you are advised to implement elements from the following resistance training strategy, if not the entire strategy: Try to train your entire musculature at least once over the course of a week, prompting steady size increases across your entire physique. Train with heavy weights in sets of eight to 10 reps to induce the most rapid physiological response. Focus primarily on compound exercises that strategically break down all of your largest muscle groups, while also inviting participation from smaller muscle groups. These include exercises like squats, deadlifts, bench presses, overhead presses, and pullups. Follow your compound exercises with supplemental movements that isolate and comprehensively fatigue each of your muscle groups with precision. Cardio for the Ectomorph Body It is understandable why you'd want to include regular cardio in the planning of your physical activities. Even aside from the burnoff of unnecessary calories that accompanies cardio training, frequently elevating your heart rate is also linked to improved heart health, and a reduction in the incidence of several diseases, including heart diseases. (1) Unfortunately, none of that is beneficial to you if you have an ectomorph body type and prioritize increasing your size. Studies show that while it is possible to gain muscle mass through resistance training without modifying your diet plan, the foremost muscle gains are achieved by test subjects who consume more calories. (2) For the record, those who had the higher energy surplus also acquired more body fat as well. In your case, this means that you need to be very careful when it comes to overdoing the cardio; if you burn off too many calories, your energy surplus will disappear, and you won't be able to gain as much body mass. How to Eat if You Have an Ectomorph Body Type The saying that abs are made in the kitchen applies somewhat less to ectomorphs, since maintaining a lean and ripped body shape is unlikely to be a challenge. The strategy of ectomorphs should be directed toward establishing a nutrition plan to support physical growth. Simply put, since ectomorphs tend to lose weight easily, their nutrition schedule has to be specially tailored to bulk them up! Food for the Ectomorph Body As previously mentioned, creating an energy surplus helps to support weight gain. This means ectomorphs need to flat out eat if they want to boost body mass. This isn't to suggest that you should just pound down the junk food if you're an ectomorph and expect to remain consequence free. Studies show that this would eventually have negative consequences on your overall body composition, along with elevating symptoms of fatigue, nervousness and depression. (3) Instead, ectomorphs should carefully boost calorie intake through a healthy eating plan. A balanced diet includes lean protein, nutrient dense carbohydrates, and healthy fats. In this case, the ideal carbs include foods like brown rice, sweet potatoes, and whole grains, which have valuable nutrient content to lend additional value behind the calorie gain. Protein intake is going to be crucial for multiple reasons if you desire to gain weight as an ectomorph. While the calories from protein certainly won't hinder your quest to grow, it's the contribution of protein to muscle growth and repair that is most vital to the process. When you break down muscle tissue through strength training, protein accelerates and optimizes the repair processes aren't nearly as efficient, and studies have concluded that low protein intake is directly associated with lower body mass, all other things being equal.(4) Supplements for the Ectomorph Body Because protein and increased calories are your foremost priorities if you wish to retain a healthy body composition while you grow your muscles, there are a few types of supplements you should consider. A protein supplement is a safe bet for you, as it can ensure that you're experiencing the quality of muscle repair needed to effectively inflate your muscles to face increased resistance, and to recover from those efforts more quickly. In short, you'll be able to lift more heavily, and more frequently. This will lead to more rapid gains in muscle size. Common Mistakes Ectomorphs Make The path to helping people who have difficulty gaining weight to compensate for low muscle size. in its execution. Yes, the human body doesn't always respond to stimuli the way we'd like it to, nor as guickly as we'd like it to, but you may find yourself frustrated, and walking completely away from the plan instead. Leaning into What They're Best A People have a tendency to gravitate toward activities that they find the most success with. In the case of ectomorphs and their exercise habits, there is a tendency to gravitate toward activities that necessitate extremely heavy lifting. The problem is that high-rep weightlifting is less likely to result in muscle growth than low-rep, heavyweight sets. Then there's the fact that long bouts of cardio burn off the calories required to sustain muscle growth. To eventually inclined for success. Not Lifting Heavy Enough Even if fitness aspirants with endomorph body types hit the weights with regularity, they may not instinctively lift heavily enough to gain the right type of size. Keeping the rep count low and the resistance level high is the right mix of physical activity to effectively add size. Not Eating Enough Protein Even if ectomorphs experience a breakthrough and add size, they may end up with a higher body fat percentage than they envisioned. This can result from eating too many of the wrong foods, and ending up with excess mass of an unwelcome sort. In these cases, the best diet will prioritize protein consumption to inspire the growth of more muscle mass, and less fatty tissue. Not and exercise, it can still take quite some time to see meaningful results if you have an ectomorph body type. It is a common complaint of people who pursue their fitness goals that positive signs of change don't materialize quickly enough. For ectomorphs, there may be an increased likelihood that they will jettison the whole process if their physical fitness doesn't improve in the precise way they were hoping it would. The only way to ultimately become successful is to stay the course, stick with the plan, and continue the hard work until a breakthrough occurs. Outwork Your Genetics If you're the owner of a classic ectomorphic body, and you have difficulty adding size to your frame, there's no need to fret. If you add to your daily routine as many habits that support muscle growth as you possibly can — like engaging in consistent weight training and implementing a healthy eating plan — you'll eventually find yourself inhabiting a physique that any ordinary person would envy. References: Lee DC, Pate RR, Lavie CJ, Sui X, Church TS, Blair SN. Leisure-time running reduces all-cause and cardiovascular mortality risk. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2014 Aug 5;64(5):472-81. doi: 10.1016/j.jacc.2014.04.058. Erratum in: J Am Coll Cardiol. 2014 Oct 7;64(14):1537. PMID: 25082581; PMCID: PMC4131752. Ribeiro AS, Nunes JP, Schoenfeld BJ, Aguiar AF, Cyrino ES. Effects of Different Dietary Energy Intake Following Resistance Training on Muscle Mass and Body Fat in Bodybuilders: A Pilot Study. J Hum Kinet. 2019 Nov 30;70:125-134. doi: 10.2478/hukin-2019-0038. PMID: 31915482; PMCID: PMC6942464. Mititelu M, Oancea CN, Neacşu SM, Musuc AM, Gheonea TC, Stanciu TI, Rogoveanu I, Hashemi F, Stanciu G, Ioniță-Mîndrican CB, Belu I Măru N, Olteanu G, Cîrțu AT, Stoicescu I, Lupu CE. Evaluation of Junk Food Consumption and the Risk Related to Consumer Health among the Romanian Population. Nutrients. 2023 Aug 16;15(16):3591. doi: 10.3390/nu15163591. PMID: 37630781; PMCID: PMCID in Korean adults. BMC Geriatr. 2022 Apr 11;22(1):319. doi: 10.1186/s12877-022-03019-1. PMID: 35410179; PMCID: PMC8996477. An ectomorph body type is often described as having a flat chest, small shoulders, and thin waist. These individuals are often described as thin or skinny and have trouble putting on weight, possibly due to a faster than average metabolism (i.e. they are a "hard gainer"). Building muscle and gaining weight is primarily a function of three things: your training program, diet, and recovery. Manipulating these three things correctly can help an individual with an ectomorph body. type build muscle, get stronger, and increase their overall size. In fact, ectomorphs that gain a bit of muscle are well within reach of obtaining the ottermode body type. Here's what this guide will help you do. Pick a training program Calculate your total daily energy expenditure (TDEE) Calculate your macro profile Track your calories That's it. The rest is just details and tips for your success. If you need help gaining weight, check out our hardgainer diet tips and our list of the best weight gainers for skinny guys. In order to build muscle and gain weight, the three most important training principles are: with adequate resources to fuel growth by being in a caloric surplus Adequate recovery Ivysaur 448 GreySkull LP 5/3/1 BBB A good starting option is the Ivysaur 4-4-8 Program. This program: Utilizes 3 training days per week Focuses on big compound lifts Is a full body split Progresses weekly, allowing for faster progress lvysaur 4-4-8 Program Spreadsheet - LiftVault.com Another great choice is the Greyskull LP program, which is another 3 day full body strength workout. It increases each session instead of every week, but the overall progression rate is the same as Ivysaur 4-4-8 (15 lb per week or 7.5 kg per week). 3 training days per week Equal volume between overhead press and bench press Equal volume between chin ups and barbell rows Includes direct arm work (triceps, biceps) Includes ab and shoulder work (shrugs) 5 exercises per training session instead of 4 exercises per training session instead of 4 exercises per training session instead of 4 exercises I think Ivysaur 4-4-8. Bench Press can typically handle higher frequencies, so I think it is suboptimal to split volume evenly between the overhead press and the bench press in Greyskull LP. Still, this is a minor complaint and I still recommend running Greyskull Linear Progression Progre Wendler's 5/3/1 Boring But Big. This program: Utilizes 4 training days per week Focuses on big compound lifts Has gradual progression built in, allowing it to be run for a long time while continually making gains Wendler 5-3-1 v1.3.xlsx Combined, choosing a beginner and intermediate program listed above should be able to take you through your first year of training. Ivysaur 4-4-8 or Greyskull LP with their weekly/daily progression, should provide somewhere between 3 and 5 months worth of steady progress. It will start easy, but gradually become quite difficult. Successful execution of the program will require that diet and recovery are dialed in, which we will discuss below. Jim Wendler's 5/3/1 Boring But Big, with its monthly progression, should be able to provide you with a solid training frequency will be even more critical here, as the training frequency will be increased from three times per week. It is a brutally simple program that has helped thousands of people increase their size and, run correctly, it will help you grow too. You don't build muscle when you're working out. You build muscle when you're recovering from working out. You build muscle when you're working out. You build muscle when you're working out. recover from fatigue, which accumulates in your body and, at adequate levels, reduces your ability to train at optimal levels. Sleep Study #1 These study participants got 8.5 hours per night. The 5.5 hours group lost 1.6x more fat than a group that got 5.5 hours of sleep each night and lost 2.33x more fat than a group that got 8.5 hours of sleep each night and lost 2.33x more fat than a group that got 8.5 hours per night. Study #2 Not getting enough sleep reduces circulating levels of testosterone and IGF-1 (a growth hormone). There is a ton of supporting research that suggests sleep is a crucial part of any strength and muscle building endeavor. Sleep cannot be sold, so you don't hear it discussed much by the fitness industry, but it is just as essential as exercise and diet. It is the third leg upon which the bar stool of fitness sits. Can't get 9 hours? Shoot for 8. Can't get 8 hours? Shoot for 7.5. The point is that the more gains you will make. That's it. Getting to eating, lifting, and gaining! While the above information is all you need to get started, if you think you need some extra guidance, here you go. A entire subreddit community dedicated to gaining weight, mass, and muscle. Most importantly, read the FAQ section (below). It will very likely answer any remaining questions you have. Here are some great recipes for meals that help you gain weight. recipe is for a meal or a shake. Related: Weight_Gain_Recipe_Archive Here are real people that used Lift Vault programs recommended above, showing that there are many paths to gaining weight and muscle, but they all use adding weight on heavy compound lifts and eating at a caloric surplus. He used a PPL routine, running it about 5x per week. M/23/6'2 [158lbs to 198lbs] (1 year) byu/Arayder inBrogress They used Sheiko programs, the CUBE method, and German Volume Training programming. [deleted by user] by inBrogress They used Sheiko programs, the CUBE method, and German Volume Training programming. started eating 3 meals a day + a protein shake. M 23 107lb -> 126lb (5 Months) by ingainit Gaining weight and muscle, for the vast majority of people, including ectomorphs, is straightforward. Hop on a linear periodization program that utilizes heavy compound lifts, eat in a caloric surplus, and give your body adequate recovery. That's it. plenty. The trick is finding ones that you will actually do. For me, a shake with milk, eggs, protein powder, coconut oil, peanut butter, a banana, and spinach every morning was an easy way to get nearly 1,000 calories in for breakfast. This put me in a good position to hit my caloric goals by the end of the day. Eating calorically dense food: red meat whole milk, nuts, avocado, and rice are also smart strategies. More detail is provided in the "diet" section above. The most popular ectomorph training programs for beginners are Ivysaur 4-4-8 and Greyskull LP. For intermediates, 5/3/1 Boring But Big (BBB) is recommended for gaining muscle size. Yes, of course. Just about everyone, including ectomorphs, have been able to gain muscle and size by lifting weights and eating more - just like everyone else. The same rules apply. I don't mean this as an insult and I don't say it with malice. This is, in fact, good news. Many people have been where you are and have successfully achieved their goals of getting bigger and stronger. It is very possible and if you follow the correct steps, it is inevitable.Kyle Risley founded Lift Vault in 2016 to make finding great powerlifting, and more. He currently lives in Massachusetts and continues to compete in powerlifting. I have a hard time gaining muscle, no matter how hard I train. I'm naturally built like a string bean. Sound like you? If it does-like me-you fall into a category of people called ectomorphs. Ectomorphs are one of 3 body types-or somatotype isn't ordinarily associated with jacked-ness. But ectomorphs can build muscle, and we have a workout plan specifically to help you do just that. If you are an ectomorph, read on or jump to the workout plan now! Alternatively, you can download the free PDF version of the program using the link below: Ectomorph Workout plan PDF Program styleResistance training + cardioWorkout duration1-2 hoursScheduling3 or 6 days a weekGoalBuild muscle and burn fatLevelBeginners to advancedTarget GenderMale and Female Ectomorphs also fall in a category of people called "hardgainers". They are characterized by being naturally slender and willowy, they have narrow shoulders, hips, and often, long limbs. They're the basketball players and distance runners. Gaining muscle-and fat-is possible if the conditions are right. Ectomorphs have to eat and train right just like everyone else. We just need to deal with the propensities of being more naturally slim. The graphic should give you a pretty good idea of your basic, default body type. (Overeating can make everyone look like an endomorph, by the way.) Somatotypes (ectomorph, and mesomorph) provide a general framework for categorizing basic physiques. Many people won't fit neatly into one or the other. There are combinations. I'm a mash-up of ectomorph, and mesomorph, by the way.) ectomorphs. Anyone over 50 years of age - while not necessarily all ectomorphs - should all be considered hardgainers due to the natural loss of muscle mass. So for you guys and gals who are "more seasoned", this would be an excellent plan to follow. Related: Hardgaining ectomorphs can expect to work out 6 days a week. You'll be working out hard with a focus on recovery in between sets and workouts. Our goal is to coax the muscles along. To quote 8-time Mr. Olympia Lee Haney (who wasn't talking about ectomorphs BTW), "stimulate, don't annihilate". Stimulate, don't annihilate". the higher end of that range. Eat nutritious unprocessed foods with balance between protein, carbohydrates, and fats. If you have to err, err on the side of protein and starchy carbs like potatoes and rice. Ectomorphs can make noticeable gains when following this plan. It's structured as an A-B Push-Pull-Legs which takes a natural 3-day split and turns it into a 6-day plan. The routine follows a Push-Pull-Legs A-B format. The A-B split provides for additional days and exercise variety. Variety isn't important by itself. It does expose you to several different exercises that accomplish fundamentally the same objectives. This helps prevent overtraining while getting the nuanced benefits of similar exercises. Some exercises are better for muscle development. But there's nuance. "Best" exercises may not work for everyone. Good example: I can't do Bulgarian Split Squats due to an artificial hip that subluxes when I get in that position. Another good example: I can't do Bulgarian Split Squats due to an artificial hip that subluxes when I get in that position. Another good example might be doing Smith Machine presses on Push Day A, where Dumbbell Bench Press is done on Push Day B. You could do both on the same day, but splitting them into A and B allows for higher intensity on each. I selected exercises that are known muscle-builders. Due to the medium frames and proportional limbs of ectomorphs, traditional weightlifting exercises that are known muscle-builders. cables to do this routine. It's not an at-home or outdoor program, nor one that can be done adequately in a free-weight only environment. This is the format: DaySplitPush AChest, Anterior shoulders, Triceps. Compound exercise focusPush BChest, Anterior shoulders, Triceps. Isolation exercise focus PPL A-B works great for a 6-day per week schedule but can be easily adapted to a 3-day per week split where the A and B workouts are spread out over two weeks. Here's how you might schedule one week 6-Day PPL program with an A-B split: DayWeekdaySplit1SundayPush A2MondayPull A3TuesdayLegs A4WednesdayRest5ThursdayPush B6FridayPull B7SaturdayLegs B What about Rest Day? You've got lots of flexibility on where you put the rest day. Traditionally, you'd put it on Day 4 after Leg Day A. There's no unbreakable rule that you can't take a rest on Day 7. Or Day 3. Cardio training is important from an overall fitness perspective. However, it will not help an ectomorph swill want all their energies going toward their goal of building and sculpting muscle. Nothing says ectomorphs shouldn't do some cardio. If you can't breathe, you can't lift. However, if you do elect to do cardio, opt for LISS which combines benefits of sustained activity and recovery-biased low intensity. Ectomorph Workout Plan PDF ExerciseSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Chest Press15-2010-128-108-10Close Grip Chest Press15-2010-128-108-Crossover or Decline Cable Press(Bilateral or Single Side, kneeling)15-2010-128-108-10Front Raises15-2010-128-108-10Front Raises15-2010-128-108-10E to Row 15-2010-128-108-10E to Row 15-2010-128-10E to Row 15-10Kelso Shrugs15-2010-1210-1210-1210-12Chest Supported Incline DB Flyes15-2010-128-108-10 ExerciseSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Heel Elevated)15-2010-128-108-10Bulgarian Split Squats (Rear foot elevated)15-2010-128-10Bulgarian Split Squats (Rear foot elevated)15-2010-128-108-10Bulgarian Split Squats (Rear foot elevated)15-2010-128-10Bulgarian Split Squats (Rear foot elevated)15 ExerciseSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Biceps Curls15-2010-128-108-10Machine Pull-downsor Pull-ups with bodyweightor Machine-assisted10-1210-128-108-10P-1210-1210-1210-128-108-10 ExerciseSet 1Set 2Set 3Set 4Leg Extensions15-2010-128-108-10P-1210-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-1210-128-108-10P-128-10P-128-10 10Hip Abductions15-2010-128-108-10Hip Adductions15-2010-128-108-10Hip Extensionsor45° Hyperextensions15-2010-128-10Calf Raises15-2010-128-10Calf R the context of the entire workout and lifestyle. Some things just work all the time. Observe all the resistance training basic rules of thumb for the ectomorph program as for any other resistance training basic rules of the entire workout and lifestyle. training routines, progressive overload always applies. Always. Select a weight you can perform for the specified number of repeat the cycle. Record your sets, reps, and weights in a composition notebook. Yep, paper is better. Leave your phone or tablet in your locker; this is a gym, not a coffee shop. It always works. Concentrate on executing every rep with perfect form. Don't count your reps; make your meaning that if my form is off, a set of 8 could actually end up being a set of 12. For me, it's a worthwhile thing to do to make sure I'm paying giving each rep the attention it deserves. The clinical literature in the field of exercise science now strongly suggests that the sets taken to absolute mechanical failure are what grow muscle best. We have a conundrum. Ectomorphs need to not overtrain, yet they struggle to gain muscle. So... Best application for this program is 1 or 2 RIR for the first set or two, then complete mechanical failure for the last set of each exercise. All with excellent form of course. Set your weights so that the last rep of every set really is the last one you can do with good form. Use a methodical, rhythmic, pumping motion without momentum of any kind. Opt for supported exercises whenever you can. We are not concerning ourselves with developing "stabilizer" muscles here. Using a bench or machine with chest or back support will serve you ectomorphs better as you aim to maximally build muscle. For a terrific visual of the rep cadence you need, watch the 1976 documentary, "Pumping Iron" which chronicles Arnold's quest for his 7th Olympia title...which he achieved of course. Aim for 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep and stay asleep. Cool very dark room, no electronics at least 1 hour before bed, stop drinking liquids 2 hours before bed. Rest a minute or so between hard sets. Your last sets for each exercise require 2 to 3 minutes rest between to allow you to go all-out, as mentioned earlier. Always use your rest period to visualize your next set in your head. Avoid taking your smartphone onto the gym floor. It will only distract you. No cell phones. Focus on executing every set perfectly and intensity that could be better. The hardgaining ectomorph needs to train as much with their brains as they do with their bodies. Use the mirror and clothes fit as your primary gauge of progress, which will be slow. Stay at it. Avoid the scale except for long intervals, such as every 30 or even 60 days. You'll drive yourself crazy if you weigh yourself crazy if you weigh would our Ectomorph Workout Plan PDF below: Ectomorph Workout Plan PDF How much muscle and strength can an "ectomorph" gain? Plenty of research has looked into rates of muscle and strength standards for us? Skinny guy? Are there different strength standards for us? Skinny guy? Are there different strength standards for us? quickly we can grow? Do we have an extended period of newbie gains, allowing us to gain muscle and strength more quickly? Or does having less muscle mass indicate that our genetics are poor, causing us to build muscle more slowly? We have thinner bones and narrower frames, and we tend to start off weaker. Does that limit how strong we can become? In this article, we'll go over two main questions from an ectomorph's perspective: How much muscle can an ectomorph gain in his first year? Most guys can expect to gain around twenty pounds of muscle during their first year? Most guys can expect to gain around twenty pounds of muscle during their first year? weights? With a good workout routine, most guys are able to bench press 225 pounds (100kg), squat 315 pounds (140kg), and deadlift 405 pounds (140kg), and deadlift 405 pounds (180kg). Are these numbers realistic for ectomorph's lifetime muscular genetic potential? If we lift for a lifetime, how big can we hope to get? How strong can an ectomorph get with a lifetime of serious training? If we develop our muscles to their full potential, how strong can we hope to become? Let's dive in. Before we can talk about how much muscle "ectomorphs" can build, we need to understand what sets us apart from the average guy. The main difference is that by the time the average man reaches adulthood, he's naturally accumulated a fair amount of muscle mass on his frame, partly due to his genetics, partly from gradually becoming overweight. Compared to us ectomorphs, he's far closer to his genetic muscular potential. (You can calculate your genetic muscular potential here.) When the average guy makes newbie gains, he'll be able to gain around two pounds of muscle per month, which, to be clear, is an incredible rate of muscle growth. As ectomorphs, though, many of us can dwarf those newbie gains: Now, to be clear, your results will surely vary. Everyone has a different frame, different muscle shapes, and slightly different genetic potential. You can see a wider variety of bulking transformations here. We also have an article going over average bulking results. Overall, on average, the skinnier a guy is, the more quickly he can build muscle. How is that possible, though? Doesn't the research disprove this? The research disprove this? growth than that, but, at least on average, most experts agree that a lifter following a good bulking program can realistically expect to gain about two pounds of muscle per month. However, the research also shows that rates of muscle growth vary highly from person. While gaining two pounds of muscle per month may be the average, some guys are able to gain muscle up to three times as quickly (study). If we look at GK's before and after photos, instead of gaining two pounds of muscle per month, he's appearing to gain more like six pounds. Mind you, not all of his weight gain is muscle. At least a few of those pounds are other forms of lean mass—denser bones, more connective tissue and so on-and surely there's some fat in there as well. Still, he's gaining muscle far more quickly. That was confirmed by could ever hope to. Don't hardgainers have worse muscle-building genetics? When I first started trying to build muscle, I assumed that being skinny meant that I wouldn't be able to build muscle very quickly. That was confirmed by a confirmed b the fact that I was trying everything I could to gain weight and still couldn't get the damn scale to budge. Furthermore, the term, though, a hardgainer is someone who struggles to gain weight. I know that sounds like a weird distinction to make, given that bulking up requires gaining both body weight and muscle mass. However, our struggle to gain weight has little to do with "hardgainers" having faster metabolisms or smaller appetites. In my case, at least, I wasn't failing to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having a poor response to lifting to build muscle because I was having the build muscle because I was have a weights. Rather, I was failing to build muscle because I wasn't gaining any weight overall. I wasn't able to eat enough calories, skinny guys tend to respond incredibly well to lifting weights. With a proper bulking program, we're often able to exceed all the expected rates of muscle growth, even while keeping our gains fairly lean. Although we don't gain muscle more slowly, we do start off with less of it. A study published in 2000 in the Journal of Applied Physiology determined that the average man weighs around 200 pounds and has about 80 pounds of muscle mass on his frame (study). Over the course of his life, he might be able to add another forty pounds of muscle to that, accumulating 120 pounds. He'll likely have slightly thinner bones, a narrower frame, and a smaller stomach, which accounts for some of the weight difference, but most of the weight difference is due to the fact that he's carrying far less muscle and fat. Obviously, there are different degrees of hardgainers, but for the sake of this example, let's say that the hardgainer only has around forty pounds of muscle by the time he reaches adulthood. He's starting behind the starting line. If you read our newble gains article, then you know that the further away from our genetic potential we are, the faster we re able to grow. This is because the slow part of building muscle is the process of adding more nuclei to our muscle fibres, like so: Newbles don't need to do that. When we re far enough away from our genetic potential, the nuclei in our muscle fibres, like so: Newbles don't need to do that. fibres are still capable of managing larger areas, meaning that we can gain muscle without needing to increase the number of nuclei in our muscles fibres, like so: Admittedly, this example is oversimplified. Other factors contribute to the slowing rate of muscle growth as well (such as the repeated bout effect). The main takeaway, though, is that our muscles grow quickly at first, and then as we get closer to our genetic potential, our rate of muscle growth slows. We get progressively diminishing returns: However, given that we're starting so far away from our genetic potential, our rate of muscle growth slows. the very beginning. This seems to explain why guys who are starting out thinner than average are able to build muscle at such a tremendous pace. I suspect that our muscle growth trajectory looks more like this: Now we've arrived at the issue of our genetic muscular potential. As naturally skinny hardgainers, how far away from our genetic potential are we? After all, it doesn't matter how close to the average genetic potential we are, it matters how closer to our genetic potential we are. The best researcher looking into this question is Casey Butts, Ph.D., who found that the genetic muscular potential of a hardgainer is about 5–10% lower than the average man (due to having thinner bones and smaller frames). So if the average man can hold around 120 pounds of muscle, we hardgainers can expect to hold about 108-114 pounds of muscle. That's a genetic disadvantage, sure, but not a significant one. In fact, given how few people get anywhere even close to reaching their genetic disadvantage, sure, but not a significant one. In fact, given how few people get anywhere even close to reaching their genetic disadvantage, sure, but not a significant one. and more muscular than almost every other man we come across. Our 130-pound ectomorph beginner, though, still only has forty pounds of muscle to gain before he starts butting up against his genetic potential. That's an absolutely insane amount of muscle that he can gain over the course of his lifetime, most of which he could theoretically gain during his first couple of years of proper bulking. Compared to the other male body types, yes, ectomorphs start off with less muscle, but our genetics aren't nearly as limiting as most of us think they are. With some heavy metal and protein shakes, we're able to completely transform our physiques. As we showed above, it's almost like ectomorphs get multiple rounds of newbie gains, allowing us to catch up to other guys incredibly quickly. At that point, through cleverness and a good work ethic, we have every opportunity to blow past them. Skinny guys can gain muscle quickly at first. However, the more muscle we gain, the more our growth will slow. The law of diminishing returns kicks in. Eventually, those kicks will get quite painful. We have our ectomorph newbie gains, where we bulk up insanely quickly. This often allows us to shoot past the average non-lifter. Here's a remarkable example of that: Then, because we're no longer skinny, we have more typical newbie gains, where most of us can expect to gain around two pounds per month without a noticeable increase in body-fat percentage. This usually allows us to catch up to the other casual lifters over the course of a year or so, earning us a totally athletic and attractive physique. Here's an example of the progress some ectomorphs can make with just a single year of lifting: Once we reach an intermediate bulking level, we can expect to start following especially well-programmed lifting routines as well as actively overcoming plateaus. This is also where we might need to start following especially well-programmed lifting routines as well as actively overcoming plateaus. news is that by the time our progress really begins to slow, we're already quite strong and muscular, and we've hopefully developed good skills, knowledge, and habits. Yes, it takes longer to see further improvements, but we already look and feel awesome, so there's less urgency to it. For example, here's JoeBrusk going from having an awesome physique to having an incredible physique: Compared to Dan gaining thirty pounds in ten weeks, gaining an estimated eight pounds of muscle over the course of five months might not sound like a lot, but that's actually quite rapid progress for someone who's already built such a solid foundation. Now, again, keep in mind that these are specific examples. Your results will surely vary. Everyone gains muscle a little differently. Okay, now let's talk about strength standards, shooting way past them. With average male strength standards, though, we have the opposite problem: they seem totally unrealistic. Why do we keep hearing that within our first year of lifting, we should be able to bench press over 225 pounds? That's insane! So, first of all, where do these strength standards come from? As far as I can tell, the most credible source that's looked into this is Greg Nuckols, MA, from Stronger by Science (an incredible strength training blog). He took a survey of his readers, all of whom are serious about both powerlifting and science but who ranged from beginners all the way up to advanced lifters. Greg found that within a year of serious lifting, the average guy was able to bench press 235 pounds. Furthermore, he mentions that with proper workout programming and coaching, most guys should be able to do even better than that. However, we also need to consider how much these guys were able to bench press when they started lifting. In this case, the men started off benching around 188 pounds. So, within their first year of lifting, they only added 50 pounds to the bar. an "aha" moment for a lot of us skinny guys. It's not that ectomorphs gain strength more slowly; it's that we start off behind the starting line. When we can build muscle far more quickly than the average guy, we can also gain strength far more quickly. It just takes a little while for us to catch up. The main thing to keep in mind when thinking about our genetic strength potential. In order to reach our strength and size are a happy couple that enjoys strolling hand in hand along the beach. Most things that increase strength can also increase muscle mass and vice versa. When we're talking about the average man here. The average man starts off with roughly 80 pounds of muscle mass. Then, during his first year of lifting, he can increase to around 100 pounds of overall muscle mass. That means that he only needs to bulk up his chest muscles a tiny bit to have the horsepower he needs to bench 235 pounds. So to understand why our strength is starting off so much lower, we need to consider how much muscle mass we're starting off with. Consider the 130-pound ectomorph from our example. He's only starting with forty pounds of muscle, so he doesn't have anywhere close to the amount of muscle mass required to bench pressing, I was benching fifty pounds for six reps. Rounding up, that puts my estimated one-rep max at 60 pounds. Worse, I wasn't even able to bring the barbell down to my chest. Technically, I couldn't even get a single rep with the 45-pound bar. At the time, I figured I was an ectomorph. I had a thin torso, long arms, and just generally bad genetics for the bench press. harder for ectomorphs to learn, for sure, and it explains why I couldn't bring the barbell down to my chest, but a new study confirms that bench press strength is directly correlated with the amount of muscle someone has in their chest, upper arms, and shoulders. Bench press strength is directly correlated with the amount of muscle someone has in their chest, upper arms, and shoulders. nothing to do with skill, either. It's a movement that requires sheer muscle mass. Once we build the muscle, we'll have the strength. In my case, at 6'2 and 130 pounds, it stands to reason that I was only benching fifty pounds. I still had a small chest, small arms, and small shoulders. I wasn't weak because of my lanky proportions, I was weak because I had so little muscle mass on my frame. Not much, unless we also factor in muscle mass. So let's do that. The average man starts off with eighty pounds and moves his bench press up to 235 pounds. If strength is indeed directly related to muscle mass, then in order to even bench press 188 pounds, I'd need to gain an estimated forty pounds on top of that. In my case, this theory held true. I gained 55 pounds within my first couple of years of lifting, going from 130 up to 185 pounds, with a body fat percentage of 11% (as measured by DEXA). Again, no drugs or secrets, just a good bulking program: By the time I had gained 55 pounds, I was benching around 250, squatting around 250, s to 315 and 405 over the course of another couple of months. Once I had a solid amount of muscle mass, my strength hit those targets without a problem. To be fair, I hit both a size and a strength plateau at around 150 pounds, and if it weren't for Marco coaching me through the process, I probably would have stayed stuck there for quite a while (Here's our article on how we went from skinny to muscular.) I know, I know. Even taking into account that I had a world-class strength coach guiding me through half of this bulk, I realize this rate of weight gain sounds remarkable. Now, keep in mind that not all of the weight I gained was muscle. My bones got denser, my connective tissue got stronger, I gained some fat, and I grew my hair out. Still, much of the weight I gained was muscle, and for many guys, gaining that much muscle would be unrealistic. But keep in mind that it took me two years of lifting to reach the size and strength standards that most guys can reach within a single year. My progress may seem remarkable, but remember that I had to train for a year just to make it to the starting line. For another example, Marco is 6'4 and started off his adult life weighing around 150 pounds at a little under 10% body fat. At that point, he was benching 250, squatting 315, and deadlifting 450. Again, once he gained enough muscle mass, he was able to achieve those strength targets without an issue. If we want to get strong, we have to get strong, we have to get strong, all things considered, it takes ectomorphs a little longer to build a big and strong physique. Not that much longer, mind you-maybe an extra 6-12 months, depending on how skinny you are right now. If you aren't as skinny as I was, don't expect to bench press 250 sooner than I was able to. Lamenting about our lack of natural muscle size and strength can certainly be satisfying, but we also have a pretty cool advantage: skinny guys have naturally lower body-fat percentages. Even skinny-fat guys aren't dealing with the same propensity for obesity that the average guy is—not even close. And the more muscle we gain, the easier it becomes to stay lean (study). If a skinny-fat guys aren't dealing with the same propensity for obesity that the average guy is—not even close. And the more muscle we gain, the easier it becomes to stay lean (study). If a skinny-fat guys aren't dealing with the same propensity for obesity that the average guy is—not even close. And the more muscle we gain, the easier it becomes to stay lean (study). If a skinny-fat guys aren't dealing with the same propensity for obesity that the average guy is—not even close. And the more muscle we gain, the easier it becomes to stay lean (study). If a skinny-fat guys aren't dealing with the same propensity for obesity that the average guy is—not even close. And the more muscle we gain, the easier it becomes to stay lean (study). the habit of lifting, and starts eating a better diet, staying lean will become second nature. (Here's our guide for skinny-fat guys.) In fact, most of us skinny guys don't have abs because our ab muscles are too small, not because our body fat percentage is too high. Our problem is flipped around backwards. That's the edge ectomorphs have. We can often build muscle quite quickly, and if we do it properly, we'll be able to maintain a lean and muscular physique year-round. Besides, even if we're only able to get 90-95% as big as the average serious lifetime lifter, that's still an incredible degree of muscularity. With good training, most of us should eventually be able to bench over 315 pounds, squat over 450, and deadlift over 500. That's plenty. But wait a second. If you train at a standard gym, you may have noticed that the vast majority of ectomorphs stay skinny forever. And Hell, even most naturally strong guys with a decade of lifting experience aren't deadlifting anywhere close to even 400 pounds. In fact, if you do a set of deadlifts with four plates on the bar in a commercial gym, you're going to draw stares. Guys will probably come up to you and ask for lifting advice. The good news is that it has nothing to do with genetic variation. As I mentioned above, even if you're an ectomorph, you can almost certainly still get your bench press over 300 pounds, your squat over 400, and your deadlift over 500. The trick is that you need to build a bunch of muscle in order to do it (which is probably your main goal anyway, so that's great). The real reason that most people fail to make progress is that: They refuse to follow good bulking programs. Maybe they want to do this without spending any money. Or maybe they spend money on the programs with the fanciest marketing instead of by looking at the education and credentials of the people making it. Or maybe they follow programs out there, but there are also a lot of bad ones. They don't use coaches. Right when we started beta testing the very first version of our bulking program, we realized that we needed to include online coaching with every membership. We know that our members are going to have unique circumstances. They'll benefit from feedback on their lifting technique. We need to be there to help them through that. That's the only way that we can guarantee progress. Intermediate lifters fail to put in enough effort. Beginners lack consistency. People who follow a good lifting routine, eat a good bulking diet and focus on gradually gain strength are able to accomplish incredible things, blowing past the average lifter in no time. But if you aren't bulking properly, ectomorph or not, you're not going to gain enough muscle mass to get anywhere even close to these muscle growth or strength targets. The other thing to keep in mind is that you'll progress at all. No matter how diligently you persist, zero gains per week will still add up to zero gains per vear. In fact, it's possible to spend decades lifting weights without ever gaining more than 10-20 pounds of muscle and 10-20 pounds knowing what it's like to be big and strong. This is great news in the sense that we have every opportunity to become far better than average. But it's bad news if you were hoping that this would be a walk in the park. There's also the issue of people underestimating their potential, which is why I wanted to write this article in the first place. A recent study published in Nature split the participants into two random groups. Half the participants were told that they were genetically gifted, and the other half were told that they were genetically gifted performed markedly better. (Greg Nuckols wrote up a good breakdown of the study here.) To reach your full potential, you have to expect a lot of yourself and then fight for it. If you keep thinking that being an ectomorph is holding you back, it will. Ectomorphs start off with less muscle mass, but we catch up quickly. While we're underweight, we're often able to build muscle at a tremendous pace, often gaining 20+ pounds in just our first couple months of lifting and up to forty pounds within our first year. Then, when we get up to a more average size, we can expect to gain muscle as much muscle mass as the average lifter, we shouldn't expect to be able to lift as much as him. That might mean that we need to gain 20-40 pounds of muscle before we're able to lift as much as they are, which can add an extra 6-18 months before we're able to hit the strength targets of bench pressing 235, squatting 330, and deadlifting 405 pounds. (Keep in mind that although strength targets of bench pressing 235, squatting 330, and deadlifting 405 pounds.) strength training is ideal for gaining muscle size. If you're trying to gain muscle size, hypertrophy training is better.) Our potential is quite high. Most people aren't following good programs, they aren't seeking the advice of qualified strength and

conditioning coaches, and they aren't pushing themselves consistently. Alright, that's it for now. If you want to know the ins and outs of bulking up, we have a free newsletter. If you want a full muscle-building program, including a 5-month workout routine, a bulking diet guide, a gain-easy recipe book, and online coaching, check out our Bony to Beastly Bulking Program. Or, if you want a customizable intermediate bulking program, check out our Outlift Program. You want to gain 30 pounds of muscle in your first year of training? If you're skinny-fat, forget about it! When I started training, I thought I would gain 20-30 pounds of muscle in my first year of training without adding any body fat. That's at least the idea I got from reading countless bodybuilding forums, transformation success stories and eBooks. Because of that, I decided to training. I added hundreds of pounds to my compound lifts and I changed from a diet full of empty calories to a healthy diet full of whole foods. Unfortunately, I ended up disappointed. Instead of filling out my skinny-fat frame with muscle, I gained 35 pounds of fat. I don't want you to go through the same pain as me. Instead, I want you to start your skinny-fat transformation with somewhat realistic expectations in mind. By knowing how fast you can gain muscle, you'll start to appreciate any progress you make in your training, rather than looking for a quick-fix all the time. Therefore, the goal of this article is to answer the question: How much muscle can you gain in 1 year? For the purpose of the maximum amount of muscle you can gain in a year, I like to use The McDonald Model, which shows the potential rate of muscle gain per year for the average man: 1st year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 2nd year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 10-12 pounds (1 pound per month) 4th year of proper training: 10-12 pounds (1 pound per month) 2nd year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 10-12 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 10-12 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds (2 pounds per month) 4th year of proper training: 20-25 pounds training and onwards: 2-3 pounds (not worth calculating) If you sum up he potential muscle gains for the first 3 years of training don't sound too bad, however it's important to note that the model assumes average genetics. Unfortunately, skinny-fat guys have below average genetics. (Muscle gains are hard to come by while fat gains seem to accumulate just by looking at food). Because of that, most skinny-fat guys will gain less muscle mass than this range suggests. In the sections below I will explain why, by relating to my own training history and the countless skinny-fat guys will gain less muscle mass than this range suggests. email inbox. Keep in mind that the numbers I provide below are ESTIMATES. People gain muscle at different rates, but those estimates should at least give you an idea of what's possible. 1st Year of Training: Gaining A Base-Line of Muscle The typical skinny-fat guy has 20-30 pounds of fat to lose. If we assume that you have 24 pounds to lose, and you lose 6 pounds per month, you will be doing fat loss for the first 4 months of you training. That leaves 8 months to gain muscle while staying lean. This is different from the average guy which the McDonald Model is based on. The average guy which the McDonald Model is based on. and fat during his short bulks, then spend a long time cutting. The ectomorph will gain a small amount of muscle mass, but he will be able to bulk for a VERY long time, since he doesn't gain much fat. What about the skinny-fat guy? Just like the ectomorph, he will also gain quite a lot of fat. If he wants to remain aesthetic, he needs to spend a significant amount of his year controlling his body-fat level. In other words, the skinny-fat guy cannot expect to gain as much muscle in his first year of training. I estimate that a skinny-fat guy cannot expect to gain as much muscle in his first year of training. Unfortunately, those 15 pounds of muscle mass will not be enough to make you look muscular. Instead, you will end up looking skinny. The reason for this is that most skinny-fat guys carry close to ZERO muscle mass when they start, so the first 15 pounds will make you go from "skeleton" to "lean". A good example of how the first year of training can look like is presented below: This is a 2 year transformation picture of a Skinny-Fat Transformation reader who spent a long time following typical condition ever (June 2012), where he carries around 30 pounds of excess weight. After that he trained for a long time with no results, following typical bodybuilding advice: As a skinny fat guy, I have been struggling for a long time to improve my appearance with a lot of effort and poor results, following the same bad advices as you in your beginings. It's been 7 weeks since I started applying your ideas and so far I've had the best progress in my life after years of intermittent weight training. I really appreciate having found your website and I want to thank you for sharing all your experiences! After finding Skinny-Fat Transformation he went from 0 to 8 chin ups and lost 12 pounds of fat in just 7 weeks. That was a month ago. Now he is up to 11 chin ups. The progress he made from picture 1 to picture 2 is the kind of progress a skinny-fat guy can except in 1 year of proper training and eating. 2nd Year of Training: Focus on Weak Spots I see the first year of training as "preparation" to make in your first year of training combined with fat loss, will place you in a great position to gain muscle while staying lean in your 2nd year of training. It's not a joke when people tell you to change your lifestyle if you want to change your body. When I lost 60 pounds of fat, started eating more dietary fat from whole foods, sleep better and train hard, my testosterone levels increased by over 100%. Good testosterone levels are key to benefit from resistance training. Without sufficient testosterone, hard training will make you fatigued and fat. This is why you want to do a minimalistic strength training like a bodybuilder and eating a caloric surplus. As explained in my previous article about getting muscular with calisthenics: the real muscle gains come when you start performing the exercises with slow, controlled movements while eating enough to support muscle gains. Because of that, I estimate that you will gain 8-12 pounds of muscle in your second year of training. 8-12 pounds of muscle mass may not sound like much, but there are 2 important things to note: 1: In your 1st year of training you should already have gained a base-line of muscle mass you can gain is limited by your genetics, however you can partly decide WHERE you gain it. By training like a bodybuilder you can emphasise your weak muscle groups and make those 8-12 pounds count. In other words, the second year of training may not result in bigger muscle gains than the first year of training. but the muscle you gain will look impressive - especially if you focus on the areas of your body that you want to grow. Unfortunately, I don't have a good picture from my 3rd year of training, however I have one from my 3rd year of training. The picture below shows the progress I made in the first 6 months of training like a bodybuilder, where I emphasised my arms, shoulders, upper chest and lats. I gained around 13 pounds in those 6 months, and I believe that's the type of progress you can except to gain around 5-6 pounds as predicted by the McDonald Model. Just like in the second year, you should focus on the areas of your body that you want to grow, and make the most out of those 5-6 pounds. So, the first 3 years of proper training and eating should result in the following gains: 1st year: 15 pounds 2nd year: 8-12 pounds 3rd year: 5-6 pounds In other words, you should add around 28-33 pounds of muscle in your first 3 years of proper training muscle gains are slow and inconsistent. They usually come in chunks of 2-4 weeks, followed by 5-6 months where you don't see any noticeable changes in your body has gained the majority of the muscle it is capable of carrying. I have tried all kinds of things to speed up muscle gains, such as training hard 4-6 times a week, sleeping 10 hours a day and eating a lot of healthy calories. This works, and I look 10-20 pounds bigger when I do it, despite gaining just 5 or so pounds. However, once I decide to cut the excess fat, I can't train as hard as I do during my short bulks. Therefore, I lose some (but not all) of the size I gained. To progress beyond this point you really have to love training and be patient. My advice or people that have trained consistently for +3 years is: learn how to cut fat while minimising muscle loss. Provided that you're fairly lean, you can actually cut an additional 5-10 pounds of body-fat and end up looking much bigger: With that said, I'm not saying you CAN'T gain muscle after your 3rd year of training. I'm just saying that gains are so slow that it doesn't pay off to obsess about small details. Instead, you should look at the big picture and make sure that you do your workouts every single week no matter how slow your progress is. There's no way your body will be the same if you train like a bodybuilder, have periods of caloric surplus while consistently pushing your limits. The Importance of Getting Lean and STAYING Lean I have always been hesitant about writing this article, since it may tell you things you don't want to hear. Nobody wants to hear that they can "only" gain 28-33 pounds of muscle in 3 years of training. People want to gain that in ONE year. Not THREE. However, I wish that someone had told me about this when I started training. When you know how hard muscle gains are to come by, you also realise how important it is to get lean and most importantly: STAY lean. Most skinny-fat guys are at least 20 pounds of fat, you won't look aesthetic, since you will have wide hips, manboobs and a soft waist. Furthermore, muscle loss is inevitable when you cut as a skinny-fat guy, so you don't want to start your training career with an ineffective 30 pound bulk, followed by losing most of the muscle loss and feeling good during the process! It will take time and a lot of effort to build a great physique when you have crappy genetics, but it can be done. If you really want it, you will put in the time and do it right. Never quit and gains will come!