

# **Hybrid based workouts- Full body movements for building muscle and burning fat**

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Take a look around any gym in America and what do you see? It is pretty much the same story, personal training clients being guided through workouts modeled after bodybuilders or the latest exercise fad. It is time exercise and those of us who deliver it learned some new tricks. We're not saying these things aren't beneficial, but the same old line of, "lift heavy to put on more muscle and do your cardio for weight loss" is only part of the story and leaves a little bit to be desired. The reason this way of thinking is less than desirable, is it can quickly get you in a rut when your results are less than expected. I think we would agree that if we break it down, most people involved in fitness are after improved body composition. There is another way to deliver the lean muscular look your clients want, and it is an alternative to the status quo. You can accomplish muscle gain and fat loss in one workout while saving time and a special type of exercise can help; hybrids. If you are unaware of hybrid movements or have not yet incorporated them into your workouts, then we will show you how, but first we need to cover some basics.

## **Weight Loss and Bulking Up**

Before we began this discussion, it would be useful to straighten out some common terminology that often gets misused. Take weight loss for instance. Isn't it really fat loss we are after? No, they are not the same thing. It is easy to lose weight, just starve yourself and your mission is usually accomplished. However, looking like a waif, skin flapping in the wind model is not what most would desire. Some call this look "skinny fat" or in medical lingo, sarcopenic obesity. It describes a body that is within a normal weight, but has a muscle to fat ratio resembling the overweight or even obese. In the world of fitness training, this is most often seen when unwitting weight loss seekers shun food and weights and then run like Forest Gump. All cardio and no food will make muscle melt the same as fat and although these people may look thin to the untrained eye, their less than toned body lets you know something is missing; muscle.

One more issue to point out is "bulking up". This is a fear more common among female clients, but men increasingly share the concern. We think trainers have skirted this issue for far too long. If building increased muscle under a layer of fat can not be described as bulking up, than what can? The issue is not whether it happens, but rather why? It is not what most people perceive. In other words, women are not going to build big huge muscles like men unless they are using anabolic hormones, and even men will tell you putting on muscle is no easy task. Bulking up, as it is referred to by most, happens only when muscle is gained while fat is maintained. This is like putting two sweaters on underneath your jacket; of course you are going to appear bigger. Bulking up is impossible when adding muscle and losing fat. Improving the muscle to fat ratio is the very definition of lean, and is a goal shared by both male and female alike.

## **What are hybrid movements?**

So, is it possible to do both? Can you lose fat, build muscle and get that lean muscular look all without looking bulky? Yes, and the most effective solution is full body workouts that use hybrid based movements. These are exercises that combine multiple movement patterns into one congruent action. Probably the best and oldest of the hybrid movements can be seen in the Olympic power movements. Power-cleans, push-presses, and the snatch are all examples. However, while these Olympic movements are usually far beyond the skill of your stereotypical trainee, hybrid movements can be tailored to the fitness level of the individual. If your client knows how to do a squat and can also do a shoulder press, then they can morph the two movements into one; a Squat-Press.

You may be thinking, how can these exercises be so effective, especially if one segment of the movement limits the amount of weight that can be used on the other part? This is where you are going to have to give up some of your preconceived notions. It is possible to burn fat and build muscle at the same time and while heavy weights are one of the best tools to build muscle, the volume of exercise done and the amount of muscles being used are also powerful stimulants for both muscle development and fat burning. A focus on hybrid movements uses a huge amount of muscle mass allowing a large volume of exercise to be done in a short amount of time. These movements are the closest thing we have to giving our clients the same benefits afforded athletes. If asked, the average trainee averse to “bulking up” would select the look of an athlete over the look of a bodybuilder any day. Of course, it depends on the sport, but athletes are more lean than bulky and bodybuilders are both. While bodybuilders use isolated movements as the foundation of their training, athletes use full body movement’s specific to their sport. The advantage is a lean muscular physique that is also extremely functional and fit.

### **The Science of Hybrids**

The use of hybrid exercise in workouts is so new that very few studies have been done on their metabolic effects. However, we have a large population of athletes from all different sports to show their value. Like most things in the world of science, the things that work today will be the material of study ten years from now. A complete reliance on science over practical experience will leave the best trainers playing catch-up. Some studies are showing hybrid workouts can build muscle and burn fat without needing to split your efforts into separate cardiovascular and weight training days. This is a powerful tool considering most trainees often neglect one or the other components of their training to save time and money. Incorporating only a few hybrids into a workout can save on time, deliver substantial results, and break the monotony of more conventional exercises.

Research shows workouts combining upper and lower body exercise in to one workout can deliver multiple fitness parameters all at the same time. In 2001, the journal *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* published a study on thirty five females undergoing a workout that combined lower body aerobic exercise and upper body weight training. Contrary to what some guessed at the time, the workout showed improved body composition as well as enhanced muscular endurance and strength compared to doing aerobic exercise alone. In volume 94 (2005) and 97 (2006) of the *European Journal of*

Physiology, two articles were printed that came to the same conclusion, this time in men. The studies showed that combined lower and upper body workouts were able to improve muscle mass, lower body fat, and improve multiple fitness parameters in as little as 8 weeks. Thigh and abdominal fat measured in the second study decreased by eleven and twelve percent respectively in a fourteen-week period while muscle cross sectional area increased between 2% and 14% in nine out of ten muscles measured. In another study coming out of Ireland, exercisers were shown to burn up to 50% more fat in a workout combining upper and lower body than lower body exercise alone. These are impressive results by any ones standards, and are even more surprising considering many experts' assertions that cardiovascular and resistance training are incompatible within the same workout.

All the studies above used variations on hybrid exercises that combined upper and lower body movements. What these studies illustrate convincingly is that the idea of separating the upper body from the lower body and avoiding cardiovascular responses in a resistance workout are not necessary and may not be the best idea for clients desiring optimal changes in body composition. Although more studies should be done, many prominent strength and conditioning coaches have been using full body movements aimed at improving both cardio-respiratory fitness and strength and muscle gains for years.

### **How is it done?**

We recommend you experience these movements for yourself before you begin using them on your clients. Hybrids will require extra diligence in exercise instruction and coaching on form, but will more than make up for it through results. Not unlike sprinting, expect your clients to enjoy a large cardiovascular stimulus with these exercises. The best way to explain the feeling is trying to push a heavy wheelbarrow up hill. You will be panting for breath and feel that heavy "pumped" feeling in the extremities. Give rest as often as it is needed and don't forget the basics of delivering effective workouts; train heavy, train to failure, and train safe. Failure in this workout will be achieved on both ends; mechanical failure from being unable to overcome gravity, and metabolic failure from anaerobic byproducts. It will be a good idea to use heart rate monitoring along with perceived exertion rates in this workout. This will make for a safe and effective workout. All fitness levels will be able to benefit by adjusting weight, rest intervals, and movements based on ability.

Start off choosing your exercises. I suggest starting with the simple and more intuitive hybrid movements. A squat/press, lunge/curl, and push-up/row would be a good place to start. Now you have a choice, you can use these movements in a simple workout of three sets of 8-12 reps of each exercise. In order to maximize the cardiovascular benefit, you will want to keep the rest short; between thirty seconds and two minutes. Another way of conducting the workout naturally incorporates short rest. In this scenario, you can use the exercise in a superset where one exercise is done for 8 reps and is immediately preceded by the next for 8 reps. In this way, you can create a continuous round robin circuit that is action packed and will tax the most advanced trainees. The rest in the circuit routine will

be based off individual fitness with some clients resting before others. The important thing is to remind your trainee to rest whenever they need it, and continue as soon as they can. Exertion rates and heart rates can be used to judge safety and guide rest periods. 85% of maximum heart rate is the intensity you want to breach, but will not be sustained for long. When the rest comes, a return of 70% is a good indication the client is ready to resume. Because everyone is different and prescription drugs can affect heart rate, always defer to exertion rates. On a 1 to 10 scale, with 10 being maximum effort, an exertion rate of 6/7 or where talking can be resumed without panting will signal a restart to the workout for most.

Whichever workout you employ, make sure the weights are heavy. Dumbbells are your best bet since they are easier to maneuver, take up less space, and will not impede the movement of the extremities. A ten-repetition maximum should be chosen off of the weaker movement. For instance, since the legs can handle much more weight than the shoulders, the weight for a squat/press should be one that the shoulders can handle for ten repetitions with the last one being almost impossible to press with the shoulders. If failure comes prior to completion of a set, resume where you left off when the workout resumes. It is better to keep the weight heavy and complete the set in two or three attempts than reduce the weight to make it easier. Move as fast through the workout as possible based on the ability of the client. Stick with the same workout for six to eight weeks before choosing another set of movements.

Another important consideration in constructing your hybrid workouts is pay attention to pairing. Just like with traditional exercises, the paring of movements will determine the degree of difficulty in the workout. For advanced clients who can handle anything you through at them, doubling up on leg heavy hybrids will push them to the max. For instance, lunge/squat hybrid supersetted with a squat/step-up hybrid will torch the legs and create a marked anaerobic response. For those new to exercise and less fit or less coordinated, the use of machine hybrids is safe and effective. A leg-extension/shoulder-press will quickly prime the nervous system. Hybrids will deliver maximal caloric burn for fat loss and adequate muscle stimulus for any beginner. The important thing is to be aware of whom you are training and what their goals are.

Keep in mind, the construction of hybrid movements is limited only by your imagination, but should be constructed in a way that the whole body is worked and the cardiovascular system is taxed. You can even combine a recumbent bicycle with a dumbbell curl and press to get the full effects of this style of training while mixing up the scenery. Adding just one or two hybrid exercises into your standard machine or free weight routine can add variety and effectiveness. For more ideas you can check out the site, [www.metaboliceffect.com](http://www.metaboliceffect.com). From the front page, you can click on “The Program” and then “Movements”.

The beauty of hybrids is that they are extremely functional and can substitute for both a resistance and cardiovascular workout. They are able to develop all the attributes of fitness by improving cardio-respiratory parameters as well as muscular strength and endurance. They also work in multiple planes and combine different movements in one,

and therefore are a test to the nervous system and also challenge balance and coordination. In this way, they surpass more traditional forms of functional training, which fall short in development of body composition. Give hybrids a try. Their religious use in your routines will help you achieve optimal fat loss and muscle development in your workouts and avoid indiscriminate weight loss or “bulking”. You and your clients now have a whole new exercise arsenal that can deliver in more areas than one.