



EIGHT ESSENTIAL EXERCISES FOR THE X PHYSIQUE

BUILT.WITH.THREE

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THANKS

I don't know how this got in your hands, but thanks for reading.

I hope to see you around on my blog. Comment on the posts. Say hello. Make yourself known.

If you have any questions, whittle them down to something manageable. Then send them to anthony.mychal@gmail.com. I love hearing from you.

SEEING THE END

Zeus gave Prometheus—a Titan known for his forethinking mind—the responsibility of creating man from clay. As any artist could tell you, seeing the “bigger picture” from the start is an important part of **creating**.

A hunk of clay takes shape gradually. Each step of subtraction and of addition is important. But none of it is possible unless an end is conceptualized.

It's about the finished product.

It's about forethought.

Here's something to think about: there are two things that are going to pave the way for your x physique. But I'll come back to these in a bit.

SHAPING CLAY

We're all “clay” in the metaphorical sense. We're malleable creates that can take “shape.” This “shape” and our existence is largely a product of our environment and genetics.



We can't really do anything about genetics. Good genetics are like soft clay: easier to mend and move. Bad genetics are like hard clay: you can get there, it just takes more effort.

Those with great genetics will be able to mould themselves easier. Those on the lesser end have to work a bit harder.

Regardless, the end—wherever that may be—is possible.

CHANGING THOUGHT

Become a forethinker. Don't be an afterthinker. Have an end in mind. Know what you want to create from clay. Don't let anyone else tell you how your finished product should look.

Ask yourself:

- What you want to look like
- What type of person you want to be
- What abilities you want to have
- What you want it all to mean

And then ask yourself if what you're doing is ideal for creating that finished product.

SEEING THE END

If you aren't a forethinker, you're wandering around in a purgatory of sorts. You jump on program after program with no end goal.

What's the purpose of the program? Where's it going to take you and how does it relate to where you want to be?

A lot of people jump on powerlifting or Olympic weightlifting routines without thinking about this.



What you need to know: powerlifting, Olympic weightlifting, CrossFit, and bodybuilding are all sports on their own. They all have their own values, visions, and goals.

Powerlifters aim to maximize their strength in the back squat, bench press, and deadlift. That's it. Notice that there's nothing about physique here. Any physique benefit is a side effect.

Prometheus was a non-conformist. Despite Zeus's orders, Prometheus also gave man fire, and was against most formal institutions.

If you want to reshape your clay, you can't be a conformist. You have to bend these two elements of creating an x physique to fit *your* desires. Not anyone else's.

You have to be able to say, "I respect what so-and-so group of people does, but that's not where my heart is. I need to walk a different path."

EFFECTIVE VS. POPULAR

Exercises are popular because they are contested in a sport, not because they are effective for a certain goal.

Most people will say the bench press is the "best" pressing exercise. But that's really only because of its powerlifting popularity.

Back when the overhead press was contested in Olympic weightlifting, it was a much more popular exercise. Perhaps even more so than the bench press. (After all, the bench press didn't always exist.)

Outside of some underground circles, the overhead press is all but lost. Why? The exercise didn't magically lose effectiveness.

It lost *popularity* because it's no longer *contested*.



The body responds to stress somewhat specifically (think of adding clay in certain areas instead of others). You need to pick exercises that are going to gently shape the clay over time.

You shouldn't do an exercise because it's popular or because it's done in a sport. Those athletes share different values and goals.

If you want to powerlift, you gotta' bench, squat, and deadlift.

But if you don't, who cares?

Your success will never be "judged" on the flat bench press. And, no, powerlifting gnomes won't steal your soul.

Do exercises because it gets you closer to where you want to be, not because it's are popular.

DON'T DETAIL TOO SOON

Sculptures start as one giant mass of clay. The immediate goal is to whittle a decent overall shape. Too much detail too soon is a mistake. And that goes for both of these elements that create the x physique.

"Ballpoints and fine tips just don't fill the page like a Sharpie does. Fine tips invite you to **DRAW** while Sharpies invite you to just to get your concepts out into big bold shapes and lines. When you sketch with a thin tip you tend to draw at a higher resolution and worry a bit too much about making things look good. Sharpies encourage you to ignore details early on."

-37signals

Even though you're building a base, you're still working towards the final shape. You need to pick the best "shaping" exercises that are set the best foundation for future detailing.



Using a sharpie is better than using a ballpoint pen when sketching ideas. But if you use a king-sized sharpie, you won't get *enough* detail.

It's a fine line.

(Pun potentially intended.)

MORE THAN MUSCLE

Physique is about proportion. I know because few people look at Ronnie Coleman and say, "I want that."

Growing up, I suffered from skinny-fat syndrome. Combining love handles, string bean biceps, and narrow shoulders makes for miserable body image issues as a teenager.

It ate my psyche alive.

When I got into training, I wanted to expand. I wanted to grow wings and finally have a proportion I was proud of.

To me, this was always the fabled "x physique."

The most culturally recognized and sought after physique is known as the "x" physique: thick upper back, broad shoulders, thin waist and large powerful legs suited for overcoming great resistance, yet also moving at high speeds, and calves that give the legs a finishing pop.

For a long time—and for whatever reason—I associated this X Physique with athleticism, vim, and virility.



I'm no oracle, but I was onto something.

- Women value physical characteristics in men such as height, muscularity, and broad shoulders ¹
- Narrow hips are an advantage in fast running ²
- Well-known human traits such as...broad shoulders, and large gluteus maximus were selected through evolution to make it easier for us to run long distances ³
- Using facial photos of male college students that were cropped at the neck, those with faces that women rated as attractive had more pronounced wedge shaped torsos (broad shoulders and narrow hips), a masculine feature many women prefer. ⁴
- Proportions alone are associated with physical attractiveness. In the crudest sense, the more you appear like a certain sex, the more attractive you will be. We don't like ambiguity ⁵

MORE THAN PHYSICAL

Being skinny-fat was a mind wrecker. When I was in 9th grade, a girl whispered something to her friend and they had a good chuckle at my expense. I later found out that one of them told the other that I had “girl boobs.”

I know the ins and outs of skinny-fat syndrome better than anyone else, which is why I created a resource devoted specifically to it.

You can check it out [here](#).

This whole experience taught me that physique was more than physical. How you feel about yourself hinges on whether or not you're happy with what you look like.

This is why you can't let anyone else tell you what you want your clay creation to become. It's in your hands. Don't take it for granted.



TOUGH CLAY

I have less than ideal genetics. My skinny-fat past is proof. I struggle gaining muscle. I struggle losing fat. I'm at the intersection of physical failure.

I'm not predisposed to have a six pack. I'm not meant to be a maze of muscle.

A lot of people you look up to and admire come from the top of the pyramid. I was amazed by Adrian Peterson's comeback from his ACL injury. He defied the length of traditional rehabilitation and came oh-so-short to having the best season by an NFL running back of all time.

Here's what he said about his comeback:

“Despite his incessant habits of working out and incredible physical stature, Adrian Peterson seems to think something entirely different is at hand when explaining his quick recovery from a torn ACL last off-season. Peterson credits much of his medical success to his genes, FOX Sports reports.

Peterson said of his aunts and uncles, "they're all ripped. At 50 years old, they've got six packs and eight packs.”

Adrian's clay is really really soft. Most of us have tougher clay.

What you're reading is the experience of someone with really tough clay. Someone that's fighting and has fought just as hard as you probably will have to.

I'll be the first to admit I'm not the strongest. I'm not the biggest. But I've been able to turn myself into something I'm proud of. Something that isn't afraid of the mirror's truth. And something that also has a touch of athletic **fire**, true Prometheus style.



TWO ELEMENTS

There are two oh-so important that build an x physique.
(Remember?)

The first is base training. You won't build an x unless you're training for muscle with *the right movements*.

You can't be a conformist. You have to set a foundation for future detailing. There's no sport in x physiqueness, so you can't follow rules from any popular sport.

The second is perhaps more important, but I'll save that for later.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT EXERCISES

Eight exercises are going to do 80% of the work in shaping your clay.

The even better part about these eight exercises?

They're going to set a solid athletic foundation. They're going to **add a little fire**.

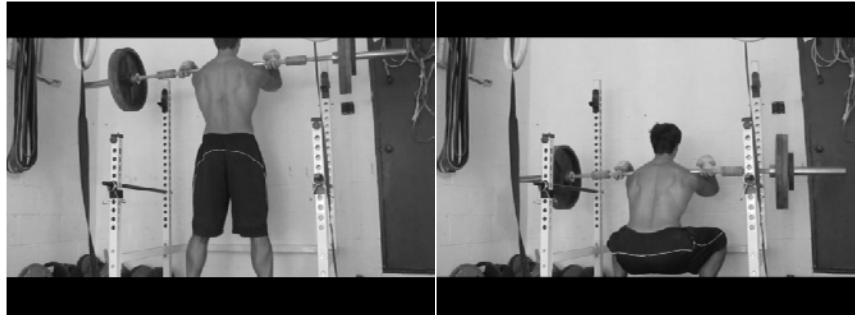
Insane right?

Physique *and* a bit of performance?

That's what I'm all about though, so you shouldn't have expected any less.



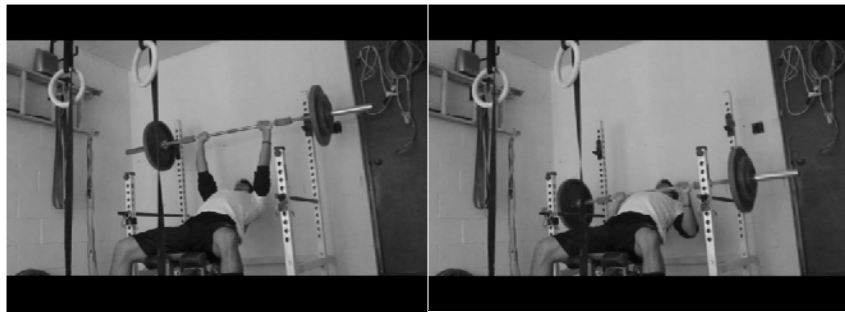
THE 8-4-X



1. THE FRONT SQUAT

The front squat is the squat of choice. In the front squat, the upper back is called upon to stabilize the load. So not only are the glutes, quads, and hamstrings (to a lesser extent) going to get their work on, but so is the back. The back is *muy importante*.

If you have any kind of knee pain during the front squat, check out [An Athlete's Guide to Chronic Knee Pain](#). The theories in there took my knees from a snapping, crackling, and popping mess to being able to do anything without pain.



2. THE 30 INCLINE PRESS

Unless you're a powerlifter, there's truly no reason to flat bench. People that have out of proportion upper chests are only going to make their problem worse by flat bench pressing. The incline press still gives us a little oomph behind pressing power and also gets our upper chest moving and grooving.





3. THE CHIN-UP

I consider the chin-up to be the ultimate exercise for those questing for the x physique. It's the exercise responsible for making lats that get stingrays feeling jealous.

Traditionally, a chin-up is done with a “palms facing the body” grip. But if your elbow gives you problems you can switch to a neutral grip of palms facing away (pull-up) grip.

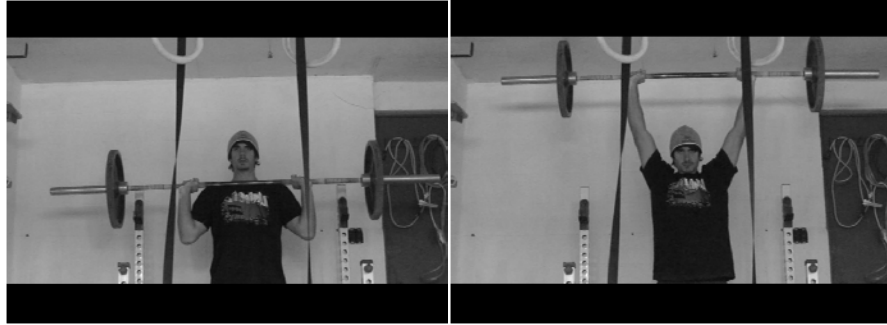
(You don't have to use rings.)



4. THE CONVENTIONAL DEADLIFT

When done properly, there's really no lift as “full body” as the deadlift. The power of the deadlift for the x physique lies within strengthening and growing the entire backside.





5. THE OVERHEAD PRESS

The overhead press has fallen in popularity, but it's making a comeback. Although this exercise is tough to progress on, it's the main shoulder meat builder.

You have to be patient with it. Coddle it at times. Attack it at times. Don't get frustrated.

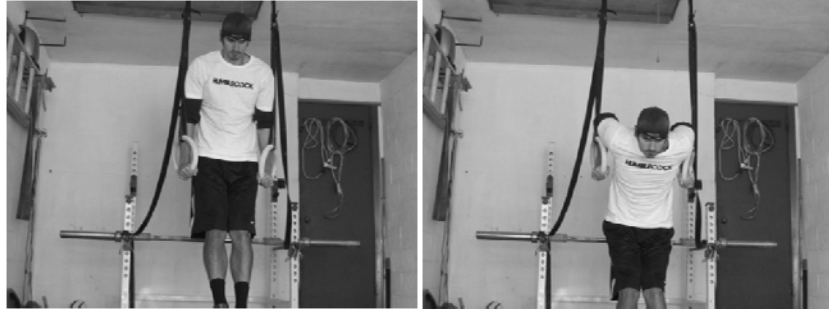


6. THE BARBELL ROW

The barbell row has *really* dropped out of popularity, but it will build your back as a whole unlike any other exercise. When combined with the conventional deadlift and the chin-up, you're on your way to good things.

To maximize working muscles through different angles, do the barbell with an overhand grip and with the torso parallel to the floor. Don't rest the weight on the floor between reps. For our purposes, it's better to keep the muscles under tension.





7. THE PARALLEL BAR DIP

The parallel bar dip is a controversial addition because most people have an out-of-proportion chest. Their lower chest dominates, which is why the bench press is *excluded*.

The dip is important because it hits the triceps better than any other exercise and isn't afraid of packing meat on the shoulders. If you have any upper chest issues, keep the reps low and only descend until your upper arm is parallel to the ground.

(Rings aren't necessary.)



8. THE BARBELL CURL

The standing barbell curl is one of the most underrated exercises despite what some groups say about curls being “for the gurlz.” Embrace the non-conformity: don't listen to ‘em.

If you have any thick grip bar or thick grip attachment, use them for this exercise.

Curls jack the heart rate up and are a nice arm builder and strengthening for other exercises down the road.



IS THAT ALL?

People often want to know if that's "all" of the exercises that are good for the x physique. The answer is absolutely *no*. But the other exercises are better served *after* these eight exercises are mastered.

So master them first. Then worry about everything else.

PROGRAMMING

From a pure beginnings standpoint, the kind of program you incorporate all of these exercises into is secondary to actually going out there and doing them.

Make that your first step. Do these eight exercises. Do them regularly. Make them your babies. All of them.

I recommend beginners do nothing more than these eight plus one or two exercises to promote recovery and hit some weak spots.

That's **all**.

Train three or four days per week and make it happen.

If programming is your weak spot, feel free to check out [Man From Clay](#).

It's a separate website dedicated to programming these eight exercises from the ground up. It also intertwines athletic based training for those Built With Three.

THE SECOND SECRET

The second secret to the x physique is...

...can you guess...?



Body fat.

There are bigger implications here. Most people kill themselves because they don't know how to train and balance fat loss and muscle gain.

THE SOLID BASE

I break the nutrition quest into two distinct pieces:

First, is the quest to the solid base. This means you do everything in your power to get down to about 10% body fat. Be sure to strength train during this time.

Second, is the quest for muscle *without* gaining fat. This is commonly known as a “clean bulk.”

If you don't know the difference between fats and carbs, which one better to fuel your training habits, when to eat what, when to eat period, what to eat period—basic stuff—you need Nate Miyaki's [Intermittent Feast](#) resource. It's more suited towards the journey to a solid base and is the best nutritional starting point available.

If you're more advanced, you need the [Chaos Bulk](#). The Chaos Bulk is my own nutrition book and is a clean bulking strategy for the genetically disadvantaged.

Don't underestimate nutrition. If you spend hours in the gym, why waste muscle building potential with a shitty nutrition foundation?

(Hint: You don't need supplements. You just need a solid understanding of nutrition.)



MOVING FORWARD

Ultimately, the “best” way to attack the x physique is with these exercises and a sound progression over time.

Good markers to shoot for:

Beginner

Front squatting 1 x BW
Deadlifting 1.5 x BW
Incline pressing 0.75 x BW
Barbell rowing 0.75 x BW
Chinning for 10 reps
Dipping for 15 reps
Overhead pressing 0.5 x BW

Intermediate

Front squatting 1.5 x BW
Deadlifting 2 x BW
Incline pressing 1.25 x BW
Barbell rowing 1.25 x BW
Chinning with resistance
Dipping with resistance
Overhead pressing 0.75 x BW

Once you pass the beginner level, more advanced exercises can be introduced to further work on the x physique while also giving the body some built in recovery and differing stimuli.

This is the ethos of [Man From Clay](#), which is a framework that plays off of being Built With Three. The goal of that website is to create a compressive athletic-aesthetic hub for adventurers questing for both the x and markers of athleticism.

The foundation of Man From Clay: These eight exercises.

Consider yourself ahead of the game.

The only way to get further ahead of the game is to go out and attack these eight so you're more prepared for what's to come down the road.



QUESTIONS?

Remember, you aren't dealing with a computer.

Scroll back a few pages: I know what you're going through. I know the value placed on the physical self and I want to help you get to where you want to be.

Feel free to reply to any of the e-mails I send you within the Sacred Realm (including the one that contained this).

Let me know what you thought of this resource. And if you have a small question or two, feel free to drop them my way too.

You will be getting e-mails from me just about every week, even though I tend to update my blog more than once per week. But to respect your privacy, I only send one e-mail per week.

I hope you enjoy ~

Ant

