



7 EXERCISES FOR PURE POWER

PUSH PRESS

What it does:

Teaches VIOLENT arm extension that improves throwing, shoving, punching, and of course, muscling insane weight over your head. In addition to generating power, the overload sparks strength gains in the lockout of your overhead press and it can even be a valuable hypertrophy movement when taken into the weeds

Who should use it:

Shotputters, football players, fighters, strongmen, Olympic lifters, general strength enthusiasts

When to do them:

As a main movement, first or second in the workout, if going HEAVY and hard; it's very productive to follow these up with strict pressing and regular shoulder work.

Or as a secondary movement on a GPP or speed day when going lighter and faster.

Sets and reps:

As a main movement, any strength progression you would use for bench or overhead works great. I often apply my 4x6+ from “Bullmastiff”, where I can be quick and snappy for the first 3 sets, then use that practice and efficiency to build up a metric shit ton of fatigue in the 4th set with an amrap (I LOVE reps with this). Heavier protocols that use a lot of 1-3 rep sets are also productive for overhauling your nervous system, but you get the most out of them when you have gotten fast and efficient first. Focus on crisp sets that leave plenty in the tank over the ugly 10.5 RPE grinders.

For speed/technique, many sets with fewer reps at a medium weight. 5-10 sets of 2-3 reps, preferably with a fixed rest period. 5x3 EMOMs are really good here and they won't wreck the rest of your workout.

PIN PRESS

What it does:

Conditions rate of force development, meaning you recruit more motor units at once and do so FASTER. In simple terms, nasty effing starting power. As you get good at higher pin settings, it also overloads the chest and triceps, creating a stronger lockout.

Who should use it:

Any athlete who benefits from a stronger 'push', powerlifters, strongmen, etc.

When to do them:

These will always be a primary movement when you do them. If they come at the end of the workout, you will be too fatigued to get anything out of them. That's like doing 100m sprints after running a marathon. Schedule them as your first or second movement.

Sets and reps:

Focus on 4-6 reps for volume, 1-3 reps for pure strain. If you're new, you can start on the high end, taking 6-8 sets to work up to a top set of 6. Take the warmups seriously and practice breaking the weight fast. After a few weeks, drop to 5s, then 4s. When it's time to go to 3s, switch to repeating sets (i.e., 5x1, 4x2, or 3x3 at similar weight or RPE).

Be ready to deload at the first workout where the bar moves like shit and the weight feels like a million pounds. Pin presses can take a toll on the joints and your recovery when you start going HAM.

POWER ROW

What it does:

Uses leg and hip power to put momentum on the bar, allowing much more weight to be handled than a typical bent barbell row. This is a proven method for adding size and strength to the rowing muscles, but it also is a brutally effective way to get your hips, abs and back strong as shit. This is why some of the best deadlifters on the planet have sworn by them.

Who should use it:

Any competitive deadlifter, anyone who needs a bigger, stronger back.

When to do them:

Either first thing on back day, when you're fresh, or on deadlift day after you've done all of your heavy pulls but before smaller hamstring and ab work.

Sets and reps:

The stroke is pretty short here, so you'll get more bang for the buck if you use reps, 5 at the minimum. I would tell anyone new to this to do a few weeks of a standard 3x10 with a little more than your normal strict row weight, adding pounds as it makes sense. You can then quickly drop to 8s, then 6s and start to push the weight.

Because the timing takes a while to get down, a 'plus set' approach works really well, like the 4x6+ using something you can hit 10+ reps with on the last set.

HANG SNATCH

What it does:

Engrains a fast ‘pop’ in your hip extension that makes you better at literally every athletic movement you can think of, including lifting weights.

Who should use it:

Everyone, at some point. For general athletes and strongmen, they should be a staple.

When to do them:

Early in the workout when you’re fresh. You can do them as a warmup before squats or deads (they aren’t taxing) or on a separate speed or GPP day.

Sets and reps:

Where some of the other movements are strength/hypertrophy hybrid movements, this is best used as a pure speed movement. That means weights should stay light enough that the reps are crisp and the bar never slows down. 3-5 reps is a good range and you want a lot of practice reps, at least 5 sets. Don’t worry about percentage, as most won’t have a concept of a max and you shouldn’t waste a second finding one. Let the execution of the rep determine if it’s an appropriate weight. The thing that makes speed work easy is that going too light isn’t a problem, going too heavy is.

HIGH PULL

What it does:

Similar to a hang snatch, it trains a quick hip extension. The load is typically heavier than a snatch and the pull with the arms strengthens the delts and traps.

Who should use it:

Most specifically, strongmen or highland games athletes who throw overhead, athletes who regularly utilize cleans and snatches in their training.

Beyond that, it can be a fun way to grow your traps and shoulders.

When to do them:

For speed, they should be done fresh. They can be put at the beginning of any workout without taxing the heavier movements after.

For hypertrophy, they can be done whenever.

Sets and reps:

For speed, similar to hang snatches: 5 working sets of 3-5 reps, adjusting up or down each set based on quality of execution rather than percentage.

For hypertrophy, typical bodybuilding protocols work just fine, 3-5 sets of 8-12 reps.

Note: your speed/power work will probably go off a lot better if you've done some weeks with 8-12s first.

POWER SHRUG

What it does:

Overloads the sweet bejeezus out of your traps and upper back while simultaneously reminding you what a deadlift lockout should feel like. Start at your knee to emphasize lockout power, start higher to emphasize isometric strain in the back.

Who should use it:

Those in the market for bigger traps or a bigger deadlift. Or anyone with a brutal “power stairs” medley coming up.

When to do them:

At the middle or end of a deadlift workout. These are taxing if you push them, so be wary of trying to do them on a back or shoulder day if you have deads coming up after. It will punish you if you try squatting or deadlifting after in the same workout.

Sets and reps:

I’m not recommending this as a pure trap builder, but rather as another way to temper your hips and spine to high forces. The ‘shrug’ only happens if you move quickly with the hips, so it’s more of a speed cue than the purpose of the exercise. Start lower around the knee and practice tying the hip lockout into an exaggerated shrug for 3-5 sets of 8-10 reps. Transition to 5-8 reps after you’ve gotten comfortable with them and transition to the bar higher up the thigh when you want to transition from hammy/glute development to sheer spinal erector overload.

BOX SQUAT

What it does:

Same 'rate of force development' training as pin presses, but for the biggest joint and muscles in your body. Better box squats means more power at the start of squats and deads, but also at the start of every sprint, jump and punch you ever do.

Who should use it:

Everyone. Athletes, powerlifters, strongmen.

When to do them:

These will always be a primary movement when you do them. If they come at the end of the workout, you will be too fatigued to get anything out of them. That's like doing 100m sprints after running a marathon. Schedule them as your first or second movement.

Sets and reps:

These are in the same vein as a pin press, where 4-6 reps are great for volume and 1-3 reps for speed or strain. While higher reps have a use case for building power endurance (necessary for strongmen rep events), the point is to condition starting power in the first place... you can't do that if you're pacing yourself.

I'd recommend the same approach as pin presses, starting at 6s, taking 6-10 sets to work up to a top set, then progressing to 5s and 4s. When you get to 3s, make them repeating sets. To get the most out of this, every rep should fly off the box... if it's slowing down, the weight needs to drop.