

The Ultimate Guide To Bodybuilding: Self Analysis Part I

Researched and Composed by Jacob Wilson

Introduction

A bodybuilder must look at himself as a master sculptor, an artist if you will. And as an artist you need to be extremely objective in regards to your work. Remember you are your own master piece. Today I want you to take a long look at your masterpiece. And I will give you the exact tools needed to accomplish this process! This will allow you to do one of two things,

- A.** Smash every plateau you will ever face into pieces
- B.** Dramatically increase your overall Gains

Below is the first of a three part series of articles. It will cover how to professionally critique your body and design a program that specifically fits its needs. The second part will discuss your physical conditioning and the third will discuss how to analyze your nutritional plan.

Note: I include a self assessment sheet in the magazine section. This will allow you to literally check the areas you are doing great in and also mark the areas you lack in. More on this latter.

Assessing your body

The first step to assessing your current program is to take a good long critical look in the mirror. Below I will discuss what aspects I want you specifically to look for.

note: To complete this process with ease, I suggest that you photograph yourself from every angle possible.

This will make it easier for you to assess yourself, from a critical point of view.

I. Muscularity

Ours is a sport centered around one word...mass, and a significant amount of it! Every bodybuilder must have a solid muscular foundation in order to have success in this sport. With that being said, you need to firstly assess yourself from this particular standpoint. In order to do this however, you need to clearly understand what your goals actually are. This applies to competitive and non-competitive bodybuilders alike. What I recommend is for the athlete to look in the mirror, or take photos of his body and examine himself. Now at this stage you need to roughly decide what your " ultimate " goal, as far as mass will be for your particular frame.

Examples: I will give three examples of bodybuilders at different stages. One should semi fit your current situation. I would highly suggest reading all three though, as you will benefit from each. In edition I will give hypothetical plans that

the bodybuilder might use to reach his or her goals. You should note that there are many methods and plans to reaching these specific goals. I will just give an example for the sake of bettering your comprehension on how to make your own plan.

1. Lean Example: We will use a 5-8, 150 pound, lean man to illustrate our first point. Obviously as a bodybuilder he will want to add more mass to his frame. After carefully examining himself, lets say he feels that he would look best at 200 pounds of raw cut up mass. At this stage he has just made a self assessment and is no longer working out for nothing. Instead he is working out for an overall goal. The second stage is to realize how close he actually is to his goal. This is obvious, as he is 50 pounds of lean mass away from it. In my opinion, this goal should be his primary focus until he reaches it. Essentially he needs to " pay his dues " in the mass department to get there. Now, when I say this should be his main concentration, I simply mean that spending most of his time trying to get shredded would be a complete waste of his energy. I personally do not see a point in him getting below 6-9 percent body fat until he begins to really near his goal.

From here he should design his program around getting to 200 and shredded. An excellent step toward this would be to actually reach 200 in bodyweight. A solid strategy toward this would be to set himself up on a one year program. (As a side note, I always like to see ahead one year at a time.) In which case he would eat and workout to gain approximately one pound a week for the entire year. This also gives him 6 free weeks in which he can maintain, etc. etc. At a rate of one pound of bodyweight a week, he will end out gaining a tremendous amount of muscle mass. Finally, after this years journey I would recommend going on a solid cut in which he sheds the fat that was gained on his bulk. Following this, he would re-assess and decide how close he is to his goal. Obviously he would be tremendously closer! This is a very conservative and basic approach, but it definitely works. There are also many other approaches, but my main point is that you need to set up a comprehensive goal. You may even be more conservative than what I discussed and gain a half a pound a week. Or go on several short bulking and cutting cycles. If you went this route, you would still be bulking primarily, and cutting less, because your primary goal is mass.

2. Needs To Lose Fat Example: For our second example, we will discuss an individual who is carrying a good amount of fat. Lets say he is 5-8, 250 pounds, and 28 percent body fat. His assessment of himself will be similar to the first person. He needs to set a tentative base for what his overall mass goals should be. Lets say that his goal is also to be a lean and shredded 200 pound athlete. He might first set a goal to be 10 percent body fat at 200 pounds. He could then work to lose a pound of fat a week for a year. Again, this gives him 6 weeks of leeway. If he lifts hard and manages to lose 50 pounds of fat in a year, he can reach his goal of 200 pounds and 10 percent body fat. The point is that you need to set goals for yourself! After he reaches this one he would than re-assess. Only this time, he would be extremely lean compared to the year before and in 10 times the shape, because he busted his behind in the gym and pre-planned his program!

3. The Advanced Bodybuilder

A bodybuilder reaches a more advanced stage when he feels that he has attained a solid base of mass. If you look in the mirror, or at your photos and feel that you have achieved this then your chief goal in this sport changes. (Again, I feel that

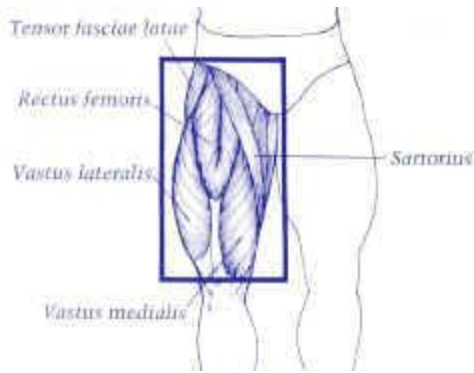
every bodybuilders primary goal should be attaining a solid or great level of muscle mass first and foremost!) However, don't think for a minute that it gets easier. If this is your assessment than you will have to go into an even greater artistic stage in your bodybuilding career. At this point I would recommend taking countless photographs of yourself and painstakingly critique them. Your goals will have a greater emphasis on thinner skin, separation, body fat percentages, symmetry, lagging body parts, and last but not least a beautiful v-taper. Lets discuss thinner skin briefly. When a bodybuilder steps on stage his goal is to look as close to an anatomy chart as possible. The thinner his skin is, the closer he will be to this look. In order to achieve this he will want to avoid over stretching his skin with anymore " heavy bulks. " When he does bulk I would recommend it to be a clean one, in which the athlete is extremely cautious about the rate at which he gains weight. This means upping his meal frequency to avoid storage of food, lowering starchy carbs at night and on off days, and very slowly upping his caloric intake. Also if you notice that an area of your body isn't tight enough, even though your body fat percentage is low, then I would suggest working the area hardcore on a bulk to fill in the loose skin. For example, if you have a small amount of lose skin on your abs, animals mass workout would help fill this in nicely. Notice how I mention still going on bulks even though the bodybuilder has reached a great base of overall mass. The focus on these bulks however will be mostly lagging body parts, and other aspects of ones physique. I will discuss these in more detail below. At this point in his career he will also shoot for much lower body fat percentages when he cuts, again to achieve that paper thin type of skin he will need for the stage.

To Sum Things Up You Will Ultimately Reach Your Goals By:

- A.** Examining Your Body
- B.** Setting An Overall Mass Goal for Yourself, I.E. 200 pounds and shredded
- C.** Achieve an understanding of how close/far you are away from your goal.
- D.** Set up a Comprehensive plan to reach that goal. I would suggest using the articles and forums on this site to help you design your plan. Brief examples:
 - 1.** A year long Plan
 - 2.** 12 week bulks, 12 week cuts
 - 3.** Shorter bulks, I.E. 6 weeks and 4 week cuts
 - 4.** An overall fat loss program emphasizing lowering your body fat percentage
 - 5.** A program designed to thin skin, etc.

II. Assessing Your Muscular Separation

Muscular separation is always a hot topic in this sport. After all, bodybuilding is not just about size, it is also about the clarity of each muscle group. In order to truly assess your muscular separation you will need to be somewhere in the single digits in your body fat. Understand that the lower your body fat percentage is, the more separated your muscles will be. In edition the thinner your skin, the better this aspect will be as well. However, separation goes beyond body fat percentages and thin skin, way beyond! Take the thighs for example. The mass of this area is made up of the quadriceps and adductors as illustrated below:



In order to achieve the kind of separation seen above you will need to properly develop each head within the quadriceps complex and the adductors. If your tear drop is great and middle head, but your adductors and outer quad sweep lack, then you will not even come close to this type of separation. This is where specialty work comes in. Again, you need to look at your photographs and see what aspects of each muscle group are lacking. If your adductors are weak then prioritize them in your leg routine! Use wide stance squats with toes pointed out, include the adductor machine, sumo dead lifts and other exercises that stress the adductors. If your outer sweep is weak then utilize exercises that emphasize this aspect of your quads. The best way to target this would be close stance squats with your toes pointed forward, or even elevated. Hack squats also emphasize the outer sweep. You may find that your front and side delts are great, but rear are horribly underdeveloped. In this case you might begin your shoulder workouts with rear delt training.

Breakdown

1. Study each of your muscle groups.
2. Find what is lacking within them
3. Prioritize those lacking aspects for maximum separation!

III. Assessing Your X-Factor!

Every bodybuilder, competitive and non-competitive alike strives for a beautiful X-Frame. This is made up of five distinct aspects, each of which you need to critique. I will discuss them briefly and then tie them all together at the end. Your job is to understand these concepts and then use them to analyze each of these areas in your own body.

1. The Side Deltoid: You need to examine yourself and see how developed your side deltoids are. If they are lacking then you need to prioritize them now! I cannot over emphasize the importance of this muscle when it is related to the entire body. The wider your side delts the more complete your physique will be and the smaller your waste will appear. Usually when people emphasize pressing movements and neglect isolation movements, they end up with lagging side delts. So emphasize exercises such as side laterals, upright rows, overhead laterals etc.

what this accomplishes: Makes your collar bone appear longer and your waist look smaller.

2. The Upper Back: This area again adds width to your upper body and must be fully developed at all costs. Nothing will widen your upper back like pull-ups will. I mean nothing! If you are basing your upper back routine purely on pull downs, then you are sabotaging serious growth. First and foremost use pull-ups, and secondarily use pull downs as these are the second greatest way to build an upper back. Do them wide, close, wider, closer and everyway in between!

what this accomplishes: Accentuates your shoulder width, adds to width itself and makes waist appear smaller.

3-4. Hips and Waist: These two areas are mostly a matter of body fat percentage. The lower your BF, the smaller these areas become. This should be accomplished by changing your diet so that your body shifts into a fat burning mode. I.E. Lower starchy carbs and slightly less calories. I discuss this in much greater detail in my illusion article.

what this accomplishes: Makes shoulders, back, and quadriceps appear extremely larger. In edition it is the finishing signature to the rest of your body.

5. Outer Quad Sweep: Most people lack the flair of the outer quad sweep. However, this is just as important to the x-shape as any other aspect of your physique! You see beautifully built outer quads make your waist appear smaller, and as we all know this is your finished product when you step on stage! If you find you are lacking in this area try a this routine:

Free weight hack squats: 3 sets (12, 10, 8 drop the weight and get 12)

Close Stance Squats with Heels Elevated: 3 sets (10, 8, 6)

Machine Hack Squats: 3 sets (12, 10, 8 drop the weight and get 12) note: if you don't have machine, use free weight hacks instead.

what this accomplishes: Causes your waist to appear smaller and finishes the x-shape off.

Tying everything together!

When each of the aspects above are developed in proportion, you will have achieved a text book " X-frame" of the body, whereby your wide deltoids taper into a narrow waist which flare out to sweeping quads to complete the "X". Take care to critique your body and find which of these aspects lags behind the other. In this way you will be able to more scientifically and methodically train.

IV. Lagging Body parts And Symmetry

The word symmetry means balance. When applied to your physique it simply how well each of your body parts fit together, or how proportionate they as a whole. If you have a huge upper body and chicken legs, then you are deemed extremely unsymmetrical. Or if you have extremely high peaking biceps, but puny triceps, you will have unbalanced arms. Essentially your job, in this sport is to make sure that none of your body parts are lagging. This is the final stage of assessment. It is also

the most painful stage, as you will have to come to grips or make emends with your week points. I realize of course that each of you reading this are at different stages in their bodybuilding career, but I want you to analyze yourself, in this respect, the same way. First look at your body as a whole. Secondly pick out your absolute best muscle group and rate it a 10 out of 10 as far as development is concerned. Following this rate each and everyone of your body parts accordingly. For example, lets say that your biceps are your best body part, you would rate that a 10. Then you look and your calves are half way decent as compared, you would rate them a 5-6. I have designed a chart on the analysis sheet that goes with this article that includes each and every body part. You will use this chart to rate yourself. The sheet also has a place for you to place notes. I would recommend writing both good and bad notes. This way you can apply training methods that you have had success with on your great body parts to your lagging body parts.

Here is a Partial Common Example of What a Bodybuilders list May Look Like:

Triceps Rating - 10

Notes: I am extremely pleased with how my triceps have progressed, they are without a doubt my best body part! I work them out every 5 days, and use 9-12 sets total on them. I push myself to failure on every set, with a maximum level of intensity! I also frequently use drop sets and supersets. My last workout was: 3 sets of skull crunchers, 3 sets of behind the back dips, 3 sets of dumbbell kickbacks and finally a drop set on skull crunchers.

Hamstrings Rating - 3

Notes: To be honest I have neglected my hamstrings. I skip them like every 3 workouts and when I do work them I use like 3 sets of lying leg curls. In fact that was my last leg workout. My poundage's suck, because I have neglected this area. This is a major weakness. I am going to use the priority principle on them and start hitting them hard. I will start hitting them first in my workout. In fact I am going to pre-fatigue the area before squats. My next leg workout will be: 3 sets of lying leg curls supersetted with stiff legged dead lifts. I will follow this up with three sets of leg presses with my feet high on the platform to hit my hammys. Following this I will again perform three supersets. Then I will do my quads, which will consist of 3 sets of leg extensions and 3 sets of 10 one and a half rep sissy squats. I am determined to bring this part up, no matter what!

end of sample.....

This is the best way for you to assess whether your body parts are lagging or are doing just fine! 3 months from now, when this person re-looks at this list, he will be able to rate his hamstrings much higher! If he had not assessed himself, he would not have realized this and continued to lag in this area. So you see how valuable a thorough self assessment can be!

Over View of Procedure

Now that you have a thorough understanding of how to assess yourself, I suggest that you do the following.

- A. Photograph yourself from head to toe, or examine your body carefully in the mirror.
- B. Take the check list I have provided here, and go through the entire thing. Don't rush through it. This process may take a few days. The key is to walk away with a huge outlay of what your strengths and weaknesses are, a clearer idea of how to set goals, a perspective of how close you are to those goals, and a program designed to meet them specifically as well.

Conclusion

Most people do not realize what a key role self analysis plays in our sport. As I have stated above you must be your most devout critique. I guarantee that your gains will absolutely explode after implementing this into your program!

Sincerely

Jacob Wilson