

Advanced German Volume Training
by Charles Poliquin

When I introduced German Volume Training in the now defunct *Muscle Media 2000*, it was the most popular article they had ever published. Since then, it has been reprinted, translated, copied, attacked, "modified" or "improved," pirated, you name it.

Why? Because it works; because it works very well.

I get feedback about it to this day, even though it was written over ten years ago. I still get asked at least three questions a week about it on my own website. Last year, I was visiting Boston and decided to grab a workout at the Needham's Gold Gym. As I showed the attendant my Gold's gym card, he said, "Oh, the German Volume article author! I'm pleased to meet you. That's the only program that put 15 lbs of muscle on me in one month."

I have heard this type of report countless times.

However, the most common question I hear concerns how it might be adapted for an advanced trainee—someone with a good 5-years training experience.

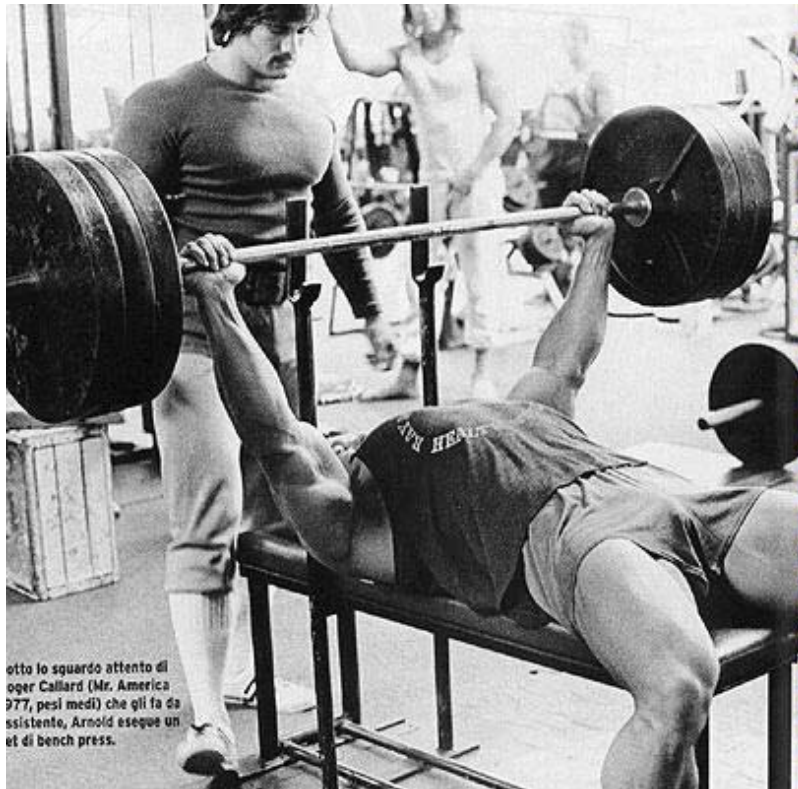
Before I get into that, let us recap the most important points regarding German Volume training:

1. You do ten sets of a single "most bang for your buck" exercise.
2. You strive to do a pre-determined number of reps on each set, i.e. ten sets of ten reps.
3. You preferably alternate with the antagonist "most bang for your buck" exercise.
4. You only increase the weight once all ten sets are completed with the pre-determined starting weight. The load used is submaximal, you do not try to reach failure on all sets, but only the last three should be hard. Basically you get the training effect from the law of repeated efforts.

A typical workout might look like this:

A. Bench press (the goal is to do 10 sets of 10 with 200 pounds):

Set 1: 10 reps
Set 2: 10 reps
Set 3: 10 reps
Set 4: 10 reps
Set 5: 9 reps
Set 6: 7 reps
Set 7: 7 reps
Set 8: 8 reps
Set 9: 7 reps
Set 10: 6 reps



B. Barbell Row (the goal is to do 10 sets of 10 with 200 pounds):

- Set 1: 10 reps
- Set 2: 10 reps
- Set 3: 10 reps
- Set 4: 9 reps
- Set 5: 8 reps
- Set 6: 7 reps
- Set 7: 7 reps
- Set 8: 7 reps
- Set 9: 6 reps
- Set 10: 6 reps

Once you were able to do complete 10 sets of 10 reps, you would increase the weight by 2 1/2 to 5%.

Pseudo-improvements for GVT

A lot of people claim to have improved the German Volume Training, but failed miserably because they did not understand the physiology behind it.

I do not care to bore you with details, but let's say that German Volume Training is the best apple pie recipe. One author might say you should use bananas instead of apples for an apple pie. And he would argue that the crust ruins it, and that it should instead be made into a loaf, or a mousse, or whatever.

Unfortunately, it is not apple pie anymore.

For example, performing 5 sets of 2 exercises done to failure does not equal the training effect of 10 sets of a single exercise using a load that causes fatigue on the later sets. The volume-intensity equations are completely different for the two different training systems.

Goals and Guidelines for the Advanced Trainee

Training Frequency: Because this is such a demanding program, it will take you longer to recover. I recommend working each body part every 5 days, **BUT ONLY DOING THE SAME EXERCISE EVERY 10 DAYS**. The routine outlined in the end will make things clearer. The exercises done in the two different workouts for the same body part should be similar, yet different enough to tap into a different motor unit pool.

Reps: For the advanced trainee, doing more than 5 reps is a waste of time, as the average intensity will be too low. The reps should vary for each one of the six workouts (German Volume Training, like any other training, is only effective for so long). Reps are the loading parameter to which one adapts the quickest.

Therefore, for an advanced trainee, one should apply a 6-9% increase in load with each successive rep reduction as outlined in the example below. In other words, each week, you'll do fewer reps per set, but increase the weight.

Workout 1

The goal of the Advanced German Volume Training method is to complete 10 sets of 5 reps with the same weight for each exercise. You want to begin with a weight you could lift for 10 reps to failure (10RM), if you had to push it. For most people, on most exercises, that would represent 75% of their 1 R.M. load. Therefore, if you can bench press 300 pounds for one rep, you would use 225 pounds for this exercise.

So your workout may look like this:

Set 1: 225 x 5
Set 2: 225 x 5
Set 3: 225 x 5
Set 4: 225 x 5
Set 5: 225 x 5
Set 6: 225 x 5
Set 7: 225 x 4
Set 8: 225 x 4
Set 9: 225 x 3
Set 10: 225 x 3

When using this—or for that matter, any program—you should keep a detailed journal of the exact sets/reps, load, and rest intervals performed, and only count the repetitions completed in strict form.

Additional tips will follow after the description of the remaining workouts.

Workout 2

Increase the weight by 6-7% and strive to do 10 sets of 4 reps with that weight. So workout 2 would look like this:

Set 1: 235 x 4
Set 2: 235 x 4
Set 3: 235 x 4
Set 4: 235 x 4
Set 5: 235 x 4
Set 6: 235 x 4
Set 7: 235 x 4
Set 8: 235 x 4
Set 9: 235 x 4
Set 10: 235 x 4

NOTE: It is not uncommon on the second workout to be able to complete all sets of 4, as your work capacity will have improved from the first GVT workout.

Workout 3

Increase weight of Workout 1 by 8-9% and strive to do 10 sets of 3 reps with that weight. Yes, you are reading it correctly—8-9%, not 6-7%.

So Workout 3 might look like this:

Set 1 255 x 3
Set 2 255 x 3
Set 3 255 x 3
Set 4 255 x 3
Set 5 255 x 3
Set 6 255 x 3
Set 7 255 x 3
Set 8 255 x 3
Set 9 255 x 3
Set 10 255 x 3

NOTE: During sets 6-7-8, you will think your spleen wants to come out of your right eye, but stick with it as sets 9 and 10 will be the easiest.

Workout 4

Use the weights you used in Workout 2 and go for 10 sets of 5, which you should do easily. If not, you have the Testosterone count of a castrated field mouse who consumes xeno-estrogens by the barrel.

Workout 5

Use the weights in workout 3 and go for 10 sets of 4, which again you should do easily. Otherwise, you are one of those Americans who eats an average of 60 dozen donuts a year (no kidding, that is what the average American eats, and if you take out the average tofu-eating Oregonian, the average Ohio resident probably eats 79 dozen).

Workout 6

By now you should be able to do 10 sets of 3 at 275 pounds with no problem. If not, your training background is probably slow tempo Kettlebell power snatches performed on the Bosu Ball.

Rest Intervals: When trainees start with this method, they often question its value during the first several sets simply because the weight will not feel heavy. However, there is minimal rest between sets (about 90 seconds when performed in sequence and 90-120 seconds when performed as a superset), which gives you a process of accumulative fatigue. Because of the importance of the rest intervals, you should use a stopwatch or a watch equipped with one to keep the rest intervals constant. This is very important, as it becomes tempting to lengthen the rest time as you fatigue.

Tempo: For long range movements such as squats, dips, and chins, use a 40X0 tempo; this means you would lower the weight in four seconds and immediately change direction and lift explosively for the concentric portion. For movements such as curls and triceps extensions, use a 30X0 tempo.

Advanced trainees, because of their enhanced neurological efficiency, should only use explosive concentric tempos.

Number of Exercises: One, and only one, exercise per body part should be performed. Therefore, select exercises that recruit a lot of muscle mass. Triceps kickbacks and leg extensions are definitely out—squats and bench presses are definitely in. For supplementary work for individual body parts (like triceps and biceps), you can do 3 sets of 6-8 reps.

Overload Mechanism: Once you are able to do 10 sets of x reps with constant rest intervals, increase the weight on the bar by the percentage outlined in the article and repeat the process. Refrain from using forced reps, negatives, or burns, as the volume of the work will take care of the hypertrophy. Expect to have some deep muscle soreness without having to resort to set prolongation techniques. In fact, after doing a quad and hams session with this method, it takes the average bodybuilder about five days to stop limping.

Following are some sample routines:

Day 1: Chest and Back

A-1: Incline Barbell Presses

10 sets of 5 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

A-2: Lean-away Chin-ups

10 sets of 5 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

B-1: Parallel Bar Dips

3 sets of 6-8 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

B-2: One-Arm Arc Dumbbell Rows
3 sets of 6-8 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

Day 2: Legs

A-1: Back Squats
10 sets of 5 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

A-2: Lying Leg Curls, feet pointing away from the body
10 sets of 5 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

B-1: Dumbbell Lunges
3 sets of 6-8 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

B-2: Romanian Deadlifts
3 sets of 6-8 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

Day 3: Off

Day 4: Arms

A-1: Incline Off-Set Dumbbell Curls
10 sets of 5 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

A-2: Close Grip Bench Press
10 sets of 5 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

B-1: Thick Bar Reverse Curls
3 sets of 6-8 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

B-2: Seated EZ Bar French presses
3 sets of 6-8 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

Day 5: Off

Day 6: Chest and Back

A-1: 30-degree Incline Barbell Presses
10 sets of 5 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

A-2: Close Parallel Grip chin-ups
10 sets of 5 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

B-1: Flat Dumbbell Presses
3 sets of 6-8 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

B-2: One-Arm Elbowing Rows (the elbow comes out to the side, as if you were elbowing someone in the chops)
3 sets of 6-8 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

Day 7: Legs

A-1: Heels Elevated Front Squats

10 sets of 5 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

A-2: Lying Leg curls feet inward

10 sets of 5 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

B-1: Farmer's Walks

3 times 50 yards, rest 90 seconds

B-2: Glute-ham Raises

3 sets of 6-8 on a 40X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds



Day 8: Off

Day 9: Arms

A-1: Seated Zottmann Curls

10 sets of 5 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

A-2: Low decline close grip bench presses

10 sets of 5 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 100 seconds

B-1: Scott Bench Close-Grip Reverse Curls

3 sets of 6-8 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

B-2: Low Pulley French presses

3 sets of 6-8 on a 30X0 tempo, rest 90 seconds

Day 10: Off

Day 11: Do the Day 1 routine using Workout 2 pattern

Continue for 55 days, making the rep adjustments as outlined.

As you can see, there is no direct work for the popliteus or tibialis anterior, nor is there use of a Swiss Ball, Bosu Ball, or Bodyblade—just straight, hard, rewarding work.

For those of you, who have access to bands or bungee cords, please feel free to add them to the squatting and pressing exercises for increased overload. They are not a must, so don't think you are missing out if do not have access to them. The program will still have impressive anabolic properties without them.

It will take you 60 days to go through the cycle, but you should gain 8-10 lbs. of lean tissue by the end of those two months. It is not a program for the faint of heart, but it is a very rewarding program (in size and strength) if one has the guts to complete it.

In August, Charles Poliquin will be exporting his weeklong internship program to Europe for the first time. This program will take place in Dublin, Ireland from the 27th to the 31st of August. Participants will learn how to apply Coach Poliquin's cutting edge training methodology to their own training and to their client's. To be part of this unique experience, contact Kelly at (480) 966-3834.

Places are limited, so sign up quickly!

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