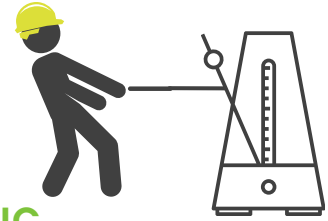


FEEL THE RHYTHM. IT'S ABOUT TIME!

BY SARA THISTLE,
LAT, ATC, CSCS

Building strength is what all the cool kids are talking about these days. And why shouldn't they? It's challenging, it helps us take only **one** trip to bring the groceries in, and it systemically aids in many processes in our day-to-day as industrial athletes, even to help slow the effects of aging! So, what's there to talk about? Perhaps we should talk about the possible avenues for progression which are available to us as we work towards building our own strength.



INTRINSIC CONTRACT

Let's think of a basic bicep curl. When we're pumping that iron during a rep, there are two phases of a muscle contraction:

- **The concentric phase** (when the muscle shortens - i.e. bringing your wrist to your shoulder in the bicep curl)
- **The eccentric phase** (when the muscle lengthens - i.e. lowering that wrist/hand back down to your side in the bicep curl)

Now, the eccentric portion surely is the easiest phase of the muscle contraction. Most people probably don't even think about it. It's a means to an end. A way to return to the starting position so you can crush the next rep. But what if we focused a bit more on that lowering phase? It's during the *eccentric* phase that the runway to progression is laid and strength gains take flight.

RECOMMENDED METRIC

If focusing on eccentrics is so beneficial, your next question is probably, "But, Sara, I bet incorporating eccentrics is hard, right?" How about I answer with, "No, it's not!"

The secret is in the RHYTHM of your workout. Instead of a stereotypical *up - down - up - down*, just take your time! Less scientifically, think *up - downwwwn*. If you need a more technical version, try this:

Let's reimagine that same bicep curl:

UP: 1 second (to the top)

HOLD: 1 second (at the top)

DOWN: 4 seconds (return to the bottom)

HOLD: 1 second (at the bottom)



This tempo will work for ANY movement - squats, lunges, hamstring curls, or incline sit ups to name a few. The rhythm, and more specifically, the eccentric phase can be modified to increase challenge. Give it a go and let's get strong, y'all. 🏆



Eccentric is pronounced 'e-centric,' not to be confused with eccentric (ex-centric). Strange, right? Strive to be eccentrically eccentric!

Here are some potential benefits of focusing on the eccentric phase:

- Has positive effects on hypertrophy (muscle growth), strength and power output.
- An effective tool to improve muscular health in those with chronic health conditions/discomfort.
- A useful intervention for tennis elbow
- Helps improve mobility (strengthen to lengthen!)
- A great option to maintain/improve neuromuscular health and physical function in older adults
- Certain to test and improve your patience and tolerance of discomfort and uncomfortable situations. Just an added bonus!

SARA'S CAUTION CORNER

To avoid "too much, too soon" be mindful of load in the beginning, starting conservatively and progressing over time. This can look, at it's most minor severity, as delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) but at its most severe, a wee bit too much for our muscles, resulting in strains that are more serious than DOMS.

Don't be afraid of DOMS! Take it slow, listen to your body, and stay confident. Remember, challenging the status quo of your muscles is always a bit uncomfortable. DOMS does go away - I promise!



Sara Thistle, LAT, ATC, CSCS || Sara is an Industrial Athletic Trainer and also works in Operations, Management, and Continuing Education for Work Right NW. When she isn't working on logistics, program development, or supporting her onsite clinicians, she is probably buried in a good book, lifting weights, or bothering her cat, Tsuki.

Work Right NW is changing the way that companies view workplace hazards. Our focus is on educating the workforce to prevent injury. We provide access to Injury Prevention Specialists in the workplace to address the early signs of discomfort. We are changing the industry one company at a time by helping one person at a time.