

# STARTIN' OUT

## FEET OFF THE FLOOR BENCH PRESS

*as told to Powerlifting USA by Doug Daniels*

It seems there can never been too many articles on methods to increase the bench press. My contribution this time around is a great assistance exercise called the feet off the floor bench press. Simply put, this variation is just like the regular bench except that your back is flat on the bench with your feet off the ground, above the bench with your ankles crossed.

This variation accomplishes several things. First, it forces the upper body to do all the work by taking away any leverage advantage or stabilization that your legs can provide. In the regular bench style, the legs can potentially add significantly to pushing power. This forces your upper body to develop the stabilizing muscles used in the lift. As I have said countless times before, controlling the weight in any lift is at least half the battle.

Next, the feet off the floor style does not stress the spine like the competitive bench does. Many lifters arch to get maximum leverage and reduce the distance the bar must travel. Over time, this can add up on the lumbar discs. Giving your back a break from arching can hopefully mean a longer lifting career with decreased pain and injuries. Also, if you're suffering from a lower back problem, this variation could enable you to get in productive bench work.

This variation also adds variety to your training program and it is also a great choice as a substitute for the regular

benches in the off season. It can be used along with regular benches for down sets or as a finisher. I don't advise going below 5 reps in a set with this exercise because of the inherent decreased stability of this movement. You will not be able to use as much weight on this exercise as you would for a normal style bench. Start with 70% of your regular bench weight to get accustomed to the feel of this variation as the balance will be markedly different and charging ahead too fast and too furious may cause an injury. Your spotters must remain especially alert as the lifter could lose the bar to either side.

Keeping your back flat and your feet off the floor insures maximum strictness. Don't swing or flail your legs to gain extra leverage or you'll defeat the purpose of the movement. These types of unnecessary, jerky movements also raise the chance of pulling a muscle or losing control of the bar.

This bench variation can also be customized. It's easy to perform close grips, wide grips, benches to the neck, etc., with your feet off the floor. For example, you can do a wide grip set with your elbows at right angles to the body to stress the pecs. Close grips can emphasize your triceps. Don't go crazy and perform every type of variation you can think of. Always remember that quality is superior to quantity when training with weights.

Hopefully this article on the feet off the floor bench press gave you a few ideas on bench press training. Since the feet off the floor is a bench press, strength and power developed training this lift will readily transfer over to your competitive bench. Variations of grip etc. can also be used on this exercise. If you choose to use this style during the off season, switch back to your competitive style at least 6-8 weeks prior a contest to re-acustom yourself to contest form. Hopefully, you will realize a measurable strength gain at contest time.