



>> PERIODIZATION TRAINING
THE UNDULATING
SPECTRUM
WORKOUT



For those who don't know, periodization is a systematic training method that cycles through various approaches to exercise for a set period of time. There are several variations on periodization training, all directly emphasize intensity and volume in workouts. The most popular and more contemporary periodization model is an undulating weekly progression. The undulation approach begins with a given volume and intensity (high or low), then progresses to the opposite end of the spectrum. Figure 1-1 below illustrates a typical undulating periodization routine. In the two-week example there are five different rep max (RM) ranges, each corresponding to a workout day. Simply put,



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each workout has a different RM number pertaining to every exercise involved. These RM assignments have ascending undulation in the first week and descending during week two.

Figure 1-1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	1-3 RM	3-5 RM	5-8 RM	10-12 RM	12-15 RM
Week 2	12-15 RM	10-12 RM	5-8 RM	3-5 RM	1-3 RM





Figure 1-1 displays the usual undulating training method that is commonly adopted by fitness enthusiasts. It is a simple and effective route to a complicated concept of periodization. While the undulating method works well and has been proven to produce noticeable results, I would like to introduce an even more effective variation on the same concept. In figure 1-2 below are two workouts designed for alternating throughout the week. Each has RM ranges spread over five exercises. Like the previous example, this approach too has an undulating pattern. The difference, however, is that the undulation in figure 1-2 pertains to each individual exercise

within the workout. More simply, figure 1-1 undulates RM according to the whole workout, figure 1-2 undulates a different RM for each exercise. The significance of undulating within each workout is to increase training volume and intensity even more than the first method. The new method provides a full spectrum of volume (reps) and intensity (resistance) within each workout.

Most people generally focus on a single RM number for each workout or even for an entire training period. This is typically done to focus on a single training emphasis—either volume (reps) for muscle definition or intensity (resistance) for increased muscle strength and size. Having a singular focus in a workout is a very traditional and also beneficial approach to training, however it can lack efficiency. While, more traditional training approach-

Figure 1-2

	Exercise #1	Exercise #2	Exercise #3	Exercise #4	Exercise #5
Workout #1	1-3 RM	3-5 RM	8-10 RM	10-12 RM	12-15 RM
Workout #2	12-15 RM	10-12 RM	8-10 RM	3-5 RM	1-3 RM



es certainly have advantages and proven results, those looking for a new breed of results will more likely find them with a periodization workout. More specifically, undulating periodization will provide the most progressive results from both volume and intensity.

Undulating spectrum training (fig. 1-2), as I like to call it, is a method of progression similar to regular periodization. It encompasses maximal output, heavy weight exercises and submaximal output with lighter weight exercises. Essentially, the goal of the spectrum undulating workout is to exhaust the muscles more thoroughly. This is done by anaerobically targeting different muscle fibers in the body. This



is done with a descending progression of heavier weight, lower RM to ascending lighter weight, higher RM. Consequently, the RM number being performed and the weight lifted have an inverse relationship. Below, figure 1-3 is a more detailed example of an undulating spectrum workout plan. It is a simple example a chest workout with five exercises and their corresponding sets and RM. Figure 1-3 is a basic example that can be further developed and tweaked. It is, however, a good reference to start undulating your workouts.

Figure 1-3

Exercise	Sets	RM
Bench Press	3	1-3
Incline Bench Press	3	3-5
Decline Bench Press	3	8-10
Reverse Grip Bench	3	10-12
Chest Fly	3	12-15

The undulating workout plan in figure 1-3 covers a full spectrum of RM, starting from one and progressing up to 15. Also note worthy is, the number of sets does not change. This is to provide a constant while the RM is the variable. The number of sets does not have to remain constant or stay at three. This workout is made for customization.

Plateaus are annoying as many exercisers are all too familiar. The undulating spectrum workout is a prime candidate for hurdling any training plateau. Fitness pla-

teaus are often plagued by stale training methods and nonexistent results. When a workout feels old or results begin to fail, add some undulation to your workout spectrum. It will test the muscles in a way never experienced before. Not to mention the consistent change will employ a mental stimulation otherwise neglected by overly repetitive routines.

Some may criticize periodization as a style of training saying its counterproductive. Simply because periodization focuses on both volume and intensity is by no means counterproductive. In fact, it is quite the contrary. It actually focuses on both simultaneously, which increases training efficiency and keeps the muscles from acclimating to one given volume or intensity. As those with exercise experience know preventing the muscles from acclimating and adapting to training is the key to fitness success. In other words, incorporating this new undulating training method will keep the muscles guessing and the results flourishing. The undulating spectrum workout doesn't have to be adopted forever or even for a long training period. However, given a trial, it will produce new and greater results than before. It is definitely worth trying for a training period of at least six weeks. After which, is a good opportunity for proper evaluation. Keep in mind, no training method is meant to be permanent and the only true way to know if the undulating workout is effective is to try it on. Then, you can move on to something else; either adding it to your fitness repertoire or not. 