

# How to build bigger calves

By Stuart McRobert

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First follow “The Program” detailed in Chapter 17 of **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT**. Only after the minimum period of 12 months on “The Program” should you consider implementing this calf specialization program.

## Introduction

If you’re a bodybuilder you’ll want to develop as good a physique as possible, but not everyone wants to develop their muscles to the maximum degree. Whatever your training-related goals are, **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** shows you how to achieve them.

**IT’S NOT NECESSARY TO BE HUGE TO BE IMPRESSIVE! Even average genetics can produce a TERRIFIC physique.**

Imagine if you were to build 10 to 20 pounds of muscle, and lose the same amount of fat. Although you’d remain about the same weight, your physique would be **TRANSFORMED**. This is a realistic potential achievement for most men. You may, however, be able to make an even greater change to your physique.

But you need to be knowledgeable on training and recuperation savvy

Your calf development potential is affected by these three factors:

1. **Muscle belly length.** If the tendons of your calves are long, the actual “meaty” part of the muscle is reduced accordingly, producing what are often called “high calves.” With high calves, the muscle seems to be in a small ball close to the knees. If you have this sort of structure, your ultimate calf development will be greatly reduced relative to if you had a more typical calf formation. The ideal is a full-bodied, long calf.
2. **Bone structure.** Generally, heavier bone structure produces a bigger calf size potential than a lighter bone structure. Ankle size is representative of lower-body bone structure. Seven and a half inch ankles, for an average height man, denotes a light bone structure and will usually accompany an ultimate

size potential of substantially less than someone whose ankles are over nine inches.

3. Tibia length. If the length of the bones of your legs (below your knees) is long relative to your height, chances are you'll have more difficulty developing large calves than if you have shorter leg bones.

Muscle belly length, bone structure and tibia length play a huge role in calf size potential, and they are all genetically determined.

**Although your heredity is out of your control, your training, recuperation and dedication are FULLY IN YOUR CONTROL.** And what you DO with your heredity is more important than the heredity per se.

Everything you need to know to build the best physique that's possible for you is included in CS Publishing's books and the back issues of **HARDGAINER** magazine.

**BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** is the single most complete instructional guide on body transformation. Much of the guidance in that book isn't common practice, but it **WORKS WONDERS** when implemented correctly.

### **General comment on specialization programs**

If balanced routines are used -- like in "The Program" detailed in **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT**-- and each exercise is trained with comparable effort, all bodyparts will develop as well as they can according to individual genetic potential. But if some areas are neglected, they may lag behind other areas, comparatively speaking.

One of your bodyparts (and the exercises that train it) may be more responsive to training than the rest of your physique, because of a greater genetic potential in the former. There may be a big difference. For example, a few people have huge calves even though they have never done any exercise for them other than everyday activities. Some people have potential in several bodyparts that's out of proportion to that of the rest of their physiques.

If you have a lagging bodypart because of neglect, you may be able to bring it up to the level of the rest of your physique if you train it

progressively for long enough. But if the imbalance is genetically determined, and substantial, it may not be fully correctable no matter how much specialization is done.

A specialization routine may help to correct or minimize a lagging bodypart or exercise. If, however, the specialization work is overdone, it will hinder progress, not help it.

## **The calf specialization program**

If your **OVERALL PHYSIQUE** is underdeveloped, you're unlikely to add an inch to your calves unless you add **AT LEAST 15 MUSCULAR** pounds on your whole body. And if you want two inches on your calves, reckon on having to build a whole body that's **AT LEAST 30 MUSCULAR** pounds bigger.

But if your calves truly are **LAGGING** behind the rest of your physique, it may be time for a calf specialization program. Perhaps your calves are an inch or more smaller in girth than your arms. If so, here's a calf specialization routine.

It may be possible to add between a quarter and a half inch to your calf girth over a two-month period on an **OCCASIONAL** basis. **THAT** is what the following program is designed to achieve. But it's not possible to progress on your calves at that rate every two months.

**During most of your training, focus on building your **WHOLE** body, which of course will include your calves.**

### **Calf musculature**

The calf is a group of seven posterior muscles below the knee, divided into superficial and deep groups, whose functions include extending the ankle (pointing the toes). The two main muscles are the meaty two-headed gastrocnemius and, beneath it, the soleus. The gastrocnemius connects the heel to the femur, and the soleus connects the heel to the tibia and fibula -- the gastrocnemius crosses the ankle **AND** knee joints, while the soleus crosses the ankle joint only. The tendons of these two muscles, together with the plantaris, fuse to form the Achilles tendon.

The soleus is underneath the gastrocnemius, so most of the soleus isn't visible, but it still contributes significantly to calf girth. The soleus crosses the ankle joint only, but the gastrocnemius crosses the ankle

**AND** knee joints. Both muscles plantar flex the foot -- namely, point the toes -- but the gastrocnemius also assists with flexion of the knee. Keeping your knees straight in calf work, or just slightly bent, fully recruits the gastrocnemius **AND** the soleus. Bent-knee calf work -- especially the seated calf raise -- reduces gastrocnemius involvement according to the extent of knee flexion.

The standing two-legged calf raise, and the one-legged variation, are the calf exercises used in this specialization program, and in **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT**. Both of these exercises fully involve the gastrocnemius and soleus simultaneously.

## **Training**

This program will focus on your calves but without neglecting the rest of your body. Make progress **ONLY** on your calves. For the rest of your body, just **MAINTAIN** what you've currently got. Just for two months, give yourself a break from progressing on your entire physique, and instead focus on making progress on your calves **ONLY**.

For the two months of the calf specialization, train your calves twice a week, but each other bodypart just once a week.

Work out just twice each week. Don't train more frequently on this program. You'll hit your calves at both workouts, with a different routine for each day. But training for the rest of your body will be **SPREAD** over both workouts each week.

Backing off from work for the rest of your body will give you the chance to focus your effort, concentration, recuperation, and progress on your calves.

Many bodybuilders seem to specialize on their whole bodies all the time. That, of course, is overkill, which causes overtraining, and stagnation or only minimal progress. But if you reduce your training frequency and volume for the rest of your body, then for short periods **ONLY** you may be able to benefit from a moderately increased volume and frequency of training on a single bodypart.

I'll list the calf training for Monday and Thursday workouts. Of course, you could train Sunday and Wednesday, or any other similar pairing of days.

Use an abbreviated program for the rest of your body -- see the pair of routines given on page 487 of **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT**. Do sufficient to **MAINTAIN** your strength and development there. Don't try to progress over the rest of your body for the duration of this program. Focus on calf progress.

For exercises for the rest of your body, perform just one per bodypart: warm-up work plus two work sets each of your preferred rep count. But **DON'T** train them at your fullest intensity. For example, for an eight-rep work set, use a weight you could get ten reps with, but do just eight reps. And for the duration of this program, stay with the **SAME** poundages.

From the pair of routines given on page 487 of **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT**, exclude the calf exercise from the first workout, and add the following to the **BEGINNING** of the workouts:

#### **MONDAY**

Standing calf machine: warm-up plus 2 x 10-12

One-legged calf raise: 2 x 6-8

*Keep accurate records of your workouts.*

### **EXERCISE TECHNIQUE PRIORITY!**

Properly done, weight-lifting is safe, but the use of correct exercise technique is the exception in nearly all gyms. Gyms are usually terrible places for learning correct exercise technique. Few trainees practice correct technique because hardly anyone knows what it is, and this includes most gym instructors, and personal trainers. Exercise technique isn't secondary to program design, and training intensity. Technique comes first!

Exercise technique isn't simple. It requires detailed instruction, and serious study, if you're to master it.

I sustained most of my training injuries because I used incorrect exercise technique. All of these injuries were avoidable.

*See **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** for extensive detail and many photographs on the correct technique for safe, effective training, including calf work. No other book covers exercise technique with the same care, thoroughness and accuracy.*

## **THURSDAY**

**Standing calf machine: warm-up plus 2 x 15-20**

**DESCENDING SETS one-legged calf raise: see text**

*Keep accurate records of your workouts.*

For your calves, train with comfortable weights and moderate intensity in the first week. Train harder and heavier at the second week, but not flat out. Then in the third week, train as hard as possible with the most weight you can handle for the target reps **IN CORRECT EXERCISE TECHNIQUE**. Only in the third week does the specialization program proper start, for seven weeks of hard work, using progressively heavier poundages, but while **ALWAYS** using correct exercise technique and a **CONTROLLED** rep speed.

Once you're training hard, the poundage for the first exercise, for example, should **JUST** permit twelve reps for the first work set. Rest two minutes and repeat. On the second set, aim for ten reps.

Naturally, you'll use heavier poundages on the first day than the second, because of the lower reps at the former.

Keep accurate records of your workouts.

For the descending sets, use the one-legged dumbbell calf raise. or the one-legged machine calf raise. For the latter, use the regular calf machine, but exercise one leg at a time

For the descending sets work, you'll already be warmed up from the previous calf work. Select a poundage for the one-legged calf raise that **JUST** permits 10 reps. Immediately reduce the poundage by 25% and perform maximum reps with it. Then immediately reduce the poundage by a further 25% and perform maximum reps with that. Either have the three dumbbells at hand, or make the pre-planned weight reductions quickly on a calf machine.

That's one descending set. Rest for two minutes, and repeat. Your reps will be reduced for the second wave, but still do your best.

Done correctly, descending sets are grueling. Never save something for the next sequence of reps with a lighter weight. Consider each batch of reps your final batch, and give your all to each, but in **CORRECT** exercise technique, of course.

**You must train hard to stimulate progress. See page 499 of **BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT** for valuable tips on how to train hard but with discipline.**

Keep accurate records of the poundages you used, and the reps performed with each weight.

**Again, resist any temptation to add sets, exercises or workouts to the arm program. Instead, add more focus and effort! And don't try to make any progress in non-calf exercises. All progress must be focused on your calves.**

You **MUST** get stronger during the hard seven weeks of this program, but **NEVER** at the expense of good exercise technique. To progress in poundages you must **FULLY** satisfy the components of recovery -- nutrition, rest, and sleep -- **EVERY** day.

What you do out of the gym is **INTEGRAL** to your overall progress. If you don't fully recover between workouts, you'll never progress to the best of your ability.

Be **100%** dedicated to training and training-related matters. Compromise on anything and you'll compromise on your progress.

Follow this program as written, be **100%** dedicated, and you should easily be able to add a little poundage to each calf exercise each week. But **NEVER** add poundage at the expense of loosening your exercise technique.

A half inch or so on your calves from this specialization program is possible **PROVIDED** you had lagging calves but **NOT** a lagging **WHOLE** physique, and provided you work hard and progressively.

Once the two-month calf specialization is over, return to a full-body program in order to get your **WHOLE** body growing as a unit. Employ regular calf work without any descending sets.

In summary, you can't build much bigger calves unless you build a much bigger body. You may **OCCASIONALLY** be able to add a quarter or, at most, half an inch to your calf girth from a two-month

specialization period. But regular calf specialization probably won't add anything further **UNLESS** in the meantime you've built a bigger muscled physique **OVERALL** -- a bigger body that is capable of sustaining bigger calves.

## **FURTHER HELP . . .**

**See BUILD MUSCLE, LOSE FAT, LOOK GREAT for all the details on how to train, and a treasure trove of everything related to training.** At over 600 pages, and with nearly 400 photographs, this is the most complete book on body transformation. *But if you don't agree, you may return it for a refund.*

For further information, visit

[www.hardgainer.com](http://www.hardgainer.com)

**or** [www.buildmusclelosefatlookgreat.com](http://www.buildmusclelosefatlookgreat.com)