



FREE, NO EMAIL, NO CATCH

The mh3 Bench Press Guide

Everything I teach about the bench press in my reels and on the floor at mh3, in one place. The setup that saves your shoulders, the bar path, why reps actually get missed, and the exact 6 week block structure we program at the gym. Save this page.

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READ THIS FIRST

If you are stable you can be strong

The bench press is a stability lift. If you are moving around on the bench, feet sliding, back shifting, bar wandering, you are leaking power, and strength disappears with it. Everything in this guide is about one thing: locking in a base so that every bit of your energy goes into the bar instead of into holding yourself together.

And here is the truth about missed reps: a lot of bench press reps are missed not because you are not strong enough, but because you panic when the bar slows down. We will fix that too.

PART 1

The setup: grip, shoulders, legs, unrack

1 Grip the bar with intent

You cannot just grab it and go. Pick your reference on the rings, I put my middle finger on the ring, and once you have your grip, that is your grip, every session, never change it. Twist the big knuckle of your thumb into the bar, pinch your pinky into it, and you will feel the whole underside of your arm switch on. Then let your knuckles drop back so your palms face the ceiling. Everyone tells you knuckles to the ceiling, but that is a weak, shoulder dominated position. Palms up, the bar sits over the bones of your forearm, and it is stable at the top and the bottom.

2**Get on top of your shoulders**

Do not lie flat on the bench. Flat pins your shoulder blades down, they have nowhere to travel, and the shoulders internally rotate at the bottom, that is the pain across the front of your shoulders. Instead, roll up on top of your shoulders, neck flat to the bench, chin tucked. Then drop your shoulder blades down into the bench. That alone can take about 10 centimetres out of your range of motion, and your scaps stay free to move while you press from a solid base.

3**Leg drive goes up the bench, not into the floor**

Leg drive is not stomping downwards, and it is not launching your hips into the air. Push yourself away from your feet, up the bench, so your legs drive you higher onto your shoulders. Your hips stay on the bench, they just slide up it. This is how you get the arch without the arch: chest high, ribcage up, range shortened, and none of that lower back cramping you get from forcing a huge bend. I used to chase the crazy arch, my lower back hated it, horizontal leg drive fixed all of it.

4**Unrack half a centimetre**

Set up so the bar only just misses the rack on the way out. Half a centimetre is all you need. If you set up a foot away, you waste energy hauling the bar out and you lose your position on top of your shoulders before the set even starts. Straight arms, gently out, stay stacked.

PART 2

The press: the J curve and the pause

The bar does not move in a straight line and you should not try to make it. It comes down to the bottom of your chest, and it presses back up over the front of your shoulders. A slight J. Your lats control that path: squeeze the bar down to your chest with your lats, keep it tight to your body, then push it back over your face. On the way down and up, keep trying to pull the bar apart, as if it could split down the middle. That lights up the back of your shoulders and holds the whole path together.

Pause every rep. Control the bar down, pause on the chest, count 1, 2, 3, press. No bouncing. Bouncing means you are not in control, it wastes the energy into the bounce and it shifts the work onto your shoulders. Paused, tight, your chest does the pressing, and every rep is the same rep. Brace at the top before the bar comes down, hold it through the pause, let it go at lockout, re brace.

And when the bar slows down on a heavy rep: nothing changes. You do not twist, you do not flare, you do not chase it with your elbows. Stay stable, stay tight, and let the muscles move the weight slowly. As long as you hold your positions, a slow bar is still a moving bar. Get comfortable in the struggle. That is where strength is built.

PART 3

The 3 mistakes that cap your bench

1. Lying flat on the bench

Flat on your back, your shoulder blades are pinned with nowhere to go, so at the bottom of every rep your shoulders internally rotate and grind. That is where the pain across the front of the shoulders comes from, and it is why your bench has no base to press from.

Instead: Get right up on top of your shoulders, neck to the bench, chin tucked, shoulder blades dropped down into it. Scaps free, base solid. Do this one thing and watch your bench press fly.

2. Chasing a huge arch

You crank your back into the biggest bend you can and pull your bum toward your shoulders, your lower back cramps, your hamstrings feel like they are about to tear, and half your focus goes into holding the circus pose.

Instead: Horizontal leg drive does the same job without the cost. Push away from your feet, up the bench, chest high, hips gliding up the bench but never leaving it. Shorter range, stable base, no lower back drama.

3. Panicking when the bar slows

The bar slows mid rep and you rush: elbows flare, hips pop up, air dumps out, you move differently to chase the rep. Every heavy rep becomes a different lift, and you are literally training yourself to panic under load.

Instead: Hold your brace and wait. The bar does not have to move fast, it has to keep moving, and it will if you stay tight. Trust the pattern you built on your warmups: same shape, more squeeze. You will get stronger so much faster lifting like this.

PART 4

The 6 week block: how we actually program the bench

Same engine we run on the gym floor and in the app. The indicator comes first, one set at the same reps as the top set around RPE 6.5, your reading for the day: moves like it should, proceed; feels heavy, today stays lighter, the plan bends to the day. Then one all in top set at the day's target RPE, the set that drives progress. Then back offs at exactly top set minus 10 percent. Feel genuinely great on the indicator? Add 2.5kg to the top set yourself, the bench moves in smaller steps than the squat and deadlift, so no hero jumps.

RPE 8 means about two good paused reps left, RPE 9 means one. Warm up with singles past your first working weight. Day 2 earns its place: close grip bench for the pressing volume, palm up front raises, one of the exercises that made the biggest difference to my own bench, they teach the top of the chest to control that J curve back over the shoulders, and rows, because a big bench sits on a big back.

WEEK 1

Day 1: Indicator 1 x 5 @ RPE 6.5, top set 1 x 5 @ RPE 7.5, back offs 2 x 5 at top minus 10%

Day 2: Close grip bench 3 x 8 @ RPE 7, palm up front raise 3 x 12, Pendlay row 3 x 10

Every rep paused on the chest, count 1, 2, 3, press. Entry point for the top set: a weight you are certain you could press for 8, done for 5.

WEEK 2

Day 1: Indicator 1 x 4 @ RPE 6.5, top set 1 x 4 @ RPE 8, back offs 3 x 4 at top minus 10%

Day 2: Close grip bench 3 x 8 @ RPE 7, palm up front raise 3 x 12, Pendlay row 3 x 10

Reps drop, bar climbs. Same grip every session, middle finger on the ring, get comfortable with it and never change it.

WEEK 3

Day 1: Indicator 1 x 3 @ RPE 6.5, top set 1 x 3 @ RPE 8.5, back offs 3 x 3 at top minus 10%

Day 2: Close grip bench 3 x 6 @ RPE 7.5, palm up front raise 3 x 12, Pendlay row 3 x 10

Heaviest week so far. When the top set slows down, that is not a missed rep, that is the rep. Stay tight and let it move slowly.

WEEK 4

Day 1: Deload: 3 x 5 at week 1 top set minus 10%. No indicator, no top set.

Day 2: Palm up front raise 3 x 12, Pendlay row 3 x 10, both two reps shy of last week's effort

Lighter for volume. Use it to drill the setup: on top of the shoulders, neck to the bench, leg drive up the bench, pause every rep.

WEEK 5

Day 1: Indicator 1 x 3 @ RPE 6.5, top set 1 x 3 @ RPE 9, back offs 2 x 3 at top minus 10%

Day 2: Close grip bench 2 x 6 @ RPE 7, palm up front raise 3 x 12, Pendlay row 3 x 8

The heaviest triple of the block, fresh off the deload. Brace at the top, hold it through the pause, stay in the struggle.

WEEK 6

Day 1: Test: singles up to your opener, then ONE all in set of 3 to 5 reps @ RPE 9

Day 2: Rest

Not a 1RM day, no grinding singles. One honest paused set, then use the formula below for your new max estimate.

Scoring your test: estimated max = weight x (1 + reps x 0.033), and because you left one rep in the tank at RPE 9, count one extra rep. Example: 90kg for 4 with one left is 90 x (1 + 5 x 0.033), about 105kg. That number seeds your next block, it is what the indicator, top set and back offs all calculate from.

Want the weights calculated for you?

The mh3 training app takes your numbers and builds every set of this for you, then adjusts the weights as you log. Your first week is free, no card needed.

Start your free week

Get the 8 week bench program

In Dubai? First week at the gym is free too: mh3gym.com/trial

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