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7 Benefits of Supersets and How to Use Them in Workouts

There are many ways to form and complete a workout. In strength and resistance training, super-setting is a method that helps you mix things up, increase your workout intensity, and get the most out of your time.

Let's look at what supersets are, their benefits, and how you can easily make them part of your workouts.

THE DEFINITION OF "SUPERSET"

A superset is when you perform **two different strength exercises back-to-back without rest**. This is different from traditional sets where you perform one set of a movement, rest, then repeat. When you superset, you perform the first exercise, perform the second right after, then rest and repeat.

The exercises in a superset can either work the *same muscles* or *opposing muscle* groups. For example, you could do two push exercises or a push movement followed by a pull movement. Technically, a superset can also include one cardio exercise and one strength exercise.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SUPERSETS?

Supersets can benefit your workouts in many ways. Here are the top reasons to use them.

1. Increasing Your Workout Intensity

Since there's no rest during a superset round, you increase your *time under tension (TUT)* — how long your muscles are under strain during a workout. Greater TUT forces your muscles to work harder for longer, which improves strength, muscle growth, and endurance.

Supersets are especially great for TUT when you do two back-to-back exercises of the same muscle groups. You're maximizing the work time for those same muscles.

2. Greater Muscle Growth

As we just mentioned, supersets keep your muscles under tension for longer. Utilizing all of your muscle fibers for longer [maximizes hypertrophy](#), which increases muscle size and mass.

3. More Fat Burn

Besides helping you [build more lean muscle](#), supersets can also help you burn more body fat.

For example, a [study](#) published in *The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* found that exercise **energy expenditure was "significantly greater" during and post-exercise** in subjects who performed supersets versus those doing traditional resistance training workouts.

4. Optimizing Your Workout Time

Most gym-goers understand how easy it is to waste time during a workout. Driving to the gym, filling up your water bottle, changing clothes, and talking to others can eat up precious time, and most of us don't have hours to exercise.

Besides switching to at-home exercises, you can save time by adding supersets to your workouts. (And all-in-one systems like the [Gorilla Bow](#) make it easy to do supersets at home!) By resting less between exercises, you **increase your volume and burn in a shorter time**.

5. Adding More Variety to Your Workouts

If you've ever started strong with a workout routine but fallen off out of boredom, you're certainly not alone. Many of us need to keep things interesting to maintain a workout routine. Plus, you actually [need variety in your workouts](#) to keep seeing results.

Supersets switch things up, allowing you to **change the speed and intensity** of what you've been doing. And since you get fewer breaks, it's easier to power through a workout. Before you know it, you're done and can move on with your day.

If you struggle with consistency, supersets can **provide variety and efficiency** that keep you on track with your goals.

6. Busting Through Workout Plateaus

If you've stopped seeing results from your workouts (also known as a workout plateau), that's a sign you need to [change things up](#).

Supersets are fantastic for making your workouts more challenging without creating an entirely new program.

7. Bonus Aerobic Benefits

Since super-setting shortens your rest periods, your workout intensity increases. This higher intensity requires your heart to work harder, which gives you a resistance training workout *and* cardiovascular benefits.

[Research](#) has shown that supersets lead to much higher anaerobic expenditures (for **increasing muscle size**

and mass) and aerobic (for improving endurance) expenditures than traditional resistance training for both men and women.

In other words, supersets are good for your heart *and* muscles!

TYPES OF SUPERSETS AND HOW TO USE THEM

You can perform supersets in many different ways. The best types for you depend on your fitness level and goals.

Here are some of the variations for supersets in a workout.

Push-Pull Supersets

Push-pull supersets are when you combine a push movement and a pull movement for one set. You're working **opposing muscle groups** back-to-back.

For example, a push-pull superset could be:

- Bench press (push) and a bent-over row (pull)
- Overhead presses (push) and pullups (pull)
- Pushups (push) and rear-delt flies (pull)

Push-pull supersets are fantastic when you want to do a lot in less time. Your muscles get small amounts of rest during sets — for example, your pushing muscles will rest as you perform the pulling exercise.

Upper Body-Lower Body Supersets

With upper-lower supersets, you perform an upper-body strength movement followed by a lower-body strength movement — or vice versa.

Examples include:

- Lunges and overhead presses
- Squats and pullups
- Deadlifts and bench presses

Upper body-lower body supersets work well for full-body workouts, and they provide the most rest time since you're working entirely different muscle groups. Simply pair an upper-body exercise with a lower-body exercise to create an upper-lower superset.

Compound Supersets

During compound supersets, both exercises target the **same muscle group**. For example:

- Bench presses and press-ups (working the chest)
- Barbell curls and hammer curls (working the biceps)
- Shoulder presses and lateral raises (working the shoulders)

If you're pressed for time but want to ramp up the intensity, compound movements are a smart choice. Compound supersets work your prime movers *and* your ancillary muscle groups — those that assist your primary muscles. You can double up on a muscle group in a shorter period.

Plus, working larger muscle groups (like your legs or chest) with compound sets provides cardiovascular benefits. Just try them, and you'll see how much it gets your heart rate up!

Compound movements typically involve heavier weights for each exercise. Muscular fatigue happens more quickly, impacting form if you aren't careful. Remember that ***using the correct form trumps the number of reps***. Go slow when performing compound supersets until you're confident in your form.

With same-muscle-group supersets, you need to rest more in between sets to avoid burning out. That way, you can commit to the same weight load each time. It's best to *rest 60-90 seconds* in between compound supersets.

Compound movements should also be the focus of most drop sets, which are also a form of supersets. (More on that below.)

Isolation Supersets

Want to really feel the burn and build lean muscle on a smaller muscle group (such as the biceps)? Isolation supersets are your friend.

Isolation sets target **one smaller muscle** back-to-back. You could do combinations like:

- Lateral raises and front raises (working the shoulders)
- Tricep pulldowns and skull crushers (working the triceps)
- Glute bridges and leg presses (working the glutes)
- Chest flies and cable crossovers (working the chest)

Post-Exhaustion Supersets

With post-exhaustion supersets, you perform a **compound exercise followed by an isolation exercise**. (Compound exercises work multiple muscle groups at once, while isolation movements target one muscle group.)

Examples include:

- Hip hinges and hamstring curls (working the hamstrings)
- Diamond push-ups and overhead tricep extensions (working the triceps)
- Squats and leg extensions (working the quads)

So, you work a larger group of muscles at first, then really zone in to isolate the smaller muscle. Just ensure you're choosing compound exercises that include the isolated muscle.

Another variation of this is switching the order. You do the isolation movement first, then the compound exercise. This is known as a *pre-exhaustion* superset, although recent [research shows](#) it might not be as effective as experts once thought.

Tri-sets and Giant Sets

Supersets don't always stop at two exercises. You can increase the amount of work without rest through *tri-sets* or *giant sets*:

- **Tri-sets** are when you perform three different exercises back-to-back without rest.
- **Giant sets** are doing four or more different exercises back-to-back without rest.

Larger sets allow you to combine several exercises back-to-back without rest, which is helpful for when you have limited workout time. Plus, these sets can keep things interesting with different combinations!

Drop Set vs. Superset

Drop sets are easily confused with supersets, but they're not exactly the same. In fact, drop sets are a *type* of superset:

- With some supersets, two *different* exercises are performed back-to-back without rest.

- During a drop set, you **perform the *same* exercise back-to-back but decrease the weight by 10-30 percent** on the second exercise.
- For a triple drop set, you can also decrease the weight by 10-30 percent *again* and do a third set.

The purpose of a drop set is to fit in more reps at once while keeping good form.

HOW TO INCORPORATE SUPERSETS IN YOUR WORKOUTS

As we've been mentioning throughout this article, supersets are "super" for fitting in more work during a shorter time. Since carving out time for exercise can be challenging, supersets can help you stay consistent.

But you can't reap the benefits without knowing how to perform supersets properly. Let's look at the details.

Getting Started with Supersets

If you want to start using supersets in your workouts, it's best to **start with 2-4 exercises you're already doing regularly**. (If you're a complete beginner, start with familiar exercises, such as squats or knee push ups.) Then, you can start super-setting exercises together.

For example, maybe you're already doing bench presses and [bent-over rows](#) during your workouts. Instead of doing them separately, make them a push-pull superset. Perform your bench presses, then immediately perform bent-over rows for one superset.

(And, if you were wondering: yes, you can perform [bench presses](#) with the Gorilla Bow!)

You can also choose two same-muscle-group exercises to form a compound superset. For example, you could do [shoulder presses](#) followed immediately by lateral raises.

Typically, **the best supersets for exercises are those working opposing muscle groups**. In other words, the first exercise performs the opposite movement of the second exercise. Bench presses followed by bent-over rows is a good example.

How Many Supersets Per Workout?

The number of supersets you include in your workout is up to you. However, you don't need to superset all your exercises.

Also, it's best to **repeat each superset 2-4 times** in one workout.

How Many Reps for Supersets?

Besides saving time, supersets are great for building lean muscle and improving muscular endurance. The number of reps you do will depend on your fitness goals concerning these benefits:

- If your prime goal is to *build muscle*, doing **8-12 reps per exercise with moderate weight** works well.
- If you're focused more on *endurance*, you can increase the reps to **15-30 per exercise with lighter weights**.

How Much Rest Between Supersets?

You'll want to *rest 30 to 60 seconds* between each superset. For more intense sets, such as compound sets where you're working the same muscle twice, you might need up to 90 seconds of rest.

CAUTIONS ON PERFORMING SUPERSETS

The main precautions to take with supersets regard correct form and fatigue.

Since super-setting increases the intensity of a workout, fatigue can set in sooner. Be sure to listen to your body. If completing a full set becomes too hard, you'll need to decrease the resistance and possibly increase your rest between sets.

You can also consider a modified form of the exercise, such as doing push ups off of your knees instead of your toes.

In addition, make sure you're using the proper form for all superset exercises. If you're struggling to maintain the correct form, you might need to reduce the weight or use an easier version of the exercise until you get stronger.

Drop sets can increase the chance of delayed-onset muscular soreness (DOMS), muscle soreness or pain you can experience a day or two after a workout. Everyone can experience DOMS after an intense workout, but it might be more shocking or uncomfortable for a beginner.

Want to give supersets a try? Use the examples above to help you get started. We're willing to bet you'll notice the difference (in other words, the *burn!*).

And for expert-led, on-demand workouts tailored to your fitness goals, try out [Gorilla Bow All-Access](#). Filter by class types, such as Strength, HIIT, and Functional, or by instructor, and start crushing it today!

References

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