

PASS OR FAIL?

Explore gains in strength and size in the land beyond muscle fatigue

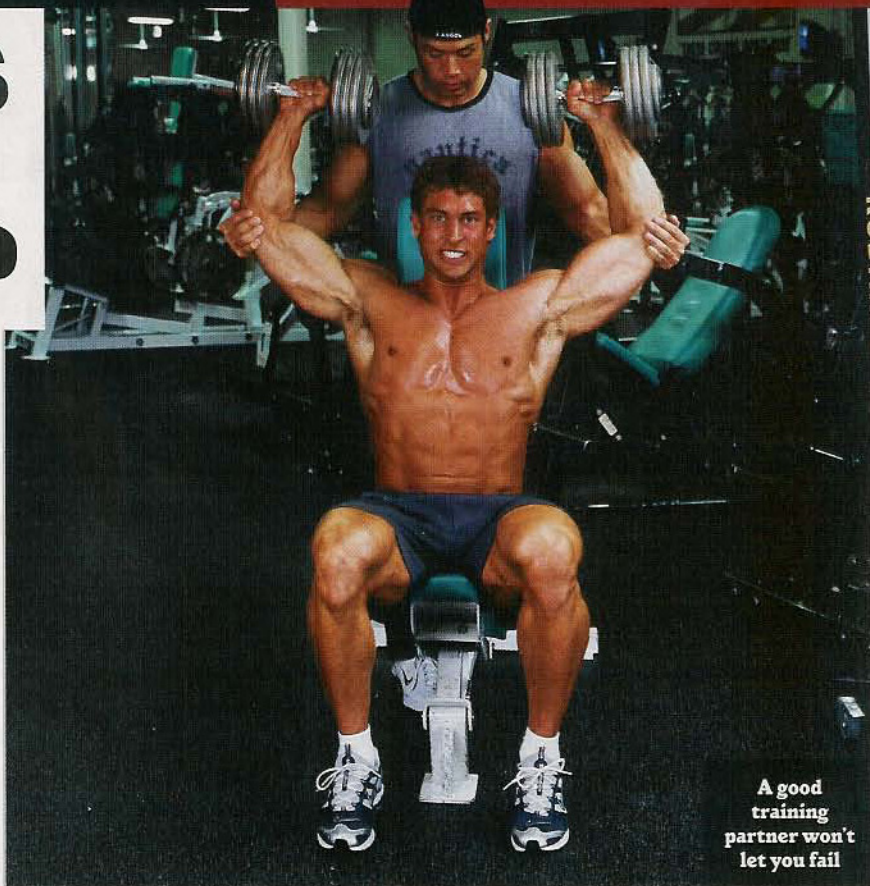
Q: HOW BENEFICIAL IS IT to train beyond muscular failure?

A: The weight-training version of failure is much different from what you encounter in day-to-day life — with bodybuilding, when you reach failure, you've achieved success.

Exercise guru Steve Zim, *Weekend Today* fitness and nutrition expert, explains it this way: "Muscle failure occurs when your body is physically incapable of a full muscle contraction for the target muscle of a specific exercise." When you perform a set of a particular exercise, you eventually reach a point at which you can no longer perform another rep without cheating or assistance. This means you've fully exhausted your target muscle for the load (amount of weight) you're using.

Zim says you can achieve additional benefits by working beyond failure, but only if you're careful. "Once you reach failure, it's great to work in partial rep ranges until you fail in these rep ranges, too." But he cautions against doing this for more than one exercise per bodypart per week. This is an advanced muscle-building technique that can lead to overtraining if used too frequently.

According to Zim, it's critical to have a training partner when using this protocol. "For instance, with the bench press, work until you can't complete one more full rep without the assistance of your spotter. Then, from your chest,



A good training partner won't let you fail

push the bar up a few inches and lower it. Do this two or three times, then allow your spotter to assist you with returning the bar to the rack." He recommends that you do this for only one set of the last exercise for that bodypart's routine. "Once you perform this

partial-reps set, pushing beyond failure, you've fully trained that muscle group. It's time to stop and let it recover and grow," Zim says.

Steve Stiefel is nutrition editor for *FLEX* magazine.

FAILING TO SUCCEED

Here's one way to safely and effectively train to failure using partial reps in your next delts/triceps workout.

DELTS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Dumbbell Overhead Press	4	8-10
Overhead Machine Press	4	8-10
Dumbbell Lateral Raise	3	10-12
Dumbbell Overhead Press	1	8-10*

TRICEPS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Close-Grip Bench Press	3	8-10
Cable Pressdown	3	8-10
Dumbbell Kickback	3	10-12
Close-Grip Bench Press	1	8-10*

*After you reach muscular failure, perform 2-3 partial reps (with a spotter helping, if necessary).