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WHAT'S THE VERDICT?



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Signal Mountain, Tennessee, Police Department, with Spike's Tactical ST-15 M4 LE carbine.



GET A GRIP

Grip Strength Training BY JESS BANDA

TOP PERFORMANCE ON A TIGHT BUDGET

Spike's Tactical ST-15 M4 LE Carbine BY ABNER MIRANDA





HIT THE DECK!

Ground Fighting with a Carbine BY ABNER MIRANDA



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FOREARM CURLS

Here's a little-known secret: by strengthening your forearms, you'll increase the amount of weight you can use on pulling exercises such as dead lifts, rows, pull-ups and biceps drills. Without a strong grip, using heavy weights with these exercises is next to impossible, which limits your strength potential.

KEY POINTS > Perform forearm exercises with dumbbells, to correct strength imbalances between limbs.

For rapid strength improvement, use different angles when training forearms. For instance, perform forearm curls on an inclined and declined bench. This overloads the muscles differently than performing them on a flat bench.

GETAGRIP

» BY JESS BANDA » PHOTOS BY DAWN ROGERS

GRIP STRENGTH TRAINING

Zero dark thirty. You're on the ground, pinned against your squad car by an ex-con with a grudge.

is hands are on your weapon and trying to rip it from your holster—now is not the time to be concerned about your grip strength. And while several components must come together for you to win the fight, you must first break the perp's grip before you can stand up, disengage and reassess. The time to start training for the worst-case scenario is long past.

According to FBI statistics, 46 officers were killed with their own firearms in the decade between 1998 and 2007. When apprehending, restraining and detaining a subject, your hands are the first point of contact. Should the suspect make the unfortunate decision to engage you, the strength of your forearms, hands and wrist will make the difference between going home at the end of your shift and becoming a statistic.

IT'S A NEW AGE

Recent advancements in non-lethal technologies have provided law enforcement officers with a greater choice of safer use-of-force options for subduing violent subjects. But this technology comes with a price: it adds to the equipment an officer must carry on his duty belt and diligently protect. The more defensive weapons (lethal and non-lethal) an officer carries,

the more weapons there are available for a takeaway.

In 2008, San Diego Harbor Police responded to a call of a man falling overboard from a charter boat. Once aboard the police boat, the rescued man began fighting with two police officers. During the fight, the rescued man disarmed one of the officers of his TASER, striking him in the face before attempting to remove the officer's firearm. The rescued man was fatally shot by the second officer.

Today's law enforcement officers must possess grip strength capable of generating force in a multitude of positions, defending their weapons from attack in multiple directions. The grip strength required to defend an item located on the rear of your duty belt is considerably different from the strength required to protect your firearm located on your strong side. This difference in grip strength requirements is due to the different positions of the hands and forearms when generating force.

In the past few years, mixed martial arts (MMA) has enjoyed remarkable commercial success. Its rise from underground clubs to sold-out arenas should concern law enforcement officials because one of the key elements of MMA is the ability to take your opponent to the ground.

When martial arts initially exploded in popularity in the early 1980s, instructors were quick to deny enrollment to anyone whom they deemed "undesirable." As a whole, the martial arts community did a superb job of excluding anyone they suspected would tarnish or disrespect their discipline. But today, it's a different story with MMA.

While there are numerous MMA gyms across the country, a large number of practitioners are self-taught through the use of instructional MMA books and DVDs. The ease with which the information can be accessed omits the self-regulating adherence to ethical behavior. Anyone, regardless of intent, can access YouTube videos demonstrating vascular and respiratory restraints. With properly developed grip strength, you can grab and control resisting subjects, regardless of whether you grab a jacket, arm or leg, allowing you to create space in order to execute escapes.

BASICS OF GRIP STRENGTH

Although a certain level of grip strength is necessary for everyday life, law enforcement officers need additional strength that can only be developed through a well-designed grip training program. Possessing a grip capable of

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THE EXERCISES

Grip strength training is easy to introduce into your current resistance training program. The key to making rapid and constant progress with your grip strength is to use exercises that place your hands and forearms in different positions in relation to your body. It's also important that you vary the implements used, as different equipment challenges your muscles and nervous system in unique ways.

generating and resisting forces in a multitude of positions requires that you train its four components: crushing, pinching and supporting grips, and wrist strength.

Crushing Grip: This is the form of grip strength most people are familiar with. A crushing grip refers to a squeezing action and is utilized when you grab someone's hand or wrist during handcuffing procedures.

Pinching Grip: In a pinch grip, the fingers are on one side of an object, with the thumb on the other, moving inward toward each other in a clamping motion. This grip is utilized when having to grab a large object, such as a subject's arm. With this grip, the thumb is the weakest link.

Supporting Grip: This version is a combination of both crushing and pinching grips, with the fingers and thumb close to touching.

Wrist Strength: The wrist is often the most neglected aspect of grip strength training. If your wrists are lacking in strength, the forces generated by your forearms will not be transferred to your hands.

To further maximize your grip strength, the four grip components should be trained for:

Maximum strength: Depending on the exercise used, grip strength is increased by performing low reps (1 to 6) or by holding a weight for no more than 20 seconds.

Endurance: Endurance is improved when performing 12 to 20 reps, or holding a weight for 45 to 75 seconds.

PLATE PINCH

You can possess the strongest crushing grip in the world but have a pinch grip weaker than a wet noodle. The difference is due to the pinch grip requiring a higher level of thumb strength. To train your pinch grip, position two weight plates side by side, with the smooth sides facing out. Grab the weight stack with your thumb on one side, fingers on the other, and lift.

KEY POINTS > When training for endurance, stack multiple lighterweight plates together. Utilizing lighter-weight plates will allow you to stack a greater number of them together, requiring a wider grip but allowing you to hold the weight for a longer amount of time, which

Gripping smooth side of weight plates forces you to squeeze as hard as possible.

will improve your grip endurance.

When training for strength, only stack two of the heaviest plates you can support.

Perform this exercise over a soft surface, as you'll be dropping the weight initially.

Watch your toes.

HAND GRIPPERS

These are the most commonly performed of all the grip exercises, due to the convenient size of the grippers, which can be easily carried and the exercises performed anywhere. Unfortunately, most people purchase department-store hand grippers. While initially providing sufficient resistance to strengthen your grip, over time the inferior material used in the construction of the spring will weaken from regular use. In my experience, the best hand grippers are the Captains of Crush Grippers, which are available in ten strengths from 60 to 365 pounds of tension. Their high quality and all-metal construction ensure many years of productive grip strength training.

KEY POINTS > Avoid placing the hand grippers on the "sweet spot" in your palm. While it allows you to maximize your leverage, it's completely unlike what you'll encounter on the street. When a perp is trying to disarm you, he's not going to let you take your time adjusting your grip on his arm. Just grab it and crush it!

Squeezing your gripper in the upright position, with the spring pointing up, primarily challenges your ring and little fingers due to the gripper's handles being farther apart at the



bottom. Using the gripper inverted, with the spring pointing down, will especially challenge your index and middle fingers.

You'll have better results if you periodically utilize different arm positions while squeezing your grippers. For example, you could position your arm straight out in front of you, as if aiming your handgun; with your elbow at your side, bent 90°, as if you were holding a tray; or with your arm straight down the side of your leg. The different arm positions will preferentially recruit different muscles, as well as recruit them in different orders.

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PARALLEL GRIP HANG



Parallel grip hang overloads your grip, lats, and biceps.

This is one of my favorites and is the best supporting grip exercise for law enforcement officers. This exercise not only challenges the gripping muscles but also strengthens the lats and upper arm musculature, both of

which are involved when pulling someone or something toward you.

KEY POINTS > When training for strength, do not allow your hang time to exceed 20 seconds. Depending on your current strength levels, you may need to add external weight with a dip belt around your waist. When training for endurance, aim for a 60-second hang.

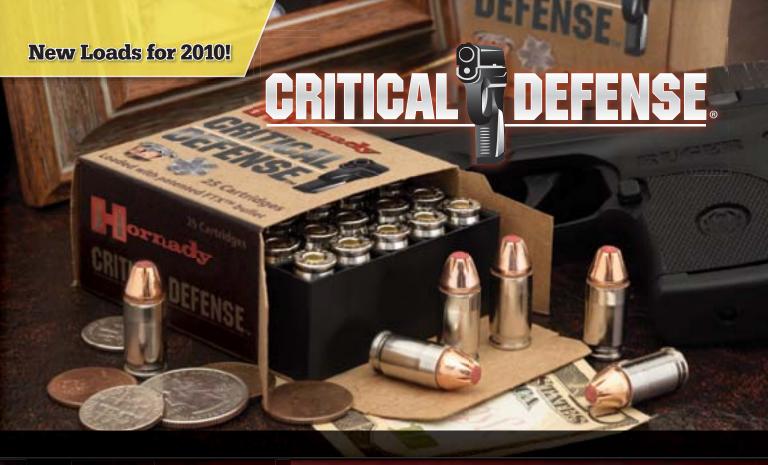


Facing the pulley works radial deviation. Keep your head upright and place opposite foot forward. Facing away from the pulley works ulnar deviation.

Probably the least known exercises, radial and ulnar deviation will help you manage recoil when firing a handgun, bringing your gun's sights back onto



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your target more quickly and leading to increased accuracy.

KEY POINTS > Keep your arm alongside your body, with your elbow locked throughout the exercise, to keep tension on your wrist and forearm muscles. Using a low cable pulley with a "stick" attachment, stand three to four feet away from the weight column. When facing the cable column, you're working radial deviation, and ulnar

deviation when facing away from the column.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

From personal experience, I have found that the optimal training frequency for grip strength is twice per week, with each workout devoted to a different strength quality and usually performed at the end of your upper body workouts. Allow at least two days of rest between the two grip training workouts.

STRENGTH WORKOUT

- A) Hand grippers: four sets of three to five reps. Rest 90 seconds between sets.
- B1) Parallel grip hang: three sets of 20 seconds. Rest 90 seconds.
- B2) Incline bench forearm curls: three sets of eight to ten reps. Rest 90 seconds.
- C1) Plate pinch: three sets of 20 seconds. Rest 75 seconds.
- C2) Radial/ulnar deviation: three sets of 10 to 12 reps. Rest 75 seconds.

(The notations B1 and B2 or C1 and C2 mean to superset those two specific exercises. For example, you would do one set of the B1 exercise, rest for the prescribed amount of time, and then do one set of the B2 exercise, alternating back and forth until all sets for both exercises are completed. Start all exercises with the non-dominant hand.)

ENDURANCE WORKOUT

- A) Hand grippers: three sets of 12 to 15 reps. Rest 75 seconds between sets.
- B1) Parallel grip hang: three sets of 60 seconds. Rest 60 seconds.
- B2) Decline bench forearm curls: three sets of eight to ten reps. Rest 60 seconds.
- C1) Plate pinch: three sets of 60 seconds. Rest 65 seconds.
- C2) Radial/ulnar deviation: three sets of 10 to 12 reps. Rest 65 seconds.

WRAP UP

Grip strength training has been one of the most overlooked aspects of strength training, treated more as an after-thought than a necessity. But the ability to control a suspect's arm not only protects the law enforcement officer from hand or weapon strikes, but protects the public around them as well. •

[Thanks to Charles Poliquin, www. charlespoliquin.com, for allowing us to take photos at the Poliquin Strength Institute.]

SOURCE: IRONMIND ENTERPRISES, INC.

(Captains of Crush Grippers) Dept. S.W.A.T. P. O. Box 1228 Nevada City, CA 95959 (530) 272-3537 www.ironmind.com

