

Choosing and Breaking in a Bench Shirt

BY ROB LUYANDO

Are you in the market for a new bench shirt? Before taking measurements and comparing prices, first find out the rules of the Federation in which you intend to compete. Once you have learned those rules, then you can get out the tape measure and start shopping.

MEASUREMENTS AND OTHER ADVICE

- Taking measurements when you are all pumped up can throw off the sizing, so take true measurements when you are relaxed.
- Lifters with less experience should go with a basic shirt regardless weather it's single- or double-ply. More experienced lifters should get a shirt as jacked as they can handle.
- Pick one shirt and train with it until you've mastered it. Don't order four or five shirts and then wonder why you can't figure out which shirt to use and why they don't perform the same way. One of the biggest problems I faced as a sponsored lifter was having too many shirts. At first it was cool. Every day was like Christmas when the UPS man showed up. But I wasted time trying to figure out which shirt to wear instead of concentrating on my training.
- The shirt you train in should be the shirt you use to compete in. Practice how you play.
- Train with people who have experience with bench shirts. Surrounding myself with experienced lifters was the best move I ever made for training and making gains.



BREAK IT IN

If the bench shirt you purchased was measured correctly, it should be pretty tight the first few times you wear it. Keep in mind that you may not be able to start out with your normal competition grip. Assuming the lifter breaking in the shirt is a 600-lb. bencher, here is what I would recommend for the first workout.

- 405 lbs., 3 reps, 2 sets off 3 board
- 425 lbs., 2 reps, 1 set off 3 board
- 450 lbs., 2 reps, 1 set off 2 board
- 475 lbs., 2 reps, 1 set off 2 board
- 500 lbs., 2 reps, 1 set off 2 board
- 525 lbs., 2 reps, 1 set off 2 board
- 550 lbs., 1 rep, 1 set off 1½ board

I wouldn't push the shirt any lower that first workout. If you have to start with a close grip your first set or so, try to force out a finger each set after that until it's a legitimate competition grip.

By your second or third workout, you should be able to get the shirt full range — but it will take some work. Any questions? Contact me on Super Training Gym forums (www.SuperTrainingGym.com).