

Training Guide:

Big and Strong Traps

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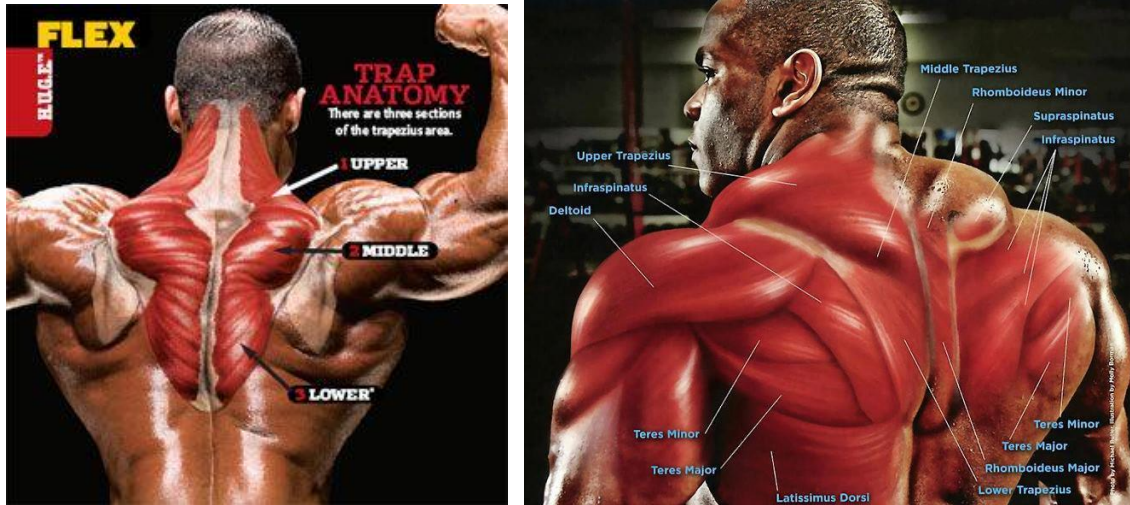
Before you embark on any physical fitness program, please consult a
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INTRODUCTION

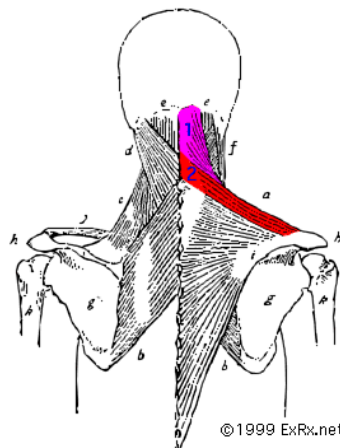
ANATOMY



Our traps (Trapezius) are made up of primarily 3 muscles. The upper traps, middle, and lower traps. Some of the surrounding muscles include the infraspinatus, rhomboids, and rear delts. To get a truly HUGE back, you'll need to pack size on all muscles in your upper back, but for the sake of this article, we're going to focus on the TRAPS.

UPPER TRAPS

The upper traps are what we think of when we talk about The Rock, or Goldberg (former WWE pro wrestler), or Brock Lesnar. They connect up at the base of your skull, and extend down towards your shoulder and insert near the acromion process (lateral clavical). The upper traps are stimulated by pulling your shoulders "UP" to your ears, or in a loaded stretch with your arms hanging down (deadlifts, farmers walks..etc).

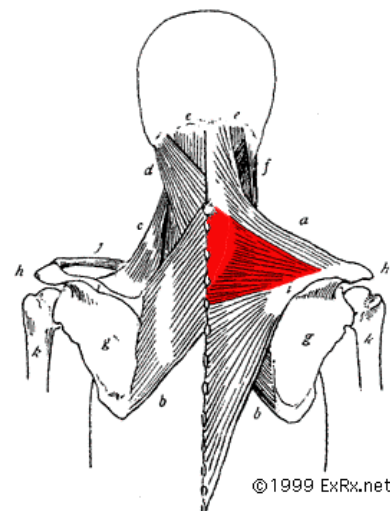


MIDDLE TRAPS

The middle traps originate (connect) near your spine (vertebrae C7-T3) and extend almost laterally towards your scapula (shoulder blade) and acromion process (lateral clavical). They are stimulated by adducting your shoulders (meaning to pull to the center of your body), as well as by retracting your shoulder blades (pulling your shoulders back.)

The middle traps are typically the more difficult of the 3 to stimulate as it requires great mind to muscle connection, and if you have poor thoracic (upper back) flexibility, it will only make it harder to activate.

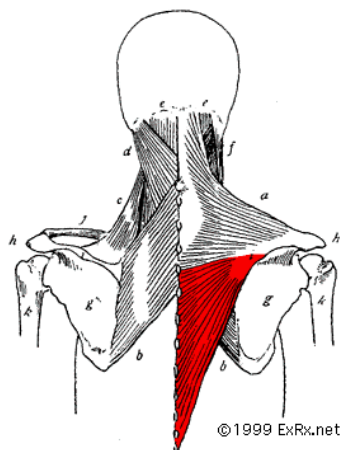
Seated bent over rows, chest supported rows, bent over shrugs, Yates rows.. etc are all effective for middle traps.



LOWER TRAPS

The lower traps can sometimes be confused with the upper spinal erectors, as they have similarities in that they both appear to run vertically up the back.

The lower traps are primarily involved with scapular retraction (pulling your shoulder blades back). Exercises that stimulate the lower traps include high rows, and horizontal pulling with a emphasis on pulling your shoulders down and back.



HOW TO TRAIN

People tend to focus on what they can see in the mirror (muscles on the front of their body), meaning that their posterior chain (all the muscles through the back side of your body) will be lagging compared to your front.

This means that when you decide to make a focused effort on building your traps, you're going to see incredible growth and increased strength due to the new stress (stimulus) you're placing on the muscles.

The frequency goal should be 3-4x per week.

When we perform our shrugs, we want to make sure we're pulling both "UP" and "BACK" throughout the set. Typically we'll do something like a set of 20 reps, with 10 being "UP" and 10 being "BACK". When we're talking about pulling "BACK" we mean retracting your shoulders first, then squeezing up. Your shoulders should track behind your head.

There is no secret method or exercise or magic to build your traps. Traps come from time in the gym, quality reps, and lots of volume. Exercises selection on a "traps only" workout can be limited to barbell shrugs, smith machine shrugs, dumbbell shrugs, seated bent over rows, and wheelbarrow shrugs. Rather than doing 3x20 and trying to find a different exercise, do 3-5 more sets.

If you do 17 sets for chest in a workout, traps can be thought of in the same way, except you might only have 3 exercises

Example

Chest workout – 5 sets flat bench, 4 sets incline dumbbell, 4 sets cable fly, 3 pushup = 16 total sets across 4 exercises.

Traps workout – 6 sets smith machine, 6 wheelbarrow shrug, 4 dumbbell shrug = 16 total sets across 3 exercises

Muscles need stimulus to grow. Our bodies adapt to the stresses we place on them – meaning the way to a big back is to progressively increase your weights.

Lets say right now, you can do barbell shrugs with 405 for 5 good reps. Your goal should be to keep building that number to either 500x5 or increase the number of reps to 405x15.

TRAPS ONLY WORKOUT

Smith machine shrugs – 6x20 (3 sets in front of the body, 3 sets behind)

Bar In Front



Bar Behind Back



Wheelbarrow shrug machine – 6x10-15 (increase weight each set, then drop set the last one)



Seated bent over rows – 6x10-15



Dumbbell shrug – 6x15



The workout above can be done on it's own, or along side a shoulders or back day.

When it comes to building an upper back, a well rounded program will have these muscles activated 3-4 times per week. A weekly breakdown could be something like this:

Monday: Closegrip Bench + Triceps + **Upper Back**
Tuesday: Squat
Wednesday: Shoulders + **Upper back**
Thursday: REST
Friday: Bench + **Upper Back**
Saturday: Deadlift (**upper back in a loaded stretch**)

If you follow this training schedule, you'll be doing a focused upper back and traps workout 3x per week, and the fourth day will get activated in a loaded stretch during deadlifts.

Other exercises that should be incorporated in your training:

- Heavy rack pulls above the knee
- Power cleans
- Rows (various angles)
- Farmers walks
- Anything where you're holding weight in your hands