



Variable Resistance Training: What is it, and why bother? by Frank DiMeo

There are several different approaches to variable resistance training. They have one thing in common: as you are getting closer to the completion of your exercise movement, the difficulty is increasing.

For the sake of simplicity, we will focus on one main type of variable resistance training today, resistance bands.

If you are lifting a weight off the floor, you have to overcome the force of gravity to get it moving. The laws of inertia also remind us that an object at rest will remain at rest, unless acted upon by an irresistible force. With that being said, it's just plain hard to get the weight off the floor. Once it's moving (and the weight not above your capabilities to lift it) you should be able to complete the range of motion for that exercise.

If you can picture the space shuttle being launched, the most energy is used to get it off the launching pad at the very beginning. Less is needed after that to keep it moving. That's a pretty good comparison of how a

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weight is lifted.

Now, let's look at the differences between lifting that weight and doing the same type of movement with a resistance band. Please keep in mind here I am referring to heavy duty resistance bands, not what is used for therapy, though the principles are the same.

For example, if we were doing a Deadlift with a 100lb barbell, then switched to a band that offers 100lb of resistance we would notice that the level of difficulty would increase the further the band was stretched.

That is pretty simple to understand, right? The ways that resistance band training can be of benefit to athletes, martial artists, etc. who do weight training is that it will help you to drive through the "sticking point" in a heavy lift more effectively.

Those of you who do heavy lifting already know what this is, but others may not. The "sticking point" occurs when the movement seems like it's slowing down noticeably, threatening to sabotage the lift. It kind of feels like you're going to have to set the weight back down and not complete the lift.

A quick note, sometimes the weight is too heavy to be safely lifted by an individual. Other times, fatigue or poor technique can compromise the lift.

Resistance band training can give you a smoother, more continuous lifting movement. Your balance will be better, plus your strength and power

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towards the end of the movement will be greater.

For martial artists, your punches and kicks can have more penetration and stopping power if you consistently train with resistance bands. Your speed and balance will also improve.

Let me also mention that resistance bands, when used properly, are very safe. People who want to do resistance training but do not want to lift weights can accomplish that with resistance bands.

My personal favorites are FlexBands, due to their strength, durability, and reasonable prices.

If you choose to do resistance band training, don't just consider the price of the bands. Low quality bands can tear or break fairly easily, and you can be injured.

Add some consistent resistance band training to your exercise regimen, and I am sure you'll be glad you did.

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