

# Men's Fitness

## The Bench Press

*Impress your friends by moving monster poundage*

by Sean Hyson

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There's a perfectly simple explanation for why your best bench-press weight is a joke, and it isn't because you don't lift heavy enough or do enough sets, or because your spotter doesn't give you the proper motivation ("It's all you, bro!"). The fact is, you're doing it wrong. We asked Jim Wendler, strength coach and champion powerlifter at Elite Fitness Systems in London, Ohio—who, by the way, benches more than 600 pounds—to break down exactly how the lift should be done for maximum gains and safety.

### 1 THE SETUP

Lie on the [bench](#), grab the bar underhand, and pull your torso up and forward, resting your head on the bench before the rest of your body. This should automatically cause you to bend your knees to about a 45-degree angle so that your feet are planted far back (you can rise up on the balls of your feet). Switch to an overhand, shoulder-width grip.

### 2 THE DESCENT

Lift the bar off the rack and hold it directly above your chest. Squeeze the bar hard, arch your upper back, and drive your feet into the [floor](#). Your elbows should be pointed toward your feet. Lower the bar to just below your nipples, keeping your elbows tucked closely to your body—not flared out—throughout the movement.

### 3 THE ASCENT

Once the bar touches your chest, push your feet harder into the floor. (If you can, drop your heels to the floor. If not, don't force it or you'll lose position.) Press the weight, focusing on pushing it back toward your face as it rises. When the bar is halfway up, begin flaring your elbows. Gradually rotate your upper arms outward as the bar rises to the top position.

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