

Teaching the Bench

As usual, start with an empty bar. *ALWAYS* start every lift with an empty bar, whether teaching it for the first time or warming up for a personal record. Position yourself in the standard place for coaching the bench, in the center between the uprights facing the end of the bench (figure 6). Have the



Starting Strength

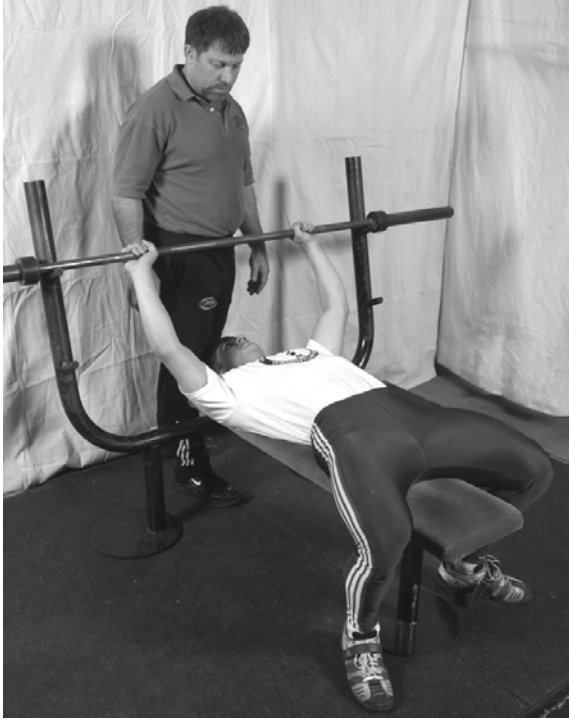


Figure 6. The coach should position himself in a manner to maximize observation, instruction, and safe practice.



Figure 7. Trainee's position on the bench. Note that the eyes, looking straight up, see the ceiling on the "thumb" side of the bar.

trainee lie down on the bench with his eyes looking straight up. In this position, he should be far enough down (always meaning toward the foot-end of the bench) from the bar that when looking up his eyes are on the thumb side of the bar (figure 7). His feet should be flat on the ground at a comfortable spacing comparable to the squat stance, with the shins approximately vertical (figure 8). His upper back should be flat against the bench, with the lower back in an anatomically normal arched position (figure 9).

When this position has been established, have him take an overhand grip on the bar. The grip should be somewhere between 22 and 28 inches, measured between the index fingers, and this will vary widely based on shoulder width (figure 10). An excessively wide or narrow grip is to be avoided, on which more will be discussed later. The bar should rest on the heel of the palm, directly over the bones of the forearm, and not in the palm near the fingers, so that power being transmitted to the bar up the arms goes directly to the bar without being channeled through the wrist (figure 11). The fingers should wrap around the bar AFTER the bar has been set correctly on the heel of the hand. This grip is best accomplished by turning the hands and elbows out, with a slight internal rotation of the arm. This has the advantage of placing the bar in a good position on the hand, and placing the elbows in a useful position as well.