

Weightlifting Concepts Series

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Concept #1 – The Receiving Position

Welcome to a series of articles that will explain the most important concepts in Weightlifting.

The series starts with the concept of ‘the receiving position’ and this is an indication of its profound importance. Let’s start with a definition:

*A receiving position is the body position that is attained at the **first moment** the athlete in Weightlifting is **able to arrest the downward trajectory** of the bar in the Snatch, the Clean or the Jerk.*

It is obvious to anyone, novice or experienced, that athletes who develop a low, stable and confident receiving position have a great advantage in Weightlifting. There would be little debate that a low receiving position increases the potential of the athlete to lift more weight. When faced with the proposition that an athlete can only pull the bar as high as the bottom of their rib cage, the only likelihood that they can succeed with a Snatch is if they can drop (and drop fast) into a very low receiving position. Similarly in the Jerk, despite the best efforts of the athlete to drive the bar upwards, the bar may only rise 25cm from the shoulders and it is therefore imperative that there is rapid movement into a low split or squat receiving position.

Suffice to say that the ability of the athlete to develop low, stable and confident receiving positions is an important factor that dictates the ultimate level of success that can be achieved. But even for the less serious Weightlifter, the execution of great skill in competitions is a matter of pride, satisfaction and enjoyment and an integral part of this is the ability to demonstrate competence in receiving positions.

It is obvious that an athlete’s flexibility in their hips, knees and ankles is a key asset that makes it possible to achieve low receiving positions in the Snatch or Clean. However, there is also a requirement for shoulder flexibility to position bars overhead in the Snatch or Jerk, and for elbow flexibility to position a bar securely on the shoulders in the Clean. Furthermore, for many athletes, hamstring flexibility is a factor that inhibits the maintenance of good lumbar posture, and this detrimentally affects their positional strength and security in low receiving positions for the Snatch and Clean.

Although there is little conjecture about its importance, it is common for novice Weightlifters to spend a very small amount of their training time developing flexibility. The great fascination that drives the Weightlifter is the opportunity to explore just how much weight can be added to the bar and yet still make a successful lift. Weightlifting after all is a numbers game and it is much harder to directly measure success in terms of changes in foot positioning, depth of receiving position or uprightness of posture. Ideally, though, receiving positions should be highly practised and athletes should spend much more of their training developing flexibility.

Here are a few more things that you should consider:

- (1) The athlete’s confidence to go under a heavy bar is determined by their confidence in the receiving position
- (2) An athlete must be equally as proficient in the holding action as they are in lifting action in Olympic Weightlifting movements
- (3) The only satisfactory way to move into a receiving position is FAST.

- (4) Confidence is developed by practising stability in receiving positions i.e. holding motionless, keeping balance
- (5) The athletes comfort in a receiving position will be determined by their flexibility and postural strength and BOTH can be developed
- (6) Athletes need to study their own form, and the form of elite athletes, and work out how they can improve their own receiving positions
- (7) Athletes should not make a habit of pushing the head forwards under the bar in the receiving position for the Snatch or the Jerk
- (8) There must be great attention to detail when athletes practise receiving positions so that they can cope with increasingly heavy weights
- (9) Athletes should not hurry out of receiving positions as this is often a cause of failure
- (10) Athletes need to be engaged in developing strong and confident receiving positions right from the outset of their training in Olympic Weightlifting

Receiving positions:

