

Increase Your Pull Up Numbers with Ladders!

By Jason Donaldson, The Cell - Real Fitness Head Coach

The question I get asked most as a coach is, “How can I get better at pull ups?” If I had a dollar for everytime I was asked that, I wouldn’t need to coach anymore!

Well, the answer is simple and some would say, obvious. Do more pull ups!

Ok, so it’s a simple and obvious answer, but what if you can’t do more pull ups? I’m going to teach you all about ladders. Ladders are a sure fire way to add volume to your training without overworking your muscles.

Let’s go back to the question. “How can I get better at pull ups?” First we have to work out what you mean by that. Do you want to do more pull ups in a session or be able to attach 3 big kettlebells to your waist and bang out a pull up? The reason we need to look at it like this and determine what your goals are, is because achieving your goals may require you to take seperate or conflicting paths.

This article will focus on increasing your pull up numbers, say from 10 to 20 or maybe getting off the large Power Band and onto a medium.

The key to increasing numbers is increasing volume. More volume will get you stronger AND build muscular endurance. The best way I have found to increase volume for Pull Ups; is through the use of ladders.

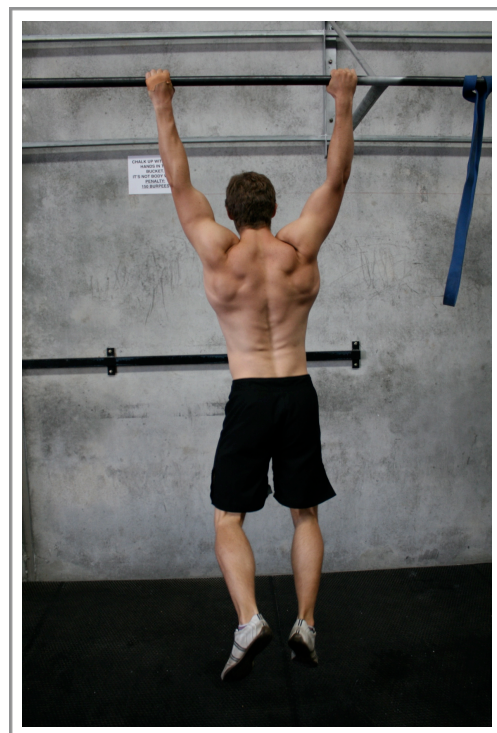
So what is a ladder? No, it’s not something you use to climb onto a roof. Well ok it is. But that’s not the sort of ladder I’m on about. Ladders are the intelligent use of an ascending and descending rep scheme to build volume. The easiest way to explain is through example.

Let’s take Joe. Joe can do 5 unassisted Pull Ups, but just hasn’t got the strength to get beyond 5. We’ll take Joe’s 5 reps and design our ladder around that number. So how many Pull Ups can Joe do comfortably? He can manage 4 without too much straining, grunting and groaning. Joe is going to perform a Pull Up Ladder each day after his WOD at The Cell. His ladder will go like this.

Week 1

- Set 1 - Perform 1 Pull Up
- Rest 10 seconds
- Set 2 - Perform 2 Pull Ups
- Rest 20 seconds
- Set 3 - Perform 3 Pull Ups
- Rest 30 seconds
- Set 4 - Perform 4 Pull Ups
- Rest 40 seconds
- Set 5 - Perform 3 Pull Ups
- Rest 30 seconds
- Set 6 - Perform 2 Pull Ups
- Rest 20 seconds
- Set 7 - Perform 1 Pull Up

So Joe has performed 16 Pull Ups in this session and it’s taken him around 3 minutes. He should get through all Sets without too



much strain. Set 4 will be tough, but he'll manage it.

Joe does this for a week and then adds another rung to the ladder; 5 reps. So week 2 looks like this:

Week 2

Set 1 - Perform 1 Pull Up

Rest 10 seconds

Set 2 - Perform 2 Pull Ups

Rest 20 seconds

Set 3 - Perform 3 Pull Ups

Rest 30 seconds

Set 4 - Perform 4 Pull Ups

Rest 40 seconds

Set 5 - Perform 5 reps

Rest 50 seconds

Set 6 - Perform 4 Pull Ups

Rest 40 seconds

Set 7 - Perform 3 Pull Ups

Rest 30 seconds

Set 8 - Perform 2 Pull Ups

Rest 20 seconds

Set 9 - Perform 1 Pull Up



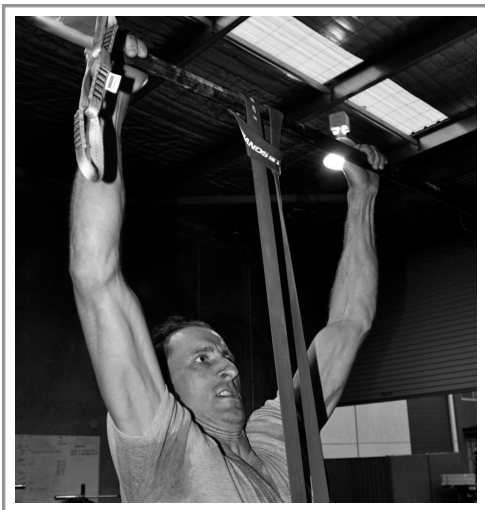
Now Joe has performed 25 Pull Ups in about 5 minutes. Again, he should get through all the sets. Set's 4 and 5 will be difficult but achievable. If Joe gets all sets out all week, its time to up the reps again. So the 3rd week, he adds another rung, 6 reps.

This linear progression goes on until the goal is reached or strength plateaus. Then its time to change it up, but that's for another article.

If you find you cannot complete a set, increase your rest period by 10-20 seconds. Unless it's Set 1 and I'll be asking why your doing unassisted Pull Ups! Grab a damn band! This method works just as well with Power Band assisted Pull Ups as it does unassisted Pull Ups. For instance, if you're on a large Power Band, find your max, deduct a rep or two and design your ladder around that figure.

Pull Up ladders have never failed me when it comes to increasing either my own numbers or an athletes. So don't just sit there complaining about your lack of Pull Up numbers. Get on the bar and knock out a ladder. It'll take you less than 5 minutes and you won't believe the improvement.

Let me know how you go.



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To contact Jason or to buy Power Bands, email jason@thecellfitness.com.au.