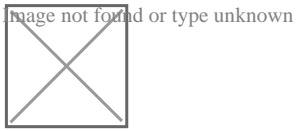


Gaze into the Mirror

Description



This week we focus on two common faults in weightlifting: starting with a downward gaze and starting with the hips too high. Oftentimes these faults can be linked, but below they are treated separately in the checklist. [Watch the video](#), and pay close attention to Tyler in the first clip.

First, notice his gaze is straight ahead, as if he is looking at himself in the mirror. Second, notice how upright his back angle is in comparison to when I instruct him to relax and look downward—his is a GREAT example, and one that is difficult if you haven't been practicing.

If you're not starting out like Tyler and some of our other athletes from the video, then practice getting set up in your starting position in front of a mirror.

Looking at yourself from a slight angle is best!

COMMON
FAULT

DIY FIX

DESCRIPTION

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While this seems like a super-easy fix, I think it is important to point out that it's very easy for you to get so caught up in the repetitive lifting during a WOD that you may not even notice that this is something you do.

There are a couple reasons *why* you might do this, and it is usually done subconsciously: (1) either your focus on the bar has drawn your gaze downward, or (2) your body has defaulted to a posture that is more comfortable and helps you conserve energy.

Gaze is cast downward at the bar/floor

Gaze straight ahead, as if to see yourself in a mirror

By fixing your gaze straight ahead in the starting position (just as you begin pulling on the bar), you activate muscles that **stabilize the T-spine** during the lift. The opposite is also true: By looking downward as you pull on the bar, you create laxity in the T-spine, and this is *no bueno* because this is the region where several muscles of the upper back, as well as the scapulae, are anchored—they require a high degree of stability in order to perform their pulling function during the lift.

You may be tinkering right now and feel that this head position feels like it's overextending the neck beyond a neutral position, which is what you often hear coaches cueing. Yes, you must maintain a neutral spine, but if you feel you are overextending, then chances are it's because your hips are too high in the starting position—and that's our next common fault.

This fault is more noticeable in the snatch starting position (and often more difficult to correct) because the wider grip naturally draws the torso closer to the bar and inclines the torso more towards parallel to the floor.

First, why this is a bad starting position: in the shortest explanation possible, it is difficult to generate the same degree of **bar velocity** when elevating the bar with a hips-high posture than it is with a hips-low posture.

Hips are too high, back (torso) angle is nearly parallel to the floor

Lower hips, creating a more upright back angle

Second, why you have adopted a hips-high starting position: (1) it takes isometric strength to hold a proper starting position, and the lift-off may tax your quads when they are stretched at that length; (2) if you already have trouble squatting at full depth, then you are likely dealing with hamstring inflexibility, poor dorsiflexion, or a weak midline (aka core); or (3) “Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect”—meaning, you possibly learned the correct starting position but you have been practicing incorrectly.

Build up isometric strength by practicing your starting position in front of a mirror: Hold your position for bouts of 3 seconds at first, then progress to 5 seconds. *Take care not to push down on the bar during this exercise*; instead, gently pull yourself into the floor.

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