

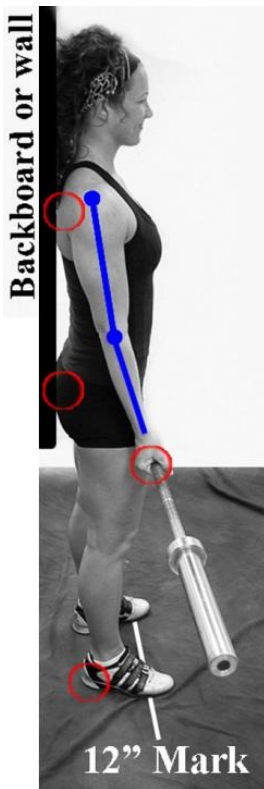
– **Common Competition Exercises** –  
*1<sup>st</sup> Draft entry for Curl – © 2025*

**Curl** – *Odd-lifting competitive lift; Pull category; First official use 1939.* With a name that putatively derives from its curvilinear path of execution, the Curl is most commonly thought of as a single joint exercise that develops the biceps brachii through loaded flexion of the elbow. It does however have a small element of shoulder flexion that generally is omitted in description and understanding.

Preparing to do a competition Curl starts in a standing position where the barbell has been picked up from the floor or out of a rack and is held at arm's length, bar across the thighs, with a double underhand grip. The elbows are completely extended.

To assume the “*start*” position, the lifter:

- Sets their feet at roughly hip width with the heels no further forward than 12 inches (*30 centimeters*) from the competition's vertical back board.
- Leans back, knees fully extended, and places their posterior shoulder (*scapular region*) and buttocks (*gluteal/coccygeal region*) on the vertical surface and waits for the referee command “*curl*”.



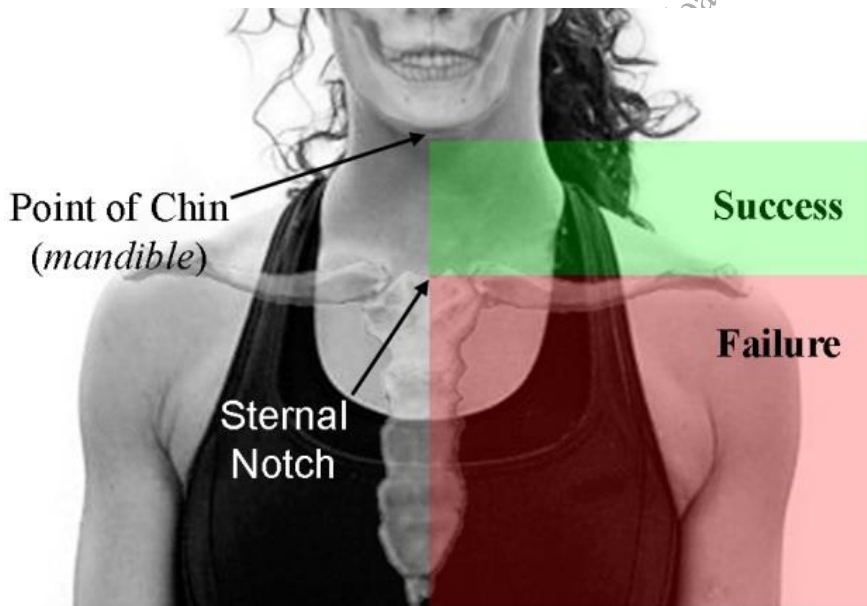
**Figure 1.** Start position of the Curl. There are four required points of contact (*red circles*): Shoulder to back board, gluteals to backboard, bar at arm's length across the upper thigh, and heels on the floor placed behind the 12" line (*30.5 centimeters; measured from the wall or backboard*). The heavier the weight curled, the more a heel position closer to the 12" line benefits maintaining points of contact.

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The timing of the referee's command is contingent of the lifter being motionless against the vertical back surface, the bar held with elbows fully extended down, and with the head and chin up and facing forward.

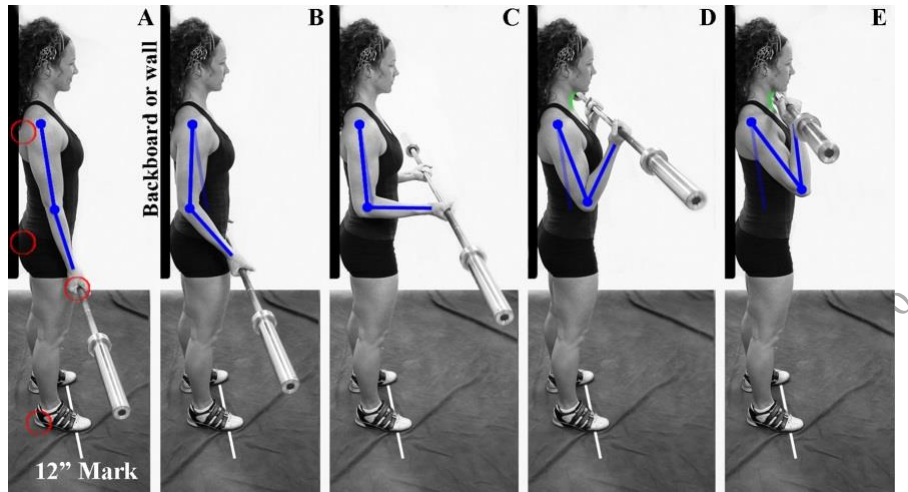
Upon hearing the “*curl*” command, the lifter commences flexion at the elbow:

- The wrists should be isometrically held in normal extension.
- The elbows must be kept in close proximity to the sides of the torso and the upper arms must remain vertical throughout the movement.
- Elbow flexion produces a forward and upward arc of movement that must end with the bar between the sternal notch (*minimum requirement*) and the chin.



**Figure 2.** The bar must reach the level of the sternal notch (*suprasternal notch*) to be successful. Any end position below that is a competition failure.

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**Figure 3.** The Curl movement. The barbell must be moved from its resting place on the thighs upwards to its final position (*green area in D&E*). The movement must be roughly symmetrical and continuous with all four points of contact maintained. Note that both the elbow and shoulder joints are involved as indicated by the changing angles of the humerus (*upper arm*) and the ulna (*forearm*).

Upon completing the Curl movement, the barbell must be held stably and under control after the end position is achieved. At that point the referee will give a “down” command and the lifter will:

- Lower the barbell back to the start position. An exact reverse copy of the upward Curl motion is not required here; any method of lowering the barbell down to arm’s length is acceptable (*dropping the barbell is not allowed*).
- Replace the barbell on the rack or floor.

The Curl is a simple but compound movement involving few muscles as primary movers, but many as coordinating muscles, or as stabilizing muscles. The position of the body against a back support removes most lower body muscle actions. The following is a list of the joints and muscles involved in some aspect:

*Hip* – Isometric stability. Adductor brevis, adductor longus, adductor magnus, biceps femoris, gluteus (maximus, medius, minimus), semimembranosis, semitendinosus, tensor fascia latae.

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*Vertebral column* – Isometric stability. External obliquus, iliocostalis, internal obliquus, interspinales, intertransversarii, longissimus, multifidus, pyramidalis, quadratus lumborum, rectus abdominis, semispinalis, spinalis, splenius, transversus abdominis.

*Shoulder* – Flexion, motor stability, isometric stability. Deltoideus, infraspinatus, latissimus dorsi, pectoralis (major and minor), rhomboideus, supraspinatus, subscapularis, teres major, teres minor, trapezius.

*Elbow* – Flexion, motor stability. Anconeus, biceps brachii, brachialis, brachioradialis, triceps brachii.

*Wrist* – Isometric stability. Extensor carpi (*radialis and ulnaris*), extensor extensor indicis, extensor pollicis longus, flexor carpi, flexor digitorum profundus, flexor digitorum superficialis, flexor pollicis longus.

The Kilgore Academy Abridged Dictionary for Trainers & Coaches: Book Two