

Atlas Stone Loading

Think your strong? Then test your strength on an almost perfectly round stone that weighs up to 400lbs. Lift it and load it on to a platform 4ft and higher. Do this and you just loaded your first Atlas Stone.

Atlas stones have been in the strength business for hundreds of years and in the beginning they were referred to as McGlashan stones. Our European ancestors tested their strength on these stones long before iron was shaped into plates. As many others in modern times may have tested their strength on similar stones just lifting them out of gardens and preparing crop fields for tilling. These stones of course were nowhere near the girth or weight but none the less awkward and heavy. The big ones were left for the oxen and horses. Today, the animals have been replaced by men who prefer to be called 'strongmen'. In today's time, Atlas stones have become not only a test of strength for strongmen, but have been coveted by these athletes as a true test of grit and determination.

Most these stones today have been cast out of concrete and re-enforced internally with steel and iron to add weight and durability. Perfectly round or close to it, from 18" to 22" in diameter, Atlas stones provide an almost grip-less and slippery obstacle to lift and load. As with most feats of strength, training and technique provide the needed tools for lifting success.

Loading these stones are a staple of every strongman's training and just like lifting weights these stones require the same regiment in training. Not only is strength required, but in most cases, the ability to overcome the pain and agony that is often associated with lifting these behemoth boulders time and time again. In most contests this loading requires an athlete to load five stones consecutively in ascending weights to a minimum of 48" and sometimes from descending heights from 72". In any case these feats must also be accomplished in a designated time of 60 to 75 seconds. These varying heights, weights and time, test the unique combination of speed and strength. One wrong move could mean the difference of seconds and it's those seconds that separate being good from being the best.

How do you load an Atlas stone? There are a couple techniques but the most popular choice is the "Lap and Load". You start by standing almost directly over the stone with your feet spread slightly beyond the width of the stone. Squat down and hook the stones center with your arms, using your forearms to grasp the stone. Your arms will act as hooks and your hands grasp the bottom of the stone tightly to prevent the stone from spinning. It's important to use your legs as much as possible and don't lift the stone with all with your lower back. As you begin to pick the stone off the ground begin to roll the stone towards your body and use your lower legs as guide rails. This will allow the stone to contour up your legs and fall into your lap. Still in the squatting position and the stone in your lap, your arms should have slightly rolled up on the stone. Now, one at a time, place your arms and hands on the upper 1/3 of the stone, the palms of your hands should almost be facing towards the ground. Grip tight with your forearms. Begin to stand from the squatting position while pulling the stone hard to your body and leaning back. This will force the stone to begin to roll up your chest. Remember to pull hard and squat up simultaneously with force. This will allow your momentum to assist in the lift. Any hesitation will result in the stone dropping from your forearm grip and most efforts from this point will be futile. As the stone quickly rolls up, snap your hips forward, while continuing to pull the stone towards you and pop out your chest. If done correctly the stone should explode away from you with your own force of its momentum to the platform. Congratulations you just loaded your first stone!

Varied heights require more explosive speed and strength with the stone rolling up higher on your chest, almost to your chin. For shorter athletes this will also require you to carry the movement on

your toes for added height. When training Atlas stones you can use a variety of routines. Most common routines mimic the same type of training you would do with weights. Start with a lighter stone for a couple warm up sets. You should always practice a couple lap loads and a few top "pops" to ensure proper warm up. Once your warm up is complete choose a stone that will challenge you to 6 - 10 reps at varied heights. You should always practice to different heights to prepare for any event circumstance and different techniques may be required. Load the stone, drop and repeat until you desired rep range or time is complete. After, grab a heavier stone, one that would challenge you to 3 - 5 reps and load to a shorter platform to improve on your strength. A good training session should consist of several sets, weights, heights and rep ranges.

The best part of training stones is your own PR (personal record). As you begin to perfect your technique challenge yourself to load heavier stones higher. Every strongman can tell you his PR with the coveted stone. Good luck! ** Having difficulty hanging on? Try "Tacky". This sticky pine tar type substance is in every strongman's bag of tricks and is allowed in competition. Lather a thin [coat](#) on your forearms and palms. This will give you that 'Spiderman' grip to hold the stones. You may notice the "Tacky" to begin to give way. Always place a small glob on the back side of your hand in competition for a quick reload. You will be glad you did. That time spent is a lot shorter than trying to wrestle a slippery stone.

*** Are you forearms bleeding? Get used to it! It's strongman not bodybuilding and it requires some grit. Have chaffed forearms comes with the territory of stone loading and eventually this gets better....not much, but any strongman will tell you this is a right to passage. Once you have proved your grit, then go out and get some neoprene sleeves. You may go through a few pairs but it could save you some skin.

****Remember always train Atlas Stones with a partner. Injuries although rare can happen and if a 400lb. stone comes crashing down on you, you'll be glad to have someone there to pick it off and pick you up. Train hard and train safe! Important Tip- No matter how strong you think you are you can't curl a stone, so leave your biceps out of it. If your biceps hurt, it's a warning sign you are doing it wrong and they are getting ready to blow. You can't do a 300lb. curl so don't try and curl an Atlas Stone!