

Novice Training Program

Cardio Guidelines (what to do on days off from your workouts): Nothing structured, but walking and movement are great. Any activity you enjoy that doesn't get your heart rate above ~150 beats per minute will be a good way to promote recovery. If able, set a goal to get a total of 45-60 min. of walking at a minimum. You can split this up however you prefer. You can also bike, row, jog, hike, play a sport, etc.

Try not to do any endurance activity where your heart rate is 120+ for over 60-90 min. Too much can hurt your recovery during this program. Basically, you should be able to talk in a complete sentence without getting too out of breath.

Strength Training (2-3x/week): Ideally, spread these out over your week the best you can with a day of rest between. The workouts are listed starting on page 3.

Warm up (general and specific)

The goal of the warm-up is simply to get your temperature up, move your joints through a full range of motion, and make sure all your muscles can be fully activated. You should not become tired from your warm-up. Depending on the ambient temperature and how you feel, you may need more or less warming up, so let your body temperature and overall readiness to perform guide your warm-ups.

Here's a structure for your **general warm-up** for each training session. You most likely will not need anything past the 5 minutes of low intensity cardio for phase 1 as the workout itself is mostly bodyweight and should not require more.

- ~5 minutes of low intensity cardio on an incline treadmill (brisk walking: no jogging), rower, elliptical, stairmaster, bike ergometer or crosstrainer. Do more if you're still cold afterwards. You should feel your body temperature increase, if you weren't sweating already because of the ambient temperature.

- 8-12 [Forward and backwards leg swings](#) (phase 2 and phase 3 only)
- 8-12 [Side-to-side leg swings](#) (phase 2 and phase 3 only)
- 8-12 [Arm circles forward and backward](#) (phase 2 and phase 3 only)
- 8-12 [Crossbody arm slaps](#) (phase 2 and phase 3 only)
- 8-12 [Bodyweight squat](#) or [Goblet squat](#) (phase 2 and phase 3 only)
- 8-12 glute bridges ([single leg](#) or [bilateral](#)) (phase 2 and phase 3 only)

PHASE 3 ONLY: For the first 1-2 exercises of each workout, you should also perform a **specific warm-up** as follows.

Begin with no weight and move up in weight towards your work set in 1 to 3 sets of 3 to 10 reps. The higher the weight and the more technical the exercise, the more sets you'll need to warm up and the lower the reps on your warm-up sets should be. For example, for squats you'll likely need at least 2 sets of 5 reps with progressively more weight before you perform your first work set. For simple isolation exercises, you most likely won't need any warm-up, but if you feel better doing one, a single set of 12 reps with about half of your estimated working weight is often sufficient.

Don't fatigue yourself during your warm-up. Focus on technique and a smooth, explosive movement. The goal of the warm-up is to be able to perform your work sets safely with full ROM and maximal performance.

Workout execution

-Do not worry or focus much on your tempo during an exercise. Lower slowly/under control and attempt to lift with maximal speed when you feel comfortable with your form.

-With few exceptions, focus on external cues, i.e. your actual performance of the movement. Do not worry about internal cues when this isn't specifically needed, like which body part is going where or which muscle you feel most. Where you feel an exercise and which muscles experience high activation are very different things. Maximizing performance generally maximizes muscular adaptations.

-Always use the full range of motion you have available to YOU. People will vary in how much range of motion they have based on their levers, mobility, and joint structure. Many will often see their range of motion improve over time if they continue lifting.

-Attempt to add weight and/or reps to an exercise if you feel comfortable with your technique and feel you could complete at least 1-3 more reps with good form.

-For unilateral exercises, always start with the weaker side and do the same number of reps with your stronger side so that the total training volume is equal for both sides. This ensures symmetrical muscular development.

-In between sets of the same exercise, rest 1 to 5 minutes, depending on when you feel ready to perform maximally again. You can go by feel here (autoregulation). Don't rush though! Take your time.

-Your total training session can take as long as you want or need.

Phase 1

Workout A – Full Body

Exercise	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4+	Comments	Rest
Squat to box or Bodyweight Squat	2-3x10	3x10	3x10-12	3x10-12	Weight centered over midfoot. Abs tight.	1-2 m.
Single Arm Dumbbell Row or Inverted Rows	2x8-10/s or 2x10	2-3x8-10/s or 2-3x10	3x8-10/s or 3x10	3x8-10/s or 3x10	If you choose the inverted rows, you can use a table , bar , pole , or a towel instead.	1-2 m.
Pushup or Incline Pushup	2x8-12	2-3x8-12	3x8-12	3x8-12		1-2 m.
Glute Bridge	2x8-15	2x8-15	2-3x8-15	2-3x8-15	Squeeze and hold for 1-2 seconds at the top.	60-90 s.
Side Plank	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	ALAP = as long as possible. Perform from knees as shown HERE if needed.	60-90 s.

Workout B – Full Body

Exercise	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4+	Comments	Rest
Dumbbell Sumo Deadlift	2-3x8-10	3x8-10	3x8-10	3x8-10	Hips back. Fold over at hips. Point shirt towards floor at the bottom.	1-2 m.
Single Arm Dumbbell Overhead Press	2-3x8-12/s	3x8-12/s	3x8-12/s	3x8-12/s	Abs tight and ribs down.	1-2 m.
Bent Over T or Band Pull Apart	2-3x8-15	2-3x8-15	2-3x8-15	2-3x8-15	Neutral spine. Squeeze shoulder blades towards spine.	1-2 m.
Split Squat or Step Up	2x8/s	2x8/s	2x8-10/s	2x8-10/s	Abs tight.	60-90 s.
Plank	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	ALAP = as long as possible.	60-90 s.

Alternative exercises if equipment is limited:

Workout A

Single Arm Dumbbell Row -> Perform the inverted row or find a heavy-ish object to use in place of a dumbbell (suitcase, backpack, etc.)

Workout B

Dumbbell Sumo Deadlift -> [Banded Hip Extension](#), [Band Pullthrough](#), or find a heavy-ish object to use in place of a dumbbell (suitcase, backpack, etc.)

Single Arm Dumbbell Overhead Press -> [Overhead Band Press](#) or find a heavy-ish object to use in place of a dumbbell

Phase 2

Workout A – Full Body

Exercise	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4+	Comments	Rest
Goblet Squat or Plate Squat	3x10	3x10	3-4x10	3-4x10	Weight centered over midfoot. Abs tight.	1-2 m.
Band Assisted Chinup or Underhand Grip Lat Pulldown	2-3x5-8	3x5-8	3x5-8	3x5-8	If you choose lat pulldown, perform with an underhand grip as opposed to what is shown in video.	1-2 m.
Pushup or Incline Pushup	2x8-12	2-3x8-12	3x8-12	3x8-12	Continue to try and progress by lowering incline and/or performing more reps.	1-2 m.
Step Up or Single Leg Glute Bridge	2x8-10/s	2x8-10/s	2-3x8-10/s	2-3x8-10/s	Perform glute bridge with both legs on the floor if needed.	60-90 s.
Side Plank	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	ALAP = as long as possible. Perform from knees as shown HERE if needed.	60-90 s.

Workout B – Full Body

Exercise	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4+	Comments	Rest
Dumbbell Sumo Deadlift	2-3x8-10	3x8-10	3x8-10	3x8-10	Continue to try and progress by adding weight and/or performing more reps.	1-2 m.
Single Arm Dumbbell Overhead Press or Split Stance Landmine Press	2-3x8-12/s	3x8-12/s	3x8-12/s	3x8-12/s	Abs tight and ribs down.	1-2 m.
Single Arm Dumbbell Row or Inverted Rows	2x8-10/s or 2x10	2-3x8-10/s or 2-3x10	3x8-10/s or 3x10	3x8-10/s or 3x10	If you choose the inverted rows, you can use a table , bar , pole , or a towel instead.	1-2 m.
Split Squat	2x8/s	2x8/s	2x8-10/s	2x8-10/s	Abs tight.	1-2 m.
Plank	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	2 x ALAP	Move to long lever plank if you can hold longer than 60 seconds.	60-90 s.

Alternative exercises if equipment is limited:

Workout A

Goblet Squat or Plate Squat -> [Bodyweight Squat](#), [Banded Squat](#), or find a heavy-ish object to hold in place of a plate or dumbbell

Band Assisted Chin-up or Lat Pulldown -> [Band Pulldown](#), [Towel Rows](#), or [Prone Y](#)

Workout B

Dumbbell Sumo Deadlift -> [Banded Hip Extension](#), [Band Pullthrough](#), or find a heavy-ish object to use in place of a dumbbell (suitcase, backpack, etc.)

Single Arm Dumbbell Overhead Press -> [Overhead Band Press](#), [Pike Pushup](#), or find a heavy-ish object to use in place of a dumbbell

Single Arm Dumbbell Row -> Perform the inverted row or find a heavy-ish object to use in place of a dumbbell (suitcase, backpack, etc.)

Phase 3

Workout A – Full Body

Exercise	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4+	Comments	Rest
Barbell Back Squat	3-4x5-8	3-4x5-8	3-4x5-8	3-4x5-8	Neutral spine. Abs tight. Good video HERE on proper breathing and bracing.	1-3 m.
Band Assisted Chinup or Underhand Grip Lat Pulldown	2-3x5-8	3x5-8	3x5-8	3x5-8	If you choose lat pulldown, perform with an underhand grip as opposed to what is shown in video.	1-2 m.
Pushup or Incline Pushup	2x8-12	2-3x8-12	3x8-12	3x8-12	Continue to try and progress by lowering incline and/or performing more reps.	1-2 m.
Step Up , Single Leg RDL , or Single Leg Hip Thrust	2x8-10/s	2x8-10/s	2-3x8-10/s	2-3x8-10/s		1-2 m.
Reverse Crunch or Pallof Press ISO	2x8-12 Or 2x20sec.	2x8-12 Or 2x20s.	2x8-12 Or 2x30s.	2x8-12 Or 2x30s.	The pallof press can be done with a band.	60-90 s.

Workout B – Full Body

Exercise	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4+	Comments	Rest
Barbell Deadlift	3-4x5	3-4x5	3-4x5	3-4x5	Neutral spine! Abs tight. Video HERE on proper breathing and bracing.	1-3 m.
Dumbbell Overhead Press	3x8-12	3x8-12	3x8-12	3x8-12	Abs tight and ribs down.	1-2 m.
Dumbbell Bent Over Row	3x10	3x10	3x10-12	3x10-12	Neutral spine. Squeeze shoulder blades back towards spine.	1-2 m.
Dumbbell Reverse Lunge	2x8/s	2x8/s	2x8-10/s	2x8-10/s	Abs tight.	1-2 m.
Long Lever Plank or Ab Wheel Rollout	2 x ALAP or 2x8-10	2 x ALAP or 2x8-10	2 x ALAP or 2x10-12	2 x ALAP or 2x10-12		60-90 s.

Alternative exercises if equipment is limited:

Workout A

Barbell Back Squat -> [Dumbbell Front Squat](#), [Goblet Squat](#) (DB or heavy object), [Banded Squat](#), or [Bodyweight Squat](#)
 Band Assisted Chinup or Lat Pulldown -> [Band Pulldown](#), [Towel Rows](#), or [Prone Y](#)

Workout B

Barbell Deadlift -> [Dumbbell Sumo Deadlift](#), [Dumbbell Romanian Deadlift](#), [Single Leg Romanian Deadlift](#), [Banded Hip Extension](#), or [Band Pullthrough](#)
 Dumbbell Overhead Press -> [Overhead Band Press](#), [Pike Pushup](#), or find heavyish objects to use in place of dumbbells
 Dumbbell Bent Over Row-> Inverted Row variation (towel, bar, suspension trainer, etc.) or find heavyish objects to use in place of dumbbells (suitcase, backpack, etc.)

The Novice Program is a 3-day-a-week program (although it can be done 2 days a week, or even up to 4 days a week) that is written towards those brand new to resistance exercise, those coming back from a layoff, or anyone who wants to focus on improving technique before moving to a more advanced program.

The Novice Program is divided into three phases that vary in length based on your rate of progress and level of experience. The first phase aims to improve your technique and get you comfortable with common exercises and movement patterns. If you are brand new to resistance exercise, this phase could last anywhere from 4 weeks up to 12-16 weeks.

Once you feel good about your technique and are ready to move on, you will begin phase 2 which has slightly more technical exercises, and has you focus a little more on adding weight or complexity to the exercise. There will be some new exercises, but there should not be a steep learning curve after completing phase 1. Phase 2 will typically last anywhere from 4-12 weeks. You will want to move onto phase 3 when you are no longer able to progress by adding weight and/or reps.

Phase 3 will give you the option of performing exercises with a barbell, however, there will be exercise substitutions given if you do not have access to a barbell.

Technically, you can complete this program with just your bodyweight and bands and/or a fairly heavy object such as a backpack, dumbbell, or kettlebell. However, it would be advantageous to have at least a few fairly heavy dumbbells to ensure you are able to challenge yourself.

The full program utilizes a barbell (only in phase 3) and dumbbells, but I give exercise substitutions if you will only have the limited equipment listed above.

All phases have two different workouts – Workout A and Workout B. The ideal setup is to perform **three workouts a week** by alternating the workouts each time you train. However, as mentioned above, you can also make this work if you only have two days a week or even want to train 4 days a week. You will just alternate the workouts each time.

The focus of the program will be on getting stronger and learning/improving technique across all major movement patterns such as squats, hip hinges, presses, pulls, and rows.