



REBUILDING YOU

THE ULTIMATE FITNESS BLUEPRINT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

02 YOU BECOME WHAT YOU THINK: INSIGHTS TO LEVEL UP YOUR LIFE

03 REDISCOVER YOURSELF

04 EMBRACING TRUE TOUGHNESS

05 MY PILLARS OF RESILIENCE

06 HOW TO KEEP GOING? A JOURNEY TOWARDS A HEALTHIER YOU

07 THE CARDIO WORKOUT

08 THE ROLE OF DIET IN YOUR FITNESS JOURNEY

09 UNDERSTANDING ADAPTATION AND PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD

10 THE PROGRAM



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Christopher Harrington, born in London but raised in a small town north of Venice, Italy. My mother, an Italian, and my father, an Irishman, decided to settle in Italy to give me and my brothers a better quality of life. Growing up in Italy, surrounded by rich culture and close family ties, shaped much of who I am today.

For over two decades, I lived in Italy, navigating an uncertain future. I pursued barbering, a craft I deeply enjoyed, while simultaneously earning a degree in sports science and nutrition. By the time I was 18, I had already ventured into online coaching, guiding people in their fitness journeys. These two career paths gave me a unique blend of skill with over a decade of experience in health and fitness, alongside my work as a barber.

In 2020, with the world in turmoil due to the pandemic, I made a life-changing decision. With only £700 in my pocket, I returned to London, convinced that I could carve out a better future there. I persuaded my girlfriend at the time to leave everything behind and join me, promising her that I would one day achieve success. The beginning was grueling but eventually we secured an apartment, and she joined me a month later.

However, the second lockdown hit hard. As a self-employed barber, I found myself out of work, faced with a desperate situation. Many around me chose to return to their home countries, but I stayed, determined to adapt. I spotted an opportunity in the road bike market and at night, I worked delivery jobs and even partnered with a carpenter to start a small construction business. It wasn't glamorous, but it kept me going. I often said, *"There are people who cry and people who sell tissues. I've always been the one selling tissues."*

As the world started to recover in 2021, my personal life took a painful turn. After four years together, my girlfriend and I parted ways. She wanted to start a family, but I wasn't ready for that step. I promised her, "Give me three more years, and I'll make it," but our visions for the future didn't align. Heartbroken, she returned to Italy, and I was left devastated.

The months that followed were some of the darkest in my life. I spiraled into depression, losing all sense of purpose and routine. I stopped training, eating well, and caring for myself, spending most of my days in isolation, wondering, "Why me?" But my mother's words stayed with me: *"If it's meant to be, better things will come."* Slowly, I started to rebuild.

I returned to the gym, began eating healthy again, and set clear goals for my future. The road wasn't easy. For three years, I worked tirelessly for 14-hour days, sleepless nights, and countless sacrifices. I gave up weekends, social events, and relationships, devoting myself entirely to achieving my dreams. Fueled by the pain of heartbreak and the drive to prove myself, I pushed forward with unwavering determination.

Through this journey, I gained invaluable lessons about life, discipline, mental health, and the importance of self-love. Pain became my teacher, resilience my ally, and self-belief my guiding force. These years shaped me into the person I am today—someone who knows the value of hard work and perseverance.

Now, my mission is to give back. I want to help others who feel lost, just as I once did, and show them that even in the darkest moments, there is always a way forward. This is my story of starting from zero, transforming struggle into strength, and proving that no matter how tough life gets, there is always a brighter future waiting for those who refuse to give up.



**YOU
BECOME
WHAT YOU
THINK:
INSIGHTS TO
LEVEL UP
YOUR LIFE**

When life feels directionless and motivation is barely hanging on, the key to turning things around lies not in grand gestures but in the small, consistent actions you take each day. Transformation isn't about flipping your life upside down overnight—it's about mastering the little habits that, when repeated, can redefine your identity and reform your future.

If you see yourself as someone who struggles with motivation, it's time to change that story. Take charge of your life and ask yourself, "Who do I want to become?" Whether you aspire to be healthier, more focused, or full of energy; let your daily actions align with that vision, even in the smallest ways. Set out your workout clothes the night before to remind yourself to move. Swap one bag of chips for a piece of fruit. Don't forget to celebrate your wins, no matter how little they are because those small victories build momentum. Take small steps but takes those steps daily. Don't give up on yourself.

At its core, change follows a simple pattern: cue, routine, reward. For instance, placing your running shoes by the door (cue) makes it easier to go for a jog (routine), and finishing the jog comes with the satisfaction of a post-run smoothie (reward). When you build routines around clear cues and rewarding outcomes, change becomes less overwhelming and more achievable.

And that's the secret: focus on systems, not goals. Goals give you direction, but systems create the daily habits that get you there. Instead of setting a daunting goal like losing 50 pounds, develop a system where moving your body and eating well becomes a routine. It can be taking a five-minute walk, doing one push-up, or drinking an extra glass of water. These micro steps may seem insignificant, but over time, they build the foundation for long-term change.

Commit to being just 1% better each day, and watch as those small changes shape into something extraordinary. This approach works for more than just fitness—it can transform your mindset, boost your confidence, and reignite your motivation.

The magic is in showing up. It is in committing. It is in staying consistent. It is in trusting the process. It is about consciously redirecting your thought process. And one day when you look back, you'll be amazed at how far you've come.

This guide is here to help you take charge of your life, reconnect with your inner strength, and create a future that reflects your full potential. By embracing mindset shifts, practical steps, and a focus on both mental and physical well-being, you can begin your transformation journey today. So let's start!

Core themes

1- *Mindset is Everything*

- Your thoughts shape the life you live. By nurturing a positive and resilient mindset, you unlock the power to reach your full potential.
- Replace self-doubt with empowering affirmations: *"I am capable of growth, and my future is full of possibilities."*

2- *Rediscover Your Purpose*

- Take a moment to ask yourself: *What truly brings me joy? What kind of life do I want to create?*
- Set small, achievable goals in areas like fitness, career, and personal growth to help you find your sense of direction again.

3- *Fitness as the Foundation for Change*

- There is no doubt that physical health directly impacts your mental clarity and energy. Make movement a daily habit, even if it's just a short walk or a few minutes of exercise in order to rebuild your strength and confidence.
- Focus on consistency, not perfection. You don't realize it but a quick workout adds up over time and makes a real difference.

4- Building Resilience

- Tough times don't break you. In fact, they make you stronger. Embrace challenges as opportunities to grow. Let those challenges fuel your progress.
- Incorporate deep breathing or mindfulness to manage stress. Be mindful in how you calm yourself in tense situations.

5- Creating Healthy Habits

- Structure your day to support both your mental and physical well-being. It can be as simple as making sleep and nutrition a priority.

6- Focusing on Growth

- Let go of perfection and focus on daily growth.
- Regularly reflect on where you are and where you want to be, and redirect yourself as needed to stay on track.

Practical Exercises

Now, let's explore how you can bring your goals and motivation to life. What daily steps can you incorporate into your routine to support your growth?

The following exercise will help you visualize the future you're working toward.

1- Reflection Prompts:

- *What truly sparks my motivation?*

- *What does my dream life look like, and how can I start creating it today?*

2- Fitness Challenge:

- *What physical activities can you commit to on daily basis? List at least 7.*
It's a small start that will help you build momentum and set a positive tone for your day.

3- Visualization Exercise:

- *Picture yourself at your best; both mentally and physically. What does that look like?*
Write down the steps you can take to make that vision your reality.

By changing your mindset, focusing on your well-being, and taking small, consistent actions, you have the power to rebuild your life. With each thought and every step, you can become the person you've always envisioned.



**REDISCOVER
YOURSELF**

Life's setbacks can shake us to our core, leaving us feeling lost and disconnected from the person we once were. Whether it's the loss of a loved one, a career change, or any hardship that has challenged you, it's natural to feel adrift. But remember, setbacks aren't the end of your story—they are often the beginning of a new chapter. This journey of rediscovery is about finding the strength within yourself to rebuild your identity and reclaim your purpose.

In this chapter you will meet yourself again. The strong, passionate and beautiful you. Rediscover yourself and embrace it wholeheartedly.

Who Are You Beyond the Pain?

Major setbacks can make us question our identity. Reflect on the person you were before the hardship and the person you wish to become and ask yourself:

"What makes me, me, outside of my pain or circumstances?"

Reconnecting with Joy

Explore activities or hobbies that once made you happy or try something new that sparks curiosity.

List down what comes to your mind when you think of excitement and peace.

Setting New Goals

What kind of life do you want to create?

Set goals that align with your values and give you a sense of direction. Combine goals for personal growth (like learning a skill) with physical and mental health goals.

When life knocks you down, it's a chance to rebuild with purpose and resilience. By reconnecting with your passions, setting meaningful goals, and rediscovering your true self, you can create a life that is both fulfilling and driven by purpose.

Key principles that help you develop a resilient mind and body

- ***Mind-Body Connection:*** Mental and physical health are closely linked. Regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and mindfulness practices are crucial for strengthening both.
- ***Consistency over Perfection:*** True mental and physical strength comes from small, consistent actions, not drastic changes.
- ***Resilience through Discipline:*** Mental fitness is about training your mind to remain calm under pressure, confront fears, and push through discomfort.
- ***Self-Awareness is Key:*** To master your emotions and thought patterns, the first step is understanding them.



**EMBRACING
TRUE
TOUGHNESS**

In ***Do Hard Things: Why We Get Resilience wrong and the Surprising Science of Real Toughness***, Steve Magness challenges the traditional notion of toughness that many of us have internalized. The common belief that resilience is about simply enduring hardship, pushing through pain, and ignoring our emotional and psychological needs is misleading. Magness suggests that true toughness isn't about enduring suffering at all costs; rather, it's about being adaptable, emotionally resilient, and focusing on growth rather than blind endurance.

This chapter draws on key insights from Magness' work to guide readers who may feel lost or directionless and are eager to create meaningful change in their lives.

Redefining Toughness

True toughness is not about ignoring your emotions, instead, it's about being adaptable and building emotional resilience. Resilience means approaching difficulties with the mindset that growth is the goal, not just endurance. True strength comes from facing challenges with a clear mindset that acknowledges your emotional and psychological needs. It's not about pushing yourself beyond your limits at all costs but about knowing when to push forward and when to pull back for recovery.

The Science of Resilience

Resilience is a skill, not an inherent trait. It's something that can be developed and strengthened with practice. Magness emphasizes that resilience isn't about "gritting your teeth" through hard times but rather about getting your strength back from setbacks, learning from mistakes, and moving forward with purpose. Cultivating resilience involves building mental habits that help you process adversity in a way that supports growth, not suffering. It's about making the conscious decision to bounce back after challenges and use the lessons from failure to propel forward in life.

Embrace Discomfort, Don't Fear It

Growth happens outside of our comfort zones. While it's natural to avoid discomfort, the key to true personal development lies in engaging with discomfort in a way that promotes mental and emotional growth. It's not about seeking out pain or struggle, but about stepping into situations that challenges you. This process requires balance—pushing yourself enough to foster growth, but not to the point of burnout. Embracing discomfort in a sustainable way means setting boundaries that allow you to stretch and grow without risking your well-being. Key is to finding your balance.

Purpose over Perfection

Perfectionism can be a major roadblock and can lead to draining. Magness suggests that focusing on perfection can lead to burnout and frustration. Rather, we should focus on a deeper sense of purpose. Having a “why” behind your actions gives direction and helps you push through challenges with more energy and motivation. When you're driven by a clear purpose, even the toughest moments become easier to navigate, because you know why you're pushing through.

The Power of Rest and Recovery.

True toughness involves understanding the critical role rest plays in the process of growth. Pushing through fatigue without proper recovery can quickly lead to burnout. Rest isn't a sign of weakness—it's an essential component of building resilience. Incorporating recovery into your routine allows your body and mind to regenerate, ensuring that you're ready for the next challenge. Whether its sleep, relaxation, or taking mental breaks – do what helps you in such times.

Adaptability is Key.

Life rarely goes according to plan. Toughness doesn't come from sticking rigidly to

a plan, but from the capability to adapt to changing circumstances. True resilience is about learning to pivot when things don't go as expected and finding new ways to keep moving forward. This skill allows you to stay flexible, open-minded, and creative in the face of adversity.

The take home lesson here is that true resilience isn't about constant battle, but about cultivating a mindset focused on growth, adaptability, and purpose. By facing discomfort in a healthy, balanced way, staying rooted in your core motivations, and learning from each experience, you can continue moving forward with strength, even in uncertain times. Real toughness isn't measured by how hard you can push yourself, but by how well you can adapt, recover, and keep progressing towards personal growth.

Now let's find out how you can practice this skill.

WORKSHEET

Exercise for Mental Toughness

List a few small daily challenges that push you outside your comfort zone.
(Hint: trying a new workout or learning a new skill.)

Build Emotional Resilience

Reflect on past setbacks. What lessons can you take from each experience to grow stronger?

Rest and Recharge

What is your idea of resting? List down things that come to your mind.

Rest and Recharge

What is your idea of resting? List down things that come to your mind.

A close-up, profile shot of a muscular man in a gym. He is wearing a black cap, a black tank top, and a chain necklace. He is lifting a black dumbbell with a green logo and '15KG' printed on it. The background is blurred, showing gym equipment and lights.

MY PILLARS OF

RESILIENCE

In this chapter, I'll take you through my personal journey of navigating through some of the toughest times in my life. I'll share the pillars of resilience that helped me stay grounded and find my way forward, even when the path seemed unclear. These guiding principles weren't just about surviving hardship; they became the foundation of my strength, helping me grow and evolve along the way. My hope is that by sharing my experience, some of you may find the direction, insight, or inspiration you need to face your own challenges with renewed purpose and resilience.

The Rules That Shaped Me

- **Rule 1:** Exercise daily to boost mental clarity.
- **Rule 2:** Prioritize rest and recovery to avoid burnout.
- **Rule 3:** Train your mind to focus through meditation or mindfulness.
- **Rule 4:** Fuel your body with nutritious food for optimal brain function.
- **Rule 5:** Challenge your comfort zone regularly.
- **Rule 6:** Cultivate a positive mindset through gratitude and affirmations.
- **Rule 7:** Learn to manage stress with breathing techniques.
- **Rule 8:** Surround yourself with supportive, like-minded people.
- **Rule 9:** Develop self-discipline by setting and sticking to routines.
- **Rule 10:** Limit distractions and practice intentional focus.
- **Rule 11:** Celebrate progress, not perfection.
- **Rule 12:** Use visualization to build mental strength and confidence.
- **Rule 13:** Reflect regularly on your goals and purpose.
- **Rule 14:** Face failure head-on and learn from setbacks.
- **Rule 15:** Commit to lifelong learning and growth.

How to Find Your Direction?

Reflect: Which of these principles speaks to you most in your current circumstances? How can you begin to weave it into your routine today to help you move forward?

Affirmation: "Each small step I take strengthens both my mind and body."

Set Daily Intentions: Start each day by setting a clear intention for yourself. Whether it's to stay calm in the face of stress, to focus on one task at a time, or simply to be kind to yourself.

Celebrate Small Wins: Whether it's completing a task you've been avoiding, staying patient in a difficult situation, or sticking to your morning routine – always celebrate yourself!

Track Your Progress: Have a simple checklist to monitor your progress. Writing down what you've accomplished each day, it will help you see how far you've come and motivate you to keep going, especially on tough days.

Practice Gratitude: Take a moment every day to reflect on something you're grateful for. Practicing gratitude shifts your focus from what's lacking in your life to what's already working.

Create a Support System: Surround yourself with people who encourage your growth. Someone who can provide accountability, perspective, and emotional strength when times get tough.

Embrace Flexibility: Life often doesn't go according to plan. Rather than resisting change, practice adaptability.

Prioritize Self-Care: Resilience isn't just about pushing through hardship—it's also about taking care of yourself. Make self-care a non-negotiable part of your routine.

Visualize Your Success: Take a few moments each day to visualize yourself achieving your goals. Imagine the emotions, the satisfaction, and the steps you'll take to get there.

Let Go of Perfectionism: Understand that progress is more important than perfection. Stop holding yourself to unrealistic standards and allow yourself room to make mistakes.

Break Large Tasks into Smaller Steps: If you're feeling overwhelmed, break down big projects or goals into smaller, manageable steps. Focus on completing one task at a time, which makes challenges seem less daunting and more achievable.

Remember that building mental strength is a process – one that takes time, patience, and commitment. Embrace the process of growth and resilience, knowing that every small habit you adopt today paves the way for a stronger, more balanced tomorrow.



**HOW TO KEEP
GOING? A JOURNEY
TOWARDS A
HEALTHIER YOU.**



Motivation

A question I often get asked is, *"How do I stay motivated?"* The truth is, motivation flows naturally when you're doing something you genuinely enjoy. Think about the things you love; whether it's watching movies, playing guitar, eating pizza, or spending time with your dog. Do you need motivation to do those things? Probably not, because they bring you joy effortlessly. For me, the gym is like all those things rolled into one. It's my version of a favorite pastime, a place where I get to unwind and feel good.

New passions can grow over time, especially when you're consistent. You may not love the gym today the way you love other activities, but with time and effort, you'll begin to appreciate it more. As you see progress, you'll feel a new kind of excitement, not just about the gym itself, but about the person you're becoming and the goals you're reaching. Even on the days when motivation feels low, your commitment to growth will keep you going.

We all know that showing up is often the hardest part. But once you walk through that door, it's about taking that first small step. Start simple—do a quick warm-up, pick up a weight, or take a few steps on the treadmill. Before you know it, you'll be in the flow, feeling good, and maybe even having fun. It takes time to progress, and the key is to just keep swimming!

This same idea applies to anything you want to achieve in life. Whether you're writing a book, building a business, or chasing a big dream, motivation doesn't always come first. The key is to start. Even if you don't feel like it, begin anyway. Once you take that first step, the rhythm will come, and before long, you'll realize how much you've accomplished.

Consistency

Starting something new is often the easy part. Whether it's launching a business, hitting the gym, enrolling in a course, or picking up a new skill, that initial step can feel exciting and full of potential. But as time goes on, the challenge becomes

staying consistent. That's where the real work lies. Without consistency, the journey can feel overwhelming, and progress can start to slow down. Staying consistent is a daily effort. It is a lot of conscious work some days but don't give up!

When it comes to training, it's not about going hard for a short time, it's about showing up consistently and making it part of your life. Life will throw you off track sometimes –whether it is a vacation, family visits, a busy workweek, or just feeling mentally drained. That's all normal. The real trick is to bounce back and keep going. Consistency is the key to making progress, even if you miss a few sessions along the way.

Don't worry if you miss the gym once in a while—that won't derail your goals. The important thing is that each time you go, you're there to give it your best. But just to be clear, “missing a few sessions” doesn't mean disappearing for weeks at a time, because those long breaks can set you back. Instead, find exercises and routines that excite you, so you're always looking forward to your workouts.

My approach to training is about sustainability. The goal is to build a routine you can stick with for the long haul. If you get bored or feel some strain, switch things up. The gym should be something you enjoy, not a place you dread. Focus on finding what you love about your workouts, show up regularly, and keep it fun. That's how you build lasting habits and achieve long-term success.

Have Realistic Expectations

In the fitness world, one of the biggest myths is the idea of achieving rapid, dramatic results. Many people enter the gym with the expectation that they can gain 20 pounds of muscle in just a few months, often influenced by the unrealistic portrayals seen in the media. Movies and social media showcase actors transforming their bodies in record time for roles, but these transformations rarely tell the full story. Behind the scenes, it's often a combination of muscle gain, water retention, fat fluctuations, glycogen levels, and, in some cases, performance-enhancing substances like steroids.

So, what's truly achievable when you commit to consistent, hard, and smart training? Let's break down the realistic muscle growth you can expect over time.

For men with optimal genetics, the typical progression looks like this:

- **Year 1:** 8–12 pounds of muscle
- **Year 2:** 6–8 pounds
- **Year 3:** 4–6 pounds
- **Year 4:** 3–5 pounds
- **Year 5:** 2–4 pounds
- **Years 6–9:** 2–3 pounds annually
- **Year 10 and beyond:** 0–1 pound annually

This means that for most people, it can take about 10 years of dedicated effort to reach their genetic muscle-building potential. For men with exceptional genetics, this could mean gaining anywhere from 30 to 50 pounds of lean muscle over their lifetime. Women, due to physiological differences, can expect around half of this growth. For those with less favorable genetics, the lifetime gain could range from 15 to 25 pounds.

Understanding these numbers is crucial for setting realistic expectations. Building muscle is a long-term journey, not a sprint. It takes time, consistency, and a lot of patience to see substantial results.

What's the takeaway? By staying committed and focusing on steady progress, you'll create a foundation for lasting success. And remember, the journey itself, with all its small wins and gradual improvements, is just as important as the destination. Enjoy the process and your progress!



THE CARDIO WORKOUT

Cardiovascular exercise is an essential component of a well-rounded fitness routine. While lifting weights is great for building strength, cardio is crucial for maintaining heart health, boosting mood, and improving overall well-being. Your heart is arguably the most important muscle in your body, and neglecting cardio can put your long-term health at risk. Strength training and cardio each serve distinct purposes, and combining the two is key to a balanced and sustainable fitness plan.

In fact, if you had to choose between weightlifting and cardio, prioritizing cardio would be the better choice, especially for heart health. While some individuals may maintain a lean physique without cardio, this is not the case for the majority, and skipping cardio is not advisable. Beyond its role in fat burning, cardio strengthens the heart, improves stamina, and contributes to better overall health.

How Much Cardio Should You Do?

A solid goal is to aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio per week. Moderate intensity means you should be able to maintain the activity for 2–3 hours without feeling too fatigued or sore the next day. This level of intensity strikes the perfect balance, helping to enhance cardiovascular health without overtaxing your body.

The Best Cardio for Your Routine

When choosing cardio, focus on low-impact exercises like incline treadmill walking at a 15% incline. This option provides a solid cardiovascular workout while being easy on your joints, making it an ideal complement to strength training. On the other hand, high-impact activities like running can strain your joints and may interfere with recovery, so it's best to limit them if possible.

Incorporating cardio into your weekly routine not only improves your physical performance but also ensures that your heart stays healthy for the long run. Prioritize your heart health now – your future self will thank you for it.

THE ROLE OF DIET IN YOUR



FITNESS JOURNEY

Diet plays an integral role in shaping the results you get from your fitness routine. While strength training can help you build muscle and increase metabolism, nutrition is what fuels your body and helps you achieve your fitness goals. For many, the key to reducing body fat and improving body composition is creating a calorie deficit—consuming fewer calories than you burn.

It's important to note that weight loss cannot be achieved by exercise alone. While lifting weights boosts muscle mass, which increases your metabolism, it's the combination of proper nutrition and exercise that truly drives fat loss. If you're not seeing the progress you want, it might be time to adjust your calorie intake, fine-tune your exercise routine, or both.

Key Guidelines for Optimizing Your Diet

Track Your Progress

Keeping an eye on your daily weight, caloric intake, and cardio activity can give you valuable insights into what's working and what's not. Tracking doesn't have to be overly complicated, but it helps keep you accountable and allows you to make data-driven decisions about your fitness journey.

Prioritize Protein

Protein is essential for muscle recovery and growth. Aim to include a high-quality protein source with each meal—whether it's lean meats, eggs, legumes, or plant-based options like tofu or tempeh. Protein helps preserve muscle mass, especially when you're in a calorie deficit for fat loss.

Don't Fear Carbs

Carbohydrates are your body's preferred source of energy, especially when it comes to fueling workouts. Rather than cutting carbs entirely, focus on choosing healthy, nutrient-dense carbs such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. These foods provide sustained energy and aid in recovery, without the blood sugar spikes of processed carbs.

Incorporate Healthy Fats

Healthy fats play an important role in hormone regulation, joint health, and overall well-being. Include sources like avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil in your diet to support both your workouts and overall health.

Hydration is Key

Proper hydration is often overlooked but is crucial for maintaining energy levels, supporting metabolism, and preventing muscle cramps. Drink plenty of water throughout the day, especially before, during, and after workouts.

Timing Matters

While the overall quality of your diet matters most, the timing of your meals can also impact your performance and recovery. Eating a balanced meal 2–3 hours before working out can provide the energy you need to perform your best. Post-workout, aim for a meal with protein and carbs to replenish glycogen stores and help muscle recovery.

Balancing Calories and Activity

The ultimate goal is to align your nutrition with your activity level to achieve the desired results. If you're looking to lose fat, create a moderate calorie deficit without drastically reducing calories, which can affect energy levels and muscle mass. If you're aiming to gain muscle, a slight calorie surplus combined with strength training will help you build muscle.

Remember, fitness is a journey. It's about creating a sustainable, balanced approach to diet and exercise that supports your goals and maintains your well-being. By integrating thoughtful nutrition, consistent cardio, and regular strength training, you'll be on track to optimize your fitness results while living a healthier lifestyle overall.

Understanding Adaptation and Progressive Overload

Adaptation is a key principle in fitness, but it's often misunderstood. Many people mistake adaptation for stagnation when, in fact, it's essential for progress. When we train, we place stress on our body, particularly the nervous system and muscles. This stress triggers adaptations such as muscle growth (hypertrophy) and increased strength, preparing us to handle similar challenges more effectively in the future.

The real challenge lies in fostering continuous adaptation. If your progress begins to plateau, it's a sign your body has adjusted to the current routine. To continue progressing, you need to apply a new level of stress—whether through increasing the weight, volume, or intensity of your workouts. Just like you'd adjust your calorie intake during a weight loss plateau, you must make small but strategic changes to your training to continue growing.

Progressive overload is the foundation of muscle growth and overall fitness improvements. By progressively increasing the demands on your body, you force it to adapt and become stronger. But this doesn't mean constantly pushing yourself to the limit. It's about creating a sustainable challenge that's tailored to your goals. Small, consistent increments—whether in reps, sets, or weights—can lead to remarkable results over time.

The key is to keep the pressure just enough to stimulate growth without burning out. Overloading should feel like an intentional progression, not an all-out attack on your body. This ensures that your body adapts in a healthy, balanced way, making your fitness journey not only effective but sustainable.

Quick Tips for Implementing Progressive Overload

1. **Increase Weights Gradually:** If you can comfortably perform your reps with your current weight, it's time to add a small increment—typically 2.5 to 5 pounds.
2. **Increase Repetitions:** Another way to challenge your muscles is by increasing the number of repetitions you perform. This can be an excellent option if you don't have access to heavier weights or want to focus on endurance.
3. **Increase Sets:** If you feel like your workout isn't challenging enough, try adding an additional set to your routine. This simple change can provide more time under tension for your muscles, encouraging growth.
4. **Reduce Rest Time Between Sets:** By shortening your rest period, you can increase the intensity of your workout, forcing your body to adapt to a higher workload in a shorter amount of time.
5. **Try Different Variations:** Adding new exercises or variations to your routine can help target muscles in different ways. For example, if you're used to bench pressing, switch to dumbbell presses or incline presses to activate muscles in slightly different ways.
6. **Track Your Progress:** Track your sets, reps, and weights so you can look back and identify when it's time to increase the challenge.
7. **Vary Your Program:** Doing the same workout over and over can lead to a plateau. Incorporating new exercises or altering your program every 4-6 weeks ensures that your body is continually adapting.

While pushing yourself is essential for growth, remember that progressive overload should be a controlled, sustainable process. Overloading should always be done thoughtfully. Pushing too hard, too quickly, or without proper recovery can lead to injury. Focus on small, incremental improvements, and always prioritize proper form and technique over heavier weights or higher reps.

A muscular man with a beard and a black cap is performing a cable exercise in a gym. He is wearing a black tank top and black shorts. He is holding the handles of a cable machine with both hands, pulling them towards his chest. The gym has various pieces of equipment in the background, including weight racks and other machines. The lighting is bright, highlighting the man's muscles.

The Program

I believe that we all are super motivated now to being the fitness journey, right?

So I welcome you all to your new training program! As your trainer, I'm excited to guide you through this journey and help you unlock your full potential. This program is designed to challenge you, build your strength, and improve your overall fitness –step by step.

We'll focus on progressive overload, ensuring that each week brings new opportunities for growth and improvement. Whether you're aiming to build muscle, increase endurance, or simply feel stronger, this plan has been tailored to meet your goals. Let's stay committed, trust the process, and enjoy the results that come with consistent effort. Ready to get started? Let's do this!

This program is structured into three training blocks, each broken down into smaller one or two week segments. The exercises should be followed in the listed order, completing all sets for one exercise before moving to the next. If you see grey, black, or empty boxes, they indicate that no set is required, allowing you to proceed directly to the next exercise.

Your training week will consist of 1-5 days of workouts, and it's important to stick to the sequence to minimize muscle soreness and promote effective recovery. While soreness isn't always a reliable indicator of progress or recovery, following the set days helps prevent overlapping exercises—like performing a bench press on consecutive days can lead to overtraining.

If you can't fit all five workouts into a single week, don't worry! Just pick up where you left off the following week. This approach ensures that the program remains continuous and progressive, without skipping any essential components, even if it takes longer to complete.

The program progressively increases in intensity, with each week building upon the previous one. The early sessions in the first block are designed to help your body adjust to the increased training volume and frequency. These sessions are just as important as the more challenging workouts in later blocks.

It's crucial to respect the range of RIR (Reps in Reserve) targets—both higher and lower RIRs are integral to the program's design. Don't aim to push every set to maximum intensity. Doing so can defeat the purpose of regulating intensity and workload, which is vital for sustainable progress.

To accommodate varying fitness levels, alternative exercises and notes are provided throughout the program.

Stay committed to each phase for the best results and to see tangible progress!

Rest Periods

Rest is a vital component of hypertrophy-focused resistance training, and striking the right balance is essential for maximizing results. Short rest periods may elevate cardiovascular intensity but can hinder strength performance and limit the amount of weight you can lift.

On the other hand, excessively long rest periods can break momentum, cause muscles to cool down, and unnecessarily extend your workout time.

Here's a guide to recommended rest durations:

- **Lower body compound exercises** (e.g., squats, deadlifts): 2–4 minutes
- **Other compound exercises** (e.g., bench press, overhead press): 2–3 minutes
- **Isolation exercises or accessory work:** 1–2 minutes

These guidelines allow for optimal recovery for most individuals, but they should be adjusted based on your personal recovery capacity. If you feel that you need more rest to maintain performance, take it; if you're ready to go sooner, shorten the rest period. The key is finding the balance that helps you get the most out of each set while maintaining an efficient and productive session.

Warming Up

A proper warm-up is an often overlooked but essential step before any intense workout. It helps prevent injuries, prepares your body for the demands of the session, and primes your mind for the work ahead.

Here are the key benefits of warming up:

- **Injury Prevention:** It increases body temperature and mobilizes your joints, reducing the risk of injury.
- **Improved Movement:** Warming up allows you to practice the movements and get into the proper mechanics before the full intensity of the exercise begins.
- **Mental Focus:** A good warm-up gets you mentally prepared for the intensity of the workout, setting a positive tone for the session.

While warm-up routines can vary based on the type of workout, they generally consist of the following:

1. **Increase Body Temperature:** A brisk 5-10 minutes of light cardio walking, cycling, or using a cross-trainer.
2. **Joint Mobility:** Dynamic stretches or drills that enhance range of motion, particularly for the hips, shoulders, and ankles.
3. **Muscular Activation:** Specific exercises to "wake up" the muscles that will be working hardest during your session.
4. **Movement Practice:** A few light sets of your first major exercise (e.g., squats, deadlifts) to focus on technique and form before adding weight.

For certain exercises like the back squat, you may need additional mobility work to prepare your joints and muscles fully. Remember, the goal is to be as prepared as possible so you can train hard and effectively, minimizing your risk of injury.

I want you to know that I'm here to support you every step of the way. This journey is about more than just sets and reps, it's about building your confidence, strength, and resilience. Whether you're facing challenges or celebrating victories,

I'm always here to guide, encourage, and help you stay on track. Remember, progress isn't always linear, but with dedication and patience, you'll get there. Keep pushing, stay consistent, and never hesitate to reach out if you need guidance or motivation. I believe in you, and together, we'll achieve your goals! Let's keep moving forward!



WORKOUT PLAN

Programme

[Go to Exercise Notes](#)

Block 1.1 Week 1-2

1 set										Mins
Day 1	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Bulgarian Split Squat	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	2	2-3
	Seated DB Press	12	3	12	2	12	2			2-3
	Lat Pull-down	12	3	12	2	12	2			2-3
	Leg Curl	12	3	12	2	12	2			1
	DB Curl	20	3	20	2	20	2			1
	Decline Crunch	15	3	15	2	15	2			1

Day 2	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	BB Bench Press	6	3	6	2	6	2	6	2	2-3
	T-Bar Row	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	2	2-3
	DB Lateral Raise	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	2	1
	Seated Calf Press	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	2	1
	Cable Overhead Extension	8	3	8	2	8	2			1

Day 3	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Pull-up	6	3	6	2	6	2	6	2	2-3
	Deadlift	6	3	6	2	6	2	6	2	3-4
	Tricep Dip	10	3	10	2	10	2			2-3
	Cable Upright Row	12	3	12	2	12	2			1
	Reverse Crunch	10	3	10	2	10	2	10	2	1

Day 4	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	BB Overhead Press	6	3	6	2	6	2	6	2	2-3
	Leg Press	12	2	12	2	12	2	12	2	2-3
	Standing Cable Chest Flye	15	2	15	2	15	2			1
	Rear Delt Cable Flye	15	2	15	2	15	2			1
	Smith Machine Calf Raise	15	2	15	2	15	2			1
	DB Shrug	12	2	12	2	12	2			1

Day 5	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Chest Supported Row	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	2	2-3
	Incline DB Press	12	3	12	2	12	2			2-3
	Leg Extension	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	2	1-2
	BB Hip Thrust	10	3	10	2	10	2			1-2
	EZ Preacher Curl	15	3	15	2					1
	Cable Pushdown	15	3	15	2					1

Programme

[Go to Exercise Notes](#)

Block 2.1 Week 5-6

Day 1	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest		
	Back Squat	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	2	3-4		
	Seated Smith Machine Press	10	3	10	2	10	2	10	1			2-3		
	Lat Pull-down (close grip)	10	3	10	2	10	2	10	1			2-3		
	Alternate Leg Curl	20	3	20	2	20	1					1		
	DB Hammer Curl	20	3	20	2	20	1					1		

Day 2	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	BB Bench Press	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	2-3
	Chest Supported Row	12	3	12	2	12	1					2-3
	Alternate Leg Extension	20	3	20	2	20	2	20	1			1-2
	Single Leg DB Calf Raise	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1			1
	Roman Chair Leg Raise	15	-	15	-	15	-	15	-			1
	Cable Lateral Raise	12	3	12	2	12	1					1

Day 3	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Deadlift	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	3-4
	Pull-up	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	2-3
	Tricep Dip	8	3	8	2	8	1					2-3
	DB Tricep Skullcrusher	12	1	12	1					1		
	Adductor Machine	15	3	15	2	15	1					1
	Abductor Machine	15	3	15	2	15	1					1

Day 4	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	BB Overhead Press	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	2-3
	Single Leg Press	10	3	10	2	10	2	10	1			1-2
	Incline Cable Chest Flye	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1			1
	EZ Bar Curl	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1			1
	Seated Calf Press	12	3	12	2	12	1					1

Day 5	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Pendlay Row	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1	2-3
	Flat DB Press	10	3	10	2	10	2	10	1	2-3
	Romanian Deadlift	12	3	12	2	12	2			1-2
	Lat Prayer	12	3	12	2	12	1			1
	Cable Pushdown	10	3	10	2	10	1			1
	Decline Crunch	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1

Programme

Go to Exercise Notes

Block 1.2 Week 3-4

Day 1	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Bulgarian Split Squat	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1	2-3
	Seated DB Press	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	2-3
	Lat Pull-down	12	3	12	2	12	1			2-3
	Leg Curl	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1
	DB Curl	20	3	20	2	20	1			1
	Decline Crunch	15	3	15	2	15	1			1

Day 2	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	BB Bench Press	6	3	6	2	6	2	6	2	6	1	2-3
	T-Bar Row	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1			2-3
	DB Lateral Raise	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1			1
	Seated Calf Press	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1			1
	Cable Overhead Extension	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1			1

Day 3	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Pull-up	6	3	6	2	6	2	6	2	6	1	2-3
	Deadlift	6	3	6	2	6	2	6	1			3-4
	Tricep Dip	10	3	10	2	10	1					2-3
	Cable Upright Row	12	3	12	2	12	1					1
	Reverse Crunch	10	3	10	2	10	2	10	1			1

Day 4	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	BB Overhead Press	6	3	6	2	6	2	6	1	2-3
	Leg Press	12	2	12	2	12	2	12	1	2-3
	Standing Cable Chest Flye	15	2	15	2	15	1			1
	Rear Delt Cable Flye	15	2	15	2	15	1			1
	Smith Machine Calf Raise	15	2	15	2	15	1			1
	DB Shrug	12	2	12	2	12	1			1

Day 5	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Chest Supported Row	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	2-3
	Incline DB Press	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	2-3
	Leg Extension	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1
	BB Hip Thrust	10	3	10	2	10	1			1
	EZ Preacher Curl	15	2	15	1					1
	Cable Pushdown	15	2	15	1					1

Programme

[Go to Exercise Notes](#)

Block 2.2 Week 7-8

Day 1	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Back Squat	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	3-4
	Seated Smith Machine Press	10	3	10	2	10	1	MR	0			2-3
	Lat Pull-down (close grip)	10	3	10	2	10	1	MR	0			2-3
	Alternate Leg Curl	20	3	20	2	20	1					1
	DB Hammer Curl	10	2	10	1	MR	0					1

Day 2	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	BB Bench Press	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	2-3
	Chest Supported Row	12	2	12	1	MR	0					2-3
	Alternate Leg Extension	20	3	20	2	20	1	MR	0			1
	Single Leg DB Calf Raise	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1			1
	Roman Chair Leg Raise	15	-	15	-	15	-	15	-			1
	Cable Lateral Raise	12	2	12	1	MR	0					1

Day 3	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Deadlift	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	3-4
	Pull-up	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	2-3
	Tricep Dip	8	3	8	2	8	1					2-3
	DB Tricep Skullcrusher	12	1	MR	0							1
	Adductor Machine	15	3	15	2	15	1					1
	Abductor Machine	15	3	15	2	15	1					1

Day 4	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	BB Overhead Press	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	2-3
	Single Leg Press	10	3	10	2	10	2	10	1			1-2
	Incline Cable Chest Flye	12	3	12	2	12	1	MR	0			1
	EZ Bar Curl	15	3	15	2	15	1	MR	0			1
	Setead Calf Press	12	3	12	2	12	1					1

Day 5	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Pendlay Row	8	3	8	2	8	2	MR	0	2-3
	Flat DB Press	10	3	10	2	10	1	MR	0	2-3
	Romanian Deadlift	12	3	12	2	12	1			1-2
	Lat Prayer	12	2	12	2	MR	0			1
	Cable Pushdown	10	2	10	2	MR	0			1
	Decline Crunch	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1

Programme

[Go to Exercise Notes](#)

Block 3.1 Week 9

Day 1	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Back Squat	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	2	3-4
	BB Overhead Press	4	2	4	2	4	1	4	0	2-3
	Single Arm DB Row	6	2	6	2	6	1	6	0	1-2
	Incline Cable Chest Flye	15	3	15	2	15	1			1
	Kneeling Cable Crunch	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1	1

Day 2	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Deadlift	3	2	3	1	3	1			3-4
	BB Bench Press	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1	2-3
	Leg Extension	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1-2
	EZ Bar Curl	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1
	Smith Machine Calf Raise	20	3	20	2	20	2	20	1	1

Day 3	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Pull-up	4	2	4	2	4	2	4	1	2-3
	Tricep Dip	6	2	6	2	6	2	6	1	2-3
	Cable Pushdown (drop set)	10	1	MR	0	MR	0			0
	DB Lateral Raise	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1	1
	Leg Curl	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1	1

Day 4	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Back Squat	3	2	3	1	3	1			3-4
	BB Overhead Press	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1	2-3
	Chest Supported Row	12	2	12	2	12	1			2-3
	Reverse Crunch	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1
	Adductor Machine	15	3	15	2	15	1			1
	Abductor Machine	15	3	15	2	15	1			1

Day 5	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Deadlift	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	2	3-4
	BB Bench Press	4	2	4	2	4	2	4	1	2-3
	Bodyweight Pull-up	MR-1	1	MR	0					2-3
	Lat Prayer (drop set)	12	1	MR	0	MR	0			0
	Seated Calf Press	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1
	Cable Upright Row	12	2	12	2	12	1			1

Programme

[Go to Exercise Notes](#)

Block 3.2 Week 10

Day 1	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Back Squat	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1	3-4
	BB Overhead Press	3	2	3	2	3	1	3	0	2-3
	Single Arm DB Row	6	2	6	2	6	1	6	0	1-2
	Incline Cable Chest Flye	15	3	15	2	15	1			1
	Kneeling Cable Crunch	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1	1

Day 2	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Deadlift	3	2	3	1	3	1			3-4
	BB Bench Press	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1	2-3
	Leg Extension	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1-2
	EZ Bar Curl	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1
	Smith Machine Calf Raise	20	3	20	2	20	2	20	1	1

Day 3	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Pull-up	4	2	4	2	4	1	4	0	2-3
	Tricep Dip	6	2	6	2	6	1	6	0	2-3
	Cable Pushdown (drop set)	10	1	MR	0	MR	0			0
	DB Lateral Raise	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1	1
	Leg Curl	15	3	15	2	15	2	15	1	1

Day 4	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Back Squat	3	2	3	1	3	1			3-4
	BB Overhead Press	8	3	8	2	8	1	8	0	2-3
	Chest Supported Row	12	2	12	1	12	0			2-3
	Reverse Crunch	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1
	Adductor Machine	15	3	15	2	15	1			1
	Abductor Machine	15	3	15	2	15	1			1

Day 5	Exercise	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Reps	RIR	Rest
	Deadlift	8	3	8	2	8	2	8	1	3-4
	BB Bench Press	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	1	2-3
	Bodyweight Pull-up	MR-1	1	MR	0					2-3
	Lat Prayer (drop set)	12	1	MR	0	MR	0			0
	Seated Calf Press	12	3	12	2	12	2	12	1	1
	Cable Upright Row	12	2	12	2	12	1			1

Glossary of Terms

Volume - The amount of training undertaken by a muscle group or an individual. For example, 'weekly volume' refers to the amount of training completed inside one week, and so on for 'daily volume', 'total volume' etc.

Frequency - The regularity with which a muscle group is targeted.

Intensity - How difficult a set is, or how much effort is required to complete it. This is a function of the weight used and number of reps performed (and how that relates to the ability of the individual).

Load - The amount of weight lifted during exercise.

RIR - Reps in Reserve - the number of reps a trainee is away from failure.

Training split - The manner in which weekly training volume is distributed (eg. PPL, Upper-Lower, Full Body)

Neutral grip - Sometimes described as a hammer grip, this is a grip that is neither supinated (palms up) or pronated (palms down/overhand), but with palms facing each other. An example of a neutral grip in everyday life is pulling a door open using a vertically oriented handle.

Hypertrophy - An increase in muscle mass.

Resistance Training - Modes of exercise which cause the muscles to contract against an external load

Calorie Surplus - When an individual consumes a higher number of calories than they typically expend.

Calorie Deficit - When an individual consumes a lower number of calories than they typically expend.

TDEE - Total daily energy expenditure. This is the number of calories an individual uses within a day.

Energy Balance - The relationship between calories consumed and calories expended. Therefore, a positive energy balance is synonymous with calorie surplus and a negative energy balance with calorie deficit.

MR (Max Reps) - This denotes the maximum number of reps one is able to perform. It could also be described as "a set to failure" or AMRAP (as many reps as possible). Please see the FAQ section for further info.

MR-1 - This represents maximum reps, minus one. In other words, stopping one rep from failure (this is the same as an RIR of 1).

FAQ's

How does this programme differ from the beginner programme?

The primary differences between this programme and the intermediate programme are exercise selection, mode of periodisation and overall workload (when both volume and intensity are factored in). The beginner programme starts with a less demanding acclimation phase, whereas this one assumes a higher level of competence in the complex movements, as well as a higher required workload to elicit an adaptive response - as tends to be the case with those who have been resistance training for longer.

Are my rest times rigid?

In a word, no. Your recovery will be partly impacted by your ability to recover from a cardiovascular perspective. Therefore, those with higher fitness levels may find that they are able to reduce rest times a little. With that being said, if you find that the weights you are able to complete your sets with decrease quickly from one set to the next, you may not be resting for long enough and would possibly stand to benefit from adding another 30-60 seconds between sets.

I don't feel like my workouts are very intense, what should I do?

The first move would be to ensure you aren't overestimating your intensity (i.e. calling your set and RIR 2 when it may in fact be much higher). If you are unsure, try taking a weight that you would usually use for a set of 10 at an RIR 2 and take your set to complete failure. If you get above 12, you have misjudged the RIR and need to go a little heavier next time. Those with a little more experience training who have a good grasp on what a set to failure feels like, will know that a set with an RIR 2 or 3 should still feel like quite a difficult set. Second to that, ensure your form is good and you aren't 'cheating' any reps (therefore deducting from the intensity), and be conscious of moving each rep through a full range of motion.

When do I increase the weight I'm using and by how much?

The answer is whenever you can. If that's every workout (though very unlikely) or just once every couple of weeks by a very small increment (much more likely), so be it. Actually, if you are thinking primarily about adhering to the RIR numbers, then the weights you choose will automatically increase as your strength increases. For example, let's say you have been performing a set of 10 with an RIR 2 with X kilograms. As your strength increases, the maximum number of reps you could complete with that weight (X kg) will increase, which will in turn make your RIR increase. Therefore, you will need to increase the weight you use in order to keep the RIR down at 2.

Do I change the weight I use every time the RIR changes?

Not necessarily. Let's take an example where you have four sets, with RIRs of 3, 2, 2, and 1. This represents your sets becoming slightly harder and you get slightly closer to failure as you progress through them. Some of that increase in difficulty may come about as a result of fatigue. For example, even if you use the same weight throughout, you would certainly find your fourth set more difficult than your first (which means the RIR will have increased). Typically, this fatigue may not kick in early on - people don't tend to fatigue much between their first and second set - so you may still need to increase your weights a touch, but for the most part you should find they are staying fairly consistent throughout most of your sets. It is unlikely that you would have to alter your weight used every set.

Where should I place my rest days?

Since the programme is made up of five training days, it would make the most sense to train three days on, one day off, two days on and one day off (making up the seven days of the week). Therefore, my suggestion would be something along the lines of taking Saturdays and Wednesdays off (or something that represents the same distribution). If you did want to train over the five consecutive weekdays and take the full weekend off, realistically this would be fine too, although I would say marginally less optimal than the previous suggestion.

Can I change the order of exercises?

Exercises have been ordered intentionally in a way that manages fatigue as best as is possible. If you do want to change the order of exercises, the impact that has will depend on the extent to which you do it. Taking what is supposed to be your first exercise and placing it last, would probably hinder your progress somewhat. After the initial couple of main compound exercises in each workout, the order becomes less important, so swapping around isolation exercises in the latter half of the workout likely wouldn't be a problem.

Can I change the order of training days?

As with the order of exercises, the order of training days is not accidental. If you for some reason do want to change the order, just be careful not to place two days where you are performing the same core movements consecutively. For example, a day with a horizontal push (e.g. bench press) should not be next to another. Once you have changed the order of training days, keep that order consistent for the whole training block.

What should I do if I can't train X times per week?

If you cannot train five times per week, the best option would be to simply follow the programme as it is laid out, doing each workout in order, and simply seeing it through regardless of how long it takes. For example, if you could only train four times in a week, you would do days 1-4 from Block 1.1, then next week you would start with day 5 from Block 1.1 before moving onto Block 1.2. This of course means that the training week no longer aligns with your calendar week - this isn't a problem. Just train with the maximum frequency you can appropriately manage (up to 5 times per week).

What do I do if I am aching from workouts?

If you are still able to perform all the exercises required with a full range of motion and the required intensity, do so. There is no fundamental problem with training whilst still aching. If however, it inhibits your ability to actually perform the exercises required, add in a rest day and roll over any missed training days into the following week (as described above).

I'm not aching after my workouts, does this mean I didn't train hard enough?

If you cannot train five times per week, the best option would be to simply follow the programme as it is laid out, doing each workout in order, and simply seeing it through regardless of how long it takes. For example, if you could only train four times in a week, you would do days 1-4 from Block 1.1, then next week you would start with day 5 from Block 1.1 before moving onto Block 1.2. This of course means that the training week no longer aligns with your calendar week - this isn't a problem. Just train with the maximum frequency you can appropriately manage (up to 5 times per week).

I'm struggling with the RIR system, what should I do?

First, ensure you have read through the RIR section of this document thoroughly. If you are still confused, you can go with a general rule of thumb that says most of your sets should get you to within 1-3 reps from failure. Once you are happy with the level of intensity of your workout, you can make a note of your weights used and try to match or beat those each session - just be aware of remaining primarily in the 1-3 reps from failure bracket.

I don't have a particular machine/equipment in my gym, what should I do?

Please see some suggestions for exercise replacements in the exercise notes section.

Can I use this programme for bulking and cutting?

Yes. Both aims involve hypertrophy-focused resistance training. Whether you approach this programme as part of a gaining phase or a fat loss phase, is more related to the nutrition side of things and the calories you consume (relative to your TDEE) whilst undertaking the programme.

How much muscle should I gain by the end of this programme?

Again, this is somewhat dependent on whether you plan to cut or bulk. There are also many factors such as height, age, training experience and genetics that really prohibit us from putting an actual figure on this. Ten weeks is a very short period of time in bodybuilding terms, so certainly do not expect major changes on your first run of the programme. However, if you adhere to the workouts and manage your accompanying nutrition regimen well, we hope you will be happy with your results.

What do I do when I finish the programme? Can I repeat it?

You have a couple of options. If you are happy with your progress and have enjoyed the programme, you could simply repeat it (after perhaps taking a week to deload). You may want to slightly decrease your RIR numbers for Block 1 (or even skip straight to Block 2.1) and you may also like to swap some like-for-like exercises (see exercise notes for suggestions), but beyond that you would be fine to simply keep the rest of the programme structure as it is and repeat it. This would also give the added benefit of being able to compare the exact weights you are using with the first iteration of the programme. If you want to play around with the duration of each training block slightly, this is another option to modify the programme.

Should I include cardio?

Cardio is not a compulsory component of the programme, in the sense that it isn't directly required to facilitate hypertrophy. You may still benefit from doing some as a means of manipulating your calorie expenditure, either to help with fat loss or to minimize fat gain. Please refer to the cardio & nutrition sections of this document.

What should I do for a warm-up?

Please see the warm-up section of this document.

Exercise Notes

Below you will find a list of all the exercises mentioned in the programme (in the order they appear), along with some possible substitutions (appearing in order of suitability) for each and some added notes regarding grip, form etc. Please note that exercises have been selected intentionally throughout the programme, so only utilise the exercise substitutions if you need to.

Bulgarian Split Squat - *smith machine split squat, single leg press* - No additional notes.

Seated DB Press - *BB overhead press* - Sit on a bench with the backpad as close to vertical as possible.

Lat Pulldown - *assisted pull up* - If available, unless otherwise specified, use a handle that allows for a neutral grip roughly shoulder width or slightly closer.

Leg Curl - *no substitution* - Use a seated machine rather than lying leg curl machine (but use the lying machine if that is all that's available).

DB Bicep Curl - *barbell/ez bar curl* - reps are given in the programme as the total sum of reps on both arms. Perform reps alternately (left, right, left, right).

Decline Crunch - *kneeling cable crunch* - You will need to use a bench with a leg attachment (ie a decline bench) to keep you in place whilst performing the reps. Hold weight behind head when needed.

BB Bench Press - *DB press* - Use a spotter or a rack with safety bars if going anywhere near failure.

T-bar Row - *landmine row, bent over barbell row* - Using small plates on the bar will allow you to bring the bar closer into your chest (greater range of motion).

DB Lateral Raise - *cable lateral raise, lateral raise machine* - no additional notes.

Seated Calf Press - *any bent leg calf press* - No additional notes.

Cable Overhead Extension - *French press, DB skullcrusher* - Use rope attachment (or two if easier).

Pull-up - *lat pull-down* - If possible, use a neutral grip just closer than shoulder width. If not available, use a pronated (overhand) grip, just wider than shoulder width.

Deadlift - *no substitution* - For this programme, choose sumo or conventional deadlifts (whichever you prefer) and keep that consistent for the duration of the programme.

Tricep Dip - *tricep dip machine* - Use a belt to add weight to this exercise when required, or use the assisted dip/pull-up station if you need to (and have one available).

Cable Upright Row - *EZ bar upright row, DB monkey shrug* - Use a rope attachment, or EZ cable attachment, according to whichever you find most comfortable.

Reverse Crunch - *hanging leg raise, roman chair leg raise* - Use a decline bench, with your head at the higher end. Hold onto the bench above your head. Adjust angle to increase difficulty.

BB Overhead Press - *seated DB press* - no additional notes.

Leg Press - *hack squat, smith machine squat* - If available, plate-loaded leg presses on an incline (usually around 45 degrees) tend to be superior to those machines that move the foot plate horizontally, but use whichever you have available.

Standing Cable Chest Flye - *pec deck/pec flye machine* - no additional notes.

Rear Delt Cable Flye - *reverse pec deck/rear delt machine, rear delt DB flyes* - These can be performed standing, both sides at once, or single arm (for which bent over may be more convenient).

Smith Machine Calf Raise - *calf raise machine, calf press on horizontal leg press machine* - Use small plates to elevate toes if you want a greater range of motion.

DB Shrug - *hex bar shrug, barbell shrug, Smith machine shrug* - Use lifting straps if you need assistance with grip.

Chest Supported Row - *machine row, seal row, chest-supported t-bar row* - This is not a specific exercise, but instead stands for any of the exercise substitutions given. Any horizontal pull movement with chest-support (therefore not requiring core bracing) is fine to use here, and the difference between each will be negligible, so choose as you prefer.

Incline DB Press - *incline barbell press* - use an incline bench on a 30-45 degree angle (no higher).

Leg Extension - *no substitute* - no additional notes.

BB Hip Thrust - *hip thrust using leg extension machine* - use a pad or rolled up mat between yourself and the bar if you find it uncomfortable.

EZ Preacher Curl - *DB preacher curl, preacher curl machine* - No additional notes.

Cable Pushdown - *tricep extension machine* - Use rope attachment, or two (to increase range of motion) if preferred. You may like to use two ropes, take a step away from the cable stack and lean slightly forward to enable a greater range of motion.

Back Squat - *front squat, smith machine squat* - Use an appropriate rack with safety bars.

Smith Machine Shoulder Press - *shoulder press machine* - Sit on a flat bench without using back support. This will force you to maintain a similar bar path to free bar overhead presses.

Alternate Leg Curl - *no substitution* - Unless otherwise stated, use a seated machine rather than lying leg curl machine (but use the lying machine if that is all that's available). Perform reps alternately (left, right, left, right etc).

DB Hammer Curl - *DB curl, EZ bar curl* - Reps are given as total sum for each side, intended to be performed alternately.

Alternate Leg Extension - *no substitute* - Perform alternately (reps given as total for set).

Single Leg DB Calf Raise - *single leg calf press* - It may help to balance if you hold the DB (or plate) on the working side. Add a small plate under the front of the foot for added range of motion if desired.

Roman Chair Leg Raise - *hanging leg raise, decline leg raise* - No additional notes.

Cable Lateral Raise - *lateral raise machine, DB lateral raise* - these will be best performed on narrow cables (where weight stacks are close together). If you only have wide cables available (as in those typically used for chest flyes), you may perform these single arm (a complete set with one arm, before swapping and performing a complete set with the other arm).

DB Tricep Skullcrusher - *EZ skullcrushers, French press* - Use a neutral grip whilst lying on a flat bench.

Adductor Machine - *cable adductor raises (with ankle attachment)* - No additional notes.

Abductor Machine - *cable abductor raises (with ankle attachment)* - No additional notes.

Single Leg Press - *Bulgarian split squats* - These are intended to be performed one side at a time. I.e. do a full set with the left leg, rest, then perform the set with the right leg. Four sets in the programme represents four sets for each side.

Incline Cable Chest Flye - *incline dumbbell flye* - Place an incline bench between cables, slightly in front of the line that goes between each weight stack (so the stacks are in line with the back end of the bench).

EZ Bar Curl - *barbell curl, DB hammer curl* - no additional notes

Pendlay Row - *barbell row, Smith machine pendlay row* - Use straps if assistance with grip is required.

Flat DB Press - *barbell bench press* - No additional notes.

Romanian Deadlift - *stiff leg deadlift* - Use dumbbells or barbell as preferred.

Lat Prayer - *DB pull-over* - Perform standing or kneeling. Using two ropes may enable you to bring your arms right down by your side at the bottom of each rep.

Decline Crunch - *kneeling cable crunch* - You will need to use a bench with a leg attachment (ie a decline bench) to keep you in place whilst performing the reps.

Single Arm DB Row - *single arm machine row* - No additional notes.

Kneeling Cable Crunch - *decline crunch/ any weighted crunch* - Use rope attachment and hold either side of head.

Lat Prayer - *dumbbell pull-over* - Perform standing or kneeling. Use rope grip, or two for a greater range of motion.

Can I do conventional deadlifts instead of sumo?

Although there is of course overlap, sumo deadlifts do recruit different muscle groups than conventional deadlifts. Therefore, they have been chosen purposely for how they fit into the overall picture of each training week. If you are proficient in both variations, or neither, we would encourage you to keep the sumo deadlifts in there. However, if you are accustomed to conventional deadlifts and feel far more comfortable doing those than sumo, in that case it may be worth sticking with conventional.

Can I add extra volume?

If the exercise, reps and RIRs are adhered to, you shouldn't feel like you need to add extra volume. The danger in doing so is that you use energy performing and recovering from that extra volume, which detracts from the rest of the work prescribed in the programme. If you are supremely confident you are capable of a higher workload than that given, you may want to add some extra exercises/sets onto the end of your workouts. We would caution you against adding extra volume onto exercises already given within your workouts, as this would likely have an effect on the remainder of the workout.

How do I set weights for sets that are given as MR?

Where the reps column reads as MR, either the weight is already specified as bodyweight, or it is part of a drop-set. For the latter, just reduce the weight slightly from the one you used for the previous set. For example, for the cable pushdown drop-set on day 3 of Block 3.2, you first have a set of 10 reps at an RIR of 1. Set the weight accordingly for that, then for the following sets, just reduce the weight slightly and perform sets to failure. Two plates on the cable weight stack, or thereabouts, should be sufficient.

A man in a gym, wearing a dark cap and earbuds, is shown in profile, leaning forward and holding a barbell. The background is a dimly lit gym with various equipment. The text "THANK YOU" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

THANK YOU