

THE RESET CO.

The 12-Week Strength Plan

From your living room to lifelong strength — the training half of your Reset

STRENGTH FILE 1 OF 6

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Welcome — This Is the Other Half

Hi. If you're reading this, you've either just finished the 28-Day Reset or you're partway through it, and something in you said yes to more. Good. That instinct is right, and I want to tell you why before we lift a single thing.

The Reset taught you how to eat for a body whose rules changed — protein first, real meal structure, no starving, no starting over on Mondays. And tucked into Week 3 was a quiet little section called Strength Support, with six humble movements: wall pushups, chair squats, glute bridges, step-ups, farmer carries, a wall plank. If you've been doing them, you may have noticed something. They stopped being hard. That's not a small thing. That's your body doing exactly what it's built to do at 40, at 50, at 60: adapt.

Here's the honest truth about that No-Gym Starter, though. It was the on-ramp. This is the road.

Eating well protects the muscle you have. Only progressive strength training *builds* it back. Those are the two halves of the same project, and you've been working with one hand until now. The Reset handles the raw material — the 25 to 35 grams of protein anchoring every meal. This plan is what tells your body to actually use it.

So here's my promise for the next twelve weeks:

- **Three short sessions a week.** Thirty to forty minutes, warmup included. And if life only gives you two days some weeks — two works. I'll show you exactly which two.
- **Every session written out.** Every week, every exercise, every set, every rep, every rest period. There is nothing to design, calculate, or guess. You open the page for the day and do what it says.
- **Every movement coached.** All twenty-four movements in this program have full instructions in the Form Library — setup, cues, breathing, the mistakes to watch for, and an easier and harder version of each. If your knees complain, there's a swap. If it's too easy, there's a next level.
- **Week 1 starts where you already are.** The first week of this plan is built directly from the No-Gym Starter movements. If you've been doing them, you'll recognize every single one. If you haven't started yet, that's fine too — Week 1 assumes nothing.

You do not need a gym. You don't need one for all twelve weeks. Phase 1 uses your body, a backpack, and things you already own. When dumbbells arrive in Week 5, the entire equipment list costs less than about \$60, and the Home Gym Setup file walks you through exactly what to buy and what weight to start with.

One more thing, because I know how the last twenty years of fitness marketing have treated you. This is not a punishment program. There are no burpee-till-you-drop finishers, no “beach body” countdowns, no shame if you miss a day. There’s a written protocol for missed weeks, because missing weeks is a normal part of a human life. The goal here isn’t to survive twelve brutal weeks. It’s to become a person who lifts — quietly, twice or three times a week, for the rest of your life. The twelve weeks are just how we get the habit and the base built.

The scale may or may not move much in twelve weeks. I’ll be straight with you about that in Chapter 1. But the number on the dumbbell? That one grows faster than anything the scale does. And it turns out that watching yourself get measurably, undeniably stronger — week after week, in your own handwriting in the training log — does something for a woman who’s spent years being told her body is failing her. It’s proof, in ink, that it isn’t.

Let’s begin.

Before You Start: Your Health

One page. Please actually read it — it’s short, it’s not scary, and it’s the difference between a program that serves you and one that doesn’t.

Strength training at the level in this plan is remarkably safe. In research trials with women in their 50s, 60s, and beyond — including women with low bone density — supervised, sensibly progressed lifting has a strong safety record (Watson 2018). We’ve built this program even more conservatively than those trials, because you’re at home without a coach standing next to you. That said, a few situations call for a conversation with a professional first.

Check in with your doctor before starting if any of these apply

- You’ve been mostly inactive **and** you have a known heart, metabolic (including diabetes), or kidney condition — or symptoms that could suggest one, like chest discomfort, unusual breathlessness, or dizziness with exertion (this is the standard ACSM 2018 screening guidance, not special caution for you personally).
- You’ve had a **fracture in the past 12 months**, or you have a history of vertebral (spine) fracture.
- You’ve had a **joint replacement** — most people with replacements can and should strength train, but your surgeon or physical therapist should tell you which movements to modify.

- You take medications that affect heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar, or balance. You don't need to stop them — your doctor just needs to know you're starting a strength program, and you may need to time sessions around them.
- You're managing any condition where your care team has told you to check before changing exercise.

If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia

First: strength training is one of the best-supported things you can do for your bones — resistance training is a named strategy in the bone-health literature, and this program includes gentle, optional bone-loading elements drawn from research trials (Watson 2018). You are exactly the person this kind of training is *for*.

And: please get clearance and, ideally, a session or two with a physical therapist or qualified trainer before you start, especially if your diagnosis is established osteoporosis rather than osteopenia. Two specific notes your provider will want you to know: this program avoids loaded spinal flexion (heavy rounding-forward under weight), and the optional impact moves (Heel Drops, Low Hops) are **off the menu** if you have a history of vertebral fracture — skip them entirely and do everything else.

If you have pelvic floor symptoms

If you experience urinary leaking (with lifting, sneezing, or exercise), a feeling of vaginal heaviness or bulge, or you've been told you have pelvic organ prolapse: see a **pelvic floor physical therapist** before loading gets heavy. This is not a “you can't lift” verdict — it's the opposite. Pelvic floor PTs exist to get women lifting safely, and a couple of appointments now can solve problems that ignoring them will not. In the meantime, Phase 1 as written is gentle, and Chapter 3 covers breathing and bracing basics that protect the pelvic floor. If those symptoms ever appear *during* this program: same advice. Book the appointment; keep training at the level that's symptom-free.

The soreness-vs-pain rule (memorize this one)

You will be sore, especially in the first two weeks. Here's how to tell normal from not:

Normal: a dull, general ache in the muscles you worked, showing up 24 to 72 hours after a session, roughly symmetrical (both thighs, both arms), easing with gentle movement, gone in a few days. This is standard adaptation. It fades dramatically after the first couple of weeks and is *not* a measure of how well the workout worked.

Not normal — stop that movement: pain that is sharp, one-sided, located at a joint line rather than in the belly of a muscle, present *during* the lift, or getting worse session over session. When that happens: stop that specific movement (not the whole program), use the joint-friendly swap in the Form Library, and if it persists more than a week or two, see a professional. Pain is information, not weakness, and working around it is a skill this program will teach you.

And the universal rule, always in effect: if you feel chest pain, unusual breathlessness, or dizziness during any session, stop and seek medical advice. Not because it's likely — because it's the rule.

That's the whole safety page. For most women reading this, the answer is simply: you're cleared, start Monday.

Chapter 1 — Why Strength Is the Lever After 40

The Reset made the case that muscle is your metabolic engine and that eating protein-first protects it. If you've read that, I'm not going to repeat it. What I want to do here is take you one level deeper — because when you understand what's actually happening in your muscles, joints, and bones right now, the next twelve weeks stop being “exercise” and become something closer to the single highest-leverage thing you can do with ninety minutes a week.

The quiet drain you never agreed to

Starting somewhere in your 30s, adults lose roughly 3 to 8 percent of their muscle mass per decade. After 50, the rate accelerates — closer to 5 to 10 percent per decade — and the estrogen decline of menopause means women lose muscle faster than men do through this window (UCLA Health 2024). Nobody announces this. There's no letter in the mail. It shows up as the grocery bags feeling heavier, the jar lids getting stubborn, needing the armrest to stand up from a low couch. It shows up in the effort-injustice you may already know intimately: eating the same as you did at 38 and gaining anyway, because the engine that used to burn that fuel is quietly getting smaller.

Here's what makes this different from almost every other change of midlife: **it is not a one-way street.** Muscle tissue remains responsive to training at every age researchers have studied. In a 20-week free-weight trial with middle-aged women — grouped by menopause status, so this is *your* demographic, not 25-year-olds — lower-body strength gains were large across every group, pre-, peri-, and post-menopausal (BMC Women's Health 2023). Untrained women get strong *fast* in percentage terms, precisely because there's so much responsive tissue waiting for a reason to adapt. The drain runs by

default. Training reverses the flow. Eating protein alone slows the leak; only training turns the tap back on.

The menopause musculoskeletal reality — you're not imagining the aches

If your joints have started complaining — knees on stairs, shoulders reaching overhead, that all-over morning stiffness that wasn't there five years ago — I want you to hear this clearly: it's real, it's common, and it has a name. Researchers now describe a “musculoskeletal syndrome of menopause,” estimated to affect around 70 percent of women through the menopause transition, with roughly half experiencing joint pain specifically (Wright et al., summarized 2024). Estrogen isn't just a reproductive hormone; it's active in tendon, joint, and muscle tissue, and its decline changes how those tissues feel and recover. (Fair warning: this research area is newer and still developing — but the pattern is consistent, and it matches what millions of women report.)

Here's the part that matters for the next twelve weeks: **achy joints are not a reason to avoid strength training. They're one of the strongest reasons to do it** — resistance training is named in that same literature as a key preventive strategy. Stronger muscles take load off joints. Progressively loaded tendons adapt and become more resilient. But — and this is why this program looks the way it does — midlife tendons ask for more patience than they used to. That's why every session starts with a real warmup, why we control tempo instead of bouncing through reps, why load jumps are small, and why every single movement has a joint-friendly swap. Chapter 3 covers this in full. For now, just know: the aches were factored into the blueprint. You don't have to train around this program. It was built around you.

Muscle is where your blood sugar goes

One more piece of the picture the Reset touched on, worth deepening: your muscles are the largest disposal site for blood glucose in your body. When you eat carbohydrates, muscle is where most of that glucose should go — pulled out of the bloodstream and stored as fuel. Less muscle means less storage capacity and a body that has to work harder to keep blood sugar steady, right at the life stage when the menopause transition is already nudging fat storage toward the middle (Greendale 2019). More muscle — and, just as importantly, *regularly used* muscle — means more glucose disposal, steadier energy, and less of the afternoon crash-and-crave cycle. Every session in this plan is, among other things, a blood sugar appointment. You'll likely feel this effect long before you see anything in a mirror.

Bones respond to being asked

Your skeleton is not a coat rack. It's living tissue that remodels itself constantly based on the demands you place on it — and after menopause, with estrogen's protective effect withdrawn, the default demand signal gets quiet and bone density drifts downward.

The research here is genuinely encouraging, and I want to represent it honestly. The landmark trial — LIFTMOR (Watson 2018) — put postmenopausal women with low bone density through just two 30-minute sessions a week of heavy, closely supervised barbell lifting plus impact work, and after eight months saw meaningful bone density improvements at the spine and hip, with an excellent safety record. A separate line of research found that a simple daily hopping protocol, built up gradually over six months, measurably improved hip bone strength in premenopausal women (Brown 2020).

What we take from the bone research — and what we don't.

This program is not LIFTMOR. That trial used heavy barbell training with a coach watching every rep, and it screened participants intensively. I will not promise you a bone density percentage, and you should side-eye anyone who does. What this program *does* take from the research is the shape of the winning formula: progressive resistance through the big lower-body and spine-loading patterns, plus small, optional doses of impact — Heel Drops in Phases 1 and 2, building to Low Hops in Phase 3 for those who want them. Think of the impact moves as a bone-supporting habit borrowed from research trials: two to three minutes, two to three times a week, scaled to you, always opt-in, and skipped entirely if you have a vertebral fracture history or pelvic floor symptoms. Twelve weeks builds the habit and the base. The bone payoff compounds over years — which is exactly why we're building something you'll still be doing years from now.

The independence math

Let me zoom out to the longest view, because I think it's the most motivating one and almost nobody says it plainly.

Every physical thing you want to be doing at 75 — traveling, gardening, getting off the floor with a grandchild, carrying your own suitcase, living in your own house on your own terms — sits on a foundation of strength you are either building or losing right now. The women who are strong at 75 are overwhelmingly the women who were training at 55. Floor-to-standing. Stairs without the railing. Catching yourself when you trip instead of falling. These are strength skills, and the six movement patterns in this program — squat, hinge, push, pull, carry, core — *are* those skills, rehearsed with progressively more resistance until they have margin to spare.

You're not training for a swimsuit. You're training for the version of you twenty and thirty years out, and she is going to be so glad you started this week.

What twelve weeks actually delivers — and what it doesn't.

What you can realistically expect:

- **Real, measurable strength gains.** This is the most reliably delivered outcome in the entire fitness research literature for untrained women — trials in your age group show large lower-body strength improvements and solid upper-body gains within weeks to months (BMC Women's Health 2023). You will lift more in Week 12 than in Week 1. The training log will prove it in your own handwriting.
- **The dumbbell number climbing.** The weight you goblet squat in Week 5 will look small to you by Week 10. This is the progress metric that never gaslights you.
- **Function and energy.** Stairs, floors, grocery hauls, yard work — noticeably easier. Most women also report steadier energy and better sleep pressure at night, which pairs nicely with what the Reset is already doing.
- **The habit.** By Week 12 you'll be someone who trains — with a system for busy weeks, bad-sleep days, and comebacks. That identity shift is the real product.

What twelve weeks will not do:

- **Dramatically change the scale.** Muscle gain in twelve weeks is modest — slower than strength gain, and slower still post-menopause (BMC Women's Health 2023). You may see clothes fit differently before you see the scale move, and body composition change is a months-and-years story that this program starts, not finishes.
- **Cure menopause symptoms.** Exercise has many proven benefits, but the evidence that it relieves hot flashes specifically is mixed at best (Cochrane 2014). If your hot flashes fade during these twelve weeks, wonderful — I just won't pretend the dumbbells did it.
- **"Fix" your bones by October.** Meaningful bone density change takes sustained loading over eight-plus months in the trials (Watson 2018). Twelve weeks lays the foundation and builds the habit that gets you there.

Strength first, function alongside, composition slowly, bones on the long game. That's the honest order of operations — and the first item on the list starts paying out in about two weeks.

Chapter 2 — How This Program Works

This chapter is the owner’s manual. Read it once now, skim it again after Week 1, and you’ll understand every decision in the next twelve weeks. There are no other rules hiding anywhere.

The shape of the twelve weeks: three phases

The program is three phases of four weeks each. Each phase has a job.

Phase	Weeks	Name	The job	Equipment
1	1–4	Foundation	Groove the six patterns, build work capacity, learn effort and tempo	None — bodyweight, a backpack, household weights
2	5–8	Load	Dumbbells enter; learn double progression; the numbers start climbing	Dumbbells (≤ ~\$60 setup)
3	9–12	Build	Heavier weights, slightly lower reps on the big lifts, optional impact and finishers; Week 12 is test week	Same dumbbells

Everything in this program is organized around six movement patterns — squat, hinge, push, pull, carry, core — because those six are how a human body interacts with the physical world. Chairs, floors, groceries, suitcases, grandkids. Twenty-four total movements across the twelve weeks, each with an easier, standard, and harder level, so the program meets you exactly where you are and never runs out of road.

Phase 1 will feel familiar on purpose. Session A of Week 1 is built from the same movements as the Reset’s No-Gym Starter — chair squats, wall pushups, glute bridges, farmer carries. If you’ve been doing that routine, your first week here is a continuation, not a restart. We add structure, a second pattern day, benchmarks, and a progression system — but your body will recognize the work.

Week 1 is also **benchmark week**: you’ll log a few simple baseline numbers (squat reps at a comfortable effort, your pushup level and reps, carry weight and steps, plank time) on the benchmark page of the Training Log. Week 12 repeats those exact tests. That before-and-after page is the single most satisfying spread in this entire bundle. Don’t skip the baseline — you can’t beat a number you never wrote down.

The weekly rhythm: A, B, C

Each week has three sessions, and they rotate through the patterns so nothing gets hammered two days in a row:

- **Session A — Squat + Push.** Squatting patterns, pushing patterns, plus carry and core.
- **Session B — Hinge + Pull.** Hip hinging (the deadlift family), rowing, plus core and the optional bone work.
- **Session C — Full Body.** A balanced mix that touches everything once.

Schedule them on non-consecutive days — Monday/Wednesday/Friday is the classic, but Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday works identically. The non-negotiable is roughly 48 hours between sessions, because the adaptation you're chasing happens during recovery, not during the workout. Training on back-to-back days doesn't earn extra credit; it just borrows from tomorrow's session.

Every session is 30 to 40 minutes including the 5-minute warmup ramp (which lives in the Warmup & Mobility file — same ramp before every session, ever, no exceptions, and doubly so in this decade of life; Chapter 3 explains why your tendons will thank you).

The minimum-viable week: two days always counts

Here is a rule I want you to internalize before life tests it: **a two-session week is a successful week.**

If a week gives you only two windows, do **Session A and Session B**. Together they cover all six patterns, and two quality full-body-pattern sessions a week is a legitimate, research-backed dose — official activity guidelines set the strength floor at twice a week, the best-known bone trial ran on exactly two sessions weekly (Watson 2018), and when total work is matched, meta-analyses find little difference between training frequencies (ACSM 2026). Session C is the C for a reason: it's the one that flexes.

What I'd ask of you: make two-day weeks the exception you deploy, not the default you drift into. Three days moves you faster, especially for upper-body strength. But when the sick kid, the work trip, or the flattening week arrives — A and B, and hold your head up. This program has no such thing as a failed week that included two sessions.

Effort: “leave 2 or 3 in the tank”

Nothing in this program is done to failure — no grinding, shaking, help-me-someone final reps. Instead, every exercise comes with a target in **reps in reserve (RIR)**: the number of good reps you could still do when you choose to stop.

- **“3–4 RIR”** (Phase 1): stop while it still feels honest but manageable. If you did 10 squats and could have done 13 or 14, that’s 3–4 in reserve. Correct.
- **“2–3 RIR”** (Phase 2): work until the last couple of reps feel genuinely heavy and slow down a bit — then stop, knowing 2 or 3 more were possible.
- **“2 RIR”** (Phase 3): the last rep of the set should feel like real work. Two more would have been possible. You never find out.

Why train this way? Because the research says failure isn’t required — stopping a few reps short produces comparable results for beginners while protecting form, joints, and next-session recovery (ACSM 2026). And because form breaks down in exactly those final desperate reps, and you’re coaching yourself. Leaving reps in the tank is not going easy. It’s how sustainable strength is built — and it’s what makes showing up Thursday feel possible after training Tuesday.

You will misjudge RIR at first; every beginner does, usually by stopping too early. That’s fine. Two honest tools calibrate you: bar speed (when reps genuinely slow down, you’re inside about 3 RIR) and the log (if you wrote 12 reps at 3 RIR three sessions running with no strain, you were further from the tank’s bottom than you thought — the progression rule below will catch it and move you up anyway).

Double progression: the only progression rule you need

This is the engine of the entire program, so let’s take it slowly. Every loaded exercise gives you a **rep range** — say, 8 to 12 — instead of a fixed number. The rule:

1. Work within the range at the prescribed RIR.
2. When you hit the **top of the range on all sets** with good form and at (or easier than) the target RIR — **add load next session** and drop back to the bottom of the range.
3. Climb the reps back up. Repeat for twelve weeks (honestly: for years).

Two dials — reps, then weight. You turn the reps dial until it maxes out, then click the weight dial once and start the reps dial over. Progress every single session, even the weeks the weight doesn’t change.

A worked example. It’s Week 5 and you’re goblet squatting, 3 sets of 8–12, at 2–3 RIR, holding a 15 lb dumbbell:

Session	Weight	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Decision
Week 5, Session A	15 lb	10	9	8	In range, not at top. Same weight next time.
Week 6, Session A	15 lb	12	11	10	Set 1 hit the top — but not all sets. Same weight.
Week 7, Session A	15 lb	12	12	12	Top of range, all sets, good form, ~2–3 RIR. Weight goes up.
Week 8, Session A	20 lb	9	8	8	Back near the bottom of the range at the new weight. Climb begins again.

Notice what happened between Weeks 5 and 7: the weight never changed, and you got stronger every week — the log proves it in rising reps. That’s why the reps dial exists. And notice Week 8: fewer reps at a heavier weight is not a setback; it’s the system working exactly as designed.

The same logic ran in Phase 1 before dumbbells arrived, with household increments — another book in the backpack, a bigger water jug for the carries, a lower chair for the squats. Smallest available increment, always. And two governing footnotes: “**with good form**” is part of the rule (twelve ugly reps don’t count as twelve — the set ends when form does), and **the rule never forces a bad day** (if today’s 12s feel like grinding, stay put; the top of the range will still be there next session).

Rest between sets: it’s part of the program, not a moral failing

- **Phase 1:** 60–90 seconds between sets.
- **Phases 2 and 3:** 90–120 seconds between sets — the loads are heavier and your muscles genuinely need the refill; research consistently favors fuller rests for strength work on the big lifts (ACSM 2026).

Resting is not slacking, and rushing rest doesn’t burn meaningfully more of anything — it just makes your next set weaker, which means less of the stimulus you showed up for. Sit down. Sip water. Write your reps in the log (this is exactly what the rest period is for). If you must be efficient, the session tables note where you can alternate two exercises that don’t compete — but the timer, not boredom, decides when the next set starts.

The missed-week protocol: never start over Monday

The Reset gave you the Next-Meal Rule. Here is its lifting twin, and I'd like it laminated somewhere in your mind:

**If you miss a week: repeat the last week you completed. Never skip ahead to stay “on schedule.”
Never go back to Week 1.**

- **Missed 3–4 days?** That's not even a missed week. Pick up at the next session as written; the schedule slides, nothing else changes.
- **Missed one full week?** Repeat the last completed week. It'll feel about 90 percent as hard as it did — a genuinely pleasant surprise — and you'll be back on the climb immediately.
- **Missed two or three weeks?** Repeat the last completed week, and take the first session at 3–4 RIR to shake the rust off. Detraining in a few weeks is far smaller than fitness culture has taught you to fear; strength comes back much faster than it was built.
- **Missed more than a month?** Drop back one full week beyond the last one you completed, and treat your first week back as a rehearsal, not a test.

What is never on the menu: starting the whole program over. The all-or-nothing restart loop — miss a week, “ruin it,” quit, begin again from zero someday — is the actual reason most exercise programs fail, and it is structurally impossible here, because there's a written answer for every gap. The plan says twelve weeks. Your calendar might say fifteen by the time life has voted. Same destination, same result. Nobody's counting but you, and you've been instructed not to.

Why 30–40 minutes is genuinely enough

I want to close this chapter head-on, because somewhere in you may live the suspicion that anything under an hour is “just a warmup” — planted by decades of fitness culture that confused suffering with results.

The evidence says otherwise, plainly. The activity guidelines' strength floor is two sessions a week hitting the major muscle groups. The LIFTMOR trial produced its bone and strength results on two 30-minute sessions weekly (Watson 2018). Effective beginner doses are modest — a few quality sets per exercise — and more volume shows sharply diminishing returns for novices (ACSM 2026). Do the arithmetic on your actual session: five minutes of warmup, six exercises, three sets each at honest RIR with real rest — that's 18 working sets touching every major muscle group. That isn't a lite version of a real program. By the published evidence, that is a real program.

What actually builds strength is not duration. It's **progressive tension, applied consistently, recovered from fully**. A focused 35 minutes, three times a week, out-builds a heroic 90 minutes that happens twice in January — and the 35-minute version is one you can still be doing at 70, which was the entire point.

Three short sessions. Two in the tank. Log everything. That's the program. Now let's talk about training in *this* body, in *this* decade — because there are a few things the generic programs never mention.

Chapter 3 — The Menopause Chapter

Most strength programs are written as if every trainee is a 28-year-old with reliable sleep, quiet joints, and a thermostat that works. You may have noticed you're training in different conditions. This chapter is the honest field guide to those conditions — not to alarm you, but because knowing *why* your body responds the way it does turns every surprise into something with a protocol.

Joints and tendons: training with the ache, not against it

Chapter 1 named it: the musculoskeletal changes of menopause are real, common, and largely trainable-around. Estrogen decline changes tendon and joint tissue — a bit stiffer, a bit slower to warm up, a bit longer to recover. Here's how this program is built around that, and what to do on the days a joint votes no:

The warmup is not optional, and on stiff days it gets longer. The 5-minute ramp exists precisely because midlife tendons perform beautifully once warm and complain when cold. On a creaky morning, run the ramp twice, or add the 10-minute mobility routine from the Warmup & Mobility file in front. Ten minutes of preparation that rescues a session is a bargain. Many women also find their joints are happier training late morning or afternoon than at 6 a.m. — if your schedule allows, experiment.

Tempo is your joint insurance. Every rep in this program is controlled — roughly two to three seconds down, no bouncing out of the bottom, a deliberate push up. Slow, full-range, controlled reps are exactly the graded loading that adapting tendons want, and they build more strength per rep at lighter weights, which is a double win at this stage. If a movement bothers a joint, your first fix is almost always *slower*, not lighter.

Swaps are strategy, not surrender. Every movement in the Form Library carries a flagged joint-friendly swap — knees disliking full squats get a higher box; wrists disliking pushups get fists or

handles; a cranky shoulder trades overhead pressing for the floor press. Using a swap keeps the *pattern* loading while offloading the complaining tissue, and it counts fully. The training effect lives in the pattern, not in any single exercise's ego.

And the standing rule from the health page applies: symmetrical muscle ache is adaptation; sharp, one-sided, joint-line pain is a stop sign for that movement. Swap, retest next week, refer out if it lingers.

Pelvic floor: pressure management, in plain language

Your pelvic floor is a muscular hammock at the base of your torso, and every time you lift something, pressure inside your abdomen rises and presses down on it. Menopause affects this tissue too — same estrogen story. Lifting done sensibly *strengthens* this system along with everything else. Lifting done breath-held and strained can overwhelm it. So, two layers:

The breathing rule — exhale on effort. This one habit does most of the work. Breathe in during the easy phase (lowering into the squat, lowering the weight), and breathe **out through the hard phase** (standing up, pressing, pulling). Exhaling as you exert vents excess pressure instead of ramming it downward. The cue that makes it automatic: *blow the weight up* — imagine exhaling is what moves the load. Never hold your breath to grind through a rep; at these loads and RIR targets, you never need to. Layer two is a light brace: just before the hard part, gently tighten your middle as if preparing for a light nudge — a soft corset, maybe 30 percent effort, not a maximal clench — then exhale through the rep. The Form Library repeats the breath cue on every movement until it's boring.

The referral rule. If you notice leaking during lifts, coughs, or hops; a sensation of heaviness or bulge in the vagina (especially by day's end or after exercise); or pressure that worsens with lifting — pause the loaded work at whatever level is symptom-free and book a **pelvic floor physical therapist**. This is a routine, solvable referral, not a verdict: these clinicians retrain pressure mechanics and return women to full lifting all day long. What doesn't work is ignoring it and adding weight. One flat note: with active prolapse symptoms, skip the impact options (Heel Drops, Low Hops) until a PT clears them — they're opt-in for exactly this reason.

Hot flashes and the broken thermostat

Strength training won't cure hot flashes — the honest reading of the evidence is “mixed at best” (Cochrane 2014) — but training *with* a temperamental thermostat is very manageable with a little staging:

- **Cool the room first.** Fan on before the warmup, coolest room in the house, window open. Ambient temperature is the cheapest lever you have.

- **Dress in layers you can shed mid-session** — and put the fan where set-rest happens, because rest periods are when the heat tends to arrive.
- **If a flash hits mid-set:** finish the rep safely, set the weight down, stand in front of the fan, sip something cold, and wait it out — usually a couple of minutes. Then resume where you left off. A hot flash costs you ninety seconds, not a session. It's a weather event, not a fitness event, and it says nothing about your effort or progress.
- **Hydrate more than feels necessary** — flashes and night sweats raise fluid losses, and even mild dehydration makes everything feel heavier. Water before, during, after (more in Chapter 4).
- **Track your pattern.** Many women find flashes cluster at certain hours; if evenings are your storm season, become a morning lifter. The program has no opinion about the clock.

The sleep-disrupted-day protocol: show up, halve the volume

Menopausal sleep is famously unreliable — the 3 a.m. wide-awake club has a large membership — and a rough night genuinely reduces what you can recover from. The all-or-nothing brain offers two options: push through at full intensity (miserable, unproductive, occasionally sloppy) or skip (and hand the restart loop its opening). This program offers a third, and it's a standing rule you never have to re-decide at 6 a.m. through a fog:

After a bad night: show up and do half.

- Same session as scheduled, same movements, same weights.
- **Cut every exercise to half its sets** — 3 becomes 2 (call it half-ish), 2 becomes 1.
- Add a rep or two of cushion to the RIR — today runs at 3–4 RIR regardless of phase.
- Log it, with a little moon symbol or “½” if you like. It counts as a completed session. Fully. No makeup owed.

Why this works: half a session preserves the habit, keeps the movement patterns greased, and delivers a real training touch — while respecting that a sleep-deprived body recovers less and coordinates worse. And here's the practical secret you'll discover within a month: about half the time, you'll finish the halved session feeling unexpectedly decent and simply do the full thing. The rule's real job was getting you past the lacing-up-your-shoes decision. Either outcome is a win that keeps Thursday intact.

One boundary: if you're running on multiple wrecked nights in a row, that's a recovery deficit, not a willpower deficit — take the extra rest day without ceremony and use the missed-day math from Chapter 2. Sleep is when strength is actually constructed; protecting it *is* training.

Low-energy days (the ones that aren't about sleep)

Then there are the days you slept fine and the tank still reads empty — hormonal weather, work weeks, life. Same triage, slightly different door:

1. **Do the warmup ramp. Just the ramp.** Five minutes, then honestly re-ask the question. Warmups are diagnostic: very often “no energy” was actually “no momentum,” and you’ll feel the answer change by minute four. If it does — proceed, maybe at the halved volume. This five-minute test resolves the majority of low-energy days in your favor.
2. **If the ramp says no, it’s no.** Do the 10-minute mobility routine or take a walk, log a rest day without a story attached, and apply the missed-day math. One skipped session inside a consistent program is statistically invisible. The women still lifting at 70 aren’t the ones who never had empty days — they’re the ones who never made an empty day mean anything about who they were.

The thread through this whole chapter: this program assumes real conditions — the aches, the flashes, the 3 a.m. ceilings, the flat Tuesdays — and gives each one a protocol instead of a judgment. Nothing that happens in a menopausal week is a program-breaker here, because the program was built for the week you actually have.

Chapter 4 — Eating to Train

Good news first: if you’re doing the Reset, the eating side of this program is already running. There is no separate “training diet,” no new numbers to learn, no supplements to buy — the Reset’s four pillars *are* the nutrition plan for these twelve weeks. This short chapter just connects the two halves and answers the questions that come up once the dumbbells arrive.

Protein anchors: same rule, new significance

The Reset’s first pillar — anchor every meal with 25 to 35 grams of protein, eaten first — continues exactly as is. What changes is what that protein is *for*. Until now, it’s been protecting the muscle you have. Starting this week, every session sends a build signal, and protein is the delivery of materials to the job site.

You do not need to choke down protein in a magic post-workout window — that idea has aged badly. What the research supports, especially at our age when the muscle-building response to any single meal is blunted (the “anabolic resistance” the Reset explained), is simply hitting that 25–35 g anchor at each of your 3–4 daily eating occasions, so there’s a solid pulse of amino acids every few hours (PROT-

AGE 2013; ISSN 2017). Practical translation for a training day: eat a normal protein-anchored meal within a couple of hours after your session — which, if you're following the Reset's meal structure, was going to happen anyway. That's it. The system you already run covers the athlete you're becoming. The one nudge I'll add: on training days, be extra unwilling to skimp the anchors, and if you use the Reset's optional protein snack, a training day is the natural day for it.

Carbs are fuel, not the enemy

If years of diet culture trained you to treat carbohydrates as the thing to minimize, here's the reframe this program needs from you: **carbs are the fuel your sessions run on**. Strength training draws heavily on glycogen — carbohydrate stored in your muscles — and lifting on chronically empty stores feels exactly like it sounds: heavy, flat, headachy, weak-for-no-reason.

Nothing here overrides the Reset Plate — the quarter-plate of smart carbs (potatoes, oats, rice, fruit, beans, whole grains) was always part of the structure, not a loophole in it. Two adjustments earn their keep on training days: keep some real carbohydrate in the meal *before* your session (a banana, oats at breakfast, the potatoes at lunch — normal food, not products), and don't pick training days to experiment with going low-carb. And remember Chapter 1: you're actively building the muscle that stores and burns glucose. Every week of training makes your body a better carb-handler. Fueling the sessions is how you get the machinery that makes fuel a non-issue.

If you ever notice a pattern of weak, dizzy, or flat sessions, run this checklist in order: sleep, water, “did I eat real meals yesterday, including carbs?” It's almost always one of those three.

Water: the cheapest performance enhancer you'll ever ignore

Even mild dehydration measurably drags on strength and effort tolerance, and midlife stacks the deck — hot flashes and night sweats raise losses, and thirst signals dull with age. So, mechanical rules, no tracking apps:

- **A big glass of water before the warmup.** Non-negotiable and free.
- **Bottle within reach during the session; sip at rests.** You're resting 90 seconds anyway — that was the plan.
- **A glass after**, and normal steady drinking through the day (the Reset's water habits carry straight over).
- On heavy-sweat days — hot flash days, warm rooms, sweaty sessions — add a bit more, and a pinch of salt with a meal is a fine, free answer. No electrolyte powders required at this training volume; that's a solution to a problem 35-minute home sessions don't create.

“Should I train before breakfast?” — answered plainly

The question always comes up, sometimes carrying an old diet-culture hope that fasted exercise “burns more fat.” Straight answer, both barrels:

Is it safe and fine to lift before breakfast? Yes, for these sessions. Thirty-five minutes of RIR-governed strength work is well within what a fed-yesterday body handles before eating, and if early morning is when your life has a slot, an early session beats a skipped one every single time. Caveats: have water first regardless; if you take blood-sugar-affecting medication, this specific question goes to your doctor, not to me; and if fasted sessions leave you dizzy, shaky, or flat, that’s your answer — something small first (a banana, a few spoonfuls of yogurt, even milk in your coffee) ten or twenty minutes before, and the problem disappears.

Is it *better* — does fasted training burn more fat? No. This is one of those ideas that sounds mechanical and hasn’t held up: over weeks, fat loss tracks overall intake and output, not the fed-state of any individual workout. Train fasted if it’s convenient. Train fed if it feels better. The session that happens is the right one.

One flag worth naming, gently. If you notice yourself drawn to fasted training *because* it feels like restriction — exercise as penance, another way to eat less — that’s the old programming this whole bundle exists to retire. You are eating to build. The Reset already ended the era of earning your food; don’t let it back in through the garage.

The whole chapter in one line.

Eat the Reset as written, keep carbs in the tank on training days, drink water like it’s your job, and train at whatever hour your real life offers. Done. Nothing about lifting requires you to become a more complicated eater — it just gives every meal you’re already eating a better job to do.

Continued in Part 2: the three phases week by week, with every session written out.

PART 2

The Twelve Weeks

Everything before this page was the why and the how. From here forward, it's the what — every phase, every week, every session, written out. You never have to design anything. You open the page for today, you do what it says, you write down what happened. That's the whole job.

A note on reading the session tables: every session begins with the 5-minute warmup ramp from the Warmup & Mobility file — it's assumed in every table, so it isn't printed in every table. "Effort (RIR)" is reps in reserve — the number of good reps left in the tank when you stop (Chapter 2 refresher: 3–4 RIR means stop while it still feels honest but manageable). Rest times are between sets, and they're part of the program, not a suggestion. And in every phase, the minimum-viable week is the same: **if life only gives you two days, do Session A and Session B**. Two is a successful week. It says so in writing, right here, forever.

Chapter 5 — Phase 1: Foundation (Weeks 1–4)

What this phase builds

Phase 1 has one job, and it isn't sweat: it's teaching your body the six patterns — squat, hinge, push, pull, carry, core — so well that when the dumbbells arrive in Week 5, adding weight is the only new thing happening. You're building three quiet assets this month: **movement skill** (the reps are rehearsals), **work capacity** (the ability to do three sessions a week and recover comfortably), and **connective tissue readiness** (tendons and joints adapt more slowly than muscles, and this month is their on-ramp — this matters double in the menopause decade, as Chapter 3 explained).

The equipment list for the entire phase: your body, a chair, a wall, a doorway, a backpack, and some books or water jugs. Nothing to buy yet.

What you'll notice. Honestly? The first week may feel easy, especially if you've been doing the Reset's No-Gym Starter — that's deliberate, and I'll ask you to trust it. By the end of Week 2, you'll notice the movements feel smoother, less wobbly, more *yours*. Somewhere in Weeks 3 and 4, you'll notice everyday things first: standing up from low chairs without hands, grocery bags that seem to have lost weight, stairs that don't require a strategy. That's the earliest strength adaptation — it's mostly your nervous system learning to use the muscle you already have, and it happens fast in untrained women (BMC Women's Health 2023). You may also be sore in Weeks 1 and 2. Reread the soreness-vs-pain rule on the health page; symmetrical muscle ache that fades in a couple of days is the normal kind, and it quiets down dramatically after the first two weeks.

Phase 1 prescription at a glance: 2 sets of everything in Week 1, then 3 sets in Weeks 2–4. Reps: 8–12 (carries: 30–40 steps; planks: 20–40 seconds). Effort: 3–4 RIR — generous on purpose. Rest: 60–90 seconds between sets.

Session A — Squat + Push

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
Chair Squat → Box Squat	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s
Wall Pushup → Incline Pushup	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s
Glute Bridge	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s
Farmer Carry (household weights)	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	30–40 steps	3–4	60–90s
Dead Bug	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12 per side	3–4	60–90s
Calf Raise	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s

Session B — Hinge + Pull

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
Doorway Hinge (add backpack from Wk 3)	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s
Backpack Row	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s
Bodyweight Step-Up	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12 per side	3–4	60–90s
Wall Plank → Forearm Plank	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	20–40s	3–4	60–90s
Bird Dog	2 (Wk 1) • 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12 per side	3–4	60–90s
Heel Drops (<i>opt-in bone work</i>)	2	10 slow drops	Gentle — never to fatigue	30–60s

Session C — Full Body

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
Chair Squat → Box Squat	2 (Wk 1) · 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s
Backpack Row	2 (Wk 1) · 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s
Glute Bridge	2 (Wk 1) · 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12	3–4	60–90s
Farmer Carry (household weights)	2 (Wk 1) · 3 (Wk 2–4)	30–40 steps	3–4	60–90s
Dead Bug	2 (Wk 1) · 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12 per side	3–4	60–90s
Calf Raise + Heel Drops <i>(opt-in)</i>	2 (Wk 1) · 3 (Wk 2–4)	8–12 raises (+10 drops)	3–4	60–90s

Every movement above has a full entry in the Form Library — setup, cues, breathing, mistakes, and its easier and harder levels. Before your first Session A, read the entries for that day’s six movements. It takes ten minutes and it’s the best ten minutes you’ll spend this month.

Week 1 — Benchmark week

Week 1 is deliberately light: 2 sets of everything, 3–4 reps in the tank, movements you may already know from the Reset. Its real job is the **baseline**. On the Week 1 benchmark page of the Training Log, record these four numbers — this is the “before” photo, except in ink and unfakeable:

- **Squat reps to comfortable effort** — one set of Chair Squats at a steady tempo until you reach about 3 RIR. Write the number.
- **Pushup level and reps** — which level you used (wall or incline, and how high the incline) and how many reps to about 3 RIR.
- **Carry weight and steps** — what you carried (be specific: “two 1-gallon jugs,” “backpack with 15 lb of books”) and how many steps before your grip or posture wanted out.
- **Plank time** — wall or forearm (note which), held with good form. Stop when your hips start to sag, not when you collapse.

Do the benchmarks fresh — at the start of your first two sessions, right after the warmup — and don’t inflate them. A modest, honest Week 1 number is a gift to your Week 12 self. If Week 1 feels too easy, resist the urge to add sets or improvise. Easy is the assignment. You’re establishing the habit of showing up three times, learning the tempo and the exhale-on-effort breathing, and letting tendons vote before muscles get ambitious.

Week 2 – Sets go from 2 to 3

One change this week: every exercise goes from 2 sets to 3. That's a 50 percent jump in work, which is plenty, so nothing else moves. You'll feel the third set — that's the point. Keep the effort honest at 3–4 RIR, keep resting the full 60–90 seconds, and keep writing every set down. If soreness from Week 1 lingers, that's normal and no reason to skip; the warmup ramp plus the first set will loosen it. This is also the week most women stop needing to look at the form cues mid-set. Good sign.

Week 3 – The Doorway Hinge gains load

The hinge is the most valuable pattern in this program — it's the deadlift family, the “pick things up off the floor forever” pattern — and by now you've had eight days of rehearsing it empty. This week, the Doorway Hinge graduates: put books in the backpack and hold it in both hands as you hinge (the Form Library entry shows exactly how). Start with 5–10 pounds of books. If 12 reps at 3–4 RIR is still comfortable, add another book next session — the double progression rule from Chapter 2 is now officially running on its first movement.

Everywhere else, keep climbing reps within the 8–12 range. If you've hit 12 on all sets of something with form to spare, nudge it: a bigger jug on the carries, a lower chair on the squats, a longer plank hold (toward 40 seconds), a step down the incline on pushups. Smallest available increment, always.

Week 4 – Boring on purpose

Week 4 is a consolidation week, and I want to defend it before you're tempted to skip ahead. Nothing new is introduced. Same sessions, same 3 sets, same rep ranges. The work is simply: do everything a little better than last week — deeper squat, smoother hinge, stricter plank, one more rep where the range allows. In training terms, you're converting a month of learning into owned skill before load arrives. In behavior terms, you're proving the schedule survives a week with no novelty in it — because that's most weeks of a training life, and the women still lifting at 70 made peace with boring decades ago.

Order your dumbbells this week.

Phase 2 starts in seven days and shipping takes a few. The Home Gym Setup file has the complete list — one pair of adjustable dumbbells (5–25 lb range) or two to three fixed pairs around 8, 15, and 25 lb, plus an optional mat. Total under about \$60. That's the entire equipment budget for the rest of the program.

Phase 1 checklist — ready for Phase 2 when:

- ☐ Week 1 benchmarks are written in the Training Log (all four: squat reps, pushup level and reps, carry weight and steps, plank time)
- ☐ You've completed at least 8 of Phase 1's 12 sessions (a repeated week per the missed-week protocol counts)
- ☐ You can Chair Squat 3 × 12 at 3–4 RIR with a controlled two-to-three-second lowering
- ☐ Your Doorway Hinge is loaded (backpack) and your back stays long and quiet through every rep
- ☐ Exhale-on-effort happens without thinking on at least the squat and the hinge
- ☐ You know your soreness-vs-pain answer without looking it up
- ☐ The dumbbells are in the house

If two or more boxes are unchecked, run Week 4 one more time. That's not falling behind — that's the missed-week protocol's cousin, and it's how you arrive at Phase 2 ready instead of rattled.

Chapter 6 — Phase 2: Load (Weeks 5–8)

What this phase builds

The dumbbells are here, and with them the part of the program that changes your trajectory: **progressive external load**. Phase 1 built the patterns; Phase 2 starts feeding them. Your body responds to resistance it hasn't met before by building the capacity to meet it — that's the entire mechanism, and it's why the loads must (gently, gradually) climb. This is the month the training log becomes genuinely interesting, because the numbers start moving and they don't stop.

Prescription changes from Phase 1: everything is 3 sets now. Reps stay 8–12 with **double progression** on every loaded lift. Effort tightens to **2–3 RIR** — the last couple of reps of a set should feel genuinely heavy and slow down a bit. Rest lengthens to **90–120 seconds**, because heavier sets need fuller refills (ACSM 2026). Sessions still land at 30–40 minutes. Minimum-viable week: still A + B.

What you'll notice. Week 5 feels like a first date with each dumbbell — some awkwardness, some weight-guessing, entirely normal. By Week 6 the loads are settled and the climb begins. Somewhere in Weeks 7 and 8, expect a very specific pleasure: the weight that felt heavy in Week 5 feels *light*, and you get to write a bigger number in the log. That number is the honest progress metric of this whole

program. The scale wobbles with water, hormones, and weather; the dumbbell number only knows one direction when you're consistent.

Your first session with weights: picking the starting numbers

The Home Gym Setup file has the full **starting-weight selection table by exercise** — open it next to the log for your first Session A and B, and let it make the decisions. The principles behind it, so the table makes sense:

- **Start lighter than your ego suggests.** The right first weight lets you finish 12 reps and honestly say “I had 3 or 4 left.” Too light beats too heavy — too light costs you one session; too heavy can cost you a shoulder week.
- **Lower body starts heavier than upper body.** Your legs and hips are much stronger than your arms and shoulders — a goblet squat might start at 15 lb while the overhead press starts at 5–8 lb. That's not imbalance; that's anatomy.
- **The first set of each exercise is a trial set.** Do 8 reps, check in. Could you have done 20? Go up a step before set two. Barely got 8? Go down. Adjusting mid-session in Week 5 is expected — write down where you landed, and that's your baseline.
- **When in doubt, take the lighter option and add a rep.** The double progression system will move you up within two sessions if you started low. It has no mechanism to un-tweak a shoulder.

Session A — Squat + Push

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
Goblet Squat	3	8–12	2–3	90–120s
DB Floor Press	3	8–12	2–3	90–120s
DB Step-Up	3	8–12 per side	2–3	90–120s
Suitcase Carry	3	30–40 steps per side	2–3	90–120s
Dead Bug	3	8–12 per side	2–3	90–120s
Calf Raise	3	8–12	2–3	90–120s

Session B — Hinge + Pull

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
DB Romanian Deadlift	3	8–12	2–3	90–120s
One-Arm DB Row	3	8–12 per side	2–3	90–120s
Glute Bridge (add DB on hips)	3	8–12	2–3	90–120s
Side Plank (knees → feet)	3	20–40s per side	2–3	90–120s
Bird Dog	3	8–12 per side	2–3	90–120s
Heel Drops (<i>opt-in bone work</i>)	2	10 slow drops	Gentle — never to fatigue	30–60s

Session C — Full Body

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
Goblet Squat	3	8–12	2–3	90–120s
Half-Kneeling DB Overhead Press	3	8–12 per side	2–3	90–120s
One-Arm DB Row	3	8–12 per side	2–3	90–120s
Farmer Carry (DBs)	3	30–40 steps	2–3	90–120s
Forearm Plank	3	20–40s	2–3	90–120s
Calf Raise	3	8–12	2–3	90–120s

Eight movements are new this phase — Goblet Squat, DB Romanian Deadlift, One-Arm DB Row, DB Floor Press, Half-Kneeling DB Overhead Press, Suitcase Carry, DB Step-Up, and Side Plank. Read their Form Library entries before their first session. Each one is the loaded descendant of a Phase 1 pattern you already own: the Goblet Squat is your Chair Squat holding a weight; the Romanian Deadlift is your Doorway Hinge with dumbbells; the One-Arm Row is your Backpack Row, refined. Your body knows these. Only the load is new.

Double progression, now with real weights

The full rule lives in Chapter 2; here's the working version and a fresh example, because this phase is where the rule earns its keep.

The rule: work within 8–12 at 2–3 RIR. When you hit 12 on *all three sets* with good form and no less than the target RIR — next session, take the next dumbbell step up and drop back to 8s. Climb again.

A worked example — One-Arm DB Row, Sessions B across four weeks:

Session	Weight	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Decision
Week 5, Session B	10 lb	12	11	10	Set 1 hit 12, but not all sets. Stay at 10 lb.
Week 6, Session B	10 lb	12	12	11	So close. One rep short on set 3. Stay.
Week 7, Session B	10 lb	12	12	12	All sets at the top, form clean, ~2–3 RIR. Weight goes up.
Week 8, Session B	15 lb	9	8	8	New weight, bottom of the range. The climb restarts.

Three things to notice. First: Weeks 5 and 6 were *progress* — reps climbed even though the weight didn't. Never read a stay-put week as a stall; the log shows the truth. Second: Week 8's "only 8 reps" at 15 lb represents more total work than Week 7's twelves at 10 lb. Dropping reps at a new weight is the system breathing in. Third: "all sets, good form, at target RIR" is a three-part test. Twelve grinding reps with a twisting torso don't trigger a weight increase — they trigger a form review.

With fixed dumbbells (say, 8/15/25 lb), the jumps are bigger, so use the bridge trick: when you own 3 × 12 at one weight but the next weight only allows 5–6 reps, extend the range — build to 3 × 15 at the lighter weight, then jump. The Home Gym file covers this too. **With adjustable dumbbells**, take the smallest step available, always.

Week-by-week notes

Week 5 — Weight-finding week. The assignment is calibration, not performance. Use the starting-weight table, use trial sets, and expect to adjust nearly everything once. Log the weight you *end* each exercise at — that's your baseline. Effort check: at the end of a proper Phase 2 set, the last rep moved slower than the first, and you stopped with 2–3 honestly in the tank. If every rep of every set was brisk, you're still lifting Phase 1 weights.

Week 6 — The groove week. Weights are settled; now the climb starts. Most exercises should add a rep or two per set over last week. Bank the boring wins: full rests, clean tempo, exhale on effort, log every set. If a movement feels off — the Romanian deadlift in your lower back instead of your hamstrings is the classic — stop, reread the Form Library entry, drop one weight step, and rebuild. Week 6 fixes are cheap; Week 10 fixes are expensive.

Week 7 — First harvest. This is typically the week the first lifts hit 12-12-12 and the weight goes up — often the row and the goblet squat first, because pulling and squatting strength come fast. Follow the

rule the moment it triggers; don't camp at a weight you've beaten because it feels safe. If nothing has triggered yet, that's fine too — you either started appropriately heavy or you're climbing at your tissue's pace. The rule is patient. So is the program.

Week 8 — Consolidation and check. Like Week 4, nothing new — deliberately. Let every lift log one more clean session at its current weight or reps. Two checks before Phase 3: your Romanian deadlift should feel like hamstrings and glutes doing the work with a quiet, flat back, and your goblet squat should be comfortable enough at depth that adding a second dumbbell (coming in Week 9) sounds interesting rather than alarming. This is also the week to skim the Phase 3 pages so nothing surprises you.

Phase 2 checklist — ready for Phase 3 when:

- [] You've completed at least 8 of Phase 2's 12 sessions
- [] Every lift has a logged working weight — no more guessing at the shelf
- [] At least two lifts have triggered a weight increase via double progression (12-12-12, clean, then up)
- [] DB Romanian Deadlift: you feel it in hamstrings and glutes, not your lower back
- [] Goblet Squat: 3 × 10 or better at a weight that felt heavy in Week 5
- [] Side Plank: 20+ seconds per side (knees or feet — either counts)
- [] Rest discipline: you're actually taking the 90–120 seconds (the timer decides, not boredom)

Unchecked boxes? Run Week 8 again before moving on. The phases wait for you; that's what makes them work.

Chapter 7 — Phase 3: Build (Weeks 9–12)

What this phase builds

Phase 3 is where you get to act like what you now are: a trained lifter in her second month of consistent progression. The big lifts get **heavier and drop to 6–10 reps** — fewer reps per set, more weight on each one, which is the classic recipe for strength (ACSM 2026). Effort tightens one final notch to **2 RIR**: the last rep of a main-lift set should feel like real work, with two more honestly possible and never attempted. The last exercise of each session stays lighter at 10–12 reps, and core and

carries keep their own prescriptions. Rest stays 90–120 seconds — and on the heaviest sets, take all 120.

Two optional elements join the party, both genuinely optional:

The 4-minute finisher. After the main session, if you have gas and interest: four minutes of carries or step-ups, steady effort, catch-your-breath pauses as needed. Pick one — walk with your heaviest manageable dumbbells, or step up and down at a steady pace — and stop at four minutes even if you feel heroic. It adds a little conditioning and a little extra practical-strength volume. Skipping it costs you nothing that matters; the program’s results live in the main tables.

The impact micro-dose graduates. If you’ve been doing Heel Drops since Phase 1, Session A now offers **Low Hops** — the next rung on the bone-loading ladder. Here’s the honest framing: bone responds to brief, unaccustomed impact, and small daily-ish doses of hopping measurably improved hip bone strength in research settings over months (Brown 2020; Watson 2018 for the loading principle). We’re using scaled-down, home-appropriate versions: a few dozen gentle contacts, 2–3 times a week, built up slowly — a bone-supporting habit, not a promise of a bone density number. The Form Library entry starts you with March-to-Hop, which is exactly what it sounds like. **This stays opt-in, and it’s a firm no if you have a vertebral fracture history or current prolapse symptoms** — do everything else and skip this without a second thought. Twelve weeks starts this habit; the bone story pays off over years of keeping it.

What you’ll notice. Heavier low-rep sets feel *different* — more focused, oddly quicker, done before they get miserable. Many women find 6–10 reps their favorite discovery of the program. Expect visible changes in what daily life feels like: suitcases into overhead bins, 40-pound bags of dog food, a full water flat carried one-handed. And expect the identity shift to finish setting: somewhere in this month, “I’m doing a program” quietly becomes “I lift.” Watch for it.

Session A — Squat + Push

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
Double-DB Front Squat	3	6–10	2	90–120s
Incline-to-Floor Pushup	3	6–10	2	90–120s
DB Step-Up	3	6–10 per side	2	90–120s
Suitcase Carry	3	30–40 steps per side	2	90–120s
Dead Bug	3	10–12 per side	2	90–120s

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
Low Hops (<i>opt-in bone work</i>)	2	10 gentle hops	Soft and springy — never to fatigue	30–60s
<i>Optional finisher</i>	—	4 min carries or step-ups	Steady	—

Session B — Hinge + Pull

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
DB Romanian Deadlift (heavier)	3	6–10	2	90–120s
One-Arm DB Row (heavier)	3	6–10 per side	2	90–120s
DB Hip Thrust	3	6–10	2	90–120s
Side Plank (knees → feet)	3	20–40s per side	2	90–120s
Bird Dog	3	10–12 per side	2	90–120s
Heel Drops (<i>opt-in bone work</i>)	2	10 slow drops	Gentle — never to fatigue	30–60s

Session C — Full Body

Exercise	Sets	Reps or Time	Effort (RIR)	Rest
Goblet Squat (heavier)	3	6–10	2	90–120s
Half-Kneeling DB Overhead Press	3	6–10 per side	2	90–120s
Backpack/DB Row	3	6–10	2	90–120s
Farmer Carry (heavy)	3	30–40 steps	2	90–120s
Forearm Plank	3	20–40s	2	90–120s
Calf Raise	3	10–12	2	90–120s
<i>Optional finisher</i>	—	4 min carries or step-ups	Steady	—

Four movements are new: **Double-DB Front Squat** (your goblet squat, now with a dumbbell on each shoulder — more load, more core), **DB Hip Thrust** (your glute bridge graduated to shoulders-on-the-sofa, which is the strongest glute-building position available at home), **Incline-to-Floor Pushup** (the final descent of the pushup ladder you started against a wall in Week 1), and **Low Hops / March-to-Hop**. Form Library first, as always.

Moving from 8–12 to 6–10 has a practical translation: your Week 9 weights should be one step heavier than what you finished Week 8 with. If you closed Phase 2 goblet squatting 20 lb for 3 × 11, open Phase 3's heavier goblet work at 25 lb for sets of 6–7 and let double progression climb you to 10s. Same rule as always, new address: **top of the range (now 10) on all sets, clean, at 2 RIR → next weight, back to 6s.**

Week-by-week notes

Week 9 — New weights, low end of the range. Everything main-lift shaped starts at 6–8 reps at the new, heavier loads. It should feel weighty but crisp — 2 RIR means the bar for “in the tank” is higher than it's ever been, so pay real attention. Form Library reads for the four new movements. If the Double-DB Front Squat irritates your wrists or shoulders, the entry has fixes and the joint-friendly swap; a heavier goblet squat is always an acceptable substitute.

Week 10 — The climb. Reps rise across the board. This is the strongest you've ever been on paper, and the log will start producing numbers that would have sounded like someone else's in September. Keep tempo honest — heavier weight whispers persuasive arguments for shortening the range of motion and speeding up the lowering. Don't negotiate. Full range at a controlled tempo is the exercise.

Week 11 — Peak week. The heaviest normal training week of the program. Push where the rule says push, rest the full 120 on the big lifts, sleep like it's your job (it is — Chapter 3). Then, at the end of the week, look at the calendar and smile: next week you get to collect the evidence.

Week 12 — Test week. The lightest fun you'll have all program. Here's the protocol:

1. **Cut the volume, keep the habit.** Do your three sessions, but 2 sets instead of 3 on everything, at 3 RIR. Test week is for testing, not for building — arrive fresh.
2. **Repeat the Week 1 benchmarks, exactly as written.** Same four tests, same conditions — after the warmup, fresh, honest effort: squat reps to comfortable effort (*use the same chair*), pushup level and reps (*note the level — this one's usually dramatic*), carry weight and steps, plank time. Spread them across the week's sessions just as you did in Week 1.
3. **Log your working weights.** On the Week 12 page of the Training Log, record the weight you now use for every dumbbell lift: goblet squat, Romanian deadlift, row, floor press, overhead press, front squat, hip thrust, carries.
4. **Fill in the side-by-side page.** The Training Log has a two-column spread — Week 1 next to Week 12. Fill in every line. Then sit with it for a minute. In Week 1 you may have squatted to a chair 10 times and held a wall plank for 25 seconds. Look at the Week 12 column. That's not a feeling or a vibe or a

before-and-after photo with better lighting. That's measurement, in your own handwriting, of a body that spent decades being told it could only decline.

What if a Week 12 number didn't improve?

Almost always one of three things: you tested tired (retest fresh in a few days), the conditions changed (different chair, different incline — match them and retest), or that pattern spent time on a swap for joint reasons (then the swap's log line is your real progress — compare that instead). A flat number after twelve weeks of honest work is a puzzle to solve, never a verdict. Chapter 9 has the full troubleshooting protocol.

Phase 3 checklist — the program is complete when:

- ☐ You've completed at least 8 of Phase 3's 12 sessions
- ☐ Week 12 benchmarks are done and logged — all four, same conditions as Week 1
- ☐ Working weights for every dumbbell lift are recorded on the Week 12 page
- ☐ The side-by-side page is filled in, both columns
- ☐ You've read Chapter 8 and picked your road for Week 13
- ☐ Optional but recommended: tell somebody your two favorite numbers from the side-by-side page. You've earned the telling.

Chapter 8 — After Week 12: Three Roads

The worst thing about most 12-week programs is the cliff at the end — confetti, then silence, then the slow slide back. There's no cliff here. Week 12 is a fork with three good roads, and all three are fully mapped. Pick based on your life, not on ambition; you can change roads at any phase boundary forever.

Road 1 — Run it again, heavier

The simplest and, for most women, the best choice for round two: start the 12 weeks over with everything you now have. This isn't repetition — with new loads, it's a new program wearing familiar clothes. What changes on the second pass:

- **Skip straight to the Phase 1 structure with Phase 2 habits.** Weeks 1–4 become a deliberately lighter “base month” — you can run the Phase 1 sessions with light dumbbells instead of household

items, at 3–4 RIR. Your joints and your calendar will both appreciate a scheduled easier month; that rhythm of push-then-consolidate is how long-term trainees are built.

- **Phases 2 and 3 restart double progression from your Week 12 weights**, not from the starting-weight table. The 15 lb goblet squat of your first Week 5 might be a 30 lb goblet squat this time.
- **Tighten the ranges if you're enjoying strength for its own sake**: main lifts can live at 6–10 in both loaded phases on a second pass.
- **Re-run the benchmarks in Weeks 1 and 12, every cycle**. The side-by-side pages stack up into something genuinely remarkable over a year or two.

When you eventually outgrow your 25 lb dumbbells — and on this road, you will — that's not a problem, it's a graduation notice. Which brings us to Road 2.

Road 2 — Take it to a gym

Everything you learned in twelve weeks — the patterns, RIR, double progression, exhale on effort, the log — transfers directly to a gym floor. You will walk in knowing more about sensible programming than most people already there. The sessions keep their exact shape (A/B/C, 3 sets, same rep ranges, same rest); only the tools upgrade. Here's the translation table:

Home movement	Gym translation (barbell or machine)
Goblet Squat	Barbell back squat or leg press
Double-DB Front Squat	Barbell front squat, or heavier goblet with the gym's big dumbbells
Chair Squat → Box Squat	Barbell box squat (same pattern, now loaded properly)
DB Romanian Deadlift	Barbell Romanian deadlift or trap-bar deadlift
Doorway Hinge	Cable pull-through (same pattern, standing at a cable stack)
Glute Bridge / DB Hip Thrust	Barbell hip thrust or hip thrust machine
One-Arm DB Row / Backpack Row	Chest-supported row machine or seated cable row
DB Floor Press	Barbell bench press or chest press machine
Wall/Incline/Floor Pushup	Barbell bench press progression, or keep pushups — they scale forever
	Standing barbell overhead press or shoulder press machine

Home movement	Gym translation (barbell or machine)
Half-Kneeling DB Overhead Press	
Bodyweight/DB Step-Up	Weighted step-up (keep it), or leg press as a substitute
Farmer Carry / Suitcase Carry	Heavy dumbbell or kettlebell carries (gyms have the big ones), or trap-bar carry
Calf Raise	Standing or seated calf raise machine
Dead Bug / Bird Dog / Planks	Keep them exactly as they are — they don't need a gym
Heel Drops / Low Hops	Keep as your opt-in bone micro-dose, same rules

Three notes for the transition. **Hire one session of coaching for the barbell lifts if you can** — squat, Romanian deadlift, bench, and overhead press each deserve one hour of in-person eyes, and it's the single best \$50–100 you can spend on this road. **Machines are not cheating** — for a solo lifter they're a legitimate, research-respectable way to load a pattern hard and safely; nobody's grading you on equipment. And **keep the log going** — same double progression, same rules. If your bones are a priority, this is also the road the bone research favors long-term: the strongest trial results came from progressively heavy, supervised barbell training (Watson 2018). A gym plus a coach is how you eventually, carefully, get there.

Road 3 — Maintain on 2 days

Maybe the next season of your life is full — a move, a job, a parent who needs you. Here's what almost nobody says out loud: **maintaining strength costs far less than building it**. Research on training frequency is clear that two quality sessions cover the major muscle groups at the official guideline floor, and volume-matched work shows small differences between frequencies anyway (ACSM 2026; frequency meta-analysis 2018). Two days holds your ground more or less indefinitely.

The maintenance prescription:

- **Sessions A and B from Phase 3, once each per week**, on non-consecutive days. Together they cover all six patterns.
- **Keep the weights where they are**. You're not chasing the top of the range with the same hunger — hover in the middle at 2–3 RIR. If a lift creeps up anyway (they do), take the increase; maintenance often turns into slow gaining, which is a nice problem.

- **Keep the opt-in bone work** 2–3 times weekly if you’ve been doing it — it takes three minutes and the habit is the whole point.
- **Keep logging.** The log is what tells you, months from now, that you’re holding steady instead of quietly sliding.

The rule for this road: two days is the floor, not a stepping-stone to zero. When the busy season passes, Roads 1 and 2 are right where you left them — and so is your strength, which is the entire reason maintenance exists.

Whatever road you pick, the Reset keeps running underneath it.

Protein anchors, meal structure, the Next-Meal Rule — the eating half doesn’t have phases. It’s just how you eat now.

Chapter 9 — Troubleshooting

Every problem in this chapter is common, expected, and solvable. Find your situation, run the protocol, keep going.

“One of my lifts stopped progressing”

Three sessions at the same weight and reps with honest effort = a genuine stall on that lift (one flat session is just a Tuesday). Run this checklist in order — it’s ordered by likelihood:

1. **Sleep and stress audit.** Strength is built between sessions. Two bad weeks of sleep will freeze the log all by themselves (Chapter 3). If life is loud right now, this is the whole answer — hold steady and let the lift catch up when life quiets.
2. **Protein audit.** Are the 25–35 g anchors actually happening, breakfast included? The Reset’s most-missed meal is the one that feeds morning workouts. Two low-protein weeks read exactly like a training plateau.
3. **Rest-period audit.** Rushing rests to 45 seconds quietly steals reps from sets 2 and 3, which stalls the all-sets trigger. Take the full 90–120. Use a timer, not a feeling.
4. **Form check.** Film one set (phone against a water glass — details in the Form Library intro). Compare against the entry’s cues. A shortened range of motion that crept in at the last weight jump is the most common invisible stall.

5. **Still stuck? Take one step back to go two forward.** Drop that lift one weight step, rebuild to 12s (or 10s in Phase 3) over two sessions, then move back up. The run-up clears the wall — this is the oldest trick in strength training and it works stubbornly well.

Note that a stalled *lift* is not a stalled *program*. It's nearly always one movement while the other five keep climbing. Treat it like a flat tire: fix that wheel; the car is fine.

“A joint is flaring”

Knee, shoulder, wrist, hip — the protocol is the same and it never involves pushing through:

1. **Apply the rule from the health page.** Sharp, one-sided, joint-line, during the lift, or worsening across sessions = stop *that movement*. Just that one.
2. **Swap, don't stop.** Every movement's Form Library entry lists a joint-friendly swap that loads the same pattern while offloading the cranky tissue. Use it. The session continues; the pattern keeps progressing; the swap counts fully.
3. **Shrink the range before you shrink the weight.** Many flares tolerate a shortened, pain-free range (a higher box, a floor press instead of a longer press range) at normal loads. Work the range you own; re-expand as it calms.
4. **Retest the original movement in a week, lighter.** Calm and quiet? Rebuild over two or three sessions. Still barking? Stay on the swap another week.
5. **Two-plus weeks with no improvement — get eyes on it.** A physical therapist visit is not a program failure; it's maintenance on the only body you get. Bring your log; they'll be delighted you have one.

And the pelvic floor rule bears repeating verbatim: leaking, heaviness, or bulge sensations during lifting means pause the loaded work at whatever level is symptom-free and book the pelvic floor PT (Chapter 3). Routine, solvable, non-negotiable.

“I missed two weeks (or more)”

The full protocol is in Chapter 2; here's the field card:

- **Up to one week out:** pick up at the next session as written. The schedule slides; nothing else changes.
- **Two to three weeks out:** repeat the last week you completed, first session at 3–4 RIR to shake off rust. Expect to feel about 90 percent of your old self immediately and 100 percent within the week — strength returns far faster than it was built.

- **A month or more:** drop back one full week beyond the last completed week; treat the first week back as a rehearsal, not a test.
- **Never** start the whole program over, and never skip ahead to stay “on schedule.” The calendar serves the program, not the reverse.

What you’ll be tempted to feel is that you “lost it all.” You didn’t — detraining over a few weeks is dramatically smaller than fitness culture taught you, and the skill component (the patterns your nervous system learned) barely fades at all. The comeback week always feels better than the dread predicted. Always.

“I’m bored”

First: congratulations, sincerely — boredom means the program stopped being scary and started being furniture. That’s what mastery feels like from the inside at week seven. Some of it you should simply befriend (Chapter 5’s “boring on purpose” is a feature: the reps are supposed to be unremarkable; the *numbers* are the plot). But you also get levers, in this order:

1. **Chase a number on purpose.** Pick one lift and quietly decide the next milestone — the 25 lb goblet squat, the first floor pushup, a 60-second plank. A target turns routine into a countdown.
2. **Pull the optional levers you’ve been skipping** — the 4-minute finisher, the impact work, the harder level of a movement you’ve kept at standard.
3. **Change the furniture, not the program.** New playlist or podcast-only sessions, different room, morning instead of evening, a friend on video doing her sets while you do yours.
4. **Swap within the pattern.** If one accessory movement has gone truly stale, the Form Library’s harder variations are pattern-preserving trades. The main lifts, though, stay — their sameness is exactly what makes the log meaningful.

What boredom is *not*: a sign you need a new program. Program-hopping every eight weeks is the most popular way to train for years without getting anywhere. The women with remarkable strength at 65 got there by doing roughly the same things, slightly heavier, for a very long time — and finding the plot in the numbers, not the novelty.

“I travel for work” / vacation weeks

- **Hotel with a gym (even a sad one):** run your sessions as written with whatever dumbbells exist. Different weights than home? Match the *feel* — same reps at the target RIR — and keep the log going in your phone.

- **No equipment at all:** run Phase 1's Session A and B with the room's furniture — chair squats, incline pushups on the desk, doorway hinges, a loaded-laptop-bag row and carry, planks, dead bugs. At Phase 2–3 strength, push the harder levels (single-leg glute bridges, feet-elevated pushups, slow tempo everything). It won't build much, but it holds everything, and holding is the assignment.
- **True vacation, zero sessions:** a week or two off, a few times a year, costs almost nothing — planned rest is part of every long training life. Walk a lot, eat the protein anchors when you can, enjoy your life, and run the missed-week math when you're home. No makeup sessions, no penance. The program is a tide, not a streak.

“I'm scared of the soreness” (or: DOMS came and it's loud)

Delayed-onset muscle soreness — stiff thighs two days after squats, tender everything in Week 1 — deserves demystifying, because fear of it quietly kills more programs than injuries do:

- **It's a normal adaptation signal, not damage in any scary sense,** and emphatically not a requirement — soreness is *worst* when a stimulus is new and fades sharply as you adapt, which is why Weeks 1–2 are its loudest and Week 6 barely whispers. Less soreness later does *not* mean the training stopped working.
- **The fix is gentle movement, not stillness.** A walk, the warmup ramp, the mobility routine — motion flushes it faster than the couch does. Showing up to the next scheduled session (which the 48-hour spacing already positioned for you) typically *relieves* it by the second set.
- **The program pre-manages it.** RIR targets instead of failure, 2 sets in Week 1, gradual load jumps — these choices exist specifically so soreness stays in the “noticeable” band and out of the “walking downstairs backwards” band.
- **The one check:** symmetric, muscle-belly, fading-by-day-three ache is DOMS. Sharp, one-sided, or joint-line is not — that's the pain rule, and it gets the flare protocol above.

“The scale went up”

You knew this section was coming, and you might even know the answer already — but knowing and *believing at 7 a.m. on the bathroom tile* are different, so here it is in writing.

Short version: **the scale is measuring the wrong thing for what you're doing, and it can't tell the difference between progress and failure.**

Slightly longer version: over twelve weeks you're likely adding a modest amount of muscle (slowly — Chapter 1 was honest about that) while training also increases the water and fuel your muscles store; glycogen is stored *with* water, and well-fed, well-trained muscle holds more of both. That's not “bulk”

— it's a stocked pantry, and it can nudge the scale up a couple of pounds while your waistband is simultaneously loosening. Recomposition — less fat, more lean — is precisely the outcome this program plus the Reset is built for, and it's nearly invisible to a bathroom scale, which reports the sum and hides the swap. Add the daily 2–4 lb noise of hormones, salt, and hydration that the Reset already taught you about, and a Tuesday-morning uptick contains essentially zero information.

What to trust instead, in order: **the training log** (the dumbbell numbers only move for real reasons), **the benchmark pages, how clothes fit at the waist, stairs and grocery bags**, and — if you want one number — the Reset's guidance on weekly-average weigh-ins rather than daily readings, or a monthly waist measurement. If the scale reliably ruins your morning, the Reset's advice stands double here: weigh less often or not at all, and let the log be your scoreboard. It's the only scoreboard in your house that never lies about which direction you're headed.

Chapter 10 — A Closing Letter

You're a woman who lifts now.

Read that again, because I mean it literally, not as a pep talk. Somewhere in the last twelve weeks — maybe the first time the dumbbell number went up, maybe the Tuesday you trained tired because the protocol said half a session counts, maybe the day you filled in the side-by-side page — you crossed from *doing a program* to *being a person who trains*. That crossing is the product. The muscle came with it.

I want to point at what you actually built, because it's more than the numbers, and the numbers are considerable. You built proof. For years, your body has been narrated to you as a story of decline — metabolism, hormones, bone density, all of it framed as subtraction, all of it supposedly your fault and none of it supposedly fixable. And now there's a log on your shelf, in your handwriting, that tells a different story with dates on it. You asked your body to adapt, at 45 or 52 or 58, and it *did* — session after session, week after week, exactly the way the research said it would and exactly the way twenty years of marketing said it wouldn't. Your body was never broken. It was waiting to be asked.

You built a skill set nobody can repossess: six patterns, an honest effort scale, a progression rule, a breathing habit, the ability to tell soreness from pain and a flat week from a failure. That knowledge transfers to every gym, every decade, every season of your life from here.

And you built the beginning of a very long arc. I won't pretend twelve weeks finished anything — Chapter 1 was straight with you that composition changes over months and bone adapts over years. But every one of those long games has the same first move: become someone who trains, and stay her.

You’ve made the move. The rest is just continuing — and you now own three mapped roads for doing exactly that.

One last thing. Somewhere near you — at work, in your family, in the group chat — is a woman a few years behind you on this road, quietly believing her body has stopped being negotiable. You don’t need to sell her anything. Just let her see you carry the heavy thing without drama, or mention what you goblet squat now, and watch her face do the math on what that means for her. Strength, it turns out, is contagious in exactly the way shame never was.

Go put the dumbbells where you can see them. Session A is whenever you say it is.

— The Reset Co.

References

The claims in this guide are built on the sources below. Where a finding appears in the text, it’s cited by name and year. None of this replaces individual medical advice.

Strength training sources

- **ACSM Resistance Training Position Stand (2026).** The American College of Sports Medicine’s updated guidelines — source for our set/rep/rest prescriptions, the “at least twice a week” floor, the finding that training to failure isn’t required, and the principle that the best program is the one you’ll stick with.
- **Watson SL, et al. — the LIFTMOR randomized controlled trial, Journal of Bone and Mineral Research (2018).** Twice-weekly, 30-minute supervised heavy lifting plus impact work improved spine and hip bone density in postmenopausal women with low bone mass, with a strong safety record. Our bone-loading philosophy is scaled from this trial’s principles — not its loads.
- **Weekly resistance-training frequency meta-analysis, Sports Medicine – Open (2018), with Grgic et al. (2018).** When total work is equal, two and three training days produce nearly identical strength gains — the evidence behind our minimum-viable two-day week.
- **Resistance training in middle-aged women by menopause status, BMC Women’s Health (2023).** A 20-week free-weight trial showing large lower-body and solid upper-body strength gains across pre-, peri-, and post-menopausal groups — and modest, slower muscle-size change, which is why our expectations chapter reads the way it does.

- **One-legged hopping bone study (summarized by Brown, 2020).** A gradual, months-long hopping protocol measurably improved hip bone strength — the research basis for our opt-in Heel Drops and Low Hops micro-dose.
- **Wright et al. — the musculoskeletal syndrome of menopause (2024 summary).** An estimated ~70% of women experience musculoskeletal symptoms across the menopause transition; resistance training is named as a key preventive strategy. An emerging research area, flagged as such in Chapter 1.
- **UCLA Health (2024) — muscle mass after menopause.** Source for the 3–8% per decade muscle-loss figures (accelerating after 50) and the “start lighter, progress gradually” guidance for midlife women.
- **ACSM Preparticipation Health Screening (2018).** The standard screening logic behind our “check with your doctor first if...” list.
- **Cochrane Review CD006108 (2014) — exercise for vasomotor menopausal symptoms.** Insufficient evidence that exercise relieves hot flashes — the reason this guide plans around them instead of promising to cure them.

Shared with The 40+ Metabolism Reset (the eating half of this program leans on these)

- **Pontzer H, et al., Science (2021).** Total daily energy expenditure is stable from roughly 20 to 60 — the study behind the Reset’s honest “your metabolism didn’t crash at 40” story.
- **Greendale GA, et al. — SWAN study (2019) and Ambikairajah et al., meta-analysis (2019).** Fat gain roughly doubles during the menopause transition and shifts toward the middle; lean mass declines — the “aging drives how much, menopause drives where” evidence.
- **PROT-AGE Study Group (2013) and ISSN Position Stand on protein (2017).** The basis for the Reset’s protein anchors — 25–35 g per meal, spread across 3–4 meals — which double as this program’s muscle-building fuel plan.
- **U.S. Physical Activity Guidelines (2nd edition, 2018).** The official floor: muscle-strengthening activity for all major muscle groups at least two days per week.