

# 8 Steps to Fitness

If you don't like reading, check out this YouTube video for an in-depth breakdown of everything here: (Work in Progress)

## **There are 3 Basic Pillars of Building Fitness**

1. Programming
2. Flexibility
3. Consistency

These pillars are interrelated. We'll start with programming, and I'll have tips for building flexibility and consistency at the end.

## **Step 1: Pick a weightlifting split (we'll add cardio later)**

### **Split Examples**

2 Days/week Splits: Full Body, or Upper/Lower

3 Days/week Splits: Full Body, or Full Body/Upper/Lower

4 Days/week Splits: Full Body, or Upper/Lower/Upper/Lower

All of these splits are effective. You'll see the best results with 3 to 4 days a week, but there are diminishing returns. That means 4 days a week is better than 2, but not twice as good. And 4 days a week is not necessarily better than 3. Pick what fits your schedule and your priorities. There are other splits that you can do, but for minimizing time and maximizing results, this is what I recommend. The basic principle is that you can create any of these splits using these:

### **Three basic workouts**

1. Full Body
2. Upper Body
3. Lower Body

## Step 2: Build your workout split by building individual workouts

These individual workouts are comprised of eight different types of exercises. You can find an exercise bank below:

<b>Compound Leg Exercises</b>	<b>Vertical Push Exercises</b>	<b>Horizontal Push Exercises</b>	<b>Vertical Pull Exercises</b>	<b>Horizontal Pull Exercises</b>	<b>Accessory Upper Body Exercises</b>	<b>Accessory Lower Body Exercises</b>	<b>Core Exercises</b>
Deadlift (Hinge)	Dumbbell Shoulder Press	Bench Press	Pullups	Barbell Bent-over Row	Curls (Pull)	Leg Extensions	Leg Raises (Abs)
Romanian Deadlift (RDL) (Hinge)	Barbell Overhead Press	Chest Press Machine	Chinups	T-Bar Row	Incline Curls (Pull)	Sissy Squats	Hanging Leg Raises (Abs)
Good Mornings (Hinge)	Push Press	Incline Bench Press	Lat Pulldown	Dumbbell Row	Hammer Curls (Pull)	Leg Curls	Hanging Knee Raises (Abs)
Stiff-Legged Deadlift (Hinge)	Z Press	Decline Bench Press	Lat Pullover	Machine Row	Reverse Curls (Pull)	Nordic Curls	Sit-ups (Abs)
Trap Bar Deadlift (Hinge)	Behind-the-neck Overhead Press	Dips	Single Arm Kneeling Cable Pulldown	Inverted Row	Preacher Curls (Pull)	Calf Raises	Decline Sit-Ups (Abs)
Hip Thrusts (Hinge)	Landmine Shoulder Press	Assisted Dips		Rear Delt Fly	Cable Curls (Pull)	Tibialis Anterior Curls	Crunches (Abs)
Kettlebell Swing (Hinge)	French Press	Pec Fly			Tricep Extensions (Push)	Hip Abduction	Candlesticks (Abs)
Back Squat (Squat)	Shoulder Press Machine	Pushups			Tricep Pullovers (Push)	Hip Adduction	Modified Candlesticks (Abs)
Front Squat (Squat)		Incline Pushups			Skull Crushers (Push)		Dead Bugs (Abs)
Goblet Squat (Squat)		Decline Pushups			Front Raises (Push)		Russian Twists (Obliques)
Hack Squat (Squat)		Explosive Pushups			Lateral Raises		Side Bends (Obliques)
Pendulum Squat (Squat)					Shrugs		Jefferson Curls (Erectors)
Box Squat (Squat)							Back Extensions (Erectors)
Jump Squat (Squat)							Pallof Press

Overhead Squat (Squat)							Bird Dogs
Leg Press (Squat)							Planks
Walking Lunges (Lunge)							Side Planks
Forward Lunges (Lunge)							Reverse Planks
Backward Lunges (Lunge)							Farmer's Carries
Side Lunges (Lunge)							Suitcase Carries
Bulgarian Split Squats (Lunge)							
Curtsy Squat (Lunge)							
Single-Leg Leg Press (Lunge)							
Step-Ups (Lunge)							

### **How to build a basic Full Body Workout**

1. Pick 1-2 compound leg exercises (A hinge, a squat, or a lunge)
2. Pick 1-2 push exercises and 1-2 pull exercises
3. Add 1-2 accessory leg exercises (preferably in-between the upper body exercises in step 2)
4. Add 1-3 accessory upper body exercises
5. Add 1-2 core exercises
6. Continue to Step 4: Organizing your workout split

### **How to build a basic Upper Body Workout**

1. Pick 1 compound or accessory leg exercise
2. Pick 1-2 push exercises and 1-2 pull exercises
3. Add 1-3 accessory upper body exercises
4. Add 1-2 core exercises

5. Continue to Step 4: Organizing your workout split

### **How to build a basic Lower Body Workout**

1. Pick 2-3 compound leg exercises (A hinge, a squat, or a lunge)
2. Add 1-3 accessory leg exercises
3. Add 1-2 push, pull, or accessory upper body exercises
4. Add 1-2 core exercises
5. Continue to Step 4: Organizing your workout split

## **Step 3: Organizing your workout split**

Guiding Principles for organizing your workout split:

1. You should aim to be doing at least one of each type of exercise every week (Hinge, Squat, Lunge, Vertical Push, Horizontal Push, Vertical Pull, Horizontal Pull, Accessory Upper Body (Pull), Accessory Upper Body (Push), Core (Abs), Core (Obliques), Core (Erectors)) unless you have an injury, of course.
2. Prioritize big muscle groups and compound (multi-joint) movements earlier in each workout. Your compound leg exercises, push and pull exercises should generally be earlier, and accessory/core exercises should be later.
3. Move exercises that you want to prioritize earlier in each workout. Ex: If you think your legs are well-developed and want to prioritize your biceps, you might want to do curls before your squats or leg extensions.
4. Give your muscles time to rest. In general, try to separate exercises that work the same muscles if you can. Ex: Switch back and forth between push and pull exercises rather than doing multiple pull exercises back-to-back or multiple push exercises back-to-back.
5. More is not always better. You probably don't need to be doing any one exercise more than twice a week, even if that exercise is a priority.
6. Upper body workouts include a leg exercise for a reason, and lower body workouts include upper body exercises for a reason. The emphasis may be on the lower or the upper body, but you'll likely see the best results by hitting most major muscle groups every workout.

Example Workout Splits:

Full Body 3 Days/Week			Upper/Lower/Upper/Lower			
Back Squat	RDL	Pullups	Barbell Bent-Over Row	Hack Squat	Chest Press Machine	RDL
Leg Curls	Leg Extensions	Chest Press Machine	Incline Bench Press	Leg Curls	Pullups	Leg Press
Chinups	Incline Bench Press	Bulgarian Split Squat	Bulgarian Split Squat	Chinups	Leg Curls	Shoulder Press
Chest Press Machine	Pullups	Calf Raises	Pullups	Dips	Dips	Leg Extensions
Calf Raises	Dips	Row Machine	Shoulder Press	Hip Abduction	Cable Row	Chinups
Row Machine	Curls	Shoulder Press	Hammer Curls	Calf Raises	Lateral Raises	Calf Raises
Tricep Extensions	Lateral Raises	Hammer Curls	Tricep Extensions	Modified Candlesticks	Incline Curls	Decline Sit-Ups
Hanging Leg Raises	Side Bends	Jefferson Curls	Jefferson Curls		Side Bends	

## Step 4: Programming Volume

Once you have your workouts and exercises for your workout split, you need to figure out how many sets and reps you're going to do for each exercise.

Reps – How many times you do the thing in one go (ex: Curling a dumbbell up and lowering it back down would be one rep. It returned to the starting point)

Sets – How many times you do reps (ex: Doing 8 reps of curls (set 1), setting the weight back down and resting, and then picking it back up and doing 8 more reps (set 2))

Guiding principles for programming volume:

1. You can see results doing as little as 1 set per exercise if you're doing that type of exercise at a high intensity at least twice a week.
2. In general, 1-3 sets per exercise will work best for most people.
3. If you have been training for long enough (at least 1 year+), then you might see better results with 1-2 sets per exercise, as this will allow you to push closer to true failure. (If I'm doing 1 set on one day, I normally do 2 sets of that exercise on another day)
4. If you haven't been training very long (<1 year), then you might see better results with 2-3 sets per exercise, as this will allow you to build coordination and confidence.
5. You can grow muscle with anywhere from 4-25 reps per set.

6. If you do less reps, you are more likely to fail due to fatigue of the muscle rather than external factors (breathing, burning sensations, tiredness).
7. If you haven't been training very long (<1 year), then you might see better results with 10-15 reps per set, as this will allow you to build coordination and probably reduce the risk of injury.
8. If you are an experienced lifter (at least 1 year+), then you'll likely see maximum muscle growth with 4-8 reps per set. This will result in the best strength gains, and it's impossible to get stronger without adding contractile tissue (growing muscle).
9. Strong muscles are big muscles. If you get stronger over an extended period of time, your muscles will grow.
10. Have a range of reps for each exercise. If you're getting to the higher end of the range, increase the weight. If you increase weight too quickly and drop below the lower end of the range (ex: 4 reps), just decrease the weight next time.
11. Don't be so worried about constantly increasing the weight or the reps that you let your form suffer. Real progress takes time. Be patient.

## **Step 5: Add Cardio**

Implementing cardio is a lot simpler. Simply do at least 20-30 minutes of cardio 2-3 times a week and you'll see results. You can pick any type of cardiovascular exercise you want (walking, running, jogging, swimming, biking, elliptical, rowing, etc.). You can do your cardio before or after your weightlifting workouts or on separate days. If you do your cardio before weightlifting, you won't see as good results with weightlifting, but your cardio results should stay generally consistent regardless of when you choose to do cardio.

## **Step 6: Progressive Overload**

Once you have your workout program built, you need to implement it. This means you need to progressively overload each exercise you selected (including cardio). As your body adapts to the training stimulus, it will require more stimulus in order to keep rewarding your efforts with results. In other words, as your body adapts, you do more.

Ways to progressively overload

1. Add weight with roughly the same reps, and the same form
2. Add reps with the same weight and the same form
3. Improve form
4. Do the same weight/reps/form with less rest
5. Progress to a more difficult exercise or exercise variation
6. Improve speed or power output (cardio)
7. Increase time (cardio)

## **Step 7: Prioritize Flexibility**

Flexibility is the key to building consistency. If you don't listen to your body, it won't want to listen to you. If you have an injury or something feels off, you don't have to follow your program to the letter. If your shoulder hurts, don't do shoulder press. You can see how it feels next workout. There's no sense in hurting yourself. We're here for progress over time. Altering workouts here and there as needed in order to prevent injury won't ruin all of your gains.

If you don't feel like doing an exercise, or if there's something preventing you from doing an exercise (ex: Machine/bench is taken), then pick a different one. You can use the exercise bank to choose a different exercise that will work the same muscle groups.

Vary your program as needed to fit your goals. Keeping your workouts interesting, engaging and relevant to your goals will make it that much easier to build consistency.

## **Step 8: Build Consistency**

Simply getting in the gym consistently is much more important than what we do once we're there. A rule of thumb I try to live by is this:

If I have it scheduled, or if I have committed to myself to go to the gym today, I will at least go for 5 minutes. I will do something. If I still feel like shit and I just want to go home, I can now go home guilt-free. I did something. I built consistency, resilience, and the habit of going to the gym. But more times than not, I end up doing most of, if not all of my planned workout, and I feel much better for doing something that I didn't want to do. I've now

proved to myself that I can be consistent regardless of how I feel, and that'll make it that much easier to stay consistent in the future.

James Clear, the author of Atomic Habits, has this quote:

“Missing once is an accident. Missing twice is the start of a new habit.”

Try not to miss more than one scheduled workout in a row. If there's something that's stopping you (injury, vacation, family emergency, etc.) then take it off of your schedule. It's not missing a workout if you never committed to the workout. But try not to miss more than one workout in a row that you've committed to. You don't want to get in the habit of failing in your commitments to yourself. You'll start to lose trust in yourself, and it'll be that much harder to get back on track.

### **Bonus Step: Have Fun!**

While exercise is a great way to improve your health and longevity, it's also a leisure activity. It's how you choose to spend your free time. Have fun with it. Find a training partner if you can. Be friendly to other people at the gym. Pick exercises and workouts that you personally enjoy and have a good time. And celebrate your wins, even the little ones. Especially the little ones.