

Beginning Workout Guide

This beginning workout guide is intended to be three things: effective, time efficient and cost effective. You don't have to spend long hours in the gym or spend thousands of dollars on workout equipment. In fact, doing either or both of those things might actually yield fewer results than the following exercise (trust me on that, I've done both).

These workout routines are also intended to be accessible. By "accessible". I mean that anyone can do these routines, even if they have some mobility or physical limitations. There's no lying on the floor or advanced athletic requirements.

All that said, let's get to it.

Prerequisites

- **Learn the Hip Hinge** – A core movement for life, but particularly important when we get to the powerlifts. See [How to do a hip hinge](#).
- **Breathing** – Another core movement for life (obviously). When doing isometrics in Phase I, you must continue to breathe. **Do not** hold your breathe. There are two different techniques to learn: 1) Breathing into the abdomen in which you push the diaphragm "down"; 2) Hise breathing in which you concentrate on expanding the rib cage.
- **Diet** – The body synthesizes HDL cholesterol into testosterone. Don't be shy about loading up on high-quality butter and fatty meats.
- **Recuperation** - The usual advice about plenty of rest and hydration.

Phase I – Isometrics 2-4 weeks

Lifting weights in the common way is great for strength, conditioning, and life in general. However, traditional weightlifting has two parts. In the concentric phase, the muscle contracts to move the weight against resistance. In the eccentric phase, the muscle lengthens as the weight is lowered. In the eccentric part of the movement, muscle tension is reduced.

Isometrics solve this reduced "Time Under Tension" (TUT) problem. And isometrics can be very, very effective in building muscle strength and mass. Consider [the story of Alexander Zass](#), and [in his own words](#).

Warm-up

- Stretch – There's a bunch of stretching exercises out there. Pick a couple that address your weak points. For example, tight hamstrings or an achy back. I actually like [chair stretching](#) as a way to ease into a workout.
- Chair crunches – Continuing the chair theme, [these](#) are a great way to target your core and get used to moving.
- Figure fours – Ok, this could be included as just a stretch, but it's important to have loose hips when it comes to doing the hip hinge and powerlifts. And, yes, you can do it in a [chair](#).

The Exercises

The following exercises can be performed sitting or standing, using breathing technique. Repeat the series 2-3 times, 2-3 times a week:

- This one targets the chest and triceps. At chest level, place your palms together. Push with progressively greater force. The maximum force you exert is up to you. In general, hold the tension for 7 -40 seconds. If you start to shake, that's good. For bonus points, press your hands away from your chest for repetitions.
- This one targets your latissimus dorsi (back) and biceps. At chest level, interlock your hands and pull in opposite directions with progressively greater force. The maximum force you exert is up to you. In general, hold the tension for 7 -40 seconds. If you start to shake, that's good. For bonus points, press your hands away from your chest for repetitions.
- This targets the biceps and triceps directly. At abdomen level, place one palm on top of the other. Push down with the top hand, pull up with the bottom hand. Hold for 7-40 seconds.
- The wall sit is a favorite of high school gym teachers. Well, it used to be. [Here's how](#).

Phase 2 Being more dynamic 4-6 weeks

This phase not only builds strength, but also incorporates some movement. As a wise workout geek once said: "Movement is life."

There are two different types of lifts: compound and isolation. Compound movements target more than one body part. For example, the bench press not only involves the chest, but also the deltoids and triceps. Triceps extensions only work, well, the triceps. In this phase, we'll be doing only compound exercises.

And I know of no better set of compound exercises than the three traditional powerlifts: bench, squat, deadlift.

Perquisites

- **Weight to lift** - Rather than the traditional barbell set, although you can use that if you want, we'll DIY. First, decide on what to use for weight. Water (about 8 pounds per gallon, but possibly messy if the bag rips), sand, canned goods, almost anything will do. The only requirements is that the weight is modular. For example, five ziplock bags filled with sand that weigh 5 lbs. each, rather than one bag of sand that weighs 20 lbs. This lets you easily add and subtract weight.
- **Something to hold the weight** - For example, a water bag, river dry bag (my favorite), or an old-fashion gym bag from the Goodwill store.

Warm-up

- **Stretch** – There's a bunch of stretching exercises out there. Pick a couple that address your weak points. For example, tight hamstrings or an achy back
- **Chair crunches** – Continuing the chair theme, [these](#) are a great way to target your core and get used to moving.
- **Figure fours** – Ok, this could be included as just a stretch, but it's important to have loose hips when it comes doing the hip hinge and powerlifts. And, yes, you can do it in a [chair](#).
- **Swings** – A functional exercise to build get everything moving and build hip strength. Ideally, these are done with a [kettlebell](#), but a gym bag works.

The exercises

The following exercises can be performed sitting or standing, using breathing technique. Repeat the series 2-3 times, 2-3 times a week:

- **Standing Press** – Because doing the bench press requires.. wait for it.. a bench, we're going to substitute the standing press. There are two versions: 1) The [push press](#), where you hold the weight at chest level, bend your knees slightly, and then press the weight with the assistance of your legs; 2) The [military press](#) which is done without the dip. Here are few tips:
 - Keep your chest and eyes up throughout the movement.
 - Don't bend your wrists or flare your elbows.
 - Lean forward slightly at the start (bottom) and then arch slightly at the top.
 - Pause at the top of the movement.
- **Front Squat** - To perform a squat, hold the weight at chest level, using a [bear hug](#) for example, hinge your hips, and then sit down into the squat. Here are a few tips for doing front squats:

- Maintain an upright, neutral spine.
- Drive your heels into the floor when you push the weight up.
- **Deadlift** – Some (including me and [Jon Pall](#)) regard the [deadlift](#) as the ultimate exercise. You can also do sumo deadlifts, with your feet spread farther than shoulder width and your hand inside your knees. Here are a few tips for doing deadlifts efficiently:
 - Tense your back muscles. ○ Pin your arms to your sides. ○ Keep your midsection tight.
 - Keep your back flat. ○ Lock out your triceps.
 - “Squeeze” the weight up with gradual acceleration.

Conclusion

After you complete both phases a time or two, you’ll have a much better idea of what exercises you like and work well. Feel free to repeat either phase, mix and match, or try something new. The only thing that matters is that you do.

Cheap additions to your home gym

- [Bullworker Steel Bow](#)
- [Bullworker Iso-Bow](#)
- [Twister bar](#)
- [Bands](#)
- [WorldFit Iso=Trainer](#)