

Program Notes

First things first. Training is about getting stronger, not seeing what you can endure. If there's any doubt in your mind when choosing between two programs, choose the easier one. It's a lot easier to find out something is too easy to make progress and then do more than to jump into something too hard, get burned out and/or injured, and rebuild.

These are all one-lift routines. Whether or not they'll be effective when combined with other routines is largely based on the mix of variables in those other routines. For example, one of the higher volume squat routines may not pair very well with a higher volume bench routine if you have a history of shoulder or elbow issues. One of the higher volume deadlift routines probably wouldn't pair well with the Smolov squat cycle.

Because of this, I'll recommend a few combinations of these routines that will go well together for people with different goals and experience levels.

Whenever you see an AMAP set (as many as possible), this should be taken to mean as many reps as possible with no form breakdown. If your lumbar spine starts rounding when deadlifting, if your butt is coming off the bench, or if your knees start caving or your butt shoots straight up in the air on the squat, that set is over.

AMAP sets and rep maxes are used to adjust training weights for the next week, mostly on beginner or intermediate routines.

For an AMAP set with 75%, if you get 10 or fewer reps, leave your training max the same for the next week. If you get 11-12 reps, increase your training max by 5 pounds. If you get 13+, increase your training max by 10 pounds.

For an AMAP set with 80%, if you get 8 or fewer reps, leave your training max the same for the next week. If you get 9-10 reps, increase your training max by 5 pounds. If you get 11+, increase your training max by 10 pounds.

For an AMAP set with 85%, if you get 5 or fewer reps, leave your training max the same for the next week. If you get 6-7 reps, increase your training max by 5 pounds. If you get 8+, increase your training max by 10 pounds.

For an AMAP set with 90%, if you get 3 or fewer reps, leave your training max the same for the next week. If you get 4-5 reps, increase your training max by 5 pounds. If you get 6+, increase your training max by 10 pounds.

For a 10RM, count the weight you get as 75% of your training max for the next week. For example, if you have a training max of 300 going into the week, and you get 235 for a 10RM, increase your max to $235/.75=313$. When it's between two 5 pound increments, round down. So in this case, you'd use 310.

For an 8RM, count the weight you get as 80% of your training max for the next week.

For a 5RM, count the weight as 85% of your training max for the next week.

For a 3rm, count the weight as 90% of your training max for the next week.

Isolation work is somewhat at your discretion. However, I'd recommend against adding much (if any) heavy compound work not included in the program. For example, if you want to do more curls, triceps extensions, delt raises, hamstring curls, leg extensions, pullovers, flyes, hip thrusts, etc. that's totally fine. Pumps are fun. Just don't go crazy with it. If you're still sore in

your prime movers the next time you're slated to train a movement, just dial back your accessories.

If you start a routine and it's too hard, either pick an easier one, or cut back on the volume. Nix things in this order: 1) isolation work 2) variants of your main lifts (i.e. close grip bench, RDLs, front squats, etc.) 3) volume from lower intensity work with your main lifts 4) volume from higher intensity work for your main lifts. However, if you get all the way to nixing higher intensity work for your main lift, that's a good sign that the routine you're on probably isn't appropriate for your experience level.

Any of the bench programs would also work for OHP if that's your press of choice.

If any of the suggested lift variations don't agree with you for some reason (they don't address your weaknesses, you can't do them because of an injury, etc.), feel free to substitute them out for something else that is similar. For example, if you can't do front squats, you could do high bar squats. If you can't do closegrip bench, you could do incline or dips.

The green cell is your max. Fill it in and most of your training weights will auto-populate. The gray cells are those that contain formulas. Don't screw with them. The yellow cells are the ones where you need to fill in the weights you hit.

1) Bench One Time Per Week – Beginner

This is ideal for a new lifter who doesn't have enough time in their week to train the bench multiple times. In general, I'd recommend the 2 or 3x per week beginner programs. However, if you're focusing specifically on your squat or deadlift, this is a good option to continue progressing on bench while being able to devote more time to the

other lifts. This would also be a good option if you're trying to simultaneously improve your bench and OHP – simply do this routine one time per week for bench, and one time per week for OHP.

2) Bench One Time Per Week – Intermediate

Very similar to the beginner program, with more suggested accessory work, and without weekly changes in training max. Recommendations for when this would be an appropriate routine are the same.

3) Bench One Time Per Week – Advanced

This is an ideal routine for someone who would like to increase their training frequency for bench press, but who has always pressed once per week. With 6 work sets on bench, followed by EMOM (every minute on the minute) work on dead bench, this is quite a lot of pressing volume in one session. Once you no longer have issues recovering from this workout in a couple of days, most training plans that would have you benching 2x/week will be no problem for you. This is also great for a strong presser training both bench and OHP simultaneously – you can do this routine for bench once per week, and for OHP once per week, doing dead presses from nose level in place of dead bench on OHP day.

4) Bench Two Times Per Week – Beginner

This is just generally a good bench program for relatively new lifters. It doesn't have to be your first day in the gym – if your bench has plateaued on a program like Starting

Strength, this would be a great routine to move on to. If you want to focus on OHP as well, you can do OHP in place of closegrip bench on the second training day, with the same set and rep scheme.

5) Bench Two Times Per Week – Intermediate

Similar to the beginner routine, without the weekly AMAPs for bench to adjust training maxes, but with the addition of more hypertrophy work. Great for someone who wants to add some upper body mass.

6) Bench Two Times Per Week – Advanced

Similar notes to the intermediate routine, but with the addition of dips and pushups for additional pressing volume.

7) Bench Three Times Per Week – Beginner

A great bench routine for someone new to the movement and still able to progress in strength week-to-week. Similar to many other beginner programs out there, but with a DUP (daily undulating periodization) twist.

8) Bench Three Times Per Week – Intermediate Moderate Volume

See 10) below

9) Bench Three Times Per Week – Intermediate High Volume

See 10) below

10) Bench Three Times Per Week – Advanced

All three of these are Sheiko-inspired routines, and are probably quite a bit more benching volume than most people are used to. Unless you have experience with Sheiko or Smolov Jr. for bench, start with the “Intermediate Moderate Volume” routine. Run it until you can no longer progress month-to-month anymore, then move on to the “Intermediate High Volume” routine. Don’t jump straight in to the Advanced routine unless you’ve had success with the Sheiko CMS/MS bench-only programs.

11) Squat One Time Per Week – Beginner

Great squat cycle for a new lifter who only wants to train their squat once per week, or for more advanced lifters focusing on their bench or deadlift, wanting to reduce the training stress from their squat training.

12) Squat One Time Per Week – Intermediate

A higher volume version of the beginner routine (more drop back sets) with added accessory work.

13) Squat One Time Per Week – Advanced

For the masochist or someone trying to improve their ability to handle more squatting volume. Great for building work capacity.

14) Squat Two Times Per Week – Beginner

Ideal for a relatively new squatter who has plateaued on a linear progression like Starting Strength, or the 1 or 3x per week beginner programs on this spreadsheet.

15) Squat Two Times Per Week – Intermediate

A heavier version of the beginner routine, with the inclusion of front squats to improve quad and core strength, which tend to be the weak links after finishing a beginner routine.

16) Squat Two Times Per Week – Advanced

The logical progression after you plateau on the 2x per week intermediate routine. One day to train the competition squat with heavy weight, and another to strengthen all the potential weak links for the movement.

17) Squat Three Times Per Week – Beginner

A great squat routine for someone new to the movement and still able to progress in strength week-to-week. Similar to many other beginner programs out there, but with a DUP (daily undulating periodization) twist.

18) Squat Three Times Per Week – Intermediate/Advanced

This is one you'll probably have to ease yourself into. For your first run through this routine, I'd highly suggest you bump all the RPEs down 1 for the front squat (working up to a 7RPE, and doing sets until you reach an 8RPE instead of working up to an 8, doing sets until you reach 9), and be conservative with your paused squats. You should be fresh and fully recovered for your heavy squats on day 1.

19) Deadlift One Time Per Week – Beginner

A straightforward deadlift routine. Perfect for beginners, or advanced lifters who only want to pull once per week to focus more effort on their squat.

20) Deadlift One Time Per Week – Intermediate

See below

21) Deadlift One Time Per Week – Advanced

These are both great routines for someone who can still make consistent 5-10 pound increases per month. Run the intermediate version for as long as possible before using the advanced routine which has quite a bit more volume.

22) Deadlift Two Times Per Week – Beginner

For the relatively new lifter who is trying to sort out the best stance for their deadlift.

Use conventional as your dominant stance for the first month, and sumo as your dominant stance for the second. Varying the main deadlift stance month to month will usually allow linear gains to progress for a longer period of time.

23) Deadlift Two Times Per Week – Intermediate

See below

24) Deadlift Two Times Per Week – Advanced

Two moderate volume deadlift routines for people who like ripping a bar off the ground more than the typical once per week. The former will mix nicely in a balanced training plan, and the latter would be more appropriate for a block focusing more specifically on improving the deadlift. All the rack pulls should be an 8-9RPE. Feel free to pull from a slightly higher pin if you're grinding the lifts too much pulling from mid-shin.

25) Deadlift Three Times Per Week – Beginner

This is the deadlift routine I'd recommend new lifters to start with. I know most people would prefer to knock out a couple heavy sets and call it a day, but especially for someone learning the form, doing a bunch of singles can help ingrain great technique faster. If you don't know your max, use conservative weights for the first three weeks – every rep should be very easy until you work up to a heavy single at the end of week 3.

Always stop as soon as you feel your form breaking down.

26) Deadlift Three Times Per Week – Lower Volume

See 28)

27) Deadlift Three Times Per Week – Intermediate Volume

See 28)

28) Deadlift Three Times Per Week – Higher Volume

These are true deadlift specialization routines. The sets and reps are more suggestions than set-in-stone values. Terminate each set at around an 8RPE. These are also great if you're the type who seems to have a lot more trouble recovering from deadlifts than any other lift. After a couple months on one of these routines, you'll have no issue recovering from practically any other 1-2x per week deadlift programs.

Program Suggestions:

General Beginner Programs:

Squat 3x per week beginner, Bench 3x per week beginner, and either Deadlift 1x or 2x per week beginner.

Sun: Off

Mon: Squat, Bench, Deadlift (if using either the 1x per week or 2x per week program)

Tue: Off

Wed: Squat, Bench

Thu: Off

Fri: Squat, Bench, Deadlift (if using the 2x per week program)

Sat: Off

Bench 2x per week beginner, Squat 2x per week beginner, Deadlift 3x per week beginner

Sun: Off

Mon: Squat day 2, Bench day 2, Deadlift day 1

Tue: Off

Wed: Squat day 1, Deadlift day 2

Thu: Off

Fri: Bench day 1, Deadlift day 3

Sat: Off

General Intermediate Program:

Bench 2x per week intermediate, Squat 2x per week intermediate, Deadlift 1 or 2x per week intermediate

Sun: Off

Mon: Squat day 1, Deadlift (Day 2 if deadlifting 2x per week)

Tue: Off

Wed: Squat day 2, Bench day 1

Thu: Off

Fri: Bench day 2, Deadlift (If pulling 1x per week, or Day 1 if deadlifting 2x per week)

Sat: Off

Bench specialization program:

Bench 3x per week (starting with intermediate, moderate volume), Squat 2x per week beginner, Deadlift 2x per week intermediate (start with just doing day 1. Add day 2 if you're recovering well.)

Sun: Off

Mon: Bench day 1, Squat day 1

Tue: Off

Wed: Bench day 2, Deadlift day 1

Thu: Off

Fri: Bench day 3, Squat day 2, Deadlift day 2 (if needed)

Sat: Off

Squat specialization program:

Squat 3x per week intermediate/advanced, Bench 1x per week intermediate, Deadlift 3x per week beginner (with intensities decreased 5-10%, OR only doing days 1 and 2)

Sun: Off

Mon: Squat day 1, Bench, Deadlift day 1

Tue: Off

Wed: Squat day 2, Deadlift day 2

Thu: Off

Fri: Squat day 3, Deadlift day 3 (optional)

Sat: Off

Deadlift specialization program:

Deadlift 3x/week intermediate/advanced (start with the lowest volume program, and move up from there AS NECESSARY), Squat 1x per week beginner (at first just do the AMAP set, cutting it off at RPE 8. Increase RPE and add dropback sets gradually as necessary), bench 2x per week intermediate.

Sun: Off

Mon: Bench day 1, Deadlift day 1

Tue: Off

Wed: Squat, Deadlift day 2

Thu: Off

Fri: Bench day 2, Deadlift day 3

Sat: Off

General advanced program:

Bench 2x/week advanced, Squat 2x per week advanced, Deadlift 2x per week advanced

Sun: Squat day 1, Deadlift day 1

Mon: Off

Tue: Bench day 1

Wed: Squat day 2

Thu: Deadlift day 2

Fri: Bench day 2

Sat: Off