

COMPETITION PREP

12-Week Powerlifting Peaking Program

3 Days Per Week • Peak for Meet Day • Maximum Strength

Designed for:

- Advanced lifters with competition experience
- Those preparing for a powerlifting meet in 12 weeks
- Lifters who have established 1RMs on all three lifts
- Athletes comfortable with percentage-based programming

Program Overview

This 12-week program is specifically designed to peak your squat, bench press, and deadlift for competition day. Using proven periodization methods and strategic fatigue management, you'll build maximum strength while arriving at the meet fully recovered and performing at your absolute best.

Program Philosophy

Competition prep differs fundamentally from off-season training:

- Focus on the competition lifts (squat, bench, deadlift)
- Minimize accessory work as the meet approaches
- Strategic fatigue management through volume/intensity waves
- Peak at exactly the right time - not before, not after
- Practice meet-day conditions and attempts

12-Week Structure

The program is divided into four distinct phases:

- Phase 1 (Weeks 1-4): Base Building - Volume Accumulation
- Phase 2 (Weeks 5-8): Strength Development - Intensity Increase
- Phase 3 (Weeks 9-10): Peak - Competition Specificity
- Phase 4 (Weeks 11-12): Taper - Meet Preparation

Training Schedule

3 sessions per week with strategic spacing:

- Day 1: Squat Focus (+ Bench variation)
- Day 2: Bench Focus (+ Squat/Deadlift accessories)
- Day 3: Deadlift Focus (+ Squat variation)

Recommended Weekly Layout:

- Monday/Wednesday/Friday (most common)
- Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday (allows Monday recovery)

CRITICAL: Maintain consistent training days. Your body adapts to the specific schedule.

Phase 1: Base Building (Weeks 1-4)

Purpose: Build work capacity and technical proficiency through higher volume at moderate intensities. This phase establishes the foundation for the strength and peaking phases to come.

Intensity Ranges

- Competition lifts: 70-80% of 1RM
- Rep ranges: 5-8 reps per set
- Volume: 15-25 total reps per main lift per session
- RPE: 7-8 (2-3 reps in reserve)

Training Focus

- Perfect technique on every rep
- Build positional strength through variations
- Accessories target weak points
- Establish baseline for percentage calculations

Week 1 Sample - Day 1: Squat Focus

Exercise	Sets × Reps	Intensity	Notes
Competition Squat	5×5	70%	Comp stance, depth, pause, RPE 7
Pause Squat	3×5	60%	3-second pause in hole
Close-Grip Bench	4×6	65%	Bench % - tricep emphasis
Front Squat	3×8	--	Quad strength, upright torso
Romanian Deadlift	3×8	--	Hamstring/glute work
Ab Wheel	3×10	--	Core bracing

Week 1 Sample - Day 2: Bench Focus

Exercise	Sets × Reps	Intensity	Notes
Competition Bench	5×5	72%	Comp grip, pause on chest
Spoto Press	4×6	60%	1" above chest pause
Overhead Press	4×6	--	Shoulder strength
Barbell Row	4×8	--	Upper back thickness
Dips	3×10	--	Chest/tricep volume
Face Pulls	3×15	--	Rear delt health

Week 1 Sample - Day 3: Deadlift Focus

Exercise	Sets × Reps	Intensity	Notes
Competition Deadlift	5×5	70%	Comp stance, setup, RPE 7
Deficit Deadlift	3×6	60%	2-3" deficit, off-floor strength
Safety Bar Squat	4×6	--	Squat volume without back stress
Pull-Ups	4×8	--	Lat strength, add weight if easy
Leg Curl	3×10	--	Hamstring isolation
Back Extensions	3×12	--	Lower back endurance

Complete Phase-by-Phase Breakdown

Phase 1 Weekly Progression (Weeks 1-4)

Week	Intensity Range	Volume	Focus
1	70-72% (5×5)	25 reps per main lift	Technique, baseline
2	72-75% (5×5)	25 reps per main lift	Build capacity
3	75-80% (4×5, 1×5+)	20+ reps (AMRAP last)	Volume peak
4	65-70% (3×5)	15 reps per main lift	Deload week

Phase 2: Strength Development (Weeks 5-8)

Intensity increases while volume decreases. Focus shifts to heavier singles, doubles, and triples.

Week	Intensity Range	Volume	Focus
5	75-80% (5×3)	15 reps per main lift	Rebuild from deload
6	80-85% (5×3)	15 reps per main lift	Heavy triples
7	82-87% (6×2)	12 reps per main lift	Heavy doubles
8	70-75% (3×3)	9 reps per main lift	Deload week

Phase 3: Peak (Weeks 9-10)

Maximum intensity work with very low volume. Test openers and practice meet attempts.

Week	Intensity Range	Volume	Focus
9	85-92% (5-8 singles)	5-8 reps per main lift	Heavy singles
10	87-95% (3-5 singles)	3-5 reps per main lift	Peak week, attempt selection

Phase 4: Taper (Weeks 11-12)

Dramatic reduction in volume and fatigue management. Final tune-up for meet day.

Week	Intensity Range	Volume	Focus
11	80-90% (2-3 singles)	2-3 reps per main lift	Opener confirmation
12	50-60% (technique only)	Minimal - meet week	Rest and prepare

Attempt Selection Strategy

Selecting proper attempts is critical for meet success. Conservative openers, challenging second attempts, and aggressive third attempts maximize total while minimizing bomb-out risk.

Opener Selection (First Attempt)

Target: 87-90% of 1RM

- Should be a weight you can confidently triple on a bad day
- Confirms on Week 11 - take this exact weight for an easy single
- Purpose: Get on the board, warm up into meet environment
- Example: If 1RM is 500 lbs, opener should be 435-450 lbs

Second Attempt Selection

Target: 93-97% of 1RM

- Based on opener performance - if opener is easy, go to 95-97%
- If opener is harder than expected, conservative jump to 93-94%
- Purpose: Secure a respectable total, establish new PR if possible
- Example: From 450 lb opener - jump to 475-485 lbs

Third Attempt Selection

Target: 100-105% of previous 1RM

- Go for broke - this is your PR attempt
- Factor in: how second felt, how you're feeling, strategic considerations
- If chasing placement: may need bigger jump to beat competitor
- If securing total: smaller jump to guarantee success
- Example: From 485 lb second - jump to 500-515 lbs

Attempt Jump Guidelines

From	To	Typical Jump	Notes
1st → 2nd Squat	10-15 kg	22-33 lbs	Moderate jump
2nd → 3rd Squat	7.5-12.5 kg	16-27 lbs	PR attempt
1st → 2nd Bench	5-10 kg	11-22 lbs	Smaller jumps
2nd → 3rd Bench	5-7.5 kg	11-16 lbs	Conservative
1st → 2nd Deadlift	10-15 kg	22-33 lbs	Factor in fatigue
2nd → 3rd Deadlift	7.5-12.5 kg	16-27 lbs	Last lift - be smart

Meet Week Protocol

The final week before competition requires careful management of training, nutrition, sleep, and logistics.

Week 12 Training

Monday (if meet is Saturday/Sunday):

- Light opener work: Single at 50-60% for squat, bench, deadlift
- Practice meet commands and setup
- Total session: 30-40 minutes maximum

Tuesday-Friday:

- NO TRAINING
- Light walking or stretching only
- Focus on sleep, nutrition, logistics

Nutrition Strategy

Monday-Thursday:

- Maintain normal eating - don't change anything
- High carbs, adequate protein, moderate fats
- Stay hydrated - 1 gallon water daily minimum

Friday (day before meet):

- Higher carb intake - pasta, rice, bread
- Moderate protein, lower fat
- Avoid new foods - digestive issues ruin meets
- Last meal by 7-8 PM, nothing heavy

Meet Day Morning:

- 2-3 hours before weigh-in: light breakfast
- Post weigh-in: carbs + protein + electrolytes
- Continuous sipping of sports drink throughout

Sleep Protocol

- Target 9 hours per night Monday-Thursday
- Friday night: Expect poor sleep (nervousness) - this is normal
- Banking sleep earlier in week compensates
- Melatonin 1-3mg if needed Thursday and Friday

Meet Day Logistics Checklist

Pack Friday night:

- Singlet, belt, knee sleeves, wrist wraps, deadlift socks
- Baby powder, ammonia caps, athletic tape
- Food: bagels, PB&J, bananas, Gatorade, protein bars
- Change of clothes, foam roller, lacrosse ball
- Phone charger, headphones, ID, cash

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I miss Week 11 training?

If you must miss Week 11, your openers should be even more conservative - 85-87% instead of 87-90%. You can estimate based on Week 10 performance. It's not ideal but manageable.

Should I do a water cut?

For your first meet: NO. Compete in whatever weight class you're at naturally. Water cutting adds unnecessary stress and complexity. Focus on lifting your best, not making weight.

What if my opener feels heavy in Week 11?

Lower it. If your planned 450 lb opener feels like RPE 8, drop to 440 or 435. The opener should feel easy. You're tapering and may feel weak - trust the process and the percentages.

Can I add accessories during the taper?

No. Weeks 11-12 should be competition lifts only. Adding work defeats the entire purpose of the taper. If you feel under-stimulated, that's the point - you're recovering for peak performance.

What if I bomb out?

If you follow conservative opener selection (87-90%), bombing out is extremely unlikely. But if it happens: learn from it, adjust for next time, and remember that every great lifter has bombed. It's part of the sport.

Final Thoughts

Competition powerlifting is as much art as science. This program provides the structure, but you must execute with discipline and intelligence.

Keys to Meet Success

- **Trust the Taper**

You will feel weak in Weeks 11-12. This is normal and expected. The supercompensation happens on meet day when fatigue is fully dissipated.

- **Conservative Openers Always**

Getting on the board is non-negotiable. Every successful meet starts with three white lights on attempt one. Ego kills totals.

- **Master the Details**

Know the commands. Practice your walkout. Understand depth requirements. Technical disqualifications are preventable with preparation.

- **Stay Present**

Don't think about attempt 3 while warming up for attempt 1. One lift at a time. Execute, rest, repeat.

You've done the work. Now execute the plan.

Good luck on the platform.