

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

PDF Template

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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: Wednesday rest day is essential. Back-to-back heavy squat and deadlift days require 48+ hours recovery.

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 x Reps	Intensity	Notes
Competition Squat	5×5	70%	Heavy day, RPE 7–8,
Pause Squat	3×5	60%	3–sec pause, build 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 Whee	3×10	–	Core bracing

Week 1 Sample – Day 2: Bench Focus			
Exercise	Sets x 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	4×6	–	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 x Reps	Intensity	Notes
Competition Deadlift	5×5	70%	Heavy day, RPE 7–8, rest 4–5 min
Deficit Deadlift	3×6	60%	2" deficit, off-floor strength
Safety Bar Squat	4×6	–	Volume day, speed focus
Pull-Ups	4×8	–	Hamstring/ glute hypertrophy
Leg Curl	3×10	–	Lat strength, add weight if needed
Back Extensions	3×12	–	Hamstring isolation

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	Volume peak

Phase 2: Strength Development (Weeks 5–8)

Week	Intensity Range	Volume	Focus
5	75–80% (5×3)	Rebuild from deload	Rebuild from deload
6	80–85% (5×3)	Strength building	Heavy triples
7	82–87% (6×2)	Peak week	Heavy doubles
8	70–75% (3×3)	Deload/recovery	Deload week

Block 3: Intensification (Weeks 9–11)

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)

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

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 Squa	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 Deadl	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

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

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

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.

Now shut up and lift.