

HYPERTROPHY & STRENGTH

8-Week Intermediate Training Program
3 Days Per Week • Build Muscle • Increase Strength

Designed for

Intermediate lifters with 6–12 months of consistent training
Those who have completed a beginner program successfully
Lifters seeking balanced muscle growth and strength gains
Anyone wanting structured periodization for continuous progress

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Program Overview

This 8-week program bridges the gap between beginner linear progression and advanced training methodologies. It employs strategic periodization to simultaneously build muscle mass and increase strength through carefully programmed volume, intensity, and exercise selection.

Why This Program Works

Intermediate lifters can no longer add weight to the bar every session. This program addresses that reality through:

Wave loading periodization (alternating volume and intensity phases)

Strategic exercise rotation to prevent adaptation and boredom

Hypertrophy rep ranges (6–12) with progressive tension overload

Sufficient volume for muscle growth (10–20 sets per muscle group weekly)

Built-in recovery through 3-day split and deload protocol

Program Structure

8 weeks divided into two 4-week blocks:

Block 1 (Weeks 1–4): Volume Accumulation Phase

Block 2 (Weeks 5–8): Strength Intensification Phase

Each block includes a deload week (Week 4 and Week 8) to manage

Training Split

Push/Pull/Legs split training 3 days per week:

Day 1: Push (Chest, Shoulders, Triceps)

Day 2: Pull (Back, Biceps, Rear Deltoids)

Day 3: Legs (Quads, Hamstrings, Glutes, Calves)

Train Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday with at least one rest day between sessions.

Block 1: Volume Accumulation (Weeks 1-4)

Focus: Building muscle mass through higher volume work. Rep ranges of 8-12 with moderate weights. Emphasize time under tension and mind-muscle connection.

Day 1: Push (Chest, Shoulders, Triceps)

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Notes
Barbell Bench Press	4	8-10	Primary chest builder, RPE 8
Incline Dumbbell Press	3	10-12	Upper chest emphasis
Overhead Press	4	8-10	Shoulder compound movement
Dumbbell Lateral Raise	3	12-15	Side delt isolation
Dips	3	9-12	Chest/tricep focus, add weight if needed
Overhead Tricep Extension	3	10-12	Long head tricep emphasis

Day 2: Pull (Back, Biceps, Rear Delts)

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Notes
Deadlift	4	6-8	Primary posterior chain, RPE 8-9
Weighted Pull-Ups	4	8-10	Vertical pull, use assistance if needed
Barbell Row	3	8-10	Horizontal pull, strict form
Chest-Supported Row	3	10-12	Mid-back isolation
Face Pulls	3	15-20	Rear delt and upper back health
Barbell Curl	3	8-12	Bicep mass builder

Day 3: Legs (Quads, Hamstrings, Glutes)

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Notes
Back Squat	4	6-8	Primary quad builder, RPE 8-9
Romanian Deadlift	3	8-10	Hamstring and glute focus
Walking Lunges	3	12/leg	Unilateral work, glute emphasis
Leg Curl	3	10-12	Hamstring isolation
Calf Raise	4	12-15	Standing or seated variation

Progression Strategy

This program uses double progression combined with wave loading to ensure continuous gains without burning out.

Block 1 Progression (Weeks 1-3)

Week 1

Start with weights you can complete for the prescribed reps at RPE 7-8 (2-3 reps in reserve). Focus on form and establishing baselines.

Week 2

Add 5-10 lbs to lower body lifts, 2.5-5 lbs to upper body lifts. Push closer to RPE 8-9 (1-2 reps in reserve).

Week 3

Add another 5-10 lbs lower, 2.5-5 lbs upper. This should be your hardest week. RPE 9 on top sets (1 rep in reserve).

Week 4 (Deload)

Reduce to 65-70% of Week 3 weights. Maintain same sets and reps. Focus on technique and recovery. This prepares you for Block 2.

Block 2 Progression (Weeks 5–7)

Week 5

Start 5–10% above Week 3 weights despite lower reps. The reduced volume allows heavier loads. RPE 8.

Week 6

Add 5–10 lbs lower body, 2.5–5 lbs upper body. RPE 8–9.

Week 7

Push for new rep PRs. Add weight if possible. This is your peak week. RPE 9–9.5 on top sets.

Week 8 (Deload/Test)

First 2 sessions: 60–65% of Week 7 for same reps. Final session: Test new estimated 1RMs or 3–5RM on main lifts.

RPE Scale Reference

RPE	Description
7	Could do 3 more reps – comfortable
8	Could do 2 more reps – moderate effort
9	Could do 1 more rep – hard effort
10	Maximum effort – could not do another rep

Nutrition for Hypertrophy

Building muscle requires a caloric surplus and sufficient protein intake. Training provides the stimulus, but nutrition provides the building blocks.

Caloric Surplus

Target: 200 calories above maintenance daily

Aim for 0.5–1 lb weight gain per week

Faster gains = more fat gain alongside muscle

Monitor weekly averages, not daily fluctuations

Protein Targets

Minimum: 0.8g per pound bodyweight

Optimal: 1.0g per pound bodyweight

Distribute across 4–5 meals (25–40g per meal)

Post-workout protein within 2 hours optimizes recovery

Recovery Protocols

Intermediate training demands create greater recovery needs than beginner programs. Optimize these factors to maximize progress.

Carbohydrate Strategy

Primary fuel for intense training

2.5–4g per pound bodyweight depending on activity

Time larger carb meals pre and post-workout

Quality sources: rice, potatoes, oats, whole grains, fruit

Fat Intake

Essential for hormone production and absorption

0.4–0.6g per pound bodyweight

Include omega-3s from fatty fish, flax, walnuts

Don't fear saturated fat from whole food sources

Sleep Optimization

Target: 8–9 hours per night

Consistent sleep/wake schedule

Dark, cool room (65–68°F optimal)

Limit blue light 2 hours before bed

Avoid caffeine after 2 PM

Quality sleep = higher testosterone and growth hormone

Deload Weeks (Week 4 and 8)

Essential for managing accumulated fatigue

Reduce weight to 60–70% of previous week

Maintain volume (same sets and reps)

Focus on technique and mind-muscle connection

Do NOT skip deloads – they enable supercompensation

Frequently Asked Questions

Stress Management

Chronic stress elevates cortisol (muscle-wasting hormone)

Daily stress reduction: meditation, walking, breathing exercises

Adequate downtime between sessions

Training IS stress – manage life stress to optimize recovery

Can I add more exercises or training days?

No. The program is carefully designed with appropriate volume for intermediate lifters. Adding exercises or days will compromise recovery and slow progress. Trust the periodization – results come from executing the plan, not adding to it.

What if I stall on a lift?

First, check recovery factors: sleep, nutrition, stress. If those are dialed in, reduce weight by 10% for that lift only and rebuild with 2.5% jumps. The deload weeks should prevent most stalls if you're honest about RPE

Should I do cardio?

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

What comes after this 8-week program?

You have several options: (1) Run the program again with higher starting weights, (2) Switch to a 4-day upper/lower split, (3) Try a strength-focused program like 5/3/1, or (4) Progress to a powerlifting or bodybuilding-specific program. You'll have built the work capacity for any of these.

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

Now shut up and lift.