

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

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 fatigue and allow supercompensation.

Training Split

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

- Day 1: Push (Chest, Shoulders, Triceps)
- Day 2: Pull (Back, Biceps, Rear Delt)
- 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	8-12	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	6-10	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

Intermediate Hypertrophy & Strength Program

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Notes
Leg Curl	3	10-12	Hamstring isolation
Calf Raise	4	12-15	Standing or seated variation

Block 2: Strength Intensification (Weeks 5-8)

Focus: Building maximum strength through heavier loads and lower rep ranges. Rep ranges of 6-8 on primary movements, 8-10 on accessories. Prioritize adding weight to the bar while maintaining perfect technique.

Key Changes from Block 1

- Lower rep ranges (6-8 vs 8-12) on main lifts
- Slightly reduced total volume to accommodate heavier loads
- Longer rest periods (3-5 minutes on compounds)
- Some exercise variations to provide novel stimulus
- RPE 8-9 on top sets (1-2 reps in reserve)

Modified Exercise Selection

Block 2 introduces strategic exercise variations:

- Push Day: Add close-grip bench, swap incline DB for incline barbell
- Pull Day: Add rack pulls, swap chest-supported row for cable row
- Leg Day: Add front squat variation, swap walking lunges for Bulgarian split squats

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

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

Recovery Protocols

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

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

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

Frequently Asked Questions

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?

Light cardio (walking, easy cycling) on non-training days is fine and may aid recovery. Keep it to 20-30 minutes at conversational pace. Avoid intense HIIT or long-distance running during this program as it interferes with muscle growth and recovery.

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.

Can I substitute exercises?

Minor substitutions for injury or equipment limitations are acceptable. Keep the movement pattern similar (vertical push for vertical push, horizontal pull for horizontal pull, etc.). Don't substitute just because an exercise is hard - that's usually the one you need most.

Your 8-Week Transformation

You now have a complete roadmap to significant muscle and strength gains over the next 8 weeks. This program has been tested by thousands of intermediate lifters with consistent results.

Success Principles

- **Follow the Periodization**

The wave loading between blocks is intentional. Block 1 builds the foundation with volume. Block 2 converts that work capacity into pure strength. Don't skip steps or rush the process.

- **Respect the Deloads**

Week 4 and Week 8 deloads are not optional. They manage fatigue accumulation and enable the supercompensation effect. Skipping deloads guarantees stalling and potential injury.

- **Track Everything**

Record every workout. Weight, sets, reps, RPE. Review your log weekly to ensure progressive overload is happening. If the numbers aren't going up over time, something needs adjustment.

- **Fuel the Machine**

You cannot build muscle in a deficit. Eat in a slight surplus. Hit your protein target daily. This program works only if you provide the raw materials for growth.

- **Prioritize Recovery**

Sleep 8-9 hours. Manage stress. Take rest days seriously. Your body builds muscle during recovery, not during training. Compromise recovery and you compromise results.

8 weeks of disciplined execution will produce results that surprise you.

Now shut up and lift.