Minimalift

A minimalist guide to strength training

by Eugene Teo
foreword by Matt D'Avella

There's one habit that changed my life more than anything else.

It wasn't journaling, meditating, or drinking excessive amounts of coffee. It was lifting weights—filling up a water bottle, lacing up my sneakers, and walking into a gym with no idea what I was doing.

I was 22 years old, skinny, unsure of myself, and buried under $97,000 of student debt. I was trying to build a filmmaking career from scratch, getting rejected by every girl I approached, and constantly battling self—doubt. My energy was low. My confidence was lower. And I felt stuck in nearly every area of my life.

Then **one day** became **day one.**

My first workout wasn't impressive. I didn't leave the gym transformed. But I went back the next day. And the next. One week turned into two. Then a month. And slowly, things began to change.

After a few months I noticed my strength increasing. I began to see muscle definition for the first time in my life. And more importantly, I felt different. My mood improved, my posture changed, and I started believing—just a little bit—that I could follow through on something.

That was just the beginning.

Within a few years of starting my lifting habit, I noticed other remarkable changes. I was reading more, growing my business, paying off my student loan, and, yes, finally landing dates with girls.

This wasn't just about physical strength—it was about momentum. I had entered into a positive feedback loop I'd never experienced before. And it all started with one small habit.

Doing it once didn't change my life. But doing it again and again did. That's the power of consistency.

Lifting gave me structure. It taught me discipline. It became a foundation I could return to when things got hard. And over the years, no matter what season of life I've been in, I've always tried to keep some version of it in my routine.

But recently, something changed. I became a dad, and my days suddenly got a lot more full.

I no longer had the time to spend five days a week at the gym. New responsibilities, shifting priorities, and a different lifestyle made my old routine impossible to maintain.

I found myself struggling to adapt. The truth is, I'd never been formally trained. I'd seen great results with a DIY approach to lifting, but that only worked because I used to have 10+ free hours a week to mess around and figure things out.

Now, with far less time, I asked myself one important question:

With only two hours a week to lift, how could I make it count?

That question led me to minimalist lifting—and eventually, to Eugene Teo.

If you don't already know Eugene, he's one of the most respected and well-studied voices in fitness. He's spent decades coaching, experimenting, and breaking down the science of strength and hypertrophy in a way that's actually useful. He's not just a great lifter—he's a great teacher. He has this rare ability to explain complex ideas in clear, actionable ways.

But what really drew me to Eugene is that he's not interested in fluff. He's not pushing gimmicks. He's not trying to sell you on being the "most shredded" version of yourself. He's interested in what works—and in helping people train better, not just harder.

After years of optimizing for the 1% edge—the tiny tweaks elite athletes chase—Eugene became a dad too. He experienced the same thing I did: constraints. Less time. More priorities. That's when he started turning his attention toward the 99%. The fundamentals. The few key actions that actually drive results.

So I flew to Melbourne, Australia, to meet him at his gym and learn what it really means to train like a minimalist.

What I discovered was not a watered-down version of fitness. It wasn't about doing less just to feel good about it. Minimalist lifting is about intentionality. It's about asking the hard questions: What are you actually trying to achieve? What's the most effective way to get there? And what's just noise?

This book is the result of those questions.

Minimalift is for anyone who wants to get stronger, fitter, and more resilient—without spending their life in the gym.

It's a distillation of the most effective principles, backed by science and simplified by someone who truly understands the human body.

Inside, you'll learn how to:

- Train efficiently, even if you have less than 2 hours each week
- Focus on progressive overload, exercise selection, and recovery
- Use methods like training to failure and single-set efficiency
- Avoid common mistakes like overtraining or chasing trends
- Build a sustainable, consistent routine that fits your life—not the other way around

But more than the exercises or protocols, what you'll find here is a mindset shift. A way of seeing fitness not as a grind or an endless to-do list—but as something empowering. Something that gives you energy instead of draining it.

In a world overflowing with contradictory advice, Minimalift is a breath of fresh air. It helps you cut through the noise and zero in on what matters most. Whether you're a beginner walking into the gym for the first time or someone who's lifted for years but needs a reset, this book gives you a practical roadmap forward.

And make no mistake—it's still hard work. But it's the right kind of hard work. The kind that moves you forward without burning you out.

In my own life, I've adopted the principles Eugene teaches here. I've reduced my training time, simplified my workouts, and focused more on execution than volume. The result? Better consistency, less decision fatigue, steady gains, and more time with my family.

We often think that success requires doing more. But in my experience, the opposite is true. Most of the breakthroughs in my life—lifting, business, relationships—have come when I've simplified. When I've removed distractions and focused on what matters.

That's what Minimalift is all about.

So if you're feeling overwhelmed by fitness... if you're tired of starting programs you can't finish... if you want a system you can stick to—this book is for you.

You don't need to be perfect. You just need to show up. One day becomes day one. And that day, if you stick with it, can change everything.

- Matt D'Avella

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction

The Minimalist Approach to Maximum Results

More doesn't always mean better.

Most fitness advice follows a maximalist approach — chasing the last 1% of gains through excessive volume, complicated periodization, and relentless micromanagement of every detail.

The Minimalist approach poses a different question:
How much progress can I make in the least amount of time?

Surprisingly, science supports a more efficient approach*:

- **For Health**: 60 minutes of strength training is all you need to maximize the health benefits and lowered all cause mortality risk[1]
- **For Strength**: 1 heavy set, once per week, can lead to significant gains in strength[2]
- **For Muscle Growth**: Can happen with as little as 1 set per week[3]
- **For Mobility**: Just 5 minutes per week can significantly increase range of motion[4]
- **For Cardiovascular Fitness**: 4 minutes, 3x per week can significantly improve cardiovascular health[5]
- **For Maintenance**: Muscle size and strength can be maintained for up to 32 weeks with just one session per week[6]

The takeaway? We don't need as much training as the industry has led you to believe.

*A caveat on the research:

As compelling as some of the scientific research may seem, it's important to remember that it merely gives us ballpark averages to aim for. It's also often performed on absolute beginners - with more experienced trainees not being as well reflected in the recommendations. While the science suggests we can make progress with incredibly low doses of training, we'll err on the side of caution - providing routines that ensure most people make significant progress while still keeping workouts short, effective, and sustainable. We'll be combining the most compelling and evidence based practices from both scientific research and my experience as a coach to give you the most effective and sustainable plans possible.

Minimalist vs. Maximalist Training

The Balanced Approach

Minimalist Training: Focuses on efficiency, not the absolute minimum. It provides sufficient stimulus to ensure continued progress while keeping workouts sustainable.

Maximalist Training: Chases every possible gain but at the cost of more time, fatigue, and diminishing returns.

What This Book Will Teach You

This program isn't focused purely on one goal. I've designed it to provide balance and progression across all major aspects of fitness.

- ✓ **Strength**
  Get stronger without spending hours lifting.
- ✓ **Muscle Growth**
  Build size efficiently with focused work.
- ✓ **Mobility**
  Improve movement with just a few minutes per week.
- ✓ **Athleticism**
  Stay powerful, fast, and resilient.
- ✓ **Cardiovascular Fitness**
  Minimalist cardio for maximum endurance.

You'll learn:

- The most effective training principles to maximize results in minimal time.
- How to build strength, muscle, and mobility with just a few key movements.
- Customizable training templates for 2, 3, or 4-day routines.
- How to tweak workouts for your specific goals (more muscle, more endurance, etc.)

Let's begin.

Section 2: Core Training Principles

How to Maximize Gains with Minimalism

The key to success with minimalist training lies in 3 fundamental principles:

1. Progressive Overload
The foundation of all intelligent training systems.

2. Efficient Exercise Selection
The right exercises, executed well, yield more results in less time.

3. Time Management
Strategic workout design to supercharge efficiency and cut down on time wasted in the gym.

01

Progressive Overload: The key to endless progress

Progressive overload is the principle of gradually increasing the difficulty of your workouts to keep them challenging.

It's the one non-negotiable rule of training. If you don't constantly challenge yourself, your body has no reason to adapt and improve

This is often misunderstood, with people thinking you ***must*** increase weight, or do more work in the gym every single session — But that's not how it works.

It's ***when*** your body has improved — built more muscle, gained strength or increased fitness — the same workouts won't give you any more results, and you must find a way to make them more challenging.

Essentially, progressive overload is not something you do each workout, it's a metric that a workout plan is effective. You should be able to add more weight, reps or in some way, do more work over time — because your body has progressed!

This is why you'll often see Rep Ranges given in the program. Instead of a set target of "10 reps" you'll be provided with a range of 10WWW15 or 6-10, to allow for weekly variation given your current condition.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

- Week 1: Squat **3 sets of 8** at **80kg**
- Week 2: Squat **3 sets of 9** at **80kg**
- Week 3: Squat **3 sets of 10** at **80kg**
- Week 4: Squat **3 sets of 8** at **82.5kg**

(and repeat the cycle)

Progress won't always be linear, and it won't always be weekly.

Small, incremental improvements over time compound into massive results.

02

Movement Efficiency & Exercise Selection

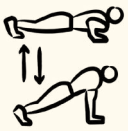
Not all exercises are created equal.
In minimalist training, efficiency is king.

The Essential Movements

The Minimalift Program will focus primarily on these core movement patterns:

Squat
Builds lower body strength and mobility.

Hinge
Develops posterior chain strength and athleticism.



Push
Pressing strength for upper body power.

Pull
Essential for back development and posture.

Carry & Brace
Core, grip, and real-world strength.

By focusing on compound movements that train multiple muscle groups, you maximize results while minimizing gym time.

What Gets Cut?

Excessive Isolation Work - Bicep curls and leg extensions won't build full-body strength. They're still fantastic exercises and we still do them, but they're programmed efficiently as tri-sets and supersets and are modified to give you more bang for your buck.

Overly Complex Movements - If an exercise requires an instruction manual to set up, it's likely not worth the effort.

Redundant Volume – More sets don't always equal more gains. The goal is quality over quantity. You'll work against the clock, learn to push with maximum intensity and prioritize technique to ensure you're getting the most out of the least.

03

Time Management: Training Smarter, Not Longer

Apart from unnecessarily high training volumes, most of the time spent in workouts isn't actually spent working out. It's often spent in everything between — rests, warm ups, cooldowns and unnecessary drills.

In the Minimalift workouts, we strategically optimize these areas through Warm Ups, Supersets, Density & Active Rest Periods to save time without compromising performance or results.

Warm Up With Intent:
No More Mindless Treadmill Walking

Instead of mindlessly walking on the treadmill for 10 minutes to "warm up", or skipping it altogether and increasing your injury risk — we use intentional warm-ups that prepare your body for the workout ahead.

- **Plyometrics**: E.g. Light skipping or jumps before a Squat focused work
- **Core Activation**: E.g. Planks & Leg Raises to strengthen your core before Deadlifting
- **Mobility Work**: E.g. Open your shoulders and spine up before Bench Pressing

Your warm-up should be an extension of your workout.
If it doesn't prepare you for the movements ahead, it's wasting time.

Smart Supersets:
Maximize Work, Minimize Downtime.

Resting for 2-5 minutes between sets might be important for heavy strength work close to a true 1-rep max, but most lifters waste time sitting idly. Here's some of the ways we structure the workouts to maximize time efficiency:

Antagonistic Supersets
Pair opposite muscle groups to speed up training and improve performance.
Example: Bench Press → Chin-Ups

Complementary Supersets
Pairing related muscle groups to give you a better training effect.
Example: Split Squats → Copenhagen Planks

Non-Related Supersets
Alternate between upper and lower body movements. You'll get a peripheral cardiovascular challenge from your heart pumping blood to multiple muscle groups, without compromising performance.
Example: Squats → Overhead Press

Density-Based Workouts:
Racing the Clock

Instead of aimless training with endless rest periods, Minimalift workouts often set a time limit to create urgency and accountability to the workouts.

Example:

- Set a timer for 15 minutes
- Alternate between pull-ups and goblet squats
- Try to complete more total reps than last time

Setting your workouts up like this will still give you a powerful strength and muscle building stimulus, but adds a cardiovascular component to build your endurance without compromising your performance.

Active Rest Periods

Instead of sitting between sets scrolling on your phone, Minimalift workouts often feature active rest periods using non-fatiguing mobility & core exercises, or smart supersets as already mentioned:

- **Mobility Drills** – Work on flexibility during rest periods. (Hip openers, thoracic rotations)
- **Core Work** – Train abs and stability without adding extra time. (Planks, hanging leg raises)

Section 3: Key Training Adaptations

How Your Body Adapts

The fundamental principle behind all training plans is The Stress Response and Adaptation. Simply put, a workout is an opportunity to apply stress to your body, and as a response to this stress, your body will adapt.

> That adaptation can take many forms, depending on the specific stress applied to your body.
>
> **Stress your body with heavy weights? It'll get stronger.**
> **Stress it with an extreme stretch? It'll get more pliable.**
> **Stress it with a hard cardiovascular workout? It'll improve cardiovascular efficiency.**

Many programs focus purely on one goal — e.g. Muscle Size (hypertrophy or strength). Instead of maxing out in one area, the **Minimalift Program** uses training to improve all facets of life.

To do this, we will cover all of the key training adaptations to ensure there are no weak links in your body.

This section will cover the 5 key training adaptations—

> **Hypetrophy**
> **Strength**
> **Mobility**
> **Power**
> **& Endurance**

—why they're important, what a maximalist routine may look like, and how we will address it as a Minimalist.

Hypertrophy

What is hypertrophy?

Hypertrophy means increasing muscle size. In this section, we'll cover some of the myths and misconceptions behind how we build muscle, and go through the fundamental principles behind the hypertrophy training in the Minimalift program.

Maximalist Hypertrophy Approach
Maximizing hypertrophy usually involves:

- Several exercises for a single body part to target different aspects (e.g. Upper vs Mid vs Lower Chest)
- Varied exercises on machines, cables, free weights etc to target different ranges of motion (e.g. stretch vs squeeze position)
- Higher set volumes (3-4 per exercise)
- 1-2 mins rest between sets
- Moderate to high effort
- Mix of compound & isolation exercises

Here's what that might look like in a standard bodybuilding routine...

Maximalist Approach to Hypertrophy

Exercise	Sets/Reps	Target	Est. Duration
Flat Bench Press	3 sets, 6-12 reps	Chest (middle chest bias)	15 min
Incline Dumbell Press	3 sets, 6-12 reps	Upper chest, shoulders	10 min
High to Low Cable Chest Fly	3 sets, 6-12 reps	Lower chest	10 min
Dips	3 sets, 6-12 reps	Lower chest, triceps	10 min
Lateral Raise	3 sets, 10-20 reps	Side deltoid, squeeze	5-10 min
Cable Lateral Raise	3 sets, 10-20 reps	Side deltoid, stretch	5-10 min
Triceps Pushdown	3 sets, 10-20 reps	Triceps	5-10 min
Triceps Overhead Extension	3 sets, 10-20 reps	Triceps	5-10 min

Total: 65-85 min

You'd also aim to repeat a routine similar to this at least twice per week to maximize the training effect.

And that's just a small portion of your body — we haven't even covered Back, Legs or even begun to think about other aspects of fitness like Mobility or Endurance!

Sounds like a lot, right?
Let's break this down and find out what actually matters..

Hypertrophy Myths & Misconceptions

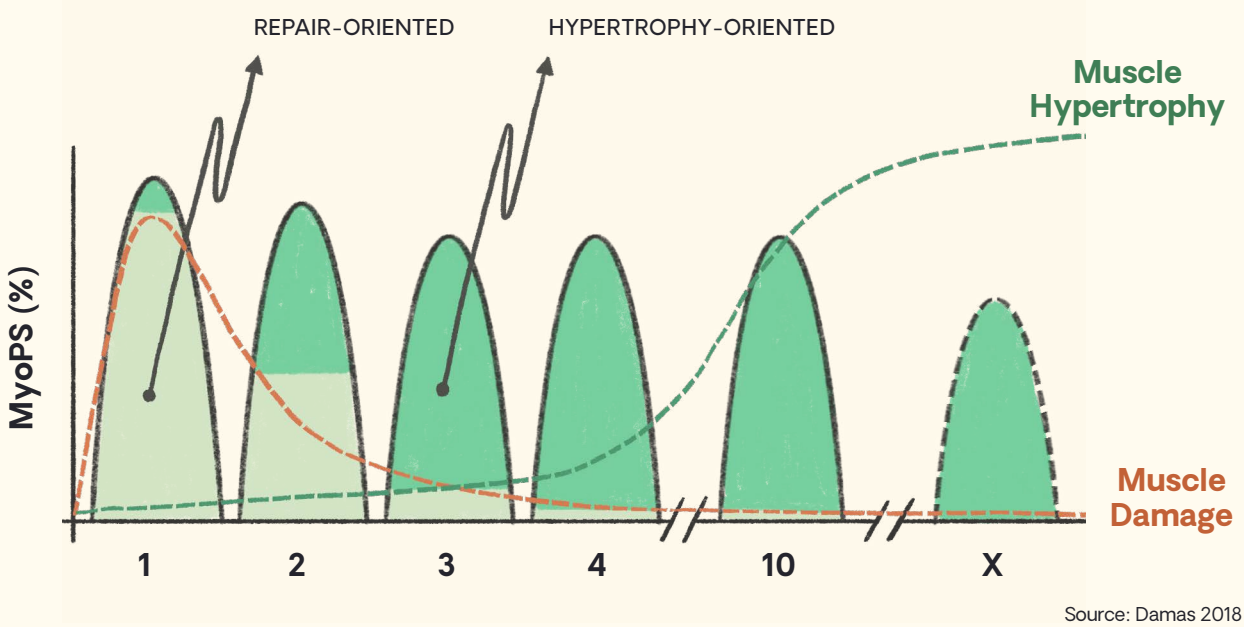
You've probably heard that lifting weights creates micro-tears in your muscles, and your body rebuilds them bigger and stronger.

So... more damage = more gains?
By this logic, you'd think you need to:

- ✕ Train 1-2 hours per session for each body part
- ✕ Destroy yourself with max intensity & pain
- ✕ Be sore after every workout
- ✕ Train 5-7 days per week just to grow
- ✕ Use PEDs just to recover from all of this

In fact, modern research shows the opposite is true.
Less is more.

Why More Damage ≠ More Growth



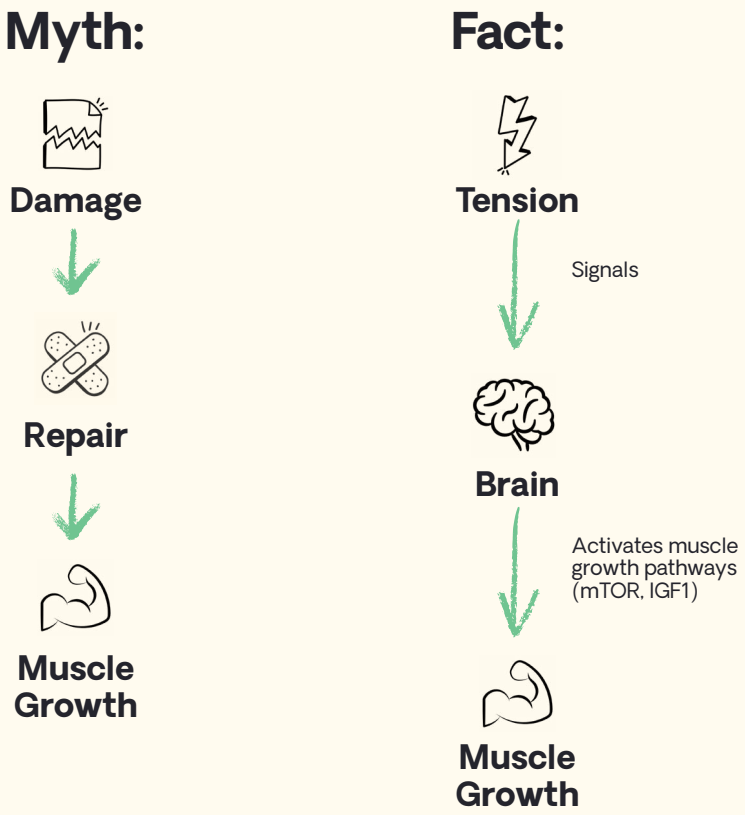
Source: Damas 2018

- When you first start training, you experience more muscle damage — but this is when you see the least amount of muscle growth (As indicated in red on the chart)

- Your body prioritizes damage, not building new muscle. After a few weeks (3-4 on the chart), you experience less damage and can allocate more resources toward actual muscle growth.

- Muscle damage is unavoidable in most workouts, even as an experienced trainee. But instead of being the goal of the workout, it's a side effect. Your primary goal is to minimize it, not maximize it.

What Actually Causes Muscle Growth?



Muscle growth isn't triggered by damage or soreness — it's triggered by mechanical tension.

Mechanical tension is a stretching force that is applied to your muscles by an external resistance. i.e a weight or your bodyweight

Here's how muscle building actually works:

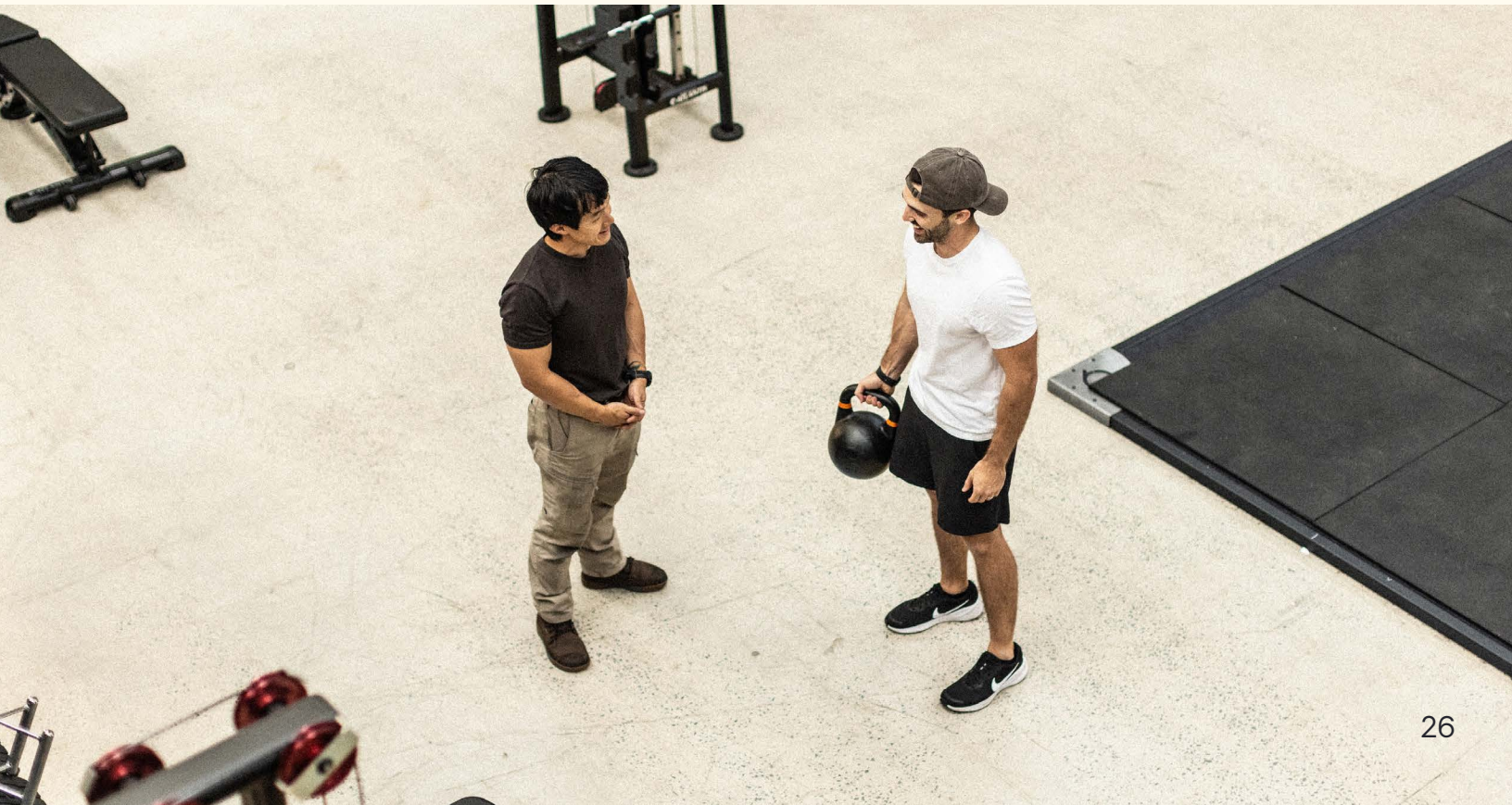
1. Your muscles experience tension when you lift weights.
2. Your muscles detect this force and send a signal to your brain.
3. Your brain activates key pathways that promote muscle growth.

What this means is we don't need to do more work to get more gains. We need to do enough work to stimulate the muscle building pathways, and that's it.

How many sets do I need?

Research shows you can get around 60% of that maximum gains stimulation by doing just 1-4 sets per week per body part. [7]

Doubling it to 5-10 sets increases that to about 85%, and going beyond 10 sets gets you closer to 100% — So yes, you can do more than 4 sets per week if you have the time for it - but there's a significant drop off to doing more work!



Minimalist Hypertrophy Approach

When we're trying to get the most out of the least, there's a few key things we need to make sure we're doing right. Here's what really matters for muscle building and some of the tools we use in the Minimalift program!

Intensity

1. We must push close to failure to maximize muscle activation and tension — especially when training with minimalist volumes!
2. Research suggests that pushing a set ~3 reps short of failure produces similar gains to pushing to failure.[8,9]
3. In one study, 160 men were asked to select their 10 rep max on an exercise. But, when coached through the exercise — many wound up getting double the reps! They'd been spending all this time in the gym training, but not getting close to the required intensity to stimulate gains![10]

It's not all bad news though. Research also shows that while we do often struggle to know where our limits truly lie, it does improve with more training experience.[11]

Key takeaway? you don't HAVE to push to failure — but should every once in a while, just to know where the limit lies.

The Minimalift Workouts keep to similar workouts for a few weeks at a time so you can experiment with pushing yourself harder to beat last week's performances and get closer to reaching this point.

Exercise Selection

We prioritize compound, multi joint exercises that cover a larger number of muscle groups. E.g. Bench Press for chest, shoulders & triceps versus a Chest Fly for just chest.

We don't neglect isolation movements — but we use them as supersets/tri-sets or with minimal break to further condense time demands. We also generally do less of these compared to a traditional maximalist routine.

Minimalist Specialty Sets

The Minimalift workouts several unique set ups to help save time and get more out of your workouts. Here's a brief rundown on some of the key Specialty Sets we will use.

1. Supersets/Tri-Sets
2. Cluster Sets
3. Density Workouts
4. Drop Sets

Supersets/Tri-Sets:

Definition: Doing 2 (or more) exercises in sequence, with minimal break between exercises. While one muscle group/exercise is resting, the other one is working.

Traditional set up:

Exercise	Instructions
Bench Press	No rest between exercises, 2mins rest between rounds = 6 minutes resting, 6 minutes working ~12 minutes
Dumbbell Row	3 sets, 6-10 reps, 2 mins rest between sets (6 minutes resting, 3 minutes working, ~10 minutes, not including warm up sets)
Total	**20 minutes, not including warm ups (25-30 minutes including warm ups)**

Minimalift Superset Set Up V1

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Bench Press + Dumbbell Row	3 sets, 6-10 reps each. 2 mins rest between sets (6 minutes resting, 3 minutes working, ~10 minutes, not including warm up sets)

Minimalift Superset Set Up V2

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Bench Press + Dumbbell Row	3 sets, 6-10 reps each. Take 1 minute rest between each exercise before returning to other exercise = 6 minutes resting, 6 minutes working ~12 minutes total

Total: Total: 10-12 minutes, not including warm up sets

Coach Tip:

Avoid same body part supersets - as this has been shown to decrease performance (e.g. Dumbbell Fly for chest into Bench Press for Chest)

Instead, we use antagonist supersets (e.g. 1 chest, then 1 back, OR we use non related muscle groups (e.g. Squats & Lat Pulldowns, or Leg Press & Shoulder Raise)

Can pair several exercises into a triset (e.g. Biceps, Triceps & Shoulders all as one extended superset)

Cluster Sets

Definition: Push a set close to failure, then take very short, incomplete rest (e.g. 5-20 seconds).
This allows **enough** recovery for your body to get a few more reps out with a high level of effort and tension.

Repeat 1-3 times e.g.:

- Set of 10 reps (failure)
- Rest 10 seconds
- Set to failure (4-6 reps)
- Rest 10 seconds
- Set to failure (2-4 reps)
- DONE

Density Workouts

Definition: The use of AMRAPs or timed sets to create a cardiovascular challenge without reducing tension or performance on your key exercises.

Example: Set a timer for 15 minutes. Perform as many rounds as possible of 3 reps on Deadlifts & Pull Ups, using an 8 Rep Max.

Drop Sets

Definition: Push a set close to failure, then immediately drop the weight down by 25-50% and go again to failure.

Decreasing the load means you can get more reps out, but **don't** need to get more rest periods in.

Strength

What is strength?

Strength is the ability to generate or withstand maximal force. In the gym, it's about lifting heavy weights.

It's not just about bigger muscles — it's about a specific **skill** of your nervous system getting better at recruiting and coordinating all of it's muscles to work efficiently at whatever task you're demanding of it, like a max heavy lift in the gym.

Why is strength important?

- **Improves performance** - It is the foundation for power, speed and endurance
- **Injury prevention** - Stronger muscles and joints reduce injury risk
- **Supports hypertrophy** - Strength improvements allow for heavier loads to be used in hypertrophy specific training
- **Functional transfer** - Being strong helps in real-world tasks like lifting, running, carrying objects
- **Longevity and health** - It's linked to better mobility, bone density and longevity

How do we build strength?

We need:

- **Low reps, heavy weights** - Around 85-100% of your 1Rep Max (around 1-6 reps at most)
    - You can get stronger lifting sets of 10-20 reps, but this strength doesn't carry over specifically to **max** strength and the nervous system efficiency required to coordinate this
- **Longer Rest Periods** - around 3-7 minutes to allow for a full nervous system recovery.
- **Practice** - Strength is a skill, so it needs a high frequency of specific movements for coordination and neural efficiency.

Maximalist Approach to Strength

The maximalist approach to strength includes 3 key features

- Larger number of sets than hypertrophy to practice the skill of the exercise
- Significantly longer rest periods to allow for the heaviest weights to be lifted
- Accessories designed to supplement the key areas that are missing from the core strength lift (e.g. Back Squat/Deadlift/Bench Press)

Here's how a squat workout may look for developing your max strength:

Exercise	Sets/Reps	Target	Est. Duration
Barbell Back Squat	4x3 @ 90% 2x5 @ 70%	Max strength, skill practice with lighter sets	30-40 min
Leg Press	3x10-15	More volume to support size & strength gains in same muscles — but with less lower back fatigue	10 min
Reverse Lunge	3x10-15 per side	Unilateral strength & stability	15 min
Hamstring Curl	3x10-15	Strengthen supportive muscles	10 min
Calf Raise	3x10-15	Strengthen supportive muscles	10 min

Total:
70-90 min

Minimalist Approach to Strength

While a competitive powerlifter may want to do multiple sets of an exercise to practice the skill, research shows that just 1 heavy set, 1-3x per week can significantly improve strength.

In fact, a 2017 meta analysis found that 81% of strength gains come from just 1-4 sets per exercise per week.[12]

> **For example:**
> Squat 2x per week — 1-2 heavy set (around 1-5 reps), 1 backdown set of around 6-10 reps

In the Minimalift Program, we will look at strength as a general quality we want to improve — **not** a specific skill like a Powerlifter might do with a Back Squat or Deadlift.

You **will** increase strength in key indicator lifts like the Back Squat/Deadlift — but the max strength gains will be slightly lower.

We also use a lower rep scheme (4-8) at times to bias strength further during certain periods of your plan.

Power

What is power?

Ability to generate force quickly.
It is defined as Power = Force X Velocity.
It's a combination of strength & speed.

Power vs Strength — What's the difference?

Strength = How much force you can produce (e.g. max weight on a Bench Press or Squat)

Power = How fast you can produce that force (e.g. max vertical jump or throwing a ball)

Components of Power

Maximal Strength (Force Production)

- The stronger you are, the more force you can apply quickly.
- Example: An athlete with a 500lb squat will generally be more powerful than someone with a 200lb squat.

Rate of Force Development (RFD)

- The ability to apply force rapidly (milliseconds vs. seconds).
- Example: Jumping as high as possible vs. grinding out a heavy squat.

Speed & Acceleration

- The ability to move load or body mass quickly.
- Example: A sprinter exploding out of the blocks.

Elasticity & Reactive Strength

- Stretch-shortening cycle efficiency (how well muscles store & release energy).
- Example: Depth jumps or bounding drills for vertical leap training.

Why Power Matters

Power is one of the most important physical attributes for performance, longevity, and functional movement. It impacts sports performance, injury prevention, daily life, and even aging.

Anything athletic relies on quick force production, not just slow, heavy lifting. — e.g. Jumping, Sprint Bursts, Punches, Kicks, Fast Swings in Golf, Tennis, etc.

But, power isn't just for athletes — it's crucial as you age, as research shows power declines faster than strength as you get older, and is one of the strongest predictors for improving your longevity.

Maximalist Power Approach

Training for maximum power usually involves:

- Strength Foundations (Heavy compound lifts)
- Explosive Strength (Light-Moderate compound lifts, performed exploasively)
- Plyometrics
- Sprint & Acceleration Work
- Contrast Training (Combining Strength work with sprint/speed/plyometrics)

It's not unusual to see work spread across an entire week to fit everything in.

Here's how it might look for the Lower Body...

Day 1 - Lower Strength & Plyos

Exercise Name	Prescription	Goal	Duration
Power Cleans	4x3 @ 70-80%	Develop explosive strength & rate of force development	15-20 min
Back Squats	5x5 @ 85%	Increase maximal lower body strength	20-25 min
Depth Jumps	3x5	Enhance stretch-shortening cycle & reactivity	10 min
Bulgarian Split Squats	3x8 per leg	Unilateral strength & stability	15 min
Sled Sprints	3x20 @ 70-80%	Train acceleration & sprint power	10 min

Day 2 - Sprints & Agility

Exercise Name	Prescription	Goal	Duration
Acceleration Sprints	6x20m	Develop first-step explosiveness & speed	15-20 min
Hurdle Hops	3x5	Improve ground contact time & reactivity	10 min
Med Ball Rotational Slams	3x6 per side	Enhance rotational power & core strength	10 min
Change of Direction Drills	3 sets	Improve agility & reactive ability	15 min
Core & Mobility Work	Varied	Strengthen core stability & improve movement efficiency	15 min

How do we do it in a minimalist approach?

While a full blown power routine for elite-level athletes may require a lot of volume and variety, we take the best core elements and bake them into our Minimalift plans with:

- Athletic warm ups (plyometrics etc)
- Incorporate pauses and modifications in set/rep execution to train explosiveness
- Use them in MetCons against the clock to reduce time demands (swings/jumps/plyos)
- Use lower skill exercises such as DBs instead of barbell cleans to speed up the skill acquisition process)

Mobility

What is mobility?

Mobility is the ability to move actively through a full range of motion with control and strength.

Flexibility is passive range, whilst mobility involves stability, strength coordination to both access and maintain that range under load and in dynamic movement.

Components of Mobility

Joint Range of Motion (ROM)

The ability of a joint to move freely and efficiently.
Example: Hips in a deep squat, shoulders in overhead pressing.

Motor Control & Stability

The ability to control movement without compensations.
Example: Holding a deep squat with control vs. collapsing forward.

Strength Through Range

Muscular control over the entire movement spectrum.
Example: Lifting your leg actively to your max range vs. having to pull it with your hands.

Neural Control & Coordination

The brain-body connection to execute movement properly.
Example: Pistol squats require mobility, but also balance & coordination.

Why Mobility Matters

Prevents Injuries: Poor mobility = compensations = higher injury risk
Enhances Performance: Athletes & lifters generate more power with full ROM
Improves Movement Efficiency: Less energy wasted from restrictions or poor mechanics
Supports Longevity: Keeps joints healthy, stable, and pain-free
Bridges Strength & Flexibility: Flexibility without strength = instability

How to Improve Mobility

- Dynamic Stretching (Active ROM work before lifting)
- Loaded Mobility (Deep squats, controlled rotations, Jefferson curls)
- CARs,PNF & PAILs/RAILs (Strengthen end ranges of motion)
- Movement-Specific Drills (Cossack squats, thoracic rotations, banded distractions)

Here's how it might look in a maximalist mobility routine...

Maximalist Mobility Breakdown

Maximizing mobility for skills like the Middle Splits require a higher frequency (~5 days per week), progressive stretching and both loaded, passive and active stretch and strength training

For Middle splits, we need to target the adductors, hamstrings, glutes and hip flexors

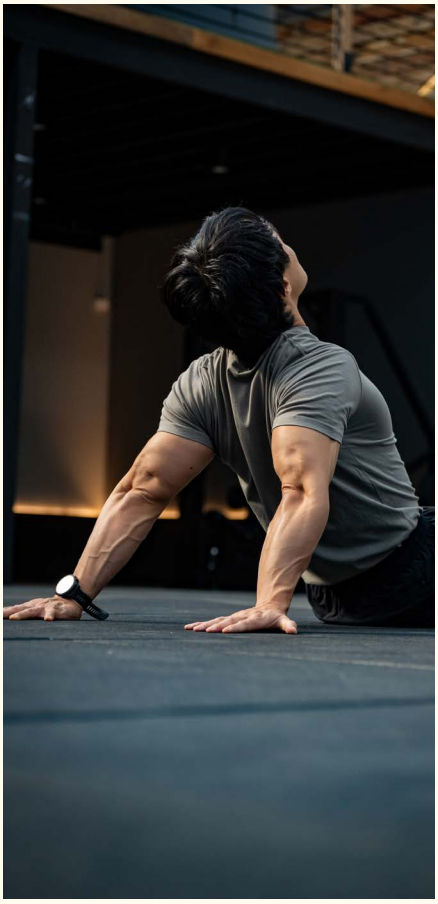
Phase	Workout	Goal
Warm Up	Dynamic Hip Circles, Deep Squats	5 minutes
Active Stretches	Cossack Squats/ Lateral Lunges	10 minutes
Deep Static Stretches	Butterfly Stretch/ Pancake Stretch	5-10 minutes
Loaded Stretching	Weighted Pancake/ Jefferson Curl	10 minutes
Isometric Holds	Middle Split Holds	5-10 minutes

Hold static stretches for 30-90 seconds for max benefits
Increase weight in loaded stretches

Requires 30-45 minutes per day, 3-5x per week (vary exercise choices etc)

How do we do it in a minimalist approach?

Research shows you can get similar gains in mobility from strength training through a full range of motion. Adding in loaded stretches, stretch pauses, and even short bursts of 30 seconds in one static position can improve mobility over time. In the Minimalift Workouts, we aim to accumulate 5 minutes per week to increase flexibility in target areas, which is the optimal dose for improving flexibility long term.



Here's some examples of how we do it:

- Use exercises that emphasize the stretched position of a muscle to strengthen that range of motion
- Holding positions in deep stretches for extended periods
- Adding mobility drills in as active rest periods
- Using mobility drills as part of an active warm up

Endurance

What is endurance?

Endurance training is all about improving the efficiency of your cardiovascular system. In simple terms, how well your body creates energy and removes waste products.

This is the vital component to being able to have energy throughout the day, perform better at all tasks, recover, do more work for longer and recover from it faster. **It is the ONE adaptation that we can ALWAYS benefit from having more of.**

HIIT vs LISS

Cardio is often broadly categrorised into HIIT (high intensity interval training) and LISS (low intensity steady state).

- **HIIT example - 10 rounds of 30 seconds on, 30 seconds off on a bike**
- **LISS example - 90 minute slow paced jog or incline treadmill walk**

The research comparing the two is quite interesting, with HIIT being shown to be significantly more time efficient. Just 1 minute of all out sprinting can provide comparable benefits to 50 minutes of lower intensity, continuous exercise across 12 weeks.[13]

However, this leads people to wrongly believe we should just be doing high intensity intervals.

The truth is, you need both.

While the high intensity interval work is efficient and yields tremendous benefits, there's unique benefits to lower intensity, long duration work for promoting relaxation and eccentric hypertrophy of the left ventricle in the heart.

Maximalist 10km Cardio Breakdown

Maximizing endurance requires progressive overload in training volume, intensity & specificity to the goal (e.g. 10km vs marathon)

We need a blend of aerobic base, threshold training and speed work.

Here's how a sample week might look if you wanted to maximize your 10km time:

Day	Workout	Goal
Monday	Interval Training (5-8 x 400m repeats)	Speed & anaerobic capacity
Tuesday	Easy Run (6-8 km @ Zone 2)	Anaerobic base & recovery
Wednesday	Hill Sprints or Tempo Run	Strength & race pace endurance
Thursday	Easy Run (5-7 km)	Active recovery
Friday	Threshold Run (6-8 km @ tempo pace)	Increases lactate threshold
Saturday	Long Run (12-15 km @ conversational pace)	Endurance & efficiency
Sunday	Rest or Cross Training (Cycling or Swimming)	Reduces impact while maintaining anaerobic fitness

40-60km (25-37 mile) weekly volume
7-10 hours per week

The Minimalist Approach to Endurance

For those of us who aren't looking at training for a marathon (yet!) — here's what we do in the Minimalift routine to maximize cardio benefits in the least amount of time.

- Keep rest periods shorter to have a higher cardiovascular demand **without** interfering with performance
- Add 1-3 optional longer duration workouts a week (e.g. a hike, bike ride, playing sport, long walks etc)

Section 4: Progress Tracking

There are 8 main tools we'll use to track progress.

The most important part of any plan is being able to track your progress to see measurable change over time. We go beyond basic bodyweight and dive deep into all aspects of fitness to give you as much data as possible on your journey.

1. Progress Photos
Standing relaxed and flexed in similar lighting conditions on an empty stomach. Take photos from the front, side and back.

2. Strength Performance
Track the reps & weights lifted on key exercises in your workouts. You should see this going up over time

---

3. Bodyweight
Track your bodyweight first thing upon waking on an empty stomach for the most accuracy.

4. Girth Measurements
Take measurements around the narrowest part of your waist, widest part of your hips, chest, arm, neck and thighs for more accuracy in your body composition.

5. Mobility

Sit & Reach test for lower body mobility & the Seated Overhead Raise & Seated Behind Back Reach for upper body mobility

---

6. Power

Strict vertical jump against a wall using a piece of tape or chalk

---

7. VO2 Max

The Coopers Test is a simple test for your aerobic fitness. It traditionally involves running for 12 minutes and covering as much distance as possible. If you prefer, you can switch this for any form of cardiovascular activity (e.g. Bike) - Track your distance covered for comparison over time.

8. Heart Rate Recovery

The Heart Rate Recovery is another measure for your aerobic fitness. To do this test, take your heart rate immediately upon completing a strenuous activity (like the Cooper's Test!). Then, take it again 1-minute after. Calculate the difference between the two values — that's your heart rate recovery!

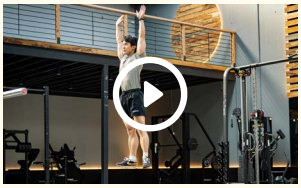
For example: Heart rate immediately post workout - 170bpm
Heart rate 1 minute after - 130BPM
Heart Rate Recovery = 30bpm

Sit and Reach
Seated on the floor with legs completely straight, reach as far forwards as possible. Take a photo or video for your reference.

Seated Overhead Raise
Seated on the floor with your legs straight, raise your arms up overhead.

Specifically, keep your palms facing the floor, arms completely straight and tucked by your sides - Avoid bending the elbows, bringing the arms out to a “Y” shape or twisting your palms inwards towards each other.

Seated Behind Back Reach



Vertical Jump
Click for demonstration

Section 5: Program Overview

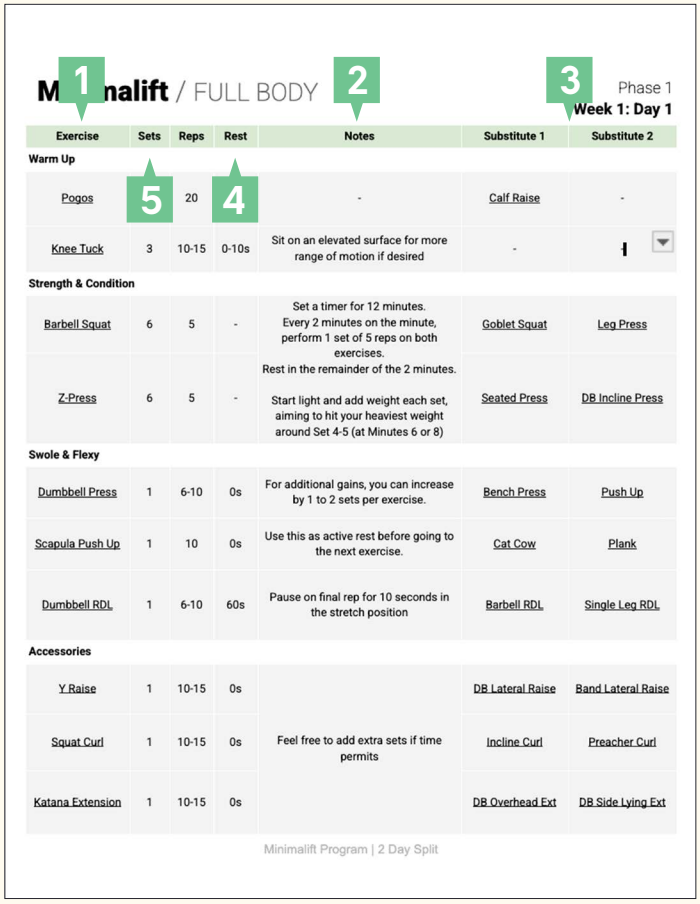
Anatomy of the Minimalift Program

Here's a brief guide to understanding the program.

1. Exercise: Each exercise has a clickable link to a tutorial or demo video.

2. Notes: Here you'll find extra technique cues, or specifics on how to perform the workout effectively.

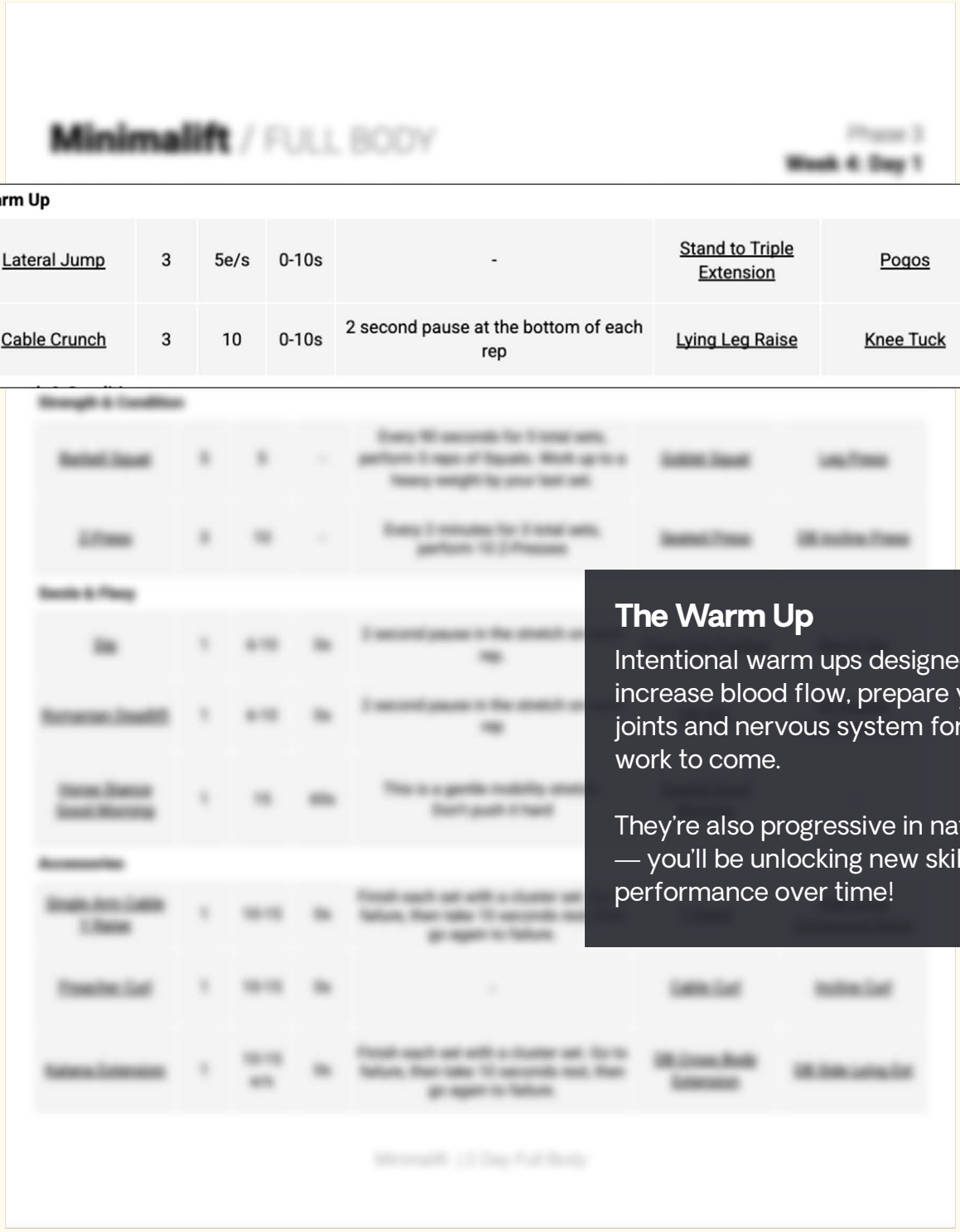
3. Substitutes: If you can't do the exercise listed, feel free to swap it to either option here. In some cases, no unique substitution is listed as it will already be specified within the tutorial.



Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest	Notes	Substitute 1	Substitute 2
Warm Up						
Pogos		20		-	Calf Raise	-
Knee Tuck	3	10-15	0-10s	Sit on an elevated surface for more range of motion if desired	-	-
Strength & Condition						
Barbell Squat	6	5	-	Set a timer for 12 minutes. Every 2 minutes on the minute, perform 1 set of 5 reps on both exercises. Rest in the remainder of the 2 minutes.	Goblet Squat	Leg Press
Z-Press	6	5	-	Start light and add weight each set, aiming to hit your heaviest weight around Set 4-5 (at Minutes 6 or 8)	Seated Press	DB Incline Press
Swole & Flexy						
Dumbbell Press	1	6-10	0s	For additional gains, you can increase by 1 to 2 sets per exercise.	Bench Press	Push Up
Scapula Push Up	1	10	0s	Use this as active rest before going to the next exercise.	Cat Cow	Plank
Dumbbell RDL	1	6-10	60s	Pause on final rep for 10 seconds in the stretch position	Barbell RDL	Single Leg RDL
Accessories						
Y Raise	1	10-15	0s		DB Lateral Raise	Band Lateral Raise
Squat Curl	1	10-15	0s	Feel free to add extra sets if time permits	Incline Curl	Preacher Curl
Katana Extension	1	10-15	0s		DB Overhead Ext	DB Side Lying Ext

4. Rest: Rest periods are to be used as rough guidelines — If you feel you need longer/shorter, feel free to adjust.

5. Sets: Outside of the Strength & Condition section, feel free to add extra sets if time permits. This is designed as the Minimalist approach, but there's plenty of room to sneak in more work if you want it! Unless otherwise stated, assume sets listed are for work sets only — take as many sets as you need to warm up appropriately before hand.



Minimalift / FULL BODY

Phase 3
Week 4: Day 1

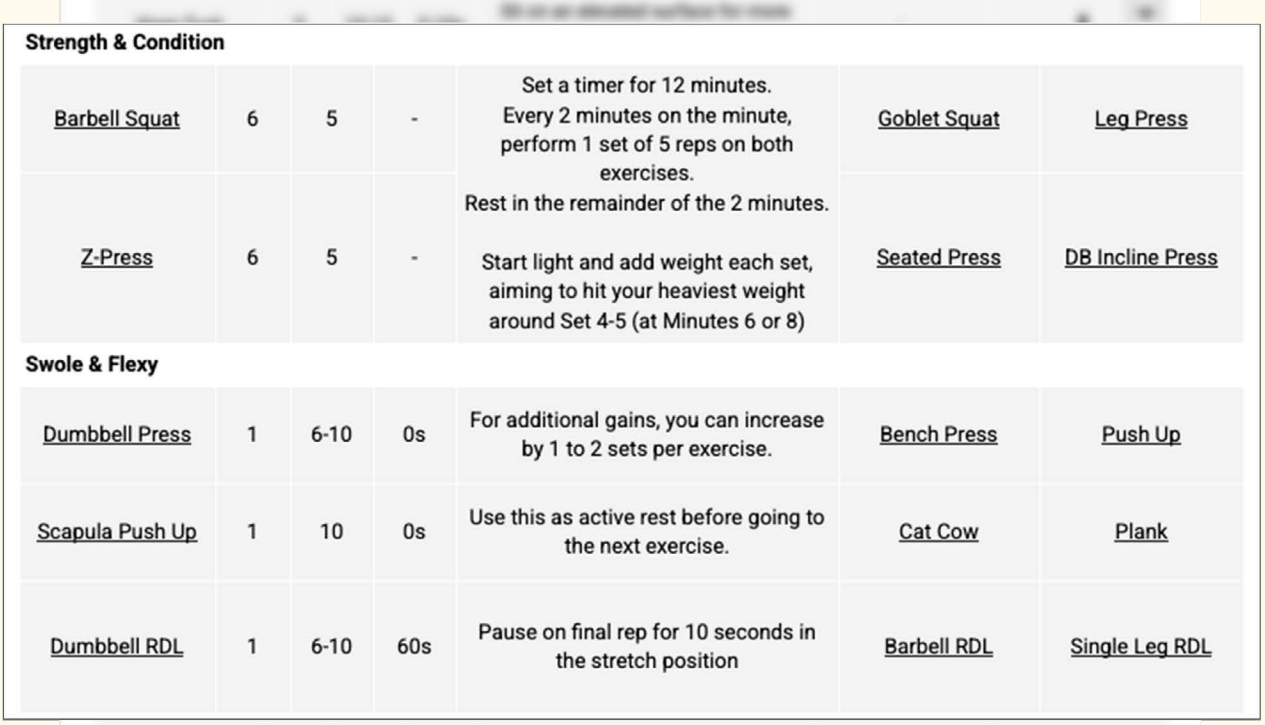
Warm Up

Lateral Jump	3	5e/s	0-10s	-	Stand to Triple Extension	Pogos
Cable Crunch	3	10	0-10s	2 second pause at the bottom of each rep	Lying Leg Raise	Knee Tuck

The Warm Up

Intentional warm ups designed to increase blood flow, prepare your joints and nervous system for the work to come.

They're also progressive in nature — you'll be unlocking new skills and performance over time!



Strength & Condition

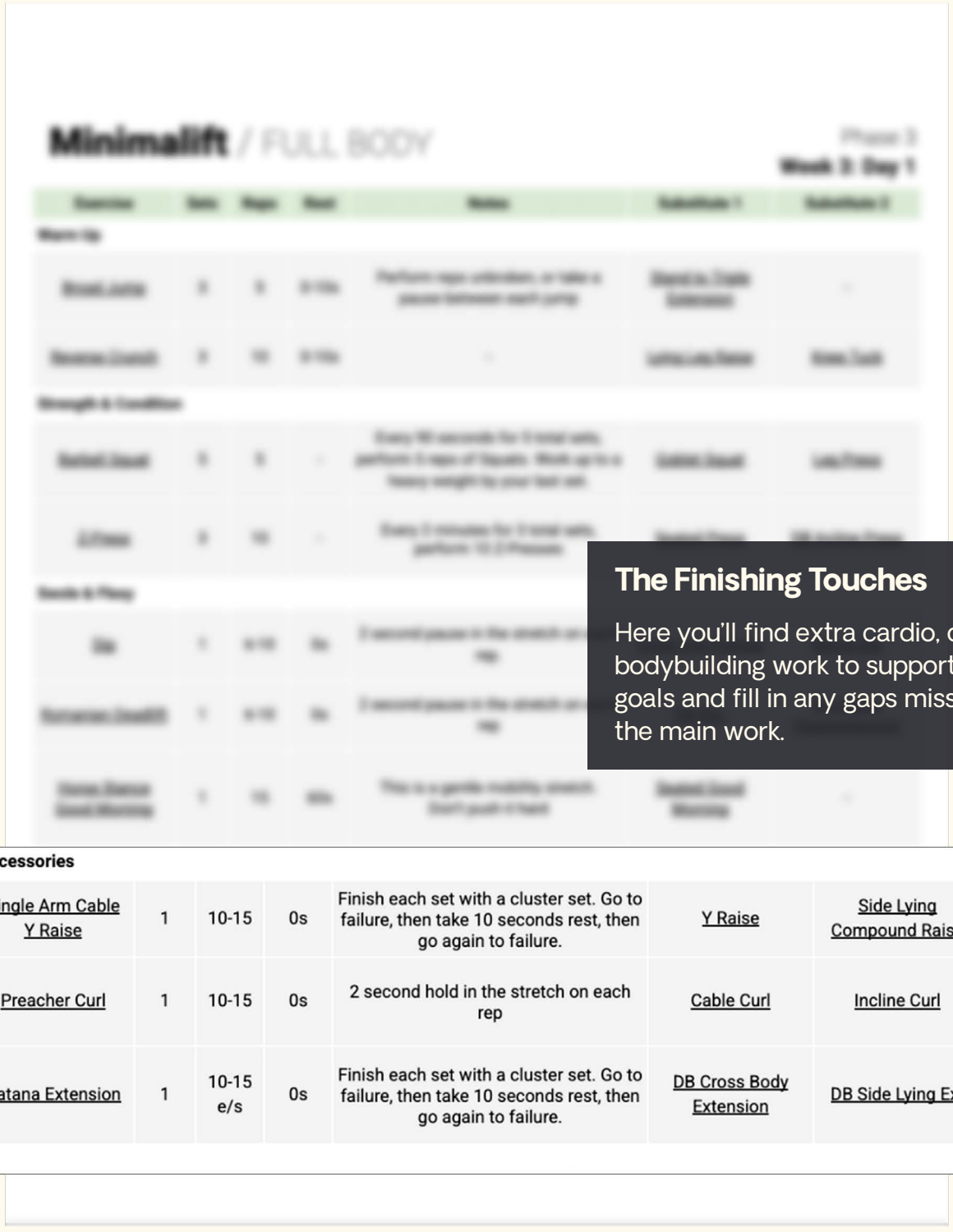
Barbell Squat	6	5	-	Set a timer for 12 minutes. Every 2 minutes on the minute, perform 1 set of 5 reps on both exercises. Rest in the remainder of the 2 minutes. Start light and add weight each set, aiming to hit your heaviest weight around Set 4-5 (at Minutes 6 or 8)	Goblet Squat	Leg Press
Z-Press	6	5	-		Seated Press	DB Incline Press

Swole & Flexy

Dumbbell Press	1	6-10	0s	For additional gains, you can increase by 1 to 2 sets per exercise.	Bench Press	Push Up
Scapula Push Up	1	10	0s	Use this as active rest before going to the next exercise.	Cat Cow	Plank
Dumbbell RDL	1	6-10	60s	Pause on final rep for 10 seconds in the stretch position	Barbell RDL	Single Leg RDL

The Main Work

The priority focus of the day. Features compound exercises and build total body strength and performance.



Accessories

Single Arm Cable Y Raise	1	10-15	0s	Finish each set with a cluster set. Go to failure, then take 10 seconds rest, then go again to failure.	Y Raise	Side Lying Compound Raise
Preacher Curl	1	10-15	0s	2 second hold in the stretch on each rep	Cable Curl	Incline Curl
Katana Extension	1	10-15 e/s	0s	Finish each set with a cluster set. Go to failure, then take 10 seconds rest, then go again to failure.	DB Cross Body Extension	DB Side Lying Ext

The Training Split

How you decide to split up your training days will largely depend on which version of the program you're running.

See below for some examples, but feel free to shift the workouts to different days of the week or add extra training days to best suit your schedule.

2 Day Full Body

Day	Workout
Monday	Full Body 1
Tuesday	Rest or Cardio
Wednesday	Rest Day
Thursday	Full Body 2
Friday	Rest or Bonus Workout
Saturday	At Home Mobility or Cardio
Sunday	Rest Day

3 Day Full Body

Day	Workout
Monday	Full Body 1
Tuesday	Rest or Cardio
Wednesday	Full Body 2
Thursday	Rest or Cardio
Friday	Full Body 3
Saturday	Rest or Bonus Workout
Sunday	Rest Day

4 Day Upper/Lower

Day	Workout
Monday	Upper Body 1
Tuesday	Lower Body 1
Wednesday	Rest Day
Thursday	Upper Body 2
Friday	Lower Body 2
Saturday	Rest or Bonus Workout
Sunday	Rest Day

5 Day Upper/Lower/Full Body

Day	Workout
Monday	Upper Body 1
Tuesday	Lower Body 1
Wednesday	Rest Day or Cardio
Thursday	Upper Body 2
Friday	Lower Body 2
Saturday	Full Body
Sunday	Rest Day

Training Phases

This program is split into three distinct phases. Each, building on the previous with a specific focus and progression in mind.

Here's a general overview on what to expect in each Phase

Phase 1: The Base. You'll see slightly higher reps, shorter rest periods and exercise selection that focuses more on improving your range of motion & endurance. This lays the foundation for recovery and joint integrity to allow you to push harder in future phases without burning out.

Phase 2: The Build. The main work will shift to allow you to lift slightly heavier weights to improve the efficiency of your nervous system; allowing you to activate your high threshold motor units more effectively to build size and strength.

We strategically use extra pauses and partial reps here to supercharge the hypertrophic and mobility response.

Phase 3: The Peak. You'll be lifting your heaviest weights at this point. In the main work, your set volume will decrease and rest periods go up to allow you to unlock all the strength you've been building over the previous 2 phases.

I recommend you run each phase for 4 weeks at minimum, but if you're making good progress on it, feel free to extend it for up to 8 weeks at a time.

Supersets/Tri-Sets

You'll find a lot of supersets within this program. This means you're meant to perform the exercises directly after each other in sequence, alternating sets back and forth.

For example:
Do Set 1 of Exercise 1, rest as prescribed
Do Set 1 of Exercise 2, rest as prescribed
Do Set 2 of Exercise 1, rest as prescribed
Do Set 2 of Exercise 2, rest as prescribed
Etc.

All supersets were selected to not require extensive set ups or equipment, so you can perform them easily in one station of your gym/workout area.

If you're unable to do them as grouped together for whatever reason, feel free to perform them as separate exercises.

What Comes Next?

I designed this program and guide to not just be a plug-and-play workout, but to give you a completely customisable and repeatable template for life.

You can restart the program from the beginning and follow it exactly as written. You'll find yourself able to push new boundaries with your new-found levels of fitness.

Or, you can substitute your favourite exercise variations (e.g. A Snatch Grip Deadlift for a Deadlift, or a Squat for a Clean & Jerk) to augment the workouts slightly whilst still giving you the full benefits of the Minimalift Template.

Section 6: Customizing your Minimalift Training

Customizing your Minimalift Program

This program was designed to be a balanced hybrid between strength, hypertrophy, power, endurance and mobility.

But you might have more specific goals, so I wanted to give you some frameworks and examples of how to specialise more in any one area. This section will be split into the 4 key areas:

- Strength
- Hypertrophy
- Mobility
- Cardiovascular Endurance

Each with sample workouts and recommendations for you to use to personalise your journey.

Minimalift Maintenance

The beauty of the Minimalift Plan is it gives you a time efficient solution to condense all of your workouts. This isn't just so you can get away with training less overall, but so you have room to add more of what you enjoy and want to develop further, while having the confidence that you're not going to go backwards in any other aspects of fitness.

The research on "Maintenance" volume is promising. Most of it points towards the notion that you can maintain your current level of fitness across all aspects by doing around 1/9th of the volume you'd need to actively improve it.

For example, if it took you around 4-10 challenging sets per week to build bigger biceps, you might only need 1 challenging set per week (or per fortnight!) to maintain those gains.

While I don't recommend always going down to the absolute bare minimum, you can rest assured that even at the lowest frequency (Minimalift 2 Day), you're still getting more than enough to continue to progress your body.

Let's take a look at how you can adjust and add more to your routine to specialise further!

Strength

Developing raw, absolute strength requires one key thing — lifting heavy weights.

"Heavy" is technically quantified in lifting circles as anything above 85% of a 1RM, or a weight you can just barely lift for 5 reps (or heavier!)

The minimum effective dose for this would be 1 set per week, performed to anywhere between 1-5 repetitions.
However, the other component to building strength beyond using heavy weights, is that **strength is a skill.**

Like any other skill (riding a bike, learning an instrument), it requires a lot of practice, and the more you can do, the faster the rate of learning. Every set and every workout is an opportunity to develop this skill, so we'll be looking at adding in more than the minimum in our recommendations below.

Exercise Selection

If you wanted to add this to your routine, I recommend picking 1-4 key lifts you want to develop your strength in at a time from the core movements of Squat, Press, Pull & Hinge.

For example, you might choose

- Barbell Squat
- Sumo Deadlift
- Incline Bench Press
- Chin Up

Whether you choose a Barbell Squat versus a Machine Squat, or a Pull Up versus a Machine Lat Pulldown isn't as important — just pick the movement or variation of the movement that you're most comfortable with and want to use as your tool to build your strength.

Reps, Sets & Frequency

As mentioned, the minimum dose would be just 1 set, performed between 1-5 repetitions.
A more "Optimal" dose for maximalist strength gains would be between 3-5 sets.

You could add this to the existing Minimalift routine by simply inserting it at the start (after your warm up) — and then going into the rest of your workout as normal.

How many exercises and sets you do will boil down to your time constraints and preference.

Adding 3-5 sets at a heavy weight will also require an additional 2-4 warm up sets. As an entire time block, this may take around 15 minutes for one exercise.

If you selected 2 exercises for the 1 training session (E.g. Deadlifts & Bench Press) that can quickly add up to an extra 30+ minutes to the one session.

That's totally doable for many people, but your schedule or preferences may not align with this.

If you're only training twice per week and want to keep your workout duration to under an hour, you will find it more practical to select either:

- 1 exercise per workout only to develop your strength
- 1 or 2 sets only, instead of the "optimal" 3-5 sets

The other alternative would be to stack all of your heavy strength lifts onto a single workout. For example, you might follow the 2 Day Minimalift Plan on Monday & Wednesday, then Friday could be reserved for your Strength Workouts where you'd perform:

- Deadlifts - 3 sets of 3-5 reps.
- Bench Press - 2 sets of 3-5 reps.
- T-Bar Row - 2 sets of 3-5 reps.

You'll make great progress on either option, but keep in mind you won't be fitting in absolutely everything you might want to at one time!

Which is what brings us to Progression and Variation.

Progression

The simplest starting point for progressing your strength is to focus purely on linear progression where you aim to add more reps or weights over time.

However with strength, we take a slightly more nuanced approach due to the heavy lifting and skill components.

For example, imagine you predict you can lift 100kg for 5 reps on a Squat. Here's how I recommend laying it out:

- **Week 1** - 90kg for 5 reps (1-5 sets)
- **Week 2** - 95kg for 5 reps (1-5 sets)
- **Week 3** - 100kg for 5 reps (1-5 sets)
- **Week 4** - 102.5kg for 5 reps (1-5 sets)

Use the first 2 weeks as your 'intro' weeks to gain confidence, strength and build the skill. Achieve your top weight prediction by Week 3, and aim to surpass it on Week 4.

Then, you can start the cycle again at Week 1, using the new "102.5kg" prediction for Week 3.

These first 2 weeks don't just give you practice, they're also gradually exposing you to heavier weights, which gives your nervous system more time to acclimate to the loads on the way up, and between each cycle of Week 3 to Week 3, you get a pseudo "Deload" where the weights are sub maximal, allowing for more recuperation and recovery.

While there is a lot more complexity behind building max strength, going into those specifics goes beyond the scope of this book. But, keep in mind many of the strongest lifters in the world have followed this exact linear model of progression for years to make significant gains.

Keep it simple.

Variation

Different variations of exercises yield slightly different results. A Chin-Up is traditionally done with an underhand grip, while a Pull-Up is traditionally done with an overhand grip.

This will change the plane of motion and muscles targeted.

While an advanced Strength Program might include a lot of variation to cover all weak points and bases, we keep things simple and minimalist by using these variations as opportunities to change things up and avoid plateaus.

After repeating the 4-Week Progression scheme outlined above on an exercise like Pull Ups for several months, you might find yourself hitting a plateau where you're unable to push things further.

The simple act of rotating to a Chin Up, or a Machine Pulling variation can help to unlock an untapped region and levels of progression for you to work towards.

You'll never be able to accomplish everything you want to in one single workout (or training block!) — enjoy the process of experimentation, discovery and learning about your body. Keep it interesting through variation and constantly pushing yourself to progress.

A rising tide lifts all boats.

Hypertrophy

The Minimalift plan covers your bases well for hypertrophy — but you might find yourself wanting to focus more on a specific body part.

Here's what I recommend:

- Choosing 1 body part at a time to selectively drive up your volume in.
- Specialise for between 6-12 weeks at most.
- Select exercises that cover the entire range of motion for the muscle group
- Aim to train it in isolation 2-3x per week
- After the 6-12 week period, switch focus to your next body part and repeat.

Here's a sample workout for each of the key muscle groups.
You can perform them:

- Exactly as prescribed as standalone workouts on a separate day.
- At the start of a Minimalift workout
- Split up - Choosing to perform 1-2 exercises on one workout, then 1-2 on another workout
- Rotating in your preferred substitute (e.g. Close Grip Lat Pulldown instead of Wide Grip Pull Up)

Biceps

Exercise	Target Range	Sets	Reps	RIR	Rest
Preacher Curl	Stretched Position	2	8-12	1-2	60s
Standing Barbell Curl	Mid Range Position	2	6-8	1-2	60s
Spider Curl	Shortened Position	2	8-12	1-2	60s

Triceps

Exercise	Target Range	Sets	Reps	RIR	Rest
Triceps Dips	Mid Range Position	2	6-8	1-2	90s
Cross Body Triceps Extension	Stretched Position	2	8-12	1-2	60s
Triceps Push Down	Shortened Position	2	8-12	1-2	60s

Glutes

Exercise	Target Range	Sets	Reps	RIR	Rest
Hip Thrust	Shortened Position	2	10-15	1-2	90s
Deficit Split Squat	Stretched Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s
Romanian Deadlift	Mid Range Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s

Hamstrings

Exercise	Target Range	Sets	Reps	RIR	Rest
Lying Leg Curl	Shortened Position	2	10-15	1-2	90s
Romanian Deadlift	Stretched Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s

Quads

Exercise	Target Range	Sets	Reps	RIR	Rest
Leg Extension	Shortened Position	2	10-15	1-2	90s
Reverse Nordic	Stretched Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s
Smith Machine Squat	Mid Range Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s

Chest

Exercise	Target Range	Sets	Reps	RIR	Rest
Upper Chest Fly	Shortened Position	2	10-15	1-2	90s
Deficit Push Up	Stretched Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s
Machine Chest Press	Mid Range Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s

Back

Exercise	Target Range	Sets	Reps	RIR	Rest
Single Arm DB Row	Shortened Position	2	10-15	1-2	90s
Lat Pulldown	Mid Range Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s
Stiff Arm Pulldown	Stretched Position	2	8-12	1-2	90s

Shoulders

Exercise	Target Range	Sets	Reps	RIR	Rest
DB Y Raise	Side Delt - Shortened	2	10-15	1-2	90s
Cable Rear Delt Fly	Rear Delt - Stretch Position	2	10-15	1-2	90s
DB Overhead Press	Front & Side Delt - Stretched Position	2	6-8	1-2	90s

Mobility

The key variable for mobility that's missing from the base Minimalift programs is extended time spent in the stretched position, both in active and passive holds.

These two sample workouts include a mix of dynamic and passive stretching, along with extra opportunities to strengthen your muscles in their end ranges to make sure the mobility improvements stick!

These can be performed post workout or on their own separate day.

If performing separately, I recommend a brief cardiovascular warm up for 5-10 minutes to warm up your muscles and joints before stretching.

Lower Body Mobility

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Horse Stance Hold	3	30s
Bodyweight Jefferson Curl	3	5-10
Seated Good Morning	3	10-15
Couch Stretch	2	60s
Hurdler Stretch	2	60s

Upper Body Mobility

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Dead Hang	3	30s
Prone Y Raise	3	15-20
Wall Angels	3	10-15
Seated Shoulder Extension	2	60s
Sleeper Stretch	2	30s
Shoulder Dislocations	2	10

Cardiovascular Endurance

Cardio workouts can generally be split into longer duration, lower intensity training and higher intensity, shorter duration training. They're both vitally important, as they provide unique benefits to your cardiovascular system.

The lower intensity, longer duration sessions will promote better recovery, while the higher intensity workouts will improve the strength of your heart. I recommend starting with just 1-2 high intensity sessions per week, and focusing heavily on the low intensity steady state work to build your base.

Low Intensity, Steady State Cardio (Zone 2)

30-90 minutes of steady state cardio on your preferred choice of exercise. Use an intensity that allows you to maintain a conversational pace.

Frequency: Can be performed daily

High Intensity, VO2 Max Cardio

Warm Up: 5 minutes at low to moderate intensity
Workout: 4 minutes on, 3 minutes at recovery pace, repeat 4 times.

Notes:

- "On" period should be at an intensity that allows you to just complete the 4 minutes, and all subsequent sets. Pace yourself — don't go too hard on the first set or you'll burn yourself out.
- Choose your choice of cardio exercise. Using machine based options (e.g AirBike, Rower etc) will allow you to track watts/ RPMs for accurate pacing.

Frequency: 1-3x per week max

High Intensity, Lactate Intervals

Warm Up: 5 minutes at a low to moderate intensity

Workout:

- 15 seconds on, 60 seconds off for 4 'reps'
- 3 minutes rest
- Repeat for 3 total rounds

Notes:

- "On" period should be at an absolute max intensity
- Any choice of cardio exercise is suitable, as long as it allows you to push to a max intensity for the duration of the sprint.

Frequency: 1-3x per week max

Moderate Intensity, Aerobic Intervals

Warm Up: 5 minutes at a low to moderate intensity

Workout:

- 15 seconds on, 45 seconds on for 4 'reps'
- 2 minutes rest
- Repeat for 4 total rounds

Notes:

- "On" period should be at roughly 60-70% intensity. Not max intensity.
- Any choice of cardio exercise is suitable.

Frequency: 1-3x per week max

Section 7: Frequently Asked Questions

Can I really make progress with this program?

Yes! As long as you're pushing yourself and progressing your workouts each week as outlined, you should be tapping into sufficient levels of intensity to trigger progress.

How long should each workout take?

If you stick with the exact prescriptions for rest periods and workout pacing, each workout was designed to take between 30-45 minutes, max. However, depending on your experience level and individual factors like taking longer rest periods, you might find each workout may take you a little longer or shorter.

The volume is lower than I'm used to — can I add sets?

Absolutely. I wouldn't recommend doing this at first — give yourself a couple of weeks to focus on your intensity and acclimating to the workload. In many cases, I find that people aren't truly tapping into the intensity level required to make the lower volume work in the first place — and adding more won't always be beneficial.

Do be sure to also check out the **Customising Your Minimalift Plan** section for accessory workout options.

How much progress can I expect to make?

Progress is highly individual. It's not just about the work performed, but individual genetics, training history and lifestyle factors. All else being equal, something as simple as getting a few hours less sleep per night can significantly impact your rate of progress.

As long as you're focusing on pushing yourself hard in your workouts and progressing them long term you can rest assured you're ticking the most important boxes.
To assist in this, I highly recommend tracking your progress in strength through a simple logbook. We have this available in the Ganbaru Workout App, but a simple pen and paper will do just fine!

Taking body measurements and progress photos are also helpful — but simply focusing on steady strength progression will be your best indicator for long term progress

Why is there little variation week to week?

One of the core principles behind any intelligent program is progressive overload. Simply put, you should be able to make the workouts progressively more challenging through adding more weight or reps over time as your body adapts.

If we were switching things up every workout, it would be hard to monitor and make these changes in an objective, consistent pattern, making it harder to make progress.

Each block is designed with 4 weeks in mind to give you plenty of time to progress each week, but changes things up before things start to go sale.

I can't do Exercise X — what should I do instead?

All exercises can be swapped out for similar alternatives due to equipment availability, or regressed to more accessible options if they're too advanced. You'll find substitutions listed in all demo videos.

My gym is crowded — can I switch up exercise order?

Absolutely. Try not to completely muddle up the workout, but if needed you can feel free to switch as much as required.

What if I can't do supersets, giant sets or paired exercises?

All sequences in this program have been programmed with a busy gym in mind, and to only require one piece of equipment at a time. However, we can't accommodate for all situations. It's completely fine to separate the exercises and perform them as individual exercises instead of in the superset/giant set/paired exercise fashion.

What's AMRAP mean?

AMRAP - As Many Reps As Possible (typically used in drop sets/rest pause sets where reps are undefined)

What's RIR?

RIR - Reps in Reserve - Personal gauge for how 'hard' a set was, which is useful for fatigue management and achieving a proper stimulus for growth/strength. For example, if you did a set of 10, but felt as if you could have done 3-4 more reps with that weight before losing technique or reaching a failure point, that would be "3-4 RIR"
Unless otherwise stated, assume all sets in all programs are to be performed between 1-4RIR — See below for more details.

How heavy should I be lifting?

Unless otherwise directed, you should aim to lift anywhere between 70%-100% of your maximum effort, or leaving anywhere between 0-4 reps in reserve (RIR).

This will vary a little based on energy, diet and other external factors, so don't feel like you MUST lift heavier every single time you workout.

Within workouts, you'll often see rep ranges given (e.g. 4 sets of 8-10 reps), or straight sets (e.g. 4 sets of 8). Unless otherwise directed, approach these however you feel comfortable. That may mean lifting the exact same weight each set, or gradually increasing OR decreasing it based on performance. As long as you are falling within that 70-100% effort on ALL sets, you should notice progression across a longer time scale.

How should I warm up?

Unless otherwise noted, all sets in workouts are for work sets only — take as long as you need to warm up and prepare your body for the workout that has been laid out.

Outside of the warm up programmed in, you might choose to add a gradual cardiovascular warm up that brings your heart rate and body temperature up such as 5 minutes on a fast paced, high incline walk, skipping or general calisthenics is enough.

Warm ups should be self directed based on preferences and needs. If you feel you need extra mobility exercises or stretching etc, feel free to do them — But in most cases, the BEST warm up is to do lighter sets of the Workout Prescriptions, and gradually increase the weight towards working weights til you feel ready to start the workout.

With that being said, using LESS REPS and rests on warm ups is an underrated way to cut down on workout times.

For example, if a work set is meant to be done at 100kg for 10 reps, most people would go:

50kg - 10 reps - rest 60s
70kg - 10 reps - rest 60s
90kg - 10 reps - rest 60s
100kg - 10 reps - rest 60s

Instead, try

50kg - 10 reps - no rest
70kg - 3 reps - no rest
90kg - 1 rep - 60s rest
100kg - 10 reps - 60s rest

How long should I rest?

Unless specifically directed as part of a timed circuit or time-cap workout, rest periods provided should be used as a guide, not rigid directions.
If you are very experienced and lifting heavy weights, you may need upwards of 3 minutes between top sets. In other cases, you may feel like the prescription of 1-2 minutes is too much, so feel free to condense it as needed.

A general guideline is to perform your next set when you feel confident that:

- Your cardiovascular system will not limit your performance (unless that is the intended goal)
- NON-target muscles will not limit your performance (e.g. Lower back fatigue limiting Barbell Squat performance)
- You can perform at least 5 reps on the exercise (unless the directions specify otherwise)

What do I do after I finish this program?

This program was designed to be repeated as it provides endless levels of progression based on where you're currently at. If you'd like to mix things up, tap here to explore our extensive program library!

Section 8: About Eugene

Hi! I'm Eugene. I'm a coach, educator, and founder of the Ganbaru Method Fitness App. My mission is to cut through the noise of extreme fitness trends so you can take charge of your health without feeling overwhelmed.

I've spent over 15 years coaching and consulting for professional athletes, coaches and health professionals across over 30 sports in over 50 countries — but my biggest passion is sharing free, practical tips on YouTube for anyone wanting to learn and grow in fitness.

I hope you've enjoyed this guide and program as much as I enjoyed writing it!

Yours in health,
Eugene