

General notes/instructions for the sample programs:

Beginner – low variation

The four main lifts follow this basic pattern:

When they're the first lift in the workout, you do 6x3, shooting for 5-10lbs (2.5-5kg) heavier than last time. This should be challenging, but even your last triple should be solid with no form deviation. This gives you more opportunity to see how your focus and cues work under a bit of fatigue.

When they're the second lift in the workout, you do 4 sets of 2 with the weight you just did 6 sets of 3 with. You may be a little tired/sore from your previous workout, but this should be a very manageable day.

When they're the third lift in the workout, it's 4 sets of 2 again, but 10% lighter than they were on the previous training day. This is because it comes after your hardest workout for a similar lift (squatting after deadlifting, OHP after benching, etc.).

When they're the fourth lift in the workout, it's a repeat of the prior day. This is to make sure you're fairly well-rested for the hardest workout for that lift, which will be in the next training session.

For all the isolation "bodybuilding" work, your goal is simply to feel the target muscle contraction. Don't worry about moving the most weight

possible. Keep the rep tempo controlled (2-3 seconds lowering, and 2-3 seconds lifting), and go to failure or very close to failure. Just 1-2 sets.

Feel free to flip-flop the bodyweight and isolation work if you'd like.

These may look like long, intimidating workouts, but you should be able to click through them with just 1-2 minutes of rest between sets. If you find yourself needing to rest a lot between sets, it generally means you've started grinding reps and having issues progressing, so you should move on to intermediate training for the lifts for which you find yourself needing to rest for more than 2 minutes between sets.

Beginner – high variation

In general, I'd recommend you move to this routine after at least 2-3 weeks on the low variation routine so you get some time to practice the main lifts since you're only doing them once per week on this program (and you shouldn't get TOO bored in just 2-3 weeks).

After that, including close variations can actually enhance the practice you're doing by challenging those basic movement patterns under slightly different conditions – it can help you learn the basic skills in a deeper fashion because the challenges are more varied but centered around the same core set of challenges (similar to how you don't master a challenging piano piece by only playing that one piece – you master

the instrument as a whole, which allows you to more easily master a particular piece).

Start with conservative loads for the variations of the main lifts as you adjust to the small tweaks to the movements, but try to progress in load week to week.

Intermediate Regular

You may recognize this as a basic upper/lower split. Progressions aren't listed for the main lifts because you have a few options, listed on the next page.

Pick progressions on a time scale where you can comfortably increase your training max at the end of each cycle. Start with the fourth option (increasing your training weights every 3 weeks), progressing to the first (increasing training weights every 15 weeks). You can also use smaller chunks of a longer progression if you'd like. For example, doing weeks 4-12 of the first option as a 9 week cycle, or doing weeks 7-12 of the second option as a 6 week cycle.

All of these utilize 3 week progressions, so feel free to take a deload after every 3 or 6 weeks of training if needed.

For auxiliary lifts, you can use any of the progressions for the main lifts, as well as the ones listed specifically for auxiliary lifts. I'd recommend you don't use the same progression for both a main lift and the

corresponding auxiliary for that main lift. I'd also recommend just using 3 week progressions for the auxiliary lifts. That will mean you hit a wall on auxiliary lifts more often than you do for main lifts, and that's by design. When you hit a wall on an auxiliary lift, just sub it out for another. That adds more variety to your training and ensures you don't develop any glaring weaknesses.

Some options for auxiliary lifts (which ones you choose is entirely up to you):

Squat:

Paused squat

Beltless squat

Squat with the opposite bar position

Squat with different shoes (flat sole if you squat in a heel, and vice versa)

Anderson squats

5 second eccentric squats

Front squat

Zercher squat (only if you sort of hate yourself)

Box squat

Bench:

Closegrip bench

Low incline press

Spoto Press

Dead bench from pins

Bench with a Slingshot

Low board press

Floor press

Bench with feet up

Long pause bench

Deadlift:

RDL

Opposite stance DL (sumo if you pull conventional, and vice versa)

Low rack/block pull

Deficit deadlift

Snatch grip deadlift

Paused deadlifts

Overhead Press:

Push Press

Seated military press

DB OHP

OHP from pins at forehead height

Incline press

Log press

General accessory guidelines are given, but building mass isn't an exact science. Feel free to experiment and see what each of your muscle groups respond best to, both in terms of set/rep schemes and exercises. Either feel free to just do the number of challenging sets for each muscle group suggested in the spreadsheet, using exercises of your choosing, or check out some of these reads to get your creative juices flowing. Again, hypertrophy is equal parts art and science.

[Rest-Paused Training](#), a favorite of bodybuilding guru Dante Trudel

[Myo-Reps](#), the brainchild of my friend and hypertrophy expert Borge Fagerli

[Bloodflow Restriction](#), for some of the most ridiculous pumps of your life. Though it hasn't been shown to cause more growth than traditional hypertrophy training (as was initially hoped after some very promising research), it DOES cause hypertrophy with zero or minimum muscle damage, making it a prime candidate for muscles that never seem to recover as well as the rest, or to ramp up training frequency for a lagging muscle group.

Intermediate Peak

Not much extra to add for this one. It's pretty self-explanatory. Four weeks of linear increases in weight at a slightly higher RPE (to get you more comfortable grinding). Take your opener for deadlift two weeks out so your back will be fully recovered for meet day. Take your bench and squat openers one week out. On the week of the meet, just do some very light, very easy sets throughout the week to stay loose and keep the motor patterns fresh.

Advanced Offseason

This looks brutal on paper. And, well...it is. This is designed to build specific work capacity for the competitive lifts. The biggest mistake you can make is going too heavy. You should be able to click through these workouts with 1-2 minutes between sets, getting you in and out of the gym in under an hour. If these workouts are dragging on closer to two hours, it's a good indication that the weights you chose were too heavy. With this volume and frequency of work for the main lifts, cranking out sets with just 1-2 reps left in the tank will probably be too much for most people. Make the sets harder by limiting rest periods, not by going super heavy. However, the strength endurance and ability to recover between sets that you build in this phase will make it much easier to complete and recover from the heavier training as a meet approaches. Feel free to

take a deload after week 3 if you need it. Stick with the same weights for the first three weeks, and add a bit of weight on week 4 since reps are a bit lower for the second three week block. Feel free to substitute any of the lifts for other auxiliary lifts listed above.

Advanced Peak

Again, this one is pretty self-explanatory. The range of sets/reps is because some people can manage more sets with heavy loads than others. In general, smaller people can do more sets and reps with heavy loads than larger people can. Feel free to push harder into the 9-10RPE range for this block since you're just training each lift once per week, but terminate a workout when your form starts slipping – the goal here is maximizing perfect practice with heavy loads.

Between the offseason block and the peak, you'd have a 4-8 week block of training looking more similar to the intermediate programming in order to work the main lifts back into your program at lower intensities.