

WORKOUT DESCRIPTION

We've all been there, stepping in the gym for the first time as a young, naive lifter looking everywhere for all the gains that will make us look like that dude on the cover of a magazine. It wasn't just the look though, was it? We wanted to be that guy that threw all the plates on the bar and banged out rep after rep while everyone in the room stared in disbelief.

If this describes you then you've probably been looking at as many bench improvement articles as you can find. Although a [big bench press](#) is impressive, the fact is that the exercise that will make people drop their jaws isn't an upper body movement, it's a lower body exercise. Of course I'm talking about the [squat](#), and if you're interested in moving some serious weight with this classic movement then keep reading.

WEEK 1: MAXING OUT

In order to know where you're going, you need to know where you're at so the first step in [improving your squat](#) is knowing what you're trying to improve. On your next leg day, your only objective is to get in the rack and squat until you can't squat anymore. This is a sample routine to help you find out what your one rep max (1RM) is:

- 5 minute walk on treadmill at 3.0 mph and at least a 8% incline so your hips, [glutes](#), and [hamstrings](#) are being warmed up as well.
- 5 minutes of stretching. Stretch everything out – even the upper body.
- Squat the bar for 15 reps. Rest one minute after this and every other warm up set.
- Squat a light weight for 10 reps. You shouldn't be failing by the 10th rep.
- Squat a heavy weight for 5 reps. Although you should be giving effort, you shouldn't [hit failure](#) here either.
- Go for your first single rep set but make it one you know you can get.
- Go for whatever [your current max is](#). If you've never maxed out before, try a weight that you're confident you can do.

- If you succeed, then add 5-10 pounds and try again. Repeat this pattern until you miss the attempt. Make sure you have a spotter and are in a squat rack. Rest for two to three minutes between max attempts.



NOW WHAT?

Now that you know your 1RM, it's time to do some math. This program will be based on using a percentage of your max for your work sets to help you improve your max. You'll take your 1RM and multiply it by .75, .80, .85, .90, and .95. Write these numbers down because you'll need them over the next few weeks during training.

THE TRAINING PLAN

Before we get into the meat of the [workout](#), I want you to try something. This is called the Deep Bodyweight Squat Test. Get down into a squat position. Your thighs should be below parallel to the floor and your butt should be as close to the floor as you can get it. Once you get into that position, stay there until you can't take it anymore. A

toddler can stay in this position for a long time so it shouldn't bother you, right? You might find that you're having trouble.

If so, then this means you have tight hip flexors, tendons, and this can all affect your squatting performance. Improving your ability to hold this position will help with explosiveness out of the hole and control of the weight as you squat. Practice this position every day with the goal of holding it at least one second longer than you did the previous day. On training days, do this before the training starts. On off days, do it first thing in the morning.

We've already completed Week 1 which was the max out attempts. Now we're going to get into the training for the following weeks. The warm up protocol will be the same as the max out up until you reach the warm up set of 5 reps. After you finish warming up, you'll do 5 work sets of [heavy squats](#).

Each week is a different rep scheme so follow the plan for the week that corresponds to the plan below. Remember when you calculated those percentages? Here is where you'll use those numbers. Let's say your max is 300 pounds. 75% of 300 is 225 and 80% is 240. For Week 2, your log would look like this:

Squats: 4 sets of 5 with 225 and 1 set of 4 with 240.

If you're on Week 3, plug in the numbers that would apply for that week and so on. Once you hit Week 6, you'll max out again as you did in Week 1. You then recalculate your percentages and repeat this plan for another cycle up until Week 11 where you'll follow your own [leg plan](#) but it should be light and with no squats. This is so you're completely rested and ready for your big day on Week 12 where you'll find out what your new max is. When you squat, don't just get down into the hole and explode up. Stop for a second at the bottom before coming back up.

Week	Percent	Sets	Reps	Percent	Sets	Reps
Week 2	75%:	4	5	80%:	1	4

Week 3	80%:	4	4	85%:	1	3
Week 4	85%:	4	3	90%:	1	2
Week 5	90%:	4	2	95%:	1	1
Week 6	Max out. Remember to recalculate your new max and percentages for your next few weeks.					
Week 7	75%:	4	5	80%:	1	4
Week 8	80%:	4	4	85%:	1	3
Week 9	85%:	4	3	90%:	1	2
Week 10	90%:	4	2	95%:	1	1
Week 11	Do a light leg workout but no squats. The lighter work and extra rest will help you for your final max out week.					
Week 12	Max out.					

After you finish your work sets in the rack, you still have some assistance work to do. These exercises will provide extra support so you know that when you attempt that new 1RM, you've covered all bases. Those exercises will focus on your hamstrings and glutes as well as your inner and outer thighs. You may notice that there isn't as many exercises and sets as there would be in a [typical bodybuilding program](#). This isn't bodybuilding training. This is [power training](#) so intensity is more important than volume. You might be tempted to do more but don't. The [extra time for recovery](#) is vital for this to work.



REST OF THE WORKOUT

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Stiff-Legged Deadlift	3	8
Walking Lunge	3	10
Adductor/Abductor	3	10

Note: One minute rest between sets

ONE MORE TIP

Most squat racks are facing a mirror so you can [pay attention to form](#) while you're lifting. Although this is generally a great idea, it might not be the best thing to do while squatting. Paying attention to the mirror might take your focus off of completing the lift. Also, looking at a mirror tends to make you lean closer to it which can throw your center of gravity off and affect your lifting. If possible, set it up so you can squat while

looking away from the mirror instead. It will be a mental test at first but once you get used to it, you'll see improvement almost immediately.

If you take this program on then in three months you should see some good improvement on your squat. There is no guarantee of how much because that varies depending on your training experience, age, injuries, etc. Whether it's 10 pounds or 50, it's more than what you're doing now which means you're getting better and that is something you should be proud of.