STAGE 1, WEEKS 1 THROUGH 3

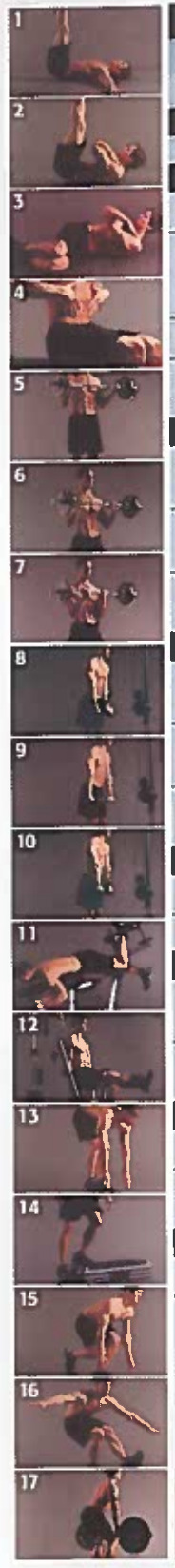
You could call this initial segment a bottom-up proposition. Its purpose is to shore up your weakest links, so the best place to start is your feet and hands—or at least your calves and forearms. It's divided up into three workouts, A, B, and C, each of which you do once a week.

The exercises within each workout are grouped as ***CIRCUITS***, ***SUPERSETS***, or ***TRISETS***. In the circuits, there's no designated rest period between the exercises because the time it takes to set up for each exercise is plenty of recovery time. A superset means you do pairs of two exercises without rest within each pair. Rest for 1 to 2 minutes before moving from one pair to another. A triset is three consecutive exercises without rest. A warmup for a superset or triset should itself be done in the same form—that is, do a warmup set of the first exercise immediately followed by a warmup set of the subsequent exercise(s).

Workouts A, B, and C end with the lat pulldown, barbell squat, and barbell bench press, respectively. Do each of these exercises with an exaggeratedly slow tempo, working with much less weight than you're used to. If you have hidden weaknesses in these lifts, they won't stay hidden for long. As you gradually work your way up to faster tempos and place more emphasis on these big-muscle movements, you'll build strength faster because you'll have exposed and corrected your weaknesses.

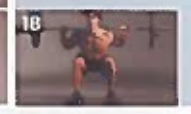
STAGE 1
WEEKS 1–3
WORKOUT A

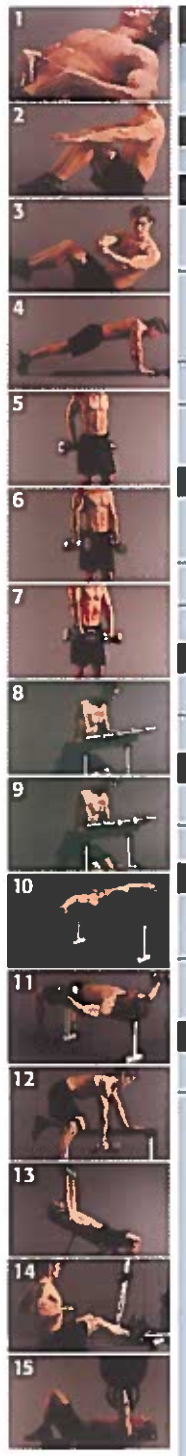
EXERCISE	REPS WARMUP	REPS WORK	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT				
1 THIN TUMMY	0	10	5-sec holds	0
2 CURLUP, CHEAT UP + SLOW LOWER, *OR* CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	10	5–15-sec lowering or 515	0
3 RUSSIAN TWIST	0	15–30	303	0
4 PUSHUP HOLD, HANDS & FEET	0	10	5-sec holds	60–120
CALF TRISET				
5 STANDING SINGLE-LEG CALF RAISE	Optional 10–15	15–20	321	0
6 CALF RAISE ON LEG PRESS MACHINE, SINGLE LEG	Optional 10–15	15–20	321	0
7 SEATED CALF RAISE, SINGLE LEG	Optional 10–15	15–20	321	60–120
SUPERSET 1				
8 DUMBBELL WRIST CURL	Optional 10–15	15–20	321	0
9 DUMBBELL WRIST EXTENSION	Optional 10–15	15–20	321	60–120
SUPERSET 2				
10 DUMBBELL LYING PULLOVER	12	12–15	321	0
11 DUMBBELL SEATED LATERAL RAISE	12	12–15	321	60–120
SUPERSET 3				
12 DUMBBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, PALMS IN	10	10–12	321	0
13 LAT PULLDOWN, BEHIND NECK	10	10–12	321	60–120
SUPERSET 4				
14 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	8	8	613	0
15 LAT PULLDOWN	8	8	613	60–120



STAGE 1
WEEKS 1–3
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	REPS WARMUP	REPS WORK	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB STRAIGHT SETS				
1 TOES TO SKY	0	10	5-sec holds	30
2 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, HANDS ON OPPOSITE SHOULDERS, ARMS ACROSS CHEST	0	10–15	313	30
3 SIDE RAISE	0	10–15	313	30
4 SEATED THIN TUMMY + CHEEK SQUEEZE	0	10	5-sec holds	30
BICEPS TRISET				
5 EZ-BAR BICEPS CURL, WIDE GRIP	10	10	321	0
6 EZ-BAR BICEPS CURL, REVERSE GRIP	10	10	321	0
7 EZ-BAR BICEPS CURL, CLOSE GRIP	10	10	321	60–120
TRICEPS TRISET				
8 TRICEPS PUSHDOWN, REVERSE GRIP	10	10	321	0
9 TRICEPS PUSHDOWN, WIDE GRIP	10	10	321	0
10 TRICEPS PUSHDOWN, NEUTRAL GRIP	10	10	321	60–120
LOWER-BODY SUPERSET 1				
11 LEG CURL, SINGLE LEG	15	12–15	321	0
12 LEG EXTENSION, SINGLE LEG	15	12–15	321	60–120
LOWER-BODY SUPERSET 2				
13 SINGLE-LEG STIFF-LEGGED DEADLIFT	0	5–20	321	0
14 SINGLE-LEG SQUAT, ON LOW BLOCK	0	10–20	321	60–120
LOWER-BODY SUPERSET 3				
15 KING DEADLIFT	8	5–20	311	0
16 SINGLE-LEG SQUAT, OTHER LEG OUT IN FRONT	8	5–20	311	60–120
LOWER-BODY SUPERSET 4				
17 DEADLIFT	Optional 10–15	8	316	0
18 BARBELL SQUAT	Optional 10–15	8	613	60–120





STAGE 1
WEEKS 1–3
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	REPS WARMUP	REPS WORK	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT				
1 THIN TUMMY	0	10	313 or 5-sec holds	0
2 CURLUP, CHEAT UP + SLOW LOWER, *OR* CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	10	5–15-sec lowering or 515	0
3 RUSSIAN TWIST	0	15–30	303	0
4 PUSHUP HOLD, HANDS & FEET	0	10	5-sec holds	60–120
DUMBBELL SHRUG TRISET				
5 DUMBBELL SHRUG, BEHIND BODY	10	10	321	0
6 DUMBBELL SHRUG	10	10	321	0
7 DUMBBELL SHRUG, TO FRONT	10	10	321	60–120
SUPERSET 1				
8 BARBELL WRIST EXTENSION	Optional 10–15	15–20	321	0
9 BARBELL WRIST CURL	Optional 10–15	15–20	321	60–120
SUPERSET 2				
10 REVERSE DUMBBELL FLY	12	12–15	321	0
11 DUMBBELL FLY	12	12–15	321	60–120
SUPERSET 3				
12 DUMBBELL ONE-ARM BENT-OVER ROW	10	10–12	321	0
13 DUMBBELL BENCH PRESS, INCLINE, NEUTRAL GRIP	10	10–12	321	60–120
SUPERSET 4				
14 SEATED CABLE ROW	8	8	613	0
15 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, FEET ON BENCH	8	8	613	60–120

STAGE 1, WEEKS 4 THROUGH 6

Once again, you do three workouts—A, B, and C—weekly. You continue working on weak links—you just concentrate on links that are a little higher on the chain. You do intensely exhausting work on many muscle groups, from large (quadriceps, hamstrings, and lats) to small (biceps, triceps, and rear delts). You also do abdominal exercises, with a repetition range of 10 to 30 and tempo ranges that feel pretty natural for those exercises. The idea is to establish a rhythmic tempo and just knock out the reps with good form and no rest between exercises.

Speaking of rest: There isn't any between most of the exercises. Go from one exercise to the next, taking no more time than you need to set up. For several exercises, you perform two sets of 10 reps—in those cases, rest for 2 minutes between those two sets, and use the same weight or a slightly heavier weight in the second set.

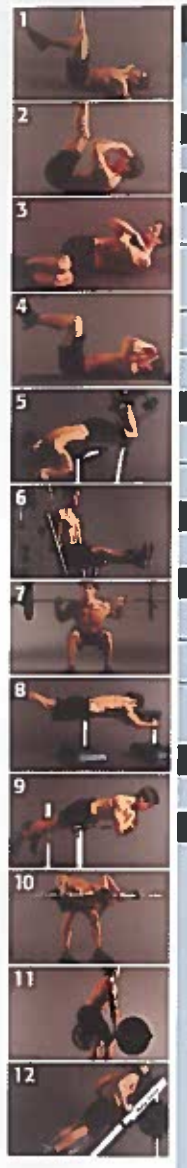
Finally, learn the following new techniques.

STRIP SETS: These are designated as 10+10+10. Lift as much weight as you can for 10 repetitions. Decrease the weight and do 10 more reps. Then decrease the weight one more time and do 10 more. Don't worry about choosing the right amounts of weight the first time—chances are you won't get them perfect until the third time through each workout. Our advice: Start with less weight than you think you can handle. That way, you can improve a bit each workout.

1.5 REPS: Some of the more conventional big-muscle exercises feature the designation 1.5 in the TEMPO column. This means "one and a half" reps. Say you do an upright row with a barbell. You pull the bar up to the top position, in which your shoulder muscles are fully contracted. Then you lower it halfway, pause, and lift it back to the top. Then lower it all the way to the starting position so that your arms are completely straight. This doubles the work you do in the toughest part of the exercise. In a set of 10, you do 10 full reps and 10 half reps.

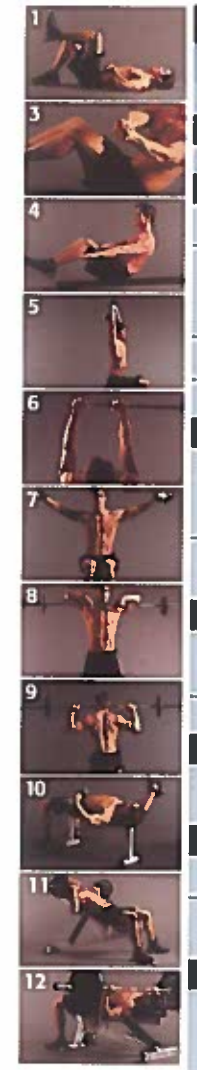
BREATHING SQUAT: As noted in chapter nine, choose a weight you think you can lift 12 times with good form. Do 10 reps the way you normally would, taking one breath per repetition. On the next 5 reps, take two breaths per rep. (That is, at the end of a rep, exhale, inhale, exhale, then inhale and do your next rep.) For the final 5 reps of the 20-rep set, breathe three times.

STAGE 1 WEEKS 4–6 WORKOUT A	WARMUP		WORK		TEMPO	REST (SEC)
EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	SETS	REPS		
ENDURANCE AB CIRCUIT						
1 THIN TUMMY, LIFT ONE LEG	0	0	1	10–30	313	0
2 CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1	10–30	311	0
3 RUSSIAN TWIST	0	0	1	10–30	202	0
4 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1	10–30	301	60–120
SUPERSET						
5 DUMBBELL SEATED BICEPS CURL WITH TWIST	1	10	Strip	10+10+10	311	0
6 EZ-BAR BICEPS CURL, REVERSE GRIP	1	10	1	10	311	60–120
SUPERSET						
7 REVERSE DUMBBELL FLY	1	10	Strip	10+10+10	311	0
8 SEATED CABLE ROW, REVERSE GRIP	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
STRAIGHT SETS						
9 SEATED CABLE ROW	1	10	2	10	311	120
SUPERSET						
10 DUMBBELL LYING PULLOVER, 1 DUMBBELL IN 2 HANDS, ACROSS BENCH	1	10	Strip	10+10+10	311	0
11 LAT PULLDOWN, WIDE GRIP	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
STRAIGHT SETS						
12 LAT PULLDOWN, NEUTRAL GRIP	1	10	2	10	311	120



STAGE 1
WEEKS 4–6
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ENDURANCE AB STRAIGHT SETS						
1 TOES TO SKY, ONE KNEE BENT	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
2 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS IN	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
3 SIDE RAISE	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
4 WRIST-TO-KNEE CURLUP	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
SUPERSET						
5 LEG CURL	1	10	Strip	10+10+10	311	0
6 LEG EXTENSION	1	10	Strip	10+10+10	311	60–120
STRAIGHT SETS						
7 BARBELL SQUAT, BREATHING	1	10	2	20	311	120
TRISET						
8 PRONE HIP-THIGH EXTENSION	1	10	1	10–20	311	0
9 BACK EXTENSION	1	10	1	10	311	0
10 GOOD MORNING, ROUNDED BACK	1	10	1	10	311	60–120
STRAIGHT SETS						
11 DEADLIFT	1	10	2	10	311	120
STRIP SET						
12 STANDING CALF RAISE	1	15	Strip	15+15+15	311	0



STAGE 1
WEEKS 4–6
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ENDURANCE AB CIRCUIT						
1 THIN TUMMY, LIFT ONE LEG	0	0	1	10–30	313	0
2 CURLUP, HANDS ON OPPOSITE ELBOWS (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10–30	311	0
3 RUSSIAN TWIST	0	0	1	10–30	202	0
4 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1	10–30	301	60–120
SUPERSET						
5 DUMBBELL SEATED OVERHEAD TRICEPS EXTENSION, 1 DUMBBELL IN 2 HANDS	1	10	Strip	10+10+10	311	0
6 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, VERY CLOSE GRIP	1	10	1	10	311	60–120
SUPERSET						
7 DUMBBELL SEATED LATERAL RAISE	1	10	Strip	10+10+10	311	0
8 BARBELL UPRIGHT ROW	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
STRAIGHT SETS						
9 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	1	10	2	10	311	120
SUPERSET						
10 DUMBBELL FLY, THUMBS IN	1	10	Strip	10+10+10	311	0
11 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, INCLINE, WIDE GRIP	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
STRAIGHT SETS						
12 BARBELL BENCH PRESS	1	10	2	10	311	120

STAGE 2, WEEKS 8 THROUGH 10

By this point, your arms, deltoids, and calves have toughened up. That extra endurance comes into play now, as you start emphasizing compound, multi-joint exercises.

This phase also introduces a technique called ***21***. Start with seven repetitions in the most difficult part of the range of the motion—for example, in the case of lateral raises do seven reps in the top half of the movement. Then do seven reps through the full range of motion, and finish with seven in the bottom half of the range. When warming up for 21, do each warmup rep through a full range of motion.

In workout B, you do some of your biceps and triceps exercises as ***ALTERNATED SETS, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS***. This means you do them much like supersets in that you do a set of the first exercise followed by a set of the second exercise, alternating between the two until you've completed the prescribed number of sets for both. Unlike in supersets, between sets you should rest for as long as it takes to get your breathing and heart rate back to normal.

The goal of your ab exercises is strength. You do more challenging exercises, faster and for fewer repetitions. In workout B, you do a modified V-sit with an explosive tempo (10*): Lower for 1 second, forgo a pause, and then raise as fast as possible.

STAGE 2
WEEKS 8–10
WORKOUT A

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRENGTH AB STRAIGHT SETS						
1 KNEE-UP, INCLINE	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
2 CURLUP, WEIGHTED (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
3 SIDE RAISE, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS OUT	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
4 SWISS-BALL ALTERNATE-LEG LIFT	0	0	1	10 (each leg)	5-sec holds	60
STRAIGHT SETS						
5 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, WIDE GRIP	1	10	2	10	321	120
6 DUMBBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
7 DUMBBELL SEATED LATERAL RAISE	1	10 (full range of motion)	1	21	311	60
8 DEADLIFT, WIDE GRIP	1	10	2	10	311	120
9 STIFF-LEGGED DEADLIFT, CHEST UP, WIDE GRIP	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
10 GOOD MORNING, ROUNDED BACK	1	10 (full range of motion)	1	21	311	60
11 SEATED CALF RAISE	1	10	1	12–15	311	60
12 STANDING CALF RAISE	0	0	1	15–20	311	60
13 STANDING SINGLE-LEG CALF RAISE	0	0	1	20+ (each leg)	311	60

STAGE 2
WEEKS 8–10
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRENGTH AB STRAIGHT SETS						
1 TOES TO SKY, KNEES TO SKY	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	60
2 BARBELL ROLLOUT	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
3 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED, WEIGHT IN HANDS	0	0	1	10–15	202	60
4 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1	10–15	10*	60
STRAIGHT SETS						
5 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, WIDE GRIP	1	10	2	10	321	120
6 SEATED CABLE ROW, REVERSE GRIP	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
7 DUMBBELL ONE-ARM BENT-OVER ROW	1	10 (full range of motion)	1	21	311	60
8 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, INCLINE, WIDE GRIP	1	10	2	10	321	120
9 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, WIDE GRIP, TO NECK, FEET ON BENCH (NOT PICTURED)	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
10 DUMBBELL BENCH PRESS, DECLINE	1	10 (full range of motion)	1	21	311	60
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
11 DUMBBELL SEATED HAMMER CURL, INCLINE	1	10	1 or 2	Set1: 10 Optional set 2:15	311	Full recovery
12 DIP/BENCH DIP	1	10 (bench dip)	1or 2	Set 1: 10 Optional set 2: 15	311	Full recovery

STAGE 2
WEEKS 8–10
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRENGTH AB STRAIGHT SETS						
1 KNEE-UP, INCLINE	0	0	1	10	201	60
2 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, WEIGHT ON CHEST	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
3 RUSSIAN TWIST, LEG CYCLE	0	0	1	15–30	212	60
4 SWISS-BALL ALTERNATE-LEG LIFT	0	0	1	10 (each leg)	5-sec holds	60
STRAIGHT SETS						
5 CHINUP	1	10 (on lat-pulldown machine)	2	10	321	120
6 LAT PULLDOWN	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
7 DUMBBELL LYING PULLOVER, 1 DUMBBELL IN 2 HANDS, ACROSS BENCH	1	10 (full range of motion)	1	21	311	60
8 BARBELL SQUAT, HIGH BAR, NARROW STANCE	1	10	2	10	311	120
9 STATIC LUNGE, BACK FOOT ON LOW BLOCK	1	10	1	10	1.5	60–120
10 LEG PRESS, SINGLE LEG	1	10 (full range of motion)	1	21	311	60
11 BARBELL SHRUG, REVERSE GRIP	1	10	1	10	311	60
12 BARBELL SHRUG	0	0	1	10	311	60
13 BARBELL SHRUG, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	10	311	60

STAGE 2
WEEKS 11–13
WORKOUT A

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
FAST AB CIRCUITS						
1 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	10*	0
2 KNEE-UP	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	20*	0
3 CURLUP, HANDS ON OPPOSITE SHOULDERS + TWIST (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	20*	0
4 RUSSIAN TWIST, MEDICINE BALL IN HANDS	0	0	1 or 2	15–25	101	0
5 SIDE RAISE, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS IN	0	0	1 or 2	10–15 (each side)	10*	60–120
STRENGTH EXERCISES, STRAIGHT SETS						
6 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, WIDE GRIP	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	4	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4 Back-off set: 12–15	211	120–180
7 BARBELL SQUAT, HIGH BAR	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	4	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4 Back-off set: 12–15	201	120–180
ASSISTANCE EXERCISE, STRAIGHT SETS						
8 BARBELL SHRUG, EXPLOSIVE, FROM HANG ABOVE KNEES	1	8	1 or 2	8	10*	60–120

STAGE 2
WEEKS 11–13
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUITS						
1 KNEE-UP	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
2 CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
3 LATERAL LEG LOWERING	0	0	1 or 2	10 (each side)	303	0
4 SIDE RAISE	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
5 PUSHUP HOLD, LIFT LEG, THEN ARM	0	0	1 or 2	10	5-sec holds	60–120
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
6 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, WIDE GRIP	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	4	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4 Back-off set: 12–15	211	Full recovery
7 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, INCLINE	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	4	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4 Back-off set: 12–15	211	Full recovery
ASSISTANCE EXERCISE, STRAIGHT SETS						
8 DUMBBELL SEATED HAMMER CURL	1	10	1 or 2	8	211	60–120

STAGE 2
WEEKS 11–13
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRENGTH ABOMINAL CIRCUIT						
1 KNEE-UP, INCLINE	1	10	1	10–15	211	0
2 BARBELL ROLLOUT	1	10	1	10–15	201	0
3 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR	1	10	1	10–15	201	0
4 RUSSIAN TWIST, MEDICINE BALL IN HANDS, *OR* FEET ANCHORED, WEIGHT IN HANDS	1	10	1	10–15	202	0
5 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, WEIGHT ON CHEST	1	10	1	10–15	201	60–120
STRENGTH EXERCISES, STRAIGHT SETS						
6 CHINUP	2 (on lat-pulldown machine)	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	4	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4 Back-off set: 12–15 (on lat-pulldown machine)	211	120–180
7 DEADLIFT, WIDE GRIP	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	4	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4 Back-off set: 10–12	211	120–180
ASSISTANCE EXERCISE, STRAIGHT SETS						
8 STANDING CALF RAISE, EXPLOSIVE	1	12	1 or 2	10–12	10*	60–120

STAGE 3, WEEKS 15 THROUGH 17

This stage offers yet another shock to your body. It shifts to a different system, in which you tackle the six strength exercises you did in weeks 11 through 13 from some different directions. You do the exercises in different sequences, with various grips and loads. The two exercises focusing on your back muscles—chinups and rows—are paired in the same workout, as are the deadlift and squat, and the bench press and shoulder press. This is a very serious challenge to the endurance of your weak-link muscles—arms, deltoids, lower back, calves. Remember all those strip sets and 21s you did for these muscles? Here's the payoff.

The ab exercises are now at the end of each workout, instead of the beginning. You're back to single sets, rather than multiple sets with a warmup; and you focus on one goal—control—instead of the three goals you worked toward in the previous 3 weeks.

STAGE 3
WEEKS 15–17
WORKOUT A

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRAIGHT SETS						
1 WIDE-GRIP PULLUP	2(use lat-pulldown machine, if needed)	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2	6	311	180
2 CHINUP *OR* LAT PULLDOWN, REVERSE GRIP	0	0	1	12	311	120
3 NEUTRAL-GRIP PULLUP *OR* LAT PULLDOWN, NEUTRAL GRIP	0	0	1	15–20	311	60
4 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW	2	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6	2	6	311	180
5 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, REVERSE GRIP	0	0	1	12	311	120
6 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	15–20	311	60
7 EZ-BAR PREACHER CURL	1	8	2	Set 1: 6–8 Set 2: 10–12	311	60–120
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
8 THIN TUMMY, LIFT & CYCLE OUT 1 LEG	0	0	1	10	313	0
9 CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1	10	515	0
10 RUSSIAN TWIST, LEG CYCLE	0	0	1	15–30	303	0
11 PUSHUP HOLD, LIFT LEG WITH OPPOSITE ARM	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	0

STAGE 3
WEEKS 15–17
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRAIGHT SETS						
1 DEADLIFT	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2	6	311	180
2 DEADLIFT, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	10	10*	120
3 DEADLIFT, WIDE GRIP, STANDING ON BLOCKS	0	0	1	15	10*	60
4 BARBELL SQUAT, FRONT	2	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6	2	6	301	180
5 BARBELL SQUAT, HIGH BAR (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10	301	120
6 BARBELL SQUAT, HIGH BAR, NARROW STANCE	0	0	1	15	301	60
7 BARBELL SHRUG, JUMP, FROM HANG ABOVE KNEES	1	8	1 or 2	8	10*	60
CONTROLLED AB STRAIGHT SETS						
8 TOES TO SKY, ONE KNEE BENT	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	30
9 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS IN	0	0	1	10–15	313	30
10 SIDE RAISE, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS IN	0	0	1	10–15	313	30
11 SEATED THIN TUMMY + CHEEK SQUEEZE	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	30

STAGE 3
WEEKS 15–17
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRAIGHT SETS						
1 BARBELL BENCH PRESS	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2:8	2	6	311	180
2 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	12	311	120
3 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, WIDE GRIP, FEET ON BENCH	0	0	1	15–20	311	60
4 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	2	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6	2	6	311	180
5 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, TO FRONT	0	0	1	12	311	120
6 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	15–20	311	60
7 EZ-BAR LYING TRICEPS EXTENSION, REVERSE GRIP	1	8	2	Set 1: 6–8 Set 2: 10–12	311	60–120
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
8 THIN TUMMY, LIFT & CYCLE OUT 1 LEG	0	0	1	10	313	0
9 CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1	10	515	0
10 RUSSIAN TWIST, LEG CYCLE	0	0	1	15–30	303	0
11 PUSHUP HOLD, LIFT LEG WITH OPPOSITE ARM	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	0

STAGE 3, WEEKS 18 THROUGH 20

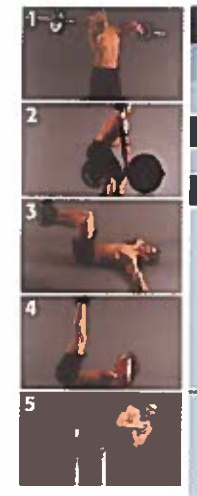
Here's where it gets heavy—really heavy. You do just two strength exercises per workout, using a technique called ***WAVE LOADING***. The concept is more complex, physiologically, than the others you've been exposed to so far. Here's how it works: After a thorough warmup (three sets with increasingly heavy weights), do a set of six repetitions, followed by a set of one rep with a weight that's much heavier—but not so heavy that you won't be able to increase it in the next two sets. Next, do another set of six with a heavier weight than you used the first time. Follow that with another set of one, with a weight that is much heavier than you used in the first set of one but that is less than your one-rep max. (Ideally, use a weight that you could lift once or even twice more.) Finish with a back-off set.

End each workout with a circuit of four ab exercises focusing on endurance, using a rhythmic tempo.

STAGE 3
WEEKS 18–20
WORKOUT A

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	5	Wave set 1: 6 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 6‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–15	211	Full recovery
2 BARBELL BENCH PRESS	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	5	Wave set 1: 6 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 6‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–15	211	Full recovery
ENDURANCE AB CIRCUIT						
3 THIN TUMMY, BOTH LEGS UP, CYCLE OUT ONE LEG	0	0	1	10–30	313	0
4 CURLUP, HANDS ON OPPOSITE ELBOWS (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10–30	311	0
5 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED	0	0	1	10–30	202	0
6 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1	10–30	301	0

† Much heavier
‡ Heavier than wave set 1
§ Heavier than wave set 2



STAGE 3
WEEKS 18–20
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
WAVE SETS						
1 BARBELL SQUAT, FRONT	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	5	Wave set 1: 6 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 6‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–15	201	180–240
2 DEADLIFT	2	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6	5	Wave set 1: 6 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 6‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–15	211	180–240
ENDURANCE AB STRAIGHT SETS						
3 TOES TO SKY, KNEES TO SKY	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
4 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS OUT	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
5 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
6 WRIST-TO-KNEE CURLUP, FULL LYING POSITION (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10–30	311	30

† Much heavier
‡ Heavier than wave set 1
§ Heavier than wave set 2

STAGE 3
WEEKS 18–20
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
WAVE SETS, ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	5	Wave set 1: 6 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 6‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–15	211	Full recovery
2 CHINUP	3 (use lat-pulldown machine)	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	5	Wave set 1: 6 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 6‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–15 (use lat-pulldown machine)	211	Full recovery
ENDURANCE AB CIRCUIT						
3 THIN TUMMY, BOTH LEGS UP, CYCLE OUT ONE LEG	0	0	1	10–30	313	0
4 CURLUP, HANDS ON OPPOSITE ELBOWS (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10–30	311	0
5 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED	0	0	1	10–30	202	0
6 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1	10–30	301	0

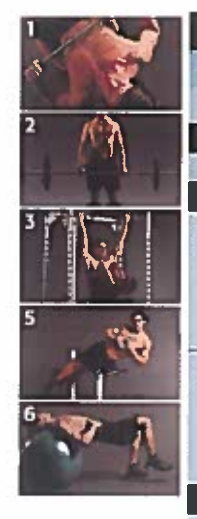
† Much heavier
‡ Heavier than wave set 1
§ Heavier than wave set 2

STAGE 4, WEEKS 22 THROUGH 24

Now you do wave loading with a more straightforward progression, using slightly heavier weights in each of the three work sets of each strength exercise. Another interesting switch is that in the barbell bench press in workout A you bring the bar down to a lower-than-normal point on your chest. This is a powerlifting technique that helps greater utilize your triceps and lats in the lift and also shortens the distance the bar has to travel. It'll take you a workout or two to get used to it, but you should notice a quick strength increase after that.

In workout B, you do some support work for your biceps and triceps using heavy weights and performing alternated sets with full recoveries. (If, by some wild chance, you're concerned about the size and appearance of your arms, you'll really like what these exercises do for you.)

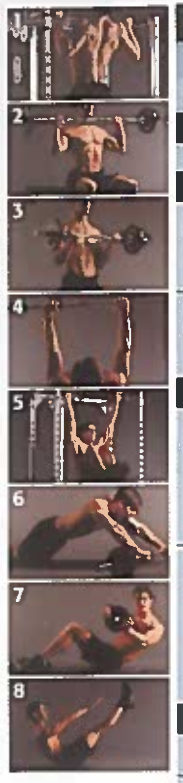
You've already done ab exercises for stability and control and for rhythm and endurance. This time, you use weights, to develop strength.



STAGE 4
WEEKS 22–24
WORKOUT A

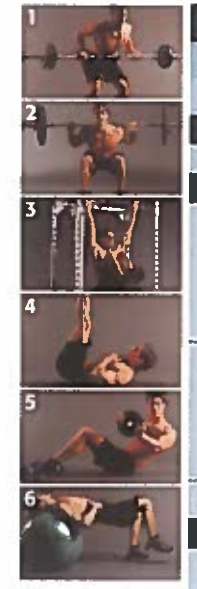
EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
WAVE SETS						
1 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, TO LOWER CHEST	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Wave set 1: 6 Wave set 2: 5† Wave set 3: 4‡ Back-off set: 10–15	211 211 211 211	Up to 240
2 DEADLIFT	3	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4	4	Wave set 1: 6 Wave set 2: 5† Wave set 3: 4‡ Back-off set: 10–15	211 211 211 211	Up to 240
STRENGTH AB STRAIGHT SETS						
3 KNEE-UP, VERTICAL	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
4 CURLUP, WEIGHTED (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
5 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR, WEIGHT ON CHEST	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
6 SWISS-BALL ALTERNATE LEG LIFT, LYING	0	0	1	10 (each leg)	5-sec holds	60

† Use slightly more weight than in wave set 1
‡ Use slightly more weight than in wave set 2



STAGE 4
WEEKS 22–24
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 PULLUP	3 (on lat-pulldown machine)	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	3	Set 1: 6 Set 2: 5 Set 3: 4	211	Full recovery
2 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, TO FRONT	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	3	Set 1: 6 Set 2: 5 Set 3: 4	211	Full recovery
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
3 EZ-BAR BICEPS CURL	1	8	2 or 3	Set 1: 6 Set 2: 6 Optional back-off set: 10	211	Full recovery
4 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, CLOSE GRIP	1	8	2 or 3	Set 1: 6 Set 2: 6 Optional back-off set: 10	211	Full recovery
STRENGTH AB STRAIGHT SETS						
5 KNEE-UP, VERTICAL	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
6 BARBELL ROLLOUT	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
7 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED, WEIGHT IN HANDS	0	0	1	10–15	202	60
8 FULL V-SIT	0	0	1	10–15	10*	60



STAGE 4
WEEKS 22–24
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRAIGHT SETS						
1 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, REVERSE GRIP	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 6 Set 2: 5 Set 3: 4 Back-off set: 10–15	211	Up to 240
2 BARBELL SQUAT	3	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4	4	Set 1: 6 Set 2: 5 Set 3: 4 Back-off set: 10–15	201	Up to 240
3 KNEE-UP, VERTICAL	0	0	1	10	201	60
STRENGTH AB STRAIGHT SETS						
4 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, WEIGHT ON CHEST	0	0	1	10–15	311	60
5 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED, WEIGHT IN HANDS	0	0	1	10–15	212	60
6 SWISS-BALL ALTERNATE LEG LIFT, LYING	0	0	1	10 (each leg)	5-sec holds	60

STAGE 4, WEEKS 25 THROUGH 27

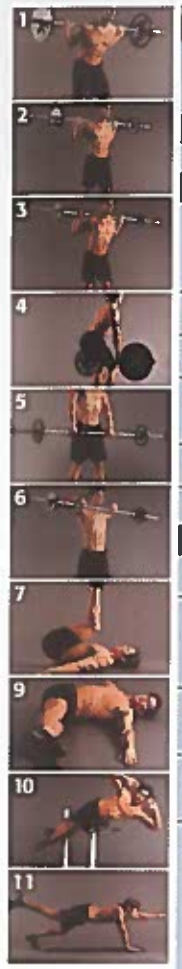
Given the range of techniques you've used and the amount of weight you've lifted, you're probably wondering how we're going to send you off. With a bang, that's how. It's time to lift the heaviest damn weights you've ever lifted for four reps; perform three new power exercises (jump squat, clean pull, and high pull) in workout B; and do circuits of five ab exercises each workout, with different goals each time: speed, strength, and control.

Also, add a new element to your bench press: an arched back. We don't mean lift your butt off the bench—in a powerlifting meet, doing that would disqualify you. We mean arch between your butt and shoulders to raise your torso higher off the bench. The bar then has even less distance to travel. Use this technique cautiously; if you have a history of back problems, it's probably not a good idea. (Then again, if you have a history of back problems, you probably haven't gotten this far in the program, given the emphasis on bent-over rows, squats, and deadlifts, all of which would probably be more than a compromised lower back could handle.)

On the squat, hold the bar lower on your back (as per the "low bar" designation). Powerlifters do this to lower their centers of gravity. You also have the option of using a weight belt during your squats and deadlifts. Though you don't have to use one, you'll probably find that a belt helps your confidence when you use maximum weights on these lifts. The back support probably adds to the lifts themselves. (Belts are legal in powerlifting competition, so using one isn't cheating.)

On your major lifts, do two sets of four reps. For the second set, use heavier weight than for the first. The longer rest periods between these sets—up to 5 minutes—make this possible. Resting that long takes some getting used to. Old-time powerlifters used to sit down and read the newspaper between sets. While that's a bit excessive, we do suggest you recover fully between these max-weight sets. These should be the heaviest weights you've ever lifted, and you don't want to blow your chance to set new personal bests. You've waited almost 6 months to get to this point—don't jeopardize it just so you can get to the shower a couple of minutes earlier. After the two max-weight sets, do one or two back-off sets.

STAGE 4 WEEKS 25–27 WORKOUT A						
EXERCISE	WARMUP		WORK		TEMPO	REST (SEC)
	SETS	REPS	SETS	REPS		
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, TO LOWER CHEST, ARCHED BACK	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4 Back-off set 1: 8–10 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
2 EZ-BAR BICEPS CURL, CLOSE GRIP	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4 Set 3: 8–10 Back-off set: 12–15	211	Full recovery
FAST AB CIRCUIT						
3 FULL V-SIT	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	10*	0
4 KNEE-UP	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	20*	0
5 CURLUP, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS OUT + TWIST (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	20*	0
6 RUSSIAN TWIST, MEDICINE BALL IN HANDS	0	0	1 or 2	15–25	101	0
7 SIDE RAISE, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS IN	0	0	1 or 2	10–15 (each side)	10*	0



STAGE 4
WEEKS 25–27
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRAIGHT SETS						
1 BARBELL SQUAT, LOW BAR	3	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6 Set 3: 4	2	4	211	Up to 300
2 BARBELL SQUAT, EXPLOSIVE	0	0	1 or 2	6–8	20*	180–240
3 BARBELL SQUAT, JUMP	1	6	1	8–10	10*	120–180
4 DEADLIFT	2	Set 1: 6 Set 2: 4	2	4	211	Up to 300
5 CLEAN PULL	1	6	1 or 2	6	10*	180–240
6 HIGH PULL	1	8	1	8	10*	120–180
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
7 KNEE-UP	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
8 CURLUP, HANDS ON OPPOSITE ELBOWS (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
9 LATERAL LEG LOWERING	0	0	1 or 2	10 (each side)	303	0
10 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR, HANDS ON FOREHEAD	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
11 PUSHUP HOLD, LIFT LEG WITH OPPOSITE ARM	0	0	1 or 2	10	5-sec holds	0

STAGE 4
WEEKS 25–27
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 PULLUP	3 (on lat-pulldown machine)	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set 1: 8–10 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
2 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, TO FRONT	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set 1: 8–10 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
STRENGTH AB CIRCUIT						
3 KNEE-UP, VERTICAL	1	10	1	10–15	211	0
4 BARBELL ROLLOUT	1	10	1	10–15	201	0
5 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR, HANDS ON FOREHEAD	1	10	1	10–15	201	0
6 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED, WEIGHT IN HANDS	1	10	1	10–15	202	0
7 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, WEIGHT ON CHEST	1	10	1	10–15	201	0

† Use more weight