STAGE 1, WEEKS 1 THROUGH 3

Prepare to leave your ego in your locker with your deodorant and jock-itch powder. These first 3 weeks, you develop muscular control and shore up weak links. You also address potential muscle and strength imbalances.

Here are a few definitions and reminders.

10+10 or 10+10+10: This notation indicates a strip set. Start with an appropriate weight for a 10-rep set, do the reps, quickly strip enough weight off the bar to do another 10 reps, and then repeat one more time (if indicated).

SUPERSET: This is two consecutive exercises without rest. A warmup for a superset should itself be done in superset form.

TRISET: This is three consecutive exercises without rest. A warmup for a triset should itself be done in triset form.

1.5 REPS: If you see this in the TEMPO column, do a rep, pause, go halfway back to the starting position, pause, go back to the finishing position, and pause again before going all the way back to the starting position. Twelve 1.5 reps actually include 24 reps in the toughest part of the motion. Load the barbell appropriately.

804 OR 408 TEMPO: You know that the first number in the TEMPO column represents the speed of the lowering phase, the middle number is the length of the pause, and the third number is the duration of the actual lifting of the weight. For a deadlift, use a 408 tempo, taking 4 seconds to lower the weight and immediately, without pausing, taking 8 seconds to lift it. Most other big-muscle exercises in this workout should be done at a tempo of 804: 8 seconds of lowering the weight and 4 seconds of lifting it, again with no pause in between.

5 STOPS: This is the tempo for ski squats in workout B. Stop five times on the way down, and hold each position for 10 to 40 seconds per stop.

SUPERSET STRIP SET: Do a set of one exercise followed by a set of a second exercise, followed by a two-set strip set of the first exercise, followed by a two-set strip set of the second exercise.

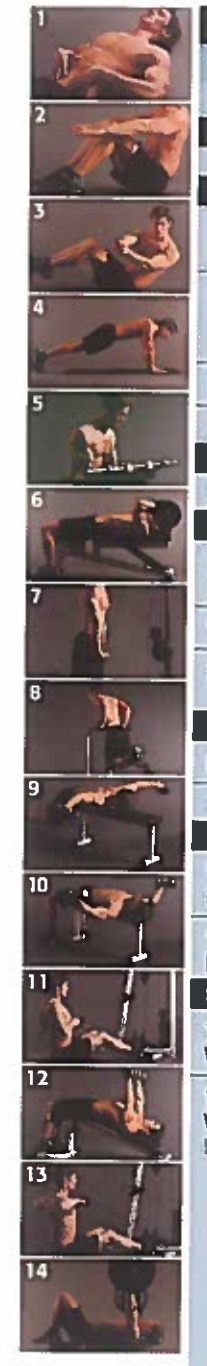
21: Do seven reps in the toughest half of the range of motion, followed by seven full-range reps, followed by seven in the easiest half of the range.

STAGE 1
WEEKS 1–3
WORKOUT A

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
1 THIN TUMMY	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	0
2 CURLUP, CHEAT UP & SLOW LOWER, *OR* CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1	10	5–15-sec lowering or 515	0
3 RUSSIAN TWIST	0	0	1	15–30	303	0
4 PUSHUP HOLD, HANDS & FEET	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	0
STRIP SET						
5 BARBELL WRIST EXTENSION	1	10	1	10+10+10	311	0
BICEPS TRISET						
6 DUMBBELL SEATED BICEPS CURL, INCLINE	1	10	1	10	422	0
7 EZ-BAR PREACHER CURL, REVERSE GRIP	1	10	1	10	422	0
8 DUMBBELL SEATED HAMMER CURL + TWIST	1	10	1	10	422	60–120
SUPERSET						
9 DUMBBELL LYING PULLOVER	1	12	1	12	1.5s	0
10 DUMBBELL SEATED LATERAL RAISE	1	12	1	12	1.5s	60–120
SUPERSET						
11 LAT PULLDOWN, NEUTRAL GRIP	1	10	1	21	311	0
12 DUMBBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, ARNOLD PRESS	1	10	1	21	311	60–120
SUPERSET						
13 WIDE-GRIP PULLUP	1	6 (on lat-pulldown machine at 311 tempo)	1	4–6	804	0
14 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, WIDE GRIP	1	6 (at 311 tempo)	1	4–6	804	60–120

STAGE 1
WEEKS 1–3
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
1 TOES TO SKY	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	30
2 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, HANDS ON OPPOSITE SHOULDERS, ARMS ACROSS CHEST	0	0	1	10–15	313	30
3 SIDE RAISE	0	0	1	10–15	313	30
4 SEATED THIN TUMMY + CHEEK SQUEEZE	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	30
CALF SUPERSET STRIP SET						
5 SEATED CALF RAISE, SINGLE LEG	1	10	1	10	311	0
6 STANDING SINGLE-LEG CALF RAISE	1	10	1	10	311	0
7 SEATED CALF RAISE, SINGLE LEG	1	10	1	10+10	311	0
8 STANDING SINGLE LEG CALF RAISE	1	10	1	10+10	311	60–120
SUPERSET						
9 LEG CURL, SINGLE LEG	0	0	1	15–20	1.5s	0
10 LEG EXTENSION, SINGLE LEG	0	0	1	15–20	1.5s	60–120
SUPERSET						
11 SUPINE HIP-THIGH EXTENSION	0	0	1	10–20	311	0
12 SKI SQUAT	0	0	1	5 stops	10–40 sec per stop	60–120
SUPERSET						
13 SINGLE-LEG STIFF-LEGGED DEADLIFT	0	0	1	5–10	422	0
14 STATIC LUNGE, BACK FOOT ON LOW BLOCK	0	0	1	8–10	422	60–120
SUPERSET						
15 DEADLIFT	1	6 at 311 tempo (optional)	1	6	408	0
16 BARBELL SQUAT	1	6 at 311 tempo (optional)	1	6	804	60–120
SHRUG TRISET						
17 BARBELL SHRUG, WIDE GRIP	1	10	1	10	311	0
18 BARBELL SHRUG	1	10	1	10	311	0
19 BARBELL SHRUG, REVERSE GRIP	1	10	1	10	311	60–120



STAGE 1
WEEKS 1–3
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
1 THIN TUMMY	0	0	1	10	313 or 5-sec holds	0
2 CURLUP, CHEAT UP & SLOW LOWER, *OR* ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1	10	5–15-sec lowering or 515	0
3 RUSSIAN TWIST	0	0	1	15–30	303	0
4 PUSHUP HOLD, HANDS & FEET	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	0
STRIP SET						
5 BARBELL WRIST CURL	1	10	1	10+10+10	311	0
TRICEPS TRISET						
6 EZ-BAR LYING TRICEPS EXTENSION	1	10	1	10	422	0
7 TRICEPS PUSHDOWN	1	10	1	10	422	0
8 DIP/BENCH DIP	1	10 (bench dip)	1	10	422	60–120
SUPERSET						
9 REVERSE DUMBBELL FLY	1	12	1	12	1.5s	0
10 DUMBBELL FLY	1	12	1	12	1.5s	60–120
SUPERSET						
11 SEATED CABLE ROW, NEUTRAL GRIP	1	10†	1	21	311	0
12 DUMBBELL BENCH PRESS, DECLINE	1	10†	1	21	311	60–120
SUPERSET						
13 SEATED CABLE ROW, WIDE GRIP, HIGH BAR	1	6 at 311 tempo	1	6	804	0
14 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, WIDE GRIP, HIGH BAR, FEET ON BENCH	1	6 at 311 tempo	1	6	804	60–120

† Normal range of motion

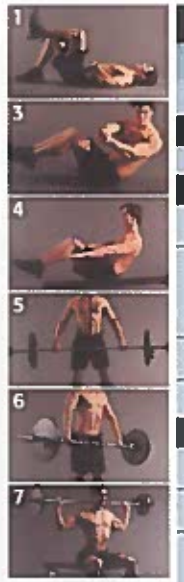
STAGE 1, WEEKS 4 THROUGH 6

Admit it: Weeks 1 through 3 were a lot harder than you thought they'd be. And now you're ready for something simpler. The next workouts are a lot simpler—just three or four exercises per workout, after you finish the ab circuit. Don't confuse "simple" with "easy," however.

You do either 5 or 10 sets of each exercise, as specified by the chart, trying to increase the weight slightly in each set, even though the repetitions stay the same.

Do high-repetition sets of the ab exercises; just try to establish a rhythmic tempo and knock out the reps without rushing through them.

The two arm exercises in workout B are paired in ***ALTERNATED SETS, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS***. Do a set of one exercise, wait until you're fully recuperated, then do a set of another. Instead of doing them one right after the other, rest until your breathing is back to normal and you feel as strong as you did before your first set of your first exercise. Only then should you begin your first set of your second exercise.



STAGE 1
WEEKS 4–6
WORKOUT A

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	0
STRAIGHT SETS						
5 DEADLIFT, WIDE GRIP	1	10	10	6	311	60
6 BARBELL SHRUG, WIDE GRIP	1	10	5	10	311	60
7 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, WIDE GRIP	1	10	5	6	311	60

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, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS IN	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
4 WRIST-TO-KNEE CURLUP	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
STRAIGHT SETS						
5 SEATED CABLE ROW, WIDE GRIP, HIGH BAR	1	10	5	6–8	321	60
6 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, WIDE GRIP	1	10	5	6–8	321	60
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
7 DIP/BENCH DIP	1	10 (bench dip)	5	8–10	321	Full recovery
8 EZ-BAR BICEPS CURL, REVERSE GRIP	1	10	5	8–10	321	Full recovery

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
STRAIGHT SETS						
5 BARBELL SQUAT	1	10	10	10	311	60
6 STANDING CALF RAISE	1	15	5	15	311	60
7 PULLUP OR LAT PULLDOWN, WIDE-GRIP	1	10 (on lat-pulldown machine)	5	6–8	311	60

STAGE 2, WEEKS 8 THROUGH 10

Shift to fewer sets with more exercises and different loading schemes. Do two sets of six reps of the first two exercises in each workout, using heavy weights. Then do single sets with moderate reps, and finally single sets with high reps.

In workout B, note the explosive-tempo designation of 10* for the dynamic lunge. This indicates that you should take 1 second to lunge and then, without pausing, push back up as quickly as possible.

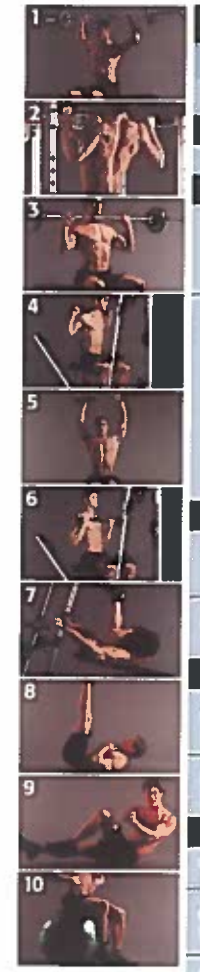
You'll do the abdominal exercises at the end of the workouts, and use weights as specified.

STAGE 2
WEEKS 8–10
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, WIDE GRIP	2	Set 1:10 Set 2: 8	2	6	311	Full recovery
2 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, INCLINE, WIDE GRIP	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2	6	311	Full recovery
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
3 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW	0	0	1	10–12	311	Full recovery
4 BARBELL BENCH PRESS	0	0	1	10–12	311	Full recovery
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
5 DUMBBELL ONE-ARM BENT-OVER ROW	0	0	1	12–20	311	Full recovery
6 DUMBBELL BENCH PRESS, DECLINE	0	0	1	12–20	311	Full recovery
STRAIGHT SETS						
7 KNEE-UP, INCLINE	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
8 CURLUP, WEIGHTED (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
9 SIDE RAISE, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS OUT	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
10 SWISS-BALL ALTERNATE-LEG LIFT	0	0	1	10 (each leg)	5-sec holds	60

STAGE 2
WEEKS 8–10
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRAIGHT SETS						
1 BARBELL SQUAT	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	2	6	301	180
2 DEADLIFT	2	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 6	2	6	211	180
3 DYNAMIC LUNGE	1	6 (each leg)	1	8–10 (each leg)	10*	120
4 STIFF-LEGGED DEADLIFT, CHEST UP, WIDE GRIP (NOT PICTURED)	1	6	1	8–10	311	120
5 SINGLE-LEG SQUAT, OTHER LEG OUT IN FRONT	0	0	1	10–15	311	60
6 KING DEADLIFT	0	0	1	10–15	311	60
7 SEATED CALF RAISE	1	15	1 or 2	12–15	311	60
8 BARBELL SHRUG	1	8	1 or 2	8	311	60
9 TOES TO SKY, KNEES TO SKY	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	60
10 BARBELL ROLLOUT	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
11 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED, WEIGHT IN HANDS	0	0	1	10–15	202	60
12 FULL V-SIT	0	0	1	10–15	10*	60



STAGE 2
WEEKS 8–10
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2	6	311	Full recovery
2 PULLUP	2	Set 1: 10 (on lat-pulldown machine) Set 2: 8 (on lat-pulldown machine)	2	6	311	Full recovery
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
3 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, TO FRONT	0	0	1	10–12	311	Full recovery
4 LAT PULLDOWN, WIDE GRIP, BEHIND NECK	0	0	1	10–12	311	Full recovery
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
5 DUMBBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	0	0	1	12–20	311	Full recovery
6 LAT PULLDOWN, REVERSE GRIP	0	0	1	12–20	311	Full recovery
STRAIGHT SETS						
7 KNEE-UP, INCLINE	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
8 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, WEIGHT ON CHEST	0	0	1	10–15	201	60
9 RUSSIAN TWIST, LEG CYCLE	0	0	1	15–30	212	60
10 SWISS-BALL ALTERNATE-LEG LIFT	0	0	1	10 (each leg)	5-sec holds	60

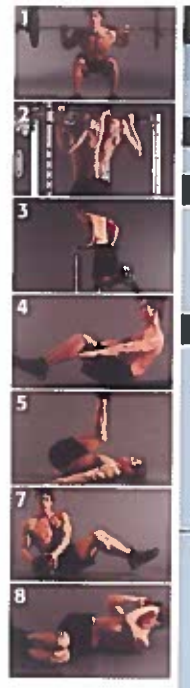
STAGE 2, WEEKS 11 THROUGH 13

Lift more heavy weights, with a new twist: one or two ***BACK-OFF SETS*** on many of the exercises. For pullups and dips, you'll probably have to use lat pulldowns and bench dips for the warmups and final back-off sets. Here's how.

PULLUP: Do three warmup sets on the lat-pulldown machine. Then do two sets of 4 reps with weight (probably a belt with a chain for holding weight plates or a dumbbell between your legs). Try to do the first back-off set—8 reps—with your body weight. Even if you can manage only a few, you have 3 weeks to work your way up to 8. Then do the second back-off set—12 to 15 reps—on the lat-pulldown machine.

DIP: You may be able to do all the warmups—sets of 10, 8, and 6—on the parallel bars. Even if you can do that, you shouldn't. Ideally, do the first warmup set as triceps pushdowns, the second warmup as bench dips, and the final warmup as body-weight parallel-bar dips. Then you're ready for weighted dips in your work sets. Or, if you're really strong, you can the first warmup set as bench dips, the second warmup as body-weight parallel-bar dips, and the final warmup with a light weight. Another alternative is to do loaded bench dips—with a weight on your lap—for one of your warmup sets. The first back-off set should be lightly loaded or body-weight parallel-bar dips. And the second back-off set will almost certainly be bench dips.

Do your ab workouts three different ways: fast reps (workout A, with explosive tempos indicated by 10* or 20*); slow, controlled reps (workout B); and with some kind of external loading or gravitational disadvantage (workout C). Do each as a circuit, with no rest between exercises but a short rest between circuits if you do more than one.



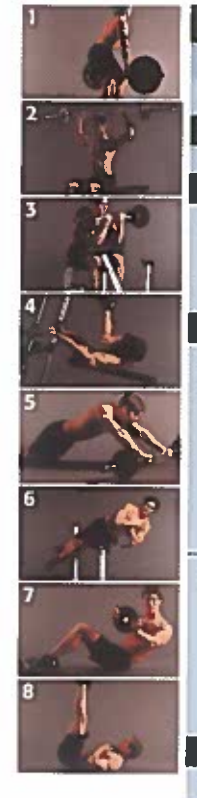
STAGE 2 WEEKS 11–13 WORKOUT A	WARMUP		WORK		TEMPO	REST (SEC)
EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	SETS	REPS		
STRAIGHT SETS						
1 BARBELL SQUAT	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	3	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set: 8	201	180
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
2 PULLUP	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set 1: 8 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
3 DIP	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set 1: 8 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
FAST AB CIRCUIT						
4 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	10*	0
5 KNEE-UP	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	20*	0
6 CURLUP, HANDS ON OPPOSITE SHOULDERS + TWIST (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	20*	0
7 RUSSIAN TWIST, MEDICINE BALL IN HANDS	0	0	1 or 2	15–25	101	0
8 SIDE RAISE, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS IN	0	0	1 or 2	10–15 (each side)	10*	60–120

† Use more weight

STAGE 2
WEEKS 11–13
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, INCLINE	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set1: 8 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
2 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, WIDE GRIP, LOW BAR (NOT PICTURED)	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set 1: 8 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
3 SEATED CALF RAISE	1	10–12	1 or 2	10–12	211	Full recovery
4 BARBELL SHRUG, EXPLOSIVE, FROM HANG ABOVE KNEES	1	8	1 or 2	6–8	10*	Full recovery
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
5 KNEE-UP	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
6 CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
7 LATERAL LEG LOWERING	0	0	1 or 2	10 (each side)	303	0
8 SIDE RAISE	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
9 PUSHUP HOLD, LIFT LEG, THEN ARM	0	0	1 or 2	10	5-sec holds	60–120

† Use more weight



STAGE 2
WEEKS 11–13
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
STRAIGHT SETS						
1 DEADLIFT	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	3	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set: 8	211	180
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
2 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 6	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set 1: 8 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
3 EZ-BAR PREACHER CURL	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	4	Set 1: 4 Set 2: 4† Back-off set 1: 8 Back-off set 2: 12–15	211	Full recovery
STRENGTH AB CIRCUIT						
4 KNEE-UP, INCLINE	1	10	1	10–15	211	0
5 BARBELL ROLLOUT	1	10	1	10–15	201	0
6 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR	1	10	1	10–15	201	0
7 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED, WEIGHT IN HANDS	1	10	1	10–15	202	0
8 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, WEIGHT ON CHEST	1	10	1	10–15	201	60–120

† Use more weight

STAGE 3, WEEKS 15 THROUGH 17

Ready for a blast from the past? It's time to whipsaw back to a workout like the one you did in the first 3 weeks of the program. You use much heavier weights, but the concept is the same: Pre-exhaust smaller muscles before working your big muscles. In workout C, for example, do three triceps exercises before three different shoulder-press movements. Then, with your triceps and shoulders fried, do heavy chest work featuring three different bench-press variations.

Workout B is a little different from workouts A and C. The nine exercises start with the heavy strength movements—deadlift, squat, and shrug—and then progress to explosive variations of those exercises. Still, it's pre-exhaustion of sorts, in that it's much harder to generate power when muscles are exhausted from heavy lifts.

The ab exercises move back to the beginning of the workouts and also resurrect an earlier concept, focusing solely on control.

STAGE 3
WEEKS 15–17
WORKOUT A

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
1 THIN TUMMY, LIFT & CYCLE OUT ONE LEG	0	0	1	10	313	0
2 CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1	10	515	0
3 RUSSIAN TWIST, LEG CYCLE	0	0	1	15–30	303	0
4 PUSHUP HOLD, LIFT LEG WITH OPPOSITE ARM	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	60–120
STRAIGHT SETS						
5 DUMBBELL SEATED HAMMER CURL	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2	Set 1: 5 Set 2: 5†	311	120
6 DUMBBELL SEATED BICEPS CURL	0	0	1	10	311	60–120
7 DUMBBELL SEATED BICEPS CURL, REVERSE GRIP (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	15	311	60
8 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2	Set 1: 5 Set 2: 5†	311	120–180
9 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, REVERSE GRIP	0	0	1	10	311	120
10 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	15	311	60–120
11 CHINUP	2 (on lat-pulldown machine)	Set 1:10 Set 2: 8	2	Set 1: 5 Set 2: 5†	311	120–180
12 PULLUP *OR* LAT PULLDOWN	0	0	1	5–10	311	120
13 WIDE-GRIP PULLUP *OR* LAT PULLDOWN	0	0	1	5–10	311	60–120

† Use more weight

STAGE 3
WEEKS 15–17
WORKOUT B

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

† Use more weight on 2nd set

STAGE 3
WEEKS 15–17
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
1 THIN TUMMY, LIFT CYCLE OUT ONE LEG	0	0	1	10	313	0
2 CURLUP, ARMS STRAIGHT & PARALLEL TO FLOOR	0	0	1	10	515	0
3 RUSSIAN TWIST, LEG CYCLE	0	0	1	15–30	303	0
4 PUSHUP HOLD, LIFT LEG WITH OPPOSITE ARM	0	0	1	10	5-sec holds	60–120
STRAIGHT SETS						
5 TRICEPS PUSHDOWN	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2†	5	311	120
6 EZ-BAR LYING TRICEPS EXTENSION, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	10	311	60–120
7 EZ-BAR OVERHEAD TRICEPS EXTENSION	0	0	1	15	311	60
8 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, TO FRONT	2	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2†	5	311	120–180
9 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS	0	0	1	10	311	120
10 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	15	311	60–120
11 BARBELL BENCH PRESS	2 (on lat-pulldown machine)	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8	2†	5	311	120–180
12 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, WIDE GRIP	0	0	1	10	311	120
13 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, WIDE GRIP, TO NECK, FEET ON BENCH (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	15	311	60–120

† Use more weight on 2nd set

STAGE 3, WEEKS 18 THROUGH 20

We think there's a good chance that these 3 weeks include the most aggressive strength workouts you've ever tried. The workouts feature two new techniques.

WAVE LOADING: Yes, you did one type of wave loading in the intermediate program (if you did that program before this one). Here we offer a different configuration. Do four sets of three reps, increasing and decreasing the weight you lift. Say you're doing barbell bench presses. Maybe you start with three reps at 185. Then you do three with 225, three with 205, and finally three with 245. Obviously, you want to bump up the numbers in each set of each workout so by the third workout you do, say, 205, 245, 225, and 265 in your four sets.

ECCENTRIC REPS: On three exercises—barbell bench presses, bent-over rows, and chinups—you do a set of three eccentric repetitions. This means load the bar—or in the case of the chinups, yourself—with 10 to 20 percent more weight than you used in your heaviest set. Take 5 seconds to lower the bar or your body. Then have spotters raise the bar off your chest or the floor (or climb back up to the chinup bar), and repeat for two more reps.

OFF BLOCKS/QUARTER REPS: For anyone other than elite lifters, it isn't wise or safe to do eccentric deadlifts or squats (often called *negative* deadlifts or squats). So to allow yourself to use more weight, you must use techniques that shorten your range of motion. To do a deadlift off blocks, set up the barbell on blocks or weight plates to raise it 6 or more inches off the floor. That should allow you to use 10 to 20 percent more weight than you did on your heaviest deadlift set. (If it doesn't, raise the blocks a bit for your next workout. And make sure to rest for the full 4 minutes between sets and exercises.)

For quarter reps on the squat, load the bar with 10 to 20 percent more weight than you used on your heaviest set, descend one-quarter of the way down, and then push back up.

When using either of these techniques, make sure you have great spotters, or work in a power rack with safety bars set at appropriate heights.

As for the ab exercises, they all use steady, rhythmic, high-repetition sets.

STAGE 3 WEEKS 18–20 WORKOUT A						
EXERCISE	WARMUP		WORK		TEMPO	REST (SEC)
	SETS	REPS	SETS	REPS		
ENDURANCE AB CIRCUIT						
1 THIN TUMMY, BOTH LEGS UP, CYCLE OUT 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, FEET ANCHORED	0	0	1	10–30	202	0
4 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1	10–30	301	60–120
WAVE SETS						
5 BARBELL SEATED SHOULDER PRESS, TO FRONT	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	5	Wave set 1: 3 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 3‡ Wave set 4: 3§ Back-off set: 10–20	211	240
6 DEADLIFT	3	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 5 Set 3: 3	4	Wave set 1: 3 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 3‡ Wave set 4: 3§	311	240
STRAIGHT SETS						
7 DEADLIFT, OFF BLOCKS	1	3	1	3	311	240

† Use more weight than in wave set 1
‡ Use more weight than in wave set 1, less than in wave set 2
§ Use more weight than in wave set 2

STAGE 3
WEEKS 18–20
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ENDURANCE AB STRAIGHT SETS						
1 TOES TO SKY, KNEES TO SKY	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
2 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS OUT	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
3 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
4 WRIST-TO-KNEE CURLUP, FULL LYING POSITION (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1	10–30	311	30
WAVE SETS, ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
5 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, TO LOWER CHEST, ARCHED BACK	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	4	Wave set 1: 3 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 3‡ Wave set 4: 3§	211	Full recovery
6 ECCENTRIC BARBELL BENCH PRESS, TO LOWER CHEST, ARCHED BACK	0	0	1	3	500	Full recovery
7 BARBELL BENCH PRESS	0	0	1	10–20	311	Full recovery
WAVE SETS, ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
8 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW, LOW BAR	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	4	Wave set 1: 3 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 3‡ Wave set 4: 3§	211	Full recovery
ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
9 ECCENTRIC DUMBBELL ONE-ARM BENT-OVER ROW	0	0	1	3	500	Full recovery
10 BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW	0	0	1	10–20	311	Full recovery

† Use more weight than in wave set 1
‡ Use more weight than in wave set 1, less than in wave set 2
§ Use more weight than in wave set 2

STAGE 3
WEEKS 18–20
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
ENDURANCE AB CIRCUIT						
1 THIN TUMMY, BOTH LEGS UP, CYCLE OUT 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, FEET ANCHORED	0	0	1	10–30	202	0
4 MODIFIED V-SIT	0	0	1	10–30	301	0
WAVE SETS						
5 CHINUP	3 (use lat pulldown, reverse grip)	Set 1:10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	4	Wave set 1: 3 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 3‡ Wave set 4: 3§	211	240
6 CHINUP, ECCENTRIC	0	0	1	3	500	240
7 LAT PULLDOWN, REVERSE GRIP	0	0	1	10–20	311	120–180
WAVE SETS						
8 SQUAT, LOW BAR	3	Set 1: 8 Set 2: 5 Set 3: 3	4	Wave set 1: 3 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 3‡ Wave set 4: 3§	201	240
9 SQUAT, LOW BAR, 1/4	1	3	1	3	201	240

† Use more weight than in wave set 1
‡ Use more weight than in wave set 1, less than in wave set 2
§ Use more weight than in wave set 2

STAGE 4, WEEKS 22 THROUGH 24

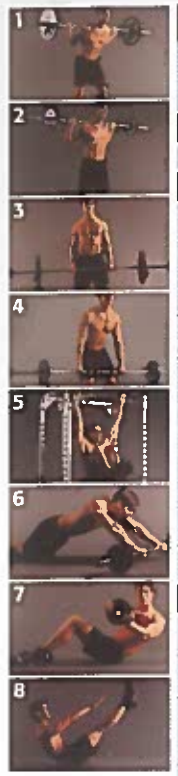
Now try another wave-loading pattern: Do a set of five reps, followed by a set of one with a heavier weight, followed by another set of five with a weight that's heavier than in the first set but lighter than in the second set, followed by another single with the heaviest weight yet.

For instance, when doing barbell bench presses, you could do your first set of five with 225. Then do a single rep with 265. Then do another set of 5 with 245, followed by a single rep with 285.

That's basically your program for these 3 weeks. Do 5-1-5-1 waves for six exercises, adding back-off sets to some and doing explosive versions of some others. Do weighted ab exercises at the end of each workout, then go home.

STAGE 4						
WEEKS 22–24						
WORKOUT A						
EXERCISE	WARMUP		WORK		TEMPO	REST (SEC)
	SETS	REPS	SETS	REPS		
WAVE SETS, ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, TO LOWER CHEST	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	5	Wave set 1: 5 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 5‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–20	211	Full recovery
2 EZ-BAR BICEPS CURL	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	5	Wave set 1: 5 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 5‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–20	211	Full recovery
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 more weight than in wave set 1
‡ Use more weight than in wave set 1, less than in wave set 2
§ Use 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)
WAVE SETS						
1 BARBELL SQUAT, LOW BAR	3	Set 1:10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	4	Wave set 1: 5 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 5‡ Wave set 4: 1§	201	180–240
2 BARBELL SQUAT, EXPLOSIVE	0	0	1	10	20*	180
3 DEADLIFT, ALTERNATING/MIXED GRIP	2	Set 1: 5 Set 2: 3	5	Wave set 1: 5 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 5‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10	211	180–240
4 CLEAN PULL	1	5	1	5	10*	180
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

† Use more weight than in wave set 1
‡ Use more weight than in wave set 1, less than in wave set 2
§ Use more weight than in wave set 2

STAGE 4
WEEKS 22–24
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
WAVE SETS, ALTERNATED, WITH FULL RECOVERIES BETWEEN SETS						
1 PULLUP, NEUTRAL GRIP	3 (on lat-pulldown machine)	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	5	Wave set 1: 5 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 5‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–20 (on lat-pulldown machine)	211	Full recovery
2 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, CLOSE GRIP	3	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5	5	Wave set 1: 5 Wave set 2: 1† Wave set 3: 5‡ Wave set 4: 1§ Back-off set: 10–20	211	Full recovery
STRAIGHT SETS						
3 KNEE-UP, VERTICAL	0	0	1	10	201	60
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

† Use more weight than in wave set 1
‡ Use more weight than in wave set 1, less than in wave set 2
§ Use more weight than in wave set 2

STAGE 4, WEEKS 25 THROUGH 27

Wrap up the advanced program with yet another wave pattern. Do two waves of three sets each (in other words, a total of six work sets). Each wave, do four repetitions in the first set, three reps in the second set, and two in the third set.

Let's use the barbell bench press yet again as an example. In the first wave, you might lift 235 pounds for four reps, 255 for three, and 275 for two. Then in the second wave, you might do 255 for four reps, 275 for three, and 295 for two. A key to this technique is using lighter weights than you ordinarily would for four, three, and two repetitions in the first wave. Working too hard in the first wave would exhaust your muscles, negating the neural boost the technique provides. So use submaximal weights the first time through in order to use heavier-than-normal weights the second time through.

Each workout, focus on one powerlift—barbell squat, barbell bench press, and deadlift—followed by eccentric or explosive work. On the eccentric bench presses, ¼ squats, and deadlifts off blocks, use 10 to 20 percent more weight than you used on your final wave set of two reps. So, using the above example, if you finish your final wave with two reps of 295 pounds, do your eccentric set with between 325 and 355 pounds. Don't forget to have a strong, vigilant spotter (or two) overseeing this great effort.

Your ab exercises again follow the heavy work, and you do three different circuits: fast, controlled, and weighted.

When you're finished, you should be the strongest you've ever been, and, depending on how strictly you've been watching your diet, your most muscular and/or buff.

Where you go from here is up to you. You could take a few days off and then test your maximum lifts in the bench press, deadlift, and squat, or go on a bodybuilding-type cutting program (higher overall volume of exercise, and more exercises for the smaller muscles) to take off whatever fat you have around the edges of your enlarged muscles.

Or you could just bask in the satisfaction of finishing an extremely challenging strength program, knowing your muscles are in the best shape ever.

STAGE 4
WEEKS 25–27
WORKOUT A

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
WAVE SETS						
1 SQUAT, LOW BAR (WEIGHT BELT OPTIONAL)	4	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5 Set 4: 3	6	Wave set 1: 4 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 2† Wave set 4: 4‡ Wave set 5: 3§ Wave set 6: 2†	201	300
STRAIGHT SETS						
2 SQUAT, LOW BAR, 1/4 (BELT OPTIONAL)	1	4	1	4	201	300
3 BARBELL SQUAT, EXPLOSIVE, LOW BAR (BELT OPTIONAL)	0	0	1	10	20*	300
FAST AB CIRCUIT						
4 FULL V-SIT	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	10*	0
5 KNEE-UP	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	20*	0
6 CURLUP, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS OUT + TWIST (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1 or 2	10–20	20*	0
7 RUSSIAN TWIST, MEDICINE BALL IN HANDS	0	0	1–2	15–25	101	0
8 SIDE RAISE, HANDS ON FOREHEAD, ELBOWS IN	0	0	1–2	10–15 (each side)	10*	0

† Use more weight than in previous set(s)
‡ Use same weight as in wave set 2
§ Use same weight as in wave set 3

STAGE 4
WEEKS 25–27
WORKOUT B

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
WAVE SETS						
1 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, TO LOWER CHEST, ARCHED BACK	4	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5 Set 4: 3	6	Wave set 1: 4 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 2† Wave set 4: 4‡ Wave set 5: 3§ Wave set 6: 2†	211	300
STRAIGHT SETS						
2 ECCENTRIC BENCH PRESS, TO LOWER CHEST, ARCHED BACK	0	0	1	4	400	300
3 BARBELL BENCH PRESS, TO LOWER CHEST, ARCHED BACK	0	0	1	10–20	201	300
CONTROLLED AB CIRCUIT						
4 KNEE-UP	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
5 CURLUP, HANDS ON OPPOSITE ELBOWS (NOT PICTURED)	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
6 LATERAL LEG LOWERING	0	0	1 or 2	10 (each side)	303	0
7 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR, HANDS ON FOREHEAD	0	0	1 or 2	10	303	0
8 PUSHUP HOLD, LIFT LEG WITH OPPOSITE ARM	0	0	1 or 2	10	5-sec holds	60–120

† Use more weight than in previous set(s)
‡ Use same weight as in wave set 2
§ Use same weight as in wave set 3

STAGE 4
WEEKS 25–27
WORKOUT C

EXERCISE	WARMUP SETS	WARMUP REPS	WORK SETS	WORK REPS	TEMPO	REST (SEC)
WAVE SETS						
1 DEADLIFT, ALTERNATING/ MIXED GRIP (WEIGHT BELT OPTIONAL)	4	Set 1: 10 Set 2: 8 Set 3: 5 Set 4: 3	6	Wave set 1: 4 Wave set 2: 3† Wave set 3: 2† Wave set 4: 4‡ Wave set 5: 3§ Wave set 6: 2†	211	300
STRAIGHT SETS						
2 DEADLIFT, ALTERNATING/ MIXED GRIP, OFF BLOCKS (WEIGHT BELT OPTIONAL) (NOT PICTURED)	1	4	1	4	211	300
3 CLEAN PULL, OFF FLOOR (WEIGHT BELT OPTIONAL)	1	6	1	6	10*	180–240
STRENGTH ABDOMINAL CIRCUIT						
4 KNEE-UP, VERTICAL	1	10	1	10–15	211	0
5 BARBELL ROLLOUT	1	10	1	10–15	201	0
6 SIDE RAISE, ON ROMAN CHAIR, HANDS ON FOREHEAD	1	10	1	10–15	201	0
7 RUSSIAN TWIST, FEET ANCHORED, WEIGHT IN HANDS	1	10	1	10–15	202	0
8 CURLUP, LEGS IN AIR, WEIGHT ON CHEST	1	10	1	10–15	201	60–120

† Use more weight than in previous set(s)
‡ Use same weight as in wave set 2
§ Use same weight as in wave set 3