

The Intermediate Training Plan



The Intermediate training plan has you train towards completing the 100 Pushups Intermediate Challenge, which is completing 100 pushups in under five minutes. Follow this training plan when you can do more than 12 pushups but less than 40 pushups in the max pushups test. Once you are able to complete 40 consecutive pushups, attempt the Intermediate Challenge.

Intermediate Training Plan

Here is the Intermediate training plan. The full explanation of the table is below.

Day	Sets	Exercise	Sets (optional)	Exercise (optional)
1	3-9	60% Standard pushup	1	100% Pushup Plank
2	3-9	60%+1 Standard pushup	1	80% Diamond Pushup
3	3-9	60%+2 Standard pushup	1	100% Pushup Plank
4	3-9	60%+3 Standard pushup	1	80% Diamond Pushup
5	3-9	60%+4 Standard pushup	1	100% Pushup Plank
6	3-9	60%+5 Standard pushup	1	80% Diamond Pushup
7	3-9	60%+6 Standard pushup	1	100% Pushup Plank
8	3-9	60%+7 Standard pushup	1	80% Diamond Pushup
9	3-9	60%+8 Standard pushup	1	100% Pushup Plank
etc				
...				

A pushup plank is holding the top position of a pushup for a set amount of time. We prefer to measure it in the number of breaths you take, rather than in seconds/minutes. Exhale forcefully with each breath, and add a count.

A diamond pushup is a pushup with [hands close together, index fingers touching and thumbs touching](#). Keep elbows close to your side throughout the pushup.

Percentage Notation

Percentages in the table refer to the percentage of your maximum for that exercise. In the case of the standard pushup, it is based on your score in the max pushups test.

e.g. If you can do 12 pushups:

50% = 6 reps

50%+1 = 7 reps

50%+2 = 8 reps, and so on...

80% = 10 reps

100% = 12 reps (or breaths in the case of pushup planks)

Round up when necessary.

Note: each percentage is based on your maximum **for that particular exercise**. For instance, do not try to do diamond pushups based on a percentage of your maximum for standard pushups.

Last Set Of The Day

The last set of the day is slightly different, you either do pushup planks or diamond pushups (odd days are pushup planks, even days are diamond pushups). These are higher intensity sets, hence just the one set.

This last set is optional, so if you are feeling wiped out already, don't feel obliged to struggle through them. But equally, if you are on a good day, go on ahead and do them. As a rule of thumb, you should be doing them more often than you are skipping them.

The Sets

Start out doing four sets spaced throughout the day (3 sets of standard pushups + 1 set of planks/diamonds). You do not do all your sets in one session. The idea is to be as fresh as possible for each set.

In practice, leave a minimum of one hour between each set. For example, for four sets, do one set when you wake up, one set in the afternoon, and two sets in the evening (at least one hour apart).

When you do a re-set (explained below), you can add one set to your daily training volume, up to an eventual maximum of ten sets total a day.

Preparation

Before you start this training plan, make sure you have done the max pushups test for standard pushups and diamond pushups. Do a similar test for pushup planks – count the number of breaths you take before collapsing in a pile on the floor, or when you can no longer hold the position with good technique (a tell-tale sign is your back will start to arch, or you can no longer 'tuck' your butt).

Intensity

This bit is real important. Each set should be low-to-moderate intensity, fairly challenging but not too challenging. It is very important that you do not regularly cross into high intensity for any set. You want to train as frequently as possible but stay as fresh as possible. Your freshness will suffer if the intensity is too high.

You can tell when you have crossed the line into high intensity when:

- you begin to make funny faces
- you hold your breath
- the 'up' part of the pushup becomes forced and slows down

These are all signs that your sets are too intense and you have gone too far.

Since the training plan adds one rep per day, you WILL INEVITABLY get to the point where a set becomes too intense. This is by design.

Here is what to do when this happens...

1. Re-do the [max pushups test](#) and max pushup plank test.
2. If everything has gone to plan, you should have increased both from your initial assessment. Do not worry if you haven't, it does not affect the next bit.
3. Take these new values and **start from the beginning of the table** with them. The intensity should have dropped back down to a manageable level, but you should also be on a higher level than first time round.
4. Follow the progression until you venture back into that high intensity zone.
Reset, rinse and repeat.

Each time you re-set and start from the beginning of the table, you have the option of increasing the number of sets per day by one. This ensures a continuous progression in training volume. Use your judgement about adding an extra set. If the last set of the day is creeping into that high intensity zone, dial it back a bit.

It is really important not to venture into high intensity training. Greasing the groove is the most effective training methodology for improving pushups, and it does not rely on going close to your maximum pushup capacity on any sets. If you combine training too close to failure with training every day, you are not training optimally and your progress will stall out.

Completion

Repeat the progression cycles until you can do 40 pushups in the max pushups test.

At that point, mark off a day to attempt the 100 Pushups Intermediate Challenge, which is 100 pushups in under 5 minutes. Make sure you feel fresh, and a good tip is to aim for 4 sets of 25 pushups.

If you aren't able to complete the Intermediate Challenge on the first attempt, ask yourself whether you think you'd be able to complete it with better spacing of sets/ reps throughout the five minutes, or whether you still lack a bit of overall strength. If it is the latter, continue with the training plan until you can do 50 reps, and try again.

[Next: The Advanced Training Plan »](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

"What is the purpose of the pushup planks and diamond pushups?"

If you ever want to perform 100 pushups in a row, you must be able to pushup plank for at least as long as it takes to perform those 100 pushups. Makes sense right? Otherwise it is the plank position itself that becomes the weak link in the movement.

As you begin to nudge your pushup ability higher and higher, your body begins

to need a new stimulus in the lower rep ranges. Diamond pushups are a much harder variation of pushups, so you inevitably can do less of them. Therefore, they ensure you are still training the muscles fibers at this lower rep range. Diamond pushups feature more heavily in the Advanced Training Plan, so it is useful to introduce them here for familiarity.

“I’m in an office environment that makes it impossible to do any sets during the day. What should I do?”

Push your sets towards the beginning and the end of the day. Do 1-2 sets before you leave in the morning, doing the remainder when you get back in the evening. In practice, you only need to leave one hour between sets. At a push, reduce this to 45 minutes if it means getting in that last set of the day, but don’t make it a habit.

“I’ve read that I should only be training a maximum of 3-4 times a week. Is doing pushups every day too much?”

Doing pushups every day is optimal, provided the intensity of your sets is low-to-moderate. This is why the training plan prevents you from getting too close to your maximum pushups capacity. The advice of training 3-4 times a week is applicable to weight training where you perform sets much closer to muscular failure, which is more taxing on the neuromuscular system and requires more time to recover from.

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