

Starting a new program can be tough because of a number of things, mainly because you might not know where to begin. In this guide, I'm going to break it down. This stuff is not in any particular order, but these are things that go through my mind when I'm programming for somebody. Here it goes:

## 1. Predicted Reliability

This one is pretty standard, but maybe the most important. You need to consider how likely it is that you'll be able to follow the schedule that is laid out. Consistency is a key component of anything that is successful. Just look at the top businesses and people of today. For example, when people go to Starbucks, they are willing to spend more money there because they get the same product. Every. Damn. Time. For that reason, the company has religious consumers and makes truckloads of money.

Bringing it back to you, you need to find a way to make yourself **adhere** to the plan you lay out. Spend some time thinking about it. If you know that you cannot make all that days in the program, then maybe a 6 day a week program isn't for you. You might be better suited to a 3 day a week, total body routine, with one active recovery day on the weekend. It's all about optimizing for success, not setting yourself up for failure.

## 2. Current Stress Level

Super important message here. We have to balance the amount of stress that affects us every day. There are a lot of things that happen to us on a daily basis that may positively or negatively impact the way we think, act, feel, or even move. Take traffic, for example. There may be nothing more stressful on the planet, because:



My point is basically that we need to be aware of all of the things in our life that stress us out. If your job is super intense, you sit in traffic every day, you are worried about bills like Destiny's Child, then that definitely needs to be taken into account when you are setting up a new exercise routine. Sometimes your body **and** your brain get tired of being the punching bag. That's why you may feel like crap and get sick all the time- something has to give. Making sure you have

an adequate balance of training volume and recovery modalities (sleep, nutrition, soft tissue work) is important for long term success, as well as enhancing performance. Sidebar though: You can't control the traffic, so turn on some of that Warren G and just relax.

### 3. Nutritional Requirements

In a perfect world, we'd all be able to eat whatever we want at any given time. But, those foods you can't live without might not *always* have a place when it's fat you're trying to lose. You might be able to make it work if you do your homework and figure it out where you can fit it in, provided the bulk of your diet is foundationally sound. Individualizing your approach to nutrition takes a lot of trial and error, especially when you have a new goal in mind.

What should be mentioned is the emphasis that **everyone is different**. Instead of looking at what someone else is doing, take a step back and look at what you are doing now. Is it working? Do you look and feel better? If not, adjust accordingly. For more info, I wrote a full article on building a nutrition plan: [Learn More](#)

### 4. Goal of Program

Goal setting is essential to any person's plan. Do you want to be stronger? How strong? Eat veggies twice a day? Put a number on it. This keeps you accountable by telling your brain that at some specific moment in your life you were committed enough to set that goal. That's why it works.

It's kind of like making plans with your buddy who you haven't seen in a while. Bailing on your bro last minute because of something worthless will only upset him and ruin your friendship, so why would you want to do that? Are you going to bail on yourself after making a goal? Maybe you will, but you'll be much more likely to commit to something if you know **exactly** you want to achieve.

### 5. Potential Forks in the Road

One of the biggest things that can railroad your fitness success is the idea of "YOLOing." 100% Factual Translation:

"Just for today/my vacation, I'm going to forget about everything I've been trying to achieve in the past 2 months. Especially those days I busted my ass to fit into my old clothes. Let's forget about that, because you only live once. Right?" Slippery slope, my friend.

Thinking like this can really affect your results. You need to continually evaluate where your priorities stand. Sacrifices will have to be made. I'm not saying you can't live it up from time to time, but that doesn't mean you are going to get the keys to the Ferrari. Ask yourself what you might do in certain social situations. Find a strategy to use that is a compromise for yourself. Plan for it the best you can and make decisions that reflect positively on your goals.

### 6. Finding Your Carrot





What motivates you? What keeps you going when your body wants to quit? What makes you set some time to prepare your breakfast and lunch in the morning or the night before? In the unbelievably well acted movie Rocky IV, Sly was motivated by the death of Apollo Creed.. and the whole communism thing. Every time Rocky was in a bad spot- insert montage of him and Apollo. That's what kept the dude going. In the simplest way possible, find that one

thing that you can think of so you stay strong. It will help keep you from focusing on quitting and keep you moving forward.

## 7. What Limits You/What You Need to Work On

As a coach, I'm always looking at how we can improve. What small detail are we missing? When you start a new program, make sure you include something that addresses where you can get better (current **injuries** are a different ballgame). The human body works as if it were this 3D jigsaw puzzle. (Simplified) If you are missing certain pieces it won't fit together quite right. Similarly, if your body lacks certain qualities, such as mobility, conditioning, or strength, it isn't going to work as well as it should. Spending some extra time working on what you need more of will go a long way in improving your total body movement quality. I'd recommend getting a Movement Screen done with a professional to see where you are at and go from there.

## 8. Training Level

How experienced are you? Do you crush weights on the reg? Do you not know what dumbbells are? Have you trained by yourself before?

These are all important questions to ask. It is essential to recognize that you may need to start easy and progress from there. If something seems too intense for you, or it just doesn't feel right, then you probably shouldn't be doing it. It's okay to step outside your comfort zone a little, but when you start experiencing pain and other bad stuff, you shouldn't keep digging deeper into your pain threshold. Find a starting point that meets you halfway. There can be many factors that you can play around with:

Days/week, Conditioning vs. Strength days, Time of Day, Set and Rep Schemes, the list goes on and on. The point is that you should begin somewhere where you are comfortable, safe, yet still challenged.

## 9. Recovery

Definitely more of a “during program” topic, but it needs to be addressed. I think by now you can probably tell that a lot of these things tie into one another. If you aren’t recovering, you aren’t getting the most out of your workouts, plain and simple. Below are the five things that will help you get there. Make sure you try to get them all!

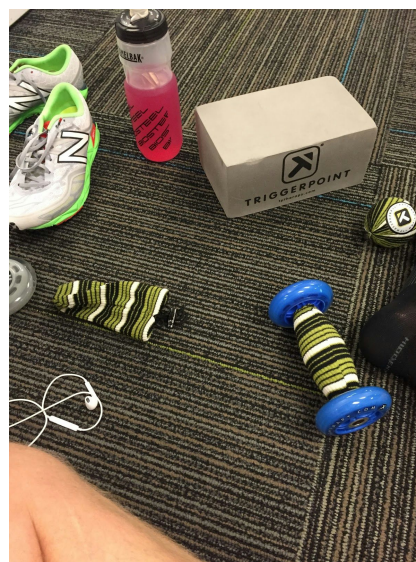
**Quality Sleep** - Sleep is essential to life, period. Back in the good old hunter gatherer days we weren’t around all this technology that keeps us up at night. It’s important to manage your sleep cycle just as you would anything else. It’s a break from the world that your body and brain needs.

**Balanced Nutrition/Hydration** - Somebody smart said that you can’t outwork a bad diet. #Truth. Improve your diet and drink plenty of water throughout the day.

**Mobility Work** - The may include soft tissue work like foam rolling, but might also include an adequate cooldown or even a full on regeneration day. The goal is to improve your movement quality and get those cranky joints functioning better.

**Get Aerobic** - Listen to Megan Trainor on this one... It’s all about the base. Conditioning is a key aspect of both general fitness **and** recovering from a bout of exercise. Including some low intensity steady state cardio will help improve your fitness as well as your overall health.

**Stress Management** - As I mentioned above, think about how your workouts are going to impact your overall stress level. Finding a balance is key to helping you improve, versus you hitting a wall early in your program. This will help keep you feeling awesome and crushing your workouts, without negatively impacting your energy levels, productivity, or mood.



## 10. Adaptability

Can the program change as you get better at it? Can you continue to challenge yourself day in and day out? This is what I’m talking about here. When you start that new program, eventually you are going to start crushing it if you are staying consistent and executing it correctly. But the key to progression is making the appropriate changes to say, “How can I make this a wee bit harder?”

Well, there are a few ways. Most people simply think about load and add more weight, which is probably the easiest way (Especially if you have a specific rep count in mind). Additionally, you may want to think about things like Tempo, Stability or Instability, Time Under Tension, or Range of Motion. Like I said above, this is where you would tailor it to the goal you are after.

**That's all folks!**

Hopefully you get the idea, but there are a lot of factors that come into play when starting a program. But, the most important thing is that you get started. It's all about finding where you are at, and building from there.

Talk soon,

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