

FORGE / Advanced

Train with intent. Recover with purpose.

An eight-week strength and hypertrophy block for experienced lifters who can judge effort and adjust workload. Four sessions, with a three-day rolling option.

8 weeks | 3 or 4 days weekly | 55-75 minutes | Gym

Your training effort

Main lifts: 2 reps in reserve. Accessories: 1-3 reps in reserve. No forced repetitions or routine failure training. Use safeties and a competent spotter where needed.

Before you begin

For adults 18+. General exercise education, not individualized medical or rehabilitation advice. Ask a qualified professional about activity if you have an injury, chronic condition, pregnancy/postpartum concerns or uncertainty about suitability. Stop for sharp pain, dizziness, unusual breathlessness or chest discomfort. Seek urgent care for severe or persistent symptoms. Inspect equipment and bands, use stable supports and barbell safeties, and seek coaching for unfamiliar lifts. Breathe through repetitions.

The plan is free. No account, equipment brand or supplement purchase is required.

Current instructions and substitutions: physiforge.com/training/forge

YOUR WEEK

Example day	Session / recovery
Monday	Upper strength
Tuesday	Lower strength
Wednesday	Recovery
Thursday	Upper volume
Friday	Lower volume
Saturday	Recovery / easy movement
Sunday	Recovery

Adapt the schedule

Use the four-day schedule if it fits recovery. With three days, train on nonconsecutive days and roll A/B/C, then D/A/B, then C/D/A, then B/C/D; repeat that rotation for weeks 5-8. Do not restart at A every Monday. A missed session stays next in the sequence. Never make up volume by doubling sessions.

Progress over the block

Weeks 1-3: begin at the low end of each range with 2-3 reps in reserve. Add reps before load; increase load only after all sets reach the top with 2 reps in reserve. Week 4: perform half the work sets, rounded up, with 4 reps in reserve. Weeks 5-7: resume normal sets from a load you can control, then progress. Week 8: repeat the easier week. Stop a set when technique changes; do not test a maximum.

When to ease back

Start with listed volume; additional work is not automatically better. If repeated performance loss, persistent soreness or poor sleep develops, bring the easier week forward. Reduce each exercise by one set or use the BUILD track if four hard sessions exceed your recovery.

PREPARE TO TRAIN

Warm up

Begin with 5-8 minutes of easy movement you tolerate. Practice the first exercises unloaded, then use 2-4 gradually heavier warm-up sets for the first compound lift. Warm-up sets are not work sets. Start only when movement feels comfortable.

Technique and effort

Keep the lowering phase controlled and lift smoothly through a comfortable range. Reps in reserve estimates how many more sound repetitions you could perform; stop earlier if unsure. Each unilateral set includes both sides; rest after both or between sides as needed. Choose one substitute, not extra exercises. Start alternatives light and keep the target effort.

Equipment

Home versions use a stable chair or support, mat, dumbbells and an intact resistance band with a secure anchor. BUILD and FORGE assume a gym. Use the simpler alternatives below when the original movement is unavailable; do not force an unsafe setup.

Missed sessions are moved forward, never doubled. Recovery belongs in every week.

Upper strength

Work sets shown. Use the introductory / easier-week adjustments in your progression instructions.

Exercise	Sets	Repetitions / time	Rest
Barbell bench press	3	4-6	3 min
Assisted pull-up	3	6-8	2-3 min
Seated dumbbell shoulder press	2	6-10	2 min
Chest-supported dumbbell row	3	8-10	2 min
Dumbbell lateral raise	2	12-15	90 sec
Cable triceps pressdown	2	10-15	90 sec

Technique: physiforge.com/training/exercises

Lower strength

Work sets shown. Use the introductory / easier-week adjustments in your progression instructions.

Exercise	Sets	Repetitions / time	Rest
Barbell back squat	3	4-6	3 min
Dumbbell Romanian deadlift	3	6-8	2-3 min
Seated leg curl	3	10-12	90 sec
Supported calf raise	3	10-15	90 sec
Kneeling side plank	2	25-40 sec each side	60 sec

Technique: physiforge.com/training/exercises

Upper volume

Work sets shown. Use the introductory / easier-week adjustments in your progression instructions.

Exercise	Sets	Repetitions / time	Rest
Incline dumbbell press	3	8-12	2 min
Lat pulldown	3	8-12	2 min
Dumbbell bench press	2	10-12	2 min
Supported one-arm dumbbell row	3	10-12 each side	90 sec
Dumbbell lateral raise	3	12-15	90 sec
Dumbbell curl	2	10-15	90 sec

Technique: physiforge.com/training/exercises

Lower volume

Work sets shown. Use the introductory / easier-week adjustments in your progression instructions.

Exercise	Sets	Repetitions / time	Rest
Leg press	3	8-12	2 min
Hip thrust	3	8-12	2 min
Reverse lunge	2	8-12 each side	90 sec
Seated leg curl	2	12-15	90 sec
Supported calf raise	2	12-15	90 sec
Dead bug	2	8-10 each side	60 sec

Technique: physiforge.com/training/exercises

MOVEMENT GUIDE

Barbell bench press

Chest, triceps, anterior shoulders | Bench, barbell, rack with safeties or competent spotter

Set a stable upper back and feet, with eyes under the bar. Use a full grip. Unrack over the chest, lower under control and press back up. Set safeties appropriately or use a competent spotter. Keep the bar off your neck.

Avoid: Bouncing the bar; unprotected heavy attempts; losing grip or body position.

Easier: Dumbbell bench or floor press.

Progress: Small load increases after all prescribed reps are controlled.

Assisted pull-up

Lats, upper back, biceps | Assisted pull-up machine with safe access

Use the machine's platform and instructions for secure setup. Begin with arms long in a comfortable shoulder position. Pull elbows toward your ribs until your chin approaches handle level. Lower with control. Use enough assistance to avoid swinging.

Avoid: Kipping; jumping off the platform; choosing too little assistance.

Easier: Lat pulldown.

Progress: Reduce assistance gradually after meeting the rep target.

Seated dumbbell shoulder press

Shoulders, triceps | Dumbbells and supported bench

Sit tall with back support. Start dumbbells at a comfortable shoulder level, palms angled as comfortable. Press overhead only through a pain-free range without arching the back. Lower slowly.

Avoid: Arching the low back; forcing a painful overhead position; shrugging aggressively.

Easier: Light neutral-grip press through a smaller pain-free range, or incline push-up if overhead work is uncomfortable.

Progress: Add repetitions before load.

Chest-supported dumbbell row

Upper back, lats, biceps | Dumbbells and stable incline bench

Lie chest-down on a stable incline bench with feet planted. Row toward the lower ribs, then lower smoothly. Keep the chest on the pad and neck relaxed.

Avoid: Lifting chest away from the bench; jerking; craning the neck.

Easier: Lighter one-arm supported row.

Progress: Add repetitions before load.

Dumbbell lateral raise

Lateral shoulders | Light dumbbells

Stand tall with soft elbows. Raise arms slightly forward of your sides to a comfortable height around shoulder level. Lower with control. Use a load that does not require swinging.

Avoid: Swinging the trunk; shrugging; lifting above a comfortable range.

Easier: Use lighter weights or a smaller range.

Progress: Add repetitions before a small weight increase.

Cable triceps pressdown

Triceps | High cable and rope or bar attachment

Stand balanced with elbows near your sides. Straighten elbows to move the attachment down without moving the upper arms. Return slowly and keep shoulders relaxed.

Avoid: Leaning bodyweight onto the handle; flaring elbows; snapping into lockout.

Easier: Light cable resistance or incline push-up.

Progress: Add repetitions before the next cable increment.

Barbell back squat

Quadriceps, glutes, trunk | Barbell, rack, correctly set safety arms

Set the bar on the upper back, not the neck. Brace before each repetition. Bend hips and knees together, keeping the bar over your midfoot. Squat to a controlled comfortable depth, then stand. Set safety arms and practice unloading before loading heavily.

Avoid: Uncontrolled descent; losing foot contact; squatting without correctly set safeties.

Easier: Goblet squat or leg press.

Progress: Small load increases after all work sets meet the target with reserve.

Dumbbell Romanian deadlift

Hamstrings, glutes, back stabilizers | Dumbbells

Stand tall with soft knees and weights near your thighs. Brace, move hips back and keep weights close to your legs. Stop when you feel hamstring tension without rounding your back. Drive hips forward to stand without leaning backward.

Avoid: Reaching toward the floor; rounding the back; turning the hinge into a deep squat.

Easier: Unloaded hip hinge to a wall or glute bridge.

Progress: Add repetitions, then small load increases; a barbell is an option with coaching.

Seated leg curl

Hamstrings | Leg curl machine

Adjust the machine so your knee aligns with its pivot and the pad sits above the heel. Keep your back supported. Bend knees smoothly, pause briefly, then return slowly.

Avoid: Poor knee alignment; lifting hips; snapping the weight stack.

Easier: Light glute bridge or lighter machine load.

Progress: Add repetitions before load.

Supported calf raise

Calves | Stable support; optional dumbbell

Hold a fixed support. Rise onto the balls of both feet, pause briefly and lower slowly. Stay on the floor initially and keep ankles aligned.

Avoid: Bouncing; rolling ankles outward; letting balance limit the exercise.

Easier: Seated calf raise with feet on the floor.

Progress: Add load or use one leg with support.

Kneeling side plank

Lateral trunk, hip stabilizers | Mat

Lie on one side with knees bent and elbow under your shoulder. Lift hips so shoulders, hips and knees form a line. Breathe steadily and hold within control. Lower and repeat on the other side.

Avoid: Shoulder collapsing; holding the breath; twisting hips forward.

Easier: Shorter holds with hips raised only slightly.

Progress: Progress to a straight-leg side plank with feet staggered.

Incline dumbbell press

Chest, shoulders, triceps | Dumbbells and stable adjustable bench

Set a modest bench incline. Plant your feet and keep your back supported. Lower weights beside the upper chest with forearms near vertical. Press up smoothly without shrugging.

Avoid: Bench almost upright; bouncing; pushing head forward.

Easier: Dumbbell floor press or incline push-up.

Progress: Increase repetitions, then load.

Lat pulldown

Lats, upper back, biceps | Cable pulldown machine

Secure thighs under the pad. Grip the bar comfortably, lean back slightly and draw elbows toward your sides as the bar approaches the upper chest. Return under control. Keep the bar in front of the head.

Avoid: Pulling behind the neck; swinging; turning the movement into a large backward lean.

Easier: Light pulldown or supported row.

Progress: Increase repetitions, then the smallest machine increment.

Dumbbell bench press

Chest, triceps, anterior shoulders | Dumbbells and stable bench

Lie with head, upper back and hips supported, feet secure. Start weights over the chest. Lower with wrists stacked over elbows through a comfortable range. Press up without bouncing or colliding the weights. Use loads you can set down safely.

Avoid: Excessively flared elbows; bent wrists; losing stable foot contact.

Easier: Dumbbell floor press or incline push-up.

Progress: Add repetitions, then the smallest available load increase.

Supported one-arm dumbbell row

Upper back, lats, biceps | Dumbbell and stable bench or support

Support one hand on a fixed bench and hinge with a long back. Row the weight toward your hip without twisting. Lower until the arm is long and controlled. Repeat both sides.

Avoid: Rotating the trunk to lift; jerking; shrugging the weight.

Easier: Light chest-supported row or seated band row.

Progress: Add repetitions, then load.

Dumbbell curl

Biceps | Dumbbells

Stand tall, palms forward or neutral. Keep upper arms near your sides as you bend elbows. Lower slowly without rocking your body.

Avoid: Swinging; moving shoulders forward to lift; bending wrists.

Easier: Use lighter weights seated with support.

Progress: Add controlled repetitions before load.

Leg press

Quadriceps, glutes | Leg press machine

Set the seat so hips and back stay supported. Place feet securely on the platform. Lower only as far as your pelvis remains against the pad. Press smoothly, keeping knees soft at the top and following the machine instructions.

Avoid: Pelvis rolling off the pad; forcefully locking knees; lowering beyond control.

Easier: Chair squat.

Progress: Add repetitions before increasing the machine load.

Hip thrust

Glutes, hamstrings | Stable bench and padded dumbbell or barbell

Support the upper back on a stable bench. Keep the load padded and secure over the hips. Brace and lift until hips are extended without arching the lower back. Lower with control. Use a glute bridge if the setup is not secure.

Avoid: Sliding bench; unpadded load; finishing by arching the back.

Easier: Floor glute bridge.

Progress: Add repetitions, then load while keeping the setup stable.

Reverse lunge

Quadriceps, glutes | Clear space; optional dumbbells

Stand tall, step one foot back and lower both knees through a comfortable range. Keep the front foot planted. Push through the front foot to return. Alternate sides or finish one side first.

Avoid: Stepping onto a tightrope; collapsing the front knee; rushing the return.

Easier: Supported split squat.

Progress: Add light dumbbells after balance and depth are consistent.

Dead bug

Trunk stabilizers | Mat

Lie on your back, hips and knees bent. Gently brace and exhale as you reach one heel away and the opposite arm overhead. Keep a comfortable, steady low-back position. Return and alternate sides.

Avoid: Arching as limbs reach; holding the breath; moving farther than you control.

Easier: Slide one heel along the floor with arms still.

Progress: Lengthen the reach gradually while keeping trunk position.

WORKOUT LOG

Program: _____ Week: _____ Date: _____

Session: _____ Load units (kg/lb): _____

Record actual repetitions for each set; note substitutions and reduced sets. No maximum testing is required.

Exercise / variation	Load used	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Notes / setup / next-session adjustment:

Energy and recovery: _____

Next suitable session: _____

KEEP BUILDING

Use your training log to choose the next appropriate session. Review steady technique, manageable effort and recovery before adding load.

Programming references

Original Physiforge schedules apply established training principles. These organizations do not endorse these plans.

ACSM 2026 resistance-training position stand: doi.org/10.1249/MSS.0000000000003897

ACSM summary: acsm.org/resistance-training-guidelines-update-2026/

CDC: cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/chronic-health-conditions-and-disabilities.html

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