

BUILDING
STRENGTH
VERSUS
MUSCLE MASS

WORKOUTS FOR DIFFERENT
TRAINING GOALS

OPEX

What's the difference between working out to build strength and working out to build lean mass?

This is one of the most common questions we receive from coaches and fitness enthusiasts alike who want to design goal-driven training programs.

In this guide, you'll learn:

- The key principles of programming for strength and hypertrophy
- How to implement them with example two-week training plans

PRINCIPLES OF BUILDING STRENGTH AND HYPERTROPHY

To design training programs with intention it's essential to understand evidence-based principles. While there is no one way to train for strength or hypertrophy, principles will always apply and will provide you with a framework to work within.

PRINCIPLES OF STRENGTH

To develop strength means to increase your ability to create a maximal contraction to overcome an external load. An example of this would be to increase your back squat one repetition maximum over a training cycle.

The following principles are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding strength development, but they're the three most important things to consider when writing programs to build strength.

① Recovery, recovery, recovery

High intensity (heavy) strength training is very taxing on the nervous system, requiring neural adaptations to see improvements. In strength training, the brain and muscle cells are learning to communicate more efficiently so that you can recruit more motor units to produce a stronger contraction. If you are tired or fatigued, your nervous system will not be able to perform at the level it needs to in order to move a heavy load. In practice, this means that adequate rest between training sessions is essential and that nutrition and lifestyle habits outside of the gym have to be dialed in to promote recovery.

② Less is more

One of the biggest mistakes strength trainees make is doing too much volume. Compared to hypertrophy training, strength training is low volume (lower total repetitions and time under tension) and high intensity (heavier loads). Rest periods will be longer to allow greater expression per set and time under tension per set will be relatively low. To build on the first principle, there must be adequate time between training sessions to promote recovery of the nervous system and specific movement patterns. Progression for strength training over time will follow increasing intensity and decreasing volume.

③ Honor the strength lifecycle

Strength training must be relative to the individual's training age. To follow an advanced high intensity and low volume training program, you must earn the right by progressing through novice and intermediate training stages first. This means starting with developing efficiency in movement patterns with relatively low intensity and higher volume, then developing a base for low volume/high intensity training by spending time accumulating volume with increasing intensity. The program you will see below is designed for a relatively advanced trainee who is ready to build strength.

Watch **this video** from our **Exercise Selection class in LearnRx** to understand how the strength lifecycle will affect the movement patterns you program and how you organize a training week.



PRINCIPLES OF HYPERTROPHY

To elicit hypertrophy means to increase the body's lean muscle mass. This occurs through the act of breaking down muscle tissue through exercise, followed by the repair and growth of muscle cells in recovery.

These three principles should always be considered when designing hypertrophy programs.

① **Volume, volume, volume**

One of the key characteristics of a hypertrophy program is volume. While there is an upper limit to volume, building lean mass in theory requires you to train a muscle as much as you can while still allowing for appropriate recovery. In program design, features will include high frequency of training muscle groups throughout the week, higher repetitions and lower loads, relatively high time under tension per set (around 40 seconds), and progression that is based on increasing volume over time.

② **Body part split**

Because the goal of a hypertrophy program is to increase the size of muscles, it is best practice to break up the weekly training plan into a body part split. A full body resistance training program that includes upper and lower body muscle groups is a great option for keeping frequency per muscle group high throughout a week. Identifying which muscle groups you are training each day will help you manage the overall volume of working sets per muscle group.

③ **Create an anabolic environment**

Muscle is broken down in the gym and built in recovery. While it's not as important to be well-recovered going into a hypertrophy session as a strength session for performance, it is essential that your lifestyle and nutrition practices support anabolism. Eating adequate protein and being in a caloric surplus, practicing good food hygiene, sleeping 7-9 hours, getting sun exposure, hydrating, and managing stress will all support gaining muscle mass.

The following programs are designed to show you the principles of strength and hypertrophy in action, but it is important to note that these workouts are designed for no-one. **For lasting results, strength and hypertrophy programs must be tailored to each client's experiences, capabilities, and assessment data.**

Learn the OPEX Method of individual design coaching in the
[OPEX COACHING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM \(CCP\)](#)

STRENGTH PROGRAM

Week 1

Monday: Squat (intensity), Bend (intensity), Lunge (auxiliary), Bend (auxiliary)

- A. Back Squat @20X1, 3-3-2-2, rest 4-5 min
- B. Deadlift @20X1, 3-3-2-2, rest 4-5 min
- C1. Front Rack Reverse Lunge @20X0, 5 reps/side x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C2. Romanian Deadlift @30X0, 5 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min

Tuesday: H Push (intensity), H Pull, V Push (auxiliary), V Pull (auxiliary), Core

- A. Bench Press @21X1, 3-3-2-2, rest 4 min
- B. Bent Over Barbell Row @20X1, 5 reps x 3 sets; rest 3 min
- C1. Dumbbell Shoulder Press @20X1, 6-8 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C2. Seated Lat Pulldown @20X1, 6-8 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C3. Weighted Hollow Hold, 30 sec x 3 sets; rest 2 min

Thursday: Squat (volume), Bend (volume), Lunge (auxiliary), Bend (auxiliary)

- A. Back Squat @20X1, 6-8 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 min
- B. Sumo Deadlift @20X1, 6-8 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 min
- C1. Dumbbell Walking Lunge @20X0, 12-16 alt reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C2. Weighted GHD Hip Extension @20X0, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min

Saturday: H Push (volume), V Pull, H Push (auxiliary), H Pull (auxiliary), Core

- A. Bench Press @21X1, 6-8 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 min
- B. Weighted Pull-Up @20X0, 6 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 min
- C1. Dumbbell Bench Press @20X1, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C2. Bent Over Dumbbell Row @20X1, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C3. Weighted Side Plank, 30 sec/side x 3 sets; rest 2 min

STRENGTH PROGRAM - CONT.

Week 2

**Decreasing reps and increasing load OR increasing reps within ranges from Week 1*

Monday: Squat (intensity), Bend (intensity), Lunge (auxiliary), Bend (auxiliary)

- A. Back Squat @20X1, 2-2-2-2, rest 4-5 min
- B. Deadlift @20X1, 2-2-2-2, rest 4-5 min
- C1. Front Rack Reverse Lunge @20X0, 5 reps/side x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C2. Romanian Deadlift @30X0, 5 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min

Tuesday: H Push (intensity), H Pull, V Push (auxiliary), V Pull (auxiliary), Core

- A. Bench Press @21X1, 2-2-2-2, rest 4 min
- B. Bent Over Barbell Row @20X1, 5 reps x 3 sets; rest 3 min
- C1. Dumbbell Shoulder Press @20X1, 6-8 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C2. Seated Lat Pulldown @20X1, 6-8 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C3. Weighted Hollow Hold, 30 sec x 3 sets; rest 2 min

Thursday: Squat (volume), Bend (volume), Lunge (auxiliary), Bend (auxiliary)

- A. Back Squat @20X1, 5-7 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 min
- B. Sumo Deadlift @20X1, 5-7 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 min
- C1. Dumbbell Walking Lunge @20X0, 12-16 alt reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C2. Weighted GHD Hip Extension @20X0, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min

Saturday: H Push (volume), V Pull, H Push (auxiliary), H Pull (auxiliary), Core

- A. Bench Press @21X1, 5-7 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 min
- B. Weighted Pull-Up @20X0, 5 reps x 4 sets; rest 3 min
- C1. Dumbbell Bench Press @20X1, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C2. Bent Over Dumbbell Row @20X1, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 2 min
- C3. Weighted Side Plank, 30 sec/side x 3 sets; rest 2 min

HYPERTROPHY PROGRAM

Week 1

Monday: Squat (Quads), Push (Delts), Bend (Glutes), Pull (Biceps), Push (Triceps), Core

- A1. Cyclist Back Squat @20X0, 8 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min
- A2. Strict Press @20X1, 8 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min
- B1. Barbell Hip Thrust @30X2, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- B2. Alternating Dumbbell Curl @20X2, 20 alt reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- C1. Dumbbell Skull Crusher @20X2, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- C2. Cable Swiss Ball Crunch @30X1, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

Tuesday: Bend (Hamstrings), Push (Chest), Lunge (Quads), Pull (Back), Push (Chest), Core (Glutes)

- A1. Romanian Deadlift @30X0, 8 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min
- A2. Close Grip Bench Press @20X1, 8 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min
- B1. Dumbbell Rear Foot Elevated Split Squat @30X0, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- B2. Seated Cable Row @20X1, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- C1. Dumbbell Fly @20X2, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- C2. Single Leg GHD Hip Extension @20X2, 10 reps/side x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

Thursday: Lunge (Quads), Pull (Lats), Push (Triceps), Bend (Hamstrings), Pull (Biceps), Core

- A1. Barbell Reverse Lunge from Riser @20X1, 8 reps/side x 4 sets; rest 2 min
- A2. Weighted Pull-Up @20X0, 8 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min
- B1. Rope Tricep Pushdown @20X1, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- B2. Roller Hamstring Curl @30X1, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- C1. Cable Rope Curl @20X1, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- C2. Side Plank Rotations @20X2, 10 reps/side x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

Friday: Bend (Hamstrings), Push (Chest), Squat (Quads), Push (Delts), Pull (Back), Core

- A1. Good Morning @30X0, 8 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min
- A2. Incline Bench Press @20X1, 8 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min
- B1. One and a Quarter Goblet Squat @30X0, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- B2. Cable Lateral Raise @20X1, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- C1. Dumbbell 3 Point Row @20X1, 10 reps/side x 3 sets; rest 90 sec
- C2. Parallette L-Sit, 30 second hold x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

HYPERTROPHY PROGRAM - CONT.

Week 2

**Increasing reps at the same loads as Week 1*

Monday: Squat (Quads), Push (Delts), Bend (Glutes), Pull (Biceps), Push (Triceps), Core

A1. Cyclist Back Squat @20X0, 8-10 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min

A2. Strict Press @20X1, 8-10 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min

B1. Barbell Hip Thrust @30X2, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

B2. Alternating Dumbbell Curl @20X0, 20-24 alt reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

C1. Dumbbell Skull Crusher @20X0, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

C2. Cable Swiss Ball Crunch @30X1, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

Tuesday: Bend (Hamstrings), Push (Chest), Lunge (Quads), Pull (Back), Push (Chest), Core (Glutes)

A1. Romanian Deadlift @30X0, 8-10 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min

A2. Close Grip Bench Press @20X1, 8-10 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min

B1. Dumbbell Rear Foot Elevated Split Squat @30X0, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

B2. Seated Cable Row @20X1, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

C1. Dumbbell Fly @20X0, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

C2. Single Leg GHD Hip Extension @20X2, 10-12 reps/side x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

Thursday: Lunge (Quads), Pull (Lats), Push (Triceps), Bend (Hamstrings), Pull (Biceps), Core

A1. Barbell Reverse Lunge from Riser @20X1, 8-10 reps/side x 4 sets; rest 2 min

A2. Weighted Pull-Up @20X0, 8-10 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min

B1. Rope Tricep Pushdown @20X1, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

B2. Roller Hamstring Curl @30X1, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

C1. Cable Rope Curl @20X1, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

C2. Side Plank Rotations @20X0, 10-12 reps/side x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

Friday: Bend (Hamstrings), Push (Chest), Squat (Quads), Push (Delts), Pull (Back), Core

A1. Good Morning @30X0, 8-10 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min

A2. Incline Bench Press @20X1, 8-10 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min

B1. One and a Quarter Goblet Squat @30X0, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

B2. Cable Lateral Raise @20X1, 10-12 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

C1. Dumbbell 3 Point Row @20X1, 10-12 reps/side x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

C2. Parallette L-Sit, 30-40 second hold x 3 sets; rest 90 sec

COACH ANY CLIENT TO ANY FITNESS GOAL

As a fitness coach, you'll be met with clients with different capabilities and a wide variety of goals—not only strength and hypertrophy. It's your job to **deliver them a program that meets them where they are at and gets them the results they desire.**

This may sound daunting, but with a knowledge of fitness principles and a system to deliver them, it doesn't have to be.

In the [Coaching Certificate Program \(CCP\)](#), you'll learn our comprehensive system of coaching, with the entire set of OPEX principles for personalizing both strength and energy systems training, as well as prescribing nutrition and lifestyle program design.

Are you ready to design smarter programs with confidence and be ready to support any client to train for any fitness goal? **Click the button below to learn more about CCP today.**

LEARN MORE