

EXERCISE SELECTION

FOR FUNCTIONAL
MOVEMENT PATTERNS

OPEX

WHAT EXERCISES SHOULD I PROGRAM FOR MY CLIENTS?

This is one of the most common questions we receive from coaches who want to program balanced, safe, and effective resistance training programs.

Choosing the best exercises for your clients is simple when you follow frameworks and understand the movement patterns that support their function.

Framework 1: Pattern-Based Approach

A pattern-based approach breaks the body into natural human patterns. Programs are designed based on patterns, not body parts, simplifying the exercise selection process.

Framework 2: Daily Split

Implementing a daily split is essential for organized and balanced program design. The split will be designed at the beginning of each short-term cycle, which sits inside of a long-term plan.

**LEARN THE OPEX METHOD OF LONG-TERM PLANNING AND PERIODIZATION
IN THE COACHING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM**

Training age will determine the best training split for your client.

Novice clients will benefit from frequent exposure to all movement patterns to develop motor control and can perform a Full Body Resistance split that includes upper, lower, and core patterns. A Full Body Resistance split is also appropriate for Grand Master clients (Advanced clients with a higher chronological age).

For example, this novice training session includes all movement patterns:

- A1. Goblet Squat @3110, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 60 sec (**Squat**)
- A2. Single Arm Dumbbell Row @2011, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 60 sec (**Pull**)
- B1. Kettlebell Romanian Deadlift @3010, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 60 sec (**Bend**)
- B2. Incline Push-Up @2011, 8-10 reps x 3 sets, rest 60 sec (**Push**)
- C1. Cable Split Squat @2111, 8-10 reps x 3 sets, rest 60 sec (**Lunge**)
- C2. Bent Hollow Hold, 30 seconds x 3 sets, rest 60 sec (**Core**)

Intermediate clients have developed motor control and will perform more strength endurance contractions, and will benefit from an **Upper/Lower split**.

For example, this intermediate training session includes the push, pull, and core patterns:

- A1. Bench Press @20X0, 4-5 reps x 4 sets; rest 90 sec (**Push**)
- A2. Pendlay Row @20X1, 4-5 reps x 4 sets; rest 2 min (**Pull**)
- B1. Dumbbell Incline Bench Press @20X0, 6-8 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec (**Push**)
- B2. Dumbbell Drag Curl @2020, 6-8 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec (**Pull**)
- C. Farmer's Carry, 50m x 4 sets; rest 2 min (**Core**)

Advanced clients have the nervous system capability to perform specific patterns, and will benefit from a **Specific split** that isolates one pattern per day.

For example, this advanced training session includes only the pull pattern:

- A. Weighted Strict Pull-Up @30X0, 2.2.2 x 4 sets; rest 20 sec between clusters, 2-3 min between sets (**Pull**)
- B. Barbell Bent Over Row @20X0, 10-8-6-4 reps; rest 2 mins (**Pull**)
- C. Single Arm Cable Reverse Fly @30X1, 8-10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 sec (**Pull**)

THE SIX FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT PATTERNS



Squat

In the squat pattern the hips and knees flex at the same time, allowing the center of gravity to lower.

Examples of squatting exercises include an [Air Squat](#), [Goblet Squat](#), [Front Squat](#), and [Back Squat](#).



Bend

In the bend pattern the hips go from flexion to extension, while keeping rigidity in the knees.

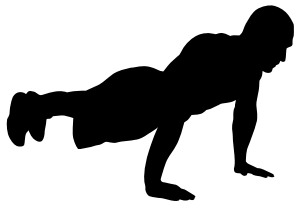
Examples of bending exercises include a [Deadlift](#), [Romanian Deadlift](#), [Cable Pull Through](#), and [Hip Thrust](#).



Lunge

In the lunge pattern, one leg is in front of the other and weight distribution is varied from front to back leg.

Examples of lunging exercises include a [Split Squat](#), [Dumbbell Walking Lunge](#), [Front Rack Reverse Lunge](#), and [Step-Up](#).



Push

In the push pattern an object or body weight is pushed away from the center of gravity, either vertically, horizontally, or in a fly.

Examples of pushing exercises include a [Push-Up](#), [Bench Press](#), [Dumbbell Fly](#), and [Skull Crusher](#).



Pull

In the pull pattern an object or body weight is pulled to the center of gravity either vertically, horizontally, or in a fly.

Examples of pulling exercises include a [Pull-Up](#), [Ring Row](#), [Bent Over Barbell Row](#), and [Dumbbell Curl](#).



Core

The core pattern includes any activity that biases the abdomen and/or obliques to perform the movement.

Examples of core exercises include a [Hollow Hold](#), [Side Plank](#), [Farmer's Carry](#), and [Pallof Press](#).

TURNING PATTERNS INTO PROGRAM DESIGN

A pattern-based approach to exercise selection will simplify your program design process and help you create balanced workouts.

However, knowing which patterns to prioritize and the best split for every new client requires a thorough understanding of their movement capabilities, training age, and the exercise principles that support their fitness goals.

In the [OPEX Coaching Certificate Program \(CCP\)](#), you'll learn a systematic approach to coaching that starts with an assessment and ends with a personalized and comprehensive fitness program.

Apply to CCP and upgrade your program design skills today.



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