

**T H E**  
**STRENGTH COACH'S**  
**M A N U A L**

**OPEX**

There's a lot of information out there on strength, but the truth is that no templated program works in the long-term. You need to be able to design individualized strength programs to meet every client's unique starting point and goals, and to progress them throughout their lives.

In this guide, we will provide you with three fundamental principles of coaching individualized strength:

- ➔ First, we will teach you how to create a lifelong progression for your clients with the **OPEX Strength Lifecycle**.
- ➔ Second, we will apply the OPEX Strength Lifecycle to the **Squat Movement Pattern**.
- ➔ Third, we will look at how to use **Accessory Movements** to address strength weaknesses.

When you apply these principles to your coaching practice, you will generate results and create sustainable strength progressions for life.

## PROGRESSING STRENGTH FOR A LIFETIME: THE OPEX STRENGTH LIFECYCLE

Progressing strength training over a client's lifetime can seem daunting, but with the right framework it's simpler than it sounds. That is why we have created the OPEX Strength Lifecycle: your roadmap through the five stages of strength training.

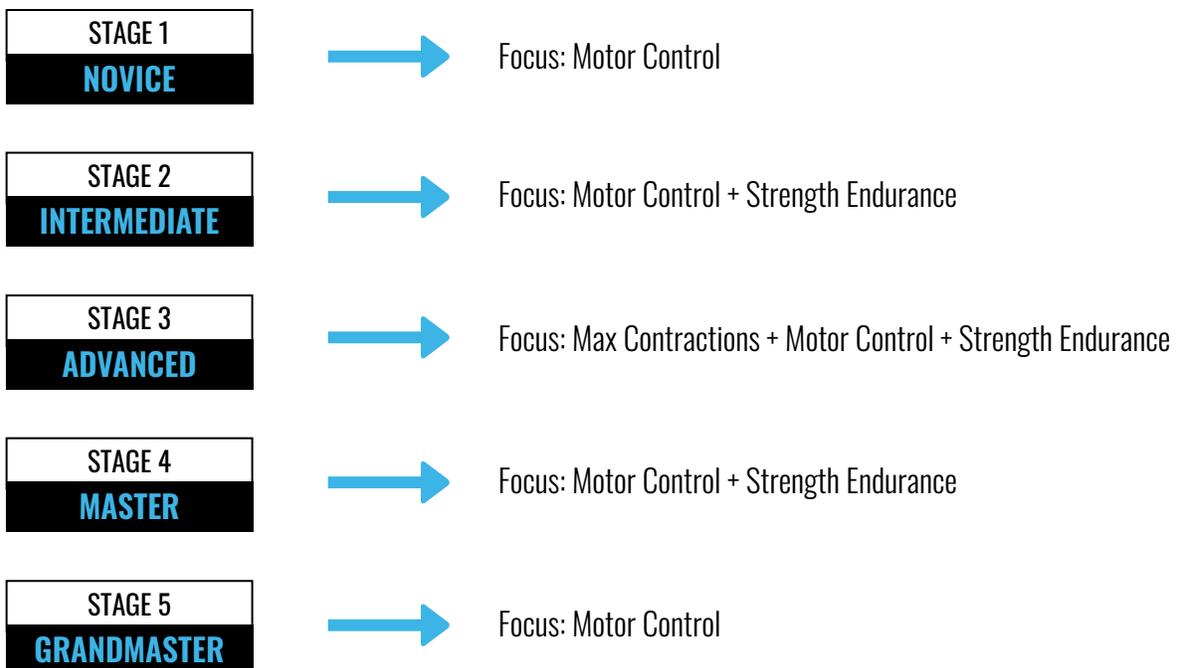
The OPEX Strength Lifecycle is a framework that you can apply to any client's strength training program. After assessing their training age, it's as simple as plug and play.

*Strength is just one part of a balanced fitness program. In the [OPEX Coaching Certificate Program \(CCP\)](#), you'll also learn how to match energy systems training to each client's lifecycle stage.*

## THE STAGES OF THE STRENGTH LIFECYCLE

The five stages of the OPEX Strength Lifecycle are clear delineations as to what is appropriate to program for a client in each stage.

The first stage in the strength lifecycle is the **Novice**, with the focus being on motor control. Clients graduate into an **Intermediate** stage as motor control is gained. From the Intermediate stage, once linear progression halts, clients progress to the **Advanced** stage. After showing coaches their clear mastery of the essential motor patterns and a highly developed central nervous system, clients then move into the **Master** stage. Finishing the lifecycle, clients may move from any of those stages into a **Grandmaster** stage to again focus on motor control and fighting against the side effects of aging. Learn how to apply the OPEX Strength Lifecycle to personalized program design in the [Coaching Certificate Program](#).



# STRENGTH LIFECYCLE

	Novice	Intermediate	Advanced	Master	Grand Master
Split / Session	Full Body	Upper / Lower	Isolated	Upper / Lower	Full Body
Sessions / Week	3	4	5	4	3
Contraction Type (s)	Motor Control (MC)	MC + Strength Endurance (SE)	Max Contractions MC + SE	MC + SE	MC
Goal	Move	Resist	Peak	Resist	Move
Metabolic Support	Cyclical	Cyclical + Gymnastics	Cyclical + Gymnastics + Weights	Cyclical + Gymnastics	Cyclical

## The Novice Stage

At the Novice stage clients are limited by motor control and need to develop efficiency in the movement patterns. You can do this through higher time under tension and higher volume repetitions and sets. Learn how to implement these program design strategies in the [Coaching Certificate Program](#).

## The Intermediate Stage

At the Intermediate stage, clients have gained an understanding of the essential movement patterns. They can perform movements well and have earned the right to lift heavier loads at faster tempos. The focus in this stage is now strength endurance, with the limitation of overcoming external loads. Linear progression sequences work well for intermediates.

## The Advanced Stage

In the Advanced stage, clients have perfected the movement patterns. You can now focus on maximal contractions, as well as strength endurance and motor control activities. These varying types of strength will be rotated and applied as needed based around which area the client shows the greatest response until progression stalls.

## The Master Stage

This brings us to the Master stage. During this stage progression in all varying types of strength has plateaued as they pass their peak of physical potential. At this point they have a highly developed central nervous system and are no longer increasing maximal contractions, but are focused on maintaining strength with strength endurance and motor control activities. Program design at this stage is similar to the Intermediate stage.

## The Grandmaster Stage

At the Grandmaster stage, clients are fighting the side effects of aging. This means a loss of motor units and bone density, along with a host of other potential issues that strength training can help resist. For this stage, training will look similar to the Novice stage, with a focus on motor control and maintaining as much strength as possible into the later years.

## PROGRESSING STRENGTH: THE SQUAT

With a fundamental understanding of the OPEX Strength Lifecycle, you can now apply its principles to specific movements, including the Squat.

### What is the Squat?

The squat pattern involves flexing at the knee and hip together, lowering the center of mass. It works the hamstrings, quadriceps, glutes, spinal erectors, and the core.



There are multiple variations of barbell squats, including the high bar back squat, the low bar back squat, the front squat, and the overhead squat. The squat pattern can also be training with dumbbells, kettlebells, cables, machines, bodyweight, and odd objects.

### Why Program a Squat?

The squat is programmed to build strength in one of the functional movement patterns. This movement is performed during daily activities such as sitting on the toilet, sitting on a chair, and to pick up low objects.

### What Type of Squat is Best?

As stated previously, there are numerous variations of the squat. The best squatting exercise depends on a number of factors, including the lifecycle stage of the client and the desired training dose-response. Below are examples of squat program design at each stage of the OPEX Strength Lifecycle.

**Novice (Motor Control)**

Goblet Squat, @3131, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 seconds

**Intermediate (Strength Endurance)**

Front Squat, @30X0, 6-8 reps x 3-4 sets; rest 2 minutes

**Advanced (Maximal Contraction)**

Back Squat, @20X1, 2-2-2-1-1-1; rest 5 min

**Master (Strength Endurance)**

Back Squat, @30X0, 10-8-6-4; rest 2 minutes

**Grandmaster (Motor Control)**

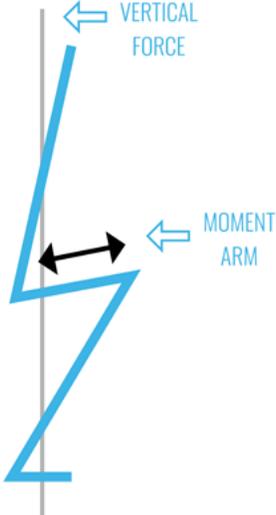
Cable Cyclist Squat, @3131, 10 reps x 3 sets; rest 90 seconds

If the goal is to move as much weight as possible, then the back squat is likely the best variation for clients who are ready to express strength endurance and maximal contractions.

When choosing between the low bar back squat and the high bar back squat, anthropometrics and function will dictate the best option. Studies have shown that when it comes to strength building, quadricep and hamstring activity in both types of squat are remarkably similar.

For clients who struggle with hip flexion and extension due to sedentary jobs, the low bar squat will reinforce and strengthen the bend pattern, building a stronger posterior chain and hip extension. Hip extension, incidentally, is the center of athletic power and expression. For those looking to excel in the sport of weightlifting, the high bar squat is more appropriate, as weightlifters wish to overload that position and get stronger with an upright torso pattern.

## HIGH BAR BACK SQUAT



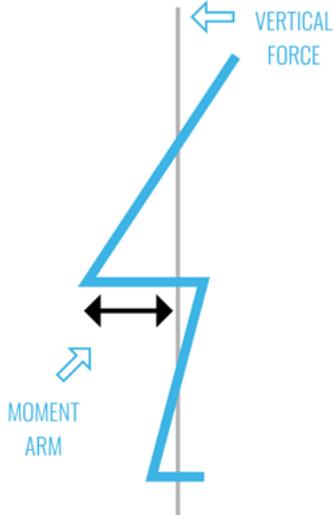
The diagram illustrates the high bar back squat. A vertical line represents the line of vertical force. A blue line represents the torso, which is relatively upright. A horizontal double-headed arrow labeled 'MOMENT ARM' is positioned in front of the vertical line, indicating the distance between the vertical force and the hip joint.

Consider the client and anthropometrics

The moment arm is predominantly in front of the line of vertical force

Preferred for olympic weightlifters due to vertical torso

## LOW BAR BACK SQUAT



The diagram illustrates the low bar back squat. A vertical line represents the line of vertical force. A blue line represents the torso, which is significantly bent forward. A horizontal double-headed arrow labeled 'MOMENT ARM' is positioned behind the vertical line, indicating the distance between the vertical force and the hip joint.

Consider the client and anthropometrics

The moment arm is behind of the line of vertical force

Preferred for clients that need to reinforce the bend

# ADDRESSING WEAKNESSES WITH ACCESSORY MOVEMENTS

## 14 ESSENTIAL ACCESSORY MOVEMENTS TO GET YOUR CLIENTS AS STRONG AS POSSIBLE

There will be times where a client's progress within the OPEX Strength Lifecycle is halted. Typically, this occurs because of limitations in either movement efficiency or in strength. Smarter accessory programming can help overcome these limitations.

There are two types of accessory movements:

- ➡ Movements to **improve motor control**
- ➡ Movements to **strengthen weak muscle groups**

Movements that are intended to improve motor control are prescribed to ensure our clients remain safe while training and develop efficiency in functional movement patterns.

Movements that are intended to strengthen weak muscle groups are prescribed to increase a client's efficiency in the patterns that they already understand.

## ACCESSORY MOVEMENTS FOR WEAK MUSCLE GROUPS

Below are 14 of the best accessory movements to strengthen weak muscle groups. Once you've identified the weak muscle group, you can use these accessory movements to progress your clients to the strongest version of themselves.

### Feet And Ankles

- Single-Leg Jump

### Core

- Back Rack Hold
- V-Up

### Adductors

- Side-Lying Adductor Leg Raise

### Mid-back

- Snatch Grip Deadlift
- Pendlay Row

### Hamstrings

- Romanian Deadlift
- Good Morning

### Shoulders

- Shoulder Press
- Upright Row

### Glutes

- Rack Pull
- Hip Thrusts

### Triceps

- Close Grip Bench
- JM Press

## A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO FITNESS COACHING

This guide highlighted fundamental principles of building strength, an essential part of designing results-driven fitness programs.

Principles like the **OPEX Strength Lifecycle** remove the guesswork from program design by showing you the best methods for matching workouts to training age. However, assessment data, goals, capacity, lifestyle, and nutrition also need to be considered when developing fitness for life.

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 long-term programs with confidence and become the most comprehensive fitness coach you can be? Click the button below to learn more about CCP today.



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