



16-WEEK STRENGTH CYCLE

4 days / week · Squat · Bench · Deadlift · Advanced

Overview

A sixteen-week strength block that moves from higher-rep foundation work into heavy, low-rep training and a short peak. The squat, bench, and deadlift each get a dedicated day, with a fourth day for pressing and structural accessory work.

16

Weeks, in 4 blocks

4×

Sessions per week

3–6

Main-lift reps

1RM

Retest at week 16

How to run it

- Anchor each main lift to a working top set at the target RPE, then use back-off sets at a reduced load.
- **RPE** guides load: RPE 8 leaves about 2 reps in reserve, RPE 9 about 1. Let bar speed and reserve set the weight, not the ego.
- Warm up thoroughly on the main lift, 4–5 ramping sets, before your working sets.
- Rest as long as you need on the main lifts, 3–5 minutes. Accessories stay around 90 seconds.

The Weekly Split

One main lift leads each day. Loads and schemes shift block to block, see the progression table that follows.

DAY 1 SQUAT · Lower / squat focus

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	REST
Back Squat — top set	1 × 3–5 @ RPE 8	4–5 min
Back Squat — back-offs	3 × 5	3 min
Romanian Deadlift	3 × 6–8	2–3 min
Bulgarian Split Squat	3 × 8–10 / leg	90 sec
Seated Leg Curl	3 × 10–12	90 sec
Weighted Plank	3 × 30–45 sec	60 sec



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DAY 2 BENCH · Upper / bench focus

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	REST
Bench Press — top set	1 × 3–5 @ RPE 8	4 min
Bench Press — back-offs	4 × 5	3 min
Close-Grip Bench or Dip	3 × 6–8	2 min
Chest-Supported Row	4 × 8–10	2 min
Lateral Raise	3 × 12–15	60 sec
Triceps Extension	3 × 10–12	60 sec

DAY 3 DEADLIFT · Lower / pull focus

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	REST
Deadlift — top set	1 × 3–5 @ RPE 8	4–5 min
Deadlift — back-offs	2 × 4	3–4 min
Front Squat or Pause Squat	3 × 5	3 min
Weighted Pull-Up	4 × 6–8	2 min
Barbell Row	3 × 8–10	2 min
Hanging Leg Raise	3 × 10–12	60 sec



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DAY 4 PRESS · Overhead + structure

EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	REST
Overhead Press — top set	1 × 5 @ RPE 8	3 min
Overhead Press — back-offs	3 × 6	2 min
Incline Dumbbell Press	3 × 8–10	2 min
Seated Cable Row	4 × 10–12	90 sec
Face Pull	3 × 15	60 sec
Curl / Skullcrusher (superset)	3 × 10–12	60 sec

— Block Progression

Four blocks move you from work capacity to peak strength. Volume falls as intensity climbs.

Block	Weeks	Focus	Main-Lift Scheme	Effort
Foundation	1–4	Rebuild work capacity	Top set + 4×5 back-offs	RPE 7 → 8
Strength	5–10	Heavier top sets, add load	Top 1×4 + back-offs	RPE 8 → 8.5
Peaking	11–14	Reduce volume, sharpen	Top 1×2–3, fewer back-offs	RPE 8.5 → 9
Taper / Test	15–16	Deload, then retest	Openers → new top set	RPE 6 → test

— Progression Rules

- Add load to the top set only when you hit it at or below the target RPE. If it grinds, hold the weight another week.
- In the Peaking block, cut back-off volume as top-set intensity climbs. You cannot do maximum volume and maximum intensity at once.
- Week 15 is a true deload: light, fast, submaximal. Week 16 is your retest, treat it like a mini meet.
- If a main lift stalls two weeks running, drop to 90% and rebuild with an extra back-off set.

Bar speed is feedback. On strength work, a rep that slows dramatically is near your true limit. Keep most working reps crisp, and save the true grinders for the peak and test weeks.



TRAINING PROTOCOL

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