



The Prep

B U I L D Y O U R T O T A L



The Prep
BUILD YOUR TOTAL

Whether your goal is bodybuilding, powerlifting or general strength training, there are lots of free online training programs you can choose from these days. Certainly, some of them are well composed, but let's be honest, many of them are not. It would be great if everyone was able to afford a qualified coach who can provide his/her trainees with an individualized program. Reality is different though. That's why we, Thomas and Simon, have created "The Prep".

"The Prep" is a 16-week training program that is based on scientific principles as well as on our own experience as coaches. Since it is primarily suited for powerlifters who want to prepare for their upcoming competition the main purpose of the program is to increase the lifters performance in the squat, bench and deadlift. But even if you're not interested in competing in powerlifting and you're a guy or girl who wants to become strong, this program is designed particularly for you. Because we built in a few options to modify the program. You can slightly tinker it to better fit your needs. No, it certainly doesn't replace a good coach. But at least it leaves you some freedom to create your own program.

Before we kick off, please note that this program was created for intermediate lifters. That means you should have about a year or two of *solid* lifting experience under your belt and be familiar with the three powerlifts.

In the following sections we will guide you through the program and show you step by step how to start and follow it correctly. So please take your time and read through those pages carefully.

Let's get going!

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General aspects of the program

The program consists of three training blocks. Each block builds upon the next one, ensuring a step by step progression to your new 1RM. There are also two options you can choose from: a four-day or a five-day-per-week training cycle.

Weekly structure

If you choose the 4 day-per-week program, we suggest a weekly “Training/Rest/Training/Rest/Training/Training/Rest” structure. This scheme makes sure you have an optimal balance between training and recovery. In practice this could mean training on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday or on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday – choose whatever best fits your personal schedule.

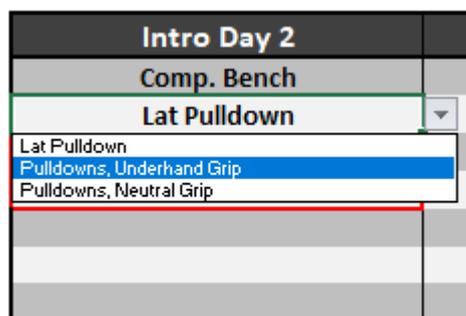
The scheme for the 5 day-per-week program could look like this: “Training/Training/Training/Rest/Training/Training/Rest”. In practice, this could mean training on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday or on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday.

Note: we planned the training days based on a weekly setup (described above) in mind. If you can't or don't want to follow it as outlined here, you might have to slightly change the program to make it fit your own weekly setup.

Exercise selection

In each training block you can choose between different exercises from each exercise category. Which one you choose should be **based on your individual weaknesses, the available equipment in your gym as well as your own preferences.**

Please, select the following exercises in week 1 of each block. They are marked by a red frame and can be selected via a drop-down-menu. The screenshot below gives you an example for block 1, week 1, day 1 when choosing your Lat Pulldown variation. The selected exercise will then be transferred automatically to the rest of the training block.



If you're not sure which exercises to pick, we suggest sticking to the first exercise that appears on the drop-down-menu. These are the exercises we would generally suggest for a well-rounded training program.

What about changing exercises? Should you stick to the ones chosen for the entire 15 weeks? Well, you don't have to. Still, at least when it comes to the main movements and their close variations (think pause squats, deficit deadlifts etc.), you're better off sticking to the same exercises over the course of all three training blocks. Accessory work (think rows, pulldowns etc.) on the other hand can be cycled through more frequently and if you'd like, you can change those at the beginning of each training block.

RPE and load ranges

Based on the 1RM's you type in at the beginning of block 1 your training loads for each day will be calculated automatically. As you'll see, the loads will always come with a range of +- 10lbs (+-5kg) as well as an RPE (red circles), in order to account for daily fluctuations in your performance. For example, the program might call for 3 sets of 8 on the competition squat with a load of 134-154lbs at RPE 6.

Intro Day 2	Sets	Reps	Weight	RPE	Equipment	Weight used	Actual RPE
Comp. Bench	3	8	134 - 154	6	Wrist Wraps		
Pulldowns, Neutral Grip	3	8	-	6-7			
Pressing Movement	2	8	-	6-7			
Reverse Pec Dec	2	10	-	6-7			
			-				
			-				

As long as you stick to the planned RPE, you can go with the lower or the upper end of the given load range – depending on what's possible on that particular day. In our experience though, on most days you'll probably choose a weight that's right in the middle of the range, while the lower and upper end will only come into play if you have either a pretty bad or a pretty good day.

Please keep in mind that the load ranges given are nothing more but guidelines. For some of you the calculated weights might either be too high or too low, in which case you should stick to the RPE at hand and adjust the weight accordingly. Write down the weight you used "Weight used" and the "Actual RPE" you hit, for every day and exercise (blue circles).

When it comes to assistance exercises we only provide you with RPE, but no load ranges, since it's impossible for us to know how much weight is appropriate for you on those movements. So just start light and work up slowly. After 1 or 2 sessions you'll get a pretty good feel for what loads you can handle here.

Note: in block 2 you'll perform frequent singles during training. The purpose of those is to expose you to fairly heavy loads, not to max out each time you come to the gym. Thus, it's very important that you stick to the RPE on the singles just as you do with every other working set.



How to run the program

Step 1: choose your unit and enter your 1RM

Begin by choosing the unit you want to use for the duration of the program (lbs or kg) (red arrow). Then enter your current 1RM's of your competition squat, bench and deadlift, as shown here (yellow circle):

1RM CALCULATOR		
Reps	Weight	e1RM
4	225	255

Unit: LBS →

KG
LBS

SQUAT		e1RM's	BENCH		e1RM's	DEADLIFT		e1RM's
Comp. Squat		405	Comp. Bench		255	Comp. Deadlift		495
2ct. Comp. Squat		365	3ct. Comp. Bench		236	Deficit Comp. Deadlift		460
401 Comp. Squat		344	Spot Bench		230	1ct. Comp. Deadlift		421
Highbar Squat		344	Closegrip Bench		230	RDL / Snatchgrip Deadlift		-

If you don't know your current 1RM's, you can use our calculator to estimate a 1RM (green circle). Please make sure though to not use a set that was performed with more than ~6 reps or so, as the calculation gets more and more inaccurate the higher the reps. Your best bet would be to go with a 2-5RM set.

After you've put the 1RM's into the chart, the 1RM values for the variations of the competition movements will be automatically calculated for you, based on our estimations. If you actually do know your true 1RM numbers for those lifts as well, you can enter them manually and ignore our estimations (in that case don't worry about the formula in the cell – just go ahead and overwrite it).

Step 2: choose your assistance exercises

As mentioned before, choose your assistance exercises via the dropdown menu in the red framed cells.

Step 3: the use of top sets

In week 4 of block 1 and 2 there's a top set planned for the competition movements. They serve two purposes: first, they reflect your progress up to that point and secondly, the

W4 Day 5	Sets	Reps	Weight	e1RM	RPE	Equipment	Weight used	Actual RPE
Comp. Bench	1	5	203 - 223	265	9	Wrist Wraps	223	8,5
Comp. Bench	3	5	90-95% of your top set		8-9	Wrist Wraps		
Closegrip Bench	2	8	158 - 178		8	Wrist Wraps		
Pressing Movement	2	10-12	-		8-9			
Rowing Movement	3	8-10	-		9			
Rear Delts	3	10-12	-		8-9			

numbers you hit on that top set will be used to calculate an estimated 1RM (e1RM). That e1RM will then be used to calculate your training weights for the next block. This means that the increase in training numbers will be based on your rate of progress – the stronger you get in each block, the higher the training loads will be in the following block.

That's also why it's important to make sure that you enter the weight you handled and the actual RPE you hit for your top set in the column "Weight used" and "actual RPE". Only then an e1RM can be calculated, which will be transferred over to the next block automatically and be used as a value that all other numbers will be derived of.

In summary, you don't have to do anything besides entering the weight you handled and the actual RPE you hit for your top set. Everything else will be done for you.

Note: if you happen to have a bad day in the gym at the day of your top set and thus your performance on that particular day does not reflect your progression of the whole block, then put in the same 1RM in block 2 as you used in block 1 manually. Or, if your training went really well in the first block, maybe add 10-20lbs to your lifts for the second block.

Q & A

"What do the abbreviations mean?"

Throughout the program you will see some abbreviations such as:

e1RM: estimated one rep max

RPE: Rate of perceived exertion (for an explanation of RPE, please refer to [this article](#))

1ct./2ct./3ct.: one count/two count/three count

BB/DB: Barbell/Dumbbell

RDL: Romanian Deadlift

SLDL: Stiffleg Deadlift

"Why is the first week of block 1 so light?"

The first week of block 1 is an intro week. This week serves as an introduction into the program so you can slowly get used to the training (volume, intensity, exercise selection etc.) and prepare yourself for the upcoming exposure.

"The weight ranges are too broad, what should I do?"

If the range of +- 10lbs is too broad, you can decrease the range to +- 5lbs if you like (this holds true especially for athlete's who aren't moving big weights yet).

“I’m not a competitive athlete. Is it possible to use the program anyway?”

Absolutely! The only difference is, that you are going to test your 1RM at the end of the program in training and not in a “real” competition.

Another possibility is to repeat block 1 and 2 and cut out the peaking phase (block 3), if it’s not your goal to specifically test your 1RM.

“Is it correct to only use a lifting belt for High Bar Squats in block 1? What about Knee Sleeves?”

In block 1 we decided to cut out thicker Knee Sleeves (like SBDs) on purpose. Thinner Knee Sleeves which simply keep your knees warm are okay to use. Thicker Knee Sleeves for High Bar Squats are supposed to be used in block 2.

“Can I do Frontsquats instead of Highbar Squats?”

It’s fine to substitute exercises in general, as long as the change is reasonable and the intention of the program stays the same.

For example you could swap Highbar Squats and do Front Squats or Safety Bar Squats instead. However, cutting out Squats and doing leg extensions instead wouldn’t be a great idea.

But if there’s no meaningful reason to change exercises, just stick to the program.

„How long am I supposed to rest before my competition/1RM Test?”

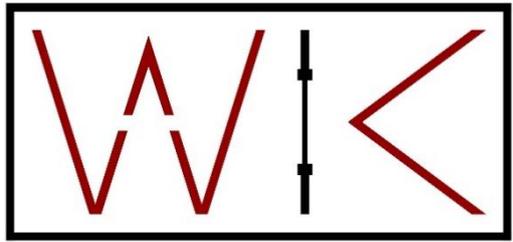
Make sure to rest for 2 days before your competition or 1RM Test. For example, if you’re competing on Saturday your last 2 workouts should be on Monday and Wednesday. If you compete on Sunday, it’ll be Tuesday and Thursday.

“In the first block I used true 1RMs for the variations of the main lifts and didn’t use your estimated values. Am I supposed to increase the 1RMs for these variations in block 2 and 3?”

If you were able to increase your 1RM on the top sets of the main lift (e.g. Comp. Squat), you could increase the your previous 1RM for the variation work (e.g. Highbar Squat or 2ct. Squat) as well. We suggest an increase somewhere around 5 to 10lbs.

“Is there anything else to watch out for?”

Yes! Please do not overwrite cells in the Excel sheets which contain any formula. The only exceptions are the cells where you can insert your 1RMs of the variations of the main lifts (if you don't use our estimated values and know your 1RMs on these movements) as well as your 1RM numbers for your competition lifts in block 2 and 3, if the top sets didn't go as planned.



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