



mind muscle academy

A NEW PHILOSOPHY OF INTEGRATED TRAINING

By: Justin Woltering

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About the Author



Justin Woltering is a top fitness expert, author, and speaker who coaches celebrities, athletes and CEOs to improve their performance and physique. He is also the author of the best-selling fitness book *Bigger Better Faster*, Founder of Mind Muscle Academy, Film Producer, and Fitness Cover Model.

In addition to being one of America's top fitness experts and coaches – he's also a speaker on Integrated training as a path to calmness, mental strength, creativity, and success. This passion for east meets west storytelling inspires and brings out the best in everyone from start-ups to Fortune 500 companies. A passionate leader, Justin is committed to educating people to master their body and find clarity in their thinking and ideas – sparking an intuitive change both mentally and physically.

Four Universal Laws of the Mind Muscle Academy

1. **Expand Breathing**
2. **Increase Awareness**
3. **Train Mental Strength**
4. **Extend Energy**

1. Expand Breathing

When properly performing these breathing techniques the ripples of the mind slow down, and increase the distance between them; until mind and body have become one, a clear reflection of the universe. This is the magic space where the ego dissolves, true self is revealed, and the subconscious mind can optimally reprogram. So by simply focusing on the center of your body, you are helping to optimize your brain. This has often been referred to as trusting your heart, or in western science has been referred to as the second brain, as there are nearly as many neurons in the “core” as there are in the brain!

USE THE SEIZA POSITION: To set the Seiza Position, use the space of two fists between the knees, letting the big toes slightly overlap, keep palms comfortably placed on thighs to feel a nice stretch in the quadriceps. Then, as if a string is pulling on the top of the head, feel each vertebrae become more erect until they align in spinal extension, with the chin back and slightly down in a neutral position, as to form a straight line from the top of your head to your tailbone.

This is the go to position for meditation, grounding, breathing, and channeling the limitless power the Universe has to offer. The universe condensed is the physical being, and further condensed becomes the one point in the core that is source of all movement and energy in the body. This well of willpower and strength is always available if we have the focus and discipline to reprogram new more efficient behaviors that sharpen the mind and sculpt the body.

BREATHING ROUTINE: To begin, slowly breathe in through the nose, allowing the lowest part of the lungs to expand first, all while keeping a relaxed but strong posture so the chest does not heave up and down. Once the lungs are filled to maximum capacity, pause, focus on your one point and exhale through your mouth as far out to the universe as possible. All nervous energy stored around the neck and head will melt away, sending energy down to your core, refilling the well- so you are balanced, calm,

and complete. Mastery of breathing is the foundation of all disciplines in the Mind Muscle Academy.

As for cadence, start out with box breathing, using a 3 second inhale, 3 second hold, 3 second exhale, 3 second hold, then progress to 5 and 10 second rhythm of controlled breathing. Once the above cadence can be completed regularly for 20 minutes straight, use unorthodox breathing patterns in a freestyle with varied periods of inhales, exhales and holding. Note: Remaining calm without air is a huge mental challenge at first, but once overcome will help increase focus and intuition.

Not to mention the health benefits and detoxification properties of slow deep breathing. This is the elixir to purify the whole person, not only does it radiate true health and wellness, and boost the immune system, it also helps reduce small issues like headaches. Entering into this meditative state it's not uncommon feel an increase in body temperature, and perspiration while toxins are flushed from the body. It's encouraged that all members of the Mind Muscle Academy perform first thing in the morning for at least 10 minutes as a primer for a positive approach to each day. Then again before bed to remove any barnacles of negativity that have stuck to you through the day as well as promoting relaxation and restful sleep.

Along the same lines, being able to sit still, introspect, and be at peace with yourself is a lost skill in today's society. You become a reflection of the universe upon itself, and this level of relaxation is the center of our approach to action, the discerning calm before the storm- the eye of the hurricane; where the greatest action is rooted in calmness.

This living calmness will lay the foundation for all of the mental, physical, and spiritual goals achieved at the Mind Muscle Academy. Be sure to practice deep breathing through the nose into the diaphragm, and work so that this becomes a natural part of your breathing pattern throughout the day. This will allow you become more aware of stress triggers so you can best respond. This new arousal control will help in business negotiation, conflict, and every small day to day interaction.

The energy body has been tracked in detail by eastern culture, yet is still underutilized and not able to be quantified by western machines and medicine. Even with mind of Einstein, Hawkings, and all the great scientists in the world, there is still an unknown. The theory of everything is not complete, thus science fails to explain many phenomena in the still very mysterious world we live in today. For example, we don't even know where the matter that makes up our bodies exists. There are theories, probability waves, and other metaphysical science that attempts to explain where the electrons on these atoms

To tap into the power of the Universe we must practice the art of silence. Being still, breathing, and knowing who we are, accepting our current situation- this is the catalyst of change. After no one else can do it for us! We are fighting an endless battle with our own ego to access the mind's eye. However, the good news is once you acknowledge when the ego is in control you have taken the first step. We are able to create space between our emotions and action, and stop before we act. It is this perspective shift, that creates alignment to our goals and allows you to use the power of your mantra.

To best create your mantra, find a saying that resonates deep within you, yet is still very easy to say. I remember reading Frank Zane's autobiography and he mentioned at one point when he was at a low, he had an epiphany that he still had to say his mantra another million or so times. He had been doing this for nearly 20 years and assumed he has mastered it, only to realize the road to mastery is never-ending. For clients and special operators I have heard a lot of different mantras over the years, however they all have one thing in common, they are short and easy to repeat. For some of my guys it could be, "Ranger Up", or a couple funny sentences that rhyme, for me, it's a simple, "Thank You".

2. Increase Awareness | Concentration | Focus

Awareness is an advanced skill that allows you to focus on a specific task, while still being aware of what's going on inside you, and simultaneously knowing what going on in the outside environment. Increased awareness through self-mastery requires a life-long commitment to training. Strive to improve in training all of these aspects to truly live the way of the warrior.

This places spiritual training at the same priority as physical training. Teaching the ability to look within yourself, to increase perception of the world around you. An example I like to use with my clients is driving, have you ever found yourself stressed, late for work, stuck in traffic. Clinching the wheel tightly, staring at the bumper of the car right in front of you? This is all perception, for when you are calm and holding the wheel with a relaxed grip you are able to look at the furthest point of the road, and improve reaction time, even if someone was to stop short or run out in front of you. This is a small daily example of how increased awareness can improve your chance of survival dramatically in a dangerous or life threatening situation.

Elements of Awareness

PHYSICAL: Physical awareness consists of muscular strength, work capacity, mobility, endurance, and building a resilient machine, that works functionally with full range of motion. Proper mind muscle connection will maximize intensity, contractions, and recovery all while building a symmetrical physique. Recovery is promoted through flexibility, nutritional intake and sleep, all are necessary. The physical training program will boost confidence and train the subconscious mind to create the ability to instinctively perform a movement without even thinking about it, this is called unconscious competence.

MENTAL: The mental training of the Mind Muscle Academy creates a warrior mindset around the same principles- to rewire the subconscious mind. Using calm, positive thinking to increase concentration, toughness, and mental discipline. Producing the most efficient, raw, and creative work possible in order to guarantee personal and professional success.

SPIRIT: Inspiration = IN SPIRIT. This is when mind, body, will power, and passion align. A balanced and integrated consciousness that protects all things. reference Ki Sayings for inspiration.

MASTERY: Through unification of mind body and spirit one has achieved the ultimate lifelong pursuit of mastery. Spending the majority of time on a plateau before breaking into higher levels of consciousness and spirituality. It's also easy to see why mastery is important in a creative, demanding workplace. Assuming relatively consistent pay, any task can get old after a while. Computer programming, financial analysis, consulting, etc. – it can all become stale *if you never improve*. But if you're constantly getting better, constantly adding more to your bag of tricks, you've got a never-ending source of fulfillment!

The same is true for weight training, martial arts, and fitness. If you think about your routine over the course of several days, several weeks, a few months, or even a year, it might seem like you're just constantly doing the same things. You train your body parts and lifts on a set schedule, you hit the gym at consistent times, and you eat more or less the same 5-6 meals one day after the next. But if you're constantly trying to master every aspect of your lifting and eating, even a seemingly boring routine can take on new life! You should strive to make every rep, every set, every cardio session, and every meal as effective as possible for the goals at hand. Little tweaks might seem insignificant to an outside observer, but *you* will be satisfied knowing that you're always bringing yourself just a little closer to your goals. Since all you have to work with is the body you were with, bodybuilding, fitness, martial arts and the Mind Muscle Academy are all about self-mastery!

EMOTION: Understanding who you are deep down, and accepting your true feelings both positive and negative. This awareness allows negative emotional experiences to be a catalyst for change, forging stronger character to quicker bounce back from a setback or loss.

INTUITION: Awareness of your mind, gut, or 'second brain'- never is this more important than situations that call on you to trust your instinct. This deeper connection creates empathy and compassion to best serve family, friends, and society.

CREATIVITY: Simply bringing your dreams into reality. Following intuition, bliss, and inspiration for guidance. Thoughts are as real as solid objects, and we must use our mind to paint a reality that innovatively and progressively serves others.

PASSION: What can you not do? When you look at the story of your life, what is that one thing you want to be remembered for? Are you doing what it takes to be the hero of your own story? These are the questions you must face if you want to follow your passion in life.

As time passes motivation will wax and wane, while purpose on the other hand, is what really pushes you to succeed long term. If you look at the people who are happiest in their chosen careers, you'll probably notice that they find a great deal of meaning and importance in the work they do, and that they see their jobs are far more than just a means to a financial end. What's more, we don't do these things *just* to reach a certain goal, we do them because they contribute positively to our lives as a whole, both physically and mentally. By pursuing excellence in bodybuilding and fitness, you can give yourself purpose *and* master the mental skills necessary to tackle your career, your relationships, and every other aspect of your life!

SERVITUDE: To place one's needs over your own, creating a powerful and unbreakable spirit. This will have a ripple effect to improve the community and make society a better place.

VISUALIZATION: Visualization is a powerful part of the creative process to create the desired outcomes we are looking for in business, love, and pretty much all aspects of life. After taking years of one on one acting classes I found it useful to appeal to other senses by visualizing the way something tastes, feels, and smells is a great way to paint a more vivid image. From this first person POV I will then reframe the narrative from a third person perspective.

2. Mental Strength Discipline

Discipline for the purposes of our training in the Mind Muscle Academy is mastery over self while being a disciple to something larger than yourself. A belief, that the true intention behind the action will be revealed, and that there is no resolve in hiding the shadow of the lies you tell yourself. If the intention is based on superfluous material desires or selfish motives it will likely not be strong enough to get you through the most grueling situations.

This is where mental strength training allows us to look deeper into our real selves and instantly access the well of willpower and There is no shortcut in this game- going into the shadows of the subconscious mind is no spectator sport, and you better be ready to face your demons, and fight to turn a negative into a positive.

As if this isn't complicated enough, it is hard to educate on these concepts with all of the overwhelming amount of misinformation out there today, the other problem with this never ending battle, is that in the western science thoughts are seen strictly as chemical releases and electrical firings. Sure, there is truth to this, however in the eastern spiritual traditions they believe that the mind exists outside of the brain, and there is truth to this as well. To integrate these contrasting ideas; I believe the mind exists outside of the body, connects to every inch of our body, and also serves as a beacon of insight and universal intelligence.

Key Principles of Mental Strength Training

PERSEVERANCE: This is a key principle I took away from martial arts training, in a society where everyone is looking for a quick fix and some get rich quick scheme, this is the tried and true character of a champion. A grinder who consistently pursues a course of action, regardless of difficulties and discouragement. This will help define your character when no one else is around, when you have to rely on your drive, passion, and purpose to find a way.

SIMPLICITY: Simplicity and minimalism can provide a fresh perspective on what is truly important in life. Too often unnecessary items can drain our energy and overcomplicate an already complicated life. This process will show you what is valued, and where these values are on the priority list, while removing commitments and people that are limiting true potential. Mental control over food and beverage intake, as well as decluttering of your personal spaces such as closets, desks, rooms, or garage are a great way to simply and make sure everything has a place.

STRESS: Mind Muscle breathing techniques and concentration are the best methods for dealing with stress and rejection. Early on in martial arts and later as a sponsored

athlete I learned how crucial mastery over breathing is to reduce stress improve health, progress spiritually.

There is also something called eu stress, which is good stress. This is the type of stress that will build muscle, burn fat, and force you to progress in mind and body. On the other hand, there is emotional resiliency which must be drawn upon to rapidly recover from loss or setbacks. This type of stress can do a number on your nervous system, so it is crucial to use these breathing techniques, rest, and recovery to maximize your output and overall work capacity.

KISS Planning: KISS planning is way of thinking that it not properly taught in today's education system. Complexity can cause uncertainty and paralysis when shit hits the fan. I learned this valuable business lesson first after years of not seeing the results I was looking for and committing to strength programs with simple muscle building programs likes 5/3/1, DC, FST, for a year at a time, seeing huge gains! It was more about concentration, planning, and intensity than variety. Sure the devil is in the details, but this progressive, fail forward fast approach allows you to attack your goals and make adjustments on the go. This is one of the most useful pieces of wisdom to help my high end business clients and special operators achieve their goals even in times of chaos.

I remember listening to a podcast from top strength coach Mike Boyle where he discussed the idea of, "master the box, before you think outside of the box." Find the simple most radically efficient way to get things done. Mastery of the basics will show 10x more value in the long run then constantly switching your plan and never making any real tangible progressions. Not to mention you will be working more efficiently than procrastinators, out-performing the perfectionists, and breaking down huge daunting tasks into micro goals to help make your creative vision into a reality.

RIGHT BRAIN VISUALIZATION: You might have your training and nutrition lined up perfectly, but is your mind in the right place? Even the strictest diets and most well-thought-out training programs are only tools, and you need to have the right mindset to apply them! Your short-term motivation will wax and wane from day to day – especially when you're leaning out – and only a true passion for bodybuilding will keep you going strong.

Sure, your logical "left brain" will help you determine *what* you need to do to reach your goals, especially once you've mastered the bodybuilding basics. But it's that not-so-rational, emotionally-driven side of yourself that will push you to actually apply what you know, day after day. In fact, it's your right brain that will help you stick to your diet, do

your cardio and endure one brutal training session after another when your body's *logical* survival signals are telling you to sit on the couch and pig out!

IMPACT OF POSITIVE THINKING ON FUTURE EVENTS: The highs are high and the lows are lower the old saying goes. But regardless of how hard or shitty things seem to be, it is crucial to reframe the situation by letting go of set-backs, excuses, and negativity. When shit hits the fan, a true master accepts responsibility for his shortcomings, makes a positive take away from his setback, and doesn't let the negativity control him. It is this positive character, that uses a good offense as the best defense, and refuses to let anyone dictate his actions.

Self- actualized learning: When it comes to feeling, thinking, sensing, knowing and acting, its challenging to put all the pieces to the puzzle. To make this happen, one would have to be what I like to call a "life-long learner." A life-long learner is one who makes meaning of their perspective through learning from both new and old experiences, striving every day to evolve to their true potential. I also included some of some of my favorite books, that have used to self-educate on my journey:

MIND MUSCLE ACADEMY BOOKCLUB:

Mastery by George Leonard

The Hero with A Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell

The Book of Five Rings by Miyamoto Musashi

Power of Myth by Joseph Cambell

Symmetry by Frank Zane

Awakening Your Life's Purpose by Eckhart Tolle

Unbeatable Mind by Mark Divine

Integral Theory by Ken Wilbur

Tao of Jeet Kune Do by Bruce Lee

4. Extend Energy

AUTHENTICITY: Authenticity: real, not copied, genuine. In a world of fear and manufactured smiles, authenticity is more and more rare. It is that intangible, magnetic effect that something or someone so real can have on you. It is being completely comfortable with you are in a sacred silence. Everyone wants to label and define

everything these days, and sure most everything can fit into some genre, however based on DNA we are all unique, and called upon to find the truest version of ourselves. This is the universal energy that exists in ALL of us, and when you are in tune with this place, this is where the magic happens! I believe deep down we all know this healing energy can never be created or destroyed. This is the source of willpower, and positivity. So draw on this bottomless well of prosperity, success, and happiness and give this back to those who need it, especially the ones you love.

To extend energy as efficient as possible, my favorite exercise is visualization while performing the Mind Muscle Breathing Techniques. Once you have relaxed and filled your lungs with air, and full concentration is infinitely on the center of your body, exhale visualizing the end of your road, then on the next breath the end of neighborhood, city, state, etc. until your mind is literally on another planet, then off to the far boundaries of the universe. It is in this moment that you living the bliss of being one with the Universe, you are the source and the source is you.

A darker meditation option that I find always works quite well is an old samurai technique of visualizing your own death. A gruesome brutal death of being thrown from cliff, murdered, mutilated, etc. This is hardcore, however it will force your mind to contemplate where your energy will go when you're gone, what your legacy will be- and ultimately reveal gratitude for all of your blessings. For a more practical daily option, when you walk into a room extend your energy to all four corners of the ceiling to place focus outside of yourself and welcome everyone into your space. This will allow you help others find the way of The Mind Muscle Academy and ultimately the universe.

Once this mastery has been obtained and the well is full, it is important to notice how many people's inspiration and health are drying up. It is our duty to help fill the well of these people and ignite a flow of positive inspiration, energy, and happiness into their lives. After training elite clients for over a decade, these techniques of extending energy can help someone the very same day after you apply or learn them.

Overall, extending energy is the most challenging and important element of the Mind Muscle Academy. This will turn you into an integrated warrior, where you lead by example and at times must follow to lead. This passion will help the *right* people because it is seeded in connecting with others, not selfish desires. So on this quest of mastery when improving breathing, awareness, and mental strength discipline, live on the razors edge of experience and give it all you got, and in return you will get everything you need.

12 Week Mind Muscle Academy TRAINER

Mind Muscle Academy Intro

If you're reading this, then you are the newest member of the Mind Muscle Academy—congratulations on joining the pack! You're going to have your workouts programmed and mapped out daily for the next 12 weeks. You are going to sculpt your physique, develop a warrior mindset, and become a tactical athlete!

The physical and mental training required places a wide variety of demands on any tactical athlete, however, there are a few principles that are universally present. In addition to the 4 Universal Laws of the Mind Muscle Academy, an effective training program must integrate the following to tackle a myriad of challenges.

Injury Prevention

Being pain free is priority number one! An injured warrior is a liability to his team, and himself, straight up. Use intuition and awareness to heal and recover as necessary.

Aerobic Conditioning

Aerobic conditioning is top priority; this level of conditioning is vital for the special operator to survive. Tactical athletes must go beyond the anaerobic system, and when - not if this time comes, aerobic conditioning will be crucial.

Strength and Power

Strength and power are also paramount for a combat athlete, if all skills are equal the stronger and more explosive person will win. In addition to the strength and power required to defeat an opponent, progression and mastery of the timeless, old school weight lifting basics, is the core of strength training in the Mind Muscle Academy.

Nutrition

Finally, you MUST make sure your nutrition is dialed in, and that you get plenty of rest and recovery. (Refer to fat loss nutrition Chapter 6 or Muscle Building Chapter 7

depending on your specific goals). You can train yourself into the ground, day in and day out, and it will all be for nothing without the right nutrition. Don't overlook sleep and stress management, either, as they are both critical to having as much energy and focus as possible once it comes time to workout. So, eat plenty of food, hit the sack, and get ready for your first workout tomorrow – things are about to get serious!

The Programs

Even with all the varying qualities a tactical athlete needs, having an effective program isn't enough! The program also needs to be an efficient one that doesn't present needlessly complicated daily demands. The Mind Muscle Academy is the most efficient path to look like a bodybuilder and perform a tactical athlete.

Overview

Mind Muscle Academy Training Program broken into phases:

Phase 1: Mind Muscle Connection

Phase 2: Power and Hypertrophy

Phase 3: Warrior Physique

Phase 4: Tactical Athlete

**Mobility: Essential Pre-hab
Thoracic Spine on Foam Roller**

Kneeling Hip Flexor Stretch

Scapula Push Up

Tigger Point Therapy

Preparing for PHASE 1: Mind Muscle Connection

“It is easier to coordinate mind and body when we are sitting or standing still than when in motion. But true unification means to maintain the coordination of mind and body even when we are moving.”

Koichi Tohei

Resistance Training

The Mind Muscle Academy was created using my experience as a top fitness cover model and martial artist to create an integral training system that increases awareness in every muscle fiber while allowing you to shape your body at will! This increase in mind muscle connection will allow you to feel muscle contractions like never before, breaking down poor movement patterns and leaving you with optimal biomechanics. Even though this program may only take one week to complete, it takes a lifetime to master.

As far as your schedule goes, you're going to spend the first week training FIVE days per week. We are going to focus on using slow tempo for the first week to prime the body, then progress over the coming weeks into explosive strength movements, high volume training, and functional warrior workouts to stimulate as many muscle fibers as possible. Each workout will be tougher than the last, continually improving your physique and mental strength. Don't try to add in superfluous crap on the off days! Trust the system and follow the program exactly, using the rest days to stretch and recover. You'll need it!

Now that we are integrating the 4 Universal Laws of the Mind Muscle Academy with resistance training, we are mastering the mind's calm focus to train the muscle through the full range of motion. Using breathing techniques to slow down breath and time while working the muscle through the *entire* range of motion. This controlled tempo helps train the subconscious mind, to improve neuro firing, until these movements are imprinted into your mind, creating a solid functional posture and injury free physique. The mental concentration of each training session will focus on the insertion and origin of each muscle, flexibility in various planes, mobility in tendons, and the balance between opposing muscle groups. The Mind Muscle Academy Phase 1 training technique aligns the physical and energy body to stimulate motor units in the muscle fibers and increases awareness while molding the body like clay.

Now that the foundation is laid, we are able to focus on one of the most important resistance training rules of the Mind Muscle Academy- make sure you're working through the entire range of motion to optimize muscle for growth. We are priming the muscles with these movements and tempos so we can delve into the limitless "intuitive world of bodybuilding", where you are deliberately controlling every action in your body and training. In each and every movement your energy is grounded, and if you feel any

inertia moving the workload, or a jerky, bouncy feeling, re-center yourself, let your ego go, and be honest to the full range of motion.

I actually perform this routine as a de-load between heavy training phases or for upto 4 weeks at time to improve symmetry, balance, and heal injuries. This program is the foundation to master the iron game, controlling every exercise for insane contractions! We are establishing pathways for the optimal movement pattern, eliminating imbalances so art and science can meet to build the ultimate warrior!

Mind, Body, and Spirit: Reversing the Social Norm of Isometric vs. Concentric

When you perform the Mind Muscle Connection initial training phase, know that the movements must be mastered with thousands of hours of work. This will reveal the insight in the simplicity of these exercises; you must grind away, to find the small hidden gems that lie beneath the surface. Much how art is training the eye to look at something longer than an average person, training is very much about focusing on the basics movement patterns longer, and understanding the efficiency of your nervous system, thus increasing efficiency and neuro firing. These exercises must be performed exactly as described in the exact order that they are given for maximum benefit. You must ACTIVE and EXECUTE each rep to perfection.

How to Activate and Execute

Begin this reversal in your thinking pattern, by first always feeling the antagonist or opposing muscle you are about to work. Feel the opposing muscles squeeze harder and harder as you continue to stretch the muscles you are about to work. For some isometric insight, pause while you are contracting the muscle to feel the fibers stretching and contracting as they 'wake up' to perform in the optimal range of motion.

Now from this place of concentration, as slowly as possible begin to squeeze the working muscle, creating tension and blood flow to that area. There is still no movement of the weight- remain stoic with just a conscious activation of the agonists muscle, while the muscle is stretched in the fully lengthened position.

With a steady and continuous squeeze, get the maximal contraction through the entire range of motion. Do not rest at the top of the movement, pause only at the stretch at the fully lengthen position of the muscle. There is no reason to work with much more than half of your max of your major lifts, and if you are using this as a de-loading phase or off week stick to about 60% of your usual working weight/intensity.

No matter how bad you want to throw some major weight around, take time to let your ego go and trust this system. This new stimulus will completely change the shape and balance of the muscles, and there have been periods in my career where I have trained like this for months at a time, and didn't lose any muscle! In fact, I even gained a bit. So use science, instinct, and spirituality to guide you, not the rhythm of the previous thought patterns and training programs that left you imbalanced, in pain, and for many you... weak and injured.

EXAMPLE BENCH PRESS:

As you lay back and grip the bar, start with feeling your pinky and ring finger flex as your wrap them around the knurling (line on the bar) and make sure your entire hand is squeezing as hard as possible. Next arch your back as high as possible. Begin from your toes as feel them stretch apart to activate the calves, then work your way up your posterior chain feeling your hamstrings, glutes, hips, low back tighten up. Now, with your feet firmly planted activate the opposing muscles of the chest, the latissimus dorsi, lower trapezius, rhomboids, rear deltoids, etc. and feel your shoulders blades pinch together. As you slowly lower the bar to your chest pause, and feel the chest pectorals stretch. From here, consciously activate your pecs and start to squeeze, contracting the muscle harder and harder. DO NOT lock out and stop at the top of the movement- keep constant tension, and focus on the controlled negative portion of the repetition, then pause, and repeat.

EXAMPLE PULL UPS:

Grip the bar as firmly as possible consciously starting with the pinky and squeeze each finger as hard as possible. Next you start from the full lengthed position of the lats, the full stretch at the bottom of the pull with elbows locked out, flexing your delts and triceps. Consciously activate your entire posterior chain starting with your calves, hamstrings and glutes, and DO NOT cross your feet so the kinetic chain stays in alignment. Next, start to consciously contract the lowest part of the lats, and really start to squeeze hard, as you visualize pulling the bar apart horizontally to increase activation. Keep contracting harder and harder until you have reached maximum contraction with your chin above the bar. Then slowly lower yourself into the negative focusing on your rhomboids, rear delts, and lower traps as let scapula slowly open up. This will help bring tremendous detail and overall development to your back to get that complete cover model look.

The Art of Symmetry and Proportion

Symmetry

1. The correspondence in size, form, and arrangement of parts on opposite sides of a plane, line, or point; regularity of form or arrangement in terms of like, reciprocal, or corresponding parts.
2. The proper or due proportion of the parts of a body or whole to one another with regard to size and form; excellence of proportion.

Proportion

1. Comparative relation between things or magnitudes as to size, quantity, number, etc.; ratio.
2. Proper relation between things or parts.

Types of Symmetry

Bi-Lateral Symmetry: Symmetrical arrangement of an organism or part of an organism along a central axis, so that the left is a mirror image of the right side, as in the human body. A lot of facial beauty is said to be based on symmetry as well.

Bodybuilding Symmetry: Balance and perfection of the human body as art. This is a slang term referring to bi-lateral symmetry but also referred to overall balance, proportion, and beauty.

Radial Symmetry: Divided into similar halves by passing a plane at any angle along a central axis, characteristic of a starfish, or circle.

Perfect Symmetry: When something looks exactly the same from every angle, think of a sphere.

Science and Symmetry: On a micro level there is symmetry present in molecules. Amino acids and DNA contain a natural symmetry. In plants there is a natural ability to regenerate to help restore symmetry.

Mirror Symmetry: In algebraic geometry and theoretical physics, mirror symmetry is a relationship between geometric objects called Calabi- Yau manifolds. The term refers to a situation where two Calabi - Yau manifolds look very different geometrically but are nevertheless equivalent when employed as extra dimensions of string theory.

In our day to day lives this is when our internal perception matches our external environment. Our thoughts are as tangible as solid objects, and it's our mind that reflects our perception- perception creates our reality.

Bi-aural Beat Frequencies: Bi-naural beats, or binaural tones, are auditory processing artifacts, or apparent sounds, caused by specific physical stimuli.

These bilateral beat frequencies help to develop symmetry between the two hemispheres of the brain, using various waves to stimulate the brain and produce optimal brain waves for meditation, relaxation, and creativity.

Time Symmetry: I remember my sensei saying, it's not hot or cold in here is just 65 degrees. This simple saying stuck with me, it is the philosophy that no moment is greater than the next. Sure there are highs and lows and life, but often times its jut a matter of perception. In way of fitness, as one ages, it allows you to find alignment between your past and future self. Life is the dance, and you are the dancer, allowing the energy to travel through you.

Super Symmetry: "A theory of particle physics, is a proposed type of space/time symmetry that relates two basic classes of elementary particles." Essentially, it is saying that there is a perfect match for everything somewhere out there in the universe. Since we don't know where the electrons travel, or if there are parallels universes, it is possible that everything thing and everyone exists in another space and time. There is only indirect evidence of this, however I think it is interesting how we look ourselves in others- where does the he ideal vision of yourself come from.

Know Opposing Muscle Groups

- Quads/ Hamstrings
- Chest/ Back
- Bicep/ Triceps
- Deltoid/ Lats
- Calves/ Tibialis Anterior

Nutrition

Be lean - already!

For the first 4 weeks our goal is to BUILD muscle, before we dial in for the remaining 8 weeks and get shredded to the bone! As you surely know, unless you are a genetic god, you're likely to add a little bit of fat when building muscle. So don't be discouraged if you lose a little bit of that definition in the beginning, it will be WORTH IT in the long run. That being said, I have seen TONS of guys build muscle and burn fat at the same time, with this exact program. So you might be surprised and get the best of both worlds with this workout regimen and nutritional plan, however remember the goal over the next 6 weeks is to build your metabolism and MUSCLE!!!

Intensity is Key!

Pre- Exhaust, Supersets, Tripletsets, and Giant Sets

Intensity techniques are training methods which allow you to make your sets longer and more difficult, ultimately allowing you to do more work in the same time. Here are some intensity techniques we will be using over the next 12 weeks:

Superset: A superset is two exercises performed consecutively with no break. Typically, people perform this on opposing muscle groups i.e. chest/back, biceps/triceps, delts/lats, however a true superset is performed on the same muscle group back to back. Regardless, we will be using a lot of supersets to take the pain to the next level and FORCE our body into new gains.

Triple Set: A triple set is three exercises performed consecutively with no rest.

Giant Set: A giant set is four or more exercises performed consecutively with no rest.

Pre-Exhaust: Similar to supersets, pre-exhaustion involves working a muscle with an isolation movement BEFORE hitting it hard and heavy with a compound exercise. This can be done in superset fashion, one movement right after the other, but you can also complete all sets of one exercise before moving onto the other. Overall, it's a great method for feeling a good mind-muscle connection and bringing up lagging body parts.

Understand Tempo

Repetition: The action repeating something that has already been said or written. In this case we will focus on each rep and make sure we are training through the ENTIRE range of motion, to get the most muscle fiber recruitment and stimulation.

Concentric: the force generated is sufficient to overcome the resistance, and the muscle shortens as it contracts. This is what most people think of as a muscle contraction.

Eccentric: The muscle and the muscle fibers lengthen as they contract. An eccentric contraction is used as a means of decelerating a body part or object, or lowering a load gently rather than letting it drop.

Isometric: The muscle remains the same length. An example would be holding an object up without moving it; the muscular force precisely matches the load, and no movement results.

Now, let's look at these terms in practice.

For example, on a 3-2-2 Tempo, the first number 3 is the ECCENTRIC or negative portion of the repetition and the second number 2 is the ISOMETRIC pause. Finally, the third number is the 2 second Concentric or positive part of the movement.

In case you're still confused, an example of 3-2-2- Tempo on bench press would be:

Slowly lower the bar to your chest for a 3 second NEGATIVE, and pause for a 2 second ISOMETRIC squeeze while the muscle is fully stretched. From here squeeze and consciously activate your pecs and start to contract the muscle for 2 seconds harder and harder for the CONCENTRIC part of the motion. DO NOT stop at the top lock out position, and focus on the controlled negative portion of the repetition, pause, and repeat.

Integrated Cardio

Integrated into the Phase 3 program you will find TONS of advanced ab routines, mental training tips, flexibility, nutrition, and cardio.

For general cardio guidelines, I recommend 3 days HIIT workouts (hill sprints, boxing, sled pulls, tabata intervals, etc.) and 3 days of LISS cardio (walking, jogging, hiking, etc.).

Set Your Schedule and Relax

THIS IS IMPORTANT! First, start this program on the right day, so that your schedule allows for all of the proper training sessions and food preparation in the coming weeks! Schedule your workouts into your calendar, and MAKE time for grocery shopping and cooking. Remember, food is the most anabolic substance on the planet, and without the right nutrients and being in a caloric surplus you will never see that highly coveted new growth you are looking for. Once your schedule is set – relax!

On that note, try to minimize your stress throughout this entire program. Chronic, undue stress will kill your results, especially if you're losing sleep. Of course we all have to live in the real world, but avoid negativity and remain calm whenever possible. This should include some regular "you" time, when you relax, unwind, and de-stress. So it's going to be important to relax, take time for foam rolling, massage therapy, and lots of stretching.

MIND MUSCLE ACADEMY

12 WEEK TRAINER

PHASE 1: Mind Muscle Connection (Week1)

In this phase, you will be learning the basic body building movements as well as how it feels to put your muscles under stress. It is important to use good form, concentrate on feeling the muscles work, and to breathe.

I use each of these moves personally. Plus, each one has been scientifically proven to stimulate the muscles. Do the exercises in the order listed and pick a weight that lets you finish the total number of sets and reps listed.

Rest Periods

In this phase, keep rest to a moderate amount of time. One minute to 1-1/2 minutes between sets is more than enough. Wear a watch, set a timer on your phone, or look around and find the wall clocks in your gym. If you try to guesstimate, you will wait too long between sets.

The Program

Week 1

Week 1 DAY 1: Upper Body	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Single-Arm DB Chest Press Feet in air	4 x 20
Single-Arm DB Row	4 x 20
Flat Bench DB Flye to Press	4 x 15
Chin Up (assisted if necessary)	4 x 15

Incline Barbell Bench Press	3 x 12
Barbell Bent Over Row	3 x 15
Seated DB Overhead Press	2 x 15
Two-Arm DB Incline Bicep Curl	4 x 12
Two-Arm DB Flat Bench Skullcrusher	4 x 12
Alt Arm Seated DB Curl	2 x 12



Nutrition Tip: Eat your green veggies, A LOT! Remember, you can consume as many green, fibrous vegetables as you want on this diet, and some onions and garlic here and there can't hurt, either. Vegetables will not only give you much-needed vitamins and minerals, they will help detox the body, and improve recovery!

Week 1 Day 2: Lower Body	
Warm up for 10 minutes on the stair climber w/ no hands on rails	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Single-Leg Standing Calf Raise	4 x 30
Single-Leg Bodyweight Calf Raise (7 with toes pointed in, 7 with toes straight, 7 with toes pointed out)	10 x 21
Single-Leg Glute Bridge	3 x 15
Single-Leg DB Straight Legged Deadlift	3 x 15
Single-Leg Rear Leg Elevated Split Squat	2 x 20
Barbell Squat	3 x 12
Boxer Squat	3 x 15



Training Tip: Remember to Breathe! Ask anyone to inhale, and they'll proudly inflate their chest, making the whole upper body seem just a bit bigger. That may be a great aesthetic trick, but it won't do you much good when you are leg

training! Remember, you want to hold in your air to give yourself a wider, sturdier base. Instead of making yourself more top heavy, you want to get as much air into your belly as possible. This same principle applies when you are using lower abdominal breathing to relax the mind and muscles in your stretching routine!

Week 1 Day 3: Rest



Nutrition Tip: Eat Fat to Lose Fat! These added fats will send your body the signals that it needs to know that it is not in 'starvation mode' and tell it to get rid of unwanted body fat. Essentially tricking your body out of millions of years of evolution, while you continue making solid muscle gains and stay to the bone!

Week 1 Day 4: Chest/ Shoulder/Triceps

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Two-Arm DB Flye w/ Active Rest	4 x 15
Barbell Flat Bench Press	3 x 12
Close Bench Press	3 x 15
DB Lateral Raise Across Body	3 x 15
Standing Barbell Military Press	3 x 12
Single-Arm DB Tricep Extension	3 x 15
Two-Arm Barbell Skullcrusher	3 x 15



Training Tip: Your triceps are composed primarily of fast-twitch muscle fibers, which means they respond best to maximal tension. They can lift a lot, but they'll tire quickly, which is why you should focus on multiple hard working sets. These will help improve your other power pressing movements for chest and shoulders!

Week 1 Day 5: Back/ Biceps	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Close-Grip Pull Up or Lat Pulldown	4 x 20
Barbell Bent Over Row (Dead stop Row)	3 x 12
Barbell Deadlift	4 x 10
Single-Arm DB Concentration Curl	3 x 15
Barbell Bicep Curl	3 x 12
Two-Arm DB Spider Curl	3 x 15



Nutrition Tip: Use Spices! As I'm sure you know, staying with clean nutrition can get a bit tedious – but it doesn't have to be! Start using your favorite herbs and spices, and be sure to try new combinations whenever you get the chance. Try different marinades, smoothie combinations, and recipes to keep it fresh!

WEEK 1 Day 6: Legs/Calves	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Single-Leg Step Up to Balance	2 x 15
Barbell Straight Legged Deadlift	3 x 10
DB Walking Lunge	2 x 8 Steps
Barbell Front Squat Narrow	3 x 12
Barbell Front Squat Sumo	3 x 15
Box Jump	2 x 20



Motivation Tip: KEEP WEIGHT UNDERSIDE: Think of a rock. This object is the definition of solid, yet at an atomic level it is still full of “empty space” between the nucleus and the distant electrons. As gravitational forces stick the rock to the earth, its weight is naturally pulled down. This is keeping weight underside. The mental and physical stressors that effect our daily life often get a

rise out of us. Many times quite literally, our necks are killing us from staring at computer screens all day while the tension and anxiety builds around our temples, jaw, and spine. We must let this go of this, all of this bullshit, and brain garbage that is bombarding our sensory perception, and become grounded, and get in tune with this primal yet genius side of ourselves.

Week 1 Day 3: Rest



Nutrition Tip: Don't Shy away from the salt! There's a lot of media hype about salt, but most people don't need to worry. In fact, if you're training as hard as you should be, you're probably sweating out TONS of sodium every day! You can replenish your sodium needs while simultaneously adding flavor with tasty condiments like mustard and soy sauce. Remember muscle building should be fun and taste good!

PHASE 2: Power and Hypertrophy (Weeks 2-4)

Phase 2 of the Mind Muscle Academy is the optimal program to build muscle and strength. When adding a powerful muscular superstructure to the physique, I've found these simple – but hardcore – workouts to be ideal for myself and almost all of my clients. Instead of a traditional body part split, you'll be doing two lower body and two upper days, each with a focus on a particular lift. You'll work that main lift to death to gain strength and build muscle, and then fill in the gaps with extra movements for each muscle.

It's Going to be Tough

Make no mistake- it will get tough! Nothing worth having comes easy, and you will develop and train at new levels you never even knew possible. As for nutrition, you'll be eating mostly the same foods day-in and day-out. Sure, you can spice things up and add some variety, but your routine is going to get monotonous at times. Hang in there, though – this develops long term discipline and greatness!

Awareness and Strength Training

“Calm the mind, but make savage the body.”

Fusing these two ideas of calmness and strength that seem to be on polar opposite ends of the spectrum can seem impossible at first. I remember when I first got into breathing techniques and meditation and started to think, Am I getting too chill? Have I lost touch with the aggressive hard-ass who created this physique and business? Am I creating my dream or someone else's?

This was a double-edged sword, as I reaped the rewards of training like an animal that just broke out of the cage. This commanding presence wasn't limited to training, the benefits were apparent in my social life and career, so it was very hard to let go. However long-term success, is more of a marathon than a sprint, so it became apparent that consistency is the greatest determinant of success. That being said, I do believe that calmness, breathing, and meditation are the key to reach optimal human performance.

Train Hard

Your focus will be on muscle and strength gains, but that doesn't mean you can slack on your intensity and controlling your rest periods to stay as lean as possible. If anything, you should kick your intensity up a notch for the next three weeks. You get out what you put in! Hard focused lifting is what is going to yield results, and maximize your

hormonal environment to keep you shredded while you see new growth. Plus, you just won't look as good and reach your true potential if you don't train hard enough. Don't forget that powerful sculpted bodies are forged with equally serious workouts. The hotter the fire the harder the steel!

Progression: More Weight, Reps and Sets

You'll only get bigger and stronger on this program by adding more reps, more sets and most importantly – more weight! Each week, try to add 5-10 pounds to the bar and get the same reps or more. Once you start to stall on weight and reps, start adding more sets to the MAIN movement. First do another set in the heaviest and lowest rep range, then keep progressing by adding sets in the lighter rep ranges. Eventually you'll get to the point where you're doing 8 total work sets for the main movement rather than 4. At that point, you should be strong enough to start adding weight to the bar once more

Integrated Cardio

For general cardio guidelines, I recommend 2 days HIIT workouts (hill sprints, boxing, sled pulls, tabata intervals, etc.) and 2 days of LISS cardio (walking, jogging, hiking, etc.).

Rest Periods

Rest between sets is also not as structured. Rest as long as it takes for your breathing to even out and your heart rate to come back down. If resting 30 more seconds will let you add 5 more pounds to a set, then do it. That said, don't go crazy. Don't sit around for 5 minutes between sets talking to the hot girl doing lunges next to you. Stay focused and get after it.

Reps

During this phase, your primary lift for the day is going to be a compound movement that uses the whole body but focuses on a specific muscle group. Squats for legs, Deadlifts for back, Bench Press for chest, and etc. These movements will be your bread and butter each day. You should be spent after this lift. All your other lifts for the day support the primary lift.

Pyramids

For these exercises, you will use a pyramid rep sequence. Start light and work your way up to a very heavy working set. Build up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. Don't miss any reps, but make sure the last rep of each set is just about all you have left!

Supersets

We are also going to incorporate some supersets. Supersets are two or more exercises back to back. For example, when doing a curls/ rope triceps pressdown, you will do curls and then immediately do the pressdowns. No resting between the exercises. You will probably need to drop your weight just a little when compared to a regular set to get through the supersets. Supersets flood the body part with blood. You should get a muscle-bursting pump with a superset.

Calves

Bring the pain when training calves. These muscles can take a beating. Embrace the burn and get after it. Push through the pain. Squeeze each rep at the top and hold each stretch at the bottom for a 2-count

The Program

In this phase you will be pushing your muscles to maximum effort. Push hard. Pull hard. Push yourself.

With that in mind, still use proper form, concentrate on feeling each rep, and breathe. This is not the time to let your ego get the best of you though. Nothing can derail progress faster than an injury. I know this from personal experience.

Also, unlike the other phases, the sets and reps are not as structured. During this phase, take your time to pyramid up to your heaviest set as outlined earlier.

Week 2

Week 2 Day 1: Squat and Lower Body	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Squats	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Sumo Barbell Straight Legged Deadlift	4 x 15
DB Walking Lunges	4 x 20 (10 per leg)
Weighted Sit ups	4 x 10 (weight held behind the head)
Standing Calf Raises	4 x 20



Training Tip: Stretch those shoulders! Opening up the anterior deltoid is one of the most overlooked aspects of training from newbies and seasoned vets alike. Releasing the pec minor and anterior deltoid will not only keep you pain free, it will allow your shoulders to sit back in the socket so you can keep better activation of your back and posterior chain on heavy squats while keeping a balanced and aesthetic physique.

Week 2 Day 2: Bench Press and Upper Body

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Bench Press	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Close-Grip Weighted Pull Ups*	4 x 8
Incline Dumbbell Press	4 x 10
Dumbbell Rows**	2 X 20 (per side)
Curls and Rope Pushdowns	4 x 15
<p>* You don't need to bring your chin all the way over the bar, but do get a full stretch at the bottom, and pull yourself up so your eyes are at least level with the bar.</p> <p>** Don't feel the need to use textbook form, either. A little body English is fine for rows, as long as you get a good stretch at the bottom and feel your lats and traps doing most of the work.</p>	

Week 2 Day 3: Rest



Training Tip: You might want to use some off-days for conditioning work or light cardio. However, yesterday was probably one of the harder workouts you've done in a while, so listen to your body - rest is one of the most important parts of building muscle. If you're feeling spent, take today to rest, eat well, relax, and get plenty of sleep tonight – you'll need all of your energy for tomorrow's training!

Week 2 Day 4: Deadlift and Lower Body

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Conventional Deadlift*	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Reverse-Grip Barbell Row**	4 x 12
Barbell Front Squat	4 x 15
Hanging Leg Raise	4 x 20
Standing Calf Raises	4 x 30
<p>* A little lower back rounding is okay, but don't give yourself a hernia trying to handle more weight than you're really capable of.</p> <p>** Use as much weight as you can handle with good form. Yea, this is a lower body day, but the bar's already on the floor, and you can never have too much upper back work!</p>	



Training Tip: The number one way to improve shoulder health and prevent upper body joint problems is to do a lot of upper back work. Pulling with your arms is the direct opposite of pushing movements such as bench presses and dips. Doing these exercises helps to balance out the muscles and the wear and tear on the joints.

Your first order of business for working your back is to simply spend as much, if not more time, doing pull-ups and rows as you do various pressing movements. A big, thick, wide back will go a long way in preventing upper body joint problems.

The other thing you should do is work specifically for your traps and rear delts. My favorite movement for this purpose is the face pull. Take a rope attachment and connect it to a pulley set at the highest setting on the cable stack. Pull towards your face. I do this movement for a few sets every time I am in the gym, and it has been great for my shoulder health.

Week 2 Day 5: Overhead Press and Upper Body

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Standing Military Press*	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Wide-Grip Pull Ups**	4 x 8
Dips***	Pyramid up to 4-6 reps.
Barbell Rows	4 x 15
Hammer Curls/V-Bar Pushdown Superset	4 x 20
<p>* This should be a strict movement. Don't use leg drive. Take off a little weight and use proper form.</p> <p>** Get a full stretch at the bottom of each rep and bring your eyes to at least bar level at the top.</p> <p>*** You don't need to go down so far that your shoulders start hurt, but don't cut your range of motion short, either. Descend until your upper arms are parallel to the floor, and go all the way to lockout on each rep.</p>	



Training Tip: Force = mass x acceleration. If you want to produce enough force to lift ever-heavier weights, you've got to train yourself to accelerate the bar as quickly as possible. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that you need to incorporate Westside-style "dynamic" workouts. Speed squats and speed benches are useful for some guys, but it's not the kind of thing you want to base entire workouts around. Just start treating EVERY weight like it's your max. When you're warming up, when you're doing higher reps, whenever. Even when the weights look like they're moving slowly, you should be using everything you've got to push (or pull) fast.

Week 2 Day 6: Rest



Nutrition Tip: Eat real food! Protein shakes are great in a pinch, but they're almost never as good as whole foods. Drink your whey after training, but focus on meat, eggs, or fish at every other meal. This requires more planning, time, and commitment, but it's the hard stuff that yields results!

Week 2 Day 7: Rest



Training Tip: In addition to nutrition, sleep is absolutely critical for muscle building. When you sleep, your body's levels of muscle building hormones such as growth hormone are highly elevated. This creates the best possible environment for growth.

To better understand why sleep is so important, think of a baby. Babies grow faster than people of any other age, and they also sleep more than people of any other age. This is because that sleep provides the optimal environment to build new muscle tissue.

Week 2 Day 5: Overhead Press and Upper Body

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Standing Military Press*	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Wide-Grip Pull Ups**	4 x 8
Dips***	Pyramid up to 4-6 reps.
Barbell Rows	4 x 15
Hammer Curls/V-Bar Pushdown Superset	4 x 20
* This should be a strict movement. Don't use leg drive. Take off a little weight and use proper form.	
** Get a full stretch at the bottom of each rep and bring your eyes to at least bar level at the top.	

*** You don't need to go down so far that your shoulders start hurt, but don't cut your range of motion short, either. Descend until your upper arms are parallel to the floor, and go all the way to lockout on each rep.

Week 3

Week 3 Day 1: Squat and Lower Body	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Squats	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Sumo Barbell Straight Legged Deadlift	4 x 15
DB Walking Lunges	4 x 20 (10 per leg)
Weighted Sit ups	4 x 10 (weight held behind the head)
Standing Calf Raises	4 x 20



Training Tip: Use Wraps and Sleeves when training heavy. There are a wide variety of wraps and sleeves that you can use to protect your knees, elbows and wrists. They help keep the joints warm and loose, so that you don't injure or reinjure them doing certain movements.

For squats and other leg movements, I would advise knee sleeves. They keep your knees very warm and comfortable and do not give you any help on exercises. You could go with some knee wraps if you wanted, but they will give you possibly unwanted support on squats and leg presses. They also take time and energy to wrap for every set.

For pretty much all pressing and extension movements, you should invest in some elbow sleeves and wrist wraps. The elbow sleeves keep your elbows warm and free from injury in movements that involve rotation about that joint

The wrist wraps keep your wrists locked in a safe position. You do not want to be doing heavy dips or bench presses and have unprotected wrists give out on

you. This poses a danger both to that specific joint, as well as to your whole body.

Week 3 Day 2: Bench Press and Upper Body

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Bench Press	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Close-Grip Weighted Pull Ups*	4 x 8
Incline Dumbbell Press	4 x 10
Dumbbell Rows**	2 X 20 (per side)
Curls and Rope Pushdowns	4 x 15

* You don't need to bring your chin all the way over the bar, but do get a full stretch at the bottom, and pull yourself up so your eyes are at least level with the bar.

** Don't feel the need to use textbook form, either. A little body English is fine for rows, as long as you get a good stretch at the bottom and feel your lats and traps doing most of the work.



Training Tip: More important than any special technique or piece of equipment for avoid injury in the weight room is good form. Likewise, the number one problem with people with weight lifting injuries is probably bad form.

To avoid lower back problems, make sure your back is arched, NOT ROUNDED, for pretty much every exercise that you do. Not only will these keep your lower back from getting injured with even the heaviest of loads, but it will force you to be nice and strict on most of your movements.

To avoid shoulder problems, simply do not place them in compromising positions. Certain movements such as upright rows, which have you vertically pulling items from the ground towards your head should be avoided. You should probably also avoid doing behind-the-neck movements.

Week 3 Day 3: Rest



Motivation Tip: Keep a training log! Whether you're trying to get huge or lean down, strength is the key to a muscular physique. To avoid strength loss while dieting, log your big lifts and make sure you're still hitting heavy enough weights. If your strength holds steady while your weight drops, you know you're on the right track!

Week 2 Day 4: Deadlift and Lower Body

Exercise	
	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Conventional Deadlift*	Pyramid up to 2-4 reps
Reverse-Grip Barbell Row**	4 x 12
Hack Squat Machine***	4 x 15
Standing Pull Down Crunches	4 x 20
Seated Calf Raises	4 x 30

* A little lower back rounding is okay, but don't give yourself a hernia trying to handle more weight than you're really capable of.

** Use as much weight as you can handle with good form. Yea, this is a lower body day, but the bar's already on the floor, and you can never have too much upper back work!

*** Wraps your knees up if this exercise aggravates them, or substitute with lunges. For either exercise, make sure you use controlled form with a LONG range of motion.



Training Tip: Since you are breaking down your muscles when you weight train, it only stands to reason that there is only so much punishment your body can productively take.

Rather than focusing on how MUCH you're doing in the weight room, you should focus on the QUALITY of your workout. No matter your muscle building weight training program, your goal should be to make some kind of progress, be it in weight, reps, sets, or a combination of all three.

This progress, and not how sore you got from that last workout, should be your main goal. As long as you are progressing, you are getting bigger.

Week 3 Day 5: Overhead Press and Upper Body	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Standing Military Press*	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Wide-Grip Pull Ups**	4 x 8
Dips***	Pyramid up to 4-6 reps.
Machine Rows (Not Cable)	4 x 15
Hammer Curls/V-Bar Pushdown Superset	4 x 20
<p>* This should be a strict movement. Don't use leg drive. Take off a little weight and use proper form.</p> <p>** Get a full stretch at the bottom of each rep and bring your eyes to at least bar level at the top.</p> <p>*** You don't need to go down so far that your shoulders start hurt, but don't cut your range of motion short, either. Descend until your upper arms are parallel to the floor, and go all the way to lockout on each rep.</p>	



Training Tip: Don't go overboard on cardio! Even hour-long sessions on the treadmill have a negligible impact on the calories you burn in a day. You can't "walk away" crappy food, so just make sure your diet's dialed in! You'll lose more fat, and you won't waste hours of your time.

Week 3 Day 6: Rest



Motivation Tip: Always break records! If you're trying to pack on muscle mass, strength gains should be your number one goal. Still, you're not going to be able to add weight to the bar at EVERY workout. If you feel like you're stalling, try doing more reps or even just more total sets. If you can see progress in your numbers, you'll see progress in your physique!

Week 3 Day 7: Rest



Motivation Tip: Push through your slump! It's inevitable - if you train for a long time, you're going to run into rough patches. Because of work, family, or a million other factors, you'll have weeks when training just SUCKS. Don't give up! Keep training hard, stick to your diet, and you'll reap the benefits in the long run. Besides, a hard workout is a great way to relieve some stress.

Week 4

Week 4 Day 1: Squat and Lower Body

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Squats	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Leg Curl	4 x 15
Leg Press*	4 x 15
Weighted Sit ups	4 x 10 (weight held behind the head)
Standing Calf Raises	4 x 20
*Use a full range of motion. There's no reason to exercise your ego on the leg press.	



Nutrition Tip: Pack in the protein! You probably know that protein's important, but are you really getting enough? Some nutritionists recommend as little as 100 grams per day, but you should be getting AT LEAST one gram per pound of body weight! Don't count the incidental amounts in grains, legumes, and other plant foods, either – it's the animal proteins that really help you gain muscle.

Week 4 Day 2: Bench Press and Upper Body	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Bench Press	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Close-Grip Weighted Pull Ups*	4 x 8
Incline Dumbbell Press	4 x 10
Dumbbell Rows**	2 X 20 (per side)
Curls and Rope Pushdowns	4 x 15
<p>* You don't need to bring your chin all the way over the bar, but do get a full stretch at the bottom, and pull yourself up so your eyes are at least level with the bar.</p> <p>** Don't feel the need to use textbook form, either. A little body English is fine for rows, as long as you get a good stretch at the bottom and feel your lats and traps doing most of the work.</p>	



Training Tip: Focus on 3s and 5s. You can get super-strong with a variety of rep ranges, but sets of three and five are my favorite. Sure, these numbers are a little arbitrary, but the point is that they're low enough to allow for heavy weights - but high enough to require an honest effort on every set. Assuming you're not being stupid and maxing out all the time, singles are just kind of easy - they're over with so fast! I find that using a little less weight and grinding out a couple more reps works MUCH better for building strength.

Week 4 Day 3: Rest



Motivation Tip: Go to bed! Plenty of guys eat well and train hard, but few people actually get enough sleep. Rest is the most overlooked aspect of recovery, but it's also one of the most important. If you really want to tear it up in the gym, get at least eight hours per night!

Week 4 Day 4: Deadlift and Lower Body

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Conventional Deadlift*	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Barbell Row**	4 x 12
Hack Squat Machine***	4 x 15
Standing Pull Down Crunches	4 x 20
Seated Calf Raises	4 x 30

* A little lower back rounding is okay, but don't give yourself a hernia trying to handle more weight than you're really capable of.

** Use as much weight as you can handle with good form. Yea, this is a lower body day, but the bar's already on the floor, and you can never have too much upper back work!

*** Wraps your knees up if this exercise aggravates them, or substitute with lunges. For either exercise, make sure you use controlled form with a LONG range of motion.



Training Tip: Touch-and-go deadlifts build back thickness. Ignore the form-Nazis who say you have to pull every rep from a dead stop. You shouldn't BOUNCE the weight, sure, but touch-and-go deads are king for back thickness. If your technique is good, you might be able to get three, four, or even five extra reps with any given weight. That's a huge increase! Plus, you'll have to

emphasize the negative to limit the bounce, and it's the eccentric portion of the lift that really builds muscle.

Week 3 Day 5: Overhead Press and Upper Body	
Exercise	Sets/Reps
Standing Military Press*	Work up to a top set of 2-4 reps. Then, do 3 more sets of 4-6, 6-8, and 8-12, respectively, taking a little more weight off the bar each time. This is a total of 8 working sets.
Wide-Grip Pull Ups**	4 x 8
Dips***	Pyramid up to 4-6 reps.
Machine Rows (Not Cable)	4 x 15
Hammer Curls/V-Bar Pushdown Superset	4 x 20
<p>* This should be a strict movement. Don't use leg drive. Take off a little weight and use proper form.</p> <p>** Get a full stretch at the bottom of each rep and bring your eyes to at least bar level at the top.</p> <p>*** You don't need to go down so far that your shoulders start hurt, but don't cut your range of motion short, either. Descend until your upper arms are parallel to the floor, and go all the way to lockout on each rep.</p>	



Training Tip: Do the military press! Most lifters train their shoulders in one way or another, but you hardly ever see a legit military press in the gym. It's a tough, frustrating lift, but you've got to do it if you want to build the biggest delts possible! Getting stronger on the strict press will also help your bench press, and who doesn't want a bigger bench?

Week 4 Day 6: Conditioning



Training Tip: Gain weight for bigger arms! Unless you're about four feet tall, you're not going to get twenty-inch guns when you weight one-fifty. The most efficient way to build a muscle group is to build your ENTIRE body with squats, presses, and other heavy exercises. Worry about "weak points" when you're already big and strong!?

Week 4 Day 7: Rest



Training Tip: Cheat to win! If you think fat loss requires months of arduous dieting, think again! Depending on how the rest of your diet's set up, one or two cheat meals per week can actually stoke your metabolism and help you get lean. Oh, and make sure you cheat at the END of the day - you don't want to turn that one meal into an entire day of debauchery.

PHASE 3: Warrior Physique (Weeks 5-9)

The PHASE 3 WARRIOR PHYSIQUE program combines strength movements, high volume hypertrophy, and a warrior mindset to create the functional superhero! Since you have completed the first two phases of the Mind Muscle Academy you are feeling increased strength, mind muscle connection, and work capacity. Now it's time to increase conditioning and grit to become a balanced athlete inside and outside of the gym!

For so long bodybuilders, olympic weightlifters, strongmen, body weight training gurus, martial artists, special operators, and powerlifters have all had their own ways of worshiping the iron. Phase 3 at the Mind Muscle Academy is a hybrid of these training styles to produce optimal performance and aesthetics.

Warrior Training: Strength & Function

The complete warrior is a function of his mind. As intense as the coming weeks are going to be, its the mind that is going to help you stick with the nutrition and brutally hard workouts. As for Mental Training during Phase 3 of the Mind Muscle Academy start to increase the cadence of the box breathing techniques to reach new levels of relaxation. To live with the universal warrior mindset always apply what's useful and discard what's not. See what beliefs are relative and are no longer helping your life, and what beliefs are leading the path to success and enlightenment. This will allow you to continually align with Universal beliefs and deeper levels of meaning about the nature of existence and life itself.

During this process you will have to do more shadow work, and this is where you must face weaknesses, flaws, and serious obstacles that are holding you back from success- understanding your dark side so you can bring consciousness to light. This emotional pain is often stored with hidden assumptions about your life, negative emotions and trauma stored in the subconscious mind. or just an overstimulated rational mind in today's world of media marketing, negative news, and materialistic popular culture. To become a warrior, you must accept these things and know that they do not define you.

In way programming, the Phase 3 Warrior Training program prioritizes heavy compounds movements as the weights are still the main tool to shape our body, loose body fat and improve conditioning. However, the cardio conditioning work will progressively get more difficult over the coming weeks, so stay focused! It's time to remove the fat from your life and your body - cut out the negative people, and tap into stored body fat as fuel to get more balanced, focused, and conditioned.

Nutrition

The Mind Muscle Academy is designed to build muscle and burn fat, this is the exact program I use to shredded to the bone for National Magazine and Film projects. Read Chapter 6 Fat Loss Nutrition before beginning Phase 3 to see how you can best program nutrition to your specific goals. Fight to maintain every ounce of quality muscle you've worked so hard to build, and keep your metabolism as high as possible while still losing body for optimal energy and performance over the coming weeks.

Plus Attitude

When the dieting and training become brutally difficult, and shit is hitting the fan in your personal life, it's time to detach from this negativity, illness, and misfortune. You must come back to the light, no matter how dark the cloud. Using the forth Universal Law of the Mind Muscle you must consistently extend positive energy as the catalyst to turn a calm mindset into an explosive power. The main outcome is authentically choosing your life path, not letting someone else direct it for you, staying one step ahead of the game. This is not a linear, rigid mindset, it requires a great fluidity of thought and action required to react and pivot as necessary.

Integrated Cardio

The cardio regimen in Phase 3 of the Mind Muscle Academy will consist of 2 days HIIT workouts (hill sprints, boxing, sled pulls, tabata intervals, etc.) and 3 days of LISS cardio (walking, jogging, hiking, etc.).

Supersets

During this pahse you will be doing supersets to really amp up the intensity. A superset means you do each exercise as prescribed back to back without resting. So, for example, on Week 5, Day 1 you will do Flat Bench Press followed immediately by rear delt flyes. No rest between the exercises. The rest period comes when you set the weights down after the second exercise.

Rest Periods

You should still be going as heavy as possible. And since this Phase is using supersets, a little extra rest between sets is a good thing. Don't go overboard though. Keep it to 90 seconds where noted and drop it to 60 where noted. The 60 second rests are designed to let you get a really good pump.

Activation Sets

New to this phase are activation sets. These are done after a short warm up and before the actual workout. During the activation set, you are waking up the nervous system and letting it know it's about to get a workout. These sets shouldn't be heavy. Give them intense focus. Squeeze the muscles. Feel every joint and fiber activating. Breathe deeply. Lots of oxygen, blood, and nutrients should flood your muscles during the activation set.

The Program

Week 5

Week 5 Day 1: Push			
Activation Set – Paloff Press 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Flat Bench Press	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	5 X 12-15	
2	Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Dragon Flye	3 x 10-12	
	Dips	3 x 10-12	
3	Dumbbell Skullcrusher with Rotation	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chest Flye on Flat Bench	3 x 10-12	
	Cable V-Grip Triceps Pushdown	3 x 10-12	

4	Triceps Bench Dip	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Crossover Pushup	5 x 10-12	
	Pike Up Leg Raise	5 x 10-12	



Nutrition Tip: have you tried different methods of cooking your proteins? Most bodybuilders fall into a trap of cooking the same way all the time! Steaming, baking, or worst of all, BOILING your meat is always going to give you a lackluster flavor. Try grilling, pan-frying, or high-temperature roasting to bring out more flavor, without adding a fatty or sugary sauce.

Week 5 Day 2: Upper Pull			
Activation Set – Prone Back 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Deadlift	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Weighted Sit Ups	5 X 12-15	
2	Bent Over Barbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chin Ups	3 x 10-12	
	Reverse Hyperextension	3 x 10-12	
3	Incline Dumbbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Hanging Ab Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Dumbbell Reverse Flye	3 x 10-12	
4	Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Dumbbell Hammer Curls	5 x 10-12	
	Reverse Grip Barbell Curl	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS 30 min walk/ jog		



Training Tip: Get strong to get shredded! If you're focused on fat loss, then you need to fight tooth and nail to keep getting stronger. Why? Because your muscle is what moves the weight! If you start training light, then your body will have no reason to hold onto all of that hard-earned mass. You'll lose just as much muscle as fat, and you'll just end up a flabby, weaker, smaller version of your current self - not what you want at all!

Week 5 Day 3: Lower Body			
Activation Set – Cossack Squat 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Wide Stance Barbell Back Squat	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	5 X 20	
2	Close Stance Front Squat	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Decline Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 (per leg)	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Barbell Walking Lunge	3 x 20 Steps	
	Weighted Russian Twist	3 x 20	
4	Seated Calf Raise*	5 x 20	60 Seconds
	Standing Machine Calf Raise*	5 x 20	
5	Anterior Tibialis Raise	Keep your heels up on a 45-lb plate, press your big toes and balls of your feet together. Tap as hard as possible on the ground for 60 second for 2 sets. Rest 60 seconds.	
Cardio	HIIT Sprints x 10		

*Remember: Bring the pain for bigger calves! Some guys are blessed with incredible calves, but most of us have to work like dogs to get them up to snuff. If you really want your calves to take off, you've got to hit them with heavy weights AND lots of reps - a painful combination!

Week 5 Day 4: Rest



Training Tip: Be smart about supplements! Most supplements are over-hyped and over-priced, but there are a definitely a few you should keep in stock. The most important is a quality protein powder that's cheap, tasty, and low in carbs. Other than that, cover your nutritional bases with Omega-3 fish oil, a multivitamin, and plenty of water.

Week 5 Day 5: Push/Core

Activation Set – Landmine Chest Press 2 x 20

Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Standing Military Press	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	Face Pulls	5 X 15-20	
2	Incline Close Grip Dumbbell Press	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Incline Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	
	Diamond Push Up	3 x 10-12	
3	Prone Opposite Arm/Opposite Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
4	Seated EZ Bar Triceps Extensions	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Seated Dumbbell Lateral Raise	5 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	5 x 20	
Cardio	Interval Run		



Training Tip: Set short-term goals for long-term results! Building a strong, lean, muscular physique takes years. So, set shorter goals to keep yourself motivated. An extra ten pounds on a lift or another pound on the scale can really keep you going when you're trying to get big. And, if you're dieting, seeing even a little bit of new definition can help you stick to your plan when things get rough.

Week 5 Day 6: Pull			
Activation Set – Incline Scapula Abduction 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Pull Ups	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	EZ Bar Curl	5 X 10-12	
	Hyperextension with a Twist	5 x 20	
2	Incline Reverse Grip Row*	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Cross Body Hammer Curls	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Lat Pull Down	3 x 10-12	
	Sit ups	3 x 20	
3	Close Grip Bent over T-Bar Row	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Neutral Grip Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	
	Cable Curls	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		
*Rest for a few breaths and then pull out a few more reps. Don't worry a ton about form here...just grind out a couple more.			



Nutrition Tip: The best way to keep yourself feeling healthy and energetic is to actually eat clean most of the time! I know there are plenty of people claiming that you can eat whatever you want so long as fits your macros – your protein, carb and fat needs – but some foods just aren't going to do your body good. Have your treats here and there, but stick to whole, unprocessed foods, and you'll rarely feel the need for a full-scale detox.

Week 5 Day 7: Pull			
Activation Set – Box Jumps 2 x 10			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Barbell Front Squat	5 x 10	90 seconds
	Hyperextension	5 X 20	
2	Alternating Leg Reverse Barbell Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	90 Seconds
	Dumbbell Lateral Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 per leg	
	Body Weight Calf Raise	3 x 20	
3	Zercher Squat	3 x 15	60 Seconds
	Kettle Bell Swing	3 x 15	
	Glute/Ham Raise	3 x 15	
4	Standing Calf Raise	3 x 20	No rest between sets
	Jump Rope	3 sets of 60 seconds	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		



Nutrition Tip: Reduce your stress for greater gains. Angry bodybuilders take note - you've got to chill out! The same goes for all of you know it alls and worry-warts. Chronic stress will inevitably lead to low testosterone and high cortisol – a potent hormonal combination for a fat, weak body. Avoid negative people, sleep more, meditate, do whatever you need to do to stay on an even keel.

Week 6

Week 6 Day 1: Push			
Activation Set – Paloff Press 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Flat Bench Press	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	5 X 12-15	
2	Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Dragon Flye	3 x 10-12	
	Dips	3 x 10-12	
3	Dumbbell Skullcrusher with Rotation	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chest Flye on Flat Bench	3 x 10-12	
	Cable V-Grip Triceps Pushdown	3 x 10-12	
4	Triceps Bench Dip	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Crossover Pushup	5 x 10-12	
	Pike Up Leg Raise	5 x 10-12	



Nutrition Tip: Salt is Your Friend! There's a lot of media hype about salt, but most people don't need to worry. In fact, if you're training as hard as you should be, you're probably sweating out TONS of sodium every day! To add flavor and replenish your electrolytes, use salt, mustard, soy sauce, and other sodium-rich condiments as you like. Just make sure you're ALSO drinking lots of water and getting plenty of potassium.

Week 6 Day 2: Upper Pull			
Activation Set – Prone Back 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Deadlift	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Weighted Sit Ups	5 X 12-15	
2	Bent Over Barbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chin Ups	3 x 10-12	
	Reverse Hyperextension	3 x 10-12	
3	Incline Dumbbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Hanging Ab Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Dumbbell Reverse Flye	3 x 10-12	
4	Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Dumbbell Hammer Curls	5 x 10-12	
	Reverse Grip Barbell Curl	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS 30 min walk/ jog		



Nutrition Tip: Saturated fat – not so evil after all. I've had about enough of this media nonsense about "healthy" fats. Sure, nuts, avocados, and olive oil are great, but you need SATURATED fat for muscle gains. The idea that it causes body fat gain was disproved long ago, and it's actually a great way to boost testosterone production. In fact, it's those supposedly healthy polyunsaturated fats that are the real killers. Load up on the beef and butter, and pass on canola oil, soy oil, and other processed crap.

Week 6 Day 3: Lower Body			
Activation Set – Cossack Squat 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Wide Stance Barbell Back Squat	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	5 X 20	
2	Close Stance Front Squat	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Decline Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 (per leg)	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Barbell Walking Lunge	3 x 20 Steps	
	Weighted Russian Twist	3 x 20	
4	Seated Calf Raise*	5 x 20	60 Seconds
	Standing Machine Calf Raise*	5 x 20	
5	Anterior Tibialis Raise	Keep your heels up on a 45-lb plate, press your big toes and balls of your feet together. Tap as hard as possible on the ground for 60 second for 2 sets. Rest 60 seconds.	
Cardio	HIIT Sprints x 10		

*Remember: Bring the pain for bigger calves! Some guys are blessed with incredible calves, but most of us have to work like dogs to get them up to snuff. If you really want your calves to take off, you've got to hit them with heavy weights AND lots of reps - a painful combination!



Nutrition Tip: Cheat meals for faster fat loss. Back in the 80s and early 90s, cheat meals were cardinal sins to bodybuilders. Fortunately, we now know how useful they can be. If you're dieting hard and losing weight, your metabolism will inevitably slow down. This is especially true if you're eating super low-carb for most of the week. Give your body (and mind) a break, and allow yourself a gluttonous cheat meal once in a while. You'll gain a few pounds of water on the rebound, but your overall fat loss will actually improve.

Week 6 Day 4: Rest



Training Tip: Get on the hill! If you're serious about leaning down AND staying strong, there's no better conditioning tool than hill sprints. They won't eat away at your muscle mass like steady-state cardio, and they won't leave you too wasted to lift. Still, they are awesomely challenging, and they might actually improve your leg strength. Search your area for sledding hills and reservoirs, and use the longest, steepest one you can find.

Week 6 Day 5: Push/Core			
Activation Set – Landmine Chest Press 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Standing Military Press	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	Face Pulls	5 X 15-20	
2	Incline Close Grip Dumbbell Press	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Incline Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	
	Diamond Push Up	3 x 10-12	
3	Prone Opposite Arm/Opposite Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
4	Seated EZ Bar Triceps Extensions	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Seated Dumbbell Lateral Raise	5 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	5 x 20	
Cardio	Interval Run		



Nutrition Tip: Alcohol - how much is too much? Not drinking at all would be ideal for bodybuilding, but that's not much fun. You should, however, seek to limit the damage. Instead of constantly mucking with your recovery, just abstain throughout the week, and give yourself a break two or three times a month. If you're worried about fat gain, stick to the liquor. Beer is filled with carbs and gluten, and it'll bloat you up faster than almost anything.

Week 6 Day 6: Pull

Activation Set – Incline Scapula Abduction 2 x 20

Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Pull Ups	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	EZ Bar Curl	5 X 10-12	
	Hyperextension with a Twist	5 x 20	
2	Incline Reverse Grip Row*	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Cross Body Hammer Curls	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Lat Pull Down	3 x 10-12	
	Sit ups	3 x 20	
3	Close Grip Bent over T-Bar Row	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Neutral Grip Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	
	Cable Curls	5 x 10-12	

Cardio LISS – 30-minute walk

*Rest for a few breaths and then pull out a few more reps. Don't worry a ton about form here...just grind out a couple more.



Training Tip: Specialize for growth. Have a weak body part? Try blasting it for three or four weeks at a time. Reduce and condense your other training, so that you can give your weak point full attention for THREE sessions per week. Hit it with heavy weights, high reps, intensity techniques, and everything else you can think of. Return to your normal training, and realize some amazing gains in the weeks to come.

Week 5 Day 7: Pull			
Activation Set – Box Jumps 2 x 10			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Barbell Front Squat	5 x 10	90 seconds
	Hyperextension	5 X 20	
2	Alternating Leg Reverse Barbell Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	90 Seconds
	Dumbbell Lateral Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 per leg	
	Body Weight Calf Raise	3 x 20	
3	Zercher Squat	3 x 15	60 Seconds
	Kettle Bell Swing	3 x 15	
	Glute/Ham Raise	3 x 15	
4	Standing Calf Raise	3 x 20	No rest between sets
	Jump Rope	3 sets of 60 seconds	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		



Nutrition Tip: Steak - the king of meats! I don't care what some researcher says about eggs or whey being more "bioavailable." They're great, sure, but steak is where it's at for building quality mass and losing body fat! Like many other lifters, I've found that I feel stronger and recover more quickly when I'm eating lots of red meat. Get steak when you can afford it and go for ground beef when you can't. Keep an eye out for sales and fill your freezer to the brim when you find a good deal.

Week 7

Week 7 Day 1: Push			
Activation Set – Paloff Press 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Flat Bench Press	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	5 X 12-15	
2	Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Dragon Flye	3 x 10-12	
	Dips	3 x 10-12	
3	Dumbbell Skullcrusher with Rotation	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chest Flye on Flat Bench	3 x 10-12	
	Cable V-Grip Triceps Pushdown	3 x 10-12	
4	Triceps Bench Dip	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Crossover Pushup	5 x 10-12	
	Pike Up Leg Raise	5 x 10-12	



Training Tip: Get back to the bench press. Most bodybuilding "experts" claim the bench isn't good for chest-building, but that's a load of BS. Guys who suck at the bench often abandon it, and then later claim it didn't do anything for them. If you want wide, thick pecs, you're going to have to plug away on the flat bench. You might as well stop avoiding it, and START making progress!

Week 7 Day 2: Upper Pull			
Activation Set – Prone Back 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Deadlift	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Weighted Sit Ups	5 X 12-15	
2	Bent Over Barbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chin Ups	3 x 10-12	
	Reverse Hyperextension	3 x 10-12	
3	Incline Dumbbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Hanging Ab Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Dumbbell Reverse Flye	3 x 10-12	
4	Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Dumbbell Hammer Curls	5 x 10-12	
	Reverse Grip Barbell Curl	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS 30 min walk/ jog		



Training Tip: Train Heavy for Tone! To tell you the truth, there's no such thing as "toning" a muscle. You can only build muscle mass or lose fat mass, and doing both at once will quickly improve your definition. In fact, attempting to "tone" with light weights and high reps may have the opposite effect - pumped, "puffy" muscles that quickly deflate once you leave the gym. Lifting heavy will actually increase *tonus*, the slight, constant contraction in your muscles. That's what actually makes you look hard and dense. You've got to train heavy if you want to look powerful!

Week 7 Day 3: Lower Body

Activation Set – Cossack Squat 2 x 20

Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Wide Stance Barbell Back Squat	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	5 X 20	
2	Close Stance Front Squat	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Decline Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 (per leg)	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Barbell Walking Lunge	3 x 20 Steps	
	Weighted Russian Twist	3 x 20	
4	Seated Calf Raise*	5 x 20	60 Seconds
	Standing Machine Calf Raise*	5 x 20	
5	Anterior Tibialis Raise	Keep your heels up on a 45-lb plate, press your big toes and balls of your feet together. Tap as hard as possible on the ground for 60 second for 2 sets. Rest 60 seconds.	
Cardio	HIIT Sprints x 10		

*Remember: Bring the pain for bigger calves! Some guys are blessed with incredible calves, but most of us have to work like dogs to get them up to snuff. If you really want your calves to take off, you've got to hit them with heavy weights AND lots of reps - a painful combination!



Nutrition Tip: Use Water for Fat Loss! I'm amazed at how many people worry their asses off about supplements, but still don't drink enough water! An abundance of water is critical for both fat loss and muscle building, and any serious lifter needs to get AT LEAST a gallon per day. Oh, and feel free to add sugarless flavorings and even have the occasional diet soda. These shouldn't be your mainstays, but that little bit of sweetness can be great for staving off cravings when you're dieting.

Week 7 Day 4: Rest



Training Tip: Up your volume. "High volume" doesn't necessarily mean high reps. Most bodybuilders operate in extremes, where they're either using light weights, high reps, and tons of sets - or they're doing just a few low-rep sets with heavy weights. A better strength-building strategy is to use heavy weights for LOTS of sets. Just don't blow a gasket by going to failure on every one.

What would an actual workout look like? Instead of working up to just one or two sets of five on the squat, you might use the same weight for six sets of four, or even ten sets of three. Each individual set wouldn't be as tough as one of those fives, but you'd get FAR more total reps in - all of them with a heavy weight.

Week 7 Day 5: Push/Core			
Activation Set – Landmine Chest Press 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Standing Military Press	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	Face Pulls	5 X 15-20	
2	Incline Close Grip Dumbbell Press	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Incline Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	
	Diamond Push Up	3 x 10-12	
3	Prone Opposite Arm/Opposite Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
4	Seated EZ Bar Triceps Extensions	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Seated Dumbbell Lateral Raise	5 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	5 x 20	
Cardio	Interval Run		



Training Tip: Train your legs with high reps! Heavy squats should always be the cornerstone of your leg training, but don't avoid high reps. Unlike most other exercises, squats (and leg presses) allow you to keep grinding out rep after rep in between short rests at the top. High-rep squatting is the toughest thing you can do, but it's also the most effective way to stimulate leg growth. Don't miss out!

Week 7 Day 6: Pull			
Activation Set – Incline Scapula Abduction 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Pull Ups	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	EZ Bar Curl	5 X 10-12	
	Hyperextension with a Twist	5 x 20	
2	Incline Reverse Grip Row*	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Cross Body Hammer Curls	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Lat Pull Down	3 x 10-12	
	Sit ups	3 x 20	
3	Close Grip Bent over T-Bar Row	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Neutral Grip Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	
	Cable Curls	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		
*Rest for a few breaths and then pull out a few more reps. Don't worry a ton about form here...just grind out a couple more.			



Motivation Tip: Learn to let Go... Of your stress, that is! Some people say that sleep is the most overlooked aspect of physique transformation, but I disagree. Chronic stress has got to be the number-one killer of progress in the gym. You can diet, train, and sleep perfectly, but your belly fat won't budge if you're bathing in a veritable bath of cortisol. In fact, high stress can specifically cause you to hold onto fat around your midsection.

So, what should you do if you're a nervous wreck? Start by limiting the negativity in your life. Whiny people boring hobbies, and friends you don't really like – just get rid of them! And when it comes to your job, your coworkers, and other things you can't really avoid: try your best to remain level-headed. A few

deep breaths and are minder of your goals will do you more good than you know.

Week 7 Day 7: Pull			
Activation Set – Box Jumps 2 x 10			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Barbell Front Squat	5 x 10	90 seconds
	Hyperextension	5 X 20	
2	Alternating Leg Reverse Barbell Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	90 Seconds
	Dumbbell Lateral Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 per leg	
	Body Weight Calf Raise	3 x 20	
3	Zercher Squat	3 x 15	60 Seconds
	Kettle Bell Swing	3 x 15	
	Glute/Ham Raise	3 x 15	
4	Standing Calf Raise	3 x 20	No rest between sets
	Jump Rope	3 sets of 60 seconds	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		



Nutrition Tip: Cook in Bulk! If you have a full-time job, school, or any other time-consuming obligation, you simply **MUST** cook your food in bulk. Prepping every meal individually is a huge hassle, and there's no way you'll have time to do it every day. To ensure that you never miss a meal - or end up eating crap, instead - set aside a day or two every week when you'll cook lots of stuff in advance. Roast or grill your proteins, steam your rice, bake your potatoes, and chop your veggies. It'll make your life a whole hell of a lot easier in the long run.

Week 8

Week 8 Day 1: Push			
Activation Set – Paloff Press 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Flat Bench Press	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	5 X 12-15	
2	Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Dragon Flye	3 x 10-12	
	Dips	3 x 10-12	
3	Dumbbell Skullcrusher with Rotation	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chest Flye on Flat Bench	3 x 10-12	
	Cable V-Grip Triceps Pushdown	3 x 10-12	
4	Triceps Bench Dip	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Crossover Pushup	5 x 10-12	
	Pike Up Leg Raise	5 x 10-12	



Training Tip: Heavy Lifting for Leanness and Strength, don't start lifting lighter to get "cut." Your diet is what will get you lean, and weight training is what will preserve your muscle mass. You probably won't gain much muscle while you're dieting, but heavy weights will definitely help you hold on to what you've got.

Week 8 Day 2: Upper Pull			
Activation Set – Prone Back 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Deadlift	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Weighted Sit Ups	5 X 12-15	
2	Bent Over Barbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chin Ups	3 x 10-12	
	Reverse Hyperextension	3 x 10-12	
3	Incline Dumbbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Hanging Ab Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Dumbbell Reverse Flye	3 x 10-12	
4	Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Dumbbell Hammer Curls	5 x 10-12	
	Reverse Grip Barbell Curl	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS 30 min walk/ jog		



Training Tip: Row your way to a bigger bench. I don't care how much you train your chest and shoulders; your bench will never improve if your back's not up to snuff. Once-a-week training won't cut it, either. Your upper back can recover incredibly fast, so start doing some rows three or four times per week! Dumbbell rows, barbell rows, cable rows...they're all good. Just make sure that you have some variety, and that you're always adding weight and reps.

Week 8 Day 3: Lower Body

Activation Set – Cossack Squat 2 x 20

Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Wide Stance Barbell Back Squat	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	5 X 20	
2	Close Stance Front Squat	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Decline Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 (per leg)	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Barbell Walking Lunge	3 x 20 Steps	
	Weighted Russian Twist	3 x 20	
4	Seated Calf Raise*	5 x 20	60 Seconds
	Standing Machine Calf Raise*	5 x 20	
5	Anterior Tibialis Raise	Keep your heels up on a 45-lb plate, press your big toes and balls of your feet together. Tap as hard as possible on the ground for 60 second for 2 sets. Rest 60 seconds.	
Cardio	HIIT Sprints x 10		

*Remember: Bring the pain for bigger calves! Some guys are blessed with incredible calves, but most of us have to work like dogs to get them up to snuff. If you really want your calves to take off, you've got to hit them with heavy weights AND lots of reps - a painful combination!



Training Tip: Don't forget to lose the belt! Belts are an awesome training tool, and you'd be crazy to pass them up entirely. Still, you do NOT want to rely on a belt for every set of squats, deads, and rows.

Week 8 Day 4: Rest



Motivation Tip: Turn up the music! Studies show that listening to music that pumps you up will help your workouts. It keeps you motivated. And, if you put in some earbuds you'll find that you spend less time chit chatting and more time lifting. It'll make your training sessions quicker and more effective.

Week 8 Day 5: Push/Core

Activation Set – Landmine Chest Press 2 x 20

Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Standing Military Press	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	Face Pulls	5 X 15-20	
2	Incline Close Grip Dumbbell Press	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Incline Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	
	Diamond Push Up	3 x 10-12	
3	Prone Opposite Arm/Opposite Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
4	Seated EZ Bar Triceps Extensions	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Seated Dumbbell Lateral Raise	5 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	5 x 20	
Cardio	Interval Run		



Training Tip: High-volume - the REAL way to grow your calves. It's time to face facts. The only way you're really going to grow your calves is to treat them like every other body part. Pick three or four different exercises, use heavy weights, and throw every intensity technique you can think of into the mix. If all

you're doing is a few sets of calf raises after quads and hamstrings, it's no wonder they haven't grown!

Week 8 Day 6: Pull			
Activation Set – Incline Scapula Abduction 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Pull Ups	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	EZ Bar Curl	5 X 10-12	
	Hyperextension with a Twist	5 x 20	
2	Incline Reverse Grip Row*	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Cross Body Hammer Curls	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Lat Pull Down	3 x 10-12	
	Sit ups	3 x 20	
3	Close Grip Bent over T-Bar Row	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Neutral Grip Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	
	Cable Curls	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		
*Rest for a few breaths and then pull out a few more reps. Don't worry a ton about form here...just grind out a couple more.			



Training Tip: Cardio – It's When You Do It That Counts. If there's one strategy that's really a "quick fix" for fat loss, it's got to be fasted morning cardio.

You're not going to go from fat to fit in a week doing this, but it's one of the best strategies for quickly losing body fat without burning up your muscle mass. It takes some serious time and effort, though!

Upon waking, down a few grams of branched-chain amino acids or about five grams of protein powder. Then just get your ass on that treadmill for about forty-five minutes. You need to keep the pace brisk, but you should be walking – not

running – the whole time. Since you don't have any food in your stomach, your body will be forced to use its own fat stores for energy. Do this four to five times per week in combination with a proper diet, and you'll start seeing daily results in your midsection.

Week 8 Day 7: Pull			
Activation Set – Box Jumps 2 x 10			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Barbell Front Squat	5 x 10	90 seconds
	Hyperextension	5 X 20	
2	Alternating Leg Reverse Barbell Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	90 Seconds
	Dumbbell Lateral Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 per leg	
	Body Weight Calf Raise	3 x 20	
3	Zercher Squat	3 x 15	60 Seconds
	Kettle Bell Swing	3 x 15	
	Glute/Ham Raise	3 x 15	
4	Standing Calf Raise	3 x 20	No rest between sets
	Jump Rope	3 sets of 60 seconds	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		

Week 9

Week 9 Day 1: Push			
Activation Set – Paloff Press 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Flat Bench Press	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	5 X 12-15	
2	Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Dragon Flye	3 x 10-12	
	Dips	3 x 10-12	
3	Dumbbell Skullcrusher with Rotation	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chest Flye on Flat Bench	3 x 10-12	
	Cable V-Grip Triceps Pushdown	3 x 10-12	
4	Triceps Bench Dip	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Crossover Pushup	5 x 10-12	
	Pike Up Leg Raise	5 x 10-12	



Training Tip: Use High Intensity Intervals for rapid fat loss. Is treadmill walking too boring for you? Do you not have the time to add in four to five hours of cardio per week? Are you too damn fat to avoid harder conditioning work? If you answered yes to any of those questions, you may want to give some interval training a try.

Intervals simply involve alternating periods of all-out effort and active recovery. If you do these on a track, you would sprint for about fifteen seconds and then walk for one to two minutes. The same principle applies to stationary bikes and ellipticals. Do eight to ten rounds, and you're done!

This kind of cardio is hell, and it's going to take a toll on your recovery abilities if you do it too frequently. If you're already weight training four to five times per week, then one or two interval sessions is plenty. Doing them on an empty

stomach isn't going to help you, either – high intensity activity burns carbs, not body fat. The fat-burning benefits come later, as your body expends more calories for hours after you've completed the workout.

Week 9 Day 2: Upper Pull			
Activation Set – Prone Back 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Deadlift	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Weighted Sit Ups	5 X 12-15	
2	Bent Over Barbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Chin Ups	3 x 10-12	
	Reverse Hyperextension	3 x 10-12	
3	Incline Dumbbell Row	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Hanging Ab Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Dumbbell Reverse Flye	3 x 10-12	
4	Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Dumbbell Hammer Curls	5 x 10-12	
	Reverse Grip Barbell Curl	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS 30 min walk/ jog		



Training Tip: Up your fats, not your carbs! Unless you were rail-thin before you started lifting, you're going to need to keep an eye on your carbs. I don't care how many or how few calories you're eating per day, over-consuming carbs will eventually make you fat. Shovel in the protein, eat just enough carbs to fuel your workouts, and get the rest of your calories from fats. You may not gain WEIGHT as quickly as you would on a super-high-carb diet, but you will stay leaner as you get stronger.

Week 9 Day 3: Lower Body

Activation Set – Cossack Squat 2 x 20

Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Wide Stance Barbell Back Squat	5 x 5	90 seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	5 X 20	
2	Close Stance Front Squat	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Decline Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 (per leg)	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Barbell Walking Lunge	3 x 20 Steps	
	Weighted Russian Twist	3 x 20	
4	Seated Calf Raise*	5 x 20	60 Seconds
	Standing Machine Calf Raise*	5 x 20	
5	Anterior Tibialis Raise	Keep your heels up on a 45-lb plate, press your big toes and balls of your feet together. Tap as hard as possible on the ground for 60 second for 2 sets. Rest 60 seconds.	
Cardio	HIIT Sprints x 10		
<p>*Remember: Bring the pain for bigger calves! Some guys are blessed with incredible calves, but most of us have to work like dogs to get them up to snuff. If you really want your calves to take off, you've got to hit them with heavy weights AND lots of reps - a painful combination!</p>			



Training Tip: Add weight to your abs exercises. Instead of doing a bunch of bodyweight crunches, try decline sit-ups with a weight BEHIND your head. Don't be one of those jackasses who piles 45s on his chest and bends about one inch at the waist. Use a long range of motion with a 10 or 25, and you'll torch your abs in just a few sets. It's incredible how much harder this movement is when you keep the weight behind your head. Other good abs exercises are heavy weighted side bends, weighted leg raises, and cable crunches. In general, you should be training your abs like every other muscle – heavy and progressively. Aim to actually get stronger on sit-ups and crunches, and you'll finally notice your abs getting more pronounced. Stronger abs will make help your squat and deadlift numbers, as well.

Week 9 Day 4: Rest



Motivation Tip: Find a Hobby! No, this isn't some kind of self-help crap - a hobby can really assist you on this diet. When you're dieting hard AND training to the max, it's easy to become preoccupied with food. To avoid cheat meals and the general stress of strict eating, find something fun or productive to take your mind off of food. Reading, video games, whatever - just don't spend all day obsessing over your next meal! And remember, you'll have plenty of time to relax once this is all done. Three weeks isn't that long in the grand scheme of things.

Week 9 Day 5: Push/Core			
Activation Set – Landmine Chest Press 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Standing Military Press	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	Face Pulls	5 X 15-20	
2	Incline Close Grip Dumbbell Press	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
	Incline Dumbbell Pullover	3 x 10-12	
	Diamond Push Up	3 x 10-12	
3	Prone Opposite Arm/Opposite Leg Raise	3 x 10-12	90 Seconds
4	Seated EZ Bar Triceps Extensions	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Seated Dumbbell Lateral Raise	5 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	5 x 20	
Cardio	Interval Run		



Training Tip: Stretch for Mass! You always want to incorporate a "stretching" movement into your back workouts – such as those close-grip pull-downs. Stretching a muscle against heavy resistance is one of the most powerful tools for mass-building, but it'll also make your muscles look fuller - even when you're not pumped! This technique works well for most body parts, but it's most effective for the lats.

Week 9 Day 6: Pull			
Activation Set – Incline Scapula Abduction 2 x 20			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Pull Ups	5 x 10-12	90 seconds
	EZ Bar Curl	5 X 10-12	
	Hyperextension with a Twist	5 x 20	
2	Incline Reverse Grip Row*	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Cross Body Hammer Curls	3 x 10-12	
	Standing Lat Pull Down	3 x 10-12	
	Sit ups	3 x 20	
3	Close Grip Bent over T-Bar Row	5 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Neutral Grip Lat Pull Down	5 x 10-12	
	Cable Curls	5 x 10-12	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		
*Rest for a few breaths and then pull out a few more reps. Don't worry a ton about form here...just grind out a couple more.			



Nutrition Tip: Carbohydrates are the double-edged sword in bodybuilding nutrition. They're damn-near essential for building muscle mass, but they can also make you fat and bloated. Even lifters who eat nothing but “healthy” carbs like oats, rice, and potatoes can still find themselves gaining fat at an unacceptable rate.

If you really want to harness the muscle-building power of carbs without piling on the body fat, you've got to eat them at the right times. First, eat a meal rich in complex carbs an hour or two before you train. That will give you sustained energy throughout the workout, and you won't crash like you would from eating sugar or simple starches. After you train, load up on the carbs for one to two hours afterwards. Don't go crazy, but this is the time when rice, potatoes, and other healthy starches are going to be put to use for muscle repair and growth –

not fat gain. Of course, all of these carb meals should have plenty of protein, as well.

Other than those times, avoid most carbs throughout the rest of your day. Vegetables are fine, but starches and fruits are for workout energy only. On your off days, eat carbs only in your first meal – or not at all. Focusing on protein and healthy fats during your non-training meals will allow you to get the calories you need to grow without spiking your insulin.

Week 9 Day 7: Pull			
Activation Set – Box Jumps 2 x 10			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Barbell Front Squat	5 x 10	90 seconds
	Hyperextension	5 X 20	
2	Alternating Leg Reverse Barbell Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	90 Seconds
	Dumbbell Lateral Lunge	3 x 10 per leg	
	Jumping Split Squat	3 x 10 per leg	
	Body Weight Calf Raise	3 x 20	
3	Zercher Squat	3 x 15	60 Seconds
	Kettle Bell Swing	3 x 15	
	Glute/Ham Raise	3 x 15	
4	Standing Calf Raise	3 x 20	No rest between sets
	Jump Rope	3 sets of 60 seconds	
Cardio	LISS – 30-minute walk		



Nutrition Tip: Fight inflammation with fats. Eating the right fats is key for building a great physique. Essential fatty acids are important for fat loss, healthy skin, and even proper brain function. What you may not know is that they're also crucial for muscle growth! Soreness in your muscles and joints is caused by inflammation, and a decent fat intake will help both to recover from heavy training. You need to make olive oil, nuts, avocados, and other healthy fat sources staples in your diet if you want to be big and lean.

Contrary to what people stuck in the 1980s might say, saturated fat is also an important nutrient for muscle growth. Not only does it NOT cause obesity, it is responsible for high levels of testosterone – a hormone conducive to building a lean, muscular physique. A good rule of thumb is to make saturated fat roughly one third of your total fat intake. Animal products like steak and eggs are good, but you should try to eat some coconut oil and other plant sources, too.

PHASE 4: Tactical Athlete (Weeks 10-12)

Over the last 9 weeks you have integrated injury prevention, strength, endurance, and nutrition on the way to become a complete tactical athlete. This new body is the result of its function, and this sculpted physique is secondary to the balanced mindset that build this living breathing work of art. Beyond the physical power, you have awakened a strength in mind, body, and spirit! A deeper trust and connection has been created with the Universe. This discipline is no longer something you are striving to achieve- but an honest part of your life. It's time to become the total package, to be the warrior spirit.

In way of programming, a tactical athlete needs a program that is as efficient as it is effective. Phase 4 of the Mind Muscle Academy doesn't present needless complicated demands- in a world where everything is so complex simplicity can get lost. It's this simplicity that reveals the deeper truths and creates the optimal athlete. This phase is broken down into three workouts, repeating each twice per week.

Warrior Spirit

Who will you be at the end of your life? The warrior spirit is knowing your purpose and taking action every day to build a life worth remembering. Bridge the gap between where you are now and where you want to be when you die. It's hard to accept your current situation, but use this realization as empowerment to take the necessary steps to create the life you want!

True Character

What do you do when no one is watching? The warrior believes that true intentions will always come to light, and character is the most important factor of success. There is no substitute for living the truth. This humble and honest attitude naturally creates trust and authentic communication.

Integrated Ambition

Eastern and Western philosophies align for an intellectual perspective guided by intuition. With your heart connected to your Universal purpose all living things will benefit. A calm focused action to create a mindset that has both disconnected from our physical form while at the same time attaching itself to the highest version of ourselves. This is the sacred area where we can see ourselves honestly- with all negativity

removed from self-image, no grandeur either, just the truest version of yourself manifest into physical form.

Integrated Cardio

The cardio regimen in Phase 4 of the Mind Muscle Academy will consist of 3 days HIIT workouts (hill sprints, boxing, sled pulls, tabata intervals, etc.) and 3 days of LISS cardio (walking, jogging, hiking, etc.).

Superset

The exercises in this phase are also performed in supersets.

Plyo

Each day you will be tasked with performing a plyometric, or plyo, exercise. This exercise should be done as explosively as possible. Really make these count. They are going to be awful Your lungs are going to burn. You might even cuss. Don't worry. You aren't going to die. Don't short change yourself here. If you're not seeing stars you're not going hard enough. The point here isn't just to be a masochist. These exercises will take your body past the point it is used to going. It will force every fiber in your body to work. Give it your all and these plyos will change you...for the positive. So embrace the suck.

Rest Periods

Rest will shorter a little between sets. We are keeping the heart rate up to help burn more calories. But we don't want to sacrifice too much in the strength department to just get the sets done quickly. Go as heavy as possible. Breathe a lot. Sweat even more. Dig in deep for this phase.

The Program

Week 10

Week 10 Day 1: Pull			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Weighted Pull Up	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Thick Grip Row	3 x 8-10	
2	Close Grip Pull Up	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Hammer Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Face Pull	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Rear Delt Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Spider Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Burpees	3 x 10-12	



Nutrition Tip: Track Your Meals. You'll be more likely to stick to your meal plan if you are tracking everything you eat and drink. Just make it another part of your routine. Writing it down helps keep you honest. It also helps you see places where you can do a better job. And I've found, that if you're tracking honestly, you will get to a point where you will pass on that 3rd piece of pizza or the Snickers bar because you don't want to write it down.

Week 10 Day 2: Press			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Close Grip Bench Press	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Dumbbell Tricep Extension	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Alternating Arm Dumbbell Incline Chest Press	3 x 10-12	
	Seated Alternating Dumbbell Overhead Press	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Push Ups	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Hyperextensions	3 x 20	
	Sprawl	3 x 20	



Nutrition Tip: Eat SPICY food if you can handle it. Peppery, sweat-inducing dishes can actually boost your fat loss, especially when they're high in capsaicin – the fiery chemical in chili peppers. That extra sprinkle of cayenne does more than just add flavor!

Week 10 Day 3: Lower Body			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Hang Clean	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Front Squat	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Leg Romanian Deadlift (RDL)	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Rear Leg Elevated Split Squat (RLESS)	3 x 10-12	
	Ab Wheel	3 x 10-12	
	Lateral Jump	3 x 10-12	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Walking Lunge	3 x 20 (10 per leg)	
	Weighted Sit Ups	3 x 20	
Ab Options (do one or the other)			
1	Toe-to-Bar	3 x 12-15	60 Seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	3 x 12-15	
	Egg Roll to Ninja Get Up	3 x 12-15	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 12-15	
2	Advanced L Hang	3 sets to failure	60 Seconds
	Ab Wheel	3 x 15-20	
	Rotation	3 x 15-20	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 10-15	



Nutrition Tip: Eat SPICY food if you can handle it. Peppery, sweat-inducing dishes can actually boost your fat loss, especially when they're high in capsaicin – the fiery chemical in chili peppers. That extra sprinkle of cayenne does more than just add flavor!

Week 10 Day 4: Rest



Nutrition Tip: Cut the Wheat! If you're trying to look as lean as possible, you should probably cut wheat out of your diet, or only eat it with cheat meals. Even if you're not gluten-intolerant, wheat has a tendency to cause bloating and massive water retention. I've seen people **BLOW UP** overnight after splurging on doughnuts, breads, and other floury treats. Stick to rice, oats, and other gluten-free grains, or better yet - get your starch from potatoes and sweet potatoes. In general, the less processing that's necessary for a food to be edible, the better.

Week 10 Day 5: Pull

Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Weighted Pull Up	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Thick Grip Row	3 x 8-10	
2	Close Grip Pull Up	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Hammer Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Face Pull	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Rear Delt Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Spider Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Burpees	3 x 10-12	



Training Tip: Sweat! Don't be afraid to sweat. If you drink plenty of water and work hard you're gonna sweat. Really turn it up by pulling on a hoodie, put the

hood up, and really get after it. Bring a towel though. You don't wanna be the guy that leaves a puddle on the bench.

Week 10 Day 6: Press			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Close Grip Bench Press	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Dumbbell Tricep Extension	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Alternating Arm Dumbbell Incline Chest Press	3 x 10-12	
	Seated Alternating Dumbbell Overhead Press	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Push Ups	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Hyperextensions	3 x 20	
	Sprawl	3 x 20	



Nutrition Tip: Find the Right Carbs for You! There's a ton of talk about the best sources of starch. Some guys swear by oatmeal, while others stick to sweet potatoes and rice. And then, of course, there are the genetic freaks who gobble breads and cakes without ever getting fat. Ultimately, you'll have to find what works best for your body. You may find that you get fat from eating wheat, but that you feel lean and strong eating the same amounts of carbs from rice. If you want to fine-tune your nutrition for the long term, you'll need to use some trial and error to find out how your body responds.

Week 10 Day 7: Lower Body			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Hang Clean	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Front Squat	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Leg Romanian Deadlift (RDL)	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Rear Leg Elevated Split Squat (RLESS)	3 x 10-12	
	Ab Wheel	3 x 10-12	
	Lateral Jump	3 x 10-12	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Walking Lunge	3 x 20 (10 per leg)	
	Weighted Sit Ups	3 x 20	
Ab Options (do one or the other)			
1	Toe-to-Bar	3 x 12-15	60 Seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	3 x 12-15	
	Egg Roll to Ninja Get Up	3 x 12-15	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 12-15	
2	Advanced L Hang	3 sets to failure	60 Seconds
	Ab Wheel	3 x 15-20	
	Rotation	3 x 15-20	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 10-15	



Training Tip: Get off the Couch! Before you ever worry about adding slow, steady-state cardio to your routine, just look at your activity levels. Are you sitting down most of the day? Are you parking right in front of the grocery store? Are you slouching while you're at your computer? If so, just try getting up and moving around. It's incredible how much you can increase your metabolic rate and overall calorie expenditure by simply standing and walking. It's also far more time-efficient to move around during your normal activities, instead of slaving away for hours on a treadmill.

Week 11

Week 11 Day 1: Pull			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Weighted Pull Up	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Thick Grip Row	3 x 8-10	
2	Close Grip Pull Up	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Hammer Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Face Pull	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Rear Delt Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Spider Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Burpees	3 x 10-12	



Motivation Tip: Surround yourself with positive people. This is a huge deal for people with big families, and big social circles, and socially demanding jobs. Once you decide to change your body, you find that all sorts of previously pleasant people start to become discouraging. It's rarely anything overt, though. You'll hear off-hand comments about your "Spartan" diet or "obsessive" training schedule, and people will not-so-playfully poke fun at you for taking fitness seriously

In the long run, these kinds of people can be poisonous to your progress. Outside negativity will eventually wear down even the most strong-willed, independent-minded person. And, even if you never cheat on your diet or miss a workout, constant negativity will cause you some serious stress – a real progress-killer for bodybuilders and lifters

While you're always going to have to deal with stressful people, you need to minimize their influence on your life. You don't need to cast out every person who's NOT a die-hard fitness fanatic, but you should limit your exposure to people who belittle your goals

Just as importantly, you'll want to surround yourself with people DO offer encouragement. Even if you train by yourself, try to spend time with other lifters and athletes who are just as serious as you. You won't need to rely on your internal motivation when you have others holding you accountable, and their progress can inspire you to be better.

Week 11 Day 2: Press			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Close Grip Bench Press	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Dumbbell Tricep Extension	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Alternating Arm Dumbbell Incline Chest Press	3 x 10-12	
	Seated Alternating Dumbbell Overhead Press	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Push Ups	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Hyperextensions	3 x 20	
	Sprawl	3 x 20	



Motivation Tip: Find what works for YOU. I've talked to tons of other fitness models about their diets, workouts, sleep habits, and more. It seems the only thing we all have in common is that we all do things differently! Sure, there are plenty of similarities, but nobody in this business follows a cookie-cutter routine...nobody successful, that is.

If you want to build the strongest, leanest, most muscular physique possible, you've got to become a veritable mad scientist with your body. Pay attention to the effects of different exercises, different foods, and even different workout times. All of these little variables can dramatically change the ways you look and perform. True professionals can gain or lose ten pounds on a whim, and they always show up in shape to contents and photo shoots. The only way to do that is to learn your body inside and out.

Week 11 Day 3: Lower Body			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Hang Clean	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Front Squat	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Leg Romanian Deadlift (RDL)	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Rear Leg Elevated Split Squat (RLESS)	3 x 10-12	
	Ab Wheel	3 x 10-12	
	Lateral Jump	3 x 10-12	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Walking Lunge	3 x 20 (10 per leg)	
	Weighted Sit Ups	3 x 20	
Ab Options (do one or the other)			
1	Toe-to-Bar	3 x 12-15	60 Seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	3 x 12-15	
	Egg Roll to Ninja Get Up	3 x 12-15	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 12-15	
2	Advanced L Hang	3 sets to failure	60 Seconds
	Ab Wheel	3 x 15-20	
	Rotation	3 x 15-20	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 10-15	



Motivation Tip: Stay consistent. Consistent, focused work: it may not be sexy, but it's the only thing that gets results! To build the body you want, you have to plug away with your eye on the prize. Need to gain more mass? Keep eating, and add weight to the bar at every workout - even it's only five pounds at a time. Want to get ripped like never before? Stick to your diet, no matter how much you feel like cheating. In the end, single-minded dedication is what truly separates the winners from the losers.

Week 11 Day 4: Rest



Motivation Tip: Visualize constantly. Here is an example of why visualization works as a crucial element to Mind Muscle Academy. Say you're supposed to eat five specific meals every day. You can go to bed each night, thinking about what each meal will look like, taste like, and require in preparation. OR, you can give your meal plan zero thought until it's time for breakfast. In which case do you think you're going to be most likely to stick to your plan?

Visualization works just as well for training. Take leg training for example. If you're like most trainees, you're not so hot on leg day, especially when heavy squats and high reps are thrown into the mix. If you never even think about leg training until you see the workout on your calendar (or hear about it from your trainer), you might end up skipping it! It's hard to put such a heavy burden on yourself with such short notice.

On the other hand, you can start thinking about that training session one, two, or even three days beforehand. Instead of focusing on the negatives – the burn, the discomfort, the feeling of heavy weights on your back – think about the positives: how your legs will grow, how your gut will shrink, and how great you'll feel when the whole thing is through. If you keep those positive thoughts flowing, you won't just make it to the gym – you'll have a kick-ass workout!

Week 11 Day 5: Pull			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Weighted Pull Up	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Thick Grip Row	3 x 8-10	
2	Close Grip Pull Up	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Hammer Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Face Pull	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Rear Delt Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Spider Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Burpees	3 x 10-12	



Nutrition Tip: Change it Up. You might think you're the most dedicated machine when it comes to your meal plan. But take it from experience. Eating the same thing day in and day out will drive you to more "cheat" meals...and not the good kind. Buy a couple of cookbooks. Look up a new recipe online. Make it fun. Change it up.

Week 11 Day 6: Press			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Close Grip Bench Press	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Dumbbell Tricep Extension	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Alternating Arm Dumbbell Incline Chest Press	3 x 10-12	
	Seated Alternating Dumbbell Overhead Press	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Push Ups	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Hyperextensions	3 x 20	
	Sprawl	3 x 20	



Motivation Tip: Get New Music. Seriously! Change that stale music playlist out on your phone or iPod. Put a few new tracks on there. You'll be surprised at how much fun new music can be when you're lifting. And an all-new playlist when doing cardio will add a whole new level to things.

Week 11 Day 7: Lower Body			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Hang Clean	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Front Squat	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Leg Romanian Deadlift (RDL)	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Rear Leg Elevated Split Squat (RLESS)	3 x 10-12	
	Ab Wheel	3 x 10-12	
	Lateral Jump	3 x 10-12	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Walking Lunge	3 x 20 (10 per leg)	
	Weighted Sit Ups	3 x 20	
Ab Options (do one or the other)			
1	Toe-to-Bar	3 x 12-15	60 Seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	3 x 12-15	
	Egg Roll to Ninja Get Up	3 x 12-15	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 12-15	
2	Advanced L Hang	3 sets to failure	60 Seconds
	Ab Wheel	3 x 15-20	
	Rotation	3 x 15-20	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 10-15	



Training Tip: Relax completely and breathe! Yes, breathe. It is the essence of our being, and relaxation is the elixir of life. Let go of all the tension in the body to find where the deeper imbalances exist. I equate this to draining a lake; once all of the water is drained then you can see the rocks at the bottom. These rocks are a metaphor for the various trigger points and emotional blockages that exist within your being. Use deep breathing to calm your mind, and remove impurities from the body.

Week 12

Week 12 Day 1: Pull			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Weighted Pull Up	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Thick Grip Row	3 x 8-10	
2	Close Grip Pull Up	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Hammer Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Face Pull	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Rear Delt Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Spider Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Burpees	3 x 10-12	



Training Tip: Put away your phone! There's very little that is so important that it can't wait an hour or so. If you must bring your phone into the gym because it holds all your music, then keep it tucked away in your pocket. Focusing on your phone means you're not focusing on your workout.

Week 12 Day 2: Press			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Close Grip Bench Press	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Dumbbell Tricep Extension	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Alternating Arm Dumbbell Incline Chest Press	3 x 10-12	
	Seated Alternating Dumbbell Overhead Press	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Push Ups	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Hyperextensions	3 x 20	
	Sprawl	3 x 20	



Nutrition Tip: Find your way around the kitchen!

You don't have to follow a Spartan diet to get big and lean. If you actually want to enjoy all that food you've got to eat, learn a few basic cooking skills, and stock your pantries with plenty of herbs and spices. Properly-cooked, well-seasoned meats and veggies can make all the difference when you're trying to stick to a meal plan.

Week 12 Day 3: Lower Body			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Hang Clean	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Front Squat	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Leg Romanian Deadlift (RDL)	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Rear Leg Elevated Split Squat (RLESS)	3 x 10-12	
	Ab Wheel	3 x 10-12	
	Lateral Jump	3 x 10-12	
3	Glute Ham Raise	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Walking Lunge	3 x 20 (10 per leg)	
	Weighted Sit Ups	3 x 20	
Ab Options (do one or the other)			
1	Toe-to-Bar	3 x 12-15	60 Seconds
	Hanging Knee Raise	3 x 12-15	
	Egg Roll to Ninja Get Up	3 x 12-15	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 12-15	
2	Advanced L Hang	3 sets to failure	60 Seconds
	Ab Wheel	3 x 15-20	
	Rotation	3 x 15-20	
	Body Weight Jump Squats	3 x 10-15	



Training Tip: Social Accountability! Why not use that Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account to push you? Announce a short-term goal. Post a progress pic. Let your friends and family know how hard you're working.

Week 12 Day 4: Rest



Training Tip: Don't Skip It! If you're feeling overwhelmed with life, family, or work and are thinking about skipping the gym all together...don't. Carve out 10 or 15 minutes. Go do a hard circuit, a Tabata, or run some sprints on the treadmill. I've seen it more times than you can count. One day turns to two. Two becomes three. Three becomes a habit. Before you know it you're back to square one.

Week 12 Day 5: Pull

Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Weighted Pull Up	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Thick Grip Row	3 x 8-10	
2	Close Grip Pull Up	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Hammer Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Face Pull	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Rear Delt Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Spider Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Burpees	3 x 10-12	



Training Tip: Have fun! Working out shouldn't be torture. The key is to find a fun routine and stick to it. Yes, a hard workout will be that...hard. You should be sore sometimes. It's going to be uncomfortable. But if you dread it every single workout, something is definitely wrong with your approach

Week 12 Day 6: Press			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Close Grip Bench Press	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Rear Delt Flye	3 x 8-10	
2	Single Dumbbell Tricep Extension	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Alternating Arm Dumbbell Incline Chest Press	3 x 10-12	
	Seated Alternating Dumbbell Overhead Press	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Push Ups	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Sit Ups	3 x 20	
	Hyperextensions	3 x 20	
	Sprawl	3 x 20	



Training Tip: The best method of progression in a muscle building program is getting stronger. You can add reps, you can add sets, you can add more exercises, but these things are all very finite and limited. You can't keep adding sets and exercises until you're doing 10 sets of 10 exercises just for one muscle group. It's impossible, and you'd burn out way before you ever got to that point.

Weight, on the other hand, is infinite. Of course you're never going to lift infinity pounds for any exercise, but you can pretty much always stand to get stronger than you are now. There are many ways to progress in strength, but that should be your main overall goal during this phase.

Week 12 Day 7: Pull			
Superset Group	Exercise	Sets/Reps	Rest
1	Weighted Pull Up	3 x 8-10	60 seconds
	Thick Grip Row	3 x 8-10	
2	Close Grip Pull Up	3 x 10-12	60 Seconds
	Hammer Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Hanging Ab Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Mountain Climber	3 x 10-12	
3	Face Pull	3 x 20	60 Seconds
	Rear Delt Raise	3 x 10-12	
	Spider Curl	3 x 10-12	
	Burpees	3 x 10-12	

Fat Loss Nutrition

We use BOTH science and intuition to make the right decisions for our nutritional guidelines. Just as our instincts are unique to each of us, so are our genetics. So I will recommend macro nutrient guidelines, however you have the freedom to choose the specific food choices and micro nutrition that you feel is best for your digestion.

All you follow this program over time you must keep tweaking and making small changes to optimize your results. For example, once you have gained some quality muscle you will need to increase calories/ day if you start adding too much fat try dropping carbs a bit lower. As a general guideline, make sure that your pre- and post-workout meals are the most important of the day. Make sure you are getting in a good dose of healthy fats with your protein and carbs pre workout to make sure you don't lose steam while training hard. Then post workout make sure it is just carbs and protein to create the most anabolic environment possible in your body. Also try to make sure these meals along with the first meal of the day contain the majority of your carbohydrate intake for the day so that you can stay as lean as possible while building new muscle.

Intro

At its core, bodybuilding is about two things: being big and being lean. If you're going about it the right way, the VAST majority of your time and efforts should go towards gaining size. Building tons of muscle mass and strength takes years, even decades of consistent effort. One can only add so much muscle per year, but almost anyone can lose twenty or so pounds of blubber in just a few months. Overall, bodybuilding should be about actually BUILDING your body.

However, there are going to be times when you want to switch gears and shed some fat. Maybe you've been plugging away for a while, you've gained some muscle, and now you want to get lean and show it off. Maybe you need to trim down for a sport or fitness test, or you want to make a certain weight class for powerlifting. In any case, make no mistake about it – focusing on fat loss is going to mean NOT gaining muscle. You can't do both at once with any kind of efficiency, so choose your goal wisely and attack it with one hundred percent dedication.

When You Should Focus on Fat Loss

Your decision to diet should never be based on a whim. If the thought of going to the beach or taking your shirt off in public makes you want to abandon your mass-gaining efforts to get in better shape, then you've got bigger problems. Either you should have gotten leaner before trying to actually GAIN weight, or you're too short-sighted to stay focused on your end goals.

If you want to avoid headaches and self-doubt, your decision to diet should be completely rational and calculated. You compare your long-term goal – being big and lean – to your short-term goal – being in decent shape – and you decide whether or not it's worth it to take a few short months to shed some fat. Once you do that, you get right back into mass-gaining mode and spend another year or more getting bigger and stronger.

So, when exactly should you focus on getting lean? *When you are no longer satisfied with your body fat levels.* That's it. It's that simple. Stop spending hours on bodybuilding message boards asking people if you "should bulk or cut," and stop agonizing over whether or not you are on the right path. If you don't like how much your stomach jiggles, get leaner. If you're not comfortable taking your shirt off in front of people, diet. And for god's sake, if you're in horrible cardiovascular shape – do something about it. You've got to do what actually makes you happy, and only you can figure out what that is.

Even if you're just starting out, it may be a good idea to diet first and THEN focus solely on getting bigger. Remember, gaining muscle at a decent rate is probably going to involve a little fat gain. You can stay pretty lean as you gain weight, but trying to avoid even the slightest increase in your body fat percentage is going to put a serious damper on your progress. If you're not already satisfied with how lean you are, how are you going to handle getting fatter? You might want to get super-strict with your diet and cardio for just a few months so you can start building from a solid base. If you don't, you'll just end up spinning your wheels and playing mental games with yourself.

How Can I Lose Fat and Build Muscle at the Same Time?

You can't. There are certainly exceptions for rank beginners and people using performance-enhancing drugs, but you can't accomplish both of these goals OPTIMALLY at the same time. In fact, it's physiologically impossible for your body to simultaneously burn its fat stores and build new muscle tissue.

Yes, there are certain dietary strategies which allow you to “re-composition” your body, making slight improvements in both leanness and muscle mass over a given time period. However, this is still nowhere near as efficient as just picking one goal at a time.

If you’re still not sure, think about this common example. Let’s say John and Jim both start bodybuilding at 150 pounds and 10% body fat. They each build lots of muscle and a little bit of fat until they’re 200 pounds at 15% body fat. They’re not obese by any means, but they’d like to get leaner before they continue gaining muscle mass and strength.

John decides to bite the bullet and just focus on fat loss. He trains as heavy as ever, but he adjusts his diet and does some cardio so that he’s consistently losing a pound or so per week. After three months, he’s 188 pounds and back at about 10% fat – great results! He’s just as lean as when he started, but now he’s got tons more muscle on his frame.

On the other hand, Jim ignores all the advanced lifters telling him to do the same. He wants to get leaner, but he’s not satisfied with how big he is. After three months of undedicated dieting efforts, he loses just a few pounds of fat while gaining a tiny bit of muscle. He’s 198 pounds and still nearly 14% body fat. In all that time, he gained one pound of muscle and only lost three pounds of fat! The whole reason he decided to change things up was that he wanted to be leaner, but he barely made any progress towards that goal. If he switches back into all-out mass-gain mode, he’s yet again going to be too fat for his liking within a month or two.

This kind of indecision is common among beginner and intermediate-level lifters, and it is absolutely poisonous to long-term progress. Consider these results typical if you’re still thinking about trying to lose fat and build muscle at the same time.

Diet

Just like with building muscle, diet is the most important aspect of losing fat. Instead of eating a moderate surplus of quality nutrients, you’ve got to whittle away at the fats and carbs in your diet in order to shed blubber. But remember, you don’t want to just lose any weight – you want to lose body fat.

If weight loss was your only goal, you could just eat less food until the scale started showing smaller numbers. In fact, you could accomplish a simple bodyweight goal pretty fast if you were willing to suffer and eat like a bird! However, these simplistic strategies will inevitably lead you to lose your hard-earned muscle mass. Muscle is metabolically active tissue – stuff that’s hard for your body to maintain. Your survival

mechanisms would rather keep the fat and get rid of that muscle, so you've got to manipulate your diet and training just right to end up lean and mean!

Do You Need to Count Calories?

There's a lot of talk among both bodybuilders and "weight loss"-type dieters about calorie counting. Some people think it's the holy grail of nutrition, while others see it a complete waste of time. Both sides of the argument have their merits. On one hand, counting calories lets you know exactly what's going into your body – essential for dietary fine-tuning. On the other hand, some people get way too caught up in the minutia, worrying whether an extra twenty-five calories is going to make or break their progress (it's not).

Overall, you're going to have to know what you're eating and how much you're eating if you want to consistently lose body fat for the ten, twelve, or however many weeks you're devoting to getting leaner. While you may not need to count EVERY calorie you eat, you will have to keep track of how many grams of protein, carbs, and fats you're taking in. What's the difference, you ask? Don't calories come straight from these nutrients? Yes, but counting everything from every morsel you eat isn't necessary.

What is important is counting the grams of each nutrient from ONLY the sources which are DENSE with that nutrient. For example, you should count all of the protein you get from lean meats. Chicken breasts and lean steak have tons of protein, but negligible amounts of fat. Likewise, breads and other grain-based products may have tiny amounts of protein and fat, but it's only important to count their carbs. Finally, some fat sources like nuts or avocados have some carbs and protein, but not enough to worry about. The only time you need to get complicated and count more than one type of nutrient from the same food is when you deal with eggs, oily fish, and other fatty protein sources. Even then, this is a much simpler way to do things than counting every calorie.

Counting nutrients this way won't give you a one-hundred percent accurate picture of how many calories and nutrients you're taking in, but it will keep you CONSISTENT. That's the key! It doesn't really matter if you count 200 grams of carbs per day, but you're actually eating 227 grams. What does matter is that when you need to make adjustments, you can easily subtract 25 grams here, 50 grams there, etc.

Handling your diet this way also allows you to easily make the right food choices because you can categorize most of the foods you'll be eating as sources of protein, carbs, or fats. Let's say you want 50 grams of carbs and 50 grams of protein for your post-workout meal during your diet. For your carbs, you might choose between a cup of oatmeal, a cup of rice, or about eight ounces of sweet potato. For your protein, you

could select about six or seven ounces of any cooked meat or fish, since cooked proteins usually have around eight grams of protein per ounce. For any given meal, you just have to have an amount of each nutrient to shoot for. Even if you end up eating the exact same foods every day, it's nice to be able to make easy substitutions for variety or convenience.

Alright, so you've got an easy way to keep track of your food intake. But what should you actually eat to get leaner? How many carbs, proteins, and fats should you eat per day, and at what times? Read on to learn more about each nutrient and how it can help (or hurt) you in your quest for leanness.

Plenty of Protein

Whether you're building muscle or losing fat, protein is the most important nutrient in your diet. In fact, getting plenty of complete protein may be even more important when you're losing fat than when you're gaining muscle. You're going to have to cut down on your carbs and fats to get leaner, and a steady supply of protein is going to keep your body from cannibalizing all of that hard-earned muscle tissue. That would take you farther from your long-term goals, not closer!

A good baseline for protein consumption during a fat loss phase is one gram per pound of your bodyweight, per day. For instance, a 180-pound person would need at least 180 grams of protein every day. Remember, don't count the incidental amounts of protein from your carbohydrate and fat sources towards this total. Make sure this protein is coming from lean animal products like chicken breast, fish, and low-fat beef. Fattier sources like salmon, eggs, and pork can be okay, too, but make sure you count that fat towards your daily totals.

Fats are Your Friend

You should know by now that eating fat is not what makes you fat – eating too much food makes you fat! In fact, fats are an extremely important part of your cutting diet. Getting a good balance of monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, and even saturated fats is crucial for balanced hormone levels and a fast metabolism. Studies have even shown dietary fats to be essential for healthy skin and proper brain function.

You should be getting a little bit of fat from your protein sources. You don't need to count every gram from your white fish or chicken breasts, but eggs, salmon, and fattier cuts of meat have significant amounts of fat. To add more fat to your diet, choose

healthy sources like nuts, seeds, olive oil, and avocados. Avoid processed fats like those found in generic “vegetable” oils.

Exactly how much fat you eat is going to depend on a couple of things – how many overall calories you consume, and how many carbs you consume. Since high protein has to be a constant in your diet, there’s going to be an inverse relationship between your carbs and fats – more carbs, less fat or less carbs, more fat. In general, you can just think of these as your “energy” nutrients. We’ll talk later about how to determine the exact amounts you’ll need.

Carbs – Friend or Foe?

Super-low-carb diets may be all the rage these days, but they are not good for someone who trains hard and is trying to build a lean AND muscular physique. Intense weight training, sprinting, and other anaerobic activities are fueled primarily by carbohydrates. You may have to cut your carbs to lose fat, but getting rid of them entirely is going to leave you weak and exhausted.

The key is to choose the right kinds of carbs. Oatmeal, rice, potatoes, and other complex carbohydrate sources are perfect. The starches in these foods give you energy for training hard, but the fiber slows digestion and ensures even blood sugar levels. In general, any whole grain or starchy vegetable is a quality source of carbs. Just avoid simple starches and sugars like those found in bread, pastries, and other processed foods.

Timing is also important when it comes to eating carbohydrates. Even quality carbs cause your body to produce lots of insulin – the most powerful hormone when it comes to building a muscular physique. Insulin can drive nutrients into your muscle cells and help you recover from weight training, but it can also cause your body to store extra calories as body fat. In fact, chronically high insulin is one of the top causes of obesity!

To harness the muscle-building power of insulin, eat the vast majority of your carbs in your pre- and post-workout meals. These are the times at which your body is most likely to put carbohydrates to good use and utilize that insulin spike to drive nutrients into your muscle cells – not your fat cells!

In fact, the hour or so immediately after your workout is the one time of day when you actually WANT to consume some simple carbohydrates (sugars). A shake with equal quantities of sugar and protein will kick-start the recovery process by rapidly shuttling amino acids to your muscles. For your sugar source, choose something with dextrose (glucose); sports drinks are usually a good bet. For your protein, whey powder is quick

to digest and can easily mix with your carbs. Just make sure you still avoid corn-syrup and table sugar!

As for exact amounts, go with about one fourth of your daily carb intake in this shake. You could do more if you really wanted to, but that just means fewer solid carbs that you get to eat. When you're strictly limiting your carbs, you're going to want to eat all you can – even if that means just another serving of oats or potatoes! The amount of protein in the shake should be proportionate to all of your other meals. For example, if you're eating five meals per day, plus this shake, then it should contain one-sixth of your daily protein.

Putting it All Together

So now you know the importance of different nutrients in your diet, some of the best foods to eat, and an easy and consistent way to keep track of your daily intake. It's time to put everything together and come up with an actual diet plan that will help you lose body fat.

The first step is to figure out how many calories you need. You're going to be counting nutrients, not calories, that's true – but starting with a rough estimate of calories is helpful for determining how many carbs, proteins, and fats you're going to eat. There are hundreds of online calculators for figuring out caloric needs, but spare yourself some headache and just use this simple formula:

Calories to lose fat = your bodyweight x 12

For instance, a 200-pound bodybuilder would start with 2400 calories.

Now you need to allocate those available calories to protein, carbs, and fats. Protein and carbohydrates each have four calories per gram, while fat has nine calories per gram.

Remember that you're going to be eating at least one gram of protein per pound of bodyweight. The lifter in this example would thus aim for 200 grams per day for a total of $200 \times 4 = 800$ calories from protein per day. That leaves 1600 calories to come from carbs and fats.

Figuring out carbs and fats can be tricky. Too few carbs, and you won't have the energy to train. Too many carbs, and losing body fat is going to be very difficult. However, a good starting point is to treat carbs like you did protein – aim for one gram per pound of

bodyweight. This means our hypothetical bodybuilder would get 200 grams per day, giving him $200 \times 4 = 800$ calories from carbs.

That leaves 800 calories from fat. Since fat has nine calories per gram, that allows this lifter about 89 grams of fat per day. That may actually seem kind of high, but these fats are going to come from healthy sources. The energy from that fat will also be crucial when carbs are low.

You may be thinking that these numbers aren't totally accurate – and they aren't! If this lifter gets 200 grams of carbs from oatmeal, for example, those extra little amounts of fat and protein in the oats are going to add up. He'll actually be getting closer to 900 or so calories from his carb sources. The same is true of his lean protein sources, which have some extra calories from small amounts of fat.

These extra calories DO NOT matter in the long run – what matters is consistency. All of these numbers are simply a baseline, anyway, and you will likely need to adjust as you progress with your diet. Start with $12 \times$ bodyweight for your calories, and figure out your nutrient allowances from there. If you aren't dropping weight, or if you're losing too fast, make some changes. We'll talk more about adjustments later.

Here are those baseline formulas one more time:

Calories =	12 per pound of bodyweight	
Protein =	1 gram per pound of bodyweight	4 calories per gram
Carbohydrates =	1 gram per pound of bodyweight	4 calories per gram
Fats:	Calculate based on remaining calories	9 calories per gram

Meal Planning and Nutrient Timing

Once you've figured out your daily totals, you'll of course need to decide how you're going to consume your proteins, carbs, and fats throughout the day. There are a dizzying number of theories on how you should do this, but we're going to keep things simple and stick with a few tried-and-true principles.

Firstly, meal frequency is not as big a deal as many bodybuilders make it out to be. Most lifters think they have to eat six or more meals per day, no matter how many or how few calories they're trying to consume. Not only can this get inconvenient, it forces people on lower-calorie diets to just eat a bunch of bird-sized portions throughout the

day. When you're already eating fewer calories than you're burning, the last thing you want is yet another tiny meal!

In general, somewhere between four to six meals, plus a post-workout shake, is best for most dieting lifters. If you like to spread things out with small meals, that's fine. If you'd rather wait longer between feedings but eat larger portions, that works, too.

When it comes to timing, the really important thing to do is put your carbs around your workout time. Your pre- and post-workout meals and shakes should contain all of your carbs – that's when you really need them. Your protein should be spread out evenly among all meals, since a steady supply of amino acids is crucial for maintaining muscle mass while you're in a calorie deficit.

As far your extra fats, add those in throughout the day, but put most of them in the meals that don't have any carbs. Some people obsess over only eating combinations of protein and fat or protein and carbs, believing that fat-starch combos are a ticket to instant fat gain. While that isn't really the case, saving your fats for meals without carbs will help keep you satisfied. Protein-only meals do not stave off hunger for long!

What about off-days? On days you don't train, you're obviously not going to need a post-workout shake. Instead of trying to "make up" those carbs in other meals, just don't have them! Those sugars wouldn't do you any good on a day you don't train, and eating fewer carbs on your off-days will facilitate fat loss. Once you start to make adjustments to your diet, off-day carbs are probably going to have to be reduced, anyway.

You can put those other, starchier carbs in your first two meals of the day. While the morning isn't as good a time to eat carbs as post-workout, this is the other time when your body is most likely to use them for energy and muscle repair.

Sample Meal Plans

Here are a few meal plans using our hypothetical 200-pounder's nutrient guidelines. Remember, this lifter's fat loss diet contains 200 grams of protein, 200 grams of carbs, and 89 grams of added fats per day. The totals won't always perfectly reflect those numbers, but they will be within five or so grams. You don't need to stress over fractions to make your diet work!

Training Day | Six meals

Meal 1	5 eggs (30 g protein, 25 g fat)
Meal 2	4 oz. chicken (30 g protein)

	0.25 cup nuts (14 g fat)
Meal 3 (pre-workout)	1.5 cups oats (75 g carbs)
	4 oz. lean steak (28 g. protein)
Post-workout shake	50 g. glucose powder or sports drink (50 g. carbs)
	1 scoop whey protein (25 g. protein)
Meal 4 (post-workout)	12 oz. sweet potato (75 g carbs)
	4 oz. fish (28 g protein)
	1 tbsp. olive oil (14 g fat)
Meal 5	1 scoop whey protein (25 g protein)
	1 tbsp. olive oil (14 g fat)
Meal 6	4 oz. white fish (30 g protein)
	2 oz. cheese (18 g fat)

Training Day | Four Meals

Meal 1	4 eggs (24 g protein, 20 g fat)
	2 oz. chicken (15 g protein)
Meal 2 (pre-workout)	1.5 cups rice (75 g carbs)
	6 oz. shrimp (45 g protein)
	1 tbsp. olive oil (14 g fat)
Post-workout shake	50 g. glucose powder or sports drink (50 g. carbs)
	1.5 scoop whey protein (38 g protein)
Meal 3 (post-workout)	12 oz. potato (75 g carbs)
	6 oz. lean steak (42 g protein)
	1 avocado (25 g fat)
Meal 4	5 oz. chicken (35 g protein)

	0.5 cup nuts (28 g fat)
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Off-Day | Six Meals

Meal 1	1.5 cups oats (75 g carbs)
	10 egg whites (30 g protein)
Meal 2	1.5 cups brown rice (75 g carbs)
	5 oz. chicken (35 g protein)
Meal 3	5 eggs (30 g protein, 25 g fat)
Meal 4	5 oz. lean steak (35 g protein)
	1.5 tbsp olive oil (20 g fat)
Meal 5	5 oz. salmon (35 g protein, 20 g fat)
Meal 6	1.5 scoop whey protein (40 g protein)
	1/3 cup nuts (20 g fat)

Off Day | Four Meals

Meal 1	12 oz. potatoes (75 g carbs)
	5 eggs (30 g protein, 25 g fat)
	3 oz. chicken (20 g protein)
Meal 2	1.5 cups rice (75 g carbs)
	1 tbsp. olive oil (14 g fat)
	7 oz. white fish (50 g protein)
Meal 3	2 scoops whey protein (50 g protein)
	0.5 cup nuts (28 g fat)
Meal 4	7 oz. lean steak (50 g protein)
	1/3 cup nuts (20 g fat)

As you can see, it's easy to make substitutions for food choices as long as you know how many carbs, proteins, and fats you need at each meal. Once you've figured out your daily totals for nutrients, first think about how you want to allocate them among your different meals. Then just add in your favorite bodybuilding-friendly foods as you see fit. This takes a bit of time and effort, but after a few weeks it will be second-nature. And besides, if you've been eating correctly for gaining weight, then you should already be used to making good food choices and eating according to most of these guidelines.

What About Fruits and Vegetables?

You probably noticed that those sample meals didn't include any fruits or veggies. Does this mean you shouldn't eat them? Not at all! Here's the low-down on including produce in your fat loss diet.

Fruit is healthy, but it contains quite a bit of sugar. While the sugars in fruit aren't going to spike your blood sugar or make you gain fat like corn syrup or other processed carbs, they are not as good as complex starches when it comes to building muscle. When your carbs are limited, it's best to "spend" them on the potatoes and grains you eat before and after your workout.

That having been said, it's probably okay for you to include one piece of fruit per day in your diet. Just eat it during one of those meals where you're already eating carbs, and make sure to count its sugar towards your daily totals just like you would any other carb source.

As for vegetables, the sky is the limit. With the exception of potatoes and other high-starch vegetables, veggies are high in fiber and contain little to no starch. In fact, most vegetables contain fewer calories than your body actually spends digesting them! The only reason vegetables weren't included in the sample meal plans is that their caloric content is too negligible to even worry about. No matter what food choices you make, and no matter how many carbs or fats you have to subtract from your diet to keep losing weight, you can always eat all the spinach, broccoli, and other leafy goodness you want.

Fat Loss Speed – Slow and Steady Wins the Race

Fat loss should be slow and gradual, but it can happen MUCH faster than muscle gain. As long as you lose between one and two pounds per week, you can be sure that your diet is progressing well without causing muscle loss.

If you go faster than two or so pounds per week, however, you start to risk losing your hard-earned muscle. When your body is in that large of a caloric deficit, it will begin to cannibalize muscle tissue for energy. Plus, losing weight that fast will probably go hand-in-hand with a very small food consumption and a serious lack of energy. Don't start skipping meals to get lean faster – it will only bite you in the ass.

If you're consistently losing less than one pound per week, you're probably eating too much or not doing enough cardio. In either case, things need to change. If you've got 10-20 pounds to lose, dieting at a snail's pace is going to make your diet drag on and on. You want to get this thing done quickly and efficiently so you can get back to building muscle!

Also, be sure to think in terms of average speed. When you first start your diet, you may lose several pounds within one or two weeks. That's okay – most of this weight is just water! When you suddenly reduce your food intake or switch to eating exclusively "clean," bodybuilding-friendly foods, your body has a tendency to hold on to less water beneath the skin. Keep plugging away at your diet for a couple of weeks before you make changes based on what the scale says.

Making Adjustments

Your body is an adaptive organism. Just like you have to make progressive changes in your training program, you'll have to make adjustments to your diet to keep losing fat.

When you begin with the baseline calories and nutrients we discussed earlier, you may not lose any weight at all. That's fine! It's better to start with too many calories than too few. If you're not losing at least a pound per week, you'll want to start subtracting carbs and fats from your diet until the scale starts showing some changes.

The first place to make subtractions is your off-day carb totals. You don't need many carbohydrates on the days you don't train, so you won't impact your energy levels too much by taking these away. If you're not losing weight, start by eating 100 fewer grams of carbs on the days you don't train with weights. Cardio-only days do not count as "training" days.

If you're still not losing fat, take some of the added fats out of your diet on both training days and off days. Cut 25 grams from your daily totals, and see if the scale starts moving.

If you make both of these changes and are still not getting leaner, you'll need to continue subtracting carbs and fats from your daily food intake. Start by nixing the rest

of the carbs on your non-training days. Having two or three days per week when you eat ONLY protein, fat, and some vegetables will almost surely get your fat loss moving.

If you still have to make adjustments, you can take away increments of 25 grams of carbs from your training days or 10 grams of fat from every day's food intake. However, you do not want to eat too little, so upping your cardio is a better choice at this point. Your metabolism is going to come to a screeching halt if you start eating like a bird, and it is often better to increase your energy expenditure than to decrease your energy intake.

And remember, these are changes to be made gradually and only when necessary. If you can lose fat with the baseline nutrient amounts and without doing any cardio, that's great! As long as you're losing one to two pounds of fat per week, starting slow and avoiding drastic changes will keep you sane and satisfied while you diet. It will also give you plenty of "wiggle-room" when your progress stalls. After all, what are you going to do when you plateau while already eating a super-low-calorie diet and doing an hour of cardio every day? You need to have plenty of room to subtract small amounts of carbs and fats and add cardio sessions as needed.

Finally, if your baseline calories and nutrients actually have you losing weight too fast, then eat more! If your metabolism is revving along, and if you can eat more carbs and fats and still lose body fat, then do it. When it comes to building a strong, lean, and muscular body, eating more is pretty much always better than eating less. Add carbs to your post-workout shakes and meals before increasing any other amounts, as these are the most critical meals for maintaining your muscle mass on a diet. Adding to these meals will also have the least impact on your ability to lose lots of fat.

Cheat Meals and Refeeds

You need to be strict with your cut diet if you expect to see consistent results. The "discipline" (or lack thereof) of most weekend warriors and fad dieters should be laughable by your standards. That being said, sticking to your meal plan for every meal, every day, every week is not necessary. It may even be counter-productive!

If you're losing body fat, it means your body is in a caloric deficit – taking in less energy than it consumes. The catch-22 here is that while a deficit is required for losing fat, it will also cause your body to down-regulate its own metabolism. The human body seeks balance, so it's going to start simply burning fewer calories after a few days or weeks of dieting. You can respond with fewer calories and more exercise, but you're only delaying the inevitable!

While you will probably have to make adjustments to your diet and cardio to keep losing fat, cheating or “refeeding” with high-calorie meals can help your body maintain a fast metabolism. A huge meal may halt fat loss for a few hours, but your body will respond by burning more calories (and body fat) for days to come. There are a couple of ways to go about doing this.

One method is to simply have a cheat meal at a scheduled time. It doesn’t matter exactly what you eat, as long as it’s very high in carbs and overall calories. Make sure you eat this meal on one of your training days, ideally post-workout. This will ensure that your body takes advantage of the extra burst of nutrients for building muscle, and it still leaves your off days for lower carbs and calories.

If you have a great deal of fat to lose, however, you might want to avoid all-out cheat meals. Instead, a more careful approach called “refeeding” may be best. The concept is the same – eat more carbs and calories to boost your metabolism – but you’re going to stay strict with your food choices. After a training session, you would load up on the same carb sources you always use, but in much higher amounts. Instead of eating only 50-100 grams of carbohydrate in your post-workout meal, you might eat 300-400. That’s quite a bit of oats and potatoes to consume in one meal, so it’s alright if you spread those carbs over the course of a few hours – as long as it’s after you’ve trained that day.

In either case, you’ll want to have a couple of weeks of noticeable fat loss under your belt before you start scheduling these kinds of meals. When you do use them, it’s once per week maximum! Saying that you “need to refeed” is not a valid excuse for giving into temptation or having an unscheduled deviation from your diet. In fact, you may want to wait until you really need a cheat or refeed until you do your first one. Here are a few signs your metabolism is slowing down:

- You’re not losing fat as fast or at all.
- You are cold all of the time.
- Your strength in the gym has taken a recent hit.
- You don’t feel energetic during workouts, even when using caffeine.
- You’re lethargic for most of the day.

Notice how “I really want some cake” isn’t on this list! Cheat meals and refeeds certainly provide a nice mental break from dieting, but their main purpose is to keep your fat loss progressing at a good pace.

In general, the leaner you are, the more restrictive your diet is, and the closer you are to your desired leanness, the more often you should refeed. If you’re flat-out chubby, refeeds should come once every 10-14 days, and cheat meals should be nonexistent

until you're in decent shape. If you're damn-near ripped, you'll want to eat a substantial cheat meal about once per week.

Weight Training

Whether you're just getting into bodybuilding, or you've been lifting for years, weight training is going to be your main form of exercise for fat loss. Your goal is to be lean and muscular, so you've got to do everything you can to maintain or even build muscle tissue during your diet. Focusing on cardio and throwing weight training to the wayside will only make you a smaller version of yourself – same body fat levels, less muscle mass.

The Myth of Higher Reps and Toning

The biggest myth about weight training for fat loss is that higher reps will “tone” or “cut up” your muscles. Do NOT fall victim to this mentality! If heavy weights and strength gains are what built your muscle mass, then that's what's going to keep it there while you strip away the body fat. You may burn slightly more calories doing more sets and reps, but burning calories isn't the point of lifting weights! Whether gaining weight or losing it, the point of lifting is to force your muscles to adapt to progressively heavier loads. Burning extra calories is a job best left to cardio and diet.

That being said, upping your rep ranges can serve a useful purpose during a diet. It's much more difficult to make strength gains in the gym when your calories, carbs, and fats are low. If you work with slightly lighter weights, adding a few reps or a few pounds to the bar is much more plausible. Confused? Here's an example:

Let's say that when you're gaining size, you do a heavy set of 4-6 reps on the squat every week. You feel strong because of the extra nutrients you're taking in, and you're able to add another five pounds or another rep every time you repeat the exercise. Over the course of a few months, that's awesome progress!

Then you start dieting, and that kind of quick progress starts to stall. Adding a sixth rep when you could only get five the week before is a BIG strength increase in the grand scheme of things. So is adding five or ten pounds to the bar and still getting the same number of reps. To keep progressing, you might start using 10-12 reps. When the next squat workout comes around, adding another couple of reps or another five pounds represents a much smaller increase in strength – but it's still an increase! The reps may be higher, but you're still gradually gaining strength and retaining your muscle mass as a result.

Overall, this method should only be used when necessary. When you first start dieting, you'll probably be nearly as strong as you were when you were gaining weight. As the diet drags on, and you start to feel a little weaker, then you might want to think about working within higher rep ranges. Whatever you do, just make sure you continue to focus on strength gains.

Big Movements

Just like you should still train for strength while losing fat, you should keep performing the same basic exercises. You'll hear a lot of lazy lifters talk about how they stop doing deadlifts, squats, and other great movements just because they're on a diet – that's crap! The exercises that are best for building muscle are going to do the best job at retaining it while you're on low calories.

If you're taking time to focus on fat loss, then you probably already know the best exercises for muscle growth. Just in case you don't, however, know this: squats, deadlifts, heavy presses, pull-ups, and rows should be your go-to movements for almost every workout. Of course, you should still do isolation exercises like curls and raises, but don't start doing more of these just because you're "refining" your physique. If you want to look thick, dense, and strong once you get lean, keep pushing the heavy iron.

Should You Reduce Volume?

At some point during your fat loss phase, the low calories and carbs are probably going to start affecting your energy levels. You may still feel excited to go to the gym, but your energy levels will take a plunge – often before you finish your workouts. What's a lifter to do?

A lot of successful bodybuilders and powerlifters actually reduce their weight training volume during a diet. They keep the most important aspects of their training regimens intact, getting rid of the energy-sapping "fluff" – the extra movements and sets which don't do much for building muscle, anyway. Doing this can also keep motivation high.

If you start to feel lethargic in the gym, you may want to give this strategy a try. Keep performing the heavy sets of those basic exercise, and make sure your strength doesn't fall! You're probably not going to gain much muscle on your diet, so your focus should be on doing whatever is necessary to retain what you already have. You're not going to be consuming enough calories to support a bunch of extra stuff in your workouts.

Cardio / Conditioning

Cardio certainly won't be the focus of your fat loss program, but that doesn't mean you can skip it, either. It sucks, and it's boring, but most people have to do at least some cardio to get as lean as possible. However, don't start hitting up the treadmill for an hour a day, every day, thinking you're going to speed things along. Just like dieting, cardio should be added gradually and only as necessary. You're not trying to get in shape for a marathon; you're trying to be lean and muscular!

Steady State Cardio

This is the traditional – and most boring – way to do your cardio. “Steady state” simply means that your heart rate and exertion stay basically the same throughout the entire cardio session. Most bodybuilders use brisk treadmill walks for their steady state cardio, but you can use any machine – bikes and ellipticals work just fine. Taking walks outside is great, too, as long as you force yourself to keep a brisk pace.

The whole point of doing slow, steady cardio is simply to burn extra calories. Contrary to what many overweight people like to believe, taking long, lazy walks doesn't work any kind of fat loss magic. If you're already in a big caloric deficit with your diet, you probably don't need much steady cardio. If you're not burning enough calories but don't want to eat any less food, a few of these sessions per week might be in order.

That being said, doing your cardio first thing in the morning on an empty stomach may provide more benefit than doing it at any other time of the day. When you wake up after eight or so hours of sleep, your blood sugar should be at about the lowest points it's going to be all day. Without tons of carbs or other calories in your system, your body is very likely to use its body fat stores as energy – exactly what you want!

So, if you're going to do steady state cardio, make every effort to get up earlier than normal and do it before your first meal. You'll probably have better fat loss results, and you'll also get it out of the way for the rest of the day.

As for frequency and duration, start GRADUALLY. At first, do steady cardio only on your off-days from weight training. Thirty minutes per session with a sustained heart rate of roughly 130 beats per minute is a good start. If fat loss stalls, start adding in one or two more sessions per week. Once you're at the point of doing 4-5 sessions per week, start upping the duration by 10-15 minutes at a time. If you get to the point where you're doing an hour per day, 4-5 days a week, you probably need to focus on changing your diet. Too much cardio eats up your muscle mass, hampers your recovery from weight training, and takes tons of time.

Intervals Slow, steady cardio is most lifters' preferred method, but many people use interval training, as well. Doing intervals involves alternating 15-20 second bursts of sprinting with 60-90 seconds of "active" rest – walking or light jogging. These sessions are very short, 15-20 minutes maximum, and you won't burn much body fat while you do them. However, this type of intense cardio will make your body burn extra calories for hours afterwards. This post-exercise effect is the reason most sprinters are so lean!

Make no mistake – doing intervals a few times per week WILL make you leaner. However, they are intense and will cut into your body's ability to recover from weight training. They also require a great deal more physical and mental energy than slower cardio. When you're already somewhat fatigued from your diet, adding intervals can sometimes be too much to handle.

If you're going to use interval training, start with just one session per week, preferably on a day you don't weight train. Do 8-10 cycles of sprints and resting, catch your breath, and go home. If you put forth an honest effort, that should be enough. You can add one more weekly session if you really need it, but don't push things any more than that. If you're eating correctly, losing body fat, and hitting the weights hard, you won't have the energy for more sprinting.

Also, you don't have to sprint on flat ground to get the benefits of interval training. Stationary bikes and elliptical machines work pretty well, and hill sprints are a fantastic option. Running on a track or sidewalk can be hard on some people's knees and ankles, and these alternatives involve much lower impact.

Should You Combine Strength Work and Conditioning?

Some fitness enthusiasts like to do cardio and conditioning work IN the weight room with circuit routines, barbell complexes, and the like. They might combine high-rep deadlifts with burpees, or they might do puke-inducing circuits of squats, overhead presses, and pull-ups. While these types of training can be effective for fat loss, they are NOT good for someone with bodybuilding or heavy-lifting goals in mind.

Combining conditioning and strength training requires extra weight-room sessions, cutting deeply into your ability to lift heavy. This type of training also requires quite a large carbohydrate intake to be done consistently – not something you're going to get on fat-loss diet.

People who train like this are typically in fantastic shape, but bodybuilders they are NOT. If your main goal is to be lean, strong, and exceptionally muscular, leave the cardio for the treadmill and the track. When you're in the weight room, stick to the heavy

lifting and progressive overload which have proven time and again to be best for building muscle.

Supplements

If you're reading this book, you probably already know that diet and training account for the VAST majority of any lifter's success. Dietary supplements are just that – supplements to an already-successful nutritional program. Most of the products out there are going to do very little to make you leaner or more muscular. If your diet sucks, supps aren't going to fix it, and if your diet's great, pills and powders aren't going to make it much better.

However, there are a few tried and true supplements which can help make your diet easier and provide a slight boost to your fat loss results. Here are the best products to use on your cut diet.

Protein Powder

A quality protein powder isn't so much a supplement as it is powdered food. If your diet includes lots of protein (and it should!), you're probably going to need a good powder to help meet your daily totals. Solid proteins like meat, fish, and eggs are best, but most people are far too busy to cook and eat every single meal.

The only type of protein powder you should really consider is whey protein. Soy protein is no good for a male looking to build a great physique, and other animal-based proteins are too expensive for long-term use. Thankfully, there are tons of great whey powders on the market. Just look for one with a good taste, easy mixability, and a price which fits your budget. Stick mainly to online purveyors, as most grocery stores and supplement shops jack their prices sky-high.

Fish Oil

Hundreds of studies have shown that Omega-3 fats are invaluable for fat loss and healthy hormone levels. However, it can be difficult to get enough of these healthy fatty acids through diet alone. Salmon and other fish are rich in Omega-3's but too expensive for most people to eat every day. You should certainly try to eat some fish two to three times per week, but a quality fish oil supplement can help you cover your bases daily.

Most grocery stores sell a generic brand of fish oil, and that will do just fine for your purposes. Make sure to include this supplement in your daily fat totals – fish oil is pure

fat, after all! Ten or so grams per day is plenty, and this moderate amount can count as the fat source in one of your daily meals. If you're on the run, a protein shake with some fish oil capsules is a healthy, convenient meal.

Tribulus

So-called testosterone "boosters" are all the rage in the supplement world. While high testosterone levels are certainly great for building muscle and losing fat, most of these products will do nothing but drain your wallet. As with any other type of supplement, you should be wary when a test-booster claims to "add 10 pounds of muscle in two weeks," "instantly add 50 pounds to your bench," or do anything else that's nearly impossible.

However, an herbal product called tribulus terrestris has been shown to slightly elevate testosterone levels in men. This supplement typically comes in pill-form, and there are plenty of cheap, generic brands available. It's not going to do anything drastic, but it can help guys who have slightly low test levels.

Really, though, this supplement is just icing on the cake. If you're a young guy, or your testosterone levels are in good shape, using tribulus isn't going to do much of anything for you. If you're worried that you actually suffer from chronically low testosterone levels, you should see a doctor and find out if something is really up with your hormones.

Caffeine

Caffeine can be awesome for lifters during growth and fat loss phases alike. As long as you don't overdo it, taking some caffeine prior to workouts can give a fantastic boost of energy and some extra mental focus to see you through a grueling session. Lots of lifters like to just drink some strong coffee before they train, but for a concentrated dose you can take a 200 milligram caffeine pill. They're available at most grocery stores and gas stations.

Caffeine can be especially helpful for when you're deep into a fat loss diet. When your carbs are low, having some caffeine in your system can make all the difference to your energy levels in the gym. If you really want to make the most of caffeine for your workouts, try to avoid it throughout the rest of the day. Possible health issues aside, being addicted to caffeine will just make it less effective when you really want a mental boost.

Fat Burners?

Don't even bother. There are tons of products out there that claim to boost fat loss for bodybuilders, but they're rarely any different from the fad diet pills marketed to the general "weight loss" crowd. They'll sometimes contain an odd herb or amino acid which may actually help you to lose fat, but only in tiny doses. In fact, most fat burners that people claim they can "feel working" are just full of caffeine! If what you're after is a little stimulant buzz, just save your money and drink some coffee.

What's worse is that some of these products have been known to have some nasty side effects. Lifters who load up on fat burners often experience heart palpitations, jitters, and cold sweats. Most supplement companies are pretty irresponsible when it comes to producing safe products, and fat loss drugs are almost never evaluated by the FDA. If you're someone who is sensitive to stimulants, then you should be especially wary of these products.

Alright, you know how to set up your diet – the most important part of your fat loss plan. You know you need to keep training hard and heavy to retain your muscle while you shed that fat. You know what supplements you should buy, and which ones you should avoid. So what are you waiting for? Get going with your cut diet, make changes when necessary, and get lean. Spend a few short months to drop that unwanted blubber so you can get back to doing what body building is really all about – getting bigger and stronger!

Muscle Building Nutrition

Your Diet: The REAL "Secret" to Muscle Growth!

So, you've bought your gym membership, picked a training plan, and loaded up on the latest supplements. You're ready to rock and roll, right? Not so fast! Whether your ultimate goal is muscle growth, fat loss, strength, or speed, you're going to go nowhere fast without the right diet.

Believe it or not, the stuff you put in your mouth everyday is even more important than your training. Before you start pointlessly plugging away in the weight room, you need to learn what foods will help you maximize your results. Eat too little of this, too much of that, start skipping critical meals - and you can expect to reap ZERO rewards from all of your hard work. Great bodies are built in the kitchen, so read on to find out how you should eat for maximum muscle growth.

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The Most Important Piece of the Puzzle

Still skeptical about the importance of a proper diet? You're certainly not alone. The biggest, strongest guys spend lots of time in the gym, so it makes sense to think that their training is what's made them huge. But that's only one part of the equation.

No matter how much you lift, sprint, jog, carry, or throw, exercise will NOT make you gain weight. In fact, exercise alone won't cause you to lose weight, either. Like every other environmental stressor, hard physical activity will simply give your body a reason to do something, a reason to change. What happens next is up to you!

Of course, we're not interested in most types of exercise; we're interested in heavy lifting! I won't bore you with the details on why heavy weights are crucial for growth - that much is obvious. What you may not understand, however, is that lifting does NOT build muscle. It breaks your body down!

When you strain against the weights, your muscles actually experience micro-trauma - tiny little "tears." No, these trauma aren't the same as the gut-wrenching muscle and ligament tears that happen to competitive lifters. But they DO lead to fatigue, and they require proper rest and nutrition to repair. Eat the right foods at the right times, and those muscle fibers will actually grow bigger and stronger than before. That's what we're after!

Your muscles aren't the only body parts that need nutrition, though. EVERY cell in your body requires energy to function. Your bones, skin, and internal organs are constantly firing away, especially if you live a high-stress, high-octane kind of life. Quite a few bodybuilders fall into the trap of ONLY considering their muscles and fat stores, but your body is a complex machine!

If you're just looking to get bigger, stronger, or leaner, do those other considerations even matter? You bet! You certainly don't need to worry about the intricate inner workings of your body, but you do need to understand that your energy needs will fluctuate. Just because you're looking good and feeling strong doesn't mean your entire body's doing well. Excitement, stress, and varying levels of activity can all influence the amount of food you need. Plan accordingly!

Why else is a proper diet crucial to muscle growth? Brain power, believe it or not. You're probably not writing a dissertation between sets, but rapidly-firing neurons are CRITICAL for productive training sessions. Despite the "dumb meathead" stereotype, heavy lifting requires a sharp, focused mind. Have you ever noticed how you're at your strongest when you're also at your smartest? Have you seen the effects that "smart drugs" like caffeine and tyrosine can have on your strength? This is why!

So, it only makes sense that you'd want to maximize your mental strength when you're training and recovering. Your brain is a metabolic powerhouse, and you'll need to provide it plenty of energy to keep it running smoothly. Eat too little fat or protein, or let

your blood sugar dip too low, and you're liable to crash right in the middle of your most important workouts.

If you still doubt the importance of proper nutrition, just look at the bodies - and overall health - of people who DON'T eat that well. We all know someone who runs, cycles, lift weights, and does every other type of exercise under the sun - yet still looks like crap. It's because of their diet!

Why is that so? Why do some people see zero results from all of their hard training? The answer is NOT "bad genetics." What a cop-out! Sure, not everyone can be the kind of freak who gets huge and lean eating Fruit Loops, but your genes are not deterministic. Poor eaters see poor results because their diets WRECK their body's hormonal systems.

Unless you're taking massive amounts of steroids and other performance enhancers, hormonal enhancement needs to be one of the main goals of your diet. You're not going to have high enough testosterone levels for growth if you're eating nothing but grains and soy. Likewise, you won't get the insulin spikes needed for growth if you're afraid to EVER eat a single carb. We'll touch more on hormones later, but suffice to say - they're important! Energy balance, macronutrient ratios, and total calories mean nothing if your hormones are all screwed up from poor food choices. Eat the right foods, though, and changing your body becomes an exact, predictable, and not-so-difficult science.

By now, I've hopefully convinced you that good nutrition is your KEY to muscle-building success. If you want to be lazy and ignore your diet - be my guest. If you're one of those aforementioned freaks who gains muscle at the drop of a hat - you probably don't need my advice, anyway! But if you're an average guy who wants a superhuman physique, the advice in this book will help you accomplish your goals as quickly and efficiently as possible.

What Are Your goals?

Before we get into the nitty-gritty details of what you'll be eating, you need to make a simple (but tough) decision: what are you goals? Are you a super-skinny beginner who wants nothing more than to be huge and strong? Are you a chronically chubby guy who wants to finally see his abs? Are you at some wishy-washy middle point where you can't quite decide whether you should "bulk" or "cut?"

Whatever the case may be, you need to pick a goal - ONE main goal - and stick with it. Aside from pure laziness and inaction, the most common reason why people fail at bodybuilding is that they never commit to a goal. I've seen guys spin their wheels for

YEARS, constantly waffling between plans and programs. They'll spend a few weeks gaining muscle, only to lose all of it (and more) on a fast-fat-loss crash diet. I've also seen men and women ruin months of dieting with a few weeks of binging - all of it justified as "bulking" or "mass gaining."

Am I saying that it's impossible to lose fat and gain muscle at the same time? Not at all. In fact, newbies who do everything right from the get-go can often experience fantastic gains in strength, size, and leanness. If you're reading this book BEFORE you've put a couple of years of training under your belt, then you might be able to do just that.

For most people, however, that's an inefficient and damn near useless way to go about doing things. You might end up gaining a bit of muscle on a fat loss diet, and you might even lower your overall body fat percentage while gaining mass. But if you organize some crazy program in an attempt to do both, you'll only be pushing your body in two totally different directions. You'll only be spinning your wheels.

Still feeling stubborn? Still think you can go from skinny-fat to super-fit in one fell swoop? If so, you're certainly not alone. Focus on fat loss, and you'll start to feel weak, depleted, and small. Focus on strength and size, and you'll feel fat and gross. It's a common complaint among beginner bodybuilders, especially those who used to be straight-up fat. The former fat-guy complex is rampant, and it keeps all-too-many guys (and gals) from reaching their goals.

If this sounds like you, do yourself a favor: get lean first! If you're not willing to take your shirt off in public, then you're too fat to focus on size. Don't worry about the arbitrary "upper-limit" body fat percentages that coaches and gurus say you should aim for. You probably haven't even measured your body fat, nor do you need to. It's all about what YOU are comfortable with. If you're not comfortable in your own skin now, there's no way you're going to stick it out for the long haul during a mass gaining phase.

Remember, too, that you might have to get a tad fatter while gaining muscle. You shouldn't become a slob, of course, but if you want to gain muscle at a decent rate, you have to be willing to accept some "extra." So even if you're acceptably lean right now, are you willing to get a little smoother? If the answer is no, you know what to do. Getting lean really don't take that long, especially if you stay focused on it for a few months at a time. The reason you've never seen your six pack is probably that you've just abandoned every fat loss plan within a few weeks of starting it!

In case you need yet another reason to lose fat before getting big, consider this: you'll gain MORE muscle if you start out lean! In general, people's insulin sensitivity becomes far worse as they get fatter. The more fat you gain, the more likely your body will be to put MORE of it on. That means you'll see crappier results, even when you train hard

and eat as perfectly as possible. So, if you're worried about "wasting" a few months on fat loss first - stop. Your longer-term results will be far better, and you'll attain that dream physique in far less time.

Now, if you're NOT in that middle ground - if you're just rail thin or straight-up-fat - then PICKING a goal should be pretty straightforward. Six feet tall and 150 pounds soaking wet? You need to gain mass. Twenty percent body fat with a hanging gut? Long-term goals be damned, you need to lose weight.

Still, these goals require serious commitment. Changing your body may not be as complicated as some people believe, but it sure as hell takes hard work. Are you willing to make it to the gym on time, every time you're supposed to? Will you stick to your diet when everyone around you tries to get you to break? Are you ready to spend the necessary time in the kitchen to prepare the right meals at the right times? These may seem like simple commitments right now, but life always gets in the way. Decide now that you're going to make the sacrifices necessary to stick to your plan.

The Basics: Proteins, Fats, and Carbohydrates

A calorie is NOT a calorie. Forget the crap you've read in news rack magazines, and stop listening to skinny-fat dieticians. Yes, a calorie-restricted diet will make you lose weight, and a caloric surplus will make you gain it. But that point is so far off from the big picture that it's not even worth worrying about. In fact, I'd suggest that you completely forget about counting your total calories. It's an arbitrary measurement that tells us almost nothing about the effects a food will have on your body.

No matter what type of diet you're using, and no matter what your ultimate goal is, the quantities you really need to consider are your macronutrients, or "macros." The three main macros are those nutrients you undoubtedly already know: proteins, fats, and carbohydrates.

It's these nutrients - and the ratios in which you consume them - that are truly responsible for the effects of any given meal. Just think about it this way. Do you think 1,000 calories of broccoli will affect your body in the same ways as 1,000 calories of butter? Do you think you'll gain more fat from eating 500 calories of sugar or 500 calories of chicken breast? What's going to help you gain more muscle - a single steak or an entire bag of carrots? These foods affect your body in different ways because of their differing macronutrient contents - NOT their energy (calorie) content.

Of course, not all carbs, proteins, or fats are created equal, either. Each refers to a broad class of organic molecules which can have wildly differing effects on fat loss and muscle gain. Sugar, starch, and fiber are all carbohydrates. Processed, hydrogenated peanut butter and extra virgin olive oil are both mainly fat. Snake venom is actually a protein! Clearly, you must also pick the RIGHT sources of these macronutrients to optimize your diet.

Proteins: The Building Blocks of Muscle Mass

If you want to build muscle, you're going to need truckloads of protein! In fact, even people on fat loss diets still needs tons of the stuff - especially if they want to retain muscle while dieting. Whether you're all-out-gaining or damn-near starving yourself to get lean, you can't afford to let your protein intake dip too low.

Why is protein so important? It's not because it provides "energy." In fact, breaking proteins down into smaller parts - and then breaking THOSE parts down into usable energy - is an extremely inefficient process. By the time your body has processed meat or eggs into cellular energy, it's already used about half of that energy just to get the job done! This is why diets high in protein - but low in BOTH carbs and fats - still leave you feeling weak and miserable.

No, protein's real job is to provide material for repair and growth. Every kind of protein - plant or animal - is made up of amino acids. These amino acids are the "building blocks" which your body uses to construct almost everything, from hair to bones to muscles. Moderate amounts are fine for people who want to keep their bodies the same. If you want to build NEW muscle tissue, however, you're going to need a ton!

Of course, not every type of protein is going to do the trick. There are twenty different amino acids, and your body needs them in certain proportions to optimally build muscle. Not surprisingly, the highest-quality, most "usable" proteins are found in animal products. Sorry vegans; there's a reason why most of you are small. Vegetarians can get by on milk and eggs, but veggies and grains just don't contain the right combinations or amounts of aminos to get big and strong.

Now, does that mean that every animal-derived protein is just as good as the next? Hardly! Supplement companies usually claim that whey protein is the most "bioavailable" protein around - just tops for building muscle. I don't care what tests they've run, though, because that's just not the case.

Protein shakes DO digest quickly, so they're great for post-workout recovery. They're also fine when you're in a bind, and you're choosing between a shake or nothing at all.

But for most of your meals, you should be concentrating on solid, whole-food proteins: meat and eggs.

My favorite? Red meat, without a doubt. Like most other experienced lifters, I've noticed far better recovery and growth when I consistently eat steak and ground beef. That may be due in part to their higher fat content (more energy means more growth), but I'm convinced that there's just something better about the proteins in cows, sheep, and other mammals. You're probably not going to eat red meat all the time, though, so feel free to load up on eggs, chicken, fish, and pretty much anything else that once had a face.

Some bodybuilders also like milk, but I'm not so keen on the stuff. It does have a decent amount of protein, and it's damn cheap – but it's LOADED with carbs. If you're the type who can handle tons of lactose, and if you're not trying to lose body fat, then have at it. Milk has a long been a staple for super-skinny hard-gainers. But if you're not so lean, or you don't handle dairy very well, then don't sweat it. There's nothing magical about the proteins in milk, and you won't curtail your progress by avoiding it.

Fats: Your Hormones' Best Friends

Now that the 1980s and 90s are behind us, even the nutritionally-illiterate layperson isn't quite so scared of fat. Still, most bodybuilders don't seem to understand the vital functions of this essential nutrient. Pick up any diet book, or read any article by a popular nutritionist, and you'll see plenty of babble about "healthy" fats - olive oil, nuts, and the like. But are those fats really the best? And what about saturated, animal fats - are they really that bad? To both questions, my answer is a resounding "no."

The truth is, properly-sourced saturated fat does wonders for your health - especially if you're a man. It's been shown time and again to increase testosterone, something you'll need in abundance if you want to make appreciable gains. The same is true for cholesterol, which is actually one of the building blocks of this crucial hormone. Want to feel great, lose fat, and gain muscle? Eat your beef and eggs!

If you're worried about your heart health and cholesterol levels, don't be. Study after study has shown that eating dietary cholesterol is not what leads to an increase in your blood cholesterol. In fact, rises in LDL (the bad cholesterol) and cardiovascular problems are most likely caused by the over-consumption of sugar and starch. More on that in a bit.

So, where should you get all this saturated fat? Start with all those foods that are supposedly bad for you. Whole eggs and fattier cuts of beef are my favorites, but pork

and skin-on chicken are pretty good, too. If at all possible, buy grass-fed beef, and get your poultry and eggs from pasture-raised chickens. This isn't essential - and it's certainly more expensive - but properly-raised and well-fed animals contain the healthiest fats. Most of the problems with beef fat, for example, arise from feeding cows corn instead of grass.

Coconut oil is another great source of saturated fat. It contains tons of medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs), which have also been shown to cause a reduction in body fat. That's right: get leaner by eating more fat! I think it tastes pretty good, too, but it does have a strong coconut aroma. If you're going to use it, don't heat it up too much. It's got a super-low smoke point, and it'll go rancid if you use it for frying or sautéing.

Aside from their positive effects on your hormone levels, all these fats are fantastic for energy. Forget the nonsense about carbohydrates being the best form of sustained energy. If you're used to eating tons of them, then sure, you'll "crash" without your thrice-daily influx of sugar. But once you get accustomed a higher fat (and lower carb) intake, you'll wonder how you ever lived differently. For most people, fats provide a smooth, even keel of energy. They're also great for adding clean calories to your muscle-building diet. Add those calories with carbs or weight-gain powders, and you'll find yourself getting bigger in all the wrong places.

So, what about those "healthy" fats you always hear about? While they may not be the holy grail of nutrition some dieticians make them out to be, they're still great. It's a good idea to balance out your saturated fat intake with some monounsaturated fats, which you can find in abundance in olive oil, avocados, and nuts. Steer clear of foods high in polyunsaturates and hydrogenated fats, though. These include corn oil, canola oil, soybean oil, and pretty much every other highly-processed oil. These foods contain the real "bad fats."

Carbohydrates: Do You Really Need Them?

Now that the anti-fat crusade is behind us, carbohydrates have become the most controversial nutrients on the block. Are they really that important for the budding bodybuilder? The short answer is yes, especially if you want to build LOTS of muscle. Some guys can make decent gains without ever eating any carbs, but they're few and far between. What you'll need to determine is what types, how many, and how often you'll need to eat them.

When it comes to muscle growth, the best carbs - and the ones bodybuilders most often consume - are starches. These include rice, potatoes, yams, and every whole grain you can think of. Often-reviled foods like white flour are also starches, though their

excessive processing and quick digestion make them less-than-ideal for our purposes. Is your health going to rapidly deteriorate if you eat a cookie or a piece of bread? No. But you CAN be pretty sure that you're helping your body to lay down more fat AND build less muscle. Not what we're after.

Of course, starches are simply long chains of simple sugars - a double-edged sword of a nutrient. Sugars and starches alike will spike your insulin, which is arguably the most powerful muscle-building hormone in your body. However, insulin can cause your muscle cells AND fat cells to store nutrients. Eat sugars and starches at the right times, and you'll drastically improve your recovery and muscular growth. Eat them at the wrong times, and you're virtually guaranteed to lay down swaths of body fat. When it comes to carbs, timing is everything!

The other main reason to eat carbs is to fill your glycogen reserves. Glycogen is basically stored energy for your muscles, and it's what fuels intense activities like weight lifting and sprinting. Without adequate glycogen, you'll feel weak, your muscular endurance will suck, and you'll LOOK small and depleted. Every gram of stored glycogen can hold THREE grams of water, which is why you look so much bigger and more defined when you're full of carbs and fluids.

Starches and sugars are what some nutritionists call "usable" carbs, but you should also consider fiber. Though it's technically a carbohydrate, fiber acts completely differently once it's in your body. It doesn't spike your insulin (or even raise it at all), and since we humans don't have certain digestive enzymes, it can't even provide energy. It is satiating, however, which is great when you're on a diet or eating a low-carb meal. Vegetables aren't the be-all, end-all of muscle-building nutrition, but you should definitely include them in some of your meals!

Everybody's Body is Different!

Before you settle on a specific dietary strategy, you'll need to consider your unique physiology. You're probably not the kind of special snowflake who can grow muscle on cookies and ice cream, but we all have our genetic quirks and differences. Just as importantly, the place your body's at NOW may be important in figuring out how to change it. There are plenty of good guidelines, but there is no perfect diet for everyone.

For the Formerly Fat

In our unfortunately unhealthy society, this is probably going to be the most common question for beginner bodybuilders. Did you get into lifting weights because you were a

fat kid? Are you still a little chubby? Have you bulked up too big in the past? If so, you're by no means doomed to carry a sub-par physique, but you may have to play it safe while you gain size.

For one thing, the fact that you used to be fat probably indicates at least some genetic disposition towards fat gain. Are you doomed to obesity? Hardly. But you will gain weight faster than most, and you'll need to maintain a more moderate energy surplus. Try to gain muscle too quickly, and you'll just end up piling on body fat. So long as you're gaining only two or three pounds per month, you're fine. Just don't fall into the trap of using a "bulking phase" to justify awful dietary decisions.

Your ability to handle carbs may also be compromised, especially if you're still not very lean. Other lifters might be slamming oatmeal and potatoes at every meal, but a sky-high carbohydrate intake will only make you fat. At the very least, you'll want to limit your carbs to the meals just before and after training - the times when you can best put them to use. If you're really struggling to stay lean - or if you need to lose weight - then you'll probably want to use a cyclic ketogenic diet, outlined in the next section.

For the Skinny and Lean

Are you rail thin? Have you struggled all your life to put on some weight? If you're lanky, then you may need to throw caution to the wind (at least for a while) and start pounding the food like nobody's business. That may sound great to other bodybuilders, but if you're like most skinny guys, eating enough to grow is not always going to be pleasant.

In particular, you'll probably need to eat far more carbs than people who've struggled with their weight. Your body can likely handle the extra insulin spikes, and as long as you're also getting plenty of protein, most of those nutrients will be put to good use. You're in no imminent danger of becoming obese, either, so you can easily adjust if you go overboard.

Overall, you may actually need to eat less fat than other bodybuilders, at least in proportion to the amounts of carbs you're consuming. Combinations of fats and carbs tend to be pretty satisfying, and they may actually make you too full before you can eat enough. You'll probably do best on a high-carb, high-protein, moderate fat diet. You don't actually need to avoid fat, but too much of it will prevent you from eating enough.

If You Need to Lose Weight

Be honest with yourself - are you formerly fat, or are you still too chubby to focus on size gains? If you're not lean enough to have some "wobble-room" to get a little smoother, then you certainly shouldn't be trying to gain weight.

For almost everyone I've encountered, the best way to lose body fat while maintaining - or even gaining- muscle mass is the cyclic ketogenic diet. We'll cover that more in the next section, but you'll be subsisting on fat and protein for a few days at a time. In simple terms, it's the strictest possible version of the widely-misunderstood Atkins diet. Eating near-zero carbs keeps your insulin low, which allows your body to switch over to its stored fat for energy.

Making a Decision

Even if you don't fit perfectly into one of these three broad categories, they should be able to guide you towards a specific kind of diet. As far as your macronutrients and food choices are concerned, your most important consideration will be how many carbs you eat, when you eat them, and how often you eat them. Everyone needs lots of protein, and your fat intake will generally rise and fall opposite to your carb intake. More fat, fewer carbs; more carbs, less fat. We'll cover the finer points in the next section.

Picking a Diet

Here's what you've been waiting for - the details on what foods you should actually eat to build muscle! As we discussed before, food choices, macronutrient ratios, and timing are far more important than your total calorie intake - so those are what we're going to discuss. We'll talk about quantities later.

For now, I'm going to outline three main "types" of diets. The way you eat may not look exactly like any one of these, but it should be pretty close. Again, the differences between these diets basically boil down to carb consumption. If you're on the chubby side, or if you just tend to gain fat easily - go with fewer carbs. If you've been skinny all your life, err way on the side of more carbs.

The Timed Carb Approach

Want to have your cake and eat it, too? Do you want to gain as much lean mass as possible without almost any body fat? If so, the timed carb approach might be right for you. As we talked about before, excessive or poorly-timed carbohydrate intake is pretty

much a one-way ticket to fat gain. However, carbs (and the insulin spikes they provide) are crucial for massive muscular growth. One of the best ways to harness this double-edged sword is to only eat carbs at specific times of the day.

Without a doubt, the most important time to eat your carbs will be during the post-workout "window" of opportunity. If you lift heavy on a regular basis, your body will always be working to recover and grow. But it's during those first few hours AFTER a heavy training session that you'll be most likely to use carbs for muscular growth - NOT fat storage. Your muscle cells are primed to sop up whatever nutrients you can throw at them, and for a couple of hours, your fat cells are actually unable to store anything new. Pretty cool, huh?

What specific foods should you eat after training? Most guys will assert that a shake is just critical, and that you'll wither away to nothing if you don't consume some combination of whey and glucose as soon as you finish your last set. While this is a great approach, I haven't found it to be the end-all, be-all of post-workout nutrition that so many other lifters claim it to be.

If you're skinny, or if you're already having trouble fulfilling your protein needs throughout the day, then have your shake. A 2:1 combination of carbs and protein is best, something like 100 grams of glucose and 50 grams of whey protein. You can find some pretty good products on supplement store shelves, but if you're pinching pennies - just make it yourself. Use whatever whey protein you already prefer, and add the necessary amount of sugar. Just make sure you buy glucose (also called dextrose)! Table sugar, corn syrup, and almost all other industrial sweeteners are half glucose, half fructose. That glut of fructose WILL cause your body to lay down fat, even if you consume it post-workout.

Whether you have a shake or not, you'll want to consume a solid-food meal about one hour after your workout. You can wait a bit longer, but try to get it in quickly - that post-workout window won't last forever! This meal should contain mainly starches, although they don't need to be slowly-digesting, fiber-filled, supposedly "healthy" whole grains. In fact, you'll get the biggest insulin spike (and the best results) from higher-glycemic carbs. These primarily include white rice, potatoes, and sweet potatoes. You can choose bread, pasta, and other wheat products if you can handle them, but I've found that most people get the best results when they keep things clean. That being said, if you're going to have a cheat meal, NOW is the time to have it!

Other than those starches, you'll want to get a decent-sized serving of protein. Just go with whatever whole food source you like and can afford. This is going to be your main, "meat and potatoes" meal for the day, and I usually choose combos like steak and

yams, chicken and rice, or fish and potatoes. As long as you're getting a big portion of starch with some protein, you're doing well.

Your pre-workout meal is the one other time you might want to eat carbs - if you actually need them. Remember, your muscles can STORE carbohydrates as glycogen, and that energy will be available for heavy training for days to come. If you're loading up on the carbs AFTER every training session, you may not really need them before you workout.

However, some lifters do just perform better when they eat some starch before they train. This will come down to trial and error, but if that's you - if you NEED carbs to be at your best in the weight room - then feel free to have some in your pre-workout meal. This meal should look like a smaller, less carb-heavy version of your post-workout meal. Have a moderate portion of rice, whole grains, or potatoes (around 50-100 grams of carbs), as well as a similarly-sized portion of protein. Make sure you eat this meal at least an hour before you train, if not two. If you eat it right before, you'll still be digesting while you lift, defeating the purpose of the meal altogether.

For all other meals of the day, you'll be avoiding starches and sugars like the plague. Get plenty of protein, add some fat, and eat all the green, fibrous veggies you can stomach. If your friends or co-workers are asking if you're on the Atkins diet during these meals, you're probably on the right track.

And yes, if you lift late in the day, following this plan will mean NOT eating carbs for breakfast. Forget conventional wisdom, and ignore the bodybuilders who religiously start every day with oatmeal and egg whites. Unless you're training in the early AM, there's no reason why you'd need to eat carbs at that time. In fact, quite a few studies show that avoiding carbs until later in the day can enhance fat loss. By limiting your carbs to one, short period of the day, you're actually allowing your body to burn fat the rest of the time.

For Skinny Guys: The "Traditional" High-Carb Bodybuilding Diet

It seems somewhat strange to call this diet "traditional," since the earliest bodybuilders advocated heaping portions of meat, milk, and eggs. For the last few decades, however, the most common mass-gain diet has been heavy on carbs, moderate on protein, and relatively low in fat. It's the typical meat and potatoes, eggs and oatmeal stuff you read about in most muscle mags. A good choice for formerly-fat guys? Hardly. But a constant influx of carbohydrates is just what the doctor ordered for guys who can't seem to put on a pound.

The cheapest (and probably healthiest) way to implement this diet is to load up on potatoes, rice, oats, and other low-cost carbs five or six times per day. Of course, you'll always want to accompany those carbs with a hunk of protein, preferably meat or eggs. Carb-only meals are a no-go, so don't get lazy and avoid cooking your proteins.

As for fat - don't go too low! Remember, a decent fat intake is critical for healthy hormone levels, and your testosterone is going to plummet if you try to avoid it. If you're skinny (and you should only be using this diet if you are), you probably don't need to worry about gaining body fat from eating too much. The only thing that should hold your fat intake back is your appetite.

So, while you don't need to add butter or oil to every meal, you should be getting at least some fat from your protein sources. Fattier beef, skin-on chicken, and whole eggs are cheaper than their skimmed counterparts, anyway, so shop for those. For a hard-gainer, there's no better mass-building meal than a fatty steak alongside a big-ass potato.

And, even though you'll be eating carbs all day long, you should still take advantage of that post-workout window. Go ahead and have that shake I mentioned earlier - 100 grams of glucose and 50 grams of whey - as soon as you're done training. Follow it up about an hour later with your biggest, most carb-heavy meal of the day. You might be eating 50-75 grams of carbs at most meals, but this one should have at least 100.

Now, some gurus would stop there. For a guy who really needs to pack on the pounds, that's a great diet. But if you're anything like most skinny guys I've talked to, constantly slamming big portions of "clean" foods - meats, grains, and potatoes - is going to become very uncomfortable, very fast. If you feel like you're going to bust from all that high-volume food, you may need to get a little dirty.

By "dirty," I mean reasonably sound food choices that are lower in volume and easier to cram in. A burger and fries or some fried chicken would fit the bill. Cookies, cakes, and ice cream would not. Even naturally-thin people have their limits, and you will get fat if you use "bulking" as an excuse to eat like total crap. A good rule of thumb is to only eat meals that have as much (or more) protein as fat. This rules out pretty much all desserts and other sugar-bombs, but it allows you to eat some of the fattier, denser stuff you'll find at fast food joints and deli counters. If you decide to go this route, try to limit your dirty meals to once per day. They'll get kind of expensive, anyway.

The Cyclic Ketogenic Diet

Also known as the CKD, the keto diet, or "Atkins" among confused laypeople, the cyclic ketogenic diet is the absolute best way to lose body fat. For some lifters - especially those who seem to gain fat at the drop of a hat - it can also be a great way to get bigger without getting fatter. Muscular gains will be slower, no doubt, but you won't have to constantly interrupt your progress with fat loss diets. If you haven't been able to stay lean on any other mass-gain plan, give this one a try.

To start, you'll need to endure ten days without ANY useable carbs. Eat all the fibrous veggies you want, but steer clear of any and all grains, potatoes, legumes, and fruit. To be safe, you should probably even avoid carrots, corn, and other slightly sugary vegetables. The point of this initial phase is to rid your body of ALL carbs, and to get yourself used to burning fat for energy.

What can you eat, then? Meat, meat, and more meat! Eggs will work, too, of course, as will extra fats from butter and olive oil. Don't even think about going low-fat, either. Fats are important on any diet, but they're non-negotiable on this one. Since you're consuming ZERO carbs - and since protein alone can't sustain you - you'll need a lot more fat than usual to get you through your workouts, job, classes, and whatever else you've got going on.

Make no mistake, this first part of the diet will probably suck, especially if you're used to eating lots of carbs every day. At some point during those ten days, your body will undergo a metabolic "shift," and you'll feel totally out of it for a day or two. As soon as that's over, however, you'll feel amazingly energetic. Instead of relying on glucose (carbs) for energy, your body will easily use fat - either from food or from your own body.

Your training might also suffer a bit during the break-in phase. Going so long without carbs will leave you damn-near depleted of glycogen, and you'll probably feel small and weak. That's only temporary, though! In the long run, this diet is designed to turn you into a muscle-building, fat-burning MACHINE.

Now, the fun REALLY begins once you finish that first part. The diet is called "cyclic" because you alternate periods of near-zero-carbs with all-out feasts! On the evening of the tenth no-carb day, you can devour almost anything you want, in pretty much any quantity you desire. Your feast is just going to last a few hours (six at the most), so you really won't even have time to do much damage or derail your progress. The day after your carb-filled binge, go right back to the zero-carb diet for five to six days. Every sixth or seventh day (depending on how often you train), you can treat yourself to another starchy, sugary feast.

What's the point of such a feeding frenzy? It's not, as you might assume, to give yourself a mental break from the rest of the diet. It accomplishes that, sure, but the real idea is to refill your glycogen stores, speed up your metabolism, and provide the sharp insulin spike you need to build muscle. You might be able to accomplish this goal with "clean" foods like rice and potatoes, but it'd be damn tough. You've really got to pack in the food during this short window of opportunity, and you might not get enough carbs and overall calories if you avoid junk food altogether. Those high-glycemic, insulin-spiking treats will actually HELP you get leaner in the long run!

So, the CKD offers high energy levels, fast fat loss, and - if you eat enough throughout the week - steady muscle growth. You also get to have a gigantic feast every week, knowing that it'll improve your results! Are there downsides? Of course; life's full of trade-offs. You can "get away" with an impromptu cheat meal on the other two plans, but when you're in the middle of your no-carb week, you really can't afford to deviate from the diet. "Just one" piece of cake or "just a handful" of chips WILL knock your body out of fat-burning mode, and your results over the next few days will be compromised.

If you really want to reap the rewards of the ketogenic diet, you'll need to be damn strict with your food choices. As far as your appetite is concerned, that really shouldn't be that hard. You can afford to eat TONS of fat and protein, even if you're trying to get leaner, and hunger is rarely a problem. In fact, some bodybuilders who use this type of diet find it difficult to eat enough!

If your life is filled with opportunities for treats and snacks, however, you'll have to learn to say no...a lot. Almost every food served at parties, office gatherings, and other social functions is filled with carbs, and your refusals will probably draw a few questions and odd glances. Can you handle that? It's a tiny price to pay to be lean, but it can get annoying.

The other major downside to the keto diet is that it can be more difficult to gain muscle. Save for your weekly carb-fest, you won't be getting any starch or sugar after your workouts, and your glycogen stores will continue to drain throughout the week. You might eat your feast on Sunday, have awesome workouts Monday through Wednesday, and then start to crash on Thursday.

The best way to combat this kind of crash is to simply load up on more fat throughout the week. Far too many bodybuilders end up eating not just low-carb, but low-calorie - a huge mistake! You may only be eating carbs once per week, but if you're trying to grow muscle, the excess energy has to come from somewhere. Buy fattier cuts of meat, eat more eggs (they go down easy), and add butter or oil to your meals as necessary. If size is your goal, and the scale's not moving, you need to eat more!

Another good strategy is to incorporate more frequent carb feasts – but ONLY if you're already lean! The most often you'll want to do this is every fourth day, and make sure you're not feasting for more than five or six hours at a time. If you drag them out longer than that, your body could slip completely back into sugar-burning mode.

How Much Should You Eat?

At this point, you should have a basic structure for your diet. Based on your body type, goals, and current stats, you know essentially what types of foods you should be eating, and when you should eat them. But we still haven't answered the other important question - how MUCH should you eat?

The short answer: it depends! Food is fuel, and everyone's got different lifestyles and different needs. The bodybuilder who trains every day and works a manual labor job is going to need an ungodly amount of food. The skinny-fat office worker who just wants to see some abs - not so much.

That being said, I CAN offer some solid guidelines that'll help you get off to a great start. You'll need to tweak your amounts as you go, adjusting up or down according to your weight, strength, and body fat levels. Here are the basics on how many grams of protein, carbohydrates, and fat you should consume.

Protein: Can you have too much?

The government's recommended daily amount of protein - about fifty grams - is FAR too low. That much is obvious. And to be honest, there really doesn't seem to be such a thing as "too much" protein. The process of converting animal protein into human body fat is incredibly inefficient and unlikely, so you don't need to worry about gaining too much weight from chicken breasts. Remember, it's not the calories that matter - it's the effects of different macronutrients on your body.

Still, there's no reason to maintain the sky-high protein intakes you see among overzealous bodybuilders. Once you pass a certain sweet spot, you're just not doing yourself any more good. 300 grams per day? Maybe. 400, 500, or even 600? You're probably crapping half of that out, and giving yourself some serious gas, to boot. Protein will be the most expensive part of your diet, so don't throw away your money on such unpleasant excess.

I've found that most people, myself included, perform optimally with one gram of protein per pound of body weight, per day. A 150-pound guy should get 150 grams, a 200-

pound guy should get 200 grams, etc. And to be clear, I'm only taking animal proteins into account. The incidental amounts in grains, vegetables, and other plants should not count towards your daily totals.

Carbohydrates: Enough is enough!

Here's where most of you will have to put on the brakes. Yes, carbs are crucial for muscle growth, and they'll fuel your heavy training sessions. Eat too many of them, however, and you'll gain a lot more fat than muscle.

If you're taking the timed carb approach, then start with TWO grams of carbs per pound of body weight. Spread these out among your post-workout shake, post-workout meal, and pre-workout meal (if it contains carbs). For example, a 200-pound bodybuilder might eat 100 grams from oats before his workout, 100 grams from glucose in his post-workout shake, and 200 grams from potatoes or rice in his post-workout meal.

How many carbs should you eat on your off days? None! Not if you can help it, at least. Some guys will just feel sluggish, and they'll go ahead and take in 50 or 100 grams during ONE of their meals. But really, going one or two days without carbs isn't that bad, especially if you're compensating with plenty of fat. When you're steadily gaining weight, it's good to have one or two days per week when your insulin stays low.

If you're doing the keto diet, on the other hand, you can afford to eat LOT more carbs in that one weekly feeding. Your appetite may dictate exactly how many you can eat, but for most people, 800 grams is a decent target. Sound ridiculous? That's why I said you might need to eat some denser, "dirtier" foods during that feast. I don't know about you, but I'd just about bust if I tried to eat 800 grams of carbs worth of oatmeal and rice. You don't want to skimp on that total, either, since those carbs have got to "last" you until your next feast.

As for you skinnier guys on the "traditional" diet, you'll of course be eating lots of carbs every day. Start with a baseline of THREE times body weight, and adjust as needed. If you're 150 pounds, that means you'll shoot for 450 grams per day. If you're 200 pounds...well, 600 grams of carbs every day is a TON, but 200 pounds isn't exactly skinny, is it? Remember, this level of carbohydrate intake is only optimal for the guys who "can't" gain weight.

Fats: Can they make you fat after all?

We know fats are great, and that eating dietary fat won't automatically lead to gains in body fat. Still, you CAN consume too much fat. It's not likely if you're sticking to meat and eggs, but it can be kind of easy to go overboard on butter and oil. And if you're eating super-flavorful foods like bacon and cheese, well - you know how easy they can be to over-consume.

If you're on the timed carb diet, a good rule of thumb is to eat the same amounts of fat and protein in your low-carb meals. For instance, you might eat a small steak with 50 grams of protein and 30 grams of fat. Add 20 more grams of fat from coconut oil, butter, nuts, or avocados, and the numbers would be even. For those pre- and post-workout feedings that DO contain carbs, just don't add any extra fats. You'll be getting some already from your protein sources.

On the ketogenic diet, you'll want AT LEAST as many fat grams as protein grams in your diet, since fat and protein are all you get! If you weigh 200 pounds, you'd shoot for 200 grams of fat and 200 grams of protein per day. That might sound like a lot of fat, but you'll need it when you're taking in zero carbs. As long as you're staying lean (or getting leaner), don't be afraid to bump those numbers up, either. It's a lot harder to reach your upper limit for fat than it is for carbs.

As for you skinny guys - you shouldn't be so concerned. Most of your meals are already going to contain carbs and a moderately-fatty protein source. Add coconut oil, olive oil, or butter whenever you can, but don't make yourself sick from fullness. If you stick to the diet for a couple of weeks, and the scale STILL won't budge, then go ahead and make a concerted effort to add one or two tablespoons of fat to each meal. That'll do the trick!

Making Adjustments

Remember, these numbers are just baselines. If you want to make big changes to your physique, you'll need to learn how your own body responds to different qualities and quantities of food. Don't go plugging in arbitrary numbers into those online calorie calculators, either - they're useless!

For most people, the most important adjustment will be carbohydrate intake. Protein should always be reasonably high, and fats should never drop too low. If you find that you're gaining weight too quickly, and that your waist is growing along with your biceps, it's probably because you're eating too many carbs.

Meal Frequency - Does it Really Matter?

Here's another myth that needs to die: "Eating every three hours will boost your metabolism and keep you lean." Bull! There are a few reasons why you'd want to eat that often, but enhanced fat loss isn't one of them. If anything, eating six or more moderately-sized meals throughout the day will just spike your insulin, keep you hungry, and make it even harder to be lean AND muscular.

As we've already discussed, your most important meals (and shakes) are the ones you consume in the hours after training. Even if you're following the keto diet, taking in near-zero carbs, you'll still get the best results by piling most of your food after your workouts.

The timings and sizes of the rest of your meals should be based mainly on hunger and energy levels. Your pre-training meals are there to stave off hunger and fuel your workouts. Once you've trained and gorged for the day, the rest of your meals are there to keep you satiated until bed.

So, exactly how many meals should you eat throughout the day? For most people, three or four seem to work pretty well. Let's say you're following the timed carb approach, and you train at 5:00 in the evening. You might eat a small, low-carb meal around 9:00, and another at 1:00. That fat and protein will keep you sustained until and throughout your workout, after which you'll have your shake and a BIG post-workout meal. It'll probably be about 8:00 by the time you're finished with all that food, and you might have another small low-carb meal before bed.

Can you spread your food out more than that? Sure - as long as you're still piling enough nutrients into the post-workout period, AND not exceeding your daily totals. Even if that's your preference now, though, you might want to reconsider. Intermittent fasting is all the rage right now, and for good reason. Surprise, surprise - going longer without eating can help you burn more fat! As long as you're still eating well at some point in the day, fasting is not going to make you wither away to nothing.

If you gain fat easily - or if you want to stay as lean as humanly possible while getting bigger - then you should try eating three or fewer meals per day. The exact number of meals isn't so important, though - it's the amount of time you sustain without food. My favorite approach is to just eat all of the day's food in one, eight-hour window.

That window usually starts around 12:00 or 1:00, when I'll have a decent-sized, low-carb, high-fat meal. That'll be it until after I train. I'll slam a big shake post-workout, then I'll go to town on my carb-heavy, high-protein meals. I'll finish eating all of that by about 8:00 PM, and I'll wait until the next afternoon to eat.

By condensing the same amount of food into a smaller amount of time, you drastically increase the amount of time your body has to rely on its own fat stores for energy. It's not a perfect system, but it can work amazingly well. You maximize your recovery and growth with all of that post-workout food, and you can use the other sixteen hours of the day to burn off any excess you might have gained.

To be clear, though, fasting is NOT for you skinny guys! It'll be tough enough for you to get in all the food you need to grow, and it could become impossible if you only allow yourself to eat for half of the day. In fact, it's the lankier bodybuilders that usually need those often-revered six meals per day. You're not trying to "boost" your metabolism - you just need to eat that often to get in all the necessary food!

Tailoring Your Training to Your Diet

Some guys change their diets according to their training - I do just the opposite! Your diet is THE most important aspect of your muscle-building success, so it only makes sense to use it as a framework for your training program.

Sound drastic? Consider this example. A guy who's skinny-fat - not too heavy, but certainly not lean - wants to gain muscle without an ounce of fat. The ketogenic diet will probably be the best approach. But a near-zero carb intake doesn't allow for a ton of training volume. He can still train heavy, of course, but endless sets and reps are just going to burn him out. A high-volume program would leave him depleted in just a few days, and the rest of his workouts before the next carb-up would be awful.

In this example, the guy would want to use a high-intensity, low-volume, moderate frequency kind of training program. He'd bust his ass as hard as humanly possible on just a few sets per workout, and he might train each body part twice per week. The low volume would prevent him from burning out early in the week, and the heavy weights would help him to get stronger and build muscle.

The same principle can work for you, even if you're not using the keto diet. The fatter you are now, the less often you should be eating carbs. The fewer carbs you're eating, the lower the training volume you'll be able to handle. If you're on the timed carb diet, and you're fatter than you're comfortable with, then you'd want MORE off days - not because you'd be worried about "overtraining," but because you'd need more low- or no-carb days to stave off fat gain.

Clearly, this principle is yet another reason why you should focus on fat loss BEFORE you gain muscle. If you start off leaner, you can afford to train more often, eat more carbs, and build muscle faster! Your recovery abilities are really only limited by your

diet, sleep, and other lifestyle habits, so more frequent training generally means better results. Think you're helping your long-term progress by putting off that fat-loss diet? Think again.

Supplements

Are they worth the cost?

Even with all this diet talk, you're probably still wondering whether you should buy any supplements. If you're on a super-strict budget, and you can barely afford the food you need to grow, then my answer's no! If you do have some extra cash, however, there are a few supplements which can slightly boost your results. They're not miracles by any means, but the following products have been proven to aid in building muscle.

Protein Powder

If you only ever buy one supplement, make it a solid whey protein powder. Consuming one gram of protein per pound of body weight isn't that hard, but I understand it can still get tough when your life is hectic. Plus, there's no better protein for a post-workout shake. It mixes well, goes down easy, and digests quickly - just what you need after a hard training session.

Don't obsess over which one you get, though. If you shop at a big wholesale store for your other groceries, then whatever brand they carry will probably be fine. If you shop at a normal grocery store, then look online for the best deals. The most important things to look for are low carbs and fats (fewer than 3 grams of each) and decent taste. Be sure to buy in bulk to save money.

Creatine

While not magic by any means, creatine monohydrate is probably the most time-tested supplement on the market. Just 5-10 grams per day can make a significant difference in the speed with which your muscle cells produce ATP (cellular energy). The end result is that you might get one or two extra reps on your hardest sets. Over time, that can actually lead to a lot more progress! Plus, the stuff is so dirt-cheap that you might as well give it a try.

Branched-Chain Amino Acids

Branched-chain aminos are pretty expensive, but they're excellent for hastening recovery. Though there are twenty total amino acids, the three BCAAs are responsible for flicking a kind of hormonal "switch" in your body that tells it to build muscle. If you can afford to add 30-40 grams to your post-workout shakes, you might find that you can train more often and build strength a little faster. Look for bulk powders to get the best deals; the pills are way too costly.

Fish Oil

Fish oil won't directly aid in muscle growth, but it can help keep you healthy. It's chock-full of Omega-3 fatty acids, which are crucial for reducing inflammation. Feeling a few aches and pains from all that heavy training? It's because your joints are inflamed. This isn't a problem for all lifters, but if you're experiencing joint pain, then high-dose fish oil is a safe bet. Ignore the absurdly small doses on the bottle, and shoot for 30-40 grams per day until your pain clears up.

Post-Workout Powders

If you're really pressed for time or just straight-up lazy, then you might want to buy a pre-mixed post-workout powder. Just look for a roughly 2:1 ratio of carbs to protein, and make sure the main type of protein is whey - not soy or some other vegan crap. You'll sometimes get some added value in the form of creatine or BCAAs, but frankly, most of these products are more expensive than they're worth.

To mix your own post-workout shake, just use the whey you're already buying. In addition, head to your local health food store or supplement shop to pick up a bag of dextrose. Unlike table sugar, which is half fructose, this stuff is pure glucose - exactly what your muscles need. Mix it in a 2:1 ratio with your whey, and add your own creatine or BCAA powder if you're using them. The post-workout shake is the best "vessel" for all of those supplements.

Muscle-Building Meals

If you don't already know how to cook, now's the time to learn! The most common reason why people fail at bodybuilding is that they don't take care of their food prep. You probably got into lifting because you like it, but cooking may seem like a chore. It might not become your favorite hobby, but a few basic skills will make muscle-building a LOT more pleasant.

We're not going to obsess over individual recipes, though. Any good chef will tell you that's a lousy way to learn to cook. Instead, we'll just talk about a few basic skills that'll help you make what YOU want. That's all cooking really is, anyway - a handful of

Cooking in Bulk: A Winning Strategy for Busy Bodybuilders

Unless you just love to spend time in the kitchen (some people do), then you're going to need to cook in bulk most of the time. Instead of grilling one steak, you'll grill and refrigerate ten. Instead of frying one chicken breast in a tiny pan, you'll bust out two skillets and make eight pieces. You get the idea.

Bulk cooking also requires bulk shopping. If you're the kind of guy (or girl) who heads to the grocer without a list or a plan, you'll need to change your ways. Consult newspapers and fliers for sales, write out your lists ahead of time, and get everything you need for the week in one fell swoop.

Steaks, Chicken, and Fish

Steaks, chicken breasts, fish filets, and other "single" pieces of meat are usually best when cooked quickly on high heat. If you've got a grill, go for it; that's my favorite method! Big gas grills are also great for cooking large, bodybuilder-sized quantities. Use as high a heat as you can get, and cook to the desired doneness. There's really no rocket science to grilling, and the only thing you need to watch for is overcooking your meat. Unless you've got a strange desire for rubbery food, keep your steaks pink, your chicken juicy, and your fish slightly underdone.

If grilling's not an option, then your next best bet is a large, heavy-bottomed frying pan. Cast iron is great, as is any heavy, stainless steel skillet. Crank your stove almost as high as it'll go, let the pan get hot, and add your oil. Olive oil can work, but it tends to burn easily. Avocado oil and macadamia nut oil are better choices because of their high smoke points. Don't skimp on the cooking fat, either. Remember, low-fat diets are a no-go for building muscle, and your food will taste like crap if you don't use enough. You can always just wipe the excess out of the pan after cooking.

Once your oil's in the pan, add your meat - and generously salt it! Not only is salt NOT bad for you, you'll need plenty of it for heavy training. When bodybuilders cut their sodium intakes (which they usually do without reason), they look flat, feel depleted, and have terrible workouts.

Now, let your meat get golden brown before flipping it. That means no touching! The hot pan and hot oil will do their job, and moving the meat around will only prevent it from getting that tasty sear. Once you've got a nice color on the bottom, flip each piece and repeat.

If you're not sure how to tell when your meats are finished, just use a thermometer. For medium rare beef, you want an internal temperature of about 135. For fish or pork, shoot for 145. For chicken - which should always be cooked all the way through - go for 160.

Slow-Cooking: The Easiest Way to Eat

If you HATE cooking, or if you just never have time to do it, then you'll want to get a good-sized crock pot. They're cheap, they're reliable, and they can effortlessly produce some of the best muscle-building food. All you have to do is chuck everything in and wait.

The best meats for slow-cooking are the ones with lots of connective tissue. If you're not sure, just look for the word "roast" on the package. These cuts also tend to be the cheapest. Still, you can use pretty much any kind of meat you want. After six to eight hours in the slow cooker, pretty much everything becomes tender and delicious.

To make your stew, just cut your meat into big chunks and toss them in the pot. If you need some carbs, add potatoes or sweet potatoes - they'll both cook up just fine. Throw in your favorite vegetables, spices, and seasonings - along with a heavy pinch of salt - and you're almost done.

To finish the job, you'll need to add enough liquid to cover everything in the pot. Water will work, and it actually won't dilute the flavor too much. If you can spare a couple of extra bucks, though, buy some chicken stock or beef stock. They add a ton of flavor with zero effort. Turn the pot on to "low," wait about eight hours, and you'll have several servings of mass-building stew.

Eggs: Boiled, Scrambled, and Fried

If you're on a strict budget, eggs may very well become your go-to protein source. An unless you feel like getting fancy with quiches, frittatas, and omeletes, then you'll probably be sticking to three main cooking methods.

- **Boiling:** As simple as it gets. Put however many eggs you want to cook into a large pot, cover them with cold water, and put a lid on. Set your heat to high, wait

until the water is at a rolling boil, and immediately remove the pot from the heat. Leaving the lid ON, let the eggs cook for 10-12 minutes. That's it! You can make them easier to peel by adding a couple tablespoons of vinegar to the water.

- **Scrambling:** Every cook has his own way of making scrambled eggs; here's the easiest. Put your pan on medium-high heat, let it get hot, and add a pat of butter. While you're waiting for it to heat, just whisk your eggs together in a bowl, and add some milk or cream if you like (not necessary). Once that's all ready, just pour the mix into the pan, stir occasionally, and reduce the heat if they're cooking too quickly. Everyone likes their eggs at a different doneness, so you can be the judge of when they're ready.
- **Frying:** Frying two eggs is easy, but what's a bodybuilder to do when he wants six or more? You'll need a big, non-stick pan with a lid. Let it come to about medium heat (no hotter), spread some butter or oil on the bottom of the pan, and crack your eggs in. As soon as they're all in, put the lid on, and wait. The hot pan will cook the bottoms of the eggs, and the steam that gathers inside will cook the tops. Sunny-side up was never easier.

Veggies: Roasting and Steaming

If you can stomach salads, then eating your green veggies raw is probably the healthiest option. If you want them cooked, your two best bets are roasting and steaming.

To roast pretty much any vegetable, just preheat your oven to 500 - no point in mucking around with low heat here. Cut your broccoli, Brussels sprouts, or whatever else you're having into evenly-sized pieces, and coat them with plenty of oil and salt. Butter's great, too, if you prefer it to oil.

Next, lay the pieces out on a cooking sheet, and don't crowd the pan. Cook in batches or use two pans if the pieces are too close together. You should only need to roast them for ten or fifteen minutes, or until golden brown. They'll get nice and crusty on the outside, but they'll still be firm on the inside. If you use a lower heat, they'll just end up mushy.

For even easier - but less tasty - vegetables, just steam them in a pot. Throw everything in, and add about one inch of water to the bottom. Put the pot on the stove, cover it, and crank the heat to high. Once the water is boiling, turn the heat down, but keep it high enough that the water still simmers. The veggies will be cooked but still firm after a few minutes - mushy if you wait much longer.

How to Cook your Carbs

Most of you will be getting most of your carbs from the basics - oatmeal, rice, and potatoes. For the first two options, just follow the microwave or stovetop instructions on the packages. That's hardly rocket science!

For potatoes and sweet potatoes, you've got a few more options. If you have an hour or two to wait, then you can just bake them whole. Set your oven to 350, put them on a cooking sheet, and wait. It's that easy! Smaller potatoes may be done in under an hour, really big ones could take closer to two. You'll know they're done when you can easily stick a fork all the way through.

Another great way to cook your tubers is to roast them. Just as with the green veggies, cut them into evenly-sized chunks, coat with oil and seasonings, and cook on 500 until done. Don't put potatoes on the same pan as the green stuff, though - they'll take quite a bit longer to get fully cooked.

Finally, if you're short on time and armed with nothing but raw potatoes, there's always the microwave. Ten minutes or so can actually cook an entire sweet potato. Just make sure you poke a few holes so the steam can escape. To cook them even faster, cut your spuds into cubes, and put them in a covered, microwave-safe dish. The lid will keep the steam inside, and they'll cook up in five or six minutes. Microwaved potatoes don't have the greatest texture, but they're far better than nothing! You can't afford to skip meals when you're trying to get big.

Sample Meal Plans

Still a little unsure about how to structure your daily meal plan? Here are few examples - one from each of the three plans we discussed. For the ketogenic and timed-carb diets, we'll roughly follow the macronutrient requirements for a 200-pound bodybuilder. For the high-carb diet, we'll work with the numbers for a 150-pounder.

Remember - these numbers are rough estimates, as they always should be. You will drive yourself INSANE if you try to count every gram of every nutrient you eat. Your body is in constant flux, anyway, and eating just a tiny bit extra of something (provided you're eating at the right time) isn't going to change your results.

Timed Carb Diet, 200-pound bodybuilder

Training Day Totals:

Protein: 200 grams

Carbs: 400 grams

Fat: 100 grams

Meal 1, 9:00 AM	6 scrambled eggs - 40g protein, 30g fat
	Spinach
Meal 2: 1:00 PM	6 oz. chicken breast - 40g protein, 10g fat
	2 cups rice - 100g carbs
	Broccoli
4:00 PM - Train	
Post-workout Shake, 6:00 PM	2 scoops whey protein - 50g protein
	100g dextrose - 100g carbs
Meal 3, 7:00 PM	8 oz. steak - 50g protein, 30g fat
	2 large sweet potatoes - 200g carbs
Meal 4, 9:00 PM	4 oz. salmon - 30g protein, 15g fat
	1 tablespoon olive oil - 14g fat

If you can handle this many carbs, this meal plan would be a great place to start. You might find, however, that you don't need all 400 grams, and that such a large carb intake is making you gain weight too fast. If that's the case, try taking the carbs out of that 1:00 meal (the pre-workout) meal, and add more fats throughout the day, instead. If you just remove the carbs without replacing them, your overall energy intake will dip too low.

Ketogenic Diet, 200-pound bodybuilder

Training Day Totals:

Protein: 200 grams

Fat: 200 grams

Carbs: as close to 0 as possible

Meal 1, 9:00 AM	6 fried eggs - 40g protein, 30g fat
	Spinach
Meal 2, 1:00 PM	6 oz. skin-on chicken thigh - 40g protein, 30g fat
	Asparagus
4:00 PM - Train	
Meal 3, 6:30 PM	16 oz. ground beef - 90g protein, 80g fat
	1 avocado - 30g fat
Meal 4, 9:00 PM	4 oz. salmon - 30g protein, 15g fat
	1 tablespoon olive oil - 14g fat

This plan will almost certainly work for fat loss, but it may not be enough for muscle growth. If you're using the ketogenic diet to gain size, feel free to add more fat AND protein with eggs, oils, and even some bacon and cheese. You could also just eat larger portions of meat, but that gets to be pretty expensive. Just make sure you always stay super low-carb throughout the week! If you try to increase calories with carbs, you'll completely ruin the fat-burning effects of the diet.

Of course, your carb-heavy days will look quite a bit different from this plan. You can still have your low-carb meals earlier in the day, and you should train right before your feast if at all possible. Make sure you get 600-800 grams of carbs in over the course of about six hours, and don't worry about eating some "bad" stuff. Treats will only help you at this point, as long as you cut yourself off before the evening is through.

Also, some people find that even 600-800 grams of carbs, once per week, is too much. This is especially true for people who start off fat, and who need to lose quite a bit of overall body weight. If you're seeing the results you want, be prepared to cut back even on your once-weekly feast. Remember, it's there to improve your results - not to give you an excuse to go overboard.

High-Carb Diet, 150-pound bodybuilder

Daily Totals:

Protein: 150 grams

Carbs: 450 grams

Fat: 150 grams

Meal 1, 9:00 AM	4 eggs - 25g protein, 20g fat
	2 tablespoons peanut butter - 16g fat
	1 cup oatmeal - 50g carbs
Meal 2, 12:00 PM	5 oz. steak - 30g protein, 20g fat
	1 tablespoon butter - 14g fat
	1 medium potato - 50g carbs
Meal 3, 3:00 PM	4 oz. chicken thigh - 25g protein, 15g fat
	1 tablespoon olive oil - 14g fat
	1 cup rice - 50g carbs
4:30 PM - Train	
Post-workout Shake, 6:30 PM	1 scoop whey protein - 25g protein
	100g dextrose - 100g carbs
Meal 4, 7:30 PM	4 oz. ground beef - 25g protein, 20g fat
	3 cups rice - 150g carbs
Meal 5, 9:30 PM	4 oz. salmon - 30g protein, 15g fat
	1 tablespoon butter - 14g fat
	1 medium potato - 50g carbs

If you haven't been able to pack on the pounds in the past, this plan should get you going. If there's one thing you might have to adjust, though, it's the protein. While 1 gram per pound of body weight is usually enough for the bigger guys, smaller lifters

sometimes need more than that. Don't be afraid to go higher! Add easy things like boiled eggs or an extra protein shake or two if you just can't eat any more.

Putting it All Together

There it is! By now, you should have all the info you need to get started on a nearly optimal muscle-building meal plan. Just know that you'll have to make some tweaks along the way. You know your body better than anyone else, and only you can make the final decisions on what, when, and how much you need to eat.

Just make sure you get started - today! In bodybuilding - and in pretty much every endeavor - paralysis by analysis keeps even hard-working people from getting results. This is especially true in the information age, when everyone's constantly bombarded with conflicting ideas. Pick your program, make changes as necessary, and always track your results. Stick to it for just a few months and you will be amazed at the results.

JW Cover Model Ab Routine

Mental State for Abdominal Training:

As we discussed earlier in the Mind Muscle Academy, the Zen Masters and martial arts teach us to focus on the center point of the body. Drawing its essence from the universe, the obscure and primal beginning from which all life arose. This requires concentration on the one point of the lower abdomen and being present in the moment. Let's take a look at the mental state of concentration in regards to abdominal training:

CONCENTRATE (With Center) – con-cen- trate

- *Con – means with or together;*
- *Centrate- Is from the latin “centrum” which means center.*

Bring or direct to a common center – to unite to a common center- to unite more closely- TO gather to one body, mass, or force.

Bring all ones powers, faculties, or activities to bear upon a course of action, or thought or object- to fix exclusive attention to.

This exclusive attention, action, and thought towards abdominal training will build your power at its source. This “well” of energy will become plentiful and powerful as your connection to core training continues to increase infinitely.

The Science

This program consists of 5 workouts, each focusing on specific function of the abdominals:

- Explosive
- Hip and Trunk Flexion
- Lateral and Rotational Flexion
- Floor Routine
- Functional Core Routine

Cover Model Ab Routine Training Split

This is complete 5 Day training split, 3 on 1 off 2 on 1 off.

So the split will be Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Sat. Thursday and Sunday of completely off from resistance training to allow complete focus on recovery and flexibility.

The key to this routine is form, and working the muscle through a controlled full range of motion, lengthening and shortening the rectus abdominals. A key factor in activating the abs is to deactivate the psoas muscle.

A Few Quick Definitions

Tempo

The speed at which an action is performed.

Repetition

The act of doing something that has already been done.

Concentric

The force generated is sufficient to overcome the resistance. When lifting weights, a concentric motion causes the muscle to shorten. This is what most people think of when they think of a muscle contraction.

Eccentric

This muscle and the muscle fibers lengthen as they contract. An eccentric contraction is used as a means of decelerating a body or object, or lowering a load gently, rather than letting it drop.

Isometric

The muscle stays the same length. An example would be holding an object up without moving it. The muscular force precisely matches the load and no movement results.

Psoas Muscle

5 Tips to disengage the Hip Flexors

1. Activate the hamstrings with 3 sets of glute bridges, followed by 3 sets of crunches holding a stability ball between your hamstrings and calves to deactivate the psoas while allowing for deeper contractions in the rectus abdominals.

2. From split squat position, whatever knee is back behind the hip, raise that arm so that it is even with your ear with thumb pointed straight back. From here lean to the leg towards the opposite side while keeping the glutes activated. This will help to open up the psoas muscles.
3. Split Stretch. From seated position spread legs to stretch adductors, sartorius and other muscles of the hip flexors. Disregard the advice that static stretching should not be performed before dynamic movements. The key is to dynamically warm the hips up to allow for greater contractions in the posterior chain, as well as more power when the hips are in an anterior pelvic tilt.
4. To dynamically warm up the hips and get external hip rotation I like to stick with kettle bell swings or box jumps. Kettle bell swings are a great way to efficiently open up the hips and prime the center of your body for an abdominal assault!
5. Having a bulletproof lower back is key when it comes to having a perfect set of aesthetically shaped abdominals. This is one area where many of the golden age heroes of bodybuilding went wrong, resulting in an obsessiveness for abdominal training often times resulting in lower back injury. The same way you muscle horizontal row to counter act bench pressing you must strengthen your lower back from every angle to get the most out of each intense ab training session.

Diet | Supplement Plan

Meal 1	2 Whole Eggs 8 Egg Whites
	1T Coconut Oil
	Mixed Vegetables: Asparagus, Spinach, cherry tomatoes
	2 Multi Vitamin
	2 Calcium
	1 Alpha Lipoic Acid
	3 Fish Oil
Meal 2	2 scoops Dymatize Iso100
	3 Fish Oil
Meal 3	10oz Chicken
	8oz Sweet Potato

	4oz Broccoli
Meal 4: PRE- WORKOUT	10oz Grass Fed Bison
	8oz Sweet Potato
	4oz Broccoli
	1 Scoop Dymatize MPACT (Arginine, Creatine, Beet Juice Extract)
	1 Multi Vitamin
Intra Workout	Dymatize Amino Pro (BCAA and Electrolytes)
Meal 5 POST-WORKOUT	1 Scoop Dymatize M.P.S. (BCAAS)
	2 Scoop Dymatize Iso100
	1 Scoop Dymatize Glutamine
Meal 6: 8oz Salmon	
	4oz Asparagus
Bedtime Supplements	3 ZMA
	1 Scoop Dymatize M.P.S.

Cheat Meals

Once a week after a hard training session enjoy one cheat meal, that will serve as a 'refeed' meal to boost metabolism, insulin sensitivity, and replenish glycogen storage. When done properly you will feel your entire body heat up, to a point where you may even start sweating! This is proof that your body is on fire and you're creating the optimal hormonal environment. So use this time to create balance and your life, so you don't become neurotic with your training. Take time to focus on others, spend time with friends, hang out with friends, go to a party, take your significant other on a date, and enjoy fine dining!

On the other hand, if you're prepping for a photo shoot or competition, you will not be allowed the luxury of these cheat meals, especially if you are 4 weeks out from the event. This is an intense and brutal sacrifice, but you will reap the rewards when you are in the best condition of your life! Also in way of cheat meals, if you are over 10%

body fat as a man and 15% as a woman there is no room for cheat meals in your program, as these meals will not help your fat loss goals.

Workout Routine

#1: HardCORE Routine

Perform these exercises as a superset. One time through counts as one set. Perform 3 sets of 20 reps.

1. Hanging Leg Raise
2. Weighted Reverse Hyperextension
3. Band Sit Up w/ Controlled Negative
4. Med Ball Slams
5. Hyperextension with Band
6. Crunch w/ Stability Disc on low back

#2: Hip and Trunk Flexion

Perform these exercises as a superset. One time through counts as one set. Perform 3 sets of 20 reps.

1. Weighted Hanging Leg Raise
2. Reverse Incline Crunch
3. Dragonfly
4. Weighted Decline Crunch
5. Weighted Rope Crunch

#3: Lateral and Rotational Flexion

Perform these exercises as a superset. One time through counts as one set. Perform 3 sets of 20 reps.

1. Weighted Hanging Ab Raise w/ Twist
2. Medicine Ball Russian Twist
3. Standing Cable Rotation
4. Kneeling Cable Oblique Crunch w/ D Handle
5. Roman Chair Knee Raise w/ Twist

#4: Floor Work

Perform these exercises as a superset. One time through counts as one set. Perform 3 sets of 20 reps.

1. Plank Opposite Arm/ Opposite Leg
2. Side Plank Opposite Arm/ Opposite Leg Crunch
3. Leg Raise
4. Reverse Crunch
5. Hip Thruster w/ Twist
6. Toe Touch
7. Knee Drivers
8. Superman
9. Sit Ups
10. V Up with Isometric Hold

Mental Strength Workouts

Crazy Training #1 – Burpees and Deadlifts

The deadlift has got to be one of the toughest exercises you can do. In fact, it IS the most brutal movement when it comes to overall muscular and neural fatigue. No other exercise lets you move as much weight, and pretty much any good deadlift session will leave you feeling like you got hit by a MAC truck in the morning. Yep, throw deadlifts into training session, and you've got just about the hardest workout possible – right? Wrong!

Deadlifts are a real man-maker in the weight room, but the simple burpee rules the world of bodyweight conditioning. A heavy set of deads may leave you dizzy and exhausted, but high-rep burpees will make you BREATHLESS. So, how can you combine these exercises into one tough-as-nails workout? Superset them of course!

If you've got a few screws loose and have been looking for a balls-out strength and conditioning workout, then keep reading. But be warned – this session will knock you on your ass if you're not prepared, and you've got to take every possible precaution against injury. Proceed with caution...

The Workout

There are a few other combinations of burpees and deadlifts out there, but most of them just aren't that hard. They either allow you to use baby weights, or they don't even require you to keep time and push yourself. Here's how you really combine these brutal movements...

First, set up a bar with roughly fifty percent of your deadlift max. Make sure you adjust accordingly if that's too light or too heavy. If your deadlift sucks, you may be able to use a higher percentage. If you're a beast at ripping weights off the floor, then you may need to use a smaller load for conditioning purposes.

Next, set up some kind of bench nearby. You can just set up the deadlift bar next to a bench press, but it's best if you can use one of the extra benches in the gym. You'll already be getting stares because of the workout – you don't want to piss the staff off by hogging more equipment than you need.

Once everything's in place, you're going to start with ten reps on the deadlift. Immediately afterwards, do 10 burpees. Right after that, do 10 leg raises on the bench. You'll need to lie on it with your butt hanging off the edge, hands grasping the back so you don't fall off. Repeat this series for five total rounds with as little rest as humanly

possible. That may not sound too hard, but trust me – you'll be wishing you were done before the second round is through.

If that ever gets too easy, you can actually make it harder by taking the leg raises out of the workout altogether. What you'll probably find is that the abs work seems like a break in between the panting sets of deadlifts and burpees. Take it out, and you've got to go between the harder exercises that much quicker.

Safety First

This can't be stressed enough – you have got to be safe with this workout. The deadlift is one of the best movements for strength, muscle mass, and overall conditioning, but it can also wreck your lower back if you're not careful. Make absolutely sure you keep your lower back arched on every rep, even as you get fatigued. If that becomes impossible, then you simply need to lighten the load.

Also, you'll probably want to use straps. The over-under grip is fantastic for allowing you to hold on to super-heavy weights, but you're always at risk for a bicep tear. That's especially true when you're doing lots of reps in a fatigued state. Save the grip work for another session.

Finally, stop if you truly feel like you're about to pass out. There's a fine line between an awesomely hard workout and being stupid, and everyone's got to figure it out for themselves. If you've been training for any decent length of time, you know where that is for you. And if you're a beginner...well, this workout probably isn't for you. Learn to read your body, get better deadlift technique, and try this in a couple of years.

Use it Wisely

If you give this workout an honest effort, you'll understand why it should not be attempted frequently. It's not something you can do all of the time, and in fact – it's not even very effective at building maximal strength on the deadlift. What is IS good for is building mental strength – the true benefit of balls-out, crazy training. It's damn near impossible to recover from this kind of workout all the time, but it's a great challenge to do every once in a while. Try it out when you really want to test yourself, then go back to your normal strength and conditioning work.

Crazy Training #2 – Squat Circuits

Plenty of lifters refer to the squat as the “king of all exercise,” and for good reason! You may be able to lift more weight on the deadlift, but nothing comes close to the squat in terms of overall muscle-building power. Heavy squats will not only build your legs up to tree trunks – they’ll give you a strong lower back, rock-solid abs, and a sturdy upper back.

If you’ve been lifting for any decent length of time, then you also know how incredibly tough squats can be – especially when you do lots of reps. Your legs don’t peter out at the end of a set like your triceps, chest, shoulders, or even your back. If the weight’s not TOO heavy, and you want those reps bad enough – you can keep going, and going, and going. The only thing that really holds you back on high-rep squats is your pain tolerance.

With that being said, it only makes sense that you’d incorporate squats into a crazy conditioning circuit! As tough as they are, you can wipe yourself out even more by combining them with overhead presses and pulling movements. Now THAT is a true total body workout.

So, if you’re looking for a serious challenge to your conditioning and mental toughness, read on. This is one circuit that will have you lying in a pool of your own sweat, wondering why you ever thought it was a good idea – until you try it again!

Setting Up

To do this workout, you’re going need a power rack, two barbells, and a pull-up bar. Ideally, the pull-up bar will be overhead in the rack itself, but if not – try to use the nearest one. If that doesn’t work with your particular gym, then you might want to hang some Olympic rings from the top of the rack. They’re a good substitute when a regular pull-up bar is out of reach.

Set one bar up inside the rack for squats, and make sure you do PLENTY of warm-up sets to get your blood flowing. Do lots of reps with easy weight, so you can get ready without wearing yourself out. Once you’re warmed up, put a weight on the bar that you can normally get for a hard sets of ten reps. Be honest here. You’re going to be doing legit, rock-bottom squats, so don’t load the bar up with a weight that you normally quarter squat. This isn’t going to become your primary strength-building workout, so there’s no point in getting stupid with the weight.

Once the squat bar is ready to go, set up another bar right outside the rack for push presses. You’ll have to be your own judge when it comes to the weight, so just

understand what you're going to be doing with it. At the beginning of every circuit, you'll be cleaning that bar from the floor one time – and then doing five explosive push presses. If you can't move the weight fast with some leg drive, it's way too damn heavy.

The Workout

The circuit is simple but brutal. Begin as we discussed before – clean that push press bar to your shoulders, and do five rapid push presses. Keep your form rock-solid, but be explosive. There's no point in trying to “feel” the muscle working during a conditioning circuit.

As soon as you're done with those, get up on the pull-up bar and knock out ten reps. If ten pull-ups is really hard for you, then you're probably not advanced enough to be doing this in the first place! Remember, this is a crazy workout designed for people who have already built a good base of strength and conditioning.

Don't get down from that bar just yet. As soon as you're done with the pull-ups, hit a set of fifteen leg raises. Be strict, but not super-slow. Again, we're going for conditioning here, so it's not crucial that you feel every delicate little fiber of your abdominals firing. Save that stuff for later...if ever.

The real “fun” begins once you're finished with the abs work. Hop down from the pull-up bar, and go straight into a set of squats. You want to limit the rest between exercise, but DO NOT compromise your set-up. Squatting in a fatigued state is risky as it is, so don't go screwing your lower back with crappy form. Using that ten-rep max that you loaded up earlier, do a set of SIX reps. Given how tired you'll already be, that's going to be hard enough.

Once you've blasted through those four movements, you are going to be absolutely toast. Give yourself three to five minutes to rest up before giving it another go. While you're resting, take enough weight off the squat bar so that you're at about your twelve-rep max. When you go through the circuit the second time, you're going to be doing EIGHT reps, not six.

Continue this pattern for FIVE total rounds. You'll take some weight off the squat bar and add two reps for each one, so the overall scheme is going to be 6-8-10-12-14. The reps and weight stay the same on all of the other exercises. Oh, and it's fine if you have to start fudging the form on the pull-ups near the end – just don't get into that habit for your normal back workouts.

If you knock out all five rounds, you WILL feel utterly destroyed – especially if you make an effort to limit your rest between the circuits. This is not the kind of workout you want to be doing all of the time. Like other forms of insane, balls-to-the-wall training, it's most effective at testing your mental strength. Keep focusing on your basic heavy movements, and throw this session in every once in a while to really push yourself.

A Note on Safety

I'll say this again because it can't be stressed enough – be as safe as possible when you do this circuit. If you can't keep good squat form in a fatigued state, then just don't do it at all. You're going to be doing these without a belt on, and your abs and lower back will need to be rock-solid even while you're panting your lungs out. If you let your form slip, you are going to hurt yourself. Train hard, but train smart!

Crazy Training #3 – Hill Sprints

Think you're pretty well-conditioned? Fancy yourself a decent runner? If so, you should give hill sprints a try. No matter how fast or enduring you think you are, the simple act of running up a hill will knock you on your ass faster than you thought possible.

Hill sprints tax your entire body so much more than running on flat ground. Your quads, hamstrings, and calves have to work overtime to propel your body forward AND upward, and each step is almost like small jump. You've also got to keep your arms and even traps pumping if you want to stay in an upright position. And of course, all of this muscle work means that your cardiovascular system gets tired FAST.

As if all of that wasn't good enough, hill sprints are also one of the safest ways to improve your conditioning. Normal jogging or sprinting is hell on your knees and ankles, especially when you're big and muscular. Personally, I've felt absolutely wrecked (and not in a good way) after a single 5K run. That's not the case with hills, though. Running on a sharp incline drastically reduces the impact between your feet and the ground. Plus, dirt and grass are far easier on your joints than concrete. Ultimately, this means that you can do more sprints, more often, without impacting your ability to squat or deadlift.

You're going to want to take things slow the first few times you run hills. That's not because you're risking injury – it's because they're just so damn hard! Once you get into the swing of things, however, it's time to seriously turn up the volume. Here are a few ways you can make hill sprints even tougher...

High Volume

You've probably done some crazy sessions in the weight room where you just kept adding set after set. Not the kind of thing you want to do all the time, but it can really work wonders at the right time. The same principle applies to hill sprints!

Depending on how long and steep your hill is, you might normally do ten or fifteen sprints. A simple but brutally effective way to challenge yourself is to just double that. You normally do ten? Today, do twenty – and don't pussy out when things get tough! Your eleventh run won't feel much different from your tenth, but fifteen on up is going to be pure hell.

Never Stop Running

If you're like almost everyone else, then you probably sprint on the way up, walk on the way down. And that's fine – normally. Every once in a while, you should really push the tempo by jogging down the hill as soon as you get to the top. You probably won't even catch your breath by the time you reach the bottom, but you've got to force yourself to turn right back around and sprint.

Don't feel TOO bad if you can't hit your normal number of runs with this method – but don't get complacent, either. Throw this strategy in maybe once per week, and try to get more runs each time.

Adding Exercises

Missing that full-body fatigue you got from the squat and deadlift circuits? If so, you should try combining sprints with other bodyweight movements. For example, do a set of ten pushups at the bottom of the hill, followed immediately by your sprint. Or go straight into jumping jacks or sit-ups as soon as you reach the top. The variations are nearly endless.

If you want the hardest possible combination, though, you're going to want to throw in some burpees. What's a burpee? You start in the standing position, hit the deck in a push-up position, and do one push-up. Then you quickly bring your legs in and JUMP. It's not a burpee if your feet don't clear the ground. You can keep yourself honest with the form by raising your arms above your head for each jump.

Find Another Hill

Eventually, you may just get to the point when your current hill is no longer challenging. It can be tough to find a good one if you live in a flat area, but don't give up. I've found a few decent hills in Kansas, so I've got no sympathy for whiners who say they're out of ideas. Search the internet for sledding hills in your area, and I guarantee you'll find something good.

Crazy Training #4 – Twenty-Rep Squats

Squats – the most effective and brutal exercise you can do in the gym. We've already gone over how awesome this movement is, so you shouldn't need any more convincing. If you're still not squatting, then you need to jump on that bandwagon NOW! Unless you're an advanced bodybuilder or severely injured, you probably have no legitimate reason to avoid it.

Now, for those of you who've been paying your dues on the squat – it's time to take things up a notch. For this crazy training session, we're going to do things old-school with high reps AND heavy weight. If that sounds like a contradiction to you, then you just haven't been giving your all when you squat...but that's about to change.

Squats are unique among heavy movements in that you can just keep getting rep, after rep, after puke-inducing rep – if you want really it! Maybe it's because the quads contain more slow-twitch muscle fibers, or maybe it's just because you can stand and “rest” between the really tough reps. Either way, I don't really care. All I know – and every big dude knows, for that matter – is that grinding out high reps on the squat will build your legs like you wouldn't believe.

Now, this is more of a technique than an actual training session. Next time you squat, warm up good and proper with very light weights. You're aiming for one balls-out set, here, so don't bother ramping up with anything heavy. Just get plenty of blood flowing in your quads, glutes, and hamstrings.

Once you're loosened up, load the bar with a weight that you can get for a smooth set of ten. Be honest with yourself here, or else you're gonna collapse before you ever get the real benefits of this technique. This needs to be a weight that lets you get ten, deep, no-shit squats WITHOUT resting at the top between reps. Oh, and don't go easy, either. If you can actually get twelve or fifteen without too much trouble, then you're likewise going to be screwing the whole thing up.

What you do next is simple – get twenty reps. No matter how long you have to stand and pant between them, you're going to hit twenty. Don't be stupid and break form,

either. Your legs are going to burn like hell, but if you picked the proper weight, you WILL be able to get all twenty without rounding your back like an idiot. It might just take a couple of minutes and a lot of heavy breathing.

So, how should you implement twenty-rep squats into your program? That's up to you. Unlike some of the other crazier sessions you've done, this one can actually be used pretty often. It's brutal, no doubt – but squats aren't actually that hard to recover from as long as you get enough food and sleep.

Some guys actually add twenty-reppers to full-body workouts. They'll start with some benches, pull-ups, and maybe some overhead presses. Then they'll do the squats, catch their breath, and finish with some more back and arm work.

Personally, I can't imagine adding heavy rows and presses to a twenty-rep squat workout. That's just too damn much for me to do in one day, both in terms of time and exertion. I always do them on a lower-body day, and I also do them LAST in the workout. I'll start with some heavier, low-rep squats, do a couple of sets of leg curls and calf raises, and then head back to the rack. There's really no need to do much more.

And yes, you probably will have to use a little less weight if you do these last – but not much. However, you WILL screw over the rest of your workout if you do them first. After you try it once, you'll see what I mean. I don't care how "hardcore" you think you are – you won't care about doing another damn thing in the weight room that day after a legit set of twenty-rep squats.

Oh, and once more thing: EAT! You really can do these week after week, and add weight to the bar each time – but only if you're recovering properly. That means plenty of protein and overall calories. More power to you if you can handle twenty-rep squats on a cut, but this technique is really meant for mass-building. Lifters have been using it for decades to pack on ten, twenty, and even thirty pounds in a matter of months, so don't go screwing up a good thing with a wimpy diet.

Crazy Training #5 – Barbell Complexes

Do you enjoy feeling like you're about to puke? Do you love breathing so heavy you think you might just keel over? Yea, me neither. But if you ask me, avoiding those sensations altogether is a good way to get fat and mentally weak. Stupid-hard conditioning isn't necessary all the time, but it can definitely serve a purpose in your training.

Unfortunately, the simplest and most effective conditioning methods also present some logistical problems. Hill sprints are awesome, but it's tough to find a decent hill that's actually within driving distance. Sled pulling is also great, but not a workable option if you live in a crowded city.

Fortunately, the weight room itself provides all the equipment and space you need in a pinch. In fact, you can do a balls-to-the-wall, puke-inducing conditioning workout with nothing but a barbell, a few plates, and some space. Skeptical? You won't be after you give barbell complexes a try.

Simply put, a complex is just a series of exercises done without any rest in between. You can use almost any combination you want, but there are a few I've found to be particularly effective. Oh, and don't let the light weights fool you. When you're doing this many reps and using every muscle in your body, it's just not going to matter.

Complex #1: Full-Body Blitz

Targeting specific areas is obviously great for building muscle, but that's not what complexes are about. If you really want to get your heart rate up and push your anaerobic threshold, you need to go full-body. Try this series on for size:

- 10 military presses
- 10 hang cleans
- 10 squats
- 10 push presses
- 10 rows
- 10 stiff-leg deadlifts

You do all six exercises with the same bar and NO rest in between! Don't even let go of the bar. And trust me, you're going to have to go light. 95 pounds is more than enough for most people, and you may even want to drop down to 85 or 65. Remember, the point of this technique is to get you breathing like a tank. Save your strength work for another day.

How many total rounds you do will depend on your current level of conditioning. Five should be your bare minimum, and working up to ten rounds would be ideal. You also want to severely limit the reset in between them. Take a thirty-second breather if you need to, but try to keep going until you're done.

Complex #2: Back Attack

Alright, I know I said targeting one area isn't ideal, but the upper back is an exception. Why? Well, it's a HUGE group of muscles that can handle some seriously high reps. This circuit will still make your chest pound, and it may even add some size to your lats and traps.

- 10 hang cleans
- 10 Yates rows
- 10 barbell rows
- 10 dead-step rows
- 10 high-pulls

Some of these might need some explanation. A "Yates" row is the high-angle row popularized by former Mr. Olympia Dorian Yates. Just bend your torso at about 60 degrees, and make sure you feel your traps working when you row.

Once you do the Yates rows, just bend over further to do a more "normal" barbell row. Once you do all ten of those, bend even more so that the plates actually touch the ground. The dead-step rows are just like they sound – let the bar stop "dead" on the floor after each rep.

After you do the dead-stop rows, stand all the way upright again to do the high-pulls. This is basically just a jerky upright row where you pull BACK as you pull up. You can put plenty of sway into the movement, too – at this point in the circuit, you'll need it!

You can use a little heavier weight on this complex, but don't go thinking it's going to be easy. Fifty total reps targeting the same group of muscles is absolutely brutal. Since you're pounding one area into submission, give yourself a couple minutes' rest between rounds. This is a great "finisher" to throw in at the end of a back workout, especially when you don't have time for other conditioning work.

Complex #3: The Man-Maker

People use the name "man-maker" to refer to all sorts of stuff, but here's what it means to me. As always, begin the complex with the bar on the ground. Do one power clean – now the bar's on your shoulders. Next, do one front squat. Once you stand back up, push-press the bar BACK over your head so it lands in the back-squat position. Do one back squat, and then push-press the weight over your head to the front once more. That's ONE "rep."

You're going to do that TEN total times. Make sure you touch the weight to the floor between each "rep" so that you can do a full power clean at the beginning – not a hang-clean. Once you get those ten reps, rest for a minute, and get ready to go again. Like the other full-body circuit, your conditioning level (and toughness) will determine how many rounds you do.

Crazy Training #6 – Recovering from Insane Workouts

Every action produces an equal and opposite reaction. It's just as true in bodybuilding as it is in a science lab. You've now got five crazy training sessions to throw into your routine, but don't think you can do so without consequence! If you want to reap the benefits of brutal workouts, you've got to take care of recovery.

If you're even considering giving these workouts a go, then you should already know the basics of good bodybuilding nutrition. Eat your protein, get your calories, don't be a fatass – that stuff is simple. Still, there are a few advanced techniques you should try if you really want to maximize your recovery...

Train Smarter

I've recommended some stupid-hard workouts – but that doesn't mean you should train like that all the time. In fact, the vast majority of your workouts should be short, sweet, and to-the-point. Doing shit-loads of volume or adding forced reps to every set is a great way to burn yourself out.

If you study the programs of most successful lifters, you'll see a pattern – they focus on what actually matters. They do compound movements with heavy weights, they train for strength, and they don't screw around with a lot of fluff. This should be basic to everyone, but it's amazing how many "intermediate" lifters end up wasting time in the weight room. Over time, all that extra and unnecessary work will actually make it impossible to recover from the important stuff.

Get Your Sleep

Sleep is by far the most overlooked aspect of recovery. Even if you think you're gaining fine on four or five hours a night, you'd probably do a hell of a lot better if you actually made rest a priority.

Not convinced? Still think you're one of those "special" people who doesn't need much sleep? Try adding in these crazy conditioning workouts, and THEN see how you feel! Deadlift circuits, twenty-rep squats, barbell complexes – all this stuff can jack your cortisol sky-high. That won't hurt you too much if you're actually getting enough rest, but it will destroy your physical AND mental strength if you don't.

In fact, excess cortisol can actually make you get fatter – even when you're doing tons of conditioning work. Your body's hormonal environment is a lot more powerful than any one workout. The cardio bunnies on the other side of the gym are a perfect example of this. They slave away for hours on treadmills and ellipticals, yet they've got monster-truck tires around their bellies. If you want to be big, strong, and lean – go the hell to sleep!

Mind Muscle Motivation

Physical Progress through Mental Strength

6 Tips for Controlling Your Body with Your Mind!

Whether you're trying to lift more, gain mass, or get lean – MENTAL strength will be the key to your success. Your goals may be physical, but your mind ultimately controls everything you do. Just read some biographies of great athletes – bodybuilders, lifters, football players, and even runners. Their sports may be different, but all true champions get to the top by honing their mental game. Almost every trainee has a capable body; it's the willing mind that sets the successes and failures apart!

Don't think YOU can get away with a mediocre mentality, either. Whether you want to gain 5 pounds of muscle or 50, lose 10 pounds of fat or 100, you'll need to make big changes to your habits, work ethic, and lifestyle. Improvement is the name of the game when you're trying to change your body. In fact, it might be just as tough for a newbie to get himself to the gym as it is for a world-class bodybuilder to prep for a contest. Only YOU really understand how hard your journey is.

Feeling the pressure? I sure hope so! It's all on you to get results, but that just means YOU have the power to make things happen. With a few changes to your mindset, you can make your daunting goals seem like obstacles you just can't wait to tackle! To help, here are 6 of my favorite tips for improving mental strength.

1. Know what YOU want.

Before you start on your journey, you've got to know where you're going. What do you really want to accomplish with your body? Are you a young guy looking to get big, or do you want to lean down? Do you want to focus on strength for a sport, or would you rather focus on mass? Do you have dreams of becoming a professional, sponsored bodybuilder or fitness model? It's up to you!

Still, these are tough questions for a lot of guys. One reason they're so hard is that they force you to come to terms with your current state of affairs. You might want to be a behemoth bodybuilder, for instance, but if you're already chubby then gaining more weight isn't a great idea. You'll have to diet first, and that sucks! It's a lot easier – and a lot less fulfilling – to just waffle back and forth between “cutting” and “bulking,” never making any real progress. The same is true for skinny guys who freak out as soon as they lose their six-packs.

Outside influences can also make it hard to focus on your personal goals. Even well-meaning friends and family might try to discourage you from spending too much time, money, or energy on bodybuilding and fitness. Don't cave in, but don't ignore them, either. Think about what it's really going to take to achieve your goals, consider the sacrifices and trade-offs you'll have to make, and then make a solid decision. The day-to-day hardships of training and eating will become a lot more manageable when you're sure of your goals.

2. Surround yourself with positive people.

This is a huge deal for people with big families, and big social circles, and socially demanding jobs. Once you decide to change your body, you find that all sorts of previously pleasant people start to become discouraging. It's rarely anything overt, though. You'll hear off-hand comments about your "spartan" diet or "obsessive" training schedule, and people will not-so-playfully poke fun at you for taking fitness seriously.

In the long run, these kinds of people can be poisonous to your progress. Outside negativity will eventually wear down even the most strong-willed, independent-minded person. And, even if you never cheat on your diet or miss a workout, constant negativity will cause you some serious stress – a real progress-killer for bodybuilders and lifters.

While you're always going to have to deal with stressful people, you need to minimize their influence on your life. You don't need to cast out every person who's NOT a die-hard fitness fanatic, but you should limit your exposure to people who belittle your goals.

Just as importantly, you'll want to surround yourself with people DO offer encouragement. Even if you train by yourself, try to spend time with other lifters and athletes who are just as serious as you. You won't need to rely on your internal motivation when you have others holding you accountable, and their progress can inspire you to be better.

3. Do what you hate!

If you want to make everything else in your routine seem a little easier, aggressively tackle the stuff you hate the most. Dreading your next leg day? Do double your normal volume on squats! Cardio getting you down? Crank up the treadmill speed and tough it out. Getting a little sick of your diet? Try eating everything with ZERO flavorings for a few days, and see if your normal meals don't seem a little less boring.

You can only make so many tough choices per day, and it's a lot easier to fall off the wagon when every meal and every workout feels like a burden. By forcing yourself to do the hard stuff, you effectively make all of exercise and dietary habits “easier,” freeing up your mental energy for other tasks.

In fact, it's even more important to apply this principle outside the gym. If you've got a stressful life where you're making tough choices all day, it'll be impossible to muster the motivation to train hard and eat right. Tackle big challenges in your career and personal life, and your “normal” activities like lifting and dieting will seem easy in comparison.

4. Maintain momentum.

“The highs are high, and the lows are lower.” That old adage applies to most endeavors, and fitness is no exception. For myself and most of my clients, training hard and eating right only become easier the longer we do them. They're like any other habits – good and bad – tough to start, but even tougher to break.

With that being said, consider your own momentum the next time you think about skipping a workout or having a cheat meal. Is it really worth it? You won't just suffer the ill effects of that one bad decision – you'll be making it easier for yourself to slip up in the future.

On the other hand, making one tough choice in the present – sticking to your diet, finishing your workout, or going to bed on time – will make things far easier in the long run. You won't have to “torture” yourself daily, since your now-difficult routine will become second nature. Plus, consistent clean eating and training will make you look and feel better! The more your body improves, the less you'll be tempted to return to your previous state – smaller, weaker, or fatter.

5. Set new goals.

When you're trying to improve your body, one of the worst things you can do is to become complacent. It's fine to take a break now and again, and even pro bodybuilders will have “maintenance” periods. But you need to constantly keep new goals in mind if you want to make continual progress.

To keep yourself moving forward, always have short-term AND long-term goals going at the same time. Say you want to increase your squat. If you're currently hitting 225 for 5, you might have a short term goal of 275 for 5 – but don't stop there! Think about how much stronger you really want to be, and set a lofty goal: 405, 495, even 585 for 5! You

can constantly accomplish and update your short-term goals, but you'll always have that long-term motivation keeping you going. Even when you slip up or take short breaks, those big goals will keep you focused and help you maintain momentum.

6. Embrace Failure!

Finally, know that you are going to fail – probably quite a few times – before you reach your ultimate potential. Even if you exert the utmost control over your diet and training, you're going to have setbacks: bad workouts, low energy, injuries, and external stress. This isn't an excuse to be undisciplined, but an understanding you'll need to have to stay in the game for the long haul. If you don't understand the likelihood of occasional setbacks, then every mishap will seem like the end of the world.

This isn't an excuse to be undisciplined, though. You never HAVE to eat bad foods, and nobody's MAKING you sit on the couch instead of going to the gym. Optimize everything that you can actually control, and understand that the things you can't control may sometimes bring you down. The right mindset will allow you to bounce right back as soon as possible!

Break Down Mental Walls to Achieve Your Dream Physique!

Most fitness advice focuses on the physical, but you cannot build a strong body without an even stronger mind! Whether you're trying to build muscle or lose fat – and no matter if your goals are modest or lofty – changing your body requires serious mental effort. We're people, not robots, and every action we take starts with a conscious decision in our minds!

Of course, we all have a few psychological roadblocks to break through, and seeing a plan through from start to finish is never as easy as it may seem. When you consider all the choices you have to make – and all the options you have to AVOID – even the simplest diet or workout routine involves hundreds of daily decisions. Long-term transformations are even tougher, involving constant hardships, setbacks, and bouts of crippling uncertainty.

Don't get discouraged, though! Just like your muscles, you can train your brain to become better at commanding your body to do what you want. Willpower is something we all must develop, and each new challenge requires as much mental adaptation as it

does physical. Here are a few of the ways you can adapt and prosper to achieve your dream physique – or any other goal!

Living with Discomfort

I don't care where your physique is at right now; if you want to make big changes, you'll have to learn to live with discomfort! Most athletes understand that mental and physical pain tolerance are key to becoming great, but people rarely apply this hardcore mentality to their personal fitness goals. Not surprisingly, most people who make big plans and claim even bigger goals never achieve even a fraction of their desired results.

What does this mean for bodybuilding and fitness? It means always pushing yourself to get that last rep, to do that exercise you hate, or to do get up at an ungodly hour for yet another morning cardio session. I don't care what some bookworm says about this or that training technique; the guys and girls who simply push longer and harder than everyone else are always the ones with the best physiques!

For most people, living with discomfort is even more important when it comes to dieting. If you're a skinny guy trying to gain size, you **WILL** have to endure weeks, months, or even years of consistently stuffing yourself. On the flipside, you chubbier guys and gals are going to have to go hungry for a while if you want to finally unveil those abs. Save for a few genetic freaks, everyone has to endure hardships to force their bodies in directions they don't “naturally” want to go.

A big caveat: “uncomfortable” doesn't have to mean “unhappy!” If you only ever did what you “felt” like doing, you'd probably just sit on your ass eating junk food all day. Being lazy and taking the easy path may feel good in the moment, but we all know it doesn't lead to long-term happiness! If you learn to live with discomfort, the fulfillment of your goals will keep you going strong during the toughest times.

Embracing Uncertainty

Like any long-term goal, physique improvement is rife with periods of uncertainty. Will your new workout routine produce results? Will you be able to lose fat on a different diet plan? What will you do when you encounter an inevitable plateau? To last more than a few short weeks on any given plan, you're going to have to embrace uncertainty! You'll probably see big changes FAST when you first get your ass in gear, but results will always slow down.

When it comes to training, this means sticking to ONE routine for at least a few weeks at a time. Quite a few guys joke about having “training program ADD,” but this is no laughing matter. You can't expect to make ANY gains if you never give a system time to work! If you're focusing on strength, you can't just jump back on a body part split the moment you see a bigger bodybuilder blasting YOUR weakest muscle group. Likewise, you can't just abandon ship on a new mass-building program the minute one of your one-rep maxes takes a dive.

Embracing uncertainty is even more important with your diet. While you should certainly strive for weekly results, there are going to be times when something stagnates – your scale weight, your appearance, or whatever measurements you're currently obsessing over. It's critical that you remain objective and make small adjustments as needed, giving each dietary change a week or two to produce results.

In the long run, though, you'll achieve your goals FAR faster than if you jumped from one diet to another every time you plateaued. Keto, carb cycling, intermittent fasting, etc. - they can all be useful, but NONE will work without consistent effort!

Switching Gears

If you're like most budding bodybuilders and fitness models, you've got TWO goals to accomplish – muscle gain and fat loss. Even if you're super lean right now, you're going to have to put on at least a little fat to make noticeable gains, and that fat will eventually have to come back off. You may understand the logistical differences between bulking up and cutting down, but can you make the mental switch between the two?

Even for experienced lifters, this switch is almost always a challenge. When you're putting on muscle, you're eating well, getting stronger, and feeling great pretty much every day. Shifting to a cutting diet means less food, slower strength gains, and at least some occasional hunger.

On the flipside, dieting can produce quick results that become addictive after awhile. You can see new cuts on a weekly or even daily basis, you feel light and lean, and you get used to seeing the best possible version of your current self. In this case, switching gears will entail a little fat gain, a little bloat, and an end to those rapid physique changes you've come to enjoy. Overall, these shifts can seriously mess with your head if you're not mentally grounded.

The solution? Do both phases right! Most anxiety over bulking and cutting comes from dissatisfaction. Lifters who half-ass their cutting diets will worry about fat gain during a bulk, while those who didn't train hard enough will realize they don't have much muscle

to “reveal” with a cut. If you put 100 percent effort into one goal – and see your plan through to the end – switching gears will come as a welcome change of pace.

Teach Yourself to Stick to a Fitness Program

You've finally decided to adopt a new lifestyle and transform your body...again. This time you have the perfect plan for your training, nutrition and supplementation, and you're not going to fall off the wagon like before. You'll get up early when you have to, eat boring meals when you have to, train your heart out and avoid all of the indulgences that keep you from reaching your goals. Sound familiar?

If you're like most fitness beginners – in fact, even if you've been lifting hard and eating right for years – you've probably thought the above more times than you can remember. Whether you have a tough time sticking to any program at all, or a short attention span keeps you hopping from one plan to the next, you haven't really seen any program through to completion.

Don't worry, though! You've at least started, which is half of the battle of any difficult task. Plenty of successful fitness enthusiasts – and even bodybuilders, competitive lifters and models – have gone through the same pattern of starting and stopping before they've knuckled down and gotten consistent. If you want to finally make fitness a lifestyle, and not just a temporary thing you do to lose weight, start following these top tips for sticking to your plan!

Don't chase perfection

Perfect is the enemy of good, and all too often, people chasing perfection fall off the wagon far more often than if they'd come to terms with a few slip-ups here and there. A cheat meal once or twice per week, a missed workout here and there – these certainly aren't things you should aim for, but you can't get down on yourself when they happen! More importantly, you won't be able to sustain the fit lifestyle for long if you never allow yourself some indulgences.

You may feel like no temptation is too much to resist when you're first starting out, but you can't maintain a 100 percent perfect training schedule and diet for the rest of your life. Plus, for the vast majority of people, there is little difference in terms of results between 90 or even 80 percent adherence and 100 percent. You may feel guilty eating a burger once a week or skipping a workout to hang out with friends, but unless you're an elite athlete, you likely won't hurt your progress.

Make it fun!

If your workouts aren't fun, you're not going to want to complete them, and you can only get through so many boring, repetitive sessions before you just call it quits. Of course you have an end goal, and you will have to do some things in the gym that you don't enjoy, but each session should involve at least something you look forward to. This could include fun exercises that play to your strengths, as well as challenging routines that leave you with a sense of accomplishment.

Spice up your meals

There's no two ways about it: If you want to lose weight, you're going to have to eat less than you're eating now, and you're probably going to have to cut way back on some of your favorite foods. But that doesn't mean you can't enjoy your meals! If you're cutting calories then you probably won't be able to eat as much fat or as many carbs as you're used to, but you can still make dishes taste great with herbs, spices, and high-heat cooking techniques like roasting and sauteing. And, if you've got a sweet tooth, there are plenty of delicious and safe sugar substitutes you can use to make healthier versions of your favorite desserts. Not every meal needs to be a gourmet affair, but you're not going to stick the plan if you can never enjoy your food.

Track your progress

Some trainers promote variety to keep workouts interesting and fun, and while that's all well and good, progression is far more important! You'll change up your weekly workouts countless times throughout your life, but during any given shorter-term program, you want to be making tangible progress in the gym. Keep track of your weight, reps, sets and rest periods, and strive to improve at least one of those data points every time you train. Variety may seem fun, but the motivational boost you get when you see tangible progress on paper can't be beat!

Stay busy

A great deal of free time outside of or even at work may seem like a blessing, but it can become a curse when you're trying to stick to a diet. Hunger, real or imagined, will you have searching for food when you might otherwise be working, and the treats your friends and co-workers are eating won't help you resist temptation.

So, if you're having trouble managing hunger on a weight-loss diet, or if you just can't seem to resist the pull of other people's treats, find something interesting to keep you busy! Options include new hobbies, good books or even odd jobs or increased responsibilities at work. Use the time you're now NOT spending focusing on food to enrich yourself in other ways.

Hire a coach.

When all else fails, having someone to keep you accountable can make a world of difference. And, while friends and family members might help you stick to your plan, they're not being paid to keep you on the straight and narrow! By actually paying for a quality coach or trainer, you're giving yourself a financial incentive to accomplish your goals, and you're getting help from someone whose job it is to ensure your success. If that seems too costly or time-consuming, think of all the time and money you've already spent on workouts, diets, gym memberships and supplements that did so little for you in the long run. You probably won't need one-on-one help forever, but hiring a trainer is a great way to keep yourself on track as you embark on the long process of adopting the fitness lifestyle.

5 Tips for a Powerful Mind!

No matter your current goals, you're not going to improve your body without first strengthening your mind! Your thoughts ultimately control your actions, and it's a strong mind that pushes us to eat right, train hard, and stick to a plan for the long haul. Even the greatest routines for nutrition, training, and supplementation will fail if you don't have the will to carry them out.

So, why don't more people grasp this critical concept? Why do so many trainees – and even accomplished athletes – become stagnant for months or years? I don't know for sure, but I have a theory: it forces you to acknowledge your shortcomings! It's easy to blame your gut, your weakness, or your lack of muscle on things outside your control. But if you accept responsibility for your own successes and failures, you'll realize that your progress – or lack thereof – all starts in your head.

Fortunately, you can also CHOOSE to be better. Even a sub-par plan will work wonders if you follow it aggressively, and most of your results will come down to sheer strength of will. With that in mind, here are 5 more tips for improving your own mental strength.

1. Test yourself.

You can't improve what you don't measure. It's true for bodybuilding as well as business; you're not going to gain mental strength without constantly testing your mental! Your mind is like a muscle, and it WILL “atrophy” if you don't keep it challenged.

There are plenty of ways to put your mind to the test, but since our ultimate goal is a great physique, what better place to do it than in the gym? My favorite way to test my own mental strength is to put myself through a grueling workout – the kind I wouldn't normally do, and that I can't just repeat day after day. This kind of workout has got to be insane!

One of the best tests of will is also one of the oldest – the 20-rep breathing squat. Walk out with a weight you can normally get for 10 or 12 reps, and keep breathing heavy and grinding them out until you get to 20! It's brutal and exhausting, and it will let you know what you're made of. You can do variations with other exercises and even with machines, but as always – the squat is king!

I also like cardio-centric mental tests. I know, I know – you're a bodybuilder, and you don't need to run! That kind of thinking is exactly why sprints and circuit work can be such great tests of mental strength for lifters. You're not used to that kind of training, and it adds a whole new challenge to your workouts. Don't make the excuse that you don't want to “go catabolic,” either – one run or one circuit workout isn't going to ruin your gains!

2. Be your own role model.

Not everyone will agree with me here, but I don't believe in having “role” models. Sure, it's great to look up to people who have already achieved what YOU want to achieve. But don't try to model yourself after someone else! For one thing, people are imperfect, and you'll always get disappointed if you follow someone else's life or career for long enough. It'll do you no good to idolize some bodybuilder, lifter, or other successful person, only to find out that they fall short of YOUR expectations when it comes to morals, motivation, or mental endurance.

More importantly, focusing on a role model keeps you from going for YOUR goals! Figure out what you want to get out of your body – and your life – and go for it with gusto. Instead of looking to others as role models, seek advice where you can find it. I might ask a powerlifter friend of mine for advice on squatting, for instance, but I'm not going to ask him how to diet – he doesn't care about getting fitness model-lean! You'll

ultimately be more motivated and more confident in your routine if you carve your own path.

3. Visualize constantly.

All that “visualization” talk you hear from athletes may seem like a bunch of new-age nonsense, but it really works! While merely thinking about your goals isn't going to magically make them happen, focused visualization will help you to stick to your plan and do what you need to do.

Don't believe me? Just consider a few examples. Say you're supposed to eat five specific meals every day. You can go to bed each night, thinking about what each meal will look like, taste like, and require in preparation. OR, you can give your meal plan zero thought until it's time for breakfast. In which case do you think you're going to be most likely to stick to your plan?

Visualization works just as well for training. Take leg training for example. If you're like most trainees, you're not so hot on leg day, especially when heavy squats and high reps are thrown into the mix. If you never even think about leg training until you see the workout on your calendar (or hear about it from your trainer), you might end up skipping it! It's hard to put such a heavy burden on yourself with such short notice.

On the other hand, you can start thinking about that training session one, two, or even three days beforehand. Instead of focusing on the negatives – the burn, the discomfort, the feeling of heavy weights on your back – think about the positives: how your legs will grow, how your gut will shrink, and how great you'll feel when the whole thing is through. If you keep those positive thoughts flowing, you won't just make it to the gym – you'll have a kick-ass workout!

4. Hold yourself accountable.

Training partners are all well and good, and you may even want to have an accountability buddy for your diet. Ultimately, though, you've got to rely on yourself for motivation. Other people will inevitably falter and flake, and only YOU have your best interests at heart 100 percent of the time. That's not a knock on your friends and family – it's just the truth! Ask anyone who's even been truly successful – in the gym or out – and you'll probably find that they're incredibly independent and self-critical.

What does accountability mean when it comes to training and dieting? For starters, you've got to quit relying on training partners. More power to you if you can find some

good ones, but YOU need to be the one who never skips, is always on time, and always gives 100 percent effort. At worst, you'll avoid being dragged down by others' excuses. At best, you and your buddy will motivate each other to train as hard as possible.

When it comes to your diet, you'll need to develop the fortitude to avoid temptations. It's easy enough to fall into a routine of meal prep and eating, but it's a whole different ballgame when people start offering you goodies. Remember, you're the one who really cares about your goals; you've got to be the one who chooses long-term gains over temporary pleasures.

The same goes for you skinny guys who want to get big. You might not have to worry about overeating and fat gain, but you will be tempted to skip meals and leave food on your plate. Remember, your body doesn't "want" to pack on slabs of muscle – your mind does! Some discomfort is inevitable when you want to make big changes to your physique, and you need the will to tough it out.

5. Remember your reasons!

When times get tough, remember WHY you're training so hard, eating so clean, and reorganizing your schedule. If fat loss is your goal, think about how much better you'll look and feel when you shed that excess weight. If you're trying to get bigger, visualize that built physique you're aiming for. Want to get stronger for a sport or a powerlifting meet? Think about how gratifying it will be to make lifts you never thought possible!

This may sound a little cheesy now, especially if you're just getting started on your routine. Wait a few weeks, though, and realize how tough it can be to maintain a strict regimen of heavy lifting, clean eating, and regular sleep. Sure, it all makes you feel great, but our whims and enjoyments will always wax and wane. Dedication to a clear goal – one that's always on your mind – is what will keep you on the right path, even when you feel like cheating.

Weak Point Training

Legs

So you've built a decent chest and some big arms? You've got wide shoulders and a pretty broad back? Great... but what about your other half? Your legs make up half of your muscle mass, and if they're lagging, your entire physique is lagging! And if you've

got straight-up chicken legs from skipping squats every week, you're going to need to put in some serious work. Here are a few pointers on how to bring your lower (and stronger) half up to par as fast as possible.

Twice-a-Week Training

That's right, you're going to train legs twice per week – no exceptions! If your schedule doesn't allow for an extra day in the gym, then condense two of your other sessions into one. Trust me, you don't need an “arm day” if you can barely squat what you bench press. Train triceps or shoulders along with chest, and do biceps after back. Keep everything else the same if you have time, but remember – your legs are your new priority. Oh, and don't buy into the nonsense about “overtraining.” Yes, it exists, but your body can take a LOT more punishment than you probably realize. Besides, even the most brutal leg session can't be that taxing when you're putting up baby weights on the squat. You'll probably have to train through soreness, but you won't be suffering from the full-body, draining fatigue that accompanies true overtraining.

Squat, squat, and squat some more!

No matter what other exercises you decide to do, you had better make squats the mainstay of your leg program. Do them at both weekly sessions, and always do them FIRST in the workout. If you've been taking it easy on this exercise, you need to get used to proper technique and heavy weights. Even if you've already been squatting week in and week out, performing the exercise more often will help you hone your technique and rapidly build strength.

As for your form, keep things simple and consistent. Put the bar just behind your traps, take a shoulder-width stance, and squat all the way down. I don't care how light you have to go at first, you had better be going to full depth on every rep! Force yourself to build strength out of the hole, and your leg development will take off in a matter of weeks.

Full Development

Heavy, deep squats will be responsible for most of your results, but that doesn't mean you can slack off afterward. Hit up the leg curl, leg press, and if your knees can take it – the hack squat machine. Throw in some lunges and stiff-leg deadlifts once per week, and you're golden. Don't worry about anything fancier right now – consistent work on these movements WILL yield the results you seek.

Once your quads and hamstrings are thrashed, you'll also need to work your calves. That doesn't mean doing a few sets of calf raises as an afterthought, though. Most guys never get their calves to take off because they do just that – they don't actually train them hard like every other muscle! If you really want a standout pair of calves, pick two movements – one seated and one standing. Do FIVE sets on each movement, and make each one burn like hell! Use heavy weights, but draw the sets out with partial reps, drop-sets, and other intensity techniques. You already walk around on your calves all day long, and they need a real beating before they'll actually grow.

A Painful Lesson

It's one thing to talk tough leg training; it's a whole 'nother thing to actually do it! Make no mistake, you're going to have to bump up your pain tolerance if you want to build impressive legs. If you're really honest with yourself, the reason your lower body's not already up to snuff is that you've been slacking on the hardest exercises. Squats, deadlifts, lunges, and even leg presses – they all hurt like hell, especially when you start doing higher reps.

However, if you can learn to embrace bone-crushing weights and skin-popping pumps, your legs will grow like weeds! The great thing about most leg movements is that you can just keep fighting for one rep after another. When a set of bench presses or pull-ups is over, it's OVER, but you can always do one more squat if you want it badly enough. If you're not a little nervous before your next leg session, you're not training hard enough!

Shoulders

You can have huge legs, a thick back, and a massive chest, but without big shoulders, you just won't quite look the part. Sure, people might be able to tell that you lift, and you may even be putting up some impressive weights. But it's those broad, three-dimensional shoulders that will really complete your physique.

Unfortunately, we're not all gifted with great shoulders. Some have narrow bone structures, while others just have straight-up stubborn delts. Next to calves, they may just be the toughest body part to grow. Fortunately, even lifters with crappy genes can build broad, imposing shoulders. It just takes a little bit of time and a lot of perseverance. Here's how to do it!

Put Weight Overhead

You can certainly find broad-shouldered lifters who never perform the military press, but they're few and far between. Before you start worrying about side raises, upright rows, or other dinky movements, you'll need to focus on putting heavy-ass weights over your head. For anyone with naturally small shoulders, there simply is no substitute.

And just to be clear, I'm talking about the strict, standing overhead press. Feel free to throw in seated exercises as accessory work, but spend most of your energy on the basic press. Plenty of people will bitch and moan that you can use more weight when seated, but most of them have crappy delts. The standing position forces you to muscle the weight up with your shoulders, rather than leaning way back and turning the exercise into an incline press.

Don't cheat and do push-presses, either. The military press is damn hard, and it'll progress slower than any of your other main movements. You may be tempted to use "just a little" leg drive, justifying the cheat with heavier weights. However, it's the press out of the bottom that makes the exercise so valuable. I don't care how light you have to start out, stay strict! If you really want to push-press, do it after you've hit your daily goals on the military.

Pump Up the Volume

Your overhead press may lag behind your other lifts, but you can (and should) work like a dog to get it up as quickly as possible. Fortunately, most lifters can handle a lot of work on this exercise without overtaxing themselves. It's not like a squat or deadlift, where you're hoisting hundreds of pounds and frying your lower back.

There are tons of ways you can arrange your pressing in your program, but the best plans usually involve a heavy day and one or two lighter days. Try to have one day where you really get after some heavy weights for sets of four or five reps. It may be a "shoulders" day, but it could also be an upper-body day where you focus on overhead work instead of bench pressing. Then, add some sets of six or eight reps to your chest day, or another upper-body day. If you can recover well enough, you may even want to do some extra pressing after squats. The bar will already be right there in front of you in the rack!

Behind the Neck?

The behind-the-neck military press is one of the most reviled lifts in the strength training world, but NOT for good reason. Strangely enough, even super-strong guys will

sometimes decry the exercise without having ever given it much of a try. This is pretty sad, since BTN pressing is simply awesome for building thick shoulders and assisting your front press.

If you lack the flexibility to press behind your neck, don't just give up on it altogether. Like strength and speed, flexibility is an attribute you can dramatically improve if you're willing to work. Start light, and complement your pressing with some equally-light behind-the-neck pull-downs with varying grips. You might also want to try limiting the range of motion, at least until you build the flexibility necessary to get the bar all the way down to your neck. Be patient, gradually up the weights, and reap the benefits of this awesome exercise. You'll see jaws drop when you're BTN pressing more than most people can military press, and you'll have some equally impressive delts.

Feel the Burn

As is often the case, most lifters seem to take their shoulder training to senseless extremes. We've discussed the posers who think you don't need to overhead press, but there are also plenty of guys who decry any type of raise. While dumbbells and cables may not be as exciting as heavy pressing, raises ARE necessary for building the biggest shoulders possible. There are tons of slow-twitch muscle fibers in the side and rear delts, and they're simply not going to grow that well without some painful, high-rep raises.

What type of raise is best? Honestly, the exact exercises aren't as important as the ways you perform them. I prefer dumbbell raises, but some bodybuilders swear by cables and machines. I'd say your best bet is to milk free weights for all they're worth, but feel free to throw in some one-arm cable raises or reverse pec-dec if they tickle your fancy.

Really, you just need to pick one type of lateral raise and one type of rear raise per shoulder session. That may not sound like much, but you're going to beat the absolute hell out of each of those exercises. Using a full range of motion and as heavy a weight as possible, stick to four to five sets of at least twenty reps, occasionally doing thirty or forty. Raises are a type of exercise that allows you to use some decently heavy loads for A LOT of reps – if you can handle the burn. And don't be afraid to use some body English or limited range of motion once you're too fatigued to do full reps. You can get away with pretty “sloppy” form as long as you feel your delts working.

How you fit raises into your program is up to you. If you're running a body part split, you'll obviously want to put most of them on your shoulder day. Since your shoulders are playing catch-up, you'll also want to add some extra side raises on chest day, and

some additional rear raises on back day. If you're using an upper-lower type routine, then do one type of raise on every upper-body day, in addition to your heavy pressing. Do all of this stuff week-in and week-out, and you'll see your shoulders blowing up in no time!

Back

If you're anything like most lifters, you've basically neglected your back for your entire training career. Sure, you've got a “back day,” and you do some pull-downs and rows. Hell, maybe you even deadlift once in a while. But let's be honest, the people who really do what it takes to build a barndoor back are few and far between. Going through the motions just won't cut it – you've got to get primal and tug on some heavy weights, week after week, year after year.

That being said, a lagging body part will always improve more quickly if you've already made good progress on the rest of your physique. You're not going to get a massive back overnight, but start hitting it hard – REALLY hard – and you'll see some astounding gains. Here are a few ways you can quickly bring your back up to speed, and finally start looking strong from every angle.

Row to Grow

When it comes to building overall size in your lats, rhomboids, and traps, nothing beats heavy rows. And yes, cable and machine rows have their place in your program – but you're not going to reach your full potential without free weights. If you're not pounding away at barbell and dumbbell rows, now's the time to start!

Don't listen to the naysaying form-nazis, either. While it's certainly important to feel the movement in your back, you're never going to get big by “squeezing” light weights. If there's any exercise that allows for some strategic “cheating,” it's the row. Whether you're using a barbell, dumbbell, or T-bar, use enough jerk to get the weight moving, and contract your back as HARD as possible. Don't turn the exercise into a shrug, but don't be afraid to slap another plate on the bar and get after it.

Bring your Deadlift to Life

If you could close-grip bench 405, you probably wouldn't be whining about small triceps. If you were squatting five plates for reps, you'd have some awesome leg development.

And if you get your deadlift into the 600+ range, you'll be damn sure to have a respectable back.

Does this mean you won't build a great back without hitting those numbers? No – but you will absolutely make gains if you improve this lift. Sure, the deadlift is a full body exercise, but it taxes your erectors, lats, rhomboids, and traps like nothing else. If you add 100 or more pounds to your current max, your body will simply HAVE to add more muscle to your back.

Still, you shouldn't just go tugging on near-maximal weights every week. The deadlift is most effective for mass-building when done for sets of around five reps. Throw on a belt, use straps if necessary, and work like a dog at improving that five-rep max. Throw in a few sets of eight to ten for good measure, and hit a few heavier singles every few weeks.

Get on the Bar

Some guys claim that pull-ups aren't necessary for bodybuilding or powerlifting, but frankly – they all have small backs. Just like anything else in training – or in life – the hard stuff is what gets you the most results. You can piddle around with pull-downs all you want, but nothing is going to give you that incredible back width like weighted pull-ups.

If you're too weak to knock out sets of ten or more, do NOT “work your way up” with pull-downs. The movements may look similar, but you're just not going to make big improvements on pull-ups without actually doing them. Use the assisted pull-up machine, or better yet – do band-assisted pull-ups. If you don't already have a good set of resistance bands, now's the time to invest – they'll come in handy for years.

Frequency for Mass

Your back will benefit from frequent training more than any other body part. Pay no heed to the people who scream “overtraining” at the mere thought of hitting a body part more than once per week. Tons of successful bodybuilders use two back sessions per week, and plenty of powerlifters do pull-ups or rows every time they lift.

Exactly how often you train your back will depend on the type of program you're using. If you're on a body part split, start hitting back twice per week, and condense your other sessions if necessary. Vary the exercises a little bit, and don't deadlift EVERY time you train, but stick to the basics.

If you're using an upper-lower or full body routine, you can probably stand to do some back work every time you're in the gym. Pull-ups should be done at least twice per week, more if you're really weak at them. Do free weight rows as often as your lower back can handle them, and use cables or machines when you're feeling beat down. And of course, always make sure your deadlift numbers are improving. Prioritize your back this much, and you're bound to see some quick, massive gains!

Chest

Most lifters neglect their legs and backs, focusing all their attention on the “mirror” muscles – but not all. Are you different? Are you one of those guys who's got great legs, a decent back, but hardly a chest to speak of? Are you strong on the heaviest lifts, but weak as all hell on the bench?

If so, there's no need to worry. You already know how to strain hard on the heaviest lifts. Now you've just got to apply some smart training to the smaller muscles. Here are a few key tips for pumping up your pecs and getting a massive bench!

Stick to the Basics

In lifting – and in life – it's common for people to neglect what they suck at, and focus most on their strengths. While this mindset may work sometimes, it's not going to help you build overall strength or a fully-developed physique. Nope, if you want to get strong on the bench, you have to actually bench! Quit telling yourself that dumbbell presses, dips, and other pressing movements are going to somehow help you gain strength on the money movements.

Am I saying you shouldn't do other types of pressing? Not at all! But if your pecs are small, and your presses are weak, the flat barbell bench will probably be the fastest way to bring up those weaknesses. Even if you're not a powerlifter, it's imperative that you don't ignore this lift. Oh, and don't listen to the naysayers who claim the bench isn't really a good pec exercise. I dare you to find a great bencher who doesn't have a wide, thick chest.

Press Heavy

You may have noticed that high reps work incredibly well for legs and back. When you squat, you can just keep going and going – even with heavy weights. When you're doing rows or pull-ups, you can put some swing into the movement and still feel most of it in

your lats. Ultimately, your pain tolerance determines how much growth you'll be able to get.

Unfortunately, things don't quite work the same on the bench and other pressing movements. Your pecs, shoulders, and triceps are far smaller than your quads, hamstrings, and lats, and when they're done – they're DONE. You can extend a set of squats for a long-ass time, but you've only got so much strength in tank when you bench.

You'll therefore need to focus on (relatively) heavy weights when you're doing bench presses, inclines, or any other pressing exercise. Sets of twelve or more reps may give you a great pump, but the loads have to be so small that they're hardly worth the effort! Stay around five reps for your main movements, and save the pump work for the end of your workout.

Bench Often

Some guys can make progress benching once a week, or even every other week – but not you! Frequency is the name of the game when it comes to improving your weak points, and your chest is no exception. If you want a big bench and powerful pecs, you'll need to hit 'em heavy and hard, two or three times per week.

That being said, don't start “maxing” your bench every day like a moron. That's a good way to test your strength, but a horrible way to actually improve. When you're performing a lift that often, you need to vary the loads and levels of exertion. You might use a 5 x 5 rep scheme on your first bench day, 4 x 6 the second, and 6 x 4 the third. This kind of template allows you to vary the weights, avoid stagnation, and consistently hit personal records. And remember, making those PRs is what's really going to make your chest grow!

Press Overhead

I know, I know, this is supposed to be a chest training article – and it is! But for most people, getting stronger on the overhead press is one of the best ways to improve the bench. There are plenty of decent benchers who can't military press 135, but the inverse is rarely true. Just about anyone who can put big weights overhead can do the same on the bench.

Believe it or not, the strict, STANDING military press is also a fantastic upper chest-builder. There are quite a few bodybuilders who slave away on incline presses and

never build that thick, shelf-like upper chest. On the other hand, pretty much everyone with impressive bench and overhead numbers has an impressive, fully-developed chest.

Pump it Up

I did say you should focus on benching, but that doesn't mean you can't throw in some pump work, as well. Combined with hard stretching, the higher-volume stuff can actually make a big difference in the way your chest looks. Once you're done with your benches, incline presses, and dips, do a few high-rep sets of flyes or crossovers. In between sets, stretch your chest as hard as possible. If you do this consistently, you may even notice your chest looking fuller in just a few weeks!

Arms

Are your arms lagging? You're not alone. Although some genetic freaks never have to deal with weak points, most of us have one area that just doesn't seem to budge. Sure, legs will grow for almost anyone – after all, it's almost impossible for them NOT to if you're actually doing squats. But when it comes to upper body training, we don't always get the right muscles to fire.

That's why you can kick ass on benching, rowing, and all of the other “money” movements and still have lagging arms. Maybe your chest takes over during every pressing movement, and your lats do all the work when you pull. That's great for building THOSE muscles, but you're still not getting any arm growth! Here are a few tips you can use to bring your arms up to par with the rest of your physique.

Stay Heavy

So, should you stop all that benching and do more “light” training to bring up your arms? No way! You may not feel the tris working during your normal presses, but that just means you'll need to find a more productive way to lift. High-volume, high-rep training absolutely has its place, but training light all the time will only make your arms SHRINK – not grow!

Instead, start focusing on big, compound exercises where you can't help but use your triceps. Do close-grip bench instead of normal benching – even when you train chest, and even when you're on the incline. If you've got a choice, use the narrowest grip possible on dips. You can even find creative ways to move your grip inward on machine

presses. The triceps are fast-twitch dominant, which means they respond best to heavy, low-rep training. You've just got to use the exercises that FORCE them to work!

The same is true for biceps. Sure, curls are the most important biceps movement, but you still need to focus on some heavy chin-ups. If you can barely use your body weight on underhand chins, it's no wonder your biceps are lagging! When you've added 100 pounds to your close-grip bench, and you're chinning with a couple of 45s hanging from your waist, small arms will be the least of your problems!

Have an Arm Day

If you love lifting heavy (and who doesn't?), you might scoff at the idea of an arms-only day. But ask any guy with great arms, and he'll probably tell you he trains them on their own. I don't care how diligent you are with your arm work at the end of your other workouts, you're just never going to get the maximum growth without giving them your full attention. Besides, you're trying to bring up a weak point, remember? It only makes sense that you'd start to prioritize arm training.

Plus, an arms-only day doesn't require endless sets of curls and extensions. They're critical, sure, but you'll still be doing plenty of heavy work. Just like any other good session, you'll start with the big stuff – close-grip benches, chin-ups, and dips. Once you've done all you can, THEN move onto the isolation exercises.

Use Supersets

Some lifters say that the pump doesn't matter, and that setting PRs is all you need to worry about. They're right to focus on breaking records, but I just don't agree. Another commonality among guys with big arms is that they ALL talk about how important it is to get a solid pump during training. Your muscles are actually surrounded by a thin membrane called fascia, and it's forced to expand when your arms are filled with blood.

What's the best way to get this kind of pump? Supersets! Once you've done your heavy work, and you've moved on to extensions and curls, always pair a biceps exercise with a triceps exercise. You can take a breather between rounds, but keep the rest to a minimum when you switch between the movements. The fascia in your arms will expand far more when your bis and tris are pumped at the same time.

Gain Weight

Not quite what you expected, is it? If your arms are truly lagging, then you may be able to improve them without getting much bigger overall. However, the biggest thing that drives arms growth is quality weight gain. Just think about it – do you really think you'll have eighteen-inch arms if you weigh a buck-sixty? Forget about it! Simply put, if you're not on a mass-gaining program, and your arms aren't a strong point to begin with, they're going nowhere.

Don't take this advice as license to get fat, though. If you're currently ripped to shreds, then you may have to accept some blurred definition, but turning into a slob will not pay off. Eat tons of protein (most of it meat), plenty of healthy fats, and just enough carbs to fuel intense training. If you're gaining two to three pounds per month, you're golden.

Finally, keep training the rest of your body every bit as hard as you have been – if not harder. You may need to gain ten or so pounds for every inch on your arms, but that weight's going to be distributed to all of your muscles. Keep that arm day in your rotation, and add some light arm work to your other sessions as well. Combined with a steady diet of squats, presses, pulls, and deadlifts, you'll be amazed at how quickly you progress!