

Which **WORKOUT PLAN** Should I Follow?

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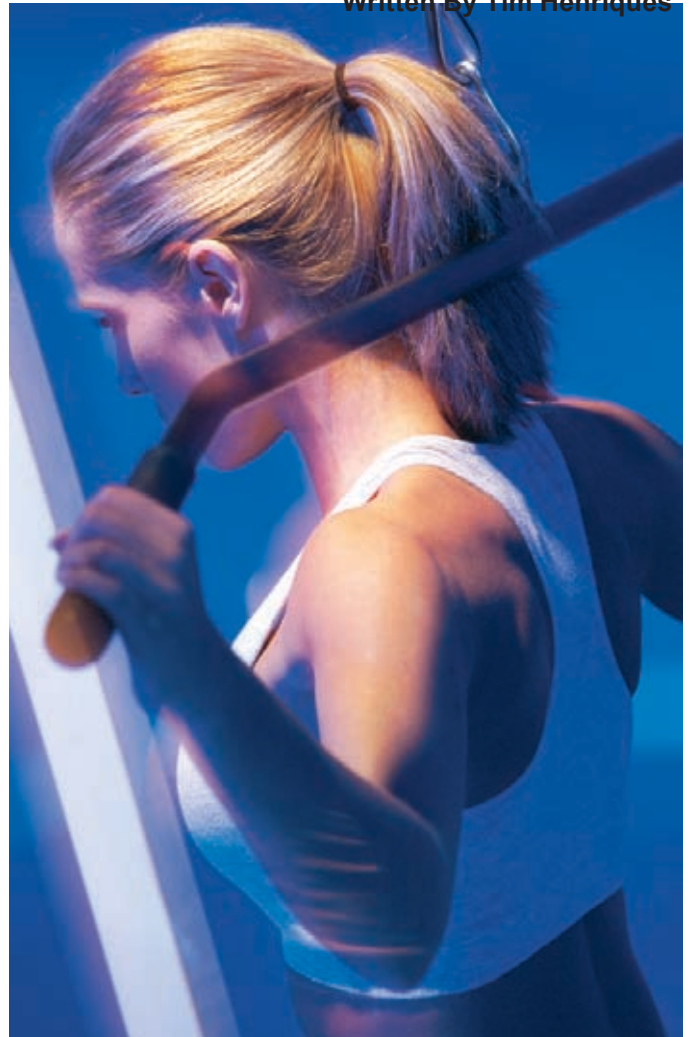
So you are ready to work out but you are not sure which exercise program you should follow? With all the choices out there, it can be very confusing as some programs are much better than others. Explaining the how's and why's of designing a good workout program would require a book, so I am just going to jump in to it and tell you what to do. Naturally, these plans aren't the only way to work out, but if you are confused and want to try something new you can be rest assured that these plans will work and they have no long-term flaws like some other ones.

The first thing you have to decide is how many days per week you want to work out, and then we will go from there. Workout programs are designed around specific goals but since this is a general program it has general goals. They are: to build strength, muscle size, muscular endurance, and to facilitate weight loss by improving your metabolism. They are also designed to reduce your chance of injury and build up your intensity and tolerance for exercise. If those sound like good goals to you, then let's go.

One workout per week - This really isn't the best way to go, but if it is the best you can do, it is better than nothing. The nice thing about a once a week plan is you have only one choice; you need to do a total body routine. When doing a total body routine, I recommend one or two (usually one) exercise per muscle group, one to three sets of an exercise, and 10-15 reps per set. You should rest about 1 minute in between sets. If you want to also do cardio, do it after you lift for 20-30 minutes. See below for a sample workout program.

Two workouts per week - Two workouts a week, while not ideal, is a good start. If you are a beginner (working out for less than 3 months consistently) do a total body routine twice a week. If you are more advanced (working out for more than 3 months consistently) you may want to try a split. A split is when we divide up (split) different muscle groups on different days. For a twice a week routine I would recommend you do a push/pull routine. What that means is you do all the muscles that push (chest, shoulders, triceps) on one day, plus abs, and then you do all the muscles that pull (back, biceps) on the next day, plus legs. On this routine you will do two to three exercises per muscle group, three work sets (meaning hard sets) per exercise, 8-12 reps per set, with one to two minutes rest in between sets. See below for a sample push/pull routine.

Three workouts a week - Now we are talking. Basically everybody should work out three times a week, every week, no matter the goals. If you are beginner, continue to do a total body routine three times a week, generally with a day of rest in between each workout (Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday work great). If you are more of the intermediate/advanced level, try a push/pull/legs routine.



That means on day one you push, day two you pull, and on day three you train the muscles of your legs (glutes, quads, hams, calves) plus the lower back. See below for examples of these workouts.

Four workouts a week - This is probably the ideal set up if you can squeeze it in. The most common days to work out are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, resting on Wednesday and the weekends, but any four days that you can commit to are great. If you are a beginner I would recommend you stick with three times a week for a few months and then move up to four days a week and switch your routine.

If you are more advanced you should do either an upper/lower split if you like to hit each muscle group twice a week or you should do a once a week split. Since I figure you can plan out your own upper/lower routine, I will outline one possible, once a week routine. There is a bunch that would work, but this works particularly well.

- Day 1: Chest and Biceps (Abs optional)
- Day 2: Legs and Lower Back
- Day 3: Back and Abs
- Day 4: Shoulders and Triceps

When you train each muscle group once a week you do three to five exercises for the large muscle groups and two to four exercises for the smaller muscle groups. The reps vary from 5-15 with 8-12 being the most common; generally you do lower reps for strength and higher reps for size (yes, you read that right). Normally you do three to five sets per exercise, with three sets still being the classic. And finally you normally rest one to three minutes in between each set, you rest shorter if your goal is muscle size or endurance (one to two minutes) and you rest longer if it is maximal strength (two plus minutes). The last thing to remember is if you are training each muscle group only once per week you need to train HARD. That muscle will have an entire week to recover so you had better hit it intensely.

Don't forget to warm-up for five to ten minutes before each workout and then do one warm-up set per exercise (a real easy set just to get the movement down). Cool down for five minutes when you are done with the workout. If you don't know how to do an exercise consult a personal trainer and of course, consult your physician before beginning any exercise program. If you are willing to devote three months to this program I feel confident you will be amazed at how much better you look and feel.

Total Body Workout - Beginner, 1-3 times per week

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Chest Press	1-3	10-15
Wide Lat Pulldown	1-3	10-15
Military Press Machine	1-3	10-15
EZ Curl	1-3	10-15
V-grip Triceps Pushdown	1-3	10-15
Leg Press	1-3	10-15
Leg Extension	1-3	10-15
Leg Curl	1-3	10-15
Standing Calves	1-3	10-15
Lower Back Machine	1-3	10-15
Crunches	1-3	10-15

2 or 3 Times a week program

Push Workout - Intermediate/Advanced

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Bench Press	3	8-12
DB Incline Press	3	8-12
Cable Crossover	3	8-15
DB Military Press	3	8-12
DB Lateral Raise	3	8-15
Rear Delt Machine	3	8-15
Skull Crushers	3	8-12
Rope Tricep Pushdown	3	8-15

Pull and Legs Workout

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Pull-ups	3	8-12
Barbell Bent Over Row,		

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45 degree	3	8-12	3 of 3
DB Row	3	8-12	
EZ Curl	3	8-12	
DB Hammer Curl	3	8-15	
Squats	3	8-12	
Leg Curl	3	8-15	
Standing Calf Raise	3	10-20	

Once a week program Day 1

Chest and Biceps	Sets	Reps
Bench Press	3-5	5-12
Incline Bench Press	3-5	5-12
Hammer Strengt		
Incline Press	3-5	5-12
Pec Deck	3-5	8-20
EZ Curl	3-5	5-12
DB Hammer Curl	3-5	8-15
EZ Reverse Curl	3-5	8-15

Day 2

Legs and Lower Back	Sets	Reps
Squats	3-5	5-12
Deadlifts	3-5	5-12
Leg Press	3-5	8-15
Seated Leg Curl	3-5	8-20
Hyperextension	3-5	10-20
Standing Calf Raise	3-5	8-12
Seated Calf Raise	2-3	20

Day 3

Back and Abs	Sets	Reps
Bent Over Row	3-5	5-12
Pull-ups	3-5	5-12
Machine Row	3-5	8-12
Shoulder Extension	3-5	8-15
Smith Machine Shrug	3-5	8-20
Cable Crunch	3-5	8-20
Roman Chair Leg Raise	3-5	8-20
Decline Situps	3-5	8-20

Day 4

Shoulders and Triceps	Sets	Reps
Standing Barbell		
Military Press	3-5	5-12
DB Rear Delt Raise	3-5	8-15
Rear Delt Machine	3-5	8-15
DB Lateral Raise	3-5	8-15
Leaning Lateral Raise	3-5	8-15
Closegrip Bench Press	3-5	5-12
Skull Crushers	3-5	5-12
Reverse Grip		
Tricep Pulldown	3-5	8-20



Tim Henriques is a Master Personal Trainer and Director of NPTI, VA. He has trained hundreds of people to become personal trainers and instructed them on anatomy, physiology and nutrition. He is a health and fitness expert with an emphasis on resistance training. He is also a competitive athlete. While attending James Madison University, he was a Collegiate All-American Powerlifter. He has also competed in various strongman and arm-wrestling competitions. Recently, he set a new Virginia state record in the deadlift with a lift of 700 lbs at a bodyweight of 198. He lives in Fairfax, Virginia. Contact TimHenriques@phillyfitmagazine.com