

# STRONGer Beginnings

## Beginner Training

Are you a beginner to strength training? Do you know the best way to train as a beginner?  
Do you know how to get the most out of your training?

### Do you know where to start?

Let me teach you...

We all start off our strength training journey with the same label; **Beginner**. No matter your knowledge or abilities from other activities, when it comes to strength training we all start at ground zero. Some people progress faster than others depending on their past experiences with sports, work or other activities, but **those that progress the fastest go in with a plan**.

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First, realize that **it is ok to be a beginner**. That is one of the best stages of any activity you pursue, because you will often approach it with more enthusiasm and an open mind. So be happy that you are a beginner and do not be afraid to look confused or ask for help. As long as you are nice and are trying hard people will often be happy to help you.

*“As long as you are nice and are trying hard people will often be happy to help you.”*

### **First Thing:**

The first thing you need to do before beginning your training is **set some goals**. These goals can be broad at first, such as “I want to get stronger” or “lose weight”, but should eventually grow to something more specific once you start to see progress, such as “I want to Squat 250 lbs” or “I want to lose 20 lbs”. Make sure that your goals start off smaller and then grow larger as you reach each one. Once you have set a large enough goal for yourself, make a plan of how to reach it. Give yourself a timeline and plan backwards by setting smaller goals that lead towards your greater goal. Then **do at least one thing EVERYDAY that progresses you towards your greater goal**. No matter how small, if you do one thing everyday towards your goal it will all add up to reaching what you want to accomplish. This may help with that: <http://mathiasmethod.com/>. Just stay focused and think of why you started in the first place. Remember what your motivation is and hold onto it. Why do you want to obtain this goal? Why do you choose to push yourself and make yourself STRONGer? Why did you go to the gym today? Ask yourself these questions and be positive even during the hard times. It will rarely be easy, but you didn't choose to improve yourself because it was going to be easy. You did it because of your “why” and that will keep you in the game. **Be goal oriented and stay motivated.**



*“...do at least one thing EVERYDAY that progresses you towards your greater goal.”*

With that being said, what do I need to do before starting a training session? The first thing to do is check with a qualified doctor to make sure that you are physically able to start a training regiment. Ensure that you have no heart issues or unknown complications that could put you at risk for an incident to occur. After you are cleared to train, it is best to **go into every training session with a plan**. If you don't have a plan then you will likely not progress very well and may end up discouraged or disliking your results. There are thousands of beginner training programs out there, including on [MathiasMethod.com](http://mathiasmethod.com) (<http://mathiasmethod.com/what-level-am-i/>), that you can choose from depending upon your goals. After searching and finding one that you like, it is important that you stick to the plan. If you are constantly switching around between programs then you will not progress as well as you could be.

*“...the most important thing for a beginner to obtain is strength.”*

Now there are many things that training programs may focus on, such as strength, size, aesthetics, or general fitness, but **the most important thing for a beginner to obtain is strength**. Strength is the basis for all physical activity and related goals. Getting STRONGer will help you to lose weight, gain weight, increase athleticism, improve aesthetics, and move better. Therefore, the first goal of any beginner training program should be strength. After obtaining more strength it will make everything else much easier to obtain. The basic components necessary for any strength training program are a proper warm-up, an emphasis on technique, a full body strength movement, accessory work, some mobility work, and usually a cardio component for those seeking more fitness.

For some motivation go here: <http://mathiasmethod.com/motivation/>

### **Proper Warm-Up:**

The warm-up, similar to mobility work, is **one of the most overlooked, but most beneficial, pieces to any training program**. The warm-up is especially important for beginners because it gets their body ready for the new stimuli it is about to encounter, by improving muscular efficiency, and teaching proper body movements from the start. It is extremely important for beginners to warm-up with a proper routine, that will teach you how to move your body properly while activating the proper muscles you are about to use. At first the warm-up routine will likely make you feel fatigued, because it is extra work added to your training session, but eventually it may become too easy to where you need to expand it. Overall, a good warm-up routine should make you break a sweat, teach you proper movement patterns and take your body through a full range of motion movements that will help improve your mobility.



*“The warm-up is especially important for beginners because it gets their body ready for the new stimuli it is about to encounter...”*

Though you can warm-up by doing some light cardio, such as cycling or jogging for 5-10 minutes, it would be better to do a more specific warm-up routine that is related to your training activities. Light cardio will warm you up, but it will not take you through the full range of motion you need to go through in order to increase, or maintain, your joint mobility or teach you to move properly.

This is also one of the most important aspects of your training routine and it should not be skipped for any reason. During days that you have less time to train you may shorten it, but the warm-up routine should be one of the main reasons you go to train. **Not only will a proper warm-up better prepare you to train, it will also increase your mobility and reduce your risk of injury.**

To view and print the Mathias Method Warm-Up Routines go to: <http://mathiasmethod.com/warm-up/>

## **Work On Your Technique:**

**Another extremely important part of any training program is technique work.** Technique work is where you take some time to improve specific weaknesses by focusing on improving the movement pattern, or technique, of the lift. You should do this with few repetitions and light weights that allow you to focus on the movement rather than being concerned about fatigue. A good amount of technique work is 3 sets of 5 reps with less than 50% of your maximum, as this allows for improvement without creating much fatigue. The focus should be on utilizing perfect form rather than just moving the weight around. As a beginner this is especially important as you are learning new movements. It is believed that it takes 300-500 repetitions to learn a new movement but 3,000-5,000 repetitions to correct a movement pattern, so it is best to start off correctly. This little amount of technique work will help to add to the number of repetitions you get to focus on your form without creating a large amount of fatigue.

Technique work should be done with an exercise that is the same, or similar, to the main movement for the day and that will help target any weakness the individual has. For example, those that need to build up their shoulders to improve their bench press should do a military press for technique work while those looking to build up their triceps should do a close grip bench press. By simply focusing on improving these movements through few repetitions and light weight, each time you train a certain related lift, they will make you STRONGer through increased neuromuscular proprioception, or the mind muscle connection. Your weak muscles will be better activated, increasing your strength potential, and you will also improve your movement pattern. **Beginners will benefit the most from this as they are always practicing new movements.** By working on lifting technique beginners will greatly improve your ability to grow and get STRONGer as you learn to move better.



## **Build Strength:**

**The most important part of any training program, especially for beginners, is the strength movement.** This is the lift that you will build the most strength with. It is the lift you came to do. This exercise should be a full body compound lift that improves a certain body function, such as a squat that improves your squatting strength, bench press that improves your horizontal pressing strength, deadlift which strengthens the hip hinge movement, military press that improves vertical press strength, etc. Whatever you choose, **make sure that you learn how to do the movement properly** and use enough intensity to build an optimal amount of strength.

*“Beginners should stick to low rep ranges with moderate intensity over the course of a moderate amount of sets to get the most out of their training.”*

For beginners, it is important that you **do not do too much too soon.** It is best that you attempt to do the least to get the most out of your training. By doing too much work too early in training you will rapidly increase your work capacity and have to do even more work to continue growth, all while putting you at risk of overuse injuries. Beginners should stick to low rep ranges with moderate intensity over the course of a moderate amount of sets to get the most out of their training. This is why 5x5 (5 sets of 5 repetitions) routines are commonly recommended for beginners. This amount of work and intensity is optimal for beginner and intermediate lifters to gain strength. To use a 5x5 program effectively it is best to start with about 50% of the individual's maximum for a certain lift and do all five sets with it focusing on perfect form. The next training session you should increase the weight by only 5 pounds total and do the same thing. Each training session thereafter you should increase by 5 pounds until you reach a point where you can no longer do all five sets with perfect form. Then decrease the weight by 15-30 pounds and start the progression again. This will keep progress moving forward quickly while not over fatiguing the newer lifter. So make sure to take your time when progressing and focus on moving properly rather than how much weight you lift as a beginner.

Remember, it's ok to be a beginner and someday we will all bench press over 300 pounds. While starting, just focus on building strength slowly overtime by utilizing proper technique that will make you STRONGer than you knew you could be.

For more about main lifts or to view the proper technique look here: <http://mathiasmethod.com/mainlifts/>

## **Accessory Work:**

Accessory work is any extra work you do after your main strength movement. **This is optional for beginners,** and can be helpful in increasing your strength while balancing out the work you do. Accessory is best utilized by selecting just a few exercises that will help improve the main lift for the day. For beginners this should be only 1-2 movements that they want to try or would



enjoy doing. **Try a variety of exercises and find what works best for you**, then stick to those exercises. When they stop working well, then move to other exercises. This is the part of training where beginners should get a lot of varying stimuli for growth in all areas. You can try to build up weaknesses or just do what you “feel like” doing that day. Just keep the weight light and do not do too much work. A good amount of work is 3 sets of 10-15 repetitions. For accessory work just have some fun and build strength in all areas.

*“Try a variety of exercises and find what works best for you.”*

For more about accessory work exercises and how to do them properly look here: <http://mathiasmethod.com/exercises/>

### **Mobility:**

Mobility work is anything that helps to increase your joint range of motion by loosening or relaxing your soft tissues. This part of training is **often overlooked, but is just as important as all other aspects of training**. Beginners, or those that have not put their joints through full range of motion regularly, often have tight tissues or pains that prevent them from getting into proper positions, which are necessary for normal body function. By taking just a few minutes to mobilize after training, while your tissues are thoroughly warmed and most pliable, you can greatly improve your body function and allow for the greatest change. To mobilize properly, **choose 2-3 mobility exercises to go through after training and do each for 2-5 minutes per side** for lasting change. These mobility techniques can be stretches, massage or self myofascial release techniques (massaging with a roller or hard object to release the fascia surrounding a muscle), but they must improve your soft tissue function. They will often be painful at first but try to relax, breathe and let the pain dissipate away. Make sure to focus on the muscles you just trained and take your time. **Mobility work is one of the most useful forms of recovery and pain relief so do not neglect it in your training regiment.**

*“By taking just a few minutes to mobilize after training...you can greatly improve your body function and allow for the greatest change.”*

For more about mobility and to view some mobility exercises look here: <http://mathiasmethod.com/mobility/>

### **Cardio:**

Cardiovascular training is any repetitive exercise that stresses the heart to work harder than it would during normal daily activities. This is **not always necessary for beginners**, but it can be useful if not overdone. Often times beginners start off their training regiment with long cardio sessions before doing strength training, if any at all. This is often in an effort to lose weight or burn fat, which cardio is useful for, but **strength training should be done first**. Cardio is an effective way to burn calories while training but the calorie burning effects do not last as long as muscular gains do. By increasing your strength and building muscle, you will burn calories



everyday to maintain the muscle obtained. Cardio burns calories now, but muscle burns calories forever. This is because muscle is calorically expensive, meaning it requires a lot of energy to maintain. By increasing your muscle mass or density through strength training you will increase your body's ability to burn calories everyday, and increase the amount of calories burned during cardio training. So **beginners should focus on strength before cardiovascular training** and add it in as necessary. A good amount of cardio training is just 20-30 minutes, post strength training, if the goal is weight loss.

*“Cardio burns calories now, but muscle burns calories forever.”*

For more about weight management look at our other articles here: <http://mathiasmethod.com/articles/>

### **Training Frequency:**

Another component to training is training frequency. Training frequency is how often you train or focus on a certain muscle group or movement. **Beginners do not need a high training frequency and going to train too often may even be detrimental to their gains.** Beginners should not train more than 4 times per week and not train the same lift more than 3 times per week. This will allow for a reasonable amount of stimuli without over fatiguing their muscles, leading to a high risk of injury. Beginners should have a low frequency of training days per week but can utilize a higher lift frequency than more advanced lifters. This means beginners can do full body strength movements, like the squat, bench press, or deadlift, up to three times per week while STRONGer lifters should only do the 1-2 times per week. For example, beginners can squat three times per week with higher intensities, compared to their max, unlike advanced lifters. This is because advanced lifters are much STRONGer and utilizing weights that can not be easily recovered from while beginners are using relatively light weights that are much easier to recover from.

*“...beginner training routines should consist of few exercises that build full body strength.”*

Overall, **beginner training routines should consist of few exercises that build full body strength**, such as the squat, bench press, deadlift and military press. Intensity should be light to moderate with an emphasis on technique. Do fewer repetitions over the course of multiple sets accumulating total training volume. Each week you should add small increments of weight to continue progress moving forward. **Beginners should go in with a plan and have fun.** The plan will keep you on track towards your goals and the enjoyment will help keep you motivated. Remember your “why”. Do not do too much too soon. Be patient and you will soon reach those that started off STRONGer than you. Try to avoid machines that focus on specific muscle groups and rather use compound free weight exercises that will build the most strength. As you progress be proud and share your success to motivate others to join you. Make new friends. Reach new goals. **Change your life and change your world.** We are behind you!



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