

Lots of guys want to be big and lift big weight. But you can't expect to go from 12-ounce curls to a 500-pound squat in one day. Here are some strength-building basics you need to know!

When guys make the decision to get fit, the goals aren't always to lose weight. Many newbie dudes have dreams of burly muscles and finally out-benching the captain of their high school football team. (So what if it's been 15 years?) Sorry to burst your hopeful bubble, but you can't go from complete inactivity to a 315-bench in one day. If you have illusions of powerlifting grandeur, you're going to have to start with the basics.

To start, get off your ass and go to the gym. If you're really new and have just started to engage in resistance training, you need a base. That base does not—and probably should not—be based on the power lifts only. The bench press, squat, and deadlift are definitely your bread and butter, but you need to have some meat and potatoes with your iron meal.

**"THE BENCH PRESS, SQUAT, AND DEADLIFT ARE DEFINITELY YOUR BREAD AND BUTTER, BUT YOU NEED TO HAVE SOME MEAT AND POTATOES WITH YOUR IRON MEAL."**

I'll help you pack your plate with essential strength-building lifts. Then, once you're through this article, it's time for dessert. Hit the gym and watch the guys who are bigger and stronger than you. Go to a powerlifting or Olympic weightlifting competition and try to rub elbows with some people who are really good. They'll teach you even more.

## **BASIC LIFTS FOR STRENGTH**

Yeah the deadlift, squat, and bench belong in your program, and you can even build your program around them, but they shouldn't be the only movements you perform. Along with the powerlifts, here are some simple exercises that I think are extremely effective for building a strength base.

Do these movements 2-3 times per week for 3-4 sets of 10 reps. Don't get overly concerned with using a lot of weight. Your focus should be on coordination and execution of the lift. Your last rep should look exactly like your first rep. If it doesn't, take some weight off.

## **UPPER BODY**

### **BENCH PRESS**

Any sort of pressing movement will make a good base for your program. Presses will hammer your chest, shoulders, and triceps. Don't go in the gym and throw on a bunch of plates. Learn to do the movement right by going light, and keep your entire body tight!

Generate force by pressing your heels into the ground and traps into the bench, and keep your elbows tucked.

**"GENERATE FORCE BY PRESSING YOUR HEELS INTO THE GROUND AND TRAPS INTO THE BENCH, AND KEEP YOUR ELBOWS TUCKED."**

### **MILITARY PRESS**

You can do this exercise with dumbbells or a barbell. I prefer to do my overhead pressing work standing, but you can sit if you'd like. Overhead presses are fantastic. They'll work your shoulders and triceps and will aid your bench press. If standing, make sure to flex your abs and glutes to stabilize your entire body.

### **PULL-UPS OR LAT PULL-DOWNS**

For beginners, I do not suggest learning how to kip like they teach in some CrossFit gyms. It's an OK movement if you want to learn it down the road, but you have to learn some of the basics first to build starting strength. Get on a machine that offers assistance or use a band that will give you assistance. Pull-ups or pull-downs are great for your lats and your biceps.

### **BENT-OVER ROW**

These guys are great for your lats and your upper-middle back. Bent-over rows can also help increase your strength for the deadlift. Because they're a free-weight exercise, bent-over rows also develop your core and lumbar strength.

### **CURLS**

Who doesn't like doing curls? Some coaches might scoff at me for calling curls a foundational strength exercise, but strong biceps make for strong pulls.

### **FARMER'S WALK**

This exercise flies under the radar for some reason, but it's a fantastic exercise. Just grab a pair of dumbbells—40s, 60s, or even 100s—and walk with those bad boys in your hands. You'll work your grip, your arms, and even your cardiovascular system.

### **LOWER BODY**

## **SQUATS**

Squats belong in everybody's program. Your quads, hammies, and glutes will get a workout, but so will your heart, abs, and back. If you're not currently squatting below parallel, drop the load and start focusing on form. You'll get a lot more from deep squats with a proper amount of weight than quarter squats with too much weight.

**IF YOU'RE NOT CURRENTLY SQUATTING BELOW PARALLEL, DROP THE LOAD AND START FOCUSING ON FORM."**

## **DEADLIFT**

Deadlifts are perfect for sports or just to kick ass in life. They'll teach you a lot about your body. They'll help you increase muscle mass throughout your entire body, which will then burn more calories so you're less fat, and help you develop total strength.

## **LUNGES**

Any form of lunge is great. Lunges work your hams and quads and will stretch your hips out. In lifting weights, we often don't have the opportunity to move around a lot. So a walking lunge is a fantastic, healthy movement.

## **LUNGES**

### **LEG PRESS, LEG CURL, LEG EXTENSIONS**

There are coaches who have a fit about these machines. Don't worry about that just yet. These exercises can be great accessory movements around your big lifts. However, if extensions hurt your knees, don't do them. That's what's great about exercise: There's always another option!

If you want, do one upper-body day and one lower-body day per week to start out. As you feel better, increase the number of times you go to the gym. You can also change the workouts so that one day you do a squat, one day you do bench press, and one day you do the deadlift. When you're done with those big movements, utilize some of the above assistance movements.

## **CONSISTENT CONSISTENCY**

If you want to be strong, you have to put in the effort. Get off the couch and work hard in the gym. Put a lot of intensity into every lift.

You also have to eat to build muscle. For your macros, try to get one gram of protein per pound of body weight, one gram of carbs per pound of body weight, and shoot for 1/2 a gram of healthy fats per pound. These are guidelines, not rules, but they're a great base for growth.

To get big and strong, you have to eat, sleep, and train hard with consistency. Keep it simple so you can stick with it!