



GOLD MEDAL BODIES

Rings Two Training Manual

GMB Rings Two Training Manual

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations and welcome to

Gold Medal Bodies Rings Two!

I was very young when I began gymnastics. I loved it from the minute I started and trained every day until I was 18 years old. Then I had a terrible knee injury, and that was the end of my gymnastic career.

It wasn't until about four years ago that I started training on the rings again. This year I'll turn 40, so as you can see, I had a pretty long gap in my gymnastic-style training (18 years to be exact)!

I wish I could say that it was easy to just jump right back into things. But that's just not true, especially since I got back into focused gymnastic training right after reconstructive surgery on my shoulder.

I soon realized that I wasn't able to sustain the level of intensity and volume of training that I could when I was younger. Being older required a different training approach. And though my shoulder felt a lot better after the operation, it still was not at 100%.

This forced me to take a look at the way that I approached training myself and my clients. I knew there had to be a way to achieve these strength movements on the gymnastic rings, but without needing several hours of training per day to do it. (Because, let's be honest - who has that kind of time?)

We're Not So Different

Some of you might look at the GMB programs and think that I'm training (and teaching you) to become a gymnast.

But that's not the case - I'm not a gymnast!

I'm a father, a husband, and the owner of a company. I work every day, and I'm sorry to say that a lot of it is sitting in front of my computer. My responsibilities to my family and my work are my main priority (sound familiar?).

I'm not mentioning all this to make excuses, I'm saying this because **I'm probably more like you than you realize.**

I have good days and bad days. I have days where I'm looking forward to training and I have those days where I wish I

didn't have to train. I have days where I really want to train but my shoulder is too sore to allow it. Then, every once in a while, I have days where everything gels together and I feel invincible!

I have fought injury, long periods of rain where I couldn't train in the parks, gyms that wouldn't let me hang my rings, and even a month where every day a crazy old lady would yell at me while I was trying to practice!

If I can make progress under these conditions, you can do it too, and I'll show you how!

Cheers!



Ryan Hurst

Course Expectations

While you're obviously working through this program to learn cool skills on the rings, our main goal for this program is to teach you how to do these tricks safely and efficiently.

There are many resources out there that can lay out various ways to achieve these skills, but we strongly believe that the program we're sharing with you is **the most time-effective and accessible way to get there.**

Remember this is not gymnastics in its pure state. For those of you familiar with gymnastics, you'll notice that there are no swinging movements in the GMB ring programs.

Why? Well, we've found that the majority of people using our programs aren't working out in a gymnastics center with a proper ring setup. So while these additional movements could be helpful, we're sticking with the ones you'll have no trouble doing on *something less than standard-issue* (like, for example, a tree branch, a pull up bar, or even a football goal post...TRUE STORY!).

A setup like that just won't allow for movements such as full giant swings, ring inlocates, dislocates, and other large swinging movements. But don't worry, you'll be plenty busy with lots of other cool and challenging movements in R2.

There's only one movement that you might have trouble performing because of equipment and location issues, and that's the handstand movement.

Handstand work on the rings can be problematic due to height restrictions, which may not allow for enough foot clearance for the full flow routine. But you'll still benefit from the training routine provided in this program, even if you don't have the optimal setup.

What's New in Level Two?

Rings Two contains an entirely different training regimen than our Level One program, Rings One.

You'll still find sets and reps and a routine to follow in R2, but how you train on any given day will be determined by what your body can handle. The principle of *Auto Regulation* is an important concept for higher level training and we'll go into detail about how to apply it for yourself.

Rings Two includes a specific timeline for progression to the full skills and flow routine, and some people may be able to follow it precisely. However, you may find that it's going to take you quite a bit longer to get through the full R2 program. Don't get discouraged.

These are very difficult skills that usually take a long time to master, even for those in the best situations .

Just remember to take your time and have patience with yourself and the process. Advanced skill work is difficult, but if you put in the time and the practice, you'll get to your goal.

Again, it takes time. Yes, we needed to repeat that, because there's no way to get these ring skills quickly. And you should know this now, so you aren't disappointed when you don't get a full Iron Cross in three weeks!

If you haven't already, we suggest building the necessary foundational skills with the Rings One program.

Using the Manual and Videos

This manual outlines the course programming with all of the details for implementing a training schedule, how to progress through the exercises, and key points in performance.

We also outline the general theory behind the course and how it all fits together to meet your goals of practical strength and mobility.

We've designed the manual to anticipate as many of your questions as possible with as straightforward instruction and detail as possible. It's *not* a detailed treatise on training - rather, a concise guide to getting the most out of this work and making the best possible progress.

We hope that you will return to this guide throughout your training and refresh your memory on key points about the workout structure and progression.

We advise reading through the entire manual first to get a good overview of the program. However, if you'd just like to skim through it first and get to the good stuff, you'll find that we've designed it in a way that lets you get moving as soon as possible!

The videos offer detailed instruction for every exercise and movement sequence in the program, and provide the visual benchmark for proper technique and execution of the exercises. The voiceover instruction, along with onscreen text and different viewing angles of the movements, will provide the best instruction outside of having us right beside you.

Please review the tutorial videos for the exercises a few times before you attempt them in your workout. You'll also find it useful to review the videos after your training session to compare your form to the correct performance by Ryan.

Ready to have some fun? Let's do this!

CHAPTER ONE: COURSE OVERVIEW

Getting Started

Some of you will be starting this program after a hiatus from your last period of ring training. If that's the case, don't worry, the first four weeks of this program are designed to get you back into condition for ring work.

However, as we're sure you already know, ring work puts a lot of stress on the body. The leverages in this type of training and the advanced movements will really tax not just your muscles but also your joints and tendons.

In order to make consistent progress, you'll have to be vigilant about getting the proper recovery during this entire training regimen.

This includes nutrition, adequate sleep, controlling stress in your daily life, and making sure that you continue to enjoy your workouts.

Do not skimp on your recovery periods!

R2 Training Schedule

Our recommended path through R2 will take you at least five months. As with all our GMB programs, this is not a single routine you repeat again and again - there are four phases to the program, and each one builds on the strength and skill developed in the prior phases.

Beginning with a prep period (since you might not have been training with rings for a while), you'll follow a progression similar to the one below.

SUGGESTED TIME LINE (OVER A 5-MONTH PERIOD)

- ★ Initial Prep Phase (1 month)
- ★ R2 Phase 1 (5 weeks)
- ★ R2 Phase 2 (4 weeks)
- ★ R2 Phase 3 (4 weeks)
- ★ R2 Phase 4 (3 weeks)

Phase Breakdown

INITIAL PREP PHASE - FOUNDATION WORK

- ★ Workout A - Pushing Focus
- ★ Workout B - Pulling Focus

PHASE 1 - MOVEMENT CONDITIONING

- ★ Workout A - Straight Arm Exercises
- ★ Workout B - Bent Arm Exercises
- ★ Workout C - Mix w/ Focus on Handstand
 - Working towards press to straight arm handstand and lowering into a shoulder stand.

PHASE 2 - SKILL SET WORK

- ★ Workout A
- ★ Workout B

PHASE 3 - MINI-FLOW WORK

- ★ Workout A
- ★ Workout B

PHASE 4 - FULL FLOW WORK

- ★ Workout A - Part 1
- ★ Workout B - Part 2
- ★ Workout C - Part 3

Pace & Progressions

We've designed Rings Two as a 5-month program. Five months may seem like a long time, but in truth, most people will probably need even longer.

Advanced ring work is very difficult, and the clients that have finished Rings Two have all told us that R2 was much more difficult than they expected. Progressing to the next phase depends on your particular condition, not a schedule, so don't feel pressured to advance faster than you're ready for.

We're offering a timeline to give you some structure, but don't force yourself into this schedule.

If you need more time to work through it, take it.

Rings Two focuses on progressing through advanced ring skills from the very beginning. Since this is a Level Two program, it is assumed that you already have proficiency and experience in basic ring training fundamentals. (And if you don't, we highly recommend starting with our Rings One program first - R1 will teach you the basic ring skills from scratch).

Since Rings Two focuses on just 7 major skills, it may look as if there aren't as many exercises listed in R2 (as compared with R1). But you'll soon see that there's actually many variations from the base level to the most difficult level of that skill.

FOR EXAMPLE, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE FRONT LEVER:

1. You'll start to learn the Front Lever with knees bent and tucked in close to you.
2. From there you'll work on opening up from that tight tuck into a more open position and holding for time.
3. Once you're able to hold that open position for at least 10 seconds then you move on to the next level. (In this case, that could be either the Can Opener, or a Straddle Front Lever).
4. Finally once that's comfortable, you'll start on the Ice Cream Maker on your way to a full Front Lever.

Exercise Skill Blocks

As you look over this program, you'll notice that we've organized the various progressions leading up to a full skill into blocks.

Within each block, you'll find up to seven different variations. Each variation is a step up in difficulty towards the full skill, and depending your progress, you may end up spending almost no time training on one of the progressions, but spend weeks training on another.

While we could have added dozens of variations, we wanted to make sure that this program was as efficient as possible.

Ryan realized that jumping into advanced gymnastic movements (like ring training) at an older age requires a different approach. And like us, you're probably not a professional athlete and you probably don't have hours upon hours to devote to ring training.

So our goal was to find the most efficient way to teach you how to nail these skills in a reasonable timeframe and training schedule, and in a way that didn't cause injury.

Hence, block training.

You'll find that training with skill blocks will build your strength and coordination in a methodical and reliable way - all you need to do is put in the work, and ensure that you train at the right level for you.

For example, if you can already perform the Front Lever Tuck, use the Front Lever Tuck Pulls as the exercise in your training.

In this structure, you'll be able to perform the full flow routine at whatever level you're at. You might not have a full Front Lever down yet, but you'll be able to choose a lower level movement from the same skill block in order to start training with the flow (and reaping the benefits).

It's very likely that you'll progress faster on some skills and take a long time with others. That's natural. Just perform the variations that you are able to do well, and you'll be able to work through the entire flow routine.

CHAPTER TWO: R2 TRAINING PRINCIPLES

The R2 Warm-Up

All GMB programs emphasize proper preparation for and recovery from exercise. R2 is no exception.

Each training session will start off with a skill warm-up. These warm-ups are generally made up of lower-level skill movements that will prepare you for the more difficult higher-level skills.

You'll be pushing your body to its limits with some of these exercises, so don't skimp on your warm-up. Take the time to adequately prepare your muscles and joints before each training session. Doing so will help speed recovery and prevent injury.

Bent to Straight Arm Training

Many of the movements in Rings Two transition from a bent arm movement to a straight arm movement.

While most are familiar with bent arm movements (and tend to be generally strong in this position), straight arm strength is something that most people aren't comfortable with. In

order to help you build strength and become accustomed to this position, we divided the bent arm and straight arm training days in the beginning.

For some people, straight arm work will be very difficult to handle. In the beginning it might seem as if your arm is going to snap! That's why you must slowly and progressively work into advancing your straight arm work.

Straight Arm strength is a major focus of R2. You'll need to have a good solid foundation of straight arm strength in order to even start working on the Iron Cross. That's why we include straight arm work in the form of basic planches into the conditioning component of the training.

The planche work will take place on the ground, and you'll use the Low Frog to get started. But don't get side-tracked by trying to achieve a full planche. In this program, the planche is just a preparatory exercise to help build straight arm strength, which will then prepare you for the Iron Cross.

Use of Props

Something else that you will find helpful in R2 is the use of a prop to help you strengthen your skills. Using rubber bands or "stretch bands" can help you hold a particular skill for a longer amount of time. This acts as "training wheels," and will help you perfect your form and gain better control of a hold.

It will also help you progress much faster since you'll be able to adjust the amount of tension used. You can use rubber bands for all of the skills, and at any level of those skills.

CHAPTER THREE: THE EXERCISES

Proper Alignment

Using apparatus such as the rings requires a few special considerations versus just placing your hands on the floor. Though the fundamental concerns remain the same, having to grip and be stable on a piece of equipment requires the following details.

Arm Alignment on Apparatus

The general alignment should be a straight line from your middle finger through the middle of your wrist to point of the elbow to the center of your shoulder. Essentially you need to “stack your blocks” correctly. Both for the safety of your joints and also for optimal performance. Being off line can place undue strain on the joints and is a waste of muscular energy, energy that should be used for the exercise at hand.

Center of Gravity Awareness on Apparatus

Another important detail to consider on the apparatus is knowing where the mass of your body is in relation to a vertical line made by the rings. For example, whilst in the top position on the rings, do you know where your body should be in relationship of that straight line from the rings to the

sky and rings to the floor? How much of your body is in front of that line, and how much is behind it?

This awareness helps you to attain the correct position, and what you need to do to get there.

Correct Breathing Principles

Another important aspect of optimal training is the practice of correct breathing during all of the movements.

First and foremost, don't hold your breath! This should go without saying, but breath-holding is very common, especially when we start performing new exercises. Holding your breath and bracing in a posture or a difficult activity is, for many, a natural response. Unfortunately, it's also one of the worst things you can do. Exhale when you are exerting effort and never hold your breath.

Second, our breathing pattern should match inhalation with expansion and exhalation with compression. This allows us to follow the natural movement of our lungs and coordinate our body's position with the correct breathing, rather than fighting against.

Try This Exercise

FOR EXAMPLE:

- ★ Stand up tall, lift up your hands as far as possible and breathe in deeply.

You should feel as if you are breathing in as much air as possible, filling up your lungs to their capacity. Exhale and relax, and remember the sensation of the full inhalation.

NOW TRY THIS:

- ★ Sit down on the floor and crunch up into a ball, hug your knees into your chest and make yourself as small as possible. Try to inhale deeply in this position.

Compare this feeling with the one earlier, when you were standing tall and fully open. Doesn't it feel as if you are straining to inhale, and that there's no room for you to take in any air?

When you regulate your breathing to never hold your breath, exhale on exertion, and coordinate your breathing with your body position, you will make the most out of your effort and find yourself performing to your best ability.

As you continue to practice proper breathing in all your exercise activities, you will gradually progress from the need to be actively controlling your breath to where you are breathing correctly without thinking about it.

This is the beginning of breath mastery, and it's a beautiful thing.

RINGS TWO EXERCISE SKILL BLOCK LIST

Use the following skill blocks to choose the appropriate level for your training.

Front Lever Block

1. Tuck Lever
2. Open Tuck Lever
3. Lower to Tuck Lever, Pull to Inverted Hang
4. Can Opener (both legs)
5. Lower to Can Opener, Pull to Inverted Hang
6. 5 Degree Lever Pull
7. Full Front Lever Hold
8. Pull to Front Lever Inverted Hang
9. Ice Cream Makers

Tips

- ★ Start with a false grip for support, then as you improve move to the standard grip.
- ★ Use a band for support at the beginning of each stage.
- ★ The Front Lever takes time. Use some of the “fun” moves like the Pull to Front Lever to Inverted Hang or the Ice Cream Maker to help further develop your Front Lever.

Key Points

- ★ Keep a flat back.
- ★ Don't shrug your shoulders - roll them back and down.
- ★ Arms locked with thumbs turned in.
- ★ Think of pulling arms down towards legs as you pull torso upward.
- ★ Keep your entire body tight and strong.

Back Lever Block

1. Skin the Cats to Inverted Hang
2. Extend to Tuck, drop into German Hang
3. Lower to Tuck, pull to Inverted Hang
4. Lower to Straddle, drop into German Hang
5. Lower to Straddle, pull to Inverted Hang
6. Lower to Straight Body, drop into German Hang
7. Lower to Straight Body, pull to Inverted Hang

Tips

- ★ Start with your thumb in/palm up position, then progress to thumb out/palm down position as you improve.
- ★ Use a band for support at the beginning of each stage.

Key Points

- ★ Lock out arms with palms down and thumbs out.
- ★ Don't shrug - pull shoulders down and roll them forward slightly.
- ★ Don't arch your back - keep a semi-hollow body position.
- ★ Pull down hard into the rings.
- ★ Keep your entire body tight and strong.

Iron Cross Block

1. Low Frog Hold
2. Baby Cross
3. Assisted Box Cross -> Feet/legs in front on box
4. Box Cross -> Feet/legs in front on box
5. Assisted Full Iron Cross
6. Full Iron Cross

Tips

The Iron Cross is a very difficult move. Don't be surprised if it takes several months to over a year to achieve it. Even with the best training and recovery, it can be a tricky move to "get." This is natural.

We recommend waiting until you have the proper straight arm strength, before you attempt to work on the Iron Cross.

You should perform this move with arms locked out, and don't hurry into it (or you'll run the risk of injury).

The initial training focus on the planche progressions, a properly done strong RTO Top Position, and a straight arm lock out in the handstand are key for achieving the Iron Cross. Don't try and "muscle" out an Iron Cross, building the

necessary strength required in your shoulders and elbows is dependent upon how focused you were on proper form.

That is why the preparatory straight arm strength work is so important. If you try and jump into the Iron Cross too quickly, your body will compensate for this lack of strength by forcing itself into an incorrect position.

Start with the false grip and move on to the standard grip as you improve.

Key Points

- ★ Start from the RTO Top Position.
- ★ Keep hollow body position with shoulders rolled forward slightly.
- ★ Lock out your arms.
- ★ Rotate elbow pits downward.
- ★ Don't arch your back.
- ★ Don't shrug your shoulders.

Handstand Block

1. Jump up to Handstand (*Legs in Straps*)
 - Use straps against shoulders to assist in arm positioning.
2. Press to Handstand (*Legs in Straps*)
 - Take feet off of straps before lowering.
3. L-Sit Press to Handstand (*Legs in Straps*)
 - Take feet off of straps before lowering.
4. Handstand (*No Straps*)
5. Press to Handstand Lower to Shoulder Stand (*Legs in Straps*)
6. Press to Handstand Lower to Shoulder Stand (*No Straps*)
 - Work towards doing with L-Sit.

Safety Movements

- ★ Handstand bail
- ★ Handstand to shoulder stand bail

Tips

Being upside down on the rings is incredibly difficult and the handstand can be a daunting move.

We suggest being proficient with your handstands on the ground before trying them on the rings. Download our free tutorial, *Ultimate Guide to Handstands*, and follow the program until you achieve a solid handstand. Then head on over to the rings and give them a go.

The ring handstand is a combination of strength and balance that is hard to match in any other exercise. When you begin, it'll be tough to balance yourself, so that's why we recommend starting with wrapping your legs around the straps. Now, using the straps doesn't give you a license to neglect your form! Focus on maintaining a hollow body, with fully locked arms in the RTO position.

We find it best to lower your rings close to the ground, lock your elbows straight, then kick on up from there. At the start you can kick up harder than usual to make sure that your feet get to the straps. As you improve kick up just enough to get in position to practice your balance. If you find yourself having trouble locking out your arms, you can place the straps in front of your shoulders and use the straps this way to get yourself in position.

The time will come when you'll feel ready to ditch the "feet around the straps" method. Again, keep the rings low at first, since you'll likely need to bail out a lot!

And with regards to bailing - don't bend your elbows or let go of the rings. EVER! Either cartwheel out or have a crash mat to land on.

Getting the Ring Handstand with arms locked out will help you with all of the other straight arm work on the rings. So be sure to put plenty of time into working on your handstands both on and off the rings.

Key Points

- ★ Shoulders over hands
- ★ Try to turn rings slightly out
- ★ Use the straps to help with form
- ★ Practice low to the ground and use a mat

Front Roll Block

1. Muscle Up
2. Front Roll Over to False Grip Hang Pull Up
3. Front Roll Over to Muscle Up
4. Front Roll

Tips

If you can get a muscle up, you can get a front roll. The main point to ensure a successful front roll is to change to a false grip as soon as you roll forward. Pull your hands in to your stomach, keep tucked, and with a little practice, you'll get it.

Key Points

- ★ Use a false grip
- ★ Go slow and emphasize good technique
- ★ Keep a tight tuck in the beginning
- ★ Keep your elbows in

Back Kip Block

1. Inverted Straight Body Row
2. Inverted High Pull
3. Half & Half
4. Back Kip or Pull Over with Assistance
5. Full Back Kip or Pull Over

Tips

1. Focus on keeping your arms as close in to your body as possible when you pull up and back for the kip. Think of putting your forearms together and rolling over your arms.

Key Points

- ★ Use a false grip
- ★ Pull high and get your feet up and back over your head
- ★ Keep elbows in. It helps to think of bringing your forearms together.
- ★ Kick up and back and push down hard into the rings

Front Kip Block

1. Pike Inverted Row
2. Half Kip Inverted Row
3. Front kip to feet on ground
4. Kip to Pull Up Hold
5. Kip to Bottom Position Dip
6. Full Kip

Tips

Achieving the Front Kip is all about kicking as high up as you can, so you can place your shoulders over your hands. If you are having trouble with this, it's probably because you are kicking down instead of up and out. Pull up and as soon as you kick your feet up and to the front, push down as hard as you can.

Key Points

- ★ Kick up towards the sky
- ★ Pull hard as soon as you kick
- ★ Drive chest up and get shoulders over hands
- ★ Keep elbows tucked in close to body

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PROGRAM

R2 Programming

Below are three different training schedule options for your R2 journey.

Pick the schedule that is best for you based on how much time you can devote to the training (either by number of days a week or time in a single session) and how much recovery you'll need to do your best.

Option 1 - Medium Effort

- ★ Workout A - Monday/Thursday
- ★ Workout B - Tuesday/Friday
- ★ Workout C - Wednesday/Saturday

Option 2 - Alternate Workouts Each Week

- ★ Workout A - Monday / Friday
- ★ Workout B - Wednesday
- ★ Workout C - Tuesday / Thursday (light to medium effort)

Option 3 - High Effort / Extra Recovery

- ★ Workout A - Monday
- ★ Workout B - Wednesday
- ★ Workout C - Friday

No matter which option you choose, remember to adjust the volume and intensity of the training in a way that matches how you feel, and your performance on any given day.

Don't be a slave to the sets and reps!

In the R2 Program Outline, we'll provide a routine based on the Option 1 schedule, but keep in mind that you are free to do whichever above routine works the best for your condition and schedule.

Gauging Your Performance

One of the unique distinctions of our training system is how we determine when to progress in our exercises. When do we try to add another repetition or set? When can we reduce the time in between sets?

Some training systems are vague on this, often stating “work as hard as you can every time” or “you should always be trying to add another repetition!” This is all well and good, as increasing intensity is one of the ways to progress. However, doesn't it seem like there should be a better way to go about it?

In GMB training, we want to be aware of every aspect of our training and use this mindfulness to direct our work in the best way possible. We should evaluate our performance in every session and use these evaluations to analyze what should happen at the next session.

Our evaluation tools are; Rating of Perceived Technique (**RPT**) Rating of Perceived Exertion (**RPE**). The ratings are made on a scale of 1-10, 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest on the scale.

The **RPT** is part of what GMB likes to call “making it pretty”. We've made the distinction between simply banging out

repetitions versus a focus on proper form and technique. A repetition that looks smooth and graceful will is always preferable to five repetitions that would make someone cringe at the sight of it!

It may seem to be too subjective, but with every practice you become more aware of how you are doing and it actually becomes a very reliable measurement. It's also very helpful to occasionally video your training and review it afterwards to evaluate your form. You'll soon become proficient at finding form errors and learn to correct those at your next training session.

The **RPE** was originally developed by Gunnar Borg <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/measuring/exertion.html>

His scale was designed on a scale of 6 to 20, with 6 being no difficulty at all and 20 the most exertion you've ever experienced. The numbers may seem funny but they were meant to correlate with heart rate (multiply by 10) and were found to approximate your actual heart rate during the exercise very well.

A scale of 1 to 10 is more intuitive though, and works well for our purposes. If you wish to experiment with a heart rate monitor, you may find that multiplying your RPE by 20 (i.e. RPE of 6 is a HR of 120), comes pretty close.

It's important to realize that we aren't searching for maximal exertion every time we workout! You should be aiming for an intensity level that allows you to work hard at the same time you maintain a very good level of form.

RPT and RPE should work together to get you the best bang for your efforts in your training session. You'll most likely notice that if your RPE is near maximal then your RPT tends to be lower. It's just the nature of working very hard. Your form tends to suffer.

Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

10 = Maximal Effort. No reps left in the tank, and form is breaking down.

9 = Heavy Effort. It's taking everything you've got to finish the last rep with good form.

8 = Could have done more, but it wouldn't be pretty.

7 = Each rep is clean and controlled, and form is spot-on.

6 = Perfect technique with moderate effort.

5 = A repetition that is a little harder than a warmup, but still very light.

4, 3, 2, 1 = Minimal exertion. These should be the sensations you have in a progressive warmup.

Rate of Perceived Technique (RPT)

10 = Perfect 10! Can't get any better, you're on the stand receiving your Gold Medal.

9 = Nearly perfect, probably looks that way to an observer, but you feel that there was a minute form break.

8 = Great technique and an ideal to shoot for in every workout.

7 = A smooth and steady repetition with minor issues. This may happen if you have better form in the beginning but fatigue is building up as you continue to train.

6 = Form breakdown is more obvious. Now it's a good idea to stop and rest a bit, or stop the exercise entirely for the day.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 = Your form is pretty wonky here and is typical for the first couple times you perform a skill. Here it is helpful to perform the skill for a repetition or two, then go back down a level to get a training effect. Don't push through this at all, you'll get no benefit.

RPT & RPE In Action

Here's an example of how to use the RPE and RPT together to judge when you should progress in a certain exercise.

- ★ **Rate of Perceived Technique:** RPT is our self evaluation of the level of proficiency we have in the particular exercise. How does our form compare with the perfect form demonstrated in the tutorials? Before we attempt to add repetitions or sets to the exercise, we want to make sure our RPT is at least an 8.
- ★ **Rate of Perceived Effort:** RPE is how much we judge our level of effort is in the given exercise. We should only add work when our RPE is at a 6 or below. If you are at around a 6 to 7, then you are at the right level of intensity and don't need to add more.

If you are performing sets of five with an RPT of 8 and an RPE of 5, it is time to add more repetitions, up to the maximum reps noted in the program charts. Once you are hitting the maximum reps with RPT above 8 and RPE around 5, add more sets or decrease the rest periods between sets.

Once you can hit your RPT / RPE goals for every exercise in a given routine, you are ready for the next phase or difficulty level.

Auto-Regulation

Another aspect of regulating intensity, but in a way that is not planned from the beginning, is Auto-Regulation. This is a daily self-assessment of your capacity for the programmed intensity level.

It's a fancy term for taking it easy on a "bad day" and allowing yourself to kick ass on a "good day". The trick is in a true assessment of a "bad/good" day.

It's very easy to be fooled by your feelings at the start of the workout. We've all had training sessions where we felt like crap in the beginning, but then it ends up being one of the best workouts we've ever done. And the reverse happens as well, you can go in feeling like a champ, and just fall apart in the session.

A good way to work through this is to see how you are doing after the warmup and the first couple of sets of the first exercise. How are your RPE and RPT as compared to your last training session?

If you are within a point, continue on and work on maintaining those ratings with the programmed sets and reps.

If your RPE has gone up two or more and RPT dropping the same, then it's safe to say this is one of those days where you would benefit from taking it a bit easy. Cut the repetitions and sets in the session until your ratings match the previous workout.

It may even turn out that one of those "bad days" turns into a "bad week"! If this happens, turn this into a *Recuperation Week* as described below in the outline.

Proper regulation of intensity and volume can mean the difference between a productive program and one that takes you nowhere.

Don't be so eager to pound yourself into the ground at every session. There are lots of ways to design a routine that makes you feel like you've been hit by a truck and be sore for days.

But that doesn't mean it's productive!

Gauge your progress for the long term, regulate your training with intelligence, and you'll continue meeting your goals for years to come.

RINGS TWO PROGRAM OUTLINE

This section outlines the basic components of the Rings Two program - kind of a bird's eye view so you can see where things are going and how you'll progress over the course of your practice. Refer to the separate R2 Program Charts document for more details on each phase. The R2 Program Charts document also contains detailed daily charts designed for easier printing.

Training Phases

Phase	Focus	Reps	Holds	Rest	Sets
Prep Phase 4 Weeks	Foundation Work - Focus on pushing and pulling movements	3 - 5	5 - 10 s	2 minutes	Up to 5
Phase 1 5 Weeks	Movement Conditioning - Focus on building bent arm and straight arm strength	Variable	5 - 10 s	2 minutes	Variable
Phase 2 4 Weeks	Skill Set Work - Skill component practice with additional conditioning	3 - 5	5 - 10 s	2 minutes	Variable
Phase 3 4 Weeks	Mini Flow Work - Combine components into a mini flow	Hybrid program of flow components and additional conditioning			
Phase 4 3 Weeks	Full Flow Work - Practice the flow in its entirety	Full flow	> 5 s	2 minutes	Up to 6

As you can see, we begin with basic skills to build the necessary strength for serious ring training. As that strength becomes available, you'll gradually begin to chain the movements together in longer and more sophisticated routines, culminating in a 'master' routine that contains everything you've practiced up to that point.

Recuperation Period Between Phases

To further enhance your recovery in this intensive program, we've included a Recuperation week between each Phase. This week is designed to not just give your body a bit of a rest and to prevent overtraining, but also to add some extra practice to movements that are proving to be more difficult.

Pick the two movements that are giving you the most problems. Commonly these are the Front Lever and the Back Kip, but figure out which two apply the most to your situation.

Perform these two movements every day, but in no pre-set set/rep scheme. Refer back to our discussion of Auto-Regulation, and vary the routine based on your body's reaction to the effort that day.

Have fun with the movements and play around with your performance and do as much as you can in the session without forcing it. Just jump up there and give it a go. Take a rest, and then try it again. Go slow and work on the "feel" of the movement. End the session with some handstand work, with the same auto-regulation scheme, and call it a day.

Daily Schedule

The workout days will alternate between 2-3 training routines each week. You can also add Workout C to your Saturday routine, or feel free to take both weekend days off for recovery. For example:

Week 1						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Workout A	Workout B	Workout C	Workout A	Workout B	Workout C or Active Recovery	Active Recovery
Week 2						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Workout A	Workout B	Workout C	Workout A	Workout B	Workout C or Active Recovery	Active Recovery

And so on for the duration of the program. On the active recovery days you will simply perform the warmup sequence and cool-down flow one time, along with whatever recreational activities in which you normally participate. As we've said before, don't skimp on your recovery periods!

R2 Phase Breakdown

Prep Phase (4 Weeks)		
Workout A Pushing Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top Position RTO • Dips • L-Sit to Shoulder Stand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rings Turned Out (RTO) Push-Ups • Handstand Using Straps
Workout B Pulling Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chin-Up • L-Chin Repeats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin The Cat • Straight Arm Pike Pulls
Recuperation Week (Pick two movements to work on each day)		
Phase 1 (5 Weeks)		
Workout A Straight Arm	SKILL WORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front Lever • Back Lever • Iron Cross 	CONDITIONING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight Arm Pike Pulls • Skin The Cat (from Inverted Hang) • Low Frog Hold
Workout B Bent Arm	SKILL WORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back Kip • Front Roll • Front Kip to Top Position 	CONDITIONING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTO Push-Ups • L-Chin Repeats • L-Sit to Bent Arm Stand Repeats
Workout C Handstand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handstand Work 	
Recuperation Week (Pick two movements to work on each day)		

Phase 2 (4 Weeks)		
Workout A	SKILL WORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front Lever to Back Lever • Half and Half to Iron Cross 	CONDITIONING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin the Cat to Front Lever • Assisted Iron Cross
Workout B	SKILL WORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ring Front Kip to Top Position to L-Sit • Front Roll to Top Position Hold 	CONDITIONING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscle-Up
Workout C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handstand Work 	
Recuperation Week (Pick two movements to work on each day)		
Phase 3 (4 Weeks)		
Workout A	SKILL WORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement A Flow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pull to Inverted Hang, Back Lever Hold and Lower to German Hang. Pike and Kip to Top Position. • Movement B Flow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From Top Position, Front Roll stop in Top Position. Roll forward into Inverted Hang, lower to Front Lever. 	CONDITIONING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front Lever Tuck Hold • Muscle-Up
Workout B	SKILL WORK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement A Flow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Back Kip to Top Position, Lower to Iron Cross • Movement B Flow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - L-Sit to Press Handstand, Lower to Shoulder Stand 	CONDITIONING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTO Push-Up • Assisted Iron Cross • Handstands
Workout C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Recovery 	
Recuperation Week (Pick two movements to work on each day)		

R2 Full Flow Phase Breakdown

Phase 4 (3 Weeks)		
Flow	<p>SKILL WORK</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Back Kip to Top Position lower to Iron Cross 2. Bend Arms, fall out of Iron Cross and pull into Inverted Hang 3. Back Lever Hold 4. Pull out of Back Lever or drop to German Hang then Pike to Front Kip to Top Position L-Sit 5. L-Sit Press to Handstand 6. Lower to Shoulder Stand 7. Top Position 8. Front Roll to Top Position 9. Slow Lower and sit back into Inverted Hang 10. Lower to Front Lever Hold 11. Lower legs to Dead Hang 	<p>CONDITIONING (*OPTIONAL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose no more than 3 of your weakest skills and perform these movements after the flow.

CHAPTER FIVE: MISCELLANY

Though we've tried to keep this manual concise by focusing on actionable instructions over a lot of unnecessary theory and discussion, we recognize that you may be curious about some of the *hows* and *whys* behind R2.

Every week, we're inundated with questions via email from people who wanted more explanation about certain points. Below, we'll answer the most common questions and concerns.

Trust Us

Let's start with this: please trust us.

We know this is asking a lot, but you can get a lot more out of R2 if you simply trust us. We have no reason to design a program that doesn't work. Think about it: we'd be out of business.

Helping people implement these programs to get the results they want is what we do for a living - all day, every day.

Some people will need to add an extra week or two to Phase 1 if they lack strength starting out. Others require ad-

ditional practice to get the more difficult progressions in Phase 2. It's OK. You're an individual, and you may need more time to get some things, but if you mind your technique (RPT) you will continue to make progress at every session.

Choosing Your Rings

To be completely honest, it doesn't matter much.

There are a lot of manufacturers out there, and quite many of them produce essentially the same products. On the R2 download page, and throughout our website at www.goldmedalbodies.com, we provide links to the rings we've used and liked enough to recommend.

The most important thing is that you get some rings you are comfortable with and trust to safely support your weight.

We especially like the EFX rings, Rogue's wooden rings, and Ultimate Body Press rings.

How To Use The Videos

Despite our fondness for her music, we feel strongly that Jane Fonda did a great disservice to the idea of what it should look like to work out at home.

The notion that you should put on a video and work out with your TV is about as absurd as it gets. We don't believe in it, and we don't recommend it. We're sure as hell not going to facilitate it by encouraging you to watch anything besides your own technique, breathing, and effort while you train.

Let's get something very clear: you are training your body., not dancing with an imaginary partner. Your tempo and timing honestly do not matter very much. You don't have to keep up with anyone's pace.

When you practice, we want you to be focused on you, not on your TV.

Which is why we need to clarify how we recommend using the videos in this program. They are not "follow-along" videos meant to be viewed while training. Rather, they are tutorials. Please watch them before training - preferably while also looking over this manual.

You may have to watch the videos more times this way, and it might take longer. You'll have to think a little but and try to remember what each exercise looks like and what we call it in the program charts. That's OK though, because exercising your brain combats mental decline in old age.

The benefit of doing so is that you can focus 100% on how your body feels, which is the best way to build control.

Where To Begin

The obvious choice would be to begin at the beginning. We highly recommend that you start Rings Two with the Initial Prep Phase and work from there. Perform the Workout A session, using the minimum number of sets and reps for each exercise.

Give that a shot first and see how it goes.

If the movements are too difficult or you feel you need to spend some time preparing with some easier ring exercises, you may want to spend some time reviewing some of the fundamentals in Rings One.

If Workout A was easy for you, and you're confident that your technique was excellent (RPT approaching a perfect 10), attempt the Workout B session using the full sets and

reps. Chances are, this will be quite a bit more difficult, so you can continue that way.

In subsequent sessions, you can determine the number of reps by stopping when your form breaks down.

Keep progressing at each session if you can.

If Phase 1 is easy for you at max reps and sets, do not skip to Phase 2. Instead, try Workout A again at the Intermediate level. Phase 2 puts the Phase 1 exercises together into combinations, so you'll want to be sure you've practiced the components adequately before attempting to work Phase 2.

Always be sure to choose and work at the level and progression that is most appropriate for you.

Making Progress

For convenience, we've structured this program around five phases over the course of 5 months. However, this isn't universal. Depending on your experience and strength level, you may find that you require more or less time.

If you are able to perform max reps and sets with RPT above 8 and RPE below 6, you can try Phase 2. Of course,

you may still decide to continue with Phase 1 for extra practice - that's always an option too.

If you've completed four weeks at Phase 1, and you are still not feeling very strong, keep at it. Some people take a little longer to start feeling stronger, so an extra week or two at Phase 1 might do you good.

In general, you should plan to move slowly and deliberately through the phases of the program. Practice hard and move on when you feel you are ready, making sure to always focus on technique. **Remember that one perfect repetition is worth more than five terrible ones.**

Work you put in laying a strong foundation always pays off for developing advanced skills later.

Preparing For A Great Training Session

There are two general ways to perform your session:

1. Complete the minimum planned work
2. Kick ass

And BOTH of them are totally viable!

Nobody can have a great workout every time. We sure don't, and you probably won't either. If you have an 'off' day, we recommend just planning to get in, do the work, and get out.

Sometimes, just getting started with the warm-up will change your attitude, and you'll go on to have a great session. Other times, lowering your expectations a bit gives you the freedom to just focus on your technique and not have to worry about doing a ton of work if you're tired.

But of course, you don't want to phone it in very often. Here's some tips for having a kick-ass session as often as possible:

- ★ Leave the world at the door. When you start your training session, your job, your family, and everything else are outside. Your only concern is what's going on with your body performing the exercises.
- ★ When learning new skills, it can help to visualize perfect execution in your head. Even better, visualize yourself performing it perfectly. "Feel" what it would feel like to perform it perfectly. Not only is this shown to reinforce your physical practice in your brain, it helps focus your effort and reactivates your memory of the key points to focus on.

- ★ Remember your goals. What do you ultimately want to achieve? Want to do a sweet Iron Cross someday? Think about that. Want to impress your wife with more muscle next time she "accidentally" touches your arm? Think about that. Your goals are your goals, and they mean something to you - even if they're not the same as what other people want. Use them to motivate yourself for a better session.

You won't be able to do this all the time. Some days, the workout will beat you. Some days, you'll have a draw. That's fine. Shoot to kick the workout's ass one good time each week and aim for at least a draw the rest of the time.

And if the workout ends up beating you, you can still feel good about winning most of the time. Get a good night's sleep and come back stronger.

Fitting It All In

There are two ways to handle the topic of fitting your training into a busy schedule. We'll start with the answer you probably want.

There's a lot of ways you can adjust the program to fit into a hectic lifestyle. You can do fewer sessions per week. You

can split the workouts into shorter AM and PM sessions. You could really do any number of things.

Unfortunately, none of those adjustments are as good for most people as following the program as written. Which brings us to the tough love answer:

If you think you have a time management problem, chances are what you really have is a prioritizing problem.

Everyone gets the same number of hours each day - 24. Unsuccessful people complain about lacking time. Successful people prioritize high-value activities in the time they have. If you watch TV or play games on Facebook, there is a very simple way to find more time for your training. You simply have to decide that it's more important to you than all the things you're wasting your time on now.

If you're a parent, ambulance driver, or ER doctor, you might not have as much control over your schedule as you'd like, but we have clients in each of those professions who are successfully following the program and getting great results.

You can too.

Assessing Your Performance

As a general rule, ring training is not easy, so if you feel that anything in this program is too easy, there are two possibilities: either you are uncommonly strong (rare) or you are doing something wrong (much more common).

If the former is true and you're simply very strong, please contact us, and we will work with you to make things more challenging. If something feels easy and you *aren't* extremely strong, we're not picking on you. We'll simply ask you to review the videos and make sure you're performing the exercise as outlined via the key points noted in the tutorials and again in this manual.

It's completely natural that some movements in this program will be easier for you than others. It's also quite common that certain holds look easy but turn out to be more difficult when you focus on doing them properly.

If you find that a single exercise is easy for you, that's great. However, remember that the various components of the program are made to work together as a whole, so don't discount an exercise because you find it easy. Continue practicing it in the context of the other exercises in your workout and try to make it more and more perfect each time.

There's a big difference between being able to do an exercise and being able to do it well with strength to spare.

Another thing we highly recommend is filming your training periodically. You don't need to do this every time, but it can be extremely beneficial to use video to check your performance when you're in the early learning stages with new movements.

Adding Other Movements / Tools

We live in a wonderful time with myriad options. And that sometimes makes it difficult to choose.

But we must. Especially when it comes to fitness training, there are about a million competing options, each claiming to be the best, super-ultimate method for giving you bigger muscles, stripping off excess body fat, and making you more attractive to potential partners.

Though many of these programs are terrible, there's still room left over for a good number of programs that actually work as advertised. There are many very talented and genuinely nice trainers and coaches out there working to make health and fitness attainable to more people. And you have to choose between them.

Think about cheese.

Cheese is delicious, and Andy likes to have some on almost everything. But different cheeses have different characters that lend themselves to various recipes.

Romano cheese makes a bland quiche, but a delicious manicotti. Cheddar goes great on a burger with bacon, but you wouldn't want cheddar cheese cake. The same thing goes for exercises, training protocols, and programs.

You need to choose the right program elements for your goal and combine them in the way that they work best together.

Just because somebody selling kettlebells says that kettlebells are the best way to build stamina doesn't mean you should add snatch intervals to every single training program. Don't get us wrong - we love kettlebells, but they won't help your handstand.

If you just really, really want to add kettlebell exercises to a GMB program, we can't stop you. Likewise for adding your favorite exercise that you think is important.

You're an adult, and you can make that decision.

But please understand that we are pretty decent chefs. If you see an ingredient "missing" from our recipe, it's because we decided not to include it. Often, that's because it doesn't contribute to the goals of the program.

Adding Other Programs

Since we're so fond of food, let's use the recipe analogy again.

Imagine a recipe for the best oatmeal raisin cookies ever made. That recipe is Rings Two, and it includes exactly the right combination of ingredients and heat to make some sweet movement skill.

Now imagine a recipe for pizza. Pizza is a real crowd-pleaser the world over, so it's hard to go wrong with a good pizza recipe. In this case, the pizza represents whatever other training programs you like. We probably like them too, because pizza is delicious.

Now think about what would happen if you combined both recipes.

Put all the dough and oatmeal and raisins and pepperoni and cheese in a bowl and mix it all together. Slap it on a bak-

ing sheet and cook at 350° for twelve minutes. Do you really want to eat that? Probably not.

Yet, this is exactly what you're doing when you try and combine two training programs together.

Can it sometimes work? Yes. It can, but it might not, and we can't be responsible for your results when you don't follow the recipe.

Exercise Selection

These days, thanks to Al Gore and The Interwebz, we have no shortage of information available to us on virtually any topic. Given the glut of resources out there, we can easily develop a tendency to assume we need to do everything (again with the "more is better" philosophy).

Rings Two is not an encyclopedia of gymnastic ring exercises.

One thing we do when designing programs is make decisions about which exercises to include. Equally important are the decisions we make about what not to include. The latter is often the more difficult decision, so some trainers avoid it by simply throwing in everything they can think of.

Given infinite time, infinite energy, and an infinite capacity to recover from training, it would be tempting to add in every single exercise that might provide some small benefit. But you don't have unlimited capacity for practice, so we don't include exercises that:

1. Don't directly contribute to meeting the main goals of the program, or...
2. Might be useful, but aren't as beneficial as other exercises that achieve the same outcomes more efficiently.

As a result, everything that *is* part of the program is essential. Do these with your full attention, striving to do each repetition as closely to perfect as possible, and you'll easily surpass the results you'd have if you tried to do it all.

Be Patient

Every so often, we get an email that says something like this:

"I bought R2 last week, and I still can't do an Iron Cross!"

Unfortunately, simply purchasing the program does not magically install strength and skill into your nervous system (though we'd love it if this were possible). Getting strong

takes work, and that work is probably going to be quite difficult sometimes.

Be patient with yourself. Though we do encourage you to compare your performance with with videos in this program to check your form against what Ryan demonstrates, we *don't* want you to feel like you have to measure up to that level of ability within a short time period. Even Ryan had to start somewhere.

The good news is that, if you practice consistently and keep working at it, you will get stronger.

Be patient, and work hard. You *can* do this.

Get In Touch

Of course, if you've read through all this and you're still having trouble, you need to get in touch.

Reply to any GMB email, or send us a request through the membership site, and we'll do everything in our power to take care of you.

OUTRODUCTION

R2 was a labor of love for Ryan, these advanced skill sets on the rings were movements he hadn't worked on since he was a teenager.

When he made the decision to share his training experience, he realized that he had the opportunity to combine his knowledge of the traditional methods of training, as well as the modifications he'd developed for clients like him: enthusiastic clients with families, careers, and responsibilities, who wanted to learn these movements but still have to play with their kids in the afternoon and on the weekend.

Training this way doesn't mean settling for less, just training smarter and having the ability to make progress while still having a life.

The skills presented in this program require patience, dedication, and putting the skills into practice. Do the work, and we know you'll get there. Have fun!



Thank you. We hope to see you soon!

The GMB Team

Ryan, Jarlo, Andy, and Amber