



MASSIVE

SIX

by Steve Shaw

MASSIVE 6

BEGINNER COURSE

by Steve Shaw

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INTRODUCTION

This is a beginner course for trainees looking to build as much muscle mass and strength as possible during their first 6 months of training. I will provide workouts for each stage of lifting. Each workout routine comes with exercise alternatives for those of you that don't have access to the listed equipment.

Regardless of your end goals, understand that the strength and muscle building processes work hand in hand. You can't build muscle without getting a lot stronger than you are now, and you need to add muscle mass if you are after strength.

There are no weak bodybuilders. There are no puny and frail powerlifters and strongmen.

99% of you have no interest in competing as a bodybuilder, powerlifter or strongman. Despite this reality, the iron game rules are the same.

You don't get to "train light" just because you don't want to become a powerlifter or get as big as a pro bodybuilder. On the same note, you can't avoid rep work and quality assistance exercises if you "just want to get strong."

My Main Training Philosophies

You can learn more about my training philosophies in my base building book Massive Iron. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Here are my core lifting philosophies:

1. Remain consistent. Without consistency nothing else matters.
2. Use some form of progressive overload. I prefer you maximize every set, especially as a beginner.
3. Choose the best possible exercises. If you seek the easy route your body and strength levels will reflect this choice.
4. Make every muscle group from head to toe as big and strong as possible.
5. Don't under-eat protein and calories. Progress is amplified by proper food intake, and hindered when diet is ignored.

6. Be patient. You can't rush the process no matter how crazy you train in the gym.
7. Listen to your body and evolve your training based on feedback and needs.

PILLARS OF SUCCESS

Pillar #1 – You Must Remain Consistent

It goes without saying that if you are missing workouts, it doesn't matter which training system you are using. Despite this obvious reality, fellow lifters often assume that when someone isn't seeing results that they are hitting the gym as scheduled.

If you aren't making progress then this should be the first area you look at. If you are missing workouts then something must be done. You can't expect consistent progress with inconsistent gym attendance.

If you are hitting the gym as scheduled, then it's time to see if you are following the other pillars.

Pillar #2 – You Must Get Stronger

There are no weak bodybuilders. Period, end of story.

If you aren't going to the gym dead set on progressive resistance in some form or fashion then you are simply working out. Working out doesn't necessarily build muscle. It burns calories.

You can have an intense, sweat-soaked workout that leaves you feeling completely destroyed, and still not build muscle. Why? You're not focused on getting stronger.

What sense does it make to believe that the body will have incentive to carry around muscle mass if it is weak? I've never met a 135 pound bench presser with big pecs, and I never will.

Most lifters experience poor results because they have very low strength expectations. Sure, they are a little stronger than when they first entered the gym, but most workouts aren't focused on maximizing progressive overload – or the strength building process.

Pillar #3 – You Must Use The Best Tools

To perform a job efficiently you want to use the best tools.

While it is possible to build a good physique without using the best tools, or exercises, it certainly is beneficial to analyze your program as a whole to find weak spots.

I have seen plenty of lifters make progress using programs stuffed with poor exercise choices. The reason is simple: the program was also stuffed with enough quality compound movements to allow for gains.

On the other hand, if you are avoiding all the major compound movements while living on isolation lifts then gains will come slow. When you seek out the most challenging movements you will amplify your body's response to training.

Pillar #4 – You Must Eat According To Your Goals

This pillar plays a major role in the success or failure of a lifter.

If you have unrealistic muscle building goals, and bulk to gain 30-40 pounds in a year, you're going to get fat. If you fear fat so much that you don't allow for any weight gain, then you are probably not going to gain much in the way of muscle mass.

If your goal is to gain 10 pounds of lean muscle mass in the coming year, there must be some form of dietary analysis and adjustment taking place. This seems like an obvious point, yet you generally find that lifters

base calorie intake needs off of BMR calculators rather than what is taking place on the scale.

If a calculator tell you that you need to eat 2,500 calories per day to gain weight, but you are not gaining weight, then you need to eat more. It's as simple as that.

Stop guessing at what you're eating each day and start making necessary adjustments. You can't expect precision results while playing a guessing game.

Pillar #5 – You Must Be Patient

Most of you will be tempted to skim this section. Don't. It's more important than you might think.

Day in and day out I listen to lifters tell me about their muscle and strength building plateaus. I usually follow these request for help with a few questions:

How much have you added to your bench press in the last 4 months? Check your log and let me know.

How much has your arm size changed over the last 6 months? Check your logged measurements and let me know.

You know what happens next? If the lifter has actually taken time to log progress, which most haven't, they find out that they haven't plateaued at all. The problem has to do with a lack of patience.

Gains come fast and furious as a beginner. After that point they slow. This is normal and doesn't mean you are doing anything wrong.

Be patient. If progress is coming – and it most likely is – stay the course. Trust the process.

Pillar #6 – Evolve Your Training And Diet Based On Needs

I touched upon this point briefly when talking about diet. When your eating plan isn't working as designed, you need to make small but calculated steps to get it back on track.

The same goes for training. Remember, there are no magic cookie cutter systems.

If you feel beat up doing Stronglifts and squatting 3x a week, but feel 10x better squatting only 2x a week – and are making progress – then by all means squat only 2x a week. If progress is coming, that is more important than sticking to a program as written.

If 3 sets of dumbbell rows are killing your elbows, try 2 instead. If that works, stick with it. If not, try a different row variation.

When something is broken, make small adjustments and monitor these small tweaks. Be scientific.

Don't be one of the program jumpers who, when they find that a program isn't working perfectly as written, takes a deload week and jumps to a vastly different program the following week.

Successful lifters adapt programs to their specific needs. You must be able to do this yourself.

MY BEGINNER STORY

1986. New Mexico Tech. Socorro, New Mexico.

I was a freshman in college. New Mexico Tech was a small private school with very few women but a quality gym. With 800 male students and only about 80 female students, I spent my time chasing progress in the gym rather than chasing women.

Back then I knew little about training. All I knew was that I was weak. Very weak.

My goal each day was to maximize sets. I was tired of being weak and small and wanted improvement and a few more reps than last time. Nothing magical about this, but it worked.

In 18 short months my life completely turned around. I was no longer a skinny-fat 155 pound science dork. Now I was 180 pounds of mass and had a bench press near 300. I felt like the king of the world.

Women were noticing me for the first time in my life, and gym rats wanted my secrets. One of my college professors even took the initiative to ask me if I was on steroids. “Heck no,” I replied, not even sure what steroids were. To top it all off, my athletic abilities improved dramatically.

Confidence. Strength. Muscle. Physical attractiveness. Improved athletic performance. I went from zero to hero in under 2 years.

I learned a lot about lifting back then, and it didn’t come from books or studies. By simply attacking every set and making it count, my muscle mass grew like weeds and I had the strength to back it up.

Over time I continued to apply this training philosophy to myself, and countless others. Now, at age 47, I am bigger and stronger than ever. Much more than this, through my articles and books I have had the opportunity to help thousands upon thousands of fellow lifters achieve the same results.

That’s what this book is about. I want my story to be your story.

WEEKS 1-2: BREAK-IN

My beginner course consists of 4 stages, or blocks. These blocks comprise a total of 6 months of training. The breakdown is as follows:

1. Weeks 1-2: Break-in Stage
2. Weeks 3-4: Ramp Up Stage
3. First 10 Week Block
4. Second 10 Week Block

Weeks 1-2, Break-In Phase

The goal of this 2 week block is to develop a routine, and to get familiar with the basic exercises. You will be training only twice a week.

Workouts will not be intense or punishing. The last thing I want you to do is destroy your muscles right out of the gate. This will leave you incredibly sore, and likely with lower motivation.

I've seen it a thousand times. Lifters wake up one day feeling super motivated. They hit the gym and do long workouts filled with high volume. Two days later they are so sore they can barely move. After about 2-3 training sessions like this, motivation wavers and many people stop training.

Muscle and strength building is a marathon and a lifestyle change, not an intense, short-term program. I want you to ease into things and just get into the habit of going to the gym. Muscle soreness will be minimal during the first 2 weeks, and that is a good thing.

Seek out information on exercise form. Learn it, practice it and read it daily. Back up this information by reading articles and watching YouTube videos on exercise form.

During weeks 1 and 2 I want you to use an amount of resistance that is not overly challenging. By this I mean you are able to complete all sets and reps without feeling like you are close to failure.

If you feel like you might not be able to complete all reps on the last set of an exercise, the weight is too heavy. Go lighter. Set your ego aside.

You might feel a little embarrassed or insecure about the amount of weight you are using. Don't fret. This weight is just a starting point. After 6 months you are going to be a lot bigger and stronger than you are now.

Stick to the plan and just focus on getting your butt to the gym and working on form. We will ramp up the intensity during weeks 3 and 4.

You will be lifting 2 days per week. Take at least 2 days of rest in between workouts. Here is a sample schedule:

- Day 1 - Workout A
- Day 2 - Rest
- Day 3 - Rest
- Day 4 - Workout B
- Day 5 - Rest
- Day 6 - Rest
- Day 7 - Rest

Weeks 1-2 Workout

Workout A

- Goblet Squats - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Bench Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- One Arm Dumbbell Rows - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Seated Overhead Dumbbell Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Close Grip Bench Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Barbell or EZ Bar Curls - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Planks - 2 sets x 30 seconds

Workout B

- Romanian Deadlifts - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Dumbbell Bench Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Pendlay Rows - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Military Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Lying Triceps Extensions - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Standing Dumbbell Curls - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Standing Calf Raises (Holding a barbell) - 2 sets x 10 reps

Commercial Gym Notes: If lifting at a commercial gym you can use any calf exercise of choice.

WEEKS 3-4: RAMP UP

Weeks 3 and 4 are a ramp up stage. You will move from 2 workouts a week to 3. During this time you will be adding weight slowly, focusing on form. Try to find a weight that pushes you for each exercise, but that allows you to complete the required number of sets and reps.

The last few reps of your final set should be very challenging, but not taken to failure. Try not to train to failure. If you can't complete all of the reps for a given set, don't sweat it. Drop the weight by 5 pounds the next time you perform this exercise.

If an exercise continues to feel "too easy," add a few pounds to the bar. Don't overdo weight additions. Progress slowly, minimally and methodically. I prefer you increase in 5 pound increments. This is the best way to safely build strength and muscle.

If by the end of this ramp up stage you have yet to reach a weight that really challenges you on the last set of an exercise, don't panic. The 2 ten week blocks that follow will have you challenging yourself full force, and adding weight at a very consistent rate.

The degree of muscle soreness could increase slightly during this 2 week phase. It's OK to train with DOMS (muscle soreness), so don't panic if you don't feel 100% recovered heading into your next workout.

Squats. You've had a couple weeks to work on your squat form using goblet squats. During this 2 week block it's time to try barbell squats. Please make sure to check out the form videos on the Internet. It will help you dial in your squat form and safely progress.

For men, start with 95 pounds on the bar during your first squat workout. If that feels insanely light, move up to 135 pounds the following week. Women, start with the bar only. If this feels insanely light move on the 65 or even 85 pounds if you are naturally strong.

Remember, the focus here is safe progression. You want to get a feel for squats without pushing yourself too hard. Once you are comfortable with your form, you can start adding more weight.

Deadlifts. You will be trying deadlifts for the first time during this block.

Men, start with 135 pounds. If this feels insanely light, try 185 the following workout. Women, start with 75 to 95 pounds. If you do not have 5 and 10 pound rubber plates that are the same size as Olympic 45 pound plates, then make sure to elevate each side by placing a 45 pound plates under the plates you are using. This isn't an optimal place to start, but it's better than pulling deadlift reps off the floor.

Once you are able to deadlift 135 for reps you will no longer need to elevate the bar.

As with squats, the focus here is on safe progression. Hunt the Internet for information on deadlift form. You want to get a feel for deadlifts without pushing yourself too hard. Once you are comfortable with your form, you can start adding more weight.

You will be lifting 3 days per week. Take at least 1 days of rest in between workouts. Here is a sample schedule:

- Day 1 - Workout A
- Day 2 - Rest
- Day 3 - Workout B
- Day 4 - Rest
- Day 5 - Workout C
- Day 6 - Rest
- Day 7 - Rest

Weeks 3-4 Workout

Workout A

- Squats - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Bench Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- One Arm Dumbbell Rows - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Seated Overhead Dumbbell Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Lying Triceps Extensions - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Barbell or EZ Bar Curls - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Planks - 2 sets x 30 seconds

Workout B

- Deadlifts - 2 sets x 5 reps
- Push Ups - 2 sets x 10-20 reps
- Pull Ups - 2 sets x 5-20 reps
- Bulldozer Laterals - 2 sets x 10 reps
- French Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Hammer Curls - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Standing Calf Raises (Holding a barbell) - 2 sets x 10 reps

Workout C

- Squats - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Incline Dumbbell Bench Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Pendlay Rows - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Military Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Close Grip Bench Press - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Standing Dumbbell Curls - 2 sets x 10 reps
- Planks - 2 sets x 30 seconds

Notes: If you are unable to perform pull ups, try inverted rows instead. Inverted rows can be performed at any gym, including a home gym (if you have a squat rack).

For the French press you may choose to perform either cable triceps extensions or standing/seated 2 arm overhead dumbbell extensions.

Hammer curls may be substituted with machine curls, cable curls or concentration curls.

STAGE 3: 10 WEEK A/B

Now it's time to go full speed ahead. Your exercise form isn't perfect, and it's imperative that you continue to work on it during the next 20 weeks.

You will using a full body workout approach during this block. There will be a focus on maximizing every set using the Rep Goal System. You will packing on muscle mass and adding strength at a rapid rate.

Before we begin, let's take a deeper look at the Rep Goal System. For a more complete overview, please [click here to purchase my book Massive Iron](#).

The Rep Goal System

The Rep Goal System is about maximizing every set, and as a result, every workout.

It's about efficiency, and getting the most out of your training. It's about pushing your body to grow, and about building strength rapidly while focusing on one extra rep at a time.

This approach has been around for ages, and my take on it is surely not revolutionary. With that said, I believe the Rep Goal System to be efficient, and one of the best ways to reach your muscle and strength building goals.

The Problem with “Magazine” Workouts

Magazine workouts have been pushing lifters off course for decades. Instead of focusing you on progressive overload, which is the primary mechanism that drives gains, magazine workouts tend to ignore progression completely.

How many times have you seen something like this:

- Bench Press – 3 sets x 8-12 reps
- Incline Dumbbell Bench Press – 3-4 sets x 8-12 reps
- Pec Dec – 3-4 sets x 12-15 reps

This isn't a training approach, it's a “to do” list. It doesn't tell you how or when to add weight, nor how hard to push each set. While some lifters

instinctively gravitate towards maximizing progression, the 90% that don't will wonder why this workout isn't panning out for them.

We've all seen these types of forum posts: "I'm running Program X and not seeing any gains. What's going on? Do I need a new program?" Responses usually range from "try Program B instead, it's much better" to "body part splits don't work for naturals, and this is proof! Go use a full body workout."

While some of these responses may carry with them a kernel of validity, they often miss the bigger picture:

A major reason why Lifter X isn't making optimal gains is because he isn't maximizing progressive overload and his workouts.

In fact, I would wager that very few average gym rats have mastered the art of pushing every set for as many reps as possible. So, with that said, let's take a deeper look at the Rep Goal System.

Rep Goal System Basics

The Rep Goal System is simple. Here are the basics:

- **Weight** – Use the same weight for each set of a given exercise.

- **Effort** – Push yourself for as many reps as possible on each set, stopping that set you feel like you might fail on the next rep, or if your form starts to slip.
- **Rep Goal** – Each group of sets has a ‘rep goal”, or a total number of reps you are after. You you reach, or exceed that goal, you add weight the next time you perform that exercise.

Do NOT train to failure. It’s not needed. Focus on maximizing every set – that is the real magic.

Let’s look at some examples.

- Bench Press – 3 Sets, Rep Goal of 20

For this example you will be performing 3 sets of bench presses. The goal is to reach 20 total reps. Understand, this is not 20 reps per set, but 20 total reps. If you do reach this goal, you will add weight the next time in the gym.

Perhaps you are starting with 185 pounds. Your first workout goes something like this:

- Set 1 – 185 pounds x 9 reps
- Set 2 – 185 pounds x 7 reps
- Set 3 – 185 pounds x 5 reps

Adding up 9, 7 and 5 reps you get a total of 21 reps. This exceeds your Rep Goal of 20, so you will move up to 190 pounds the next time you bench press.

- Leg Press – 5 Sets, Rep Goal of 50

Time to build some big quads. For this example, you are chasing 50 total reps. Let's say you start with 400 pounds on the leg press:

- Set 1 – 400 pounds x 15 reps
- Set 2 – 400 pounds x 12 reps
- Set 3 – 400 pounds x 10 reps
- Set 4 – 400 pounds x 8 reps
- Set 5 – 400 pounds x 7 reps

This is a total of 52 reps. because you were able to reach your Rep Goal of 50, you will add weight to this exercise the next time in the gym.

Now, on to the workout.

10 Weeks Block A - Full Body Alternating A/B workouts

You will be utilizing a full body workout during this 10 week block, alternating between 2 different sessions:

- Workout A
- Workout B

Here is a sample 2 week schedule.

- Monday - Workout A
- Wednesday - Workout B
- Friday - Workout A

- Monday - Workout B
- Wednesday - Workout A
- Friday - Workout B

Workout A

- Squats - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Incline Dumbbell Bench Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- One Arm Dumbbell Rows - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Military Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Close Grip Bench Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Standing Alternating Dumbbell Curls - 3 sets x 30 rep goal

- Leg Curls - 3 sets x 30 rep goal

Workout B

- Romanian Deadlifts - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Bench Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Pull Ups - 3 sets x AMAP
- Seated Overhead Dumbbell Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Lying Triceps Extensions - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- EZ Bar Curls - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Planks - 3 sets x 60-120 seconds

Pull ups - Perform 3 sets for as many reps as possible. Use straps if you have trouble with grip. If you are unable to perform pull ups, swap in either inverted rows (see the explanation video at the back of this book) or V-bar handle lat pull downs.

AMAP - AMAP stands for as many reps as possible.

Close grip bench press - You can swap in cable triceps extensions if you'd like.

Planks - If planks aren't challenging enough, try ab wheel rollouts.

STAGE 4: 10 WEEK HMH

Now that you've just spent 10 weeks making solid progress, it's time for a slight change. This 10 week full body workout block will be HMH style. You will training 3 days a week using this type of schedule:

- Day 1 - Heavy Workout A
- Day 2 - Off
- Day 3 - Moderate Workout
- Day 4 - Off
- Day 5 - Heavy Workout B
- Days 6&7 - Off

From a resistance standpoint, heavy day workouts will be your most challenging. Moderate day will incorporate more isolation-style movements and some bodyweight exercises. Moderate day will see a slight decrease in overall intensity, but will still focus on compound movements.

Notice that during this 10 week block we re-introduce the deadlift. You have spent the last 10 weeks strengthening your lower back using the Romanian deadlift. Now it's time to move on and start using one of the best exercises in the muscle and strength building kingdom.

Make sure to video your deadlift sessions. Take time each week to analyze your current form, and to study form tutorials on Youtube from prominent strength coaches.

Exercise form on deadlifts must be taken seriously. Not a day goes by where I do not see an experienced lifter on Youtube or Instagram performing deadlifts with awful form. While your body may tolerate this lower back punishment for a while, it will eventually catch up to you.

In addition, improper deadlift form transfers a lot of stress from the upper back, legs, etc., and places it upon the lower back. This will decrease the overall whole body muscle building effects that you should be deriving from this lift.

Heavy Workout A

- Squats - 3 sets x 20 rep goal
- Dumbbell Bench Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Barbell Rows - 3 sets x 25 rep goal
- Seated Overhead Dumbbell Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Leg Curls - 2 sets x 25 rep goal

- Close Grip Bench Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- EZ Bar Curls - 3 sets x 30 rep goal

Moderate Workout

- Deadlifts - 1 set x 5 reps *see below
- Leg Extensions - 3 sets x 35 rep goal
- Push Ups - 3 sets x AMAP
- Pull Ups - 3 sets x AMAP
- Bulldozer Laterals - 3 sets x 35 rep goal
- Calf Raises - 3 sets x 40 rep goal
- Planks - 3 sets x 60 to 120 seconds

Heavy Workout B

- Leg Press - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Bench Press - 3 sets x 25 rep goal
- Dumbbell Rows - 3 sets x 30 rep goal
- Military Press - 3 sets x 25 rep goal
- Leg Curls - 2 sets x 25 rep goal
- Lying Triceps Extension - 3 sets x 35 rep goal
- Dumbbell Curls - 3 sets x 30 rep goal

Deadlifts - Start with a weight that would allow you to perform 8-10 quality reps with. “Quality” meaning your form is not breaking down.

Perform a 5 rep set. If this 5 rep set felt manageable, and your form was solid, add 5 pounds to the bar the next time you deadlift.

Never “push” deadlift reps. If your form starts to break down, stop the set. Each time you can comfortably perform 5 reps with a given weight, add another 5 pounds.

This might sound like a slow rate of progression for some, but it’s not. 5 pound weight additions have the potential to add over 250 pounds to your deadlift over the course of the upcoming year. Remain patient, focus on form and build slowly.

Dumbbell Bench Press - You may also use incline dumbbell bench presses.

Leg Press - If you do not have access to a leg press, use the same squat workout you performed during Heavy Workout A.

Leg Extensions - If you train at home you can swap in goblet squats for 3 sets x 30 rep goal.

Pull Ups - Perform as many reps as you can per set. If pull ups are too easy, either use a weighted vest (or backpack), or try V-bar handle pull downs. If pull ups are too difficult, perform inverted rows instead.

Push Ups - If you train at a commercial gym you can choose to perform pec dec or dumbbell flyes for 3 sets x 35 rep goal.

QUESTIONS?

Questions? Visit my Q&A at the Tiger Fitness forum.

www.tigerfitness.com