

Home Program Design Mastery:

**HOW TO HELP
YOUR CLIENTS
GET GREAT
RESULTS...**

WITHOUT THE GYM

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I' M GLAD YOU' RE HERE.

Okay, so we are in the midst of a pandemic.
We are being forced to pivot with regard to how we train our clients, and...
Many fit pros are looking for ways to level-up their program design game.

So, I'm not glad that you're here because of what's happened, but...

I'm glad you're here because you are wanting to deliver the same caliber of training you were giving your clients in a gym setting. Aside from this, you are wanting to do more for your clients.

You are simply wanting to be there for your clients, to give them support and “normalcy” with regard to their health and fitness during this trying time.

I realize there are other resources for in-home workouts that have been created as a result of this pandemic. I haven't had the opportunity to look at any of them. I have no way of knowing if this book will provide you with more guidance, solutions, and “a-ha” moments than anything else out there, but...

I do know that my years of working with clients in their homes as well as outdoors has given me a skill set and level of expertise that I am able to put to good use right now! It would be selfish if I did not share it with the world!

That said, I want to thank you for buying this book. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to help you help your clients, and help you!

Pivot.

Before COVID-19 swooped in and changed all of our lives, I had just started working on a HUGE project for fit pros. When I was forced to close my facility, I thought “now I'll have more time to sit and work on ‘project X’!”

That's hardly been the case, however, as I haven't felt compelled to be the workaholic that I typically am. I have found myself spending more time outside, taking daily walks with the dogs, those kinda things.

I've just kinda been enjoying the simple act of “being” rather than feeling pressured to get sh*t done.

So “project X” is on the back burner, for now. I have had to pivot away from focusing on it so that I could step back and take some time to see what was truly important during this time.

As I was putting my thoughts together for the framework of this book, I thought about the ton of reflecting I’ve been doing during this pandemic.

I have been taking a hard look at myself and how I wish to show up for my clients during this time. I have been reflecting upon my role as a fitness professional, my business, and the things I wish to change about both!

I have felt all the feelings, just as you have. The feelings that have been the most pervasive have been...drum roll...

Liberated. Excited. Determined. Optimistic.

The thought that’s been in my head this entire time has been “pivot.”

Right now, is the time for us to pivot...to not completely throw away what we were doing before, but to shift a bit. To take what we know and love and to make something new with it.

We have the opportunity RIGHT NOW to make moves!

We have the opportunity to make changes and do away with the aspects of our businesses that were just not working.

We have the opportunity to focus on the things we do really well, and also level-up on the things we need to do better! For me, that means pretty much everything related to the business-side of things, as I would much rather focus on nerding-out on the fitness stuff!

This “down time” has shown me that I still struggle with holding myself back instead of putting myself out there. I still have some self-doubt moments, but in forcing myself to take action right now, I am making that old self-doubt even less of an issue.

I am proving to myself that I am no longer held back from an old mindset that was in need of improvement, and it’s freakin’ exciting!

We can either feel empowered during this time...or powerless.

Navigating a “New Normal.”

Right now, we are being forced to navigate a new way of doing what we love to do!

In brainstorming for this book, I was reminded that ***the pandemic has given many of us a tremendous opportunity...if we choose to view it that way.***

I realized that for many of us who have had to scramble to adapt to using Zoom (or other online meeting apps) to conduct training sessions, we could be sitting on something HUGE! We may be continuing to offer this type of service after we are back in our gyms, moving forward with this next chapter in our business lives...our “new normal.”

I believe there is a huge opportunity for many of us to put ourselves out there in the virtual space and reach more people through this service! I plan on continuing to apply my coaching skills to this “different” way of working with clients.

Why? Because I almost immediately saw how much it makes sense!

When I started posting about my 6am “quarantine crew,” former clients and people who have never trained with me came out of the woodwork asking for the deets! Even better, my 72-year-old mom, who lives in Oklahoma, is a part of the crew!

Why Not?

Why not offer a service that enables you to help people who are unable to train with you in your facility? Who doesn’t want to reach more clients?

Why not help more people?

So, my initial feeling was that I wanted to get this book out there ASAP, for obvious reasons, but then I was reminded that these changes could very well become part of our normal routines.

That got me even more fired up to get to work!

Being able to offer the best training experience for the long-term, regardless of the training environment, should be our foundational goal with each and every client!

Let's level-up your ability to write some damn good home-based programs that get your clients moving better, feeling better, and kicking ass...regardless of whether or not we are still following stay-at-home orders!

I don't know about you, but I am excited to continue moving forward into the "new normal."

It's time to leave some of the old ways behind!

Let's go!

NAVIGATING THE VIRTUAL SPACE AS A FIT PRO

Online training has been something I have dabbled in since 2008 or 2009, when I was putting programs together in Word with still pictures and YouTube links, then emailing them to clients.

Up until 2017, I did a little bit of it but never felt compelled to push further to promote it, because it ended up feeling like a ton of work! Obviously, I wasn't using a streamlined process to create and deliver programs, but I also made a lot more work for myself (and caused myself headaches because of overthinking).

Still, the online thing just made sense to me. Business-wise, it's a no-brainer. You can reach more people. You can reach people who live far away. It just makes sense! Why not generate a little more income by doing what you love in a different way?

Delivering Remote Programming

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, I had been working remotely with clients and delivering programming through TrainHeroic.

Using this website and app, I am able to design programs, save programs as templates, sell programming and stand-alone programs in the marketplace, and communicate with my clients regarding that day's session.

It tracks their training data, such as overall volume, maxes on specific lifts, and performance on conditioning work. In addition, it enables me to get a peek into each of my clients' well-being on any given training day, through a simple questionnaire. This questionnaire pops up when they open the app to begin their workout, and it asks for them to rate their sleep quality, stress level, and overall mood and energy level. When they complete the workout, it asks them to rate the intensity of that day's session. This data has been eye-opening for me as a coach, but more so for my clients! It gives them a simple way to reflect on their "status" for that day.

I have my YouTube videos linked to exercises in my library, along with points of performance. It's super-easy to plug things in and put workouts together, and I am able to easily add new exercises on the fly!

The app is free for clients, and I have been using it with my small groups for almost two years.

They enjoy being able to review the upcoming workout and refer to videos linked to the exercises they will be doing. In addition, I have found the app to be motivating for most of them, as they are able to record their performance in the moment! It gets really fun when we are doing a lot of barbell work, as the competitive ones tend to want to push a little bit harder!

If you would like to test-drive TrainHeroic, shoot me an email at fitprosarah@gmail.com. I can put you in touch with them for a free trial!

Let's Zoom!

So, the whole virtual personal training thing. I was never really tempted to jump on board, as the idea of coaching someone through a screen just didn't appeal to me. I assumed that there would be a huge disconnect and just kept going along with the "I work better with people face-to-face" mindset.

Boy was I wrong!

I have had a blast working with clients through Zoom! It was a little awkward at first but as a person who embraces a challenge, I have enjoyed being a newbie!

Being able to connect with my clients this way has been a blessing for everyone!

Admittedly, I am not doing back-to-back Zoom sessions for hours on end every day. I am happy that my workload has temporarily decreased, so that I can have room to breathe and keep my mind right.

I have a group of current small group training clients, along with a few former clients (and my mom) who are training with me MWF. In addition to this, I have a few "hybrid" remote coaching clients who normally meet with me once every four weeks for a session to update their programs. I have easily been able to switch them over to Zoom for the time being.

My overarching thought with regard to this whole virtual training session thing?

I wish I would have jumped on it sooner!

Yes, there are limitations. This is more obvious to me with the group sessions than with one on one. I feel that my ability to have a lot more control over my clients' movement quality is not as finely tuned as with in-person small group training.

I have come to accept that as long as my clients are moving safely, there is a degree of form degradation that is just not possible to be fixed, and this is okay! I cannot physically reach out & give a tactile cue or use strategies such as RNT in the moment. I can, however, flex my know-how with regard to minimizing a great deal of wonkiness through smart exercise selection!

Yes, it requires a skill set that isn't brand-new, but slightly different than working with people in person.

Yes, I feel it takes a lot more out of me than in-person training! I guess that's because I'm still getting the hang of it, but also, I have to do a lot more talking!

One really wacky thing about the Zoom group? We get more work done! For real, since the ladies can't stand there and chit chat for a few minutes between segments within a workout, we are able to pack more training volume into the hour! In fact, we are able to get in some good cool-down work to bring things to a close! It has been very eye-opening for me. I know that a big part of the group thing is the camaraderie, and I love that, but sometimes they can get carried away. Sometimes I am not the best at saying "HEY! Y'all zip it!" lol. Going back to in-person group training when that day comes, you'd better believe I am going to take this experience and use it to keep us moving along more efficiently!

I plan on continuing to have the virtual aspect of small group training be a part of my 6AM group. One big reason? My mom. I love love love the fact that my mom has gotten to be so consistent with her physical activity, thanks to this! I have worked with her here and there, but since we do not live in the same state, those moments are few and far between. Being able to see my mom's smiling face (and grey hair) three days a week has been awesome! Getting her feedback on how much better she has felt after the workouts has truly rocked my socks! So, because I have seen how impactful this virtual training has been on my mom's well-being, my 6AM crew will become a "hybrid" crew in that the opportunity for people to join us virtually will continue to be an option!

I have found that my AirPods Pro make a world of difference in not only being able to hear my clients but speak to them as well. The sound quality is just so much better, plus I am able to use the noise cancelling feature on the headphones.

During group workouts, I mute my clients, so they are only able to hear me. They know that if they have a question, they can unmute at any time! It was funny because the first workout we did, I had no idea why their windows kept moving around the screen.

It was because no one was muted, so anytime someone would talk, it would move their window to a different position on the screen. I was just rolling with it but in my head, I was thinking “this is so distracting!” Thankfully, one of the ladies politely let the group know that this was happening because everyone was talking at the same time!

WORKING WITH CLIENTS IN THEIR HOMES & OUTDOORS

I felt it was important to add this section for those of you who have never trained a client outside of a gym setting. You may have had to shift to doing this because of the temporary shutdowns. You may be looking ahead and wondering if shifting to mobile training may be in your future.

Even before opening my facility in 2015, I swore I would never do outdoor training again. I was burned-out with it when I stopped and at the time was able to deliver what I felt was a better training experience with a smaller group indoors. It’s interesting how our perceptions can shift over the years.

During the first week of having shut down my gym, I was sitting at home drinking a glass of wine one evening when a boot camp client from 10 years ago texted me. She asked me if I would be interested in putting together an outdoor group for herself and eight of her friends once things got back to “normal.” At the time, I was a bit shell-shocked from the gym closure and uncertainty of it all, so this conversation got me really pumped!

For the past year or so, I have actually been considering putting together some weekly or monthly outdoor group workouts, because I have a bunch of people who are interested. Being forced to shut my doors and step outside of my comfort zone a little with the virtual training is great, yes, but I have years of experience with the outdoor stuff! Why would I not give it a go again? So, I’m planning on doing just that very soon!

As someone who spent years going to her clients’ houses as well as running outdoor bootcamps, I can honestly say that the mobile training option has its pros and cons.

Let’s start with the pros of in-home training.

It’s convenient for clients! You are coming to them if you are training them at their house. They don’t have to go anywhere. This saves time and stress and may be a very desirable option for some people! I know my clients loved it.

You have very little overhead. Aside from gas and other costs associated with commuting back and forth, you don't have to lease a space, you don't have utilities, and you don't have to buy a ton of equipment to outfit a facility. Depending on your clientele, you may or may not have to haul around some equipment. You may have some clients who have decked-out home gyms, while others have the bare minimum. The type of equipment you will be utilizing for most in-home clients is not going to be high dollar. I recommend Ultimate Sandbags, kettlebells, and bands. You can do a ton of stuff with that small list of tools! Even better, encourage your clients to buy these types of tools.

Now let's look at the cons of in-home training.

Commuting. The "driving around town all day" thing can get old. Plus, having to fill up your tank more often. In addition, it's pretty obvious that our world would be better off with less pollution, so there's that too.

Equipment. As I said above, you may be limited equipment-wise. If you prefer to work with specific tools and are unable to do so in homes, then you're either gonna have to pivot and apply your know-how to other tools or find a way to bring that equipment into the picture.

Let's shift to the pros of outdoor training.

Again, very little overhead!

Fresh air! It's good for us to be outside! Training in a wide-open space can have a positive effect on both body and mind.

Plenty of space. If you work with groups, then this is a no-brainer with regard to not having to worry about people bumping into one another, feeling confined, etc. You can do a lot more "traveling" work (crawling, skipping, shuffling, running, etc) that can be difficult to do in an indoor group setting.

Now let's look at the cons of outdoor training.

Weather. This is really the only thing that ever bothered me about running an outdoor bootcamp program back in the day. I was constantly checking the weather! Living in South Louisiana, we basically get a brief, dank winter, a very short spring, and then BAM are hit by the hot, muggy months, starting in May. Summers here are brutal. Everyone is happy when football season rolls around because in addition to LSU and Saints games kickin' off, the weather finally starts to give us a break!

I ran my groups year-round for over a year and then moved us indoors for the colder months. It is important to remind people to bring plenty of water and a sweat towel for when things get swampy! In addition, during colder months outdoors it is important to remind 'em to dress in layers.

Equipment. As with in-home training, you may be limited equipment-wise. You are not going to want to haul out 20 kettlebells and sandbags every time you work with a group! If working with one client, things are a lot simpler. Having equipment in your trunk is a no-brainer with either scenario. My outdoor groups were ladies-only, and our focus was metabolic strength training, so I was able to make this happen with my trunk load of stuff in addition to everyone bringing their own mats and dumbbells.

Mosquitos. As with the weather, living in South Louisiana means mosquitos during the summer! We actually have some really wacky insects down here throughout the year, including stinging caterpillars, massive grasshoppers, and "love bugs" (that end up being like a layer of glue on your windshield). None of those were ever an issue more than the standard mosquito. I'm thankful I never had anyone get cranky about 'skeeters during workouts, as I guess people just assumed that would be part of the experience! As with the weather, I tended to be the only one who seemed to stress about mosquitos. My clients were all-around pretty awesome. Still, it's something to consider.

As I stated in my opening thoughts, being able to offer the best training experience, regardless of the training environment, should be our foundational goal with each and every client!

When we get down to it, the principles that apply to exercise selection and program design in a typical gym setting are no different with in a client's house or outdoors. We don't all of a sudden throw the baby out with the bathwater because we are unable to have a fully stocked gym at our fingertips.

It can be a bit unsettling, however, when we are forced to design programs that utilize the limited equipment our clients have at home. What we must remember is that the foundational principles never change. We may have to tweak our methods, but the principles remain the same. We want to develop well-rounded programs that address our clients' limitations and provide them with a means of making seamless long-term progress.

In working with new clients, this means starting with intake and assessment, then moving forward.

In working with clients who have been training with us for years, this means finding ways to continue moving them down the path they were on when training in the gym setting.

Having a good grasp on stances & set-ups, as well as loading positions is something, I believe to be important regardless of training environment. Being able to progressively load the body without having to use more loading is not only smart, it comes in really handy when working in non-gym settings!

The development of maximal strength can be a missing piece of the in-home/outdoor training puzzle. I get more into this topic in the "[Overcoming Isometrics for Maximal Strength](#)" section. Let's keep in mind that this may not be a goal of every client, nor may it be something we would ever need to "go there" with in regard to our group programming.

THE ART OF MACGYVER'ING: PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING IS AN EXERCISE TOOL!

So, before I get into this section, I have to preface things by saying that there have been a few videos circulating since COVID-19 forced people to start working out at home.

Perhaps you've seen 'em?! These videos show a compilation of at-home workout fails. There are a bunch of pretty painful mishaps...bands breaking and snapping people in the face, people overhead pressing barbells in plastic outdoor chairs that break, plate-loaded dumbbells with collars that are unable to hold the plates on...some are pretty hard to watch.

My immediate reaction was "who the hell would post that?" but then "oh yeah, people love to post about working out" and then "hopefully other people learn from these poor unfortunate souls' accidents!"

That said, if you wish to practice the art of MacGyver'ing, first things first please use your brain. Please. Secondly, test things out on yourself prior to recommending anything to another person. Third, proceed with caution and keep an eye out for anything that doesn't look safe!

In my years of doing in-home training, I had to come up with makeshift fitness gadgets and make do with what we had!

Some substitutions are things such as:

- Cans of food = dumbbells
- Loaded backpack = weighted vest
- Water jugs with handles = heavier dumbbells (great for carries)
- Bicycle tubes = resistance bands
- Rolling pin = stick roller, foam roller
- Staircase = duh!
- Dogs or small children = great substitution for any front-loaded exercise!

If you do a Google search, you can find plenty articles pertaining to DIY exercise equipment. Trust me, there's a ton of stuff! My buddy Brandon put together a homemade bench set-up out of desperation (if you're curious, you can check it out by clicking [HERE](#)).

TOP-NOTCH EXERCISE TWEAKS FOR IN-HOME TRAINING

Being able to challenge a client's body with other means than simply adding load comes in VERY handy with in-home training! Subtle tweaks to how load is placed on the body as well as foot position can pay off big time. A person can make seamless progress while feeling challenged at the right level!

In the private Facebook group you will find separate pdfs that cover stances & set-ups and loading positions in detail!

Stances & Set-Ups

If you are finding yourself banging your head against the wall in an attempt to come up with ways to keep your clients engaged, first off, **STOP assuming they need constant variety!**

Here's a nifty fact: **you can modify the stance/set-up of virtually any exercise to create variety & progress your clients seamlessly from "easier" to "harder."**

Keep in mind that where a person "resides" within a progression is going to be specific to them, and they may spend more time in one variation than others.

Furthermore, they may be able to skip a step and move on to the next variation. In addition, there are other nuances to this progression that could be included, and you may have some of your own you feel are appropriate for the client.

Once a person has mastered a progression, they may go back to the “easier” stances/set-ups & repeat with heavier loading. Another option is to use the “easier” stances in warm-up circuits. It is up to you to help them navigate the course!

Being able to move seamlessly from one variation to the next gives your clients the ability to “connect” the variations & prevents huge jumps in difficulty, thus reducing the learning curve! Win-win!

When introducing a new or more challenging position, keep in mind that although the exercise itself is the same, the stance/set-up isn't! These may seem like small changes, but to some people they may be a big progression. **When moving from a more stable position to one that creates a challenge in the frontal & transverse planes, a familiar exercise may feel completely different!**

To keep the learning curve at the right level, it may make sense to incorporate the new position into a workout in small doses. In other words, if using traditional sets & reps, it may be best to have a client perform their first set using the new stance/set-up and then the remaining sets in the more familiar one.

For example:

KB 1-Arm Overhead Press in Standing with Feet Together – 1 set x 8-10 reps/side

KB 1-Arm Overhead Press in Standing – 2-3 sets x 8-10 reps/side

If working with timed intervals, one could theoretically have a person perform the new variation for the first round of that exercise, then revert back to the previous variation for subsequent rounds.

One more thing - **it is not always necessary to go through an entire progression from start to finish!** You may have people that need to spend more time in the more stable positions while others may be able to utilize the more challenging stances. **You may find it's possible to skip a step here and there.** You may find that you spend more time in specific stances with most people for certain exercises.

The bottom line is that you have a logical flow from one position to the next and can apply specific stances based on your individual client or group's needs.

Progression Matrices: Stances & Set-Ups

(hyperlinks will take you to an exercise example)

Stances & Set-Ups for Core & Upper Body Exercises:

1. [Hook-Lying/Bridge](#)
2. [Dead Bug/3-Month Position](#)
3. [Hollow Body](#)
4. [Side Plank](#)
5. [Quadruped/Bird Dog Position](#)
6. [Plank/High Plank](#)
7. [Seated on Floor](#)
8. [Tall-Kneeling](#)
9. [Half-Kneeling](#)
10. [90/90 Squat](#)
11. [Seated on Bench](#)
12. [Bilateral Stance](#)
13. [Military Stance](#)
14. [Sprinter Stance](#)
15. [Split Stance](#)
16. [Split Stance Hover](#)
17. [Single-Leg Supported](#)
18. [Single-Leg Stance](#)

Stances Progression for Hinged Movements (Bent-Over Row, DL, Good Morning, Power Clean, etc):

1. [Bilateral Hinged](#)
2. [Sprinter Stance Hinged](#)
3. [Split Stance Hinged](#)
4. [Lateral Hinged](#)
5. [Rotational Hinged](#)

Dynamic (Stepping) Progression for Hinged Movements:

1. [Lateral Step](#)
2. [Reverse Step](#)
3. [Forward Step](#)
4. [Crossover Step \(Curtsy\)](#)

Loading Positions

Another way in which stability can be challenged & exercises can be tweaked is through the positioning of the load.

If loading is kept close to one's center of mass, there will be more overall stability. It is likely that a person will be able to work with heavier loads when the placement is close to their center of mass. If the load is moved further away from the center of mass, it changes the stability requirements & overall impact on the body. In addition, **the more assistance & feedback that a loading position provides, the less challenging it is considered to be in the overall progression scheme.**

Moving on, most people are going to be able to move more weight in a back squat than a front squat, correct? This is typically due to the fact that the placement of the barbell across the shoulders/upper back is a more supported position than the front rack (across the front of the shoulders). The body is simply able to resist the forces produced by the weight better in the back squat than in the front squat.

The front squat demands a lot more strength & endurance of the anterior core than the back squat. Ask anyone who has done a few sets of heavy paused front squats and they will tell you how sore their abs were the following day or two!

A loading position that places more challenge on the core musculature is undoubtedly going to be a progression from a position that is more basic.

Another aspect of load position has to do with distribution. Using a split squat as an example, the exercise can be progressed from bodyweight by adding a load. Holding two dumbbells or kettlebells in the "suitcase" (hanging) position would be a good start, as it is a balanced position.

From here, we could place a slightly heavier kettlebell in the hand opposite the forward leg while keeping the original load in the opposite hand. This creates a slightly offset distribution of weight. **The musculature of the lateral torso opposite the heavier-loaded side has to work a little harder to keep the body upright.** A progression from this could be performing the split squat with one kettlebell held in the hand opposite the forward leg, which creates even more of an unevenly distributed loading situation.

The concept at work here is that loading that is offset in nature can be a progression from more a uniform position.

From here, we could go several ways, once again asking ourselves **“what is the goal?”**

If the goal is to simply load up the movement, then we would be better off sticking with an evenly distributed suitcase position & increasing the load in both hands.

If the goal is to challenge different aspects of the body’s ability to resist unwanted movement in all three planes, then we could continue down a path of variations that emphasize offset loads. We could progress to an offset situation in which one kettlebell is racked while the other remains in the suitcase position. We could use a double racked position. We could hold one kettlebell overhead while the other is racked. We could...you get my point.

Again, if the goal is to simply move the most weight, then one should choose the position that facilitates this. You would be able to perform a split squat performed with kettlebells held in the hang carry or “suitcase” position with heavier loads than a split squat performed with both held overhead.

To illustrate these concepts using the good ol’ squat, **here is a brief example of a progression that emphasizes creating an ongoing challenge with loading position.** I opted to use dumbbells and kettlebells here, as most people have this equipment at home. Also, they can be used interchangeably for this example!

1. [Press-Out Squat](#) – the press-out serves as a counterbalance which facilitates sitting down into the squat & may help with patterning the movement.
2. [Goblet Squat](#) – keeping the load in front of the body continues with patterning, as it helps with core bracing & optimal alignment while squatting. As with the Press-Out Squat, the Goblet Squat can be considered to be a “learning variation,” but it can also be loaded up to some degree.
3. [KB Double-Rack Squat](#) – here we can add more loading while still having the benefit of increased core engagement due to the anterior position of the kettlebells. (Dumbbells may be substituted here, “racked” with ends at the shoulders and palms facing inward, but the loading effect isn’t quite the same.)
4. [KB Double-Rack Squat: Offset Loading](#) – if we take the loading used in the double-rack position & decrease one side by 4kg (8-10 lbs), this creates an offset situation. There will be more of a challenge to resist unwanted motion in the frontal & transverse planes. (Again, dumbbells may be substituted here.)

After having built up a great degree of resiliency via these offset loading variations, you could change course.

You will find loading up the body in a more traditional way (ie: barbell front or back squat) to be more effective due to improved total-body stabilization.

To demonstrate how loading positions and stances can both come into play within a progression, let's map out a series that incorporates the basic & sprinter stance squats!

1. Basic Squat Stance:

- a. [Press-Out Squat](#)
- b. [Goblet Squat](#)
- c. [KB Double-Rack Squat](#)
- d. [KB Double-Rack Squat: Offset Loading](#)

2. Sprinter Stance:

- a. [Press-Out Squat in Sprinter Stance](#) (substitute a dumbbell)
- b. [Goblet Squat in Sprinter Stance](#)
- c. [KB Double-Rack Squat in Sprinter Stance](#)
- d. [KB Double-Rack Squat: Offset Loading in Sprinter Stance](#)

It is important to note that everyone has different needs, therefore, some may not need to spend a ton of time (or any) with each of these variations. Case in point the Press-Out Squat – if someone has progressed through the variations in the basic squat stance & you are wanting to move them on to the sprinter stance variations, they may not need to begin at the press-out in sprinter stance. You may find that they are able to start with the front-loaded sprinter stance squat & build from there.

Just as with the stances/set-ups, when introducing a new or more challenging loading position, keep in mind that although the exercise itself is the same, the loading position isn't. These may seem like small changes, but to some people they may be a big progression. **When moving from a more stable position to one that creates a challenge in the frontal & transverse planes, a familiar exercise may feel completely different!**

Progression Matrix: Loading Positions

1. [Press-Out](#) (DB, KB, bumper plate, med ball, Ultimate Sandbag)
2. [Bucket Load](#) (DB, KB, med ball, Ultimate Sandbag aka USB)
3. [Bear Hug](#) (med ball, USB)
4. [Goblet Load](#) (DB, KB, med ball, USB)
5. [Back Rack](#) (barbell)
6. [Front Load](#) (USB, barbell)
7. [Double Front Rack](#) (DBs, KBs)

8. [Fist Load](#) (USB)
9. [Offset Front Load](#) (USB)
10. [Offset Double Front Rack](#) (DBs, KBs)
11. [Single Front Rack](#) (DB, KB)
12. [Shouldered + KB Racked](#) (USB + KB/DB)
13. [Shouldered](#) (USB)
14. [Overhead](#) (DBs, KBs, USB, bumper plate, barbell)
15. [Overhead Snatch Grip](#) (USB, barbell)
16. [Suitcase](#) (DBs, KBs, USBs)
17. Offset Suitcase (2 DBs, KBs, USBs of different load)
18. [Suitcase + Racked](#) (DBs, KBs, USBs)
19. [1-Arm Suitcase](#) (DB, KB, USB)
20. [Suitcase + Overhead](#) (DBs, KBs, USBs)
21. [Racked + Overhead](#) (DBs, KBs)
22. [1-Arm Overhead](#) (DB, KB)

Core Statics for Total-Body Awareness & Engagement

I am a big believer in hammering the basics & revisiting those basics in the long-term! “Core statics” is a term I have used to encompass all the exercises that involve holding solid positions for time. This is SUPER-important for anyone who is wanting to perform more intense &/or technical “fun & sexy” stuff! Being able to hold positions, create the proper amount of tension throughout the body, maintain alignment, and breathe while doing so is what we are talking about here!

Everyone wants to do more complicated exercises, but the foundational work is where the magic happens! Without it, you’re not going to be able to fully express your potential, avoid injuries, and truly continue to make progress long-term.

[In this video here](#), I go through some basic options for the main positions in my arsenal! I’ve included timestamps here for you to move around if you wish!

Progression Matrix: Core Statics

- Supine Positions
 - Hip Bridge
 - Hollow Body
 - Dead Bug

- Prone Positions
 - Arch Body Variations
- Side Plank Positions
- Supine Quadruped Positions
 - Crab
 - Tabletop
 - Reverse Plank
- Prone Quadruped Positions
 - Bird Dog
 - Beast
- High Plank/Plank Positions
- Hanging Positions
- Standing Loaded Holds

Note that this is not an exhaustive list, & it is laid out in a way that moves from ground-based to standing. I don't go into advanced positions (ie: handstand, planche) because I wanted to keep things feasible for the average in-home personal training client. I don't touch on a lot of variations but if you have an understanding of how to challenge these positions, you can expand on this list!

Movement Pattern Training for Total-Body Strength

Organizing exercises by movement pattern is a common practice for fitness professionals.

The movement pattern categories I currently use are:

- [Hinge/Deadlift Variations](#)
- [Press/Push Variations](#)
- [Squat Variations](#)
- [Pull Variations](#)
- [Lunge/Step-Up](#)
- [Rotational Variations](#)
- [Locomotion/Loaded Carry Variations](#)

For the sake of categorizing specific types of exercises, I also use the following:

- [Core Stabilization Variations](#)
- [Explosive/Plyometric Variations](#)
- [Cardio/Conditioning Variations](#)

The hyperlinks will take you to my YouTube playlists for each category!

When designing programs in any setting, we want to incorporate exercises that train each of these categories. It is important to point out that many exercises train more than one pattern. It is also important to note that if a person has difficulty performing a more complex movement pattern variation, you must be able to provide them with a more suitable variation so they can be successful! Having a “progression matrix” for exercises within each of the movement pattern categories makes this a no-brainer.

In addition, having a good grasp on how to tweak loading positions as well as stances & set-ups will enable you to build out your progression matrices for each of the movement patterns.

Overcoming Isometrics for Maximal Strength

For those who are wondering how they can get results with regard to maximal strength with clients who do not have a traditional set-up (power rack, barbell, plates, and a full range of dumbbells), I have several things I want you to consider.

The first thing I want you to consider is that if the client’s goal is to get as strong AF, then they are simply going to have to have the tools necessary to achieve that goal. This means that in a perfect world, this client would have traditional weights at home!

Don’t get me wrong, I love me some sandbags, but a client who is focused on how much weight they can lift, PR’ing every X number of weeks, and training the main lifts is not going to drop that passion and become a sandbag convert. Not saying that this could never happen, and I am by no means downplaying the importance of building true functional strength (one of the benefits of implementing non-traditional tools such as sandbags).

What I am saying is that **the client’s goals are what matters most**. What would I do with this theoretical client? I would supplement their traditional strength work with sandbag and kettlebell exercises.

Now, if that client does not have a rack, bar, and plates, and is unable to acquire some (as many have experienced during this pandemic), a temporary shift in focus may be necessary. The goal would be to maintain their gains to the greatest extent, of course, but this shift we are all having to go through could be a good way to have them work on their weaknesses (core, imbalances, etc).

The second consideration is that you can get some maximal strength work done with overcoming isometrics. This strategy is a great way to work on weak points and really teach the body to create a ton of tension. This technique is usually employed by strength athletes in a gym setting using a barbell.

An easy way to perform an overcoming iso for the deadlift, especially if a person's weakness is right off the floor, is to load up a bar heavier than they can lift. They will set up normally, then pretend they are going to lift the weight, pulling against the bar and pushing into the floor. For other positions in the deadlift, you can set the pins in a power rack at the appropriate height, then place a barbell below them. The person will perform an isometric deadlift against the pins. The same strategy goes for squats, as the person will push up into the pins with the barbell on their back. Yes, this can be done for front squats too. You guessed it, bench press is the same strategy, pushing the bar up against the pins. Same thing goes for overhead press. Yes, you can use any of the various grips and stances for any of the lifts! You get the idea.

Overcoming isos can be easily employed at any joint angle in the range of motion of the main lifts. Overcoming isos will not take the place of traditional strength work, but they are a good short-term option for those with a goal of getting as strong as possible!

An easy way to perform overcoming isos is with a towel. Yes, a towel. You can also use a rope!

I have been implementing this strategy with clients during the pandemic, and I will be continuing to use it once we are back in the gym. Why? I feel it is a simple yet effective way to ramp up the nervous system and help people create a lot of tension throughout the body without using a heavy load. In the past, I had only ever used overcoming isos with a few of my "heavy lifting" clients and myself and did so in the traditional manner. Incorporating the towel isos into my clients' programs reminded me of just how much this strategy rocks!

I used overcoming isos in the included program in two ways: for exercises on their own (ie: towel pull-aparts for 5 second holds performed for 40 seconds) and in combination with a dumbbell exercise (ie: towel pull-apart for 5 second hold followed immediately by a dumbbell reverse flye for 5 reps).

I recommend creating and holding tension for 5-15 seconds and performing sets of 4-6 reps.

[Check out my "Got A Towel" video](#) where I discuss these strategies!

Explosive Work for Power Output

Exercises such as jumps, kettlebell swings, and dumbbell snatches give our clients the opportunity to produce, express, and absorb force. It is important to be able to produce power, but just as important to be able to decelerate the body/load.

As with any exercise, knowing your client's level and abilities is imperative when programming more dynamic, explosive work!

SETS & REPS

When it comes to programming strength work, there is a lot more that can be done than the traditional "3 sets of 10" format. If you are looking to inject a little variety into a program without following the usual progression schemes in terms of volume and loading, you're in luck! There are numerous ways that standard sets and reps can be tweaked to create new opportunities for progress & continued engagement with your clients!

Keep in mind that too much variety is usually not the best idea. Sprinkle in different strategies but keep the standard "X sets x Y reps" format the bulk of your strength work.

Straight Sets

For the sake of clarification, I am mentioning straight sets. Everyone is familiar with this basic format, which is the standard "X sets x Y reps" I mentioned above. Straight sets are simply composed of reps, and this means of getting the job done works well for most people. In fact, this basic setup could be all a person needs for their strength training work.

Straight sets are notated as sets x reps. Three sets of 10 reps is shown as "3 x 10."

Circuits

This one seems blatantly obvious, but it must be included because it is a vital piece in the training model for clients of all types. I use circuits with 1-on-1 clients, semi-private, and my groups. The use of circuits in my programming for all clients means we get more work done in less time and the workout becomes more metabolic.

Most people are wanting favorable body composition changes; therefore, the use of circuits is an obvious win.

I have experimented with the use of circuits in each aspect of my small group programming over the years: warm-ups, skill work, strength work, and conditioning. A while back, I developed a strategy where the main strength lift is combined with 2-3 other exercises as our strength work. Prior to this, we typically performed our main lift as either an antagonistic super set or one that combined it with a mobility, core, breathing, or corrective drill.

x 3 Rounds:

A1) Dumbbell Clean: x 5 reps

A2) Squat Variation (using less loading with each set)

Set 1: (Goal 5-7+ reps)

Set 2: (Goal 7-9+ reps)

Set 3: (Goal 9-11+ reps)

A3) Hip Bridge Variation: x 10 reps

This strategy has really been a game-changer in terms of making the overall workout more conditioning-based. Prior to this, I felt things were working just fine, but was looking for a way to inject more “hustle” into the workout while not having it be labeled conditioning. I combined this change with my “conditioning comes first” strategy, which has also been eye-opening in a positive way. For those familiar with my “Ultimate Group Training System,” the “Program 3” template gives a solid representation of this!

Isometric Combos

As I mentioned in the overcoming isometrics section, using a towel or rope to perform max tension isometrics is a super-easy strategy! You can program straight sets of 5-10 second holds. Another option is to perform what I call “isometric combos” where you perform 3-5 seconds of an isometric followed immediately by 3-5 loaded reps of the traditional movement.

An example of this would be to perform an isometric towel 1-arm row for five seconds, followed immediately by five reps of a dumbbell 1-arm row. This is repeated for a total of three “reps” per set, [as I demonstrate in this video](#). Alternately, you could perform the reps of the dumbbell row first, then chase them immediately with the towel isometric row, and perform three “reps” in this manner.

Isometric combos can be performed using a bodyweight isometric followed by reps of a bodyweight exercise. For example, a 10-second bodyweight squat hold followed immediately by 5-10 reps of a bodyweight squat. This scenario could also be loaded up, as well as done in reverse. For example, hitting a set of 5 goblet squats in sprinter stance on one side, followed immediately by a 5-10 second hold in that bottom position, then switching legs and repeating on the other side.

Tempo

The concept of modifying tempo is not a new one, but it has become more popular in recent years pertaining to strength programming. Tempo training focuses on the time under tension (TUT) during a set of an exercise. More specifically, it is a prescription for the speed of each rep.

Tempo Notation

@31X1

The standard manner of notating tempo breaks a movement down into four components: the eccentric (lowering) phase, the pause at the bottom of the movement, the concentric (lifting) phase, and the pause at the top of the movement.

Keep in mind that **the first number is always the eccentric portion of the rep**. Yes, even for deadlifts, which begin with a concentric phase.

So, if you are deadlifting using this tempo, you would take three seconds to return to the floor from standing.

Continuing with this notation, **the second number refers to any pause in the bottom position**, so in this case you would pause for a second at the floor.

The third number reflects the concentric phase of the movement. In this example, the “X” means to be explosive upon bringing the weight up.

Finally, **the fourth number refers to any pause at the top position of the movement**, so in this example you would take one second in standing prior to returning the bar to the floor.

[Check out this short video](#) where I explain tempo lifting in “program 1” of “The Ultimate Group Training System!”

For more info, check out an article I wrote that focuses on tempo tweaks:

<http://thefitnessbootcampclub.com/using-a-tempo-focus-with-build-n-burn-workouts/>

There is also a ton of tempo work incorporated into several of the programs included in “The Ultimate Group Training System:” <https://smartfitproworkouts.com/the-ultimate-group-training-system>

As it may be the case for a group training situation, you may find timed intervals to be a more efficient way of programming workouts, instead of sets x reps. In jumping into doing virtual small group training, I experimented with all sorts of approaches. I used EMOMs and timed intervals for warm-ups, standard sets x reps for strength work (where everyone was self-paced), and timed intervals for strength work as well as conditioning.

I can’t honestly say that there is one “best” way of doing things. If you would prefer to be able to observe each individual performing the same exercise at once, then I would go for interval-based formats. If that’s not a big deal to you, then you have more flexibility. Additionally, if you find that having people keep track of their own reps doesn’t work out as efficiently as timed intervals, then opt for the intervals.

As I mentioned in The Ultimate Group Training System, I have used an interval app on my phone for years called Seconds Pro. It had been a while since I’d used it, since I use a different timer on my computer in my facility, but since I have been having to run Zoom on my computer I felt it was easier to leave that screen up and fiddle with a timer on my phone. I’m sure there’s a way better way to do things, but I haven’t felt like looking for it!

PROGRAM BREAKDOWN

The included program is one I designed and used with my virtual group training crew, but it can most definitely be used for an individual client. In addition, I feel it’s a very solid program for any training setting!

My goal was to keep things as simple as possible. There are five distinct components: warm-up, strength block 1, strength block 2, short conditioning piece, and cool-down. I wanted to cut down on the amount of instruction and maximize the work, therefore I chose to give no more than two variations for each exercise. The exercises are all done with bodyweight or dumbbells/kettlebells, along with some towel work for isometrics.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this book, it's been really eye-opening to realize how much work we've been able to do via the virtual workouts. Even if you don't have experience working with groups, I'm sure you have worked with individual clients who like to talk a lot! In a group setting, this can sometimes be a problem and I'll admit that from time to time, it gets out of hand for me. With the virtual training however, this is not an issue at all. In fact, one of my clients commented the other day that she misses talking with everyone in the group, and in my head, I was like "we're gonna keep that under control when we're back in the gym!" ☺

So, it's been refreshing being able to really knock out a lot of good work in the training hour. I had always left cool-downs to each of my individuals in my groups, as some could stick around when we were done whereas others could not. The five-minute cool-down after each of these virtual workouts has been something my clients have really enjoyed. I feel the cool-down is just as important as the warm-up, especially during this weird time where stress levels are increased.

I have provided three formats for the program – one uses a traditional "sets x reps" style, one uses timed intervals, and the third shows how I chose to combine both the "sets x reps" and timed interval approaches. In addition, I have included a "generic" template that will enable you to take these formats and plug in exercises based on your own preferences.

I chose to use rep ranges and tempo prescriptions for a lot of the exercises. I feel that both of these strategies are beneficial in a group setting. Rep ranges allow for the individual to adjust based on how they are feeling that day and giving people an idea of the speed at which to perform each rep helps them be mindful and not go too fast.

In addition, I chose to give a range for sets, as this provides more individualization. As I mentioned earlier in this manual, my mom is in her 70s and she has been a part of my 6am virtual crew. Three rounds of the strength circuits have typically been enough for her, whereas another woman in the group tends to go for four rounds!

I like being able to monitor how people are doing and then be able to adjust things on the fly, just as in the gym setting. Having some room to modify as you go is wise when working with groups, but also when working with individuals. There may be a day where a client is under a ton of stress & therefore may need to back off on their volume of work during that session. As always, being on the same page with our clients and having the ability to provide a personalized experience each and every workout is huge!

With regard to the strength blocks, I incorporated a “power” movement as the first exercise in the first circuits, as well as some of the second circuits. Exercises such as jumps, dumbbell cleans, and dynamic lift & chops fit in well here.

There is progression across the weeks within each specific workout with regard to “loading” the body through changing the stance for specific movements. In addition, there is progression in moving from 2-arm to alternating-arm to 1-arm variations.

Check out these videos where I break down circuits from the program!

[Strength Block 1C](#)

[Strength Block 1E](#)

[Strength Block 2F](#)

[Warm-Up B](#)

PROGRESSION MATRICES

I wanted to include some sample progression matrices to illustrate how progression can be made for various exercises.

These matrices can be beneficial when you need to move someone (or a group) a step forward or back. Being able to refer to a master list for each exercise not only helps with making progression seamless, it saves time!

The matrices give the variations listed in order of progression, with options given beneath each variation. I realize that not everyone may have the same equipment, or may simply need alternatives, so if that is you then these options will help! These options are to be considered “equals,” with the first option being what I would recommend. They provide alternatives for the listed exercise.

In other words, if an overhead press calls for kettlebells but you have to use dumbbells, you will find the kettlebell variation listed first, with other options listed afterward. If an exercise does not provide an alternative, then chances are you will smoothly be able to move forward or backward a step in the progression & skip that variation.

It is important to realize that what may appear to be simple progressions on paper can feel like huge leaps to a client. Subtle changes in loading position &/or stance can have a dramatic effect on a familiar movement! That said, you may find that you can skip a step or do not have to start at the beginning of a specific matrix.

I'm sure most of you have had enough experience in having to swap out equipment options & modify programs to suit your specific situations. I know I have plenty of times in my experience!

Providing variations that move a person ahead toward more complex exercises must be done in a manner that challenges the body to both produce force as well as reduce it. Jumping too far ahead could mean a person has not spent sufficient time learning how to create the movement itself, but also resist unwanted movement in other planes of motion.

Quite frankly, it kicks ass to be able to provide progressions that help bridge the gap between the familiar and “safe,” such as a bodyweight squat, to what may seem impossible at the moment to a client, such as a squat to rotational overhead press!

I have chosen not to provide a ton of variations that are not included in the program, as I felt I could get lost down a pretty deep rabbit hole in doing so, but **it bears mention that there are a plethora of regressions and progressions that are possible outside of these lists!** You will see that I have provided a few here and there, as well as some other videos for reference with regard to equipment options & other tweaks. I encourage you to build on these matrices &/or modify them to suit your preferences and needs!

When you consider how many tweaks can be made to any exercise with regard to stances and loading positions, you will see that these matrices are just a sliver of a possible all-encompassing progression scheme.

Movement Pattern Progression Matrices

[Carry Progression Matrix](#)

[Combo Progression Matrices](#)

[Hinge Progression Matrix](#)

[Lunge Progression Matrix](#)

[Press Progression Matrix](#)

[Squat Progression Matrix](#)

[Step-Up Progression Matrix](#)

[Row Progression Matrix](#)

[Rotation Progression Matrix](#)

SAMPLE EXERCISE PROGRESSION MATRICES

[Bird Dog Progression Matrix](#)
[Burpee Progression Matrix](#)
[Dead Bug Progression Matrix](#)
[Deadlift/High Pull/Power Clean Progression Matrix](#)
[Hip Bridge Progression Matrix](#)
[KB Swing Progression Matrix](#)
[Medicine Ball Slam Progression Matrix](#)
[Push Press Progression Matrix](#)
[Side Plank Progression Matrix](#)
[TGU Progression Matrix](#)
[Wall Ball Progression Matrix](#)

CARRY PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. Bear Hug Carry
 - a. [USB, Med Ball](#)
2. Front Load Carry
 - a. [USB Front Load Carry](#)
 - b. [Goblet Carry](#)
3. Unsupported Front Load Carry
 - a. [USB Fist Load Carry](#)
 - b. [DB Front Load Carry](#)
4. [KB Double Rack Carry](#)
5. [Med Ball Overhead Press Carry](#)
6. [Overhead Press Carry](#)
7. [Farmer Carry](#)
8. [Cross-Body Carry \(Rack + Suitcase\)](#)
9. [Cross-Body Carry \(Rack + OH\)](#)

Keep in mind that carries can always be regressed all the way back to holds! The next step would be in-place marching.

It is important to remember that gait is a skill and as such, it is something that must be practiced for many people.

If a person is walking without external load with any compensations such as outturned feet, overpronation (feet/ankles rolling in), excess supination (feet/ankles rolling out),

hips jutting side to side, etc, it is wise to emphasize proper mechanics prior to adding load!

An easy way to spot deviations with regard to gait mechanics is to look for anything that deviates from the sagittal plane. In other words, with the compensations I just listed, they all involve positioning or movement in the frontal &/or transverse planes.

This book isn't meant to provide guidance to help you become more proficient at improving gait mechanics BUT, a great place to start is simply by realizing that it is an important movement pattern and just because we do it allllll the time doesn't mean many of us do it well!

Adding external load to non-optimal gait mechanics may not result in injury, but it further solidifies the improper patterning and does nothing to help the person improve it! Yes, you can build fitness on a foundation that isn't as solid as possible, and we can have people carry things with relative ease because there isn't a lot of thought involved...but isn't it part of our job as fit pros to help people move better? And doesn't it seem silly to have people perform exercises without a lot of mind-body connection?

So, handing people a load and telling them to walk across the floor isn't always gonna cut it! ☺

COMBO EXERCISE PROGRESSION MATRICES

Hinge Combo 1 Progression:

1. Lateral Step Deadlift
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)
2. Reverse Step Deadlift
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)
3. [Crossover Step Deadlift](#)
4. [Lateral + Reverse Step Deadlift](#)
5. [Crossover + Reverse Step Deadlift](#)
6. [Deadlift Matrix](#)
7. [Lateral Step Good Morning](#)
8. [Reverse Step Good Morning](#)
9. [Lateral + Reverse Step Good Morning](#)
10. [Good Morning Matrix](#)
11. Lateral Step Power Clean
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)

12. Reverse Step Power Clean
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)
13. Crossover Step Power Clean
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)
14. Lateral Step Deadlift + Reverse Step Power Clean
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)
15. Lateral + Reverse Step Power Clean
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)
16. Power Clean Matrix
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)

Adding complexity via stepping in various directions makes the deadlift, good morning, and power clean more interesting (and more fun)!

I really love the USB for good mornings! The traditional good morning is done with a barbell across the shoulders. It can be beneficial for the low back, but many people find it hard not to “dump” their pelvis. In doing so, they lose proper bracing of the core to stabilize the lumbar spine. A great way to train this deadlift/hinge motion and make it a lot more user-friendly is to use an Ultimate Sandbag held in the front-load position.

In this position, we can create tension against the Ultimate Sandbag to connect the lats, core, and pelvis. This builds core and upper back strength (as those muscles stabilize), while adding a “heavier” load to the lower body (because the front-load position is more challenging than a traditional deadlift position where the load is hanging with arms extended). **This is very important for progressing to more challenging hip hinge motions where learning to control the eccentric forces is a huge factor, as well as core and upper back strength (ie: swings, cleans, snatches)!**

Heavy Slam Ball Progression:

1. [Slam Ball Deadlift \(drop from top\)](#)
2. [Slam Ball Deadlift](#)
3. [Slam Ball to Shoulder \(from step\)](#)
4. [Slam Ball to Shoulder](#)

The heavy slam ball to shoulder is a great basic movement that lets people just “do work!” It can be regressed to a deadlift & the range of motion of the slam ball to shoulder can be reduced by placing the ball on a step/bench.

Burpee Combo Progression:

1. [KB Benign Burpee Deadlift](#)
2. [KB Benign Burpee Goblet Clean](#)
3. [KB Burpee Power Swing](#) (or jump back)

The benign burpee/burpee combos pair the dynamic total-body movement with a kettlebell hinge. A step-back or jump-back action can be performed!

Hinge Combo 2 Progression:

1. [Bent-Over Row + Deadlift](#)
2. [Lateral Step Bent-Over Row + Deadlift](#)
3. Reverse Step Bent-Over Row + Deadlift
 - a. [USB](#), 2 [KB](#), 1 [KB](#)
4. Lateral Step Bent-Over Row + Power Clean
 - a. [USB](#), [KB](#)
5. Reverse Step Bent-Over Row + Power Clean
 - a. [USB](#), KB

The bent-over row + deadlift or power clean combos add complexity and time under tension to the hinge pattern.

Any of the above can be performed with a USB, kettlebells, dumbbells, or even a barbell!

Wall Sit Progression:

1. [Wall Sit](#)
2. [Goblet-Loaded Wall Sit](#)
3. [KB Double Rack Wall Sit](#)
4. [1-Leg Wall Sit](#)

Wall sits are an exercise almost everyone can do. They can be loaded up in a variety of ways! I coach my clients to perform a slight posterior pelvic tilt and focus on bracing the core!

HINGE PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. **Deadlift**
 - a. [USB Deadlift](#)
 - b. [2 KB Deadlift](#)
 - c. [1 KB Deadlift](#)
2. **Deadlift + High Pull or Goblet Clean**
 - a. [USB Deadlift + High Pull](#)
 - b. [KB DL + Goblet Clean](#)
3. **High Pull or Modified Clean**
 - a. [USB High Pull](#)
 - b. [KB Goblet Clean](#)
 - c. [Medicine Ball Clean](#)
4. **High Pull + Power Clean or Swing + Clean**
 - a. [USB High Pull + Power Clean](#)
 - b. [KB Swing + Goblet Clean](#)
 - c. [KB 2-Arm Swing + Clean Combo](#)
5. [1 KB Swing + Clean Combo](#)
6. **USB Power Clean**
 - a. [USB Power Clean to Fists](#)
 - b. [USB Power Clean to Front Load](#)
 - c. [KB 2-Arm Clean](#)
7. **Kettlebell Clean**
 - a. [KB 1-Arm Clean](#)
8. **Lateral Step Power Clean**
 - a. [USB Lateral Step Power Clean to Fists](#)
 - b. [USB Lateral Step Power Clean to Front Load](#)
 - c. [KB Lateral Step Goblet Clean](#)
9. [KB Lateral Step Clean](#)
10. **High Pull + Power Clean or Goblet Clean in Sprinter Stance**
 - a. [USB High Pull + Power Clean in Sprinter Stance](#)
 - b. [KB Goblet Clean in Sprinter Stance](#)
11. [KB Clean in Sprinter Stance](#)
12. **Reverse Step Power Clean**
 - a. [USB Reverse Step Power Clean](#)
 - b. [KB Reverse Step Clean](#)
13. **Forward Step Power Clean**
 - a. [USB Forward Step Power Clean](#)
 - b. [KB Forward Step Clean](#)

14. Crossover Step Power Clean

- a. [USB Crossover Step Power Clean](#)
- b. [KB Crossover Step Clean](#)

The main factors in progression here are explosiveness/speed and movement complexity.

The deadlift is the foundational pattern at work, with explosiveness being introduced with the high pull.

The high pull teaches one how to drive through the ground and explosively extend the hips to make the load “weightless.”

The high pull is progressed to a power clean, which involves getting the elbow(s) beneath the load immediately after the high pull is performed.

The power clean is patterned in more complex ways, incorporating stances and steps in various directions.

LUNGE PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [Press-Out in ½-Kneeling](#)
2. [Press-Out + Rotation in ½-Kneeling](#)
3. [Press-Out + Overhead Raise in ½-Kneeling](#)
4. [Lift/Chop in ½-Kneeling](#)
5. [USB ½-Kneel to Stand with Press-Out \(vertical\)](#)
6. [USB ½-Kneel to Stand with Press-Out \(horizontal\)](#)
7. [USB ½-Kneel to Stand with Press-Out + Rotation](#)
8. [USB ½-Kneel to Stand with Lift/Chop](#)
9. Front Load Reverse Lunge
 - a. [USB Front Load Reverse Lunge](#)
 - b. [KB Double Rack Reverse Lunge](#)
10. Front Load MAX Reverse Lunge
 - a. [USB Front Load MAX Reverse Lunge](#)
 - b. [KB MAX Reverse Lunge](#)
11. [USB MAX Reverse Lunge](#)
12. Suitcase Reverse Lunge
 - a. [USB Double Suitcase Reverse Lunge](#)
 - b. [KB Double Suitcase Reverse Lunge](#)

13. Front Load Forward Lunge
 - a. [USB Front Load Forward Lunge](#)
 - b. [KB Double Rack Forward Lunge](#)
14. Unsupported Front Load Reverse Lunge
 - a. [USB Fist Load Reverse Lunge](#)
 - b. [DB Front Load Reverse Lunge](#)
15. Unsupported Front Load Forward Lunge
 - a. [USB Fist Load Forward Lunge](#)
 - b. [DB Front Load Forward Lunge](#)

A 10-15# [USB](#) is what I recommend using for the Press-Out & Lift/Chop variations, but a bumper plate, Sandbell, DB (held by the ends), or KB (held by the horns) can be substituted!

The ½-kneeling position builds strength and stability in a split position. This serves as a solid foundation upon which the more dynamic lunge can be built!

The ½-kneel to stand variations are a great way to build the lower body patterning of the lunge. These serve as an excellent transition once proficiency has been demonstrated to move past the isometric ½-kneeling variations.

Moving on to the lunges themselves, things continue to get more dynamic. The action of taking a big step, lowering the body towards the ground, & then reversing the movement is what makes the lunge a lunge!

The reverse lunge is the best place to start here, as it is easier to control the forces than with a forward lunge.

Forward lunges must be introduced when a person is able to perform rep after rep of a reverse lunge variation with bulletproof technique. **You will tend to see more compensations with the forward lunge than the reverse.** Typical compensations include a loss of torso position, having to “heave” forward or backward to create momentum to return to standing

With a forward lunge, there is increased stress on the knee of the lunging leg. Also, the act of having to push off the ground & reverse the movement requires greater strength than the reverse lunge.

PRESS PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [½-Arc Press in 1/2-Kneeling](#)
2. [Arc Press in 1/2-Kneeling](#)
3. [KB Alt Overhead Press in Bilateral Stance](#)
4. [KB Seesaw Press in Bilateral Stance](#)
5. [KB Overhead Press in Bilateral Stance](#)
6. [KB Alt Overhead Press in Military Stance](#)
7. [KB Seesaw Press in Military Stance](#)
8. Rotational Overhead Press
 - a. [USB Rotational Overhead Press](#)
 - b. [KB 2-Arm Rotational Overhead Press](#)
9. [KB 1-Arm Rotational Overhead Press](#)
10. Offset Rotational Overhead Press
 - a. [USB Offset Rotational Overhead Press](#)
 - b. [KB Offset Rotational Overhead Press](#)
11. [KB Alternating Rotational Overhead Press](#)

A 10-15# USB is what I recommend for the arc press variations, but a sandbell or DB (hold ends) can be substituted. Kettlebells or dumbbells can be substituted for any overhead press variations!

The arc press variations are a great place to start anyone who may need more of a foundation for overhead pressing. Other stances can be incorporated than what kicks off this matrix here, if necessary!

Moving on to overhead pressing, a bilateral stance is first used. An alternating arm variation is progressed to a seesaw variation and finally a press with both arms.

Moving to military stance creates a challenge in the frontal plane. If needed, these same variations could be used in sprinter stance for those who are not ready to move on to the rotational overhead press!

The rotational overhead press requires a solid pivot with both legs and feet driving into the ground. **It is important to maintain the plank here,** as overextension at the lumbar spine is a common fault. The rotation and the press are performed together but if needed, they could be performed in a sequential manner as a regression.

Using offset loading with the rotational overhead press adds an additional challenge for the torso to resist side to side motion.

SQUAT PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. Press-Out Squat
 - a. [USB, bumper plate, KB](#)
2. Bucket Load Squat
 - a. [USB Bucket Load Squat](#)
 - b. [Med Ball Bucket Load Squat](#)
3. Goblet Squat
 - a. [KB, Med Ball](#)
4. [USB Bear Hug Squat](#)
5. Front Load Squat
 - a. [USB Front Load Squat](#)
 - b. [KB Double Rack Squat](#)
6. Unsupported Front Load Squat
 - a. [USB Fist Load Squat](#)
 - b. [DB Front Load Squat](#)
7. Offset Load Squat
 - a. [USB Offset Load Squat](#)
 - b. [KB Offset Load Squat](#)
8. Unilateral Squat
 - a. [USB Shoulder Squat](#)
 - b. [KB Single Rack Squat](#)
9. [USB Bear Hug Squat in Sprinter Stance](#)
10. Front Load Squat in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [USB Front Load Squat in Sprinter Stance](#)
 - b. [KB Front Load Squat in Sprinter Stance](#)
11. Unsupported Front Load Squat in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [USB Fist Load Squat in Sprinter Stance](#)
 - b. [DB Front Load Squat in Sprinter Stance](#)
12. Offset Load Squat in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [USB](#)
 - b. [KBs \(heavier on forward leg\), KBs \(heavier on rear leg\)](#)
13. Squat to Overhead Press
 - a. [USB, KBs](#)
14. USB Offset Load Squat to Overhead Press
 - a. [USB, KBs](#)
15. Squat to Overhead Press in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [USB, KBs](#)
16. Offset Load Squat to Overhead Press in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [USB, KBs](#)

The squat progression begins with the press-out, which teaches proper patterning and isn't meant to be loaded more than 10-15#. Use a USB, bumper plate, KB/DB, med ball, or sandbell.

From here we move to the anteriorly loaded variations which continue the press-out's assistance in helping with proper bracing. These variations can be loaded up!

The offset load squat is a great way to give a unilateral effect with a symmetrical stance. Once again, if you do not have your grip going & lats engaged, the movement just feels a little wonky.

Moving to the shoulder position, we create a true unilateral load. The same is true with a single racked kettlebell.

The sprinter stance is a progression from the bilateral squat stance. The demand is shifted a bit more to the forward leg, thus making this a modified unilateral position. We go through similar variations using this stance.

STEP-UP PROGRESSION MATRIX

Step-Up Progression

1. Press-Out Step-Up
 - a. [USB, KB/DB/Med Ball, bumper plate](#)
2. [USB Front Load Step-Up](#)
3. [KB Double Rack Step-Up](#)
4. [DB/KB Double Suitcase Step-Up](#)
5. Unsupported Front Load Step-Up
 - a. [USB Fist Load Step-Up](#)
 - b. [DB Front Load Step-Up](#)
6. Offset Front Load Step-Up
 - a. [USB Offset Step-Up](#)
 - b. [Kettlebell Offset Step-Up](#)
7. [KB Cross-Body Step-Up \(suitcase + rack\)](#)
8. [KB Cross-Body Step-Up \(suitcase + overhead\)](#)

The press-out using the Ultimate Sandbag helps facilitate proper bracing of the core, thus promoting good stability overall and allowing for a much better step-up! The front-load position promotes proper bracing of the core because tension can be created by pressing against the Ultimate Sandbag. This increases stability, which leads to improvements in performance!

ROW PROGRESSION MATRIX

SUSPENDED ROW PROGRESSION

1. [Suspended Neutral Grip Row](#)
2. [Suspended Supinated Grip Row](#)
3. [Suspended 3-Way Grip Row](#)
4. [Suspended Archer Row](#)
5. [Suspended Neutral Grip Hip Hinge & Row](#)
6. [Suspended 3-Way Grip Hip Hinge & Row](#)
7. [Suspended Reverse Flye](#)
8. [Suspended Archer Row & Reach](#)
9. [Suspended Row + March](#)
10. [Suspended 1-Arm Row with KB Racked](#)
11. [Suspended 1-Arm Row with KB Overhead Press](#)

BENT-OVER ROW PROGRESSION

1. [KB Bent-Over Row in Bilateral Stance](#)
2. [KB Alt-Arm Bent-Over Row in Bilateral Stance](#)
3. [KB Seesaw Bent-Over Row in Bilateral Stance](#)
4. [KB 1-Arm Bent-Over Row in Bilateral Stance](#)
5. [KB Bent-Over Row in Sprinter Stance](#)
6. [KB Alt-Arm Bent-Over Row in Sprinter Stance](#)
7. [KB Seesaw Bent-Over Row in Sprinter Stance](#)
8. [KB 1-Arm Bent-Over Row in Sprinter Stance](#)
9. [KB Bent-Over Row in Lateral Hinge](#)
10. [KB Alt-Arm Bent-Over Row in Lateral Hinge](#)
11. [KB Seesaw Bent-Over Row in Lateral Hinge](#)
12. [KB 1-Arm Bent-Over Row in Lateral Hinge](#)

Within the suspended row progression matrix there are progressions with grip as well as movement complexity, in addition to moving from a bilateral to unilateral pattern.

The neutral, supinated, and 3-way grip rows are fundamental bilateral variations.

The archer row is a 2-arm variation but with an asymmetrical pattern that moves the row out of the sagittal plane.

The hip hinge & row variations put an increased demand on the entire posterior chain and increase the complexity of the row pattern.

The progression continues with more challenging variations that pair asymmetrical upper and lower body movements.

The bent-over row progression can of course be done with dumbbells. **The main factors that drive the progression here are stance and arm action.**

With all of the bent-over row variations, it is important to realize that one's ability to maintain proper bracing and alignment in an unsupported prone position is of utmost importance! **These variations place a ton of demand on the hips and torso.** This is a very beneficial scenario for the postural muscles, which benefit from increased time under tension in this isometric sense.

That said, **a person must be able to maintain the integrity of this set-up in the bilateral stance before moving on to the more advanced stances.** If they find it difficult to hold this position when in the sprinter stance, then they would be better off spending a little more time in the bilateral stance.

A bilateral stance is the most basic, stable position for the bent-over row. **Performing the row with both arms in sync is the most balanced pattern.**

Alternating the arms creates a rotational stimulus, and the seesaw pattern takes this a step further.

Finally, **performing the bent-over row with a single arm places all the load on one side,** thus placing a huge demand on the torso and hips to maintain alignment and positioning.

With the sprinter stance this arm action progression feels a bit more challenging due to the offset nature of the stance.

The lateral hinge position shifts the demand more to one hip and requires increased strength to hold this position while the row variations are performed.

A common compensation in the bent-over row variations is to raise the torso as the row is performed. **There should be no movement of the torso or at the hips!**

ROTATION PROGRESSION MATRIX

Rotation is also incorporated into the lunges as well as overhead press for levels 2 and 3 in weeks 5-8. It is introduced at a foundational level for level 1, culminating with a rotational hinge pattern (rotational deadlift) in the final two weeks.

Rotation Progression

1. Rotation + Press-Out
 - a. [USB \(vertical\)](#), [USB \(horizontal\)](#), [Bumper Plate](#), [Med Ball](#), [KB/DB](#)
2. [Band Pivot Rotation](#)
3. [USB Bear Hug Rotation](#)
4. [USB Front Load Rotation](#)
5. KB Rotation
 - a. [Goblet](#), [1-Arm](#), [Double Rack](#)
6. Rotational Deadlift
 - a. [USB \(inside-out\)](#)
 - b. [USB \(outside-in\)](#)
 - c. [KB \(can be done inside-out & outside-in as well\)](#)
7. [Pivot Lift & Chop \(Sandbell, Med Ball, DB/KB\)](#)
8. [Band Pivot Chop \(from side or front\)](#)
9. [Band Pivot Lift from Side](#)
10. [Band Pivot Lift from Front \(1 side or alternating\)](#)
11. [KB Figure 8 to a Hold](#)
12. [USB Shoveling Rotation](#)
13. [USB Shoveling \(low intensity\)](#)
14. [USB Shoveling](#)

Rope Grappler

1. [Rope Grappler \(1 strand\)](#)
2. [Rope Grappler \(2 strands\)](#)

It is important to point out that **both range of motion as well as speed are key factors in progression with any of these variations!**

It is also important to emphasize that **the pivot action is imperative in creating rotation from the ground up and keeping the low back safe.** There must be a focus on pushing down through the feet, staying tall through the torso, and driving the ball of the pivot foot down and around so that the leg and hip follow suit.

Everything must work together to ensure the pivot is at the hip and not the lumbar spine. **The low back stays stable while the hip moves, not the other way around!**

The non-pivot foot should be angled out slightly to avoid unwanted forces on the knee.

If a person feels a fundamental rotation variation in their low back, you can bet that they are not pushing sufficiently through their feet & creating a strong base.

The pivot is magic for the hips! Not only does it engage the glutes & obliques, it can help improve hip mobility. If a person is able to properly load the hips as they pivot & rotate, the low back will not be at risk.

We do a lot of movements in my gym with bands that involve pivoting. I first began to learn about tri-planar movements in 2004 when I began to geek out on Gary Gray & JC Santana's teachings. If you peruse my older YouTube vids, you will see a lot of exercise variations that reflect this! A lot of good stuff happens when we pivot!

Keep in mind that this movement may feel unfamiliar to many. You may find it beneficial to have people perform pivot footwork without loading and slowly to one side only before moving on!

As with any of the previous matrices, if you do not have the equipment available to perform a variation, substitute as best as possible OR move ahead a step.

The rotation progression begins with slower movements and progresses to more dynamic hinge patterns. Staying upright and performing rotations with pivots is where we begin.

The press-out is where I prefer to start, as the press-out facilitates proper bracing through the core. Again, performing a rotation to one side is suggested before moving on to an alternating pattern. A person may be able to begin a workout performing the one-sided variation and then move into the alternating pattern as the workout continues. Others may need to stick with one-sided for a workout and then move on to the alternating pattern the following time.

This base movement can be loaded all sorts of ways! A bear hug can be done with a USB or a med ball. A front-loaded position can be achieved with a USB or kettlebells. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I prefer the USB because the soft surface can be pressed against, making it part of the body in a sense.

Rotational deadlifts take the pivot and combine it with a hinge. This is a fundamental to the more dynamic exercises such as the band pivot chops/lifts and USB shoveling! These variations can be done in an “inside-out” and “outside-in” manner.

The band pivot chops & lifts are old school functional strength awesomeness! They can also be done with a cable! The movement here can start small and be built up. As I have said before, speed is something that can be increased as movement proficiency is gained.

The kettlebell figure 8 to a hold doesn't involve a pivot, but I wanted to include it here because the movement is an anti-rotation dynamic hinge. The forces are rotational in nature, but the body must counter them.

Shoveling is one of my favorite rotational exercises! This movement lights the glutes & obliques on fire like nothing else! It is a dynamic movement that could be considered similar to the kettlebell swing, but a bit more complex as we are involving rotation. Just as with kettlebell swings, I do not recommend this exercise for beginners! There are a few fundamentals one needs to have a firm grasp on before progressing to this explosive movement

Being able to sit back into the hips well (aka “hinge”) & have no restrictions with this movement pattern is important! **You must be able to load the hips & then dynamically** extend to generate enough “oomph” to make the movement happen. Both the deadlift & high pull are fundamental exercises that are important to master prior to moving on to shoveling.

I have found there to be a little bit of a learning curve with shoveling (not unlike the KB swing). When a person understands that the upper body is not really involved (aside from maintaining good engagement), & it's all in the hips, things click!!

Keep tension in the USB by pulling the handles away from each other & keeping this set the entire time. This engages the lats & helps lock in the torso position so that the emphasis can stay on the hips/core

The rope grappler is a brutal battle rope variation that involves a pivot and rotation paired with hip flexion & extension. The intensity of this movement can of course be adjusted through decreasing/increasing the range of motion as well as speed. In addition, one strand of the rope can be used as a regression to two strands.

BIRD DOG PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [Quadruped Engagement](#)
2. [Bird Dog Legs Only + Slider \(1 side\)](#)
3. [Bird Dog Legs Only + Slider \(alt\)](#)
4. [Bird Dog Legs Only + Slider + Band \(1 side\)](#)
5. [Bird Dog Legs Only + Slider + Band \(alt\)](#)
6. [Bird Dog Legs Only](#)
7. Bird Dog Upper Only Iso-Drag (alt)
 - a. [Ultimate Sandbag](#), [heavy dumbbell](#)
8. [Bird Dog Iso-Drag + Slider \(1 side\)](#)
9. [Bird Dog Iso-Drag + Slider \(alt\)](#)
10. [Bird Dog Iso-Drag + Slider + Band \(1 side\)](#)
11. Bird Dog Iso-Drag + Slider + Band (alt)
 - a. [Ultimate Sandbag](#), [heavy dumbbell](#)
12. [Bird Dog Iso-Drag \(1 side\)](#)
13. [Bird Dog Iso-Drag \(alt\)](#)
14. [Bird Dog Iso-Drag + Band \(alt\)](#)
15. [Bird Dog Drag Upper Body Only](#)
16. Bird Dog Drag + Slider
 - a. [Ultimate Sandbag](#), [kettlebell](#)
17. Bird Dog Drag + Slider + Band
 - a. [Ultimate Sandbag](#), [kettlebell](#)
18. [Bird Dog Drag](#)
19. [Bird Dog Drag + Band](#)

The [USB](#) is what I recommend using for all Bird Dog variations, paired with [furniture sliders](#) & [mini bands](#) when called for! A sandbell, or a heavy DB or KB can be substituted for the iso-drag variations, and a sandbell or KB can be used for the drags. The large surface area of the USB helps in creating tension in the lat and core with the iso-drags and drags. A KB or DB won't produce the same effect as with the USB, especially with the drag variations. A sandbell would be the next best option because it has a pliable surface which is great for gripping, plus it has a more substantial surface area than a DB or KB!

[Check out this video](#) in which I compare a kettlebell to the USB for lateral drags!

In setting up for the USB iso-drags and drags, it is important to place the USB right against the knees in quadruped position.

From here, the bag will remain low on the body. If the USB is set up towards the chest, there will be a loss of connection through the core and lats. Instead stress will be placed on the shoulders and traps. No Bueno!

Perform each rep slowly and pause for 2-3 seconds in the “finish” position. Fewer reps done really well will have more of an impact than more reps done with so-so technique!

BURPEE PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [Benign Burpee Stepback with Hands Elevated](#)
2. [Benign Burpee Stepback](#)
3. [Benign Burpee with Hands Elevated \(no jump\)](#)
4. [Benign Burpee with Hands Elevated \(jump\)](#)
5. [Benign Burpee \(no jump\)](#)
6. [Benign Burpee \(jump\)](#)
7. [Benign Burpee Deadlift](#)
8. [Benign Burpee Goblet Clean](#)
9. [Benign Burpee Rope Slam](#)
10. [Benign Burpee Power Swing](#)
11. [Burpee](#)
12. [Burpee Rope Slam](#)
13. [Burpee Power Swing](#)

Ah, the beloved burpee. So many love to hate it, and so many just flat-out hate it!

Although I don't go overboard with the use of this movement, I do use it (if you're bored, [here's me rambling about the burpee](#)).

I use what I call a “benign burpee” with my clients. I do believe the other term for this would be “squat thrust.” In this movement, you can either step or jump the legs back to the high plank position. From here, you simply reverse the movement and return to standing. A jump upon upright is optional.

Elevating the hands makes any benign burpee variation a little easier, simply because it reduces the range of motion.

To jazz things up a little, **the benign burpee can be paired with other movements.**

The kettlebell deadlift paired with the burpee is a lower-level option, with the burpee + goblet clean being a bit more dynamic. Pairing the benign burpee with a power swing kicks things up a notch!

Burpees can also be paired with battle ropes! You can perform any variety of rope pattern here. Furthermore, you can perform variations of the combo, such as one benign burpee followed by more than one rope slam. The same can be done with the kettlebell movements!

DEAD BUG PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. Dead Bug Iso-Hold (heel taps)
 - a. [Ultimate Sandbag](#), [bumper plate](#), [kettlebell](#)
2. [LeverBell Iso-Hold Dead Bug \(heel taps\)](#)
3. [Dead Bug 45° Rotations \(no legs\)](#)
4. [Dead Bug 45° Rotations \(heel taps\)](#)
5. [KB Alt Press Dead Bug \(no legs\)](#)
6. [KB Alt Press Dead Bug \(heel taps\)](#)
7. [Dead Bug Lift \(no legs\)](#)
8. [Dead Bug Lift \(heel taps\)](#)
9. [Dead Bug Chop \(no legs\)](#)
10. [Dead Bug Chop \(heel taps\)](#)
11. [Dead Bug Lift + Chop \(heel taps\)](#)
12. [Dead Bug Alt Lift + Chop \(heel taps\)](#)
13. [Dead Bug Iso-Hold \(heel taps, band around thighs\)](#)
14. [LeverBell Iso-Hold Dead Bug \(heel taps, band around thighs\)](#)
15. [Dead Bug 45° Rotations \(heel taps, band around thighs\)](#)
16. [KB Alt Press Dead Bug \(heel taps, band around thighs\)](#)
17. Dead Bug Iso-Hold (marches)
 - a. [Ultimate Sandbag](#), [bumper plate](#), [kettlebell](#)
18. [LeverBell Iso-Hold Dead Bug \(marches\)](#)
19. [Dead Bug 45° Rotations \(marches\)](#)
20. [KB Alt Press Dead Bug \(marches\)](#)
21. [Dead Bug Lift \(marches\)](#)
22. [Dead Bug Chop \(marches\)](#)
23. [Dead Bug Lift + Chop \(marches\)](#)
24. [Dead Bug Alt Lift + Chop \(marches\)](#)
25. [Dead Bug Iso-Hold \(marches, band around feet\)](#)
26. [LeverBell Iso-Hold Dead Bug \(marches, band around feet\)](#)
27. [Dead Bug 45° Rotations \(marches, band around feet\)](#)

- 28. [KB Alt Press Dead Bug \(marches, band around feet\)](#)
- 29. [Dead Bug Lift \(marches, band around feet\)](#)
- 30. [Dead Bug Chop \(marches, band around feet\)](#)
- 31. [Dead Bug Lift + Chop \(marches, band around feet\)](#)

A 10-15# USB, bumper plate, kettlebell, dumbbell (grasp handle), med ball (MB), or Sandbell can be used for the iso-hold, 45° rotation, & lift/chop variations. I didn't provide videos for each & every option here, as I felt it would be redundant. Dumbbells can be substituted for any of the kettlebell variations.

Neutral spine/pelvis is maintained as the dead bug is performed. **There should be no change in pressure against the floor as movement occurs.** No dumping of the pelvis forward, allowing the lumbar spine to extend!

The ground gives a ton of feedback during dead bugs! If the individual senses any difference in pressure against their back, this may indicate a loss of spinal/pelvic position.

Perform each rep slowly and pause for 1-2 seconds in the “finish” position. Fewer reps done really well will have more of an impact than more reps done with so-so technique!

In performing dead bug variations, **it is important to make sure that the non-moving leg doesn't move as the other leg extends.** A common compensation is to go further into hip flexion with that non-moving leg!

I use the yellow and green [Perform Better mini bands](#) for the banded variations! A band can be placed around the thighs or the feet to add resistance.

It is obviously important to watch for that hip flexion compensation when performing variations that use a band around the thighs or feet! If a person is unable to perform a banded variation without compensation, simply regress the movement to the non-banded variation and allow them to master that level before moving forward.

DEADLIFT/HIGH PULL/POWER CLEAN PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. Deadlift
 - a. [USB Deadlift](#)
 - b. [2 KB Deadlift](#)
 - c. [1 KB Deadlift](#)
2. Deadlift + High Pull or Goblet Clean
 - a. [USB Deadlift + High Pull](#)
 - b. [KB DL + Goblet Clean](#)
3. High Pull or Modified Clean
 - a. [USB High Pull](#)
 - b. [KB Goblet Clean](#)
 - c. [Medicine Ball Clean](#)
4. Lateral Step High Pull or Goblet Clean
 - a. [USB Lateral Step High Pull](#)
 - b. [KB Lateral Step Goblet Clean](#)
5. High Pull + Power Clean or Swing + Clean
 - a. [USB High Pull + Power Clean](#)
 - b. [KB Swing + Goblet Clean](#)
 - c. [KB 2-Arm Swing + Clean Combo](#)
6. [1 KB Swing + Clean Combo](#)
7. USB Power Clean
 - a. [USB Power Clean to Fists](#)
 - b. [USB Power Clean to Front Load](#)
 - c. [KB 2-Arm Clean](#)
8. Kettlebell Clean
 - a. [KB 1-Arm Clean](#)
9. USB Lateral Step Power Clean
 - a. [USB Lateral Step Power Clean to Fists](#)
 - b. [USB Lateral Step Power Clean to Front Load](#)
10. [KB Lateral Step Clean](#)
11. USB Power Clean in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [USB Power Clean to Fists in Sprinter Stance](#)
 - b. [USB Power Clean to Front Load in Sprinter Stance](#)
12. KB Clean in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [KB Clean in Sprinter Stance](#)
 - b. [KB Goblet Clean in Sprinter Stance](#)
13. Reverse Step Power Clean
 - a. [USB Reverse Step Power Clean](#)
 - b. [KB Reverse Step Goblet Clean](#)

14. [1 KB Reverse Step Power Clean](#)
15. Power Clean & Press
 - a. [USB Power Clean & Press](#)
 - b. [KB 2-Arm Clean & Press](#)
16. [KB 1-Arm Clean & Press](#)
17. [USB Rotational Power Clean & Press](#)
18. [KB 1-Arm Rotational Clean & Press](#)
19. [USB Power Clean & Rotational Press](#)
20. [KB 1-Arm Clean & Rotational Press](#)
21. [USB Rotational Power Clean & Rotational Press](#)
22. [KB 1-Arm Rotational Clean & Rotational Press](#)

If needed, a mini progression matrix could be used with the deadlift using the stance/stepping progression. This could come in handy if someone needs to spend more time working on basic hinge patterning without moving on to more explosive work!

As with all of the progression matrices, my recommended options are listed first for variations that have several options. Pick one from the lettered list if a variation has several options! These are considered to be comparable exercises. For example, if looking at the deadlift options, choose either the USB (recommended, so it is listed first), 2 kettlebells, or 1 kettlebell.

It may not be necessary to work through ALL of the variations in this matrix! I wanted to provide enough options for most anyone to be able to use these matrices, therefore there are many variations that may be redundant.

It bears mention that in looking at a USB Power Clean & Press and a 1 KB Power Clean & Press, **the single kettlebell variation is considered a progression from the USB because of it being a unilateral movement.** There is more demand on the body to stabilize because of the offset load. It is for this reason that these variations are listed separately.

If you would rather stick with the Ultimate Sandbag variations, work through the progression matrix & eliminate the kettlebell variations.

If you do not have Ultimate Sandbags or simply wish to do more work with kettlebells, work through the kettlebell variations.

As stated in the previous matrix, for most of the kettlebell clean variations in this program, the clean can be performed [from the ground \(aka “dead clean”\)](#) or [from a swing!](#)

The dead clean provides more range of motion and therefore the ability to use more of the body to generate momentum, and each rep is starting from a dead stop.

The swing clean uses less range of motion and is more ballistic in nature.

HIP BRIDGE PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [Hip Bridge Iso with Iso-Hold \(5sec\)](#)
2. [Hip Bridge with Iso-Hold](#)
3. [Hip Bridge with Pullover](#)
4. [Hip Bridge with 2 KB Press](#)
5. [Hip Bridge with KB Alt Press](#)
6. [Hip Bridge with LeverBell Press](#)
7. [Hip Bridge with LeverBell Rotation](#)
8. [Hip Bridge with LeverBell Rotation + Chop](#)
9. [Hip Bridge with Lift](#)
10. [Hip Bridge with Chop](#)
11. [Hip Bridge with Lift + Chop \(1 side or alternating\)](#)
12. [Hip Bridge March with Iso-Hold](#)
13. [Hip Bridge March with Pullover](#)
14. [Hip Bridge March with 2 KB Press](#)
15. [Hip Bridge March with KB Alt Press](#)

A 10-15# Ultimate Sandbag, bumper plate, kettlebell, dumbbell (grasp handle), med ball (MB), or Sandbell can be used for the iso-hold, pullover, & lift/chop variations. [A pair of kettlebells can also be used for the iso-hold variations.](#) Dumbbells can be substituted for any of the kettlebell variations.

The yellow and green [Perform Better mini bands](#) can be used with bridges! [I use the yellow bands around the feet](#) to help [overpronators \(people who have feet that tend to roll inward\)](#) [keep their feet aligned](#). The band accentuates this unwanted position & provides an opportunity for people to become familiar with a better position! [I use the green bands at the knees](#) to do something similar with the knees, helping people maintain good alignment and also feel more of the hip complex working!

The iso-hold is where I like to start with clients. It is important to keep the load over the lower chest and not bring it close to the face. This will keep the upper traps out of it and keep tension in the lats. Moving on to the pullover challenges the body to remain stable while the load moves overhead.

The KB press variations are done in sync with the hip bridge. Pressing the KB(s) up as the hips come up creates a nice burn in the glutes! The alternating press adds an anti-rotation challenge.

If you do not have a leverbell, DO NOT stress! Move ahead a few steps. The leverbell adds a subtle, unique feeling to the hip bridge as it is an asymmetrical load. When the leverbell is rotated, the light load (7-10#) makes the hips/glutes light up in a surprising way! Adding the chop overhead creates a similar burn as the pullover, but with a slight anti-rotation twist.

The lift, chop, & lift + chop patterns can be done for reps to one side or in an alternating manner. Typically, the one-sided variations are to be attempted prior to alternating, but as with any and all exercises, it depends on the client! You may find you do not need to perform the one-sided variations with some people whereas others may need to simplify the patterning. This is a subtle change in the movement, but it can be an impactful one!

The bridge progression moves from bilateral to marching. There are plenty of steps that can be continued past the variations included here, but this program is only 12 weeks!

If needed, any of these variations can be performed with the [hip bridge as an isometric](#). Holding the hip bridge position while performing the movements with the upper body may be appropriate for certain individuals! This is important to remember in situations where you may have everyone performing the same level variation, but it is a bit too much for a certain person. Instead of switching them to a regressed variation, it may make sense to have them hold the bridge and pattern the movement along with everyone else.

KETTLEBELL SWING PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [KB Deadlift](#)
2. [KB Hike](#)
3. [KB Goblet Clean](#)
4. [KB Power Swing](#)
5. [KB 2-Arm Swing](#)
6. [KB 1-Arm Swing](#)
7. [KB Skier Swing](#)
8. [KB Hand-to-Hand Swing](#)
9. [KB Swing in Sprinter Stance](#)
10. [KB Lateral Step 2-Arm Swing](#)

The kettlebell deadlift should always be an option in a swing progression for those who are not yet ready for an explosive hinge movement!

From here, we can start to layer more complexity and intensity, building to some pretty fancy swing variations!

The KB hike is a great drill for learning the swing. It teaches people to sit back & load the hips. It also teaches the proper way to start and finish a set of “regular” swings!

The goblet clean is an easy way to emphasize the hip snap that is required to make the KB weightless at the top of a swing.

Power swings build on the KB hike and add a full swing to it, thus making things more complex. From here, the movement is reversed back to the floor.

Upon mastering a basic 2-arm swing, the 1-arm variation can be introduced, which places an anti-rotation demand on the body as the kettlebell descends from the top of the swing. **This is a progression because the body must be able to resist unwanted movement!**

The skier swing places the weight outside the legs and can be done with two kettlebells and then progressed to a single KB.

The hand-to-hand swing adds complexity to the 1-arm swing in that a release & catch of the KB is required at the top of each swing.

Moving from a traditional stance to the sprinter stance for the regular 2- and 1-arm swings challenges the body in the frontal plane as well as transverse. The body must resist side to side motion as well as resist rotation!

Finally, **adding a stepping motion to the swing continues the progression by adding complexity.** Reps can be performed to one side, side to side, or traveling across the floor.

MEDICINE BALL SLAM PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [Medicine Ball Slam in Tall-Kneeling](#)
2. [Medicine Ball Slam in ½-Kneeling](#)
3. [Medicine Ball Chest Slam](#)
4. [Medicine Ball Slam](#)
5. [Medicine Ball Jumping Slam](#)
6. [Medicine Ball Over the Top Slam](#)

I recommend using a medicine ball that bounces for shorter interval work.

There is a higher turnover and more reps can be completed because the ball bounces up to a level where it can be caught and then brought overhead again. There is no need to squat down to retrieve the ball from the ground after each rep!

That said, if you have non-bouncing slam balls at your disposal, by all means use them!

Any of the above varieties demonstrated with a non-bouncing slam ball can be done with a bouncing ball.

PUSH PRESS PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. Overhead Press
 - a. [USB](#), [barbell](#), [KB 2-Arm](#) or [DB 2-Arm](#)
 - b. [KB 1-Arm](#) or [DB 1-Arm](#), [Landmine](#)
2. Push Press
 - a. [USB](#), [barbell](#), [KB 2-Arm](#), [DB 2-Arm](#)
 - b. [KB 1-Arm](#) or [DB 1-Arm](#), [Landmine](#)

3. Push Press in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [USB](#), [KB 2-Arm](#), [DB 2-Arm](#)
 - b. [KB 1-Arm](#) or [DB 1-Arm](#)
 - c. [Landmine](#)
4. Offset Push Press
 - a. [USB](#), [KBs](#) or [DBs](#)
5. Offset Push Press in Sprinter Stance
 - a. [USB](#), [KBs](#) or [DBs](#)
6. Power Clean & Press
 - a. [USB](#), [barbell](#) ([also can be done from the hang](#)), [KB 2-Arm](#)/DBs
 - b. [Bumper plate ground to overhead](#)
 - c. [KB 1-Arm Clean & Press](#)
7. Power Clean & Rotational Press
 - a. [USB](#)
 - b. [KB 1-Arm Clean & Rotational Press](#)

DBs can be substituted for any of the KB variations.

For any of the variations that call for a pair of KBs or DBs, a single KB or DB or landmine can be used! Keep in mind that this will make the loading unilateral and therefore this is considered to be a progression from a more balanced scenario.

In looking at the list above, you could theoretically move from an “a” option to a “b” within one of the progression steps, or choose to go with either bilateral loading (or unilateral loading) for the duration of the progression.

When loading one side only, more often than not you will want to switch sides at halfway. Sometimes it may be more appropriate or convenient to stay on one side for the duration of an interval. Just know that this is another means of altering the intensity during a workout and that fatigue may play a part in decreasing performance!

We are moving from a “strict” overhead press to the push press in this matrix. In the strict press it is important to stay solidly rooted into the ground & think about pushing down through the legs and feet to generate force upwards.

In the push press, the movement becomes more dynamic through the use of an explosive leg drive, which helps generate upward momentum.

The push press is progressed from the bilateral stance to the sprinter stance. Further progression is created through the use of offset loading, which creates a challenge in the frontal plane.

The clean and press comes into play towards the end of the progression matrix. If needed, a push press could be used instead of a strict press.

For most of the kettlebell clean variations in this program, the clean can be performed [from the ground \(aka “dead clean”\)](#) or [from a swing](#)!

The dead clean provides more range of motion and therefore the ability to use more of the body to generate momentum, and each rep is starting from a dead stop.

The swing clean uses less range of motion and is more ballistic in nature.

Is one form of the clean better than the other? No. Just know that there are options and **some people may do better with one vs the other.**

SIDE PLANK PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(both knees bent\) x 5sec x 3/side](#)
2. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(both knees bent\) x 7sec x 3/side](#)
3. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(both knees bent\) x 10sec x 3/side](#)
4. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(both knees bent, top leg lifts\)](#)
5. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(top leg straight\) x 5sec x 3/side](#)
6. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(top leg straight\) x 7sec x 3/side](#)
7. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(top leg straight\) x 10sec x 3/side](#)
8. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(both knees bent, top lifts + band\)](#)
9. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(top leg straight lifts\)](#)
10. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(top leg straight lifts + band\)](#)
11. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(staggered\) x 5sec x 3/side](#)
12. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(staggered\) x 7sec x 3/side](#)
13. [Side Plank Iso-Pull \(staggered\) x 10sec x 3/side](#)
14. [Side Plank Row \(both knees bent\)](#)
15. [Side Plank Row \(both knees bent, top leg lifts\)](#)
16. [Side Plank Row \(top leg straight\)](#)
17. [Side Plank Row \(top leg straight lifts\)](#)
18. [Side Plank Row \(top leg straight lifts + band\)](#)
19. [Side Plank Row \(staggered\)](#)

20. [Band Side Plank Row \(top leg straight\)](#)
21. [Band Side Plank Row \(top leg straight lifts\)](#)
22. [Band Side Plank Row \(top leg straight lifts + band\)](#)

Any of the iso-pull variations can be performed as standard side planks with an emphasis on progression via changing the leg position and adding movement!

- [Both knees bent](#)
- [Both knees bent, top leg raises](#)
- [Top leg straight](#)
- [Top leg straight, top leg raises](#)
- [Staggered](#)
- [Feet stacked](#)
- [Feet stacked, top leg raises](#)

The [USB](#) is what I recommend using for the iso-pull & row variations. A KB or DB can be substituted.

- [KB Side Plank Iso-Pull Basic Positions](#)
- [DB Side Plank Row Basic Positions](#)

A KB/DB won't produce the same effect as with the USB, especially with the iso-pull variations. The great thing about the USB iso-pull is that all of the weight of the USB is in the bag itself, not in the handle. Because of this, when you pull up against the handle it creates tension without there being any load.

With a KB, you will have to make sure that it is of the right height so that tension can be created by pulling up & back against the handle as the KB sits on the floor. If the handle of the KB is too high, this will not be possible, and if the KB is too small (or if you use a DB), then the weight will come off the floor.

Notice that **the side plank is held for the entire duration (time or reps) in the variations that include a leg raise.** An alternative would be for each rep to begin on the floor, coming up into the side plank & continuing with the leg raise, then reversing the movement. I feel that there is more benefit to holding the side plank & building strength in that position, therefore I tend to opt for variations that use an isometric side plank.

The band row variations create a different scenario in that there is force pulling the body forward. I use eliteFTS & Perform Better superbands or the [Lifeline Triple Trainer](#) for the band row variations.

TGU PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. TGU to Elbow
 - a. [USB](#), [KB/DB](#) (optional cervical rotation)
2. [TGU to Tall Sit](#)
3. TGU to High Hips
 - a. [USB](#), [KB/DB](#)
4. [TGU to ½-Kneel](#)
5. [Leg Threading](#)
6. [½-Leg Threading](#)
7. [½-Leg Threading Hover](#)
8. [TGU](#)

I have been a fan of the Turkish Get-Up (TGU for short) since I did my first rep sometime back in 2006. I love how this one exercise is essentially an orchestration of many different movement patterns.

Why do I love the TGU variations? **I feel that they cover a lot of “good stuff” in one exercise:**

ROLLING/DEEP CORE STABILIZATION - in both the initial roll onto the back ([as shown in the full TGU video](#)) prior to beginning a set or when alternating sides, as well as the roll to the elbow. I coach my peeps to take a full breath & exhale as they roll onto the elbow. You can most definitely see a disconnect when the breath is not used! The leg will usually pop off the floor, which is great feedback.

HIPS/GLUTES - when you go from the tall sit or “post” position (hand on the floor with arm extended) to “high hips,” you’re performing a hip bridge. If you do not fully extend the hips, then the transition to kneeling is going to be super-wonky!

HIP MOBILITY - in conjunction with using the hips/glutes to assume the “high hips” position, the transition to kneeling is usually easy for those who do not have restrictions in anterior (front side) hip mobility. If you are restricted, you will find it difficult to bring the “down” knee back enough to get into a good half-kneeling position.

OBLIQUES - the transition from the “bent” position to half-kneeling is essentially a side bend, which requires you to use those tasty muscles on the side of your torso, your obliques.

SHOULDER MOBILITY & STABILIZATION - having to hold a weight over your head does a lot of good stuff for shoulder stabilization strength! Furthermore, if you're using a kettlebell, it really helps open up the shoulder thanks to how the weight is placed on the back of the wrist. I like to coach my peeps to always keep a vertical arm, as well as to stare at the kettlebell the entire time.

An easy way to conceptualize it is that you are essentially moving your body beneath a "fixed" kettlebell.

BRAIN - this is most definitely not an exercise you can just ho-hum your way through. No indeed, you gotta use your brain! I love how it makes people think about what they are doing the entire time! It's been proven time & time again that MOVEMENT TAPS INTO THE BRAIN, y'all. None of us are getting any younger, and yeah, we wanna look good and feel good, but we also wanna stay as sharp as possible for the long haul.

In peeling back the layers from the full TGU we can emphasize specific components of this complex movement.

In addition, **the leg threading variations provide move opportunities to move in (and resist) all three planes of motion.**

In the **TGU to elbow**, we take a deep breath and smoothly roll onto the forearm, pushing up from the ground the entire time. This fundamental variation paves the way for more complexity; therefore it is imperative that a person connects their breathing with the rolling pattern.

In the **TGU to tall sit (or post)**, we take things a step further and come up to the hand, sliding it towards the hip.

In the **TGU to high hips**, we perform what is essentially a hip bridge, driving through both feet to raise hips high.

In the **TGU to ½-kneel**, we bring the leg underneath from the hip bridge, planting the knee and then raising the torso to upright.

In **leg threading**, we go through the same steps as with the TGU to ½-kneel but instead of planting the knee, we extend the leg out to the side, planting the side of the foot. This is basically a side plank on an extended arm.

In **½-Leg threading (& hover)**, we begin in a ½-kneeling position and hinge over, then bring the leg underneath to the leg threading position.

In the **full TGU**, you go from the ground to standing & then reverse the movement back down to the ground. I have always broken the full movement down into 7 steps (and there are other ways, which is cool).

WALL BALL PROGRESSION MATRIX

1. [Medicine Ball Goblet Squat](#)
2. [Medicine Ball Squat to Press](#)
3. [Medicine Ball Squat to Overhead Throw](#)
4. [Wall Ball + Squat](#)
5. [Wall Ball](#)

The wall ball is a dynamic exercise that is metabolic in nature. [It requires good technique](#) in order to be efficient at cycling reps. If your technique is poor, you will not be able to maintain an appropriate level of intensity. Instead, you'll be wasting energy and time. Also, your heart rate will probably be higher than what is desirable for effective conditioning work!

Three tips for better wall balls:

- 1☐. **SMOOTH TRANSITION** - receive the ball & ride it down into the squat without any glitches.
- 2☐. **USE YOUR LEGS** - if you try to power through these using more upper body than necessary, it's gonna get hairy!
- 3☐. **RECEIVE THE BALL GOBLET STYLE** - elbows should be beneath the ball with forearms vertical. Don't let the ball pull you forward!

The wall ball can be broken down into its components & built up to promote good technique!

The goblet squat is the foundation of the movement. It is important to keep the elbows beneath the ball & not allow the ball to move away from the body.

Adding an overhead press in combination with the squat teaches coordination required for transitioning between the squat and the release of the ball, along with foundational patterning for receiving the ball & descending down into the squat.

This is taken a step further by adding a **release of the ball as an upright position is achieved coming up from the squat.**

This can help teach how the legs and hips are used to create enough momentum to “launch” the ball upwards. In addition, **this movement requires a person to catch the ball & absorb the forces as they descend into the squat.**

If a person is not quite ready to cycle through repeated wall ball reps, an alternating squat and wall ball combo may be appropriate. This slows things down a bit & takes away a little of the intensity, as every other rep is a goblet squat.

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