



PUSH/PULL/LEGS Split:

Learn How to Set Up An Effective Training Program

by

Philip Stefanov | ThinkingLifter.com

"If you're interested in learning everything there is to know about the push/pull/legs split, read [the guide I wrote on it here](#).

If you're familiar with the PPL split, you're probably wondering, "Okay, how do I set one of these up for myself?"

Here are the steps you need to take:

1. Determine your weekly training frequency and schedule.
2. Determine your weekly training volume for each muscle group.
3. Pick exercises and design your push, pull, and legs workouts. Let's take a more in-depth look at each of the steps:

1. Determine Your Training Frequency and Schedule

This is the most apparent step because it makes up the skeleton of our training routine.

First, what does your schedule allow? Can you train five days per week or only three? This is something you need to ask yourself, and you need to be honest here - there is no point in setting up an unsustainable plan. I recommend starting with the three-day split to gain momentum.

After a while, you can move to the split where you alternate between four and five days. Here are your primary scheduling options:

Example #1 - Training Three Days Per Week

This is your classic PPL program, and it is where most people get started. Here's an example:

Monday - **Push**

Tuesday - Off

Wednesday - **Pull**

Thursday - Off

Friday - **Legs**

Saturday & Sunday - Off

The great thing about this split is that it can work great for beginners or those coming back to the gym after a long break. Plus, because you only train three times per week, you can schedule your workouts in numerous ways.

The bad thing about it is, you only get to train your muscles once per week, which might not be enough to optimize hypertrophy. Plus, at some point, you will have to start cramming a lot of training volume into each workout, and that will inevitably make them quite long and draining.

Example #2 - Alternating Between Four and Five Weekly Workouts

This is where training volume and frequency ramp up a bit. Here's an example:

Week 1

Monday - Push
Tuesday - Pull
Wednesday - Off
Thursday - Legs
Friday - Off
Saturday - Push
Sunday - Pull

Week 2

Monday - Off
Tuesday - Legs
Wednesday - Push
Thursday - Pull
Friday - Off
Saturday - Legs
Sunday - Off

As you can see, this split spans across two weeks, and you get to train each muscle group once or twice per week, or an average of 1.5 times per week. Instead of training your muscles once every seven days, you train them once every five.

The great thing about this split is that you can dip your toe in a higher training frequency without committing fully. And while it may not seem like much, it adds up. For example, instead of training each muscle group 24 times in the next 24 weeks, you get to train them 36 times. With that said, this split offers some drawbacks. One such is the fact that you won't have a consistent training schedule from week to week. This can make it tough for you to make plans. You will also have to train on the weekend, which might not be ideal for you.

Example #3 - Training Five Days Per Week

Monday - **Pull**
Tuesday - **Push**
Wednesday - **Legs**
Thursday - Off
Friday - **Pull + Legs (quad-focused)**
Saturday - **Push + Legs (hamstring-focused)**
Sunday - Off

Unlike the previous example, here we train with a consistent schedule and have five weekly workouts. This is an interesting way to split the volume of six workouts into five training days.

The bad news is, your last two workouts will have to be a bit longer and more demanding. You also get to train every muscle group twice per week, which might be better for muscle growth than once. Plus, unlike the previous version, this offers a consistent training schedule.

I recommend having your pull workout before the push to help minimize the interference between your back and leg training, seeing as there's no day off for recovery. Another thing to consider here is the recovery aspect. You have three consecutive workouts, which can feel a bit overwhelming, especially if you're not used to it.

Example #4 - Training Six Days Per Week

We're in the advanced territory now. This is a high volume split, and you should only go for it if you're advanced, and your schedule allows for it. It's also a good idea to start with six relatively short workouts to gauge your recovery and slowly add volume over time. Here it is:

Monday - **Push**

Tuesday - **Pull**

Wednesday - **Legs**

Thursday - **Push**

Friday - **Pull**

Saturday - **Legs**

Sunday - Off

As far as frequency and volume are concerned, this split is fantastic. It would be incredibly difficult for you to undertrain with it. But, you should only try it if you're advanced and even then, start with less volume per workout, see how you recover, and then add sets here and there.

I don't recommend it because the little benefit you can potentially get from the frequency likely won't be worth the downside of having to train every day. It might not seem like much, but it will beat you up - both physically, as well as psychologically.

Now, let's move on to step #2:

2. Determine Your Starting Volume For Each Muscle Group

General guidelines suggest that we should do anywhere from ten to twenty weekly sets for each muscle group. But, other factors play a role:

- Most of us have lives outside the gym
- There is quite a bit of overlapping volume (e.g., your biceps work on back exercises)
- Many people can't train more than three times per week

Plus, it's also better to start conservatively and only add more volume when progression stalls. So, if you can make fantastic progress on ten sets per week, what's the point in doing 16?

As a rule of thumb, you should start with the following:

- Do 8 to 16 weekly sets for the larger muscle groups (chest, quads, and back)
- Do 6 to 9 weekly sets for the smaller ones (shoulders, biceps, triceps, and calves)

It's also a good idea to do at least three to five weekly sets for your hamstrings. You can also include several sets of direct work for your abs, glutes (and lower back), traps, and forearms.

3. Pick Exercises And Design Your Push, Pull, and Legs Workouts

This is by far the most challenging step because you have to combine everything into a sustainable and productive training plan. Besides the schedule and volume, you will also have to consider exercise selection and order, repetition ranges, and starting weights. But, if we take it one step at a time, it's not as overwhelming or confusing. So, here goes:

a) The schedule.

Let's begin with the traditional 3-day PPL split:

Monday - **Push**

Tuesday - Off

Wednesday - **Pull**

Thursday - Off

Friday - **Legs**

Saturday & Sunday - Off

b) The Push workout.

The objectives:

- Train your shoulders, triceps, and chest
- Do 8 sets for your chest, 6 for your shoulders, and 6 for your triceps
- Do at least two exercises for each muscle group

Optional: include some work for your abs and forearms.

Example:

Flat dumbbell bench press - 3 sets of 8 to 10 reps

Incline dumbbell bench press - 3 sets of 10 to 12 reps

Seated dumbbell overhead press - 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps

Lying EZ-bar tricep skullcrushers - 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps

Lateral dumbbell shoulder raises - 3 sets of 12 to 15 reps

Rope cable tricep extensions - 3 sets of 12 to 15 reps

Low cable chest fly - 2 sets of 12 to 20 reps

Optional: 3-4 sets of direct ab work and 3-4 sets of direct forearm work

c) The Pull workout.

The objectives:

- Train your back, biceps, and rear delts
- Do 8 sets for your back, 6 for your biceps, and 3-4 for your rear delts
- Do at least two exercises for your back and two for your biceps

Optional: include some trap and lower back work.

Example:

Pull-ups or chin-ups - 3 sets of 6 to 10 reps

Barbell rows - 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps

Barbell shrugs - 3 sets of 6 to 12 reps

Lat pulldowns - 2 sets of 12 to 15 reps

Standing EZ-bar bicep curl - 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps

Seated dumbbell hammer curls - 3 sets of 12 to 15 reps

Cable rope face pulls - 3 sets of 15 to 25 rep

d) The Legs workout.

The objectives:

- Train your quads, hamstrings, glutes, and calves
- Do 8 sets for your quads, 3-4 for your hamstrings, and 3-6 for your calves
- Do at least two exercises for your quads

Optional: include some direct work for your glutes and lower back.

Example:

High-bar back squat - 4 sets of 6 to 10 reps

Romanian deadlift - 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps

Leg press - 4 sets of 8 to 12 reps

Glute-ham raises - 3 sets of 12 to 15 reps

Standing smith machine calf raises - 4 sets of 8 to 15 reps

[Read The Whole Guide Here](#)