

6-STEP HOME TRAINING SET-UP GUIDE (PDF BONUS)



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Thank you so much for downloading this free PDF guide. I've created it as part of the home hypertrophy training guide, which you can read here. Let's get to it.

The Number One Requirement For Effective Home Training

Regardless if you're training with a range of equipment in a gym or are awkwardly looking for ways to leverage your body weight at home, effort is at the center of progress. Research shows that leveraging lighter weights and doing bodyweight exercises can lead to impressive strength and muscle progress (1).

But for us to reap these benefits, we need to work hard. A paper from 2015 by Schoenfeld and colleagues illustrates that high-load and low-load training cause similar muscle growth, so long as we take sets close to failure (2).

The problem is, gauging how close you are to failure is difficult when doing 20, 30, or even 40 repetitions. You might feel like you're at your limit. But, if you push yourself hard enough, you might find that you have an extra five to ten repetitions in you.

A Brief Note On Intensity

None of what I've written above should suggest that you should do tons of repetitions with light weights. There seems to be a minimum intensity threshold we need to cover if we want to build muscle - around 30 to 40 percent of one-repetition maximum (1). For instance, if your best bench press is 300 pounds, 30 percent would mean doing sets with 90 pounds. Of course, it's easier to calculate this when using weights, but what about bodyweight movements?

Well, I recommend keeping it safe by limiting yourself to no more than 40 good repetitions. If you can do that many without getting close to failure, you should find ways to challenge yourself - more on that next up. You want your weight training to remain a muscle-building activity, not turn into a cardio session.

Home Hypertrophy Program: Start Growing In 6 Easy Steps

1. Get Clear On Your Goals

Your training should reflect your goals. For instance, if you want to lose fat, you shouldn't do too much training volume.

Do fewer sets and fewer isolation exercises, and train three to four times per week. Focus on maintaining or improving your performance, keep a deficit, get enough protein, and let time do its thing.

In contrast, if you want to gain muscle and strength, do more work: more sets, exercises, and weekly workouts. Do more exercises, maintain a small surplus, get plenty of protein, and be patient.

Once you're clear on which path you want to take for the foreseeable future, move to the following steps.

2. Determine How Often You'd Like to Train

The great thing about home training is that you have a lot more flexibility for planning your training weeks. Thanks to the convenience, you can choose to have shorter and more frequent sessions or longer and less frequent ones.

Research finds a strong correlation between training volume and muscle growth (3). Studies suggest we should do at least ten sets per muscle group every week. Studies also find that training our muscles twice per week might be slightly better than just once (4).

So, given these two rules, we can pick how often we'd like to train, on what days, and how to pair different muscle groups. For instance, a 4-day upper/lower split:

Monday - Upper
Tuesday - Lower
Wednesday - Off
Thursday - Upper
Friday - Lower
Saturday & Sunday - Off

You can do a bit more volume per workout, given that you're training with an average frequency. You can also pick a 6-day push/pull/legs split:

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

Given the higher frequency, you can have shorter workouts and still hit your volume goals.

3. See What You Can Work With

The next important thing to consider is what available equipment you have. Bands, dumbbells, weight plates, a pull-up bar, and such. Round it up because this will help you in the following two steps.

If you don't have much or any equipment, don't worry. I'll give you practical recommendations for minimalistic training below.

4. Pick The Exercises You Want To Do

Keep this list short and concise. The simpler you keep things, the better your focus and results. I recommend having one to two movements for your smaller muscle groups and two to three for the larger ones. Here is what this looks like:

- Chest, shoulders, and triceps - your pushing muscles
- Back and biceps - your pulling muscles
- Core - the central group of muscles that links your upper and lower body
- Quadriceps - the large muscle group, situated at the front side of your thighs
- Hamstrings and glutes - the posterior musculature located at the back of your upper legs

If you're particularly thorough, you can also include work for your forearms, grip strength, and calves.

Here are some ideas of compound movements you can do. These will do a great job of targeting one muscle group and involving other, smaller ones.

- Chest, shoulders, and triceps - push-ups, decline push-ups, pike push-ups, and chair dips
- Back and biceps - inverted rows, pull-ups/chin-ups, dumbbell rows, and suitcase rows
- Core - planks, dead bug, and single-arm suitcase carry
- Quadriceps - single-leg squat, Bulgarian split squats, lunges, step-ups, and jump squats
- Hamstrings and glutes - slick floor bridge curls, glute bridges, step-ups, and donkey kicks

5. Put Together Your Workouts

Once you've determined how often you want to train, what equipment you can use, and which movements you want to do, the next step is to put together your workouts. For instance, let's say that you want to use an upper/lower split and have four weekly workouts. You also have a pair of dumbbells, some resistance bands, a pull-up bar, and a suitcase and backpack you can fill up with different objects for resistance.

Let's also say that you've picked the following movements you want to do:

- Chest - decline push-ups, classic push-ups, and band chest flyes
- Shoulders - pike push-ups, lateral dumbbell raises, and band face pulls
- Triceps - chair dips and overhead dumbbell extensions
- Back - chin-ups, inverted rows, and suitcase rows
- Biceps - standing dumbbell bicep curls
- Core - plank and dead bug
- Quadriceps - single-leg squats and Bulgarian split squats
- Hamstrings and glutes - slick floor bridge curls and glute bridges
- Calves - standing unilateral calf raises (for instance, on stairs at home)

So, here is how it might look like:

Upper 1 (e.g., Monday)

Chin-ups - 3 sets with 1-3 reps in the tank
Decline push-ups - 3 sets with 1-3 reps in the tank
Suitcase rows - 3-4 sets for 12 to 20 reps per side
Chair tricep dips - 2-3 sets with 1-3 reps in the tank
Standing dumbbell bicep curls - 2 sets for 12 to 25 reps
Planks - 2 sets of as long as possible
Band face pulls - 2-3 sets of 15 to 30 reps

Lower 1 (e.g., Tuesday)

Single-leg squats - 4-5 sets of 5 to 20 reps per leg
Slick floor bridge curls - 4-5 sets of 8 to 15 reps
Standing unilateral calf raises - 4-5 sets of 12 to 30 reps per leg

Upper 2 (e.g., Thursday)

Pike push-ups - 3 sets with 1-3 reps in the tank
Inverted rows - 3 sets with 1-3 reps in the tank
Classic push-ups - 3 sets with 1-3 reps in the tank
Overhead dumbbell extensions - 2 sets for 15 to 25 reps per side
Lateral dumbbell raises - 2 sets for 15 to 25 reps per side
Band chest flyes - 2 sets of 15 to 25 reps
Band face pulls - 2-3 sets of 15 to 30 reps

Lower 2 (e.g., Friday)

Bulgarian split squat - 3-5 sets of 10 to 20 reps per leg

Glute bridges - 3-5 sets of 15 to 30 reps

Dead bug - 3-4 sets of 10 to 12 reps

Standing unilateral calf raises - 4-5 sets of 12 to 30 reps per leg

It's also worth noting that you might want to start with less volume and fewer exercises at first. Monitor your progress, determine if you're doing enough work to grow and get stronger, and only add more sets or exercises if you feel the need. This is also an excellent way to establish a sustainable plan and not overwhelm yourself from the start.

6. Write It Down And Track Your Progress

You've done all of the necessary planning, so the hard part is almost over. Now, all you need to do is take a simple notebook or journal, write your workouts in, and get started. I recommend writing:

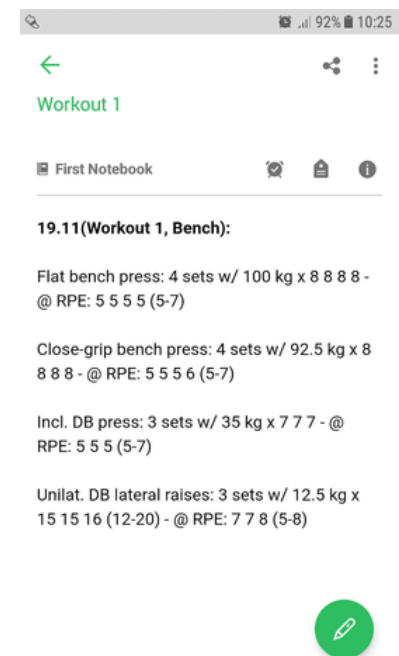
- The exercise
- The number of sets you'll be doing
- How many reps you manage to get
- Nuances like equipment used, extra weight (such as wearing a backpack on a push-up), and similar

This is actionable data you can look at to determine how things are going. For instance, if you notice your performance stagnating for several weeks, it could indicate that something needs to improve. You might not be eating enough calories, your sleep could need improvement, or the problem could relate to good old effort.

I use a phone app called Evernote, where I've created separate notes that represent each workout. On top of each note, I write the focus of my workout (e.g., deadlift session, squat session, etc.) and the date. On workouts where I do bodyweight movements (such as pull-ups, dips, etc.) I also write my morning weigh-in. You don't have to be as detail-oriented if you don't want to.

Below that, I list each exercise along with the number of sets and reps I do. On the compound lifts, I also record my rate of perceived exertion (RPE) and if I'm wearing a belt (for the squat and deadlift).

Once I finish a training week, I sit down for about fifteen minutes to write down each workout in my notebook. I then revisit each note, change the date, adjust loads on some exercises, and I'm done setting up for the upcoming week.



References

1. Schoenfeld BJ, Grgic J, Ogborn D, Krieger JW. "Strength and Hypertrophy Adaptations Between Low- vs. High-Load Resistance Training: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." J Strength Cond Res. 2017 Dec;31(12):3508-3523. doi: 10.1519/JSC.0000000000002200. PMID: 28834797.
2. Schoenfeld BJ, Peterson MD, Ogborn D, Contreras B, Sonmez GT. "Effects of Low- vs. High-Load Resistance Training on Muscle Strength and Hypertrophy in Well-Trained Men." J Strength Cond Res. 2015 Oct;29(10):2954-63. doi: 10.1519/JSC.0000000000000958. PMID: 25853914.
3. Schoenfeld, Brad J et al. "Resistance Training Volume Enhances Muscle Hypertrophy but Not Strength in Trained Men." Medicine and science in sports and exercise vol. 51,1 (2019): 94-103. doi:10.1249/MSS.0000000000001764
4. Schoenfeld BJ, Ogborn D, Krieger JW. "Effects of Resistance Training Frequency on Measures of Muscle Hypertrophy: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." Sports Med. 2016 Nov;46(11):1689-1697. doi: 10.1007/s40279-016-0543-8. PMID: 27102172.

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