



FREE, NO EMAIL, NO CATCH

The mh3 Squat Guide

Everything I teach about the squat in my reels and on the floor at mh3, in one place. The three things that actually make a squat, the faults that wreck lower backs, and the exact 6 week block structure we program at the gym. Save this page.

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READ THIS FIRST

There are only three things you need to do well

People turn the squat into twenty cues and drown in them. There are only three things you need to do well in a squat: the brace, stability in the upper back, and stability at the hips.

And here is the bigger truth: those three are not squat rules. They are the three universal truths of strength. Every exercise we teach at my gym adheres to them, and every cue a coach gives you, pull the bar down, spread the floor, squeeze your armpits, exists for one reason only: to make those three run true. Get them right and the squat almost coaches itself.

PART 1

The three things

1

The brace

A forced breath against a closed airway. Big breath in, push that air outwards inside your body, do not let it leave. The brace is what locks in all the stability you are about to create in the upper back and the hips. Brace at the top while you are stacked, take a couple of moments to set it, then move. And the brace intensifies as you squat, it does not start at full intensity and fade. Start tight, get tighter.

2

Stability in the upper back

The cue that serves it: pull the bar down. We do not just rest the bar on our back, we pull it down into the traps, like you are trying to bend it around your shoulders. Shoulder blades pulled back and down, into your back pockets. That creates thoracic extension, a stable shelf for the bar, and turns you into one solid piece from the bar to your feet. Strong legs are useless if your upper body is loose. As you stand up out of the bottom, pull down even harder, you will feel stronger out of the hole instantly.

3

Stability at the hips

The cues that serve it: twist your quads away from each other, or spread the floor with your heels, pushing them away from each other sideways. Either way you will feel the top of your glutes light up, and that tension stays on the whole time you squat. Stop worrying about your knees. Keep them soft and fluid, free to travel where they need to. The glutes control the squat, the knees just come along.

PART 2

Setup, depth and standing up

Stance: there is no rule for where your feet have to go. Everybody puts their feet somewhere different. And here is one that saves people months of frustration: you do not always need ankle mobility work to squat deeper. Sometimes you just need to take your feet a little wider. If your lower back rounds out at the bottom, try a wider stance before you try anything else.

Bar position: low bar creates more torque at the hip, lets the glutes do more work, and is usually your strongest squat, it is what most powerlifters use. High bar is more quad dominant, the knees travel further forward. Neither is wrong. Pick one, be consistent, and know that high bar does not mean staying bolt upright, you are allowed to let your chest come toward your knees. Pull down on the bar and let it happen.

Depth: for strength, you do not want to go as deep as you possibly can. Just below parallel is the job. Build reference points on your lighter sets, what your body touches and feels at the bottom, because when the weight is heavy you cannot think about anything except getting tight. The depth decision has to be subconscious by then, and you train that when the bar is light.

Between reps: stand tall and take little short breaths at the top before the next big brace. Never release the brace in the hole. If you dump your air at the bottom of a squat, you sink deeper and you are not coming back up.

PART 3

The 3 mistakes that wreck squats

1. Sticking your bum out

You arch hard and stick your hips back before you squat, because it feels tight. But that is lumbar extension, and to get to the bottom you have to release it into flexion, then yank back into extension to stand up. That switch, extension to flexion to extension, is where butt wink comes from and it is where lower back pain in the squat comes from.

Instead: Keep the lumbar spine neutral, if anything pull your belly button back toward your spine. Get your extension up in the thoracic spine instead, shoulder blades back and down, chest proud, and get your stability from the hips, not from arching. Your lower back goes from arched and stuck out to glutes locked and loaded.

2. Obsessing over your knees

Knees out, knees tight, knees tracking, people burn all their focus on the knees. But the knees are not the problem, they are downstream. When the hips are stable the knees look after themselves, and forcing them outwards just makes you wobble.

Instead: Knees soft and fluid, free to travel over the toes if they need to. Twist the quads or spread the floor, feel the top of the glutes fire, and hold that the whole rep. Stability lives at the hip.

3. A loose upper body

The bar sits passively on your back, your chest gets pushed down in the hole, and your hips and chest fight each other on the way up. That is the fold forward, the good morning squat, and no amount of leg strength fixes it.

Instead: Pull the bar down into your back before you unrack and never stop pulling. Big brace, pull the bar around your shoulders, and out of the bottom pull down even harder. One solid piece, bar to feet. Strong legs finally have something to push against.

PART 4

The 6 week block: how we actually program the squat

Same engine we run on the gym floor and in the app. Every main day has three kinds of sets: the indicator, one set at the same reps as the top set around RPE 6.5, your reading for the day. If it moves like it should, proceed. If it feels heavier than it should, today's top set stays lighter, the plan bends to the day. Then the top set, one all in set at the day's target RPE, the set that drives progress. Then back offs at exactly top set minus 10 percent, banking volume in

positions that hold. Feel genuinely great on the indicator? Add 2.5 to 5kg to the top set yourself, no hero jumps.

RPE 8 means about two good reps left, RPE 9 means one. Warm up with singles past your first working weight, no need for full fives on the way up. Two extras that pay for themselves, done away from squat day: the squat hold, sit in the bottom of a bodyweight squat for 2 to 3 minutes and get comfortable down there, and the wall stretch for your upper back. Mobility work lives on rest days, there is a time for lifting and a time for stretching.

WEEK 1

Day 1: Indicator 1 x 5 @ RPE 6.5, top set 1 x 5 @ RPE 7.5, back offs 2 x 5 at top minus 10%

Day 2: Pause squat 3 x 3 @ RPE 7 (2s in the hole, brace held), RDL 3 x 8, Pendlay row 3 x 10

Entry point for the top set: a weight you are certain you could squat for 8, done for 5. Write everything down, the block builds off this week.

WEEK 2

Day 1: Indicator 1 x 4 @ RPE 6.5, top set 1 x 4 @ RPE 8, back offs 3 x 4 at top minus 10%

Day 2: Pause squat 3 x 3 @ RPE 7, RDL 3 x 8, Pendlay row 3 x 10

Reps drop, bar climbs. On your back offs, practice your depth reference point, you cannot learn it when the bar is heavy.

WEEK 3

Day 1: Indicator 1 x 3 @ RPE 6.5, top set 1 x 3 @ RPE 8.5, back offs 3 x 3 at top minus 10%

Day 2: Pause squat 3 x 2 @ RPE 7.5, RDL 3 x 8, Pendlay row 3 x 10

Heaviest week so far. Nothing about your setup changes, only how hard you pull down on the bar and how hard you brace.

WEEK 4

Day 1: Deload: 3 x 5 at week 1 top set minus 10%. No indicator, no top set.

Day 2: RDL 3 x 8, Pendlay row 3 x 10, both two reps shy of last week's effort

Lifting lighter for volume, not going through the motions. Dial in the three things at a weight that lets you actually think about them.

WEEK 5

Day 1: Indicator 1 x 3 @ RPE 6.5, top set 1 x 3 @ RPE 9, back offs 2 x 3 at top minus 10%

Day 2: Pause squat 2 x 2 @ RPE 7, RDL 3 x 6, Pendlay row 3 x 8

The heaviest triple of the block, fresh off the deload. Trust the pattern, get tight and stay tight.

WEEK 6

Day 1: Test: singles up to your opener, then ONE all in set of 3 to 5 reps @ RPE 9

Day 2: Rest, or the squat hold and wall stretch if you want to move

Not a 1RM day, no grinding singles. One honest set, then use the formula below for your new max estimate.

Scoring your test: estimated max = weight x (1 + reps x 0.033), and because you left one rep in the tank at RPE 9, count one extra rep. Example: 120kg for 4 with one left is $120 \times (1 + 5 \times 0.033)$, about 140kg. That number seeds your next block, it is what the indicator, top set and back offs all calculate from.

Want the weights calculated for you?

The mh3 training app takes your numbers and builds every set of this for you, then adjusts the weights as you log. Your first week is free, no card needed.

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