



FREE, NO EMAIL, NO CATCH

The mh3 Beginner Strength Guide

If you are new to barbell training, this is everything I wish someone had told me at the start. What to train, the one skill that matters more than any exercise, how hard to actually push, and a 6 week plan to begin with. Save this page.

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READ THIS FIRST

Strength is a skill, not a gift

Strength is nothing more than your ability to build pressure and hold it while you move a load. That is it. It is not genetics, it is not supplements, it is not a secret program. It is a skill, and like any skill, you get it through practice: the same lifts, done the same way, over and over, a little heavier over time.

Which means the best thing you can hear as a beginner is this: stronger lifters are not just stronger. They are more patient. They respect the time it takes to set up correctly, they leave reps in the tank, and they let the weeks do the work. You do not need to be brave, you need to be consistent.

PART 1

What to train: the big lifts, nothing exotic

At my gym the entire program is built around the barbell lifts: the squat, the bench press and the deadlift, supported by the press, rows and pull ups. Six days a week of classes, and that is the whole menu. Not because we lack imagination, but because these lifts train everything, they are measurable, and they reward practice like nothing else.

A machine gives you the stability for free, so you never learn to make your own. A barbell makes you build it yourself, with your brace, your lats, your grip, and that is exactly the skill that makes you strong. You do not need variety. You need reps on the same handful of lifts.

One warning before the fun stuff: each lift has its own technique guide on this site, deadlift, squat and bench, all free, linked at the bottom. Read them as you go. This guide is about how to put the training together.

PART 2

The one skill: learn to brace before anything else

If you learn one thing from this whole page, learn this. A brace is not sucking in your belly and it is not just holding your breath. Here is the drill: take in as much air as you can, then blow it all out as fast as you can. Feel what happened, your abs tensed, your ribcage came down, you got locked in. Now do it again, but do not let the air leave. Close your lips and push that air outwards inside your body. That pressure, that tension everywhere feeling, is the brace.

Every barbell lift starts with it. Big breath, brace, create stability, then move. If you can pause in your setup for half a second before the bar moves, you were ready. If you cannot hold it, the weight is too heavy or you have not tried hard enough to find the pressure first.

And when a lift starts feeling wrong as the weeks get heavier, the first fix is always the brace. Before you change your stance, your grip, or anything about how you move, brace harder. Here is the honest truth about heavy weights: you cannot move differently when it is heavy, how you move in your warmups is how you move. The only thing you can do harder is brace.

PART 3

How hard to push: the part everyone gets wrong

Read this sentence twice, because it is the engine of everything: you get to lift as much as you can by having lifted less than you can. You do not have to lift your max to build a bigger max. Training with weights that leave 2 or 3 good reps in the tank lets you train again, and again, and the repeats are what make you strong.

The biggest mistake I see in strength training is going too heavy too often. Max out every week and your recovery hole gets deeper and deeper, you miss lifts, you fatigue yourself, you finally take a week off and come back stronger, and the lesson was there the whole time: the recovery was the missing ingredient, not the effort.

We measure effort with RPE. RPE 7 means about three good reps left in the tank, RPE 8 means two, RPE 9 means one. As a beginner, almost all of your training lives at RPE 6 to 7. That will feel too easy. It is not. The light sets are where you learn what your positions feel like, because when the weight is heavy you cannot think about anything except getting tight. And one more thing: a slow rep is not a failed rep. When the bar slows down, stay tight and let it move slowly. Do not get attached to numbers, listen to what your body is telling you, and be patient.

The 3 mistakes that stall beginners

1. Going too heavy too often

You test instead of train. Every session becomes a max attempt, the bar grinds, technique falls apart, and you dig a recovery hole that swallows weeks of progress.

Instead: Leave reps in the tank on purpose. RPE 6 to 7 for now. The weight on the bar next month is decided by how well you train this month, not by what you survive today.

2. Rushing the setup

You walk up, grab the bar and go. No brace, no tension, no stability, and the body just moves however it can to find something that works. That is why your technique looks different every single set.

Instead: Same setup, same order, every rep, warmups included. Big breath, brace, create stability, then move. Half a second of patience before the bar moves is the difference between practicing strength and practicing chaos.

3. Changing everything every two weeks

New program, new exercises, new grip, new stance, every time a video tells you something different. You never do anything long enough to get good at it, and strength only comes to the patient.

Instead: Trust the pattern you are building. Pick the plan below, run it start to finish, test at the end, then run the next block off your new numbers. Strength is a cycle: build, test, build again. Progress, not perfection.

PART 5

Your first 6 week block

Three days a week, alternating two sessions, with at least a day between them. Week one goes A, B, A. Week two goes B, A, B.

Day A: Back squat 3 x 5, bench press 3 x 5 (paused on the chest, every rep), Pendlay row 3 x 10.

Day B: Deadlift 3 x 5, strict press 3 x 5, single leg assisted pull ups 3 x 5, five seconds up each rep, using one foot on a box or bench to help only as much as you need.

Warm up with the empty bar, then singles up to your working weight, you do not need full sets of five on the way up. Before deadlifts, add a few plate hug RDLs: hug a plate to your belly, brace against it, hinge. Rest 2 to 4 minutes between working sets, and stand tall between reps, breathe at the top, never in the stretched position.

WEEKS 1 AND 2

Day A and Day B alternating, 3 x 5 on the barbell lifts @ RPE 6 to 7. Same weight all three sets.

Learning weeks. The bar should move crisply on every rep. If you are grinding, it is too heavy for where your positions are right now. Film a set from the side each session.

WEEKS 3 TO 5

Same days, 3 x 5. Add 2.5kg to a lift every session that all 15 reps were clean.

Treat set 1 as your indicator: it tells you about today. Crisp? Add the 2.5. Heavy? Stay where you are, or drop 5kg and bank clean reps. Repeating a weight is progress too, it means next time it is yours.

WEEK 6

Test week: on each barbell lift, warm up in singles, then ONE set of 5 @ RPE 8 to 9.

Not a max out, no grinding. One honest set of five per lift, then use the formula below. Those numbers are your baseline, and they seed everything you train next.

Scoring your test: estimated max = weight x (1 + reps x 0.033), and add one rep for what you left in the tank. Example: squatting 80kg for 5 with one left is $80 \times (1 + 6 \times 0.033)$, about 96kg. Those numbers are your baseline. Your next block, and the lift guides on this site, all build from them.

Want all of this done for you?

The mh3 training app asks a few questions, builds your week around your numbers, and adjusts every weight as you log. It is the exact system from this guide, automated. Your first week is free, no card needed.

Start your free week

Train with us in Dubai, first week free

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