PA STRENGTH

BUILDING A TRAINING SPLIT

THE FEEDBACK LOOP

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.
Proverb, adapted from Xunzi

A training system should not be followed blindly. It should be heard, seen, practiced, evaluated, and refined based on how you respond.

01	**HEAR** Learn the principle, purpose, and intended decision behind the prescription.
02	**SEE** Study the examples, notation, and movement patterns until the instruction becomes recognizable.
03	**DO** Apply the plan with enough consistency and effort to create useful feedback.
04	**UNDERSTAND** Compare the prescription with what actually happened during training.
05	**ADAPT** Keep what works and adjust only what the evidence supports.
06	**BUILD** Use the lesson to improve strength, control, resilience, and overall capacity.
07	**REPEAT** Return to the process as your performance, goals, and circumstances change.

HEAR → SEE → DO → UNDERSTAND → ADAPT → BUILD → REPEAT

LISTEN TO LEARN. WATCH TO CLARIFY. DO TO UNDERSTAND.

The system evolves as you do.

READ THE PROGRAM.

EXECUTE WITHOUT GUESSING.

Each listing points to the page where the lesson begins, so the guide can be used from start to finish or opened as a quick training reference.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE 05
Start with the Constraint Audit
Define the inputs that determine the split.

PAGE 06
Map Weekly Training Jobs
Move from goals to required weekly exposures.

PAGE 07
Frequency, Volume, and Stress
Distribute work across the week without confusing more days with more results.

PAGE 08
Build Each Session
Follow the default order of work inside a session.

PAGE 09
Pre-Exhaustion and Exercise Order
Weigh the tradeoffs of exercise order; no single order is universally right or wrong.

PAGE 10
Split Archetypes
Compare split structures; no single structure is universally superior.

PAGE 11
Audit the Week
Test whether the draft split works before writing every exercise.

PAGE 12
Build Your Split
Build your split with a fillable planning system.

THE OUTCOME

Organize training days, movement patterns, weekly work, and recovery around real constraints.

BUILD THE SYSTEM. THEN OWN IT.

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

Strength Compound LLC d/b/a PA Strength (the “Publisher”) provides this guide for general education. This guide, including its text, workouts, images, and worksheets (the “Content”), does not provide individualized medical, physical therapy, dietetic, or other licensed professional care.

Before changing your exercise or nutrition routine, consult a qualified health professional if you have a medical condition, an injury or symptoms, are pregnant or postpartum, take medication, or are unsure whether the Content is suitable for you. Do not use the Content to diagnose a condition or delay needed care.

Choose exercises, loads, equipment, and surroundings appropriate to your experience and ability. Start at a level you can control. Stop if you experience sharp pain, chest pain, dizziness, or other concerning symptoms, and seek appropriate medical help.

You decide whether and how to use the Content. Physical activity and changes in diet may involve risk. No particular result is promised; responses vary by person. Information can change after publication. Any right or protection that applicable law says a publisher cannot waive stays in effect, and this notice does not limit it.

START WITH THE CONSTRAINT AUDIT

MAIN LESSON Define the inputs that determine the split.

A training split should begin with the person's actual life. Start with the minimum number of days the person can reliably protect. Then record realistic session length, equipment access, schedule volatility, sport or occupational demands, symptoms, and recovery, including sleep, nutrition, and work stress. A plan that assumes six perfect days, uninterrupted sleep, and unlimited time is not advanced; it is fragile, and a four-day plan completed consistently is more useful than a six-day plan that collapses every other week. Extra days may be offered as optional capacity only after the dependable schedule succeeds. The base split should still function when ordinary life happens.

KEY POINTS

- Primary goal, secondary goal, training age, reliable days, available minutes, schedule stability, and equipment.
- Movement limitations, current symptoms, sport or occupational demands, conditioning load, and preferred exercises.
- Recovery capacity: sleep, nutrition, life stress, training history, and tolerance for current weekly work.
- Use the honest minimum number of dependable days; additional days are optional only when the base schedule succeeds.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Build the split the real week can support.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

A client reliably trains Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday. The correct starting point is a three-day structure, not six theoretical sessions.

APPLY IT

Mark dependable days, flexible days, and unavailable days.

MAP WEEKLY TRAINING JOBS

MAIN LESSON Move from goals to required weekly exposures.

Before assigning exercises to days, translate the goal into the jobs the week must accomplish. Major patterns include squat, hinge, unilateral lower body, horizontal and vertical pushing and pulling, trunk work, carries, and conditioning. Some goals need additional direct work for a muscle group or skill, and sport skills and maintenance work also compete for time and recovery. Mark each job as priority, maintenance, or optional so optional work cannot push essential work out of the program. Warm-up and activation work do not count as demanding volume unless they are intentionally programmed as working movements.

KEY POINTS

- Major patterns: squat, hinge, unilateral lower body, horizontal and vertical push and pull, trunk, carry, and conditioning.
- Note any target-muscle or skill priorities that require additional direct work.
- Separate movement exposure from hard-set volume; a warm-up drill is not the same as a demanding working set.
- Assign priority, maintenance, and optional status before assigning days.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Give every priority a home before adding accessories.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

If upper-back strength is a priority but rows are left for whatever time remains, the split does not reflect the stated goal.

APPLY IT

List each weekly job as priority, maintenance, or optional.

FREQUENCY, VOLUME, AND STRESS

MAIN LESSON Distribute work across the week without confusing more days with more results.

Frequency distributes practice and weekly work; it does not manufacture adaptation by itself. More days provide more opportunities to practice and divide weekly work, but they also create more sessions to recover from. Two sessions may be enough when the schedule is limited; more days can shorten sessions and improve distribution when attendance and recovery support them. Map high-, medium-, and low-stress work across the week. Avoid stacking every demanding lower-body exposure, pressing stressor, or elbow-intensive movement together without a reason. Add volume only when the current stimulus is inadequate and recovery remains stable.

KEY POINTS

- Frequency is an organizational tool that distributes practice and volume.
- Weekly volume, effort, exercise selection, and recovery interact; frequency cannot be judged alone.
- Avoid concentrating all high-fatigue lower-body work, pressing stress, or elbow stress without purpose.
- Label sessions or exercises high, medium, or low stress to see the week rather than isolated workouts.
- Start conservatively and add only when stimulus is inadequate and recovery remains stable.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

A sixth training day does not create a sixth day of recovery.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

Spreading the same weekly work across more days may improve session quality; adding another full workload may exceed recovery.

UNDER THE BAR

Frequency often functions as a way to distribute weekly volume and practice. It should be evaluated alongside effort, exercise selection, session quality, and recovery—not as an isolated score.

APPLY IT

Create a high, medium, and low stress map for the week.

BUILD EACH SESSION

MAIN LESSON Follow the default order of work inside a session.

Each session needs a clear hierarchy. A useful default order is preparation, priority strength or skill work, secondary compound work, accessories, isolation, trunk or carries, and optional conditioning. Preparation should improve readiness without exhausting the movement, and priority work normally occurs while the athlete is fresh. The order may change, but the reason should be clear. Noncompeting supersets can save time when they do not compromise the priority movement. Establish a realistic time cap and remove low-value work before extending the session indefinitely. The session should finish because its jobs are complete, not because the athlete has run out of possible exercises.

KEY POINTS

- Movement preparation and ramp-up work prepare the task without exhausting it.
- Place the primary strength or skill lift early when output matters most.
- Follow with secondary compounds, accessories, isolation, trunk or carries, and optional conditioning.
- Use noncompeting supersets to save time while protecting priority work.
- Cap session length and remove low-value work before sacrificing the session’s purpose.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Spend the freshest effort on the result that matters most.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

A priority squat loses quality after several leg isolations. That order may suit pre-exhaustion, but it does not protect squat performance.

APPLY IT

Remove one low-value exercise before extending the session time.

PRE-EXHAUSTION AND EXERCISE ORDER

MAIN LESSON Weigh the tradeoffs of exercise order; no single order is universally right or wrong.

Exercise order is a tradeoff. Pre-exhaustion changes the performance environment, but the response varies by exercise, athlete, and protocol. A common view is that exercise order can influence repetitions and volume, while prefatiguing the target muscle does not reliably increase its activation. Isolation work performed before a compound lift can reduce the load or repetitions available later. Treat the expected cost as a programming hypothesis to monitor, not a guaranteed rule. Place the priority lift early when maximum strength or technical performance on the compound lift matters most; reversing the order may be reasonable when local muscular work, target awareness, or lower external loading is the priority.

KEY POINTS

- Exercise order can change repetition performance, but the response depends on the sequence, load, population, and protocol.
- Isolation work before a related compound movement may reduce the work available later in the session.
- Pre-exhaustion may support local muscular work, target awareness, or lower external loading, but it does not reliably produce superior activation of the prefatigued target muscle.
- Strength and skill blocks normally protect the priority compound; hypertrophy blocks may intentionally reverse the order when the tradeoff is understood.
- Treat the expected response as a programming hypothesis to monitor, not a guaranteed biological outcome.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Name what the exercise order is buying and what it costs.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

Fly and triceps work before benching may improve local chest or arm fatigue while reducing later pressing output.

UNDER THE BAR

Pre-exhaustion changes the performance environment. It can reduce later compound output while increasing local fatigue. That cost may be intentional, but it must be named in advance.

APPLY IT

Write two orders using the same exercises for two different goals.

SPLIT ARCHETYPES

MAIN LESSON Compare split structures; no single structure is universally superior.

Split names describe organization, not quality. Full-body, upper-lower, push-pull-legs, and hybrid structures can all work when weekly priorities, volume, effort, and recovery are appropriate. A two-day full-body plan is a legitimate minimum schedule for beginners, returners, in-season athletes, or anyone with restricted availability. Three days allow frequent full-body practice. Four-day upper/lower structures distribute strength and hypertrophy work cleanly. Five days add a targeted focus day. Six-day push/pull/legs structures demand reliable attendance and recovery. Travel plans use smaller equipment and time pathways. The number of days should match dependable availability and the work to be distributed; it is a constraint decision, not a ranking of commitment.

Days	Common structure	Primary advantage
2	Full body A and B	Minimum effective schedule
3	Full body A B C	Frequent practice
4	Upper lower A and B	Balanced distribution
5	Hybrid focus split	Additional priority day
6	Push pull legs A and B	High distribution demand

COMMON SENSE CHECK

A split is a calendar solution, not a personality type.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

Upper-lower may fit four dependable days; full-body may preserve frequency when only three days are reliable.

APPLY IT

Select the archetype that fits the constraint audit, not the one that sounds advanced.

AUDIT THE WEEK

MAIN LESSON Test whether the draft split works before writing every exercise.

Before choosing every exercise, audit the whole week. Look for missing patterns, repeated joint stress, clustered high-fatigue work, and accessories that repeat the same job without adding a meaningful benefit. Check that priority patterns have a measurable progression route, similar joints receive enough recovery, and estimated session lengths fit reality. Establish a missed-session rule: in most cases, continue the planned sequence instead of cramming two demanding days together. Also name the fallback split to use when attendance or recovery declines.

KEY POINTS

- Check neglected patterns, redundant joint stress, total hard sets, recovery between similar exposures, and session duration.
- Confirm that every priority has a measurable progression route.
- Confirm missed-day logic: continue the sequence instead of cramming sessions together.
- Identify the fallback split if attendance or recovery drops.
- Run the plan for a defined observation period before making wholesale changes.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

If one missed Monday destroys the week, the split is too fragile.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

Continuing the session sequence usually preserves balance better than cramming two demanding sessions together.

APPLY IT

Write a missed-session rule before the first week begins.

BUILD YOUR SPLIT

MAIN LESSON Build your split with a fillable planning system.

Building the final split means converting constraints and priorities into a repeatable calendar. Assign each dependable day a primary job, expected stress level, and realistic duration. Place priority movements first, then supporting work. Add recovery days intentionally and specify how the sequence behaves after a missed session. Run the split for a defined period, long enough to collect comparable evidence, before making wholesale changes. Change it when goals, constraints, performance trends, recovery, or adherence justify the change—not because a different split looks more impressive online.

KEY POINTS

- Select dependable training days and realistic session lengths.
- Assign each day a primary job and stress level.
- Place movement patterns and muscle priorities.
- Add recovery days and set a missed-session rule.
- Write down the evidence that will trigger progression, reduction, or a switch to another split.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Run the split long enough to collect useful evidence.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

The first week reveals scheduling problems; several comparable weeks reveal whether volume and recovery are appropriate.

APPLY IT

Complete the seven-day builder and identify the evidence that would change it.

STRONG BODY. STRONG MIND. TRAIN ACCORDINGLY.

You now have a framework for building a training week around real attendance, equipment, priorities, and recovery. The best split is the one that assigns every day a clear job and survives ordinary life.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT SESSION

- ☐ Start with the days you can reliably protect.
- ☐ Assign every session a primary job and stress level
- ☐ Place priority movements before lower-value work
- ☐ Estimate realistic session length.
- ☐ Write a missed-session and fallback rule.
- ☐ Run the split long enough to evaluate it honestly.

FINAL DECISION CHECK

COACH QUESTION

Does every training day have a clear job—and can the week still function when life interrupts it?

WRITE THE ANSWER BEFORE YOU CHANGE THE PLAN.

BUILD THE PLAN. EXECUTE IT.

NEXT: EXERCISE SELECTION →