

★★★ PA STRENGTH



TRAINING TERMINOLOGY



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.

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THE OUTCOME

Read a complete strength prescription, select an appropriate starting load, execute the intended effort, and record what actually happened.

UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE. EXECUTE WITH PURPOSE.



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THE LANGUAGE MAP

MAIN LESSON See how every training term answers a small set of practical questions.

A training program is a set of instructions, and each term answers a practical question. The terms are easier to learn when they are grouped by the decision they control. Exercise and variation identify the movement. Sets and repetitions define the assigned work. Load, RPE, and RIR describe the demand. Tempo, range, and technique define the repetition standard. Order and rest place the work inside the session. Notes and recorded performance tell us what actually happened. The purpose of the vocabulary is not to sound technical; it is to remove guesswork and make the next decision clearer.

KEY POINTS

- What movement is being performed: exercise, variation, regression, progression, modification, and substitution.
- How much work is assigned: sets, repetitions, rep ranges, working sets, warm-up sets, and back-off sets.
- How difficult the work should be: external load, percentage of 1RM, RPE, RIR, and proximity to failure.
- How the movement is executed: range of motion, tempo, pauses, bracing, breathing, stability, and technique cues.
- When it occurs: exercise order, rest interval, training frequency, session, split, block, and phase.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Knowing an exercise name is not the same as knowing the prescription.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

Two people can perform “three sets of ten” and complete very different workouts if effort, tempo, range, and rest are not defined.

APPLY IT

Take one workout line and identify what, how much, how hard, how, when, and what to record.



READ ONE EXERCISE LINE

MAIN LESSON Read every field of a prescription, left to right.

Read a prescription from left to right before touching the weight. The exercise name identifies the task; the remaining fields—sets, repetitions, effort, tempo, and rest—determine how it should be performed, and ignoring any one of them can change the training effect even when the exercise stays the same. Consider the full line: Barbell Back Squat | 4 × 5 | RPE 8 | 3-1-1-0 | Rest 2–3 minutes. The four sets of five are working sets completed after the warm-up. RPE 8 means the load should leave about two technically acceptable repetitions in reserve. The tempo controls the descent, bottom position, ascent, and top position. The rest interval protects the intended output. If the first set already reaches RPE 9 or the tempo breaks, the smallest useful correction is usually a load reduction rather than pretending the line was completed as written.

Field	Example	Question answered
Exercise	Barbell Back Squat	What movement?
Sets and reps	4 × 5	How much work?
Effort	RPE 8	How hard?
Tempo	3-1-1-0	How should it move?
Rest	2–3 minutes	When is the next set?

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Do not begin after reading only the exercise name and rep count.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

A lifter completes 4 × 5 but ignores the RPE cap and turns every set into a grind. The numbers match; the prescription does not.

APPLY IT

Explain the sample line aloud before performing the first warm-up.



EFFORT, RPE, AND RIR

MAIN LESSON Translate effort language into practical load selection.

RPE and RIR estimate how close a set ended to technical repetition failure; they are estimates, not laboratory measurements. RPE is a 1-to-10 rating of the completed set; RIR estimates how many good repetitions remained. In ordinary PA Strength use, RPE 7 is about three RIR, RPE 8 about two, RPE 9 about one, and RPE 10 about zero. The relationship is approximate, and it becomes useful only when the exercise, range, and technique remain consistent. A repetition that needs assistance, a shortened range, or obvious breakdown is not a good repetition held in reserve. The goal is not perfect prediction but a repeatable effort standard that helps select loads, compare sessions, and keep hard work from becoming uncontrolled work.

KEY POINTS

- RPE 10 aligns with approximately 0 good repetitions remaining; RPE 9 with 1; RPE 8 with 2; RPE 7 with 3.
- RIR is an estimate whose accuracy improves with experience, exercise familiarity, and honest technique standards.
- A difficult set is not automatically RPE 10; discomfort and proximity to repetition failure are related but different.
- Stop counting hypothetical repetitions that would require shortened range, assistance, or obvious technical breakdown.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Count only repetitions that would meet the same technique standard.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

If two more repetitions require shortened range and assistance, the set did not end with two useful repetitions in reserve.

UNDER THE BAR

RIR accuracy improves when the exercise, range, and technique standard stay consistent. A lifter cannot calibrate effort against a repetition that changes every week.

APPLY IT

Estimate RIR after each working set, then compare the estimate with the next set's performance.



TEMPO, RANGE, AND TECHNIQUE

MAIN LESSON See how execution changes the training stimulus, even when the exercise and load stay the same.

Two repetitions with the same weight may not represent the same work, so tempo gives each repetition a shared structure. A four-position tempo is read eccentric, bottom pause, concentric, top pause. In the canonical squat example, 3-1-1-0 means three seconds lowering into the hole, one second held in the hole, one second standing up, and no deliberate pause at the top before the next controlled descent begins. A 3-1-X-0 prescription keeps the same descent and bottom pause, but X tells the lifter to stand with maximal controlled acceleration intent. X does not mean losing position or throwing the weight; a heavy load may still move slowly.

Tempo	Descent	Bottom	Stand up	Top
3-1-1-0	3 seconds	1 second	1 second	No deliberate pause
3-1-X-0	3 seconds	1 second	Explode with control	No deliberate pause

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Progress is only comparable when the repetition standard remains comparable.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

A faster eccentric and shorter range may allow more weight without representing improvement in the intended task.

UNDER THE BAR

The X describes intent rather than a fixed number of seconds. Drive upward as explosively as the load and technique allow; a heavy bar may still move slowly even when the lifter is applying maximal acceleration intent.

APPLY IT

Film one set and verify each phase of the prescribed tempo.



EXERCISE ORDER AND SET STRUCTURES

MAIN LESSON Decode how exercises are grouped and sequenced.

Exercise order tells you what deserves the freshest effort, and order labels show how work is grouped. A1 completed for all prescribed sets before B1 is a straight-set sequence. A1 and A2 share a letter because they are paired: complete A1, move to A2, then take the programmed rest before repeating the pair. A1, A2, and A3 create a tri-set. Circuits extend the sequence across several movements. Straight sets, supersets, circuits, drop sets, and rest-pause work are organizational tools: they may save time or deliberately accumulate local fatigue, but their value depends on whether they support the goal without reducing the quality of priority work, and the label never overrides the effort, tempo, or rest written into the prescription.

KEY POINTS

- Straight sets, supersets, tri-sets, giant sets, circuits, cluster sets, drop sets, rest-pause work, and AMRAP sets.
- A1/A2 labels: a shared letter means you alternate the movements.
- Noncompeting supersets save time; some pairings intentionally reduce performance.
- Advanced methods are tools, not proof that a session is better.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Complex methods earn their place by solving a programming problem.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

Pairing a row with a press may save time; exhausting the triceps before a priority bench press changes the objective.

APPLY IT

Circle the priority movement and confirm that the session order protects it.



TRAINING VARIABLES

MAIN LESSON Separate commonly confused programming terms.

Volume and intensity are often used as if everyone means the same thing; they do not. Volume is not one universal number: a coach may count total sets, hard sets, repetitions, or volume load, so the counting method must be named. Intensity can refer to the percentage of a maximum or to perceived effort. Density describes how much work is completed within a period of time. Frequency describes how often a session, movement, or muscle group is trained. These variables interact, which is why a direction such as “increase intensity” is incomplete until the intended measurement is specified.

KEY POINTS

- Volume requires a stated counting method: sets, repetitions, hard sets, or volume load.
- Intensity may mean load relative to maximum or effort; a program should say which.
- Frequency describes how often a movement, muscle group, or training session occurs.
- Density describes work completed per unit of time and can rise when rest decreases.
- Stimulus, fatigue, recovery, progression, variation, and adaptation complete the decision vocabulary.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Every vague variable needs a stated measurement.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

“Increase intensity” could mean heavier weight, greater effort, shorter rest, or a harder variation. The program must say which.

UNDER THE BAR

Mechanical tension, volume, effort, and fatigue interact. No single metric describes the entire training dose, so the program must specify what is being changed and why.

APPLY IT

Rewrite one vague instruction using a measurable variable.



MOVEMENT AND EQUIPMENT MAP

MAIN LESSON Use a simple map to recognize exercise families.

Movement families provide a practical map for recognizing the job of a movement before learning every possible variation. Squat, hinge, lunge, step, horizontal push and pull, vertical push and pull, carry, rotation, and anti-rotation describe broad jobs. Equipment describes how resistance is delivered: barbell, dumbbell, cable, machine, Smith machine, landmine, kettlebell, band, or bodyweight. A cable row and a chest-supported machine row share a horizontal-pull family but differ in setup, stability, and resistance. The family guides comparison; it does not make exercises identical or interchangeable.

KEY POINTS

- Squat, hinge, lunge or split squat, step, horizontal push and pull, vertical push and pull, carry, rotation and anti-rotation.
- Compound, accessory, isolation, bilateral, unilateral, ipsilateral, and contralateral.
- Primary mover, synergist, stabilizer, target tissue, and limiting factor.
- Barbell, dumbbell, cable, machine, Smith machine, landmine, kettlebell, band, and bodyweight.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

Learn the movement's job before memorizing every variation.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

A cable row and chest-supported machine row share a pulling family while changing stability, setup, and resistance.

APPLY IT

Classify five exercises by pattern, equipment, and primary job.



COMMON ERRORS AND ACTION PLAN

MAIN LESSON Turn terminology into an immediate pre-workout routine.

Most execution errors begin before the first working set: misreading the prescription, counting warm-ups as programmed work, changing the rep standard, or substituting an exercise without understanding its purpose. Before the first working set, decode the entire line, perform specific warm-up sets, confirm the repetition standard, and choose a load that fits the effort target. After the set, record load, repetitions, and useful notes. Adjust only what the evidence requires. Stop and seek appropriate evaluation for sharp or escalating pain, neurological symptoms, chest pain, fainting, acute injury, or unusual shortness of breath. A training guide can organize decisions, but it cannot diagnose a medical problem.

KEY POINTS

- Correct six common errors: counting warm-ups as work, treating a range as one number, calling every hard set RPE 10, ignoring tempo, using intensity vaguely, and substituting by muscle name alone.
- Use a five-minute checklist: decode, warm up, execute, record, and adjust.
- Practice by explaining one prescription aloud.
- Respect the safety boundary: stop and seek appropriate evaluation for pain, neurological symptoms, chest pain, fainting, acute injury, or unusual shortness of breath.

COMMON SENSE CHECK

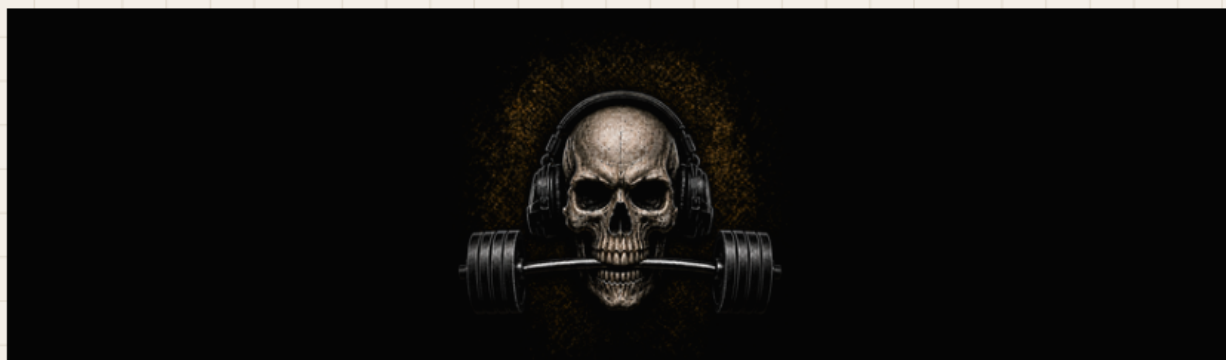
Clarity before effort; evidence before adjustment.

REAL WORLD TRANSLATION

A substitute feels harder, so the lifter assumes it is better. Without the original exercise's purpose, difficulty proves very little.

APPLY IT

Use the five-minute routine: decode, warm up, execute, record, adjust.



STRONG BODY. STRONG MIND. TRAIN ACCORDINGLY.

You now have the language required to interpret a strength program. Use it to identify the intended decision, execute the prescription, and compare the plan with what actually happened.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT SESSION

- ☐ Circle every term or symbol you cannot explain.
- ☐ Separate warm-up sets from working sets.
- ☐ Identify the target repetitions, effort, tempo, and rest.
- ☐ Choose the starting load from previous evidence—not ego.
- ☐ Record the result before changing the next set.
- ☐ Write one useful adjustment for the next exposure.

TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING

ID	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	RPE	TEMPO	REST
A1	ROMANIAN DEADLIFT	3	8–10	7	3-1-1-0	90–120 SEC

COACH QUESTION

What decision did the program intend—and what evidence from the set tells you whether it worked?

BUILD THE PLAN. EXECUTE IT.

**NEXT: UNDERSTANDING
PROGRESSION →**