

A R M D A Y

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# FULL BODY

Three days  
a week

A beginner full-body gym plan with two workouts, clear sets and reps, and printable logs.

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# Start here

## HOW THIS PLAN WORKS

This is a complete gym plan for healthy adults who are new to lifting or coming back after a break. You train three days a week, about 45 to 55 minutes per session, and every session works your whole body: legs, chest, back, shoulders, the back of the thighs and your trunk.

**Two workouts, alternating.** Each workout has a lower-body lift, a chest press, a back pull, hamstring work and a trunk exercise, using different exercises. You alternate them: A, B, A one week, then B, A, B the next. Over two weeks you do each workout three times.

**Repeatable on purpose.** You keep the same exercises for at least 8 to 12 weeks so you can add reps and weight. Progress you can write down beats variety.

**Hard, not maximal.** Lifting sets end with about 2 to 3 good reps still in the tank; planks and carries stop before your posture breaks. You never need to train to failure or test a one-rep max in this plan.

**What you need.** A gym with dumbbells, an adjustable bench, a leg press, a lat pulldown and a leg-curl machine. Busy or missing equipment? Use the swaps on page 08.

## How to read a prescription

|                         |                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3 sets × 8–12</b>    | Three working sets. Each set lands somewhere between 8 and 12 reps.                                                         |
| <b>per side</b>         | Do the reps for one arm or leg, then the same for the other. 3 sets × 10 per side means 10 left plus 10 right, three times. |
| <b>Log one dumbbell</b> | With two dumbbells, write the weight of one of them: two 20 lb dumbbells are logged as 20, not 40.                          |
| <b>Rest 90 s</b>        | Time from the end of one set to the start of the next. Rest a little longer if you need to keep your form.                  |
| <b>RIR</b>              | Reps in reserve: how many more clean reps you could have done. Target 2–3.                                                  |

### BEFORE YOU START

This booklet is general education, not medical advice or a rehabilitation plan. If you have pain, an injury, a heart, lung or other medical condition, are pregnant, or have not been active for a long time, get advice from a doctor or qualified professional before starting. Stop an exercise that causes sharp pain, dizziness, chest pain or unusual shortness of breath, and get it checked.

# Your weekly rhythm

THREE NONCONSECUTIVE DAYS

|        | MON | WED | FRI |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| Week 1 | A   | B   | A   |
| Week 2 | B   | A   | B   |
| Week 3 | A   | B   | A   |
| Week 4 | B   | A   | B   |

Monday, Wednesday and Friday is only an example. Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday works just as well, or any three days with at least one rest day between sessions. Weeks 5 and on simply repeat the pattern: odd weeks A, B, A; even weeks B, A, B.

## If you miss a session

**Don't double up.** Do the next workout in the sequence at your next session. If you missed a B, your next session is that B. The order matters more than the weekday.

**Missed a week or two?** Pick up where you left off, but use about 10% lighter loads, or do 2 sets instead of 3, for the first session back. Build back over the next two or three sessions.

**Only two days this week?** Do A and B once each, at least a day apart. That still trains every major muscle twice in the week.

## Inside one session

|           |                                                                |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8 min     | Warm-up and ramp-up sets (page 04)                             |
| 35–45 min | Workout A or B, in the order printed, resting as listed        |
| 2 min     | Write down loads and reps, and circle what to change next time |

# Warm-up and effort

EIGHT MINUTES, THEN WORK

- 1** **Easy cardio, 3–4 min.** Bike, rower or brisk incline walk. You should be warm and breathing a little faster, not tired.
- 2** **Movement prep, 1 round.** 10 bodyweight squats, 10 hip hinges with hands on hips, 5 reverse lunges per side, 10 arm circles each direction, 10 band pull-aparts if a band is available.
- 3** **Ramp-up sets.** Before the first exercise of the day, and before any lift that feels stiff, do 8 reps at about half your working weight, then 4 reps at about three-quarters. Then start your working sets.

## Effort: 2–3 reps in reserve

Stop each lifting set when you could still do about 2 or 3 more clean reps. The last reps should be slow and take focus, but your form should look the same as on rep one. If form breaks down, the set is over. Planks and carries are timed or measured: stop before your posture breaks.

|            |                              |                                    |
|------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>0</b>   | Could not do another rep     | Not used in this plan              |
| <b>1</b>   | One more rep, maybe          | Too close                          |
| <b>2–3</b> | Two or three more clean reps | <b>Your target</b>                 |
| <b>4+</b>  | Many reps left               | Fine while learning; then add load |

## Choosing your first loads

**The first sessions are for learning.** Start lighter than you think. Pick a weight you could lift about 15 times, do the bottom of the rep range, and note how many reps you had left.

**Adjust between sets.** Form solid and more than 4 reps left? You can go up one step, or stay light while you learn. Form slipping or fewer than 2 left? Go down one step. Write down the weight you finished with.

**No deadline.** Some lifts take longer to feel steady, and lighter learning sets still count. Once a lift feels steady, settle on a load near 2–3 reps in reserve and follow the progression rules on page 07.

# Workout A

FULL BODY / ABOUT 45–55 MINUTES

Warm up first and do the exercises in order. Lifting sets target 2–3 reps in reserve; on timed or distance work, stop before your posture breaks. Tick a box for each set you complete.

## 01

☐ ☐ ☐

### Goblet squat

3 sets × 8–12 · Rest 90 s

*One dumbbell held at the chest. Log the weight of that dumbbell.*

Hold the dumbbell upright against your chest, elbows pointing down. Sit down between your heels, knees tracking over your toes, as deep as you can control with a long back. Stand up by pushing through the whole foot.

## 02

☐ ☐ ☐

### Dumbbell bench press

3 sets × 8–12 · Rest 90 s

*Log the weight of one dumbbell.*

Feet flat, shoulder blades drawn back and down into the bench. Lower the dumbbells to the sides of your chest with forearms vertical, then press up and slightly in.

## 03

☐ ☐ ☐

### One-arm dumbbell row

3 sets × 10–12 per side · Rest 60 s after both sides

*Log the weight of the one dumbbell.*

One hand and the same-side knee on a bench, back flat, neck long. Pull the dumbbell toward your hip, pause, then lower until the arm is straight. Finish all reps on one side, then switch.

## 04

☐ ☐ ☐

### Dumbbell Romanian deadlift

3 sets × 8–12 · Rest 90 s

*One dumbbell in each hand. Log the weight of one dumbbell.*

Soft knees. Push your hips back and slide the dumbbells down the front of your thighs until you feel a stretch in the hamstrings, usually just below the knee. Keep your back long; stand tall by driving your hips forward.

## 05

☐ ☐

### Dead bug

2 sets × 6–8 per side · Rest 45 s

*Bodyweight. Tick the boxes.*

On your back, arms up, knees bent over your hips. Keep your lower back gently pressed toward the floor. Slowly reach the opposite arm and leg away, breathe out, return, switch sides.

## 06

☐ ☐

### Farmer carry

2 sets × 30–40 m · Rest 60 s

*One heavy dumbbell in each hand. Log the weight of one dumbbell.*

Stand tall, shoulders down, grip hard. Walk with short, even steps. Choose a weight you can carry the full distance without leaning or stopping.

# Workout B

FULL BODY / ABOUT 45–55 MINUTES

Warm up first and do the exercises in order. Lifting sets target 2–3 reps in reserve; on timed or distance work, stop before your posture breaks. Tick a box for each set you complete.

## 01

☐ ☐ ☐

### Leg press

3 sets × 10–15 · Rest 90 s

*Log the weight added to the sled or set on the stack.*

Feet hip-width in the middle of the platform. Lower until your knees are bent about 90° or just before your lower back lifts off the pad. Press through the whole foot without snapping the knees straight.

## 02

☐ ☐ ☐

### Lat pulldown

3 sets × 8–12 · Rest 90 s

*Log the stack weight.*

Grip a little wider than your shoulders, thighs snug under the pads. Pull the bar to your upper chest by driving the elbows down. Let the arms straighten fully on the way up.

## 03

☐ ☐ ☐

### Low-incline dumbbell bench press

3 sets × 8–12 · Rest 90 s

*Bench set to a low incline, 15–30°. Log the weight of one dumbbell.*

Feet flat, shoulder blades drawn back and down, chest up. Lower the dumbbells to the sides of your upper chest with forearms vertical, then press up and slightly in without arching your lower back.

## 04

☐ ☐

### Dumbbell split squat

2 sets × 8–10 per side · Rest 60 s after both sides

*One dumbbell in each hand (bodyweight is fine to start). Log one dumbbell.*

Long stance, back heel up, torso tall. Lower straight down until the back knee is just above the floor, then push up through the front foot. Finish one side, then switch.

## 05

☐ ☐

### Seated leg curl

2 sets × 10–15 · Rest 60 s

*Log the stack weight.*

Line your knees up with the machine's pivot point; pad just above the heels. Curl your heels down and back, pause, then return slowly.

## 06

☐ ☐

### Side plank

2 sets × 20–30 s per side · Rest 45 s

*Bodyweight. Log seconds held.*

Elbow under the shoulder, body in one straight line from head to heels. Bent-knee side plank is a full-credit version. Stop before your hips sag.

# How to progress

## DOUBLE PROGRESSION: REPS FIRST, THEN LOAD

Each exercise has a rep range. Keep the same load until you can do the top of the range on every set with 2–3 reps in reserve and clean form. Next session, add the smallest step and work back up the range.

### EXAMPLE / DUMBBELL BENCH PRESS, 3 × 8–12, LOAD PER DUMBBELL

| Session | Load  | Set 1 | Set 2 | Set 3 | Decision                        |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------------------|
| 1       | 25 lb | 10    | 9     | 8     | Same load                       |
| 2       | 25 lb | 11    | 10    | 10    | Same load                       |
| 3       | 25 lb | 12    | 12    | 12    | Top of range on all sets: go up |
| 4       | 30 lb | 9     | 8     | 8     | Same load, build reps again     |

## Load steps

**Dumbbells:** move to the next pair, usually 2.5–5 lb heavier per dumbbell. If the jump is big, expect to start at the bottom of the range.

**Machines:** add the smallest plate or pin step, usually 5–10 lb on the stack, more on the leg press.

**Per-side exercises:** progress when your weaker side reaches the top of the range.

**Carry and plank:** add distance or seconds up to the top of the range, then add weight to the carry or move to a harder plank.

## When progress stalls

**Same numbers three sessions in a row?** Check sleep, food and form first. Then drop the load about 10% and build back up with double progression.

**Feeling run down?** Take an easier week: same exercises and loads, 2 sets instead of 3. Many people find one every 6 to 8 weeks helpful.

**Something hurts?** Swap the exercise (page 08), reduce the range or load, and get individual advice if pain continues. Never push through sharp pain.

# Exercise swaps

## SAME SLOT, SAME SETS AND REPS

Swap an exercise only when it hurts, the equipment is missing, or it is taken and you would wait more than a few minutes. Keep the swap for a few weeks so you can track it, and start the new exercise at a calibration load.

| Exercise                                | Easier version                   | Equipment alternative                                     |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Goblet squat</b>                     | Box squat to a bench             | Leg press, or a dumbbell squat holding two dumbbells      |
| <b>Dumbbell bench press</b>             | Incline push-up on a bench       | Machine chest press, or a push-up                         |
| <b>One-arm dumbbell row</b>             | Chest-supported row, lighter     | Seated cable row or machine row                           |
| <b>Dumbbell Romanian deadlift</b>       | Shorter range: stop at the knee  | Hip thrust or 45° back extension                          |
| <b>Leg press</b>                        | Smaller range, lighter sled      | Goblet squat                                              |
| <b>Lat pulldown</b>                     | Lighter stack, neutral grip      | Assisted pull-up machine or band-assisted pull-up         |
| <b>Low-incline dumbbell bench press</b> | Lighter dumbbells, neutral palms | Incline machine chest press, or flat dumbbell bench press |
| <b>Dumbbell split squat</b>             | Hold a rail; shorter range       | Step-up to a low box, or reverse lunge                    |
| <b>Seated leg curl</b>                  | Lighter stack, partial range     | Lying leg curl, or stability-ball hamstring curl          |
| <b>Dead bug / Side plank</b>            | Arms-only or knees-down version  | Front plank, 20–30 s                                      |

## Home or hotel week

No gym for a few days? Keep the rhythm with goblet squats or split squats, push-ups, one-arm rows, Romanian deadlifts and dead bugs using whatever dumbbells or bands you have. Use the same sets and the 2–3 reps-in-reserve target, then return to your logged loads.

# Workout A log

PRINT AND REUSE / FOUR SESSIONS PER SHEET

Units: lb / kg

| Exercise<br>sets × reps                                | Session 1 Date _____ |       | Session 2 Date _____ |       | Session 3 Date _____ |       | Session 4 Date _____ |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
|                                                        | Load                 | Reps* | Load                 | Reps* | Load                 | Reps* | Load                 | Reps* |
| <b>Goblet squat</b><br>3 sets × 8–12                   |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
| <b>Dumbbell bench press</b><br>3 sets × 8–12           |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
| <b>One-arm dumbbell row</b><br>3 sets × 10–12 per side |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
| <b>Dumbbell Romanian deadlift</b><br>3 sets × 8–12     |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
| <b>Dead bug</b><br>2 sets × 6–8 per side               |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
| <b>Farmer carry</b><br>2 sets × 30–40 m                |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
| <b>Notes</b><br>energy, sleep, form                    |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
| <b>Next time</b><br>what to change                     |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |
|                                                        |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |                      |       |

\*Reps for one side on per-side exercises. Meters for the farmer carry. Circle a load when every set reached the top of the range: that is your cue to go up next time.

# Workout B log

PRINT AND REUSE / FOUR SESSIONS PER SHEET

Units: lb / kg

| Exercise<br>sets × reps                                  | Session 1 Date _____<br>Load      Reps* | Session 2 Date _____<br>Load      Reps* | Session 3 Date _____<br>Load      Reps* | Session 4 Date _____<br>Load      Reps* |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>Leg press</b><br>3 sets × 10–15                       |                                         |                                         |                                         |                                         |
| <b>Lat pulldown</b><br>3 sets × 8–12                     |                                         |                                         |                                         |                                         |
| <b>Low-incline dumbbell bench press</b><br>3 sets × 8–12 |                                         |                                         |                                         |                                         |
| <b>Dumbbell split squat</b><br>2 sets × 8–10 per side    |                                         |                                         |                                         |                                         |
| <b>Seated leg curl</b><br>2 sets × 10–15                 |                                         |                                         |                                         |                                         |
| <b>Side plank</b><br>2 sets × 20–30 s per side           |                                         |                                         |                                         |                                         |
| <b>Notes</b><br>energy, sleep, form                      |                                         |                                         |                                         |                                         |
| <b>Next time</b><br>what to change                       |                                         |                                         |                                         |                                         |

\*Reps for one side on per-side exercises. Seconds for the side plank. Circle a load when every set reached the top of the range: that is your cue to go up next time.

# 12-week tracker

TICK EACH SESSION / PLAN THE NEXT ONE

| Week | Session 1                                    | Session 2                                    | Session 3                                    |
|------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 01   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ |
| 02   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ |
| 03   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ |
| 04   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ |
| 05   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ |
| 06   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ |
| 07   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ |
| 08   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ |
| 09   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ |
| 10   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ |
| 11   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ |
| 12   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>A</b> Date _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>B</b> Date _____ |

## Next session

Movement \_\_\_\_\_ Reps \_\_\_\_\_ Load \_\_\_\_\_

Movement \_\_\_\_\_ Reps \_\_\_\_\_ Load \_\_\_\_\_

Movement \_\_\_\_\_ Reps \_\_\_\_\_ Load \_\_\_\_\_

## Session notes

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# Sources and notes

## WHAT IS EVIDENCE AND WHAT IS COACHING

**Evidence.** The 2026 ACSM position stand for healthy adults supports a few general points this plan follows: train all the major muscle groups at least twice a week, keep showing up consistently, and know that training to failure is not necessary. It does not set the exact numbers below.

**Coaching choices (plan defaults).** The 2–3 reps-in-reserve target, this plan's set counts, the exact exercises, rep ranges, rest times, load steps, the 10% back-off after a break or a stall, and the easier-week timing are pragmatic defaults chosen for beginners. They are sensible, common coaching rules, not universal optima proven by research, and other reasonable plans exist.

**No promises.** Results depend on consistency, sleep, nutrition, age, training history and more. This booklet does not promise a specific amount of strength or muscle in a set time.

## References

### 1 ACSM position stand (2026)

Currier BS, D'Souza AC, Fiatarone Singh MA, et al. American College of Sports Medicine Position Stand. Resistance Training Prescription for Muscle Function, Hypertrophy, and Physical Performance in Healthy Adults: An Overview of Reviews. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. 2026. doi:10.1249/MSS.0000000000003897  
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12965823/>

### 2 ACSM news release (March 17, 2026)

ACSM Unveils Landmark 2026 Resistance Training Guidelines: First Update in 17 Years.  
<https://acsm.org/resistance-training-guidelines-update-2026/>

### 3 ACSM infographic (2026)

Resistance Training Position Stand: practical summary infographic.  
<https://www.acsm.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Resistance-Training-Position-Stand-infographic.pdf>

### 4 ACSM position stand (2009, historical)

American College of Sports Medicine. Progression Models in Resistance Training for Healthy Adults. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. 2009. doi:10.1249/MSS.0b013e3181915670. Superseded by the 2026 stand; listed for context.  
<https://doi.org/10.1249/MSS.0b013e3181915670>

## About this booklet

Made by Armday as a free guide. The cover is an AI-generated dumbbell illustration, including its title lettering; it is not a photo of real equipment. Free to print for personal use.