

THE FITNESS PHANTOM

8-WEEK MUSCLE BUILDING WORKOUT PLAN

5-Day Gym Split | Hypertrophy + Strength | Free Training Guide

Train hard. Progress deliberately. Recover well.

A structured 8-week plan for trained beginners and intermediate lifters.

thefitnessphantom.com

Source plan: [8-Week Muscle Building Workout Plan](#)

Program Overview

This 8-week muscle-building plan uses five weekly sessions, two four-week training blocks, progressive overload, and practical RIR targets. The goal is to build muscle while keeping progression measurable and recovery manageable.

Program Detail	Recommendation
Primary Goal	Muscle growth / hypertrophy
Duration	8 weeks
Training Frequency	5 days per week
Experience Level	Trained beginner to intermediate
Workout Duration	About 60-75 minutes
Equipment	Full gym
Rest Days	Thursday and Sunday
Main Rep Range	6-15 reps
Typical Effort	1-3 RIR
Suitable For	Men and women

RIR: Repetitions in Reserve. Finishing at 2 RIR means you likely could have completed about two more good reps before failure.

Weekly Split

Day	Muscle Groups
Monday	Chest, Triceps & Lateral Delts
Tuesday	Back, Biceps & Hamstrings
Wednesday	Quads, Glutes & Core
Thursday	Rest
Friday	Chest, Shoulders & Calves
Saturday	Back, Rear Delts & Quads
Sunday	Rest

8-Week Progression

Week	Focus	Effort
1	Establish working weights and technique	2-3 RIR
2	Add reps where possible	~2 RIR
3	Add reps or a small load increase	1-2 RIR
4	Reduce most exercises by one working set	2-3 RIR
5	Establish new loads for Block 2	2-3 RIR
6	Add reps	~2 RIR
7	Increase load after reaching top of rep range	1-2 RIR
8	Beat Week 7 performance with good form	1-2 RIR

How Hard Should You Train?

Most working sets should finish with about **1-3 RIR**. Keep heavy compound lifts around 2-3 RIR early in the block and 1-2 RIR later. Isolation exercises can be taken closer to failure, especially the final set, as long as technique remains controlled.

How to Progress

Use double progression. Stay within the prescribed rep range and add reps before adding load. Example: for 3 x 8-12, build from 10/9/8 toward 12/12/12. Once you reach the top of the range with good form and the target RIR, increase the weight slightly and repeat.

Rest Between Sets

Exercise Type	Rest
Heavy compounds	2-3 min
Moderate compound exercises	90-150 sec
Isolation exercises	60-90 sec
Core exercises	45-90 sec

Warm-Up

Spend about 5-10 minutes preparing for training. Use light cardio or dynamic movement, then perform a few ramp-up sets before your first heavy compound exercise. Warm-up sets should prepare you - not tire you out.

Weeks 1-4: Foundation Block

Keep the core exercises consistent long enough to improve technique, track performance, and progressively overload. Week 4 reduces volume slightly to manage fatigue.

Monday - Chest, Triceps & Lateral Delts

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Barbell Bench Press	3	6-10
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	8-12
Pec Deck / Cable Fly	3	10-15
Triceps Rope Pushdown	3	10-15
Overhead Triceps Extension	3	10-15
Dumbbell Lateral Raise	3	12-15

Training note: Keep pressing controlled and avoid turning every chest exercise into a front-delt movement.

Tuesday - Back, Biceps & Hamstrings

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Romanian Deadlift	3	6-10
Lat Pulldown	3	8-12
Seated Cable Row	3	8-12
Single-Arm Dumbbell Row	3	8-12/side
Barbell / EZ-Bar Curl	3	8-12
Incline Dumbbell Curl	2	10-15
Leg Curl	3	10-15

Training note: Control the lowering phase and avoid using momentum on rows and curls.

Wednesday - Quads, Glutes & Core

Exercise	Sets	Reps
----------	------	------

Barbell Back Squat	3	6-10
Leg Press	3	10-15
Dumbbell Reverse Lunge	3	8-12/leg
Hip Thrust	3	8-12
Hanging Knee Raise	3	10-15
Plank	2	30-60 sec

Training note: Use a squat depth you can control without losing position.

Friday - Chest, Shoulders & Calves

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Incline Barbell Bench Press	3	6-10
Machine Chest Press	3	8-12
Cable Fly	2	12-15
Seated Dumbbell Overhead Press	3	8-12
Cable / Dumbbell Lateral Raise	3	12-15
Standing Calf Raise	4	10-15

Training note: Your front delts already get substantial work from pressing; extra front raises are unnecessary.

Saturday - Back, Rear Delts & Quads

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Pull-Up or Lat Pulldown	3	6-10
Barbell/T-Bar Row	3	6-10
Chest-Supported Row	3	8-12
Cable Face Pull	3	12-15
Reverse Pec Deck / Rear-Delt Fly	2	12-15
Leg Extension	3	12-15

Training note: Pull with your elbows and keep the movement controlled rather than simply moving weight.

Weeks 1-4 Progression

Week	What to Do
Week 1	Start conservatively. Record weights and reps. Stay around 2-3 RIR.
Week 2	Keep most loads the same and add reps where possible at about 2 RIR.
Week 3	If you reach the top of a rep range, increase load slightly. Work around 1-2 RIR.
Week 4	Remove about one working set from most exercises and stay around 2-3 RIR.

Weeks 5-8: Progressive Overload Block

The second block changes selected exercises while preserving the same movement patterns and weekly split. Establish sensible loads in Week 5, then build reps and load through Week 8.

Monday - Chest, Triceps & Lateral Delts

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Dumbbell Bench Press	3	6-10
Incline Machine Chest Press	3	8-12
Cable Fly	3	10-15
Parallel Bar Dip*	3	6-12
Single-Arm Overhead Triceps Extension	3	10-15
Cable Lateral Raise	3	12-15

***Dip option:** Use assisted dips or a triceps pressdown if dips bother your shoulders or are not appropriate for your current strength level.

Tuesday - Back, Biceps & Hamstrings

Exercise	Sets	Reps
<u>Conventional/Trap-Bar Deadlift</u>	3	4-8
Neutral-Grip Lat Pulldown	3	8-12
Chest-Supported Row	3	8-12
One-Arm Cable / Dumbbell Row	3	8-12/side
EZ-Bar Curl	3	8-12
Hammer Curl	2	10-15
Seated / Lying Leg Curl	3	10-15

Deadlift note: Deadlifts create more systemic fatigue than most hypertrophy exercises. Keep them controlled and avoid routinely taking them to failure. Use an RDL or other hip hinge if recovery becomes a problem.

Wednesday - Quads, Glutes & Core

Exercise	Sets	Reps
----------	------	------

Front Squat or Hack Squat	3	6-10
Leg Press	3	10-15
Dumbbell Step-Up	3	8-12/leg
Smith Machine Hip Thrust	3	8-12
Cable Woodchop	2	10-15/side
Hanging Leg / Knee Raise	2	10-15

Friday - Chest, Shoulders & Calves

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Incline Dumbbell Bench Press	3	6-10
Machine Chest Press	3	8-12
Pec Deck Fly	2	12-15
Barbell/Machine Overhead Press	3	6-10
Dumbbell Lateral Raise	3	12-15
Seated Calf Raise	4	10-15

Saturday - Back, Rear Delts & Quads

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Pull-Up or Lat Pulldown	3	6-10
T-Bar Row	3	6-10
Seated Cable Row	3	8-12
Rear-Delt Machine Fly	3	12-15
Face Pull	2	12-15
Hack Squat or Leg Extension	3	10-15

Weeks 5-8 Progression

Week	What to Do
------	------------

Week 5	Establish starting loads for the new variations. Stay around 2-3 RIR.
Week 6	Add reps while maintaining technique. Aim for about 2 RIR.
Week 7	Increase load after reaching the top of the prescribed rep range. Work around 1-2 RIR.
Week 8	Try to beat Week 7 with better reps or a small load increase. Keep compounds around 1-2 RIR.

Exercise Substitutions

Choose replacements that train the same movement pattern or target muscle. Do not change exercises simply because another movement looks more advanced.

Original Exercise	Alternative
Barbell Bench Press	Dumbbell or machine chest press
Incline Barbell Press	Incline dumbbell or machine press
Barbell Back Squat	Hack squat, Smith squat, or leg press
Front Squat	Hack squat or leg press
Conventional Deadlift	Trap-bar deadlift or Romanian deadlift
Pull-Up	Lat pulldown
Barbell Row	Chest-supported or cable row
Parallel Bar Dip	Machine dip or triceps pressdown
Hip Thrust	Glute bridge
Leg Curl	Dumbbell Leg Curl or Nordic curl
Dumbbell Lateral Raise	Cable or machine lateral raise
Standing Calf Raise	Leg-press or seated calf raise

Nutrition & Recovery

- Eat enough total calories to support your goal and training performance.
- A practical protein target is about 1.6-2.2 g/kg of body weight per day.
- Include enough carbohydrates to support hard training, along with fruits, vegetables, and dietary fats.
- Stay hydrated and keep sleep as consistent as possible.
- Do not automatically add more sets when you are already progressing on the written plan.

Recovery check: If performance declines across several workouts, soreness remains unusually high, or joints start bothering you, review recovery and training volume before adding more work.

Cardio During the Program

You can include low-to-moderate-intensity cardio 2-3 times per week if recovery remains good. Walking, easy cycling, and incline treadmill work are practical options. Avoid adding so much high-intensity conditioning that it consistently reduces lifting performance or leg recovery.

Who This Plan Is For

- You already understand basic resistance-training technique.

- You can train five days per week consistently.
- Muscle growth is your main goal.
- You have access to a reasonably equipped gym.
- You can recover from moderate-to-high weekly training volume.

Who Shouldn't Use It

- You have never lifted weights before.
- You can only train two or three days per week.
- You are primarily training for maximal powerlifting strength.
- An injury or medical restriction limits several movements in the plan.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is 8 weeks enough to build muscle?

Eight weeks is enough to establish measurable training progress, but visible muscle gain varies with training experience, nutrition, sleep, genetics, and consistency. Treat this as a training block, not a guaranteed transformation timeline.

Is this plan suitable for beginners?

It is best for trained beginners and intermediate lifters. Complete beginners usually do better with a simpler full-body or three-day routine while learning technique.

Can women follow this program?

Yes. Adjust the loads, exercise selection, and volume to your experience and individual needs rather than choosing a routine solely based on gender.

Do I need to train to failure?

No. Most sets should finish around 1-3 RIR. You can occasionally take the final set of a safe isolation exercise very close to failure while keeping technique controlled.

Should I increase weight every week?

Not necessarily. Add load when you reach the top of the prescribed rep range with good form and the intended RIR. Sometimes progression is simply one more rep.

What if I miss a workout?

Do not cram two full sessions together. Resume with the next scheduled workout when practical. One missed session will not ruin an eight-week program.

What should I do after Week 8?

If you are still progressing, you can run another block using similar movements and updated starting loads. If fatigue is high, take several easier training days first.

Research Notes

The program is built around evidence-informed principles rather than a single “perfect” hypertrophy method. Hypertrophy can occur across a broad range of loads when sets are sufficiently challenging; multiple-set training is effective; and every set does not need to reach absolute failure.

1. [Refalo MC et al. \(2023\). Proximity-to-failure and muscle hypertrophy.](#)
2. [Robinson ZP et al. \(2024\). Resistance training proximity to failure meta-regressions.](#)
3. [Schoenfeld BJ et al. \(2019\). Resistance-training frequency and hypertrophy.](#)
4. [Singer A et al. \(2024\). Inter-set rest interval duration and hypertrophy.](#)
5. [Schoenfeld BJ et al. \(2021\). Loading recommendations for strength and hypertrophy.](#)
6. [Schoenfeld BJ et al. \(2017\). Weekly training volume and muscle mass.](#)
7. [Morton RW et al. \(2018\). Protein supplementation and resistance-training adaptations.](#)

Final Notes

Muscle building does not require changing exercises every workout or taking every set to failure. A good program gives you enough quality work, enough recovery, and a clear way to progress. Start conservatively, record your training, and judge the program by your progress across several weeks - not by how sore you feel after one session.

No workout can guarantee a specific amount of muscle gain in eight weeks. Results depend on training experience, adherence, nutrition, recovery, and individual response.