



THE SMART GAINER

Beginner PPL for Hardgainers

From thesmartgainer.com

The *Beginner PPL for Hardgainers* is a minimalistic yet effective program to get one started on a weekly workout schedule. This program utilizes one high-priority compound movement followed by basic bodybuilding lifts to train both strength and size at the same time, also known as “power building”. This program is for beginners and has a recommended run-time of three months before moving on to a more intermediate-level program. However, if the individual is enjoying the program and seeing gains, there is no real reason to stop running the program.

Push, pull, legs (PPL) is a popular training split that accommodates each muscle group to be trained twice a week. Each muscle falls into one of three categories. Upper body muscles are split into either “Push” or “Pull” while all lower-body muscles are grouped into the “legs” category.

The split is commonly arranged as a four-day cycle:

Day 1- Push

Day 2- Pull

Day 3- Legs

Day 4- REST

Repeat

PPL is a training *split*, it is how you split up your muscle groups. Next, we will move on to a *routine*, this is the routine of exercises you do in the gym.

Warm-Up

You must always warm-up before lifting weights. It doesn't have to be cardio; it should consist of dynamic stretching and an optional light jog.

You probably remember stretching before gym class in high school. The type of stretching where you hold the stretch for 10+ seconds is called “static” stretching and is no longer recommended prior to lifting weights.

Dynamic stretching is better pre-workout because it literally warms up your muscles and does not lengthen them as static stretching does.



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Dynamic stretching

Pick a few of these and perform them until your *heart rate has increased* and you feel ready to lift weights. This should take at least 5-10 minutes. These stretches are just suggestions. Feel free to google “Dynamic stretching routine” for infinite variety, and switch them up from time to time to keep things interesting.

Leg swings

Arm circles

Bodyweight Squats

Lung Walk

Jump Squats

Butt Kicks

Side Bends

Exercise Selection

Each day begins with a heavy compound movement. That is the Squat, Bench Press, or Deadlift. I insist you do these as long as you are physically capable and free of pain. The exercises following are selected to support the compound movement of the workout and improve muscle hypertrophy. They may be swapped for similar exercises if you so choose.

Push

Bench press- 5 Sets @ RiR 2

Dips- 5 Sets @ RiR 1-3

Lateral raises- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2

Tricep Push-downs- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2

Pec Deck- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2

Pull

Deadlift- 3 Sets @ RiR 2

Pull-ups- 5 Sets @ RiR 1-3

Bicep curls- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2

Rows (cable or bent-over with dumbbells)- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2

Lat pull-downs- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2

Legs

Squat- 3 Sets @ RiR 2

Weighted lunges- 3 Sets @ RiR 1-3

Leg press- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2

Leg curls- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2

Calf raises- 3 Sets @ RiR 0-2



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You'll notice that the exercises above do not have a number of repetitions or weights assigned to them. This is because everyone is different; it would be irresponsible to assign a weight and specific reps to someone you've never met. Instead, a Reps in Reserve (RiR) rating has been assigned.

RiR, rep ranges, and weight

RiR

RiR is what it sounds like, how many reps did you leave in the "reserve"? If you performed ten reps but you could have performed a maximum of two more, that is 2 RiR.

It is important to not train to 0 RiR on the heavy compound lifts. This can lead to injury real fast and should be left to the experienced lifters. However, 0 RiR is OK on the smaller isolation movements such as bicep curls. The reason I've marked such exercises above as 0-2 RiR is for personal preference. Many individuals like to train those exercises to failure (0 RiR) and many do not.

Rep ranges

Next up is rep ranges.

Traditionally, lower reps in the 1-7 range were considered ideal for building strength, while reps in the range of 8-12 were for hypertrophy. Research is now finding that both rep ranges build a similar amount of muscle tissue. However, there is a lot more to consider when prescribing rep ranges.

Your three compound movements (Squat, Bench, Deadlift) will be performed in the lower rep range. This allows for heavier loads, which will increase your strength. You probably noticed that they were marked in **red**. This colour indicates that I want you to perform these exercises in the lower rep range of 3-7, but always leaving two reps in reserve.

The rest of the exercises in **bold black**, are to be performed in the mid rep range of 8-12.

Weight

The final piece of the puzzle is load. How much weight do you lift per exercise?

Again, it would be absolutely absurd for me (some guy you've never met) to prescribe a specific weight for you to lift. That is exactly why I've implemented RiR and rep ranges into the program.



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For example, three individuals have been asked to perform a squat for three sets at a RiR of 2, for 3-7 reps.

The first individual, who has very little experience in the gym but is a rather large person, may squat 225lbs.

The second, who is very experienced but has a bodyweight of only 95lbs may squat 245lbs.

The third who is both inexperienced and weighs only 95lbs may be able to squat 105lbs.

The three lifters vary greatly in size and experience, but what they have in common is that they all squatted in the same rep range (3-7) and all left two reps in reserve. Therefore, each lifter experienced a similar training stimulus.

It will take some practice before you can accurately predict a RiR of 2, but that is OK. The important part is that you are safe, have fun, and make gains.

A note from the author

Hi, and thanks for checking out the program. This is meant to be a minimalistic and flexible approach for beginners looking to gain muscle mass. All of the exercises, rep ranges, and sets I have laid out above can be altered. If you don't like something, go ahead and change it but be very careful.

The squat and deadlift are both dangerous exercises if performed by an inexperienced lifter. That being said, they are also essential exercises that carry a massive benefit, so please don't push yourself too hard.

If you have any questions about the program or any questions about *anything*, feel free to email me directly at thesmartgainer.oliver@gmail.com.

May the iron gods bless you- Oliver