

Strength

5×5 Strength Program

Five sets of five on the big barbell lifts, three days a week, adding weight almost every session. A simple, proven way to get a lot stronger.

Length	Sessions	Time per session	Level	Equipment
12 weeks	3 a week	45–60 min	Beginner to intermediate	Barbell, squat rack, bench and plates

How the program works

- Start each lift at about 70% of your one-rep max. Estimate it from a recent hard set with the 1RM calculator.
- Add weight every session you complete all sets and reps: 2.5 kg (5 lb) on squat and deadlift, 1.25–2.5 kg (2.5–5 lb) on bench, row and press.
- Miss reps? Repeat the same weight next time. Miss it three sessions in a row, lower the weight by 10% and build back up.
- Rest 3–5 minutes between heavy sets. Strength needs full recovery.
- Warm up every lift with the empty bar and two or three lighter sets.

A typical week

Monday	Workout A
Tuesday	Rest
Wednesday	Workout B
Thursday	Rest
Friday	Workout A (B the next week)
Saturday	Rest or a walk
Sunday	Rest

Your starting weights

Estimate your one-rep max from a recent hard set at musclecalc.com/1rm-calculator, then write down 70% of it as your starting weight.

Lift	Estimated 1RM	Start at 70%
Squat		
Bench press		
Barbell row		
Overhead press		
Deadlift		

The sessions

Workout A

45–60 min

Exercise	Sets	Reps or time	Intensity	Rest
Back squat	5	5	Start at 70% 1RM	3–5 min
Bench press	5	5	Start at 70% 1RM	3–5 min
Barbell row	5	5	Start at 70% 1RM	3 min

Optional extra: 2–3 sets of chin-ups and 3 rounds of planks.

Workout B

45–60 min

Exercise	Sets	Reps or time	Intensity	Rest
Back squat	5	5	Start at 70% 1RM	3–5 min
Overhead press	5	5	Start at 70% 1RM	3–5 min
Deadlift	1	5	Start at 70% 1RM	

One heavy set after your warm-up sets. Deadlifts are demanding, so one work set is enough.

Optional extra: 2–3 sets of dips or push-ups and 3 rounds of planks.

How to progress

Weeks

1–4

Linear progression

Start at 70% of your 1RM and add weight every session you complete 5×5. The first weeks should feel manageable.

Weeks

5-8

Keep adding weight

Progress slows. Use the smallest jumps on upper-body lifts and follow the three-miss rule when a lift stalls.

Weeks

9-11

Switch to 3×5 if needed

When a lift stalls again after a reset, change it to 3 sets of 5 at a heavier weight and keep progressing.

Week

12

Deload and retest

Three light sessions at 60% for 3×5. Then work up to a heavy set of 3–5 reps and estimate your new 1RM.

Training log

Write down what you did each session, for example 60 × 5 for 60 kg for five reps. Seeing the numbers go up is the best motivation there is, and it tells you when to add weight or speed.

Workout A, weeks 1–6

Exercise	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Back squat 5 sets of 5						
Bench press 5 sets of 5						
Barbell row 5 sets of 5						

Workout A, weeks 7–12

Exercise	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12
Back squat 5 sets of 5						
Bench press 5 sets of 5						
Barbell row 5 sets of 5						

Workout B, weeks 1–6

Exercise	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Back squat 5 sets of 5						
Overhead press 5 sets of 5						
Deadlift 1 set of 5						

Workout B, weeks 7–12

Exercise	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12
Back squat 5 sets of 5						
Overhead press 5 sets of 5						
Deadlift 1 set of 5						

Find the full guide, your personal numbers and more free programs at musclecalc.com/programs/5x5-strength-program

This program is general information, not medical advice. If you have a health condition, are pregnant or have been inactive for a long time, talk to a doctor before you start. Stop and seek help if you feel chest pain, dizziness or unusual shortness of breath. © 2026 MuscleCalc.