21-day Workout Challenge

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If you've been thinking about introducing training to your lifestyle, one of the most crucial things is to actually make a habit out of it. For the majority of the population, forming a new habit takes right about 21 days. Besides that however, you need the right training approach, in case you have certain goals in mind.

In this short guide, you'll learn why training is actually important, what types of training activity you can do (and what benefits they have), and you'll also get an actionable, 21-day workout progression to get you kick-started.

Now without further ado, let's get to it!

Why Movement Is Important

If you think about fitness outside of the popular trends, bodybuilding competitions and so on, you'll come to find that fitness is in fact, something natural.
In the past, being in shape meant survival but now, fitness is something completely different.

Nevertheless, you don't really have to follow trends, as long as you remember this - You get to test drive the most complex biological machine known in the universe - The human body.
The human body is a community of cells that work together to keep you alive and to thrive.

Training and eating well is not just about looking good, it is also about supporting your community of cells.

Given that optimal health means optimal functioning of all organs and systems, you just can't exclude the muscular system.
In fact, using the muscular system makes the body secrete and release a flurry of nourishing substances, which make you feel, look and perform better, both mentally and physically.

Movement is important because it is something natural, something we, humans have always been doing, but are now deprived of, due to the modern-day lifestyle.
However, there are different types of training activity one can do, each of which leads to certain outcomes and changes in the visual and functional aspects of your body.

Let's have a look at those!

Common Types Of Training Activity









The majority of trainees nowadays engage in two types of activities:

1. Weightlifting and other types of resistance training
2. Cardio training

Each of these two has its benefits and there really isn't ultimately a better one.

In fact, combining them and finding the balance between both is your best bet, if you're looking to improve your performance, health and visual looks.

Weightlifting is your tool to help you chisel a good-looking, healthy musculature that is developed across all functions - Strength, strength endurance, explosiveness, etc.

On the other hand, cardio training, such as jogging, rope jumping and cycling, can help you optimize the work of your heart and lungs, thus having major benefits on your health, as well as endurance during prolonged activity.

In this 21-day challenge, you'll get to exercise different functions and muscles of your body.

Granted, if you follow our instructions, you will make an impact on your mood, looks, performance and energy levels.

So, are you ready to create a new habit? Let's get to it!

The 21-Day Challenge





The 21-day Workout challenge was created to give you a fundamental base of physical development.

This workout progression will create the right stimulus for your basic physical properties:

1. Strength
2. Strength endurance
3. Explosiveness
4. Aerobic (Cardio) endurance

The training plan presented in this guide is a mix of weight training and cardio activities, so whether your goal is to look/feel better or improve your stamina, you have it all here!

Let's get to it.

Week 1 - Full Body Workouts & Cardio

During the first week on the challenge, you'll get familiar with the main, compound exercises, along with basic cardio activity.

Compound exercises are movements that engage multiple muscle groups at once, as opposed to isolated exercises which primarily focus on 1 specific muscle group.
The workout targets all major muscle groups:

1. Chest
2. Back
3. Shoulders
4. Biceps
5. Triceps
6. Quadriceps
7. Hamstrings
8. Glutes
9. Calves

Workout Table

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest time
#1 Flat Barbell Bench Press	5	**12,12,12,10,10,8**	2 Minutes
#2 Vertical Lat Pulldown	5	**12,12,10,10,10,8**	2 Minutes
#3 Seated Dumbbell Shoulder Presses	3	**8-10**	2 Minutes
#4 Bodyweight/Barbell Squats	5	**10-15**	3 Minutes
#5 Lying Hamstring Curls	5	**10**	2 Minutes
#6 Standing Calf Raises	5	**10-15**	2 Minutes

Exercise Execution Steps

Not sure how these exercises are done?
Here are some execution steps and cues to help you out!

#1 Flat Barbell Bench Press

1. Lie down flat on the bench press, comfortably
2. Grab the bar wider than shoulder width and unrack it
3. Keep your elbows slightly bent, out of lockout
4. Let the bar go down to your chest slowly
5. Once the bar has touched the chest, push up to the initial position, out of lockout
6. Repeat

#2 Vertical Lat Pulldown

1. Grab the pulldown bar as wide as possible
2. Sit down and avoid hunching your back
3. Angle your body backwards slightly
4. Look up
5. Pull the bar down to your upper chest
6. Contract the back muscles, then go back up slowly
7. Repeat

#3 Seated Dumbbell Shoulder Press

1. Set up a bench so that its backrest is slightly before a 90-degree angle
2. Grab a pair of dumbbells and sit down
3. Lift the dumbbells up and on both sides of your head
4. Form a 90-degree angle with your arms and have your palms face front- This is your initial position
5. Look slightly up and push the dumbbells up and over your head
6. Come back down slowly to the initial position
7. Repeat

#4 Bodyweight Squats

1. Step with your feet at shoulder width
2. Keep knees slightly bent, out of lockout
3. Avoid hunching your back
4. Place your arms crossed on your shoulders and look up
5. Squat down, without bending over too much
6. When your hamstrings are parallel to the ground, move back up
7. Repeat

#5 Lying Hamstring Curls

1. Lie down and place your heels under the pad - The pad should be at about ankle level, above the heel
2. Grab the handles, keep your back straight
3. Curl your legs explosively, contract the hamstrings up top, then come back down slowly
4. Avoid letting the weight go all the way down - This will help you maintain tension on the hamstrings
5. Repeat!

Exercise #6 - Standing Calf Raises

1. Step with your toes on the edge of a step/the calf machine platform
2. Keep your body straight and look slightly up
3. Dip your heels down slowly to stretch the calves
4. Briefly pause at the bottom, then push explosively through your toes
5. Contract the calves up top, then come back down and repeat the movement pattern

Post-Workout Cardio



During week 1, after each weight training workout, you have 15-25 minutes of slow-pace cardio activity.

You can also do another session on one of your off days, when you don't have any weight training activity.

This will help you unwind and relax after your heavy workout, but will also bring many benefits, such as

- Improved blood flow
- Improved cardiovascular/respiratory efficiency
- Increased cardio endurance

On top of that, if you hopped on this challenge for the goal of losing weight, the cardio workout will help you burn off extra calories, making it easier to create a caloric deficit (we'll talk about this in our nutrition challenge!)

Here are our 2 most favorite cardio activities to do after a heavy gym workout:

1. Jogging
2. Swimming

The Cardio Progression

If you are not really familiar with cardio training and have done little to none, here is a progression you can follow to improve your performance and results:

Cardio Workout	Steps
#1	1. Pick your cardio activity and start off with a pre-set distance. 2. Take your time to complete the entire distance at a low/moderate pace & **track the time needed for completion.** 3. Do NOT stop - If you get tired, just slow down the pace but keep moving
#2	1. Increase the distance slightly - If you've ran 3 kilometers on workout #, shoot for 5 on your second workout and **track the completion time.** 2. Again, do not stop in one place, if you are tired, slow down the pace.
#3	1. Take the increased distance from workout #2 and make a mental note of the completion time it took during your previous workout 2. Try and beat your time for that distance! On your third workout, you will do the same distance from workout 2, but you will have to try and beat your previous best time.

Weeks 2-3 - Upper Body/Lower Body Training & Sprints



During the last 2 weeks of your 21-day challenge, you're going to split your training from a full body circuit, to an upper body/lower body split, followed by a rest day (i.e training 2 days, resting 1 day, then repeating).

This will allow you to pay more attention to each muscle group and realize a greater training volume.



The focus is again on compound movements, as those allow you to lift heavier weights and thus create a better overall stimulus.

So let's see the workout, shall we?

Upper Body Workout Table

The upper body workout is made up of exercises, similar to the ones in the full body circuit, however, the angles of the exercises are a bit more different.

As a beginner, you must acknowledge that a small change in the grip or angle of the exercise, changes its specifics and thus, targets a different zone of the working muscle group.

This is what allows for more rounded, better overall development, so make sure you're not repeating the same 2 exercises over and over.

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest time
#1 Incline Barbell Bench Press	5	**12,12,12,10,10,8**	2 Minutes
#2 Pull-ups	5	**12,12,10,10,10,8**	2 Minutes
#3 Dumbbell lateral raise	3	**8-10**	2 Minutes
#4 Overhead Dumbbell Tricep Extension	5	**10-15**	3 Minutes
#5 Dumbbell hammer curls	5	**10**	2 Minutes

Exercise Execution Steps

#1 Incline Barbell Bench Press

1. Lie down comfortably on the bench press
2. Grab the bar wider than shoulder width and un-rack it
3. Bend your elbows slightly and out of lockout - This is your initial position
4. Without lifting your head off of the bench, let the bar go down slowly until it slightly touches your upper chest
5. Push the bar up explosively back to the initial position
6. Repeat

#2 Pull-Ups

1. Hang on the pull-up bar with your arms wider than shoulder width
2. Keep your legs straight and feet together
3. Look up, then pull yourself up until your chin is at bar level
4. Go back down in a controlled manner
5. Repeat

#3 Dumbbell Lateral raise

1. Grab a pair of dumbbells and stand with your feet at shoulder width
2. Keep the dumbbells slightly in front of you, palms facing one another
3. Bend your elbows slightly and avoid hunching your back
4. Lift your arms up laterally, leading with the elbow (i.e the elbow is slightly higher than the wrist)
5. Squeeze the shoulders up top, then come back down in a controlled manner
6. Repeat

#4 Overhead Dumbbell Tricep Extension

1. Grab a dumbbell and lift it above your head, letting it rest on your palms
2. Stand stably on your feet and keep your back straight
3. Let the dumbbell go down and behind your head slowly
4. Extend your arm back up, contracting the tricep
5. On steps 3 and 4, avoid flaring your elbows and keep them close to the head instead

#5 Dumbbell Hammer Curls

1. Take a pair of dumbbells and stand up straight
2. Keep the dumbbells by your sides, palms facing the legs
3. Without rotating your wrist, curl the dumbbell up and contract the upper arm
4. Hold peak flexion briefly, then come back down slowly
5. Repeat

Lower Body Workout Table

The lower body workouts in the last 2 weeks consist of compound, heavy movements along with sprints, as a second workout option besides weights.

Let's first have a look at the weight training workout and then move on to your approach to sprints!

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest time
#1 Barbell Squats	9	**12,12,12,10,10,8,8,6**	2 Minutes on warm-up sets, 3-4 minutes on working sets
#2 45-Degree Leg Press	3	**12**	2 Minutes 30 Sec
#3 Lying Hamstring Curls	5	**10**	2 Minutes
#4 Standing Calf Raises	5	**10-15**	2 Minutes
#5 Seated Calf Raises	5	**10**	2 Minutes

Exercise Execution Steps

#1 Barbell Squats

1. Rack a bar at shoulder height
2. Grab the bar with both hands at shoulder width
3. Get under the bar, placing it in the middle of your traps
4. Unrack the bar and take a few steps back
5. Place your feet at shoulder width with toes slightly pointing out
6. Bend your knees slightly, out of lockout
7. Keep your spine straight, don't hunch!
8. Squat down until your legs are parallel to the ground
9. Move back up, pushing primarily through the heel and mid foot
10. If you find it hard to squat and stay on your heels, place something under your heels so that they are slightly elevated

#2 45-Degree Leg Press

1. Sit down on the leg press machine comfortably
2. Tuck your butt well on the pad, so that it doesn't move up
3. Place your feet on the platform (higher if you have long legs), at shoulder width with toes pointing out slightly
4. Unrack the platform and keep your knees out of lockout - This is your initial position
5. Keeping your head rested on the pad, let the platform come down slowly
6. Push up explosively to the initial position, making sure that the tension is driven through the heel/mid foot

3 Lying Hamstring Curls

1. Lie down and place your heels under the pad - The pad should be at about ankle level, above the heel
2. Grab the handles, keep your back straight
3. Curl your legs explosively, contract the hamstrings up top, then come back down slowly
4. Avoid letting the weight go all the way down - This will help you maintain tension on the hamstrings
5. Repeat!

Exercise #4 - Standing Calf Raises

1. Step with your toes on the edge of a step/the calf machine platform
2. Keep your body straight and look slightly up
3. Dip your heels down slowly to stretch the calves
4. Briefly pause at the bottom, then push explosively through your toes
5. Contract the calves up top, then come back down and repeat the movement pattern

#5 Seated Calf Raises

1. Sit down on the calf machine
2. Place your feet on the edge of the platform, so that only your toes are on it
3. Place the pad on your legs comfortably and un-rack the weight
4. Dip your heels down slowly, stretching the calves
5. Push back up explosively through the toes, contracting the calves
6. Go back down slowly and repeat

Sprint Workouts

Sprints are without a doubt one of the most natural, power-burst exercises, that can develop your quadriceps, calves and glutes like no other gym exercise.

If you've gone through the cardio progression in week 1 and tried to beat your best time, you are now primed for short-burst sprints!

The workout presented here is a SUBSTITUTE to your lower body workout presented above, meaning that you will dedicate 1 training session to sprints and sprints only.

Follow our sprint progression below and see for yourself.

Sprint Workout #	Steps
#1	1. Take 5-10 minutes to warm up well with some bodyweight squats, lunges, light jumps and light jogging 2. Set yourself up for a sprint dash of 20 meters 3. Sprint 20 meters but not at full power, just get the ball rolling! 4. Rest 1 minute, then do another dash of 30 meters at a slightly higher power output 5. Rest 1 minute 6. Now you're ready for the full-on sprints - Do 5 dashes of 40 meters at full speed and **rest 2-3 minutes between each dash** **7. Make sure to have someone record your time!**
#2	1. Go through your warm-up routine and the gradual build up to full speed sprints 2. This time, instead of doing 5 dashes of 40 meters, do 6 dashes of 50 meters 3. Again, record your time!
#3	In workout #3, try to beat your best time for 6 dashes of 50 meters! In time, you may get used to this workout, so you can always increase the distance in a set or the total number of sets..

21-Day Challenge | Replacement Exercises

As we already mentioned, working each muscle under different angles is essential, as that will allow for better overall development.

In our table below, you can find all the exercises from weeks 1-3, along with optional substitutes.

Exercise	Substitute
Flat Barbell Bench Press	Decline Dumbbell Bench Press
Vertical Lat Pulldown	T-Bar Row
Seated Dumbbell Shoulder Presses	One Arm Dumbbell Shoulder Press
Bodyweight/Barbell Squats	Lunges/Hack Squat
Lying Hamstring Curls	Romanian Deadlifts
Standing Calf Raises	Seated Calf Raises
Incline Barbell Bench Press	Cable Crossovers
Pull-Ups	Cable Rows
Dumbbell Lateral Raise	Dumbbell Front Raise
Overhead Dumbbell Tricep Extension	Close Grip Bench Press
Dumbbell Hammer Curls	Barbell Curl

What To Do After The Challenge

The 21-day challenge was designed to give you the feel of both intense and not so intense movement.

By the end of week 3, you should be able to see substantial changes in how you look, perform and feel on a day to day basis.

Here are some tips on how to continue after week 3 is over:

#1 Keep Doing it!

The upper/lower training circuit is a perfect template, as it allows for just the right amount of recovery before training again.

You can use this split and change the exercises, sets, reps and rest times, in order to create greater stimulus and progress further.

#2 Diversify

Limiting your training to just weight training is not so good if you are not a bodybuilder or a powerlifter.

Try to add diverse training activities to your lifestyle, such as swimming, hiking, climbing, cycling, etc!

#3 Stay consistent

Training and eating well should become a part of your self-care routine, as our modern-day lifestyle basically deprives us of movement!

And guess what, judging by the anatomy we have, we were designed for a lot of movement.

Plus, movement makes you feel, look and perform better, so what is there to lose?

Just stay on track.

So, Are You In?

In 21 days you can make powerful decisions and create new habits that will ultimately improve your overall quality of life.

Take up on our 21-day workout challenge and feel the freedom of movement!

Feel the freedom of movement.

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