



NORTH STAR THEORY | FREE SAMPLE

NST Beginner Strength Plan - 8 Weeks

Choose a plan you can actually follow. A free sample: the plan at a glance, the roadmap and a three-exercise excerpt from Session A.

A FREE SAMPLE OF THE EIGHT-WEEK BEGINNER STRENGTH PLAN.

Version 1.0, updated 26 September 2026

OVERVIEW

The plan at a glance

LENGTH

8 weeks
4 phases, one plan

SESSIONS

3 a week
Full-body sessions A, B, C, in that order

SESSION LENGTH

35-55 minutes
Warm-up and cool-down included. It depends on your route.

EQUIPMENT

3 routes
None, a pair of dumbbells, or a full gym

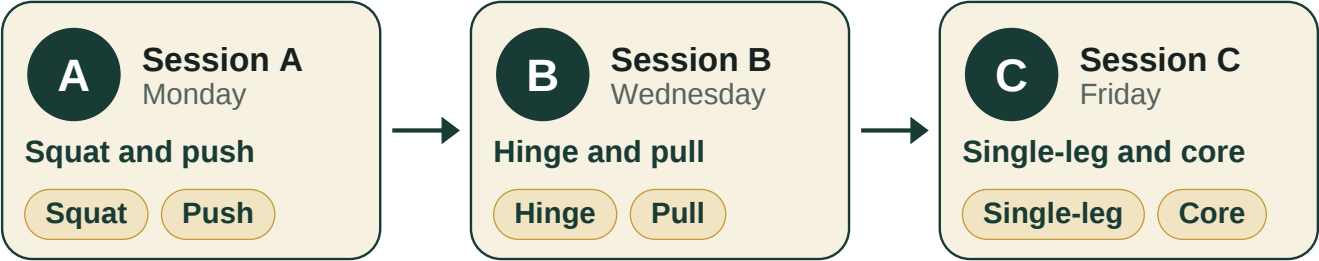
YOU GET

Web guide and PDF
Read it on your phone, or print the workbook

EDITION

Version 1.0
Updated 26 September 2026

A typical week



Monday: Session A, squat and push. **Wednesday:** Session B, hinge and pull. **Friday:** Session C, single-leg and core. Any three non-consecutive days work, and the order repeats: A, B, C, then A again.

How long each session takes

Route	Session A	Session B	Session C	Week total
Starter route No equipment needed	35-40 min Squat and push	40-45 min Hinge and pull	35-40 min Single-leg and core	110-125 minutes
Beginner route A pair of dumbbells, or a basic gym	40-45 min Squat and push	40-45 min Hinge and pull	40-45 min Single-leg and core	120-135 minutes
Progression route A full gym: barbell, rack with safety arms, bench	45-50 min Squat and press	45-50 min Deadlift and pull	50-55 min Single-leg and core	140-155 minutes

Eight weeks, four phases

1

WEEKS 1-2
Learn the patterns
Technique first. Every set feels comfortable.

2

3

WEEKS 3-5
Build
Work up to the top of each rep range.

4

5

WEEKS 6-7
Progress
Make one or two exercises harder per session.

6

7

8

WEEK 8
Consolidate
A lighter week on purpose, then choose your next step.

Where this guide starts

A common first question in strength training is: where do I actually begin, and what do I do next week? This guide is eight weeks of structure, so you are not rebuilding a plan from scratch every session.

This is not a personalised programme. It does not know your injury history, your schedule, or your goals beyond "train consistently, without overcomplicating it." It is a fixed, general starting structure that a beginner can follow, adjust to their own equipment, and use to build a routine.

It comes in three equipment routes so you can start with what you actually have access to, not what a programme assumes you own.

Who wrote this

Prepared by Gabriel Silva, a sports science student. That is not a medical, clinical, physiotherapy, coaching, dietetic, or registered-professional qualification. This guide is general fitness education, not a personalised or medical assessment. This guide has not yet been reviewed by a qualified coach, physiotherapist or clinician.

Reading on a phone or with a screen reader?

This PDF is designed for printing and for reading on a larger screen. It is not a tagged, screen-reader-accessible document. The same sample is on the guide's web page, which has proper headings and lists.

Before you start

This is a general plan and it cannot know your health. Please read this page before your first session.

Speak with an appropriately qualified healthcare professional before you start if any of these apply to you:

- You have an existing health condition, injury, or unexplained symptoms.
- You are pregnant, recently gave birth, or are returning to activity after medical care.
- You take regular medicines and are unsure whether exercise is suitable alongside them.
- You are unsure whether an activity in this guide is suitable for you.

Stop and get advice

- Stop an exercise if it causes sharp, localised or worsening pain, or symptoms that concern you, and seek appropriate medical advice before doing it again. An easier alternative is fine to use in the meantime, but it is not a reason to skip that advice.
- If you feel chest pain or tightness, faint or feel close to fainting, or become unusually short of breath, stop and seek urgent medical help. In the UK, call 999, or use NHS 111 if you are unsure how urgent it is.
- If you are unwell, for example with a fever or feeling generally ill, skip the session and return once you feel recovered.

Normal soreness or pain?

- Normal muscle soreness is a dull, widespread ache in the muscles you trained. It usually appears a day or two after a session and eases over the following days as you keep moving.
- Pain that is sharp, sudden, or in one spot such as a joint, that gets worse as you continue, that comes with numbness or tingling, or that has not eased after several days, is different. Stop the affected exercise and seek qualified advice.

Medical disclaimer

Read the medical disclaimer: <https://www.northstartheory.com/medical-disclaimer>

WHO THIS IS FOR

Prerequisites and equipment

An adult beginning structured resistance training from little or no experience, or restarting after a long break from exercise, who wants a fixed weekly structure rather than deciding what to do from scratch each session.

Prerequisites

- No previous strength-training experience is required for the Starter route.
- None of the situations in "Before you start" apply to you, or you have already checked with a qualified healthcare professional.
- "A long break" means a break from exercise. It does not include a break because of an injury, an illness or medical care: in those cases speak to your healthcare professional before starting.

Pick the route that matches the equipment you can reliably use: Starter needs no equipment, Beginner needs a pair of dumbbells or a basic gym, Progression needs full barbell access and some in-person experience of barbell lifts. You can move between routes later as your equipment changes.

CHOOSE YOUR ROUTE

Pick the route that matches your equipment

Route	Choose this if
Starter route Bodyweight, or minimal household items (a sturdy chair, a full backpack, a resistance band if you have one).	• You have no equipment, or only very basic items at home. • You are new to structured resistance training of any kind. • You would rather build the habit first and worry about equipment later.
Beginner route A pair of dumbbells (adjustable or a couple of fixed pairs), or a basic home/hotel gym.	• You have a pair of dumbbells, or access to a basic home or hotel-style gym. • You have done some bodyweight training before and want more loading options. • You have gym access but have not yet been shown barbell lifts in person. Start here, not on the Progression route.
Progression route Full gym access: barbell, plates, a squat rack or power cage with safety arms or pins, a flat bench.	• You have access to a full gym: barbells, plates, a rack with safety arms or pins, and a bench. • You have already been shown the barbell squat, bench press and deadlift in person by a qualified coach or an experienced trainer, or you have completed the Beginner route. • You want the most direct route to standard strength-training progression.

THE ROADMAP

Eight weeks, four phases

Weeks	Phase	What this phase means
1-2	Learn the patterns	Every session, every route: focus on technique and completing all sets comfortably. The goal this phase is familiarity, not intensity.
3-5	Build	Once sets feel controlled, work toward the top of each rep range before adding difficulty, rather than adding more sets.
6-7	Progress	Increase difficulty on one or two exercises per session at a time, whether that is added load, added reps, or a harder variation.
8	Consolidate	A lighter week on purpose. Finish the eight weeks feeling capable rather than depleted, and decide your next step.

WEEK 1

What week 1 actually looks like

In week 1 you do three sessions, on non-consecutive days if you can manage it, working through Session A, then Session B, then Session C.

This week sits in the "learn the patterns" phase: every set should feel clearly controlled, with several reps still left in you at the end of each set. You are not trying to find your limit yet. If an exercise's cue does not make sense the first time, that is normal; re-read it before your next set rather than guessing.

By the end of week 1 you should have a working sense of what each session actually involves in practice, not just on paper, and be ready to repeat the same three sessions again in week 2 before the "build" phase begins in week 3.

This is a three-exercise excerpt, not a complete workout. The 35-40 minute estimate describes the full Session A, not this excerpt. The complete session and progression instructions are in the full guide. Read Before you start before trying any exercise.

SESSION CARD | STARTER ROUTE

Starter route - Session A - squat and push focus

Estimated time: 35-40 minutes. Equipment: Bodyweight, or minimal household items (a sturdy chair, a full backpack, a resistance band if you have one).

- | | | |
|----------|--|--|
| 1 | Bodyweight squat
3 sets x 8-12 reps | Sit back and down like reaching for a chair. Full range you can control, not the deepest range you can force. |
| 2 | Incline push-up (hands on a stable table or counter)
3 sets x 6-10 reps | Body in a straight line from shoulders to ankles. Lower until your chest is close to the surface, then press back up. Stop the set when you can no longer keep that straight line. |
| 3 | Glute bridge
3 sets x 10-15 reps | Squeeze at the top for a moment before lowering under control. |

Rest

Rest 45-60 seconds between sets. Start the next set when your breathing has settled and you can keep good form.

Starter route - Session A: warm-up, technique and decision layer

Warm-up. 5 minutes easy movement (marching on the spot, arm circles, bodyweight squats to a comfortable depth) to raise your temperature and heart rate before loading the same patterns.

Technique - Bodyweight squat. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, toes turned out slightly. Push your hips back and bend your knees as if sitting into a chair, keeping your chest up and your weight through the whole foot. Lower to a depth you can control without your lower back rounding, then drive back up through your heels to standing.

Cool-down. 2-3 minutes of easy walking and a few gentle stretches for whatever felt tightest.

Decision layer, Session A - squat and push focus

Session purpose	This session builds your squat and your pushing strength together, two of the core patterns in strength training.
Why these movements	A squat pattern and a push train the large muscle groups of your legs and upper body in one session, so a short full-body session can cover a lot without needing many exercises.
A good working set	A good working set is controlled from the first rep to the last. In weeks 1-2 and in week 8 you should finish with several reps still left in you. From week 3, the last reps become noticeably harder than the first, but your form does not change. If you cannot finish the prescribed reps with good form, the set was too hard: lower the load or use an easier variation.
When to progress	Progress when you comfortably complete every set at the top of its rep range at the current phase's target effort, for two sessions in a row.
Equipment substitutions	To make incline push-ups easier, place your hands on a higher, stable surface or use a wall. Lowering the hand support makes the exercise harder. Check that any support cannot slide or tip before using it.
Shortened-session option	Short on time? Do the squat, the push-up, and the plank, and treat the row and glute bridge as optional extras.
Common mistakes	• Rushing the lowering phase of the main lift instead of controlling it. • Chasing extra reps past the target instead of stopping and doing another set. • Skipping the warm-up because the session already feels short.
Evidence limitations	The sets, reps and effort levels here are a commonly used starting point for beginners. They are not a personalised prescription and are not the result of a formal study of this plan. Individual response to the same programme varies.

THE REST OF THE WEEK

Session B and Session C

Starter route: titles, purpose, and duration only. The exercises are in the full guide.

Session B - hinge and pull focus

Estimated time: 40-45 minutes

Builds your hip hinge and your pulling strength, balancing the squat-and-push emphasis of Session A.

Session C - single-leg and core focus

Estimated time: 35-40 minutes

Adds more single-leg and trunk work to your week, plus a carry where the route includes one.

Printable workout log

Print this page, or copy the columns into your own notebook or spreadsheet. Fill in one row per exercise, each time you train.

The goal is a simple written record you can look back on, not a perfect one. A blank cell you forgot to fill in does not undo the session.

Date	Session	Exercise	Sets x reps	Load or variation	Effort	Notes

Session: A, B or C

Sets x reps: what you actually completed

Load or variation: weight used, or which version of the exercise

Effort: roughly how many more reps you had left in the tank

Notes: anything worth remembering next time

QUESTIONS

What people ask before buying

Is this plan suitable for me?

It is a general plan for adults who are new to strength training or restarting after a long break from exercise. It cannot assess you individually. Read "Before you start" and speak to a qualified healthcare professional first if any of those situations apply. If you are returning after an injury, an illness or medical care, that conversation comes first.

Which route should I choose?

Choose by the equipment you can reliably use. Starter needs no equipment, Beginner needs dumbbells, and Progression needs a full gym with barbells. If you have gym access but have not been shown barbell lifts in person, start with the Beginner route.

How long is each session?

Roughly 35 to 55 minutes depending on the route, including a short warm-up and cool-down. The full guide gives a rest guide and a shortened-session option for every session.

Will this get me results?

No result is promised. What you get from any plan depends on consistency, recovery, nutrition, sleep and where you start, none of which this guide can control.

What does the free sample include?

The roadmap, the plan's prerequisites and safety page, a three-exercise excerpt from Session A with written technique for its first exercise, a printable workout log, and the titles of the other two sessions. This excerpt is not a complete workout. Complete sessions and every route's exercises are in the full guide.

How do I get the guide after paying?

When your payment is confirmed you are taken to an order page with a link to read the guide online and a link to download the PDF. Keep that page's address private: it prepares fresh links each time you open it.

What this guide is not

- This is a fixed, general starting structure. It does not know your injury history, current symptoms, or personal circumstances, and it cannot adjust itself to them the way a qualified coach or clinician working with you directly could.
- If an exercise causes sharp, localised, or worsening pain (as distinct from normal new-exercise muscle soreness), stop that exercise and seek appropriate professional advice before continuing it.
- This guide does not replace an in-person technique check, especially for the barbell lifts in the Progression route. If you are unsure whether your form is safe, have it checked by a qualified coach or trainer before adding load.
- Finishing eight weeks does not guarantee a specific strength, appearance, or performance outcome - individual results vary with consistency, recovery, nutrition, sleep, and starting point, none of which this guide can control or promise.

Unlock the complete eight-week plan

This sample shows three exercises from Session A and the shape of the other two sessions. It is not a complete workout. The full guide has all eight weeks, complete sessions, every equipment route, and the four-phase progression scheme that tells you how to adjust effort as you go.

The full guide is a single payment on the North Star Theory website:

<https://www.northstartheory.com/guides/store/nst-beginner-strength-plan>