



## South Loop Strength & Conditioning - Beginner Five Week Training Program

Welcome to your five week exercise program. This program is intended as a basic strength and conditioning program for someone with no major movement issues looking to improve their fitness. There will be progressions in both strength and aerobic capacity over the five weeks. You can expect to see some nice changes in your numbers on your lifts and conditioning workouts over the course of this program - and you should also start to look better and feel better, too.

We recommend tracking your progress closely so that you're able to progress from week to week. At South Loop Strength & Conditioning, we give everyone a notebook their first day, and we also encourage using our digital partners at [Train Heroic](#). Either one works. So, before you head to the gym, you've got a few options:

- Get yourself a notebook
- Sign up for a digital workout tracking software like [Train Heroic](#)
- Start a new note in your phone

Whatever works. Just keep track of this stuff.

We also recommend using pictures to track progress in body composition. While there are a variety of easy methods of measuring body fat (bio-impedance, etc.), there is a lot of variation in measurements unless you go all in for a DXA scan. Scale weight is often an unreliable measure of body composition as well. We ran a corporate wellness program during which participants did a DXA scan at the beginning and end of the program. I received some push back from a few folks on my team about how their weight loss goals weren't heading in the right direction - in fact, their weight on the scale didn't change at all. They seemed to reluctantly accept that their body composition was changing despite a lack of change on the scale. However, once they did their final DXA scan and final series of pictures, they were ecstatic. One in particular lost 5% body fat and had extremely visible changes in abdominal definition - but her scale weight was *exactly* the same after six months of training. Pictures don't lie, though ([well, unless you want to get really clever with your photos](#)).

Many of the movements in this program are full body movements with a lot of potential for technical error. Ideally, you would have a qualified coach guiding you through this. However, without one, here are a few tips:

- Use the exercise demo vids on [Train Heroic](#) - or try to find a reputable demo on YouTube
- Never do anything that feels sketchy. It's ok for things to be hard. It's ok to be sore. It's ok to be

uncomfortable. However, *pain* is not ok. If something feels sketchy, it is. Choose a different movement if you don't feel comfortable with something.

Also, there's nothing magical about this program. This is just a sample progression designed for someone relatively new to training. There are a lot of different ways to chop this up and a lot of them are probably comparably effective. Simply use this as a springboard. Keep in mind, that if you have success with this program, you may need to move on to some more advanced training to continue seeing progress. The plan to get you to a 200# squat is not the same plan that will get you to a 400# squat. The plan to get you to 15% body fat is not the same plan to get you to 10% body fat.

### **Terms and Definitions**

We use a variety of terms to communicate the goal of a workout - and there are quite a few abbreviations that show up when you're looking at exercise programming. Here are a few that you'll see in the program below with explanations.

*AMRAP*: "As many reps as possible" in the given timeframe

*3x5*: Three sets of five repetitions

*Across*: Use the same weight for all working sets

*Working set*: The sets of an exercise that count as your training sets - exclude warm-up sets

*Warm-up set*: Lighter weight sets meant to prepare your body for the working sets

*A1/A2 - B1/B2*: This is "superset" notation. Do one set of the A1 exercise, rest the allotted time, then move on to the A2 exercise. Do one set of A2, rest the allotted time, then move back to A1. Alternate between A1 & A2 until you've completed all sets, then move on to the B exercises.

*@ 90% effort*: This is a "rate of perceived exertion" prescription. 90% effort should be about a 9 out of 10 on degree of effort. Keep in mind that this is always relative to the timeframe. So, 90% effort for something two minutes long is much much faster than 90% effort for something 30 minutes long.

*For time*: Complete as quickly as possible. There is no specific prescribed rest. Take breaks as necessary, but the goal is to complete the work as quickly as you are able. This may mean taking strategic rest as you go, or it may mean pushing early and seeing what happens later in the workout.

*EMOTM*: "Every minute on the minute" - Begin a new set each minute. For this format, it will often end up being something like 10-15s of work followed by 50-45s of rest.

### **Template Notation**

You will notice that each day has some notation after it. This is the weekly split, which indicates which characteristics will be trained on each day.

*Int*: "Intense" - Refers to percentage of one rep maximum for that lift. Intense training sessions are meant to be heavy, and usually involve sets of 5 repetitions or less.

*Vol*: "Volume" - Refers to training sessions meant to accumulate higher numbers of repetitions of exercises. "Volume" sessions will usually involve sets of 8+ repetitions.

*MAP*: "Maximum aerobic power" - Refers to training sessions focused on developing the capacity of the aerobic system to output power. These sessions are usually interval-based with work to rest ratios of about one-to-one. There will be contributions from other energy systems, but the focus is on developing both power output and recovery with the aerobic system.

*Battery*: Refers to training sessions focused on developing the capacity to repeat high percentage efforts - usually in barbell lifts or higher skill or load gymnastics movements. When the degree of difficulty passes a certain percentage, the ability to perform another rep of a challenging movement requires the body to restore the creatine phosphate system. The speed with which it can do this is sometimes referred to as "CP battery."

*Tester*: Refers to a workout that is intended to be done as a gauge in capacity for a specific timeframe. These are meant to be done for the "fastest time" or "most reps" - as opposed to interval-style workouts, which are meant to be done at submaximal effort in order to accumulate volume and develop pacing.

## **Five Week Program**

Week 1

### **Day 1 - Back squat, int + Bench press, int + MAP, int, high %**

A1. Back squat

3x5, Across, Rest 90s

A2. Close-grip bench press (14" grip width)

3x5, Across, Rest 90s

*\*Do three sets of five repetitions at a challenging weight - should be about a 7 or 8 out of 10 on a degree of difficulty scale. Use the same weight across on all sets. Use about three warm-up sets to build to your working weight - don't count those as part of your three working sets.*

*The A1/A2 notation is "superset" notation. So, do a set of back squats, rest 90s, then do a set of bench press, rest 90s, then do a set of back squats, until you've completed three sets of each exercise.*

B. 5 sets @ 90% effort

30s on/30s off:

Burpees

Walking lunges

Box jumps, step down

Russian kettlebell swings

*\*After performing all the sets of part A, then move on to part B. Rest as needed between parts A & B.*

*For part B, the goal is to find a challenging but consistent pace so that your pace on the first set resembles your pace on the last set. If you go out at full intensity, there will be significant attrition between rounds. However, this should be difficult and somewhat uncomfortable. 90% effort refers to a pace that should be about a 9 out of 10 on a degree of difficulty scale, but should also be sustainable*

*across rounds.*

*You will do 30s of work followed by 30s of rest of each exercise for a total of five times through the cycle. So, it will 30s of burpees, rest 30s, 30s of lunges, rest 30s, 30s of box jumps with a step down (not rebounding), rest 30s, 30s of Russian kettlebell swings (to chest height), rest 30s, back to 30s of burpees, etc.*

*After part B, spend some time cooling down. A good option is an easy row or bike at a very low intensity (conversational pace) as well as some foam rolling on any "tight" areas.*

## **Day 2 - Clean deadlift + Loaded carry + MAP, low %**

A. Clean deadlift  
3x8, Across, Rest 2 min

*\*For the clean deadlift, the hips will be lower than in a traditional deadlift. This mimics the starting position of the clean, and will likely result in slightly lower weights being used. Prioritize position over loading here.*

*Similar to the back squats and the bench presses on Day 1, shoot for a weight that is about a 7 or an 8 out of 10 on the degree of difficulty scale. Keep the same weight for all three sets of eight repetitions. Also, use about three warm-up sets to build up to your working weight.*

B. Farmer's walk  
3x60s, Heavy, Rest 1 min

*\*For the farmer's walk, select a weight (either kettlebells or dumbbells) that will be challenging for the entire 60s. The goal is to keep moving for a full minute. The 1 minute rest in between sets may not be a full recovery, and that's OK.*

C. 15 min AMRAP @ 70%:  
400m run  
30 single-unders  
30s/side side plank  
100' bear crawl

*\*This is meant to be aerobic development and skill work. The pace is prescribed at 70%, which means "moderate effort." This should be a much more comfortable pace than the 30s intervals from Day 1. The goal here is to build the aerobic system and work on some skills, as well as build volume in movements that can positively impact our overall movement skill (crawling, side planking, etc.)*

## **Day 3 - Front squat, int + Single-leg, vol + Short tester**

A. Front squat  
3x5, Across, Rest 2-3 min b/w sets

*\*Same concept here as with the back squats and bench presses from Day 1. Shoot for a 7 or 8 on the degree of difficulty scale. Hit about three warm-up sets to build to your working weight.*

B. DB walking lunges  
3x8-10/leg, Building, Rest 2 min b/w sets

*\*For these lunges, hold dumbbells in your hands while you complete them. For each set, do 8-10 reps per leg, so 16-20 total reps. Shoot for the higher end of the rep range, but, if form gets sketchy along the way, terminate the set. On these sets, shoot to add weight each set if you are able to complete the top end of the rep range.*

C. For time:  
30 dumbbell thrusters  
500m row

*\*This should be a short workout done at very high effort. Choose a weight on the thruster with which you can do the 30 reps in one or two sets at most. If you don't have access to a Concept 2 rower, run 400m instead.*

#### **Day 4 - Press, vol + Row, vol + Battery**

A1. Seated DB press  
3x8, Across, Rest 90s  
A2. Double DB bent over row  
3x8, Across, Rest 90s

B. EMOTM 16-24:  
1st min: 6-8 ring rows, tough  
2nd min: 6-8 double KB front squats  
3rd min: 3-4 renegade rows, tough  
4th min: 5 box jumps, no rebound, tough

*\*Set a running clock, and begin a new set each minute. You will do 6-8 tough ring rows (shoot for the top end of the rep range), then rest the remainder of the minute. When minute two starts, you will do 6-8 tough double KB front squats, then rest the remainder of the minute. After completing all four exercises, you will start at ring rows again on minute 5.*

*The "EMOTM 16-24" is meant to give you a bit of wiggle room. Shoot to complete 24 minutes, but, if you find that your ability to get the work done with good form within the rep range is deteriorating, go ahead and terminate your sets early. Shoot to set this up so you can get at least 16 minutes (4 sets) of work done.*

#### **Week 2**

##### **Day 1 - Back squat, int + Bench press, int + MAP, int, high %**

A1. Back squat  
3x5, Across, Rest 90s, Heavier than last week  
A2. Close-grip bench press (14" grip width)  
3x5, Across, Rest 90s, Heavier than last week

*\*Shoot to increase your weight used on these exercises from last week by about 5-10 pounds.*

B. 5 sets @ 90% effort  
30s on/30s off:  
Goblet squats  
Burpee box jumps  
Jump rope - Double-unders or single-unders  
Dumbbell push presses

*\*For the jump rope, do double-unders if you can. If not, scale to single-unders.*

### **Day 2 - Clean deadlift + Loaded carry + MAP, low %**

A. Clean deadlift  
8,7,6, Building, Rest 2 min

*\*The repetitions decrease per set here. Shoot to add load to each set and make each set somewhere around a 7 or an 8 on a degree of difficulty scale.*

B. Farmer's walk  
3x60s, Heavy, Rest 1 min

*\*Shoot for heavier than last week.*

C. 15 min AMRAP @ 70%:  
3/arm Turkish get-ups (moderate load)  
100/arm bottoms up KB waiter's walk  
60s plank  
90s shuttle run (10m increments)

*\*For the shuttle run, mark off 10 meters - jog back and forth and touch your hands to the ground before changing direction.*

### **Day 3 - Front squat, int + Single-leg, vol + Short tester**

A. Front squat  
3x5, Across, Rest 2-3 min b/w sets, Heavier than last week

*\*Shoot to increase the weight by about 5-10 pounds from last week.*

B. DB walking lunges  
3x10-12/leg, Building, Rest 2 min b/w sets

*\*The reps per set have increased since last week. Shoot to do these sets with at least the same weight as last week. If you're feeling good, see if you can build to a higher load.*

C. For time:  
15-12-9:  
Dumbbell hang squat cleans  
Burpees

*\*Do 15 dumbbell hang squat cleans, then 15 burpees, then 12 dumbbell hang squat cleans, then 12 burpees, then 9 of each exercise.*

#### **Day 4 - Press, vol + Row, vol + Battery**

A1. Seated DB press

3x10, Across, Rest 90s

A2. Double DB bent over row

3x10, Across, Rest 90s

*\*This is two more reps on each exercise than last week. See if you can complete the work with the same weight you used last week even though there are more reps.*

B. EMOTM 16-24:

1st min: 3-5 assisted strict pull-ups

2nd min: 4/leg DB step-ups, tough

3rd min: 1/arm Turkish get-ups, tough

4th min: 6-8 Russian KB swings, tough

*\*For the assisted pull-ups, use a jump stretch band (if you have one available) that allows you to do 3-5 tough reps per minute.*

#### **Week 3**

##### **Day 1 - Back squat, int + Bench press, int + MAP, int, high %**

A1. Back squat

3x5, Across, Rest 90s, Heavier than last week

A2. Close-grip bench press (14" grip width)

3x5, Across, Rest 90s, Heavier than last week

*\*Shoot to increase your weight used on these exercises from last week by about 5-10 pounds. As we progress through this, you should be able to increase your load by about 5-10 pounds per week for several weeks - unless you started to high or your training age is high (ie you have a significant background in strength training).*

B. 5 sets @ 90% effort

30s on/30s off:

Dumbbell thrusters

Row or run

Russian KB swings

Box jumps, step down

##### **Day 2 - Clean deadlift + Loaded carry + MAP, low %**

A. Clean deadlift

7,6,5, Building, Rest 2 min

*\*The repetitions decrease per set here. Shoot to add load to each set and make each set somewhere around a 7 or an 8 on a degree of difficulty scale.*

B. Farmer's walk  
3x75s, Heavy, Rest 1 min

*\*The time for each set has increased here. Shoot to complete this at the same weight as last week if possible.*

C. 15 min AMRAP @ 70%:  
10/arm half-kneeling KB press  
100' bear crawl  
400m run  
45s stir-the-pot  
20 step-ups, alternating

### **Day 3 - Front squat, int + Single-leg, vol + Short tester**

A. Front squat  
3x5, Across, Rest 2-3 min b/w sets, Heavier than last week

*\*Shoot to increase the weight by about 5-10 pounds from last week.*

B. DB walking lunges  
3x12-15/leg, Building, Rest 2 min b/w sets

*\*The reps per set have increased since last week. Shoot to do these sets with at least the same weight as last week. If you're feeling good, see if you can build to a higher load.*

C. For time:  
50 double-unders or 100 single-unders  
500m row or 400m run  
50 double-unders or 100 single-unders  
500m row or 400m run  
50 double-unders or 100 single-unders

*\*If you can do the double-unders, do them.*

### **Day 4 - Press, vol + Row, vol + Battery**

A1. Seated DB press  
3x12, Across, Rest 90s  
A2. Double DB bent over row  
3x12, Across, Rest 90s

*\*This is two more reps on each exercise than last week. See if you can complete the work with the same weight you used last week even though there are more reps.*

B. EMOTM 16-24:



1st min: 3-5 renegade rows, tough  
2nd min: 5-7 double KB deadlifts, tough  
3rd min: 5-7 DB thrusters, tough  
4th min: 15s row all out

*\*If you don't have a rower, try sprinting. If you don't have space to sprint, try battling ropes or broad jumps.*

## **Week 4**

### **Day 1 - Back squat, int + Bench press, int + MAP, int, high %**

A1. Back squat  
3x5, Across, Rest 90s, Heavier than last week  
A2. Close-grip bench press (14" grip width)  
3x5, Across, Rest 90s, Heavier than last week

*\*Shoot to increase your weight used on these exercises from last week by about 5-10 pounds.*

*If you're starting to fail on these sets, take the weight down by 20%, and restart the progression from there next week.*

B. 2 sets @ 90% effort  
2 min AMRAP:  
10 Russian KB swings  
10 burpees  
+  
Rest 2 min  
+  
2 min AMRAP:  
10 goblet squats  
10 box jumps, step down  
+  
Rest 2 min

*\*This week, rather than doing 30s intervals, we've progressed into doing two minute intervals. This will require an adjustment in pacing. The goal is to move for the full two minutes at a steady pace, taking strategic rest as needed.*

*The first set and the second set should hopefully have comparable output.*

### **Day 2 - Clean deadlift + Loaded carry + MAP, low %**

A. Clean deadlift  
6,5,4, Building, Rest 2 min

*\*The repetitions decrease per set here. Shoot to add load to each set and make each set somewhere around a 7 or an 8 on a degree of difficulty scale.*

B. Farmer's walk  
3x75s, Heavy, Rest 1 min

*\*Shoot for heavier than last week.*

C. 15 min AMRAP @ 70%:  
500m row  
30 single-unders  
8 Turkish get-ups, alternating (moderate load)  
15 hollow rocks

### **Day 3 - Front squat, int + Single-leg, vol + Short tester**

A. Front squat  
3x5, Across, Rest 2-3 min b/w sets, Heavier than last week

*\*Shoot to increase the weight by about 5-10 pounds from last week.*

B. DB walking lunges  
15/leg, 12/leg, 10/leg, Rest 2 min b/w sets

*\*The reps per set have increased since last week. Shoot to do these sets with at least the same weight as last week. If you're feeling good, see if you can build to a higher load.*

C. For time:  
21-15-9:  
Wall balls  
Ball slams

*\*Use the same weight for both the wall ball and the ball slam.*

*Do 21 wall balls, then 21 ball slams, then 15 wall balls, then 15 ball slams, then 9 wall balls, then 9 ball slams.*

### **Day 4 - Press, vol + Row, vol + Battery**

A1. Seated DB press  
3x15, Across, Rest 90s  
A2. Double DB bent over row  
3x15, Across, Rest 90s

*\*See if you can complete the work with the same weight you used last week even though there are more reps.*

B. 15 min AMRAP:  
150' farmer's walk (heavy)  
3/arm Turkish get-ups, tough  
10 clapping push-ups or hand-release push-ups  
8 double KB front squats (tough)

*\*Rather than doing an "every minute on the minute" piece this week, we're doing a 15 minute "grinder." Each exercise here should be pretty challenging, and should force you to pace your effort as you move through this. Select weights that will make this tough - the goal here is not be super high turnover like our MAP work earlier in the week.*

## **Week 5**

### **Day 1 - Back squat, int + Bench press, int + MAP, int, high %**

A. Back squat

Build to a tough set of 5

B. Close-grip bench press (14" grip width)

Build to a tough set of 5

*\*We will be "testing" this week, so the goal is to find some baseline numbers upon which you can base further training. You can also use these numbers to gauge progress as you train by repeating the tests. They can also offer insight into where improvement is needed - what is your back squat relative to your deadlift? How fast is your mile run relative to your 5k run? These pieces can help us put together a framework of where your fitness is, and where it needs to be improved relative to your goals.*

*For these tough sets of 5, shoot to lift more than you've lifted for any of your 3x5 sets. This doesn't need to be a true "5 rep max," just look hit something that's at least an 8 or a 9 out of 10 on a degree of difficulty scale.*

C. 10 rounds for time:

4 burpees

6 kettlebell swings

8 wall balls

*\*This is meant to be a very high turnover aerobic tester. Complete this as quickly as possible, but use your insight from the aerobic intervals we've been doing in terms of what kind of pace is going to be appropriate here. If you go out too fast on the first two rounds, things can fall apart quickly.*

### **Day 2 - Clean deadlift + Loaded carry + MAP, low %**

A. Clean deadlift

Build to a tough set of 5. Reset each rep.

B. 3 min AMRAP:

Farmer's walk

*\*Walk as far in 3 minutes as possible. Use the heaviest load you've used over the last few weeks for this test. Rest as necessary - just shoot to get as much distance as you can.*

C. For time:

3k row or 3k run

*\*Row or run 3000m as fast as possible.*

### **Day 3 - Front squat, int + Single-leg, vol + Short tester**

A. Front squat  
Build to a tough 5

B. DB split squat  
Build to a tough 6/leg

*\*A DB split squat is almost the same as a lunge - just stay stationary and don't move your feet between repetitions.*

C. For time:  
30 DB thrusters  
500m row

*\*This is a repeat of a workout from the beginning of the program. Use the same weight on the thrusters and see how you've progressed.*

### **Day 4 - Press, vol + Row, vol + Battery**

A. Seated DB press  
Build to a tough 6

B. Double DB bent over row  
Build to a tough 6

C. For time:  
30 ring rows - straps vertical if possible  
40 hand-release push-ups

### **What's Next?**

From here, you have a lot of options. I wouldn't recommend just repeating this program over and over (although you probably could and would see some good results).

This is a good primer in the concepts of strength and conditioning for general physical preparedness. If your goals are to improve your fitness, look good, and feel good, feel free to follow the "Fitness" programming we offer on our blog here: <http://southloopsc.com/blog/fitness>

Keep in mind that this programming is intended to be done under the eyes of a coach, so there may be some movements in there that will require significant coaching to be done correctly, like the snatch and clean & jerk.

If your goal is improve your fitness dramatically and you have an interest in competing in fitness competitions, check out our "Performance" programming here: <http://southloopsc.com/blog/performance>

If you're very serious about fitness competition and want to compete at the Regional level, then you don't belong here! Go check out our "Competition" programming if you like, and get yourself a coach knowledgeable in the sport!

<http://southloopsc.com/blog/competition>