

Dr. Ross's Weekly Strengthening Checklist

To fulfill our body's basic needs of strengthening activity, simply do one or two exercises from **each category** at least once per week, preferably twice. Completing this task every week consistently will likely result in strength gains, lower stress, more confidence, better sleep, less pain, and overall better health. I know this looks like a lot, so I put the **non-negotiables in bold**.

1. **Squat** (Bodyweight Jump, Barbell Back, Front, Goblet, Zercher, Sumo stance, Narrow stance, Heels elevated on wedge for extra depth and focus on quads, Heels elevated *without* a wedge for extra challenge on feet/ankles and balance under load.)
2. **Lunge** (Forward, Reverse, Side)
3. **Hip Hinge** (Deadlift, RDL, Split stance, Goodmorning, BB Hip Thrust, Bridge, SL Bridge, Kettlebell Swing)
4. Push Overhead (OHP, shoulder/military press, Pike Pushup, incline press may be a viable option for those with shoulder issues preventing overhead motions.)
5. Pull from Overhead (Pull-up, Lat Pulldown, weighted pull-up)
6. **Push** Horizontal (Push-up, Bench Press, Chest Press, Single/Double Arm)
7. **Pull** Horizontal (Cable Row, Australian Pull-up, Bent Over Row, Single/Double Arm)
8. Push Below (Dip, Weighted Dip, Decline Press)
9. Pull from Below (Shrug, Hip Huggers, High Pull)
10. **Carry** (Suitcase, Single Front Rack, Overhead, Sandbag/Atlas Stone/Child/Pet)
 - o **Brachiating** (Two hand, One hand, Supinated, Pronated, Dead, Active, Swan.) Brachiating or hanging is non-negotiable for shoulder health and function. If you can't reach overhead then modify by leaning back from something lower like doorknobs. Hang for at least 30 seconds per day or as much as you can tolerate. If you want to know why, then let me know and I'll share my thoughts. The only exceptions are people with shoulder instability from past dislocation.)
11. **Plyometrics** (Minimize contact time with the ground during: Bunny hops, Single-leg, Vertical jumps, Box jumps, Depth jumps, Multidirectional Jumps, Broad Jumps, Fast Footwork, Sprints)
12. Feet and Ankles (**Calf Raises, Toe Raises**, MJ's, Eversion, Inversion, Splays, Arch Raises)

13. **Rotator Cuff Big 3 (Resisted Internal and External Rotation; Flys and Reverse Flys** in a Clock configuration starting at 6 o'clock and ending at 12 o'clock; and **3-Way Raises** in Flexion, Scaption, and Abduction. **High pulls and Face pulls** with an emphasis on external rotation are also some of my favorites for strengthening the rotator cuff. Remember those external rotation muscles like infraspinatus and teres minor are inherently smaller than your internal rotators like pecs and lats.
14. **Neck (Lying Gravity-resisted Flexion, Lateral Flexion, Extension, and Rotation.** Shrugs (#9) and OHP (#4) also are excellent for strengthening the neck. See "Neck" page for an instructional video)
15. **Low Back (Jefferson Curl, Lumbar Extension, Side Bend, Crunch, Hip Flexion, Reverse Hypers, Straight Leg Pendulum, Kettlebell Swing Variations)**
Despite some controversy I still believe it's beneficial to train Anti-Movement with variations of bird-dogs, beast crawls, planks. If not for the fun of it, these drills can improve the feel of mind-muscle connection and build confidence with your ability to be stable in different positions. Keeping injury risk low is largely accomplished by strategically preparing athletes for the physicality of their sport. Something crucial for athletes of all sports, but especially contact sports is the ability to withstand external forces, or anti-movement.
16. **Single Leg Stability (Single-Leg "Flamingo" Drills, Loaded Hip airplane, SL RDL to High knee, SL CARs/Liftovers)**
17. **Hamstring Curls** (Seated, Lying, Nordics, Cable/Banded, Prone DB)
 - Why Hamstring curls when we're already training hamstrings with the Hip Hinge (#3)? Deadlifts and RDLs are great but they fail to strengthen the one hamstring muscle that doesn't cross the hip, the biceps femoris short head. You have to bend the knee against resistance to train it.
18. **Arm Accessories:** You get plenty of tri- and bi- work with the various pushes and pulls above, but if you enjoy working them in isolation like I sometimes do, then sprinkle some of these into your routine.
 - **Tris:** Overhead Tricep Extensions, Lying DB Tricep Extensions/skullcrushers, Tricep pushdowns, Close-grip push-up, Close-grip pike pushup.
 - **Bis:** Incline Curls, Standing Curls, Concentration Curls,
 - **Forearms:** Wrist curls, Wrist extensions, Pronation, Supination, Finger extension, Finger flexion

Choose one of the following programming options:

- A) Work out 2X per week. (9 different exercises per day)
- B) Work out 3X per week. (6 exercises per day)
- C) Work out 4X per week. (4-5 exercises per day)
- D) Work out 5X per week. (3-4 exercises per day)
- E) Work out however many times you want as long as you feel recovered, healthy, and can measure progress (you getting stronger) over time. Some days you may feel like doing less than other days. That's ok.

For REPS and SETS, since no two people are the same the only instruction that I can give that applies to everybody is to **do your best**. If the exercise is hard, then try to complete about 2-3 sets of 5 reps with 2 minute rest intervals between each set. If the exercise is easy, then maybe try 2-3 sets of 15.

Do this with enough **volume** and **intensity** to make you feel like you've adequately **challenged** yourself and are proud of the work you put in. Your muscles might look and feel a little bigger, maybe even tight like they're getting more blood flow, a phenomenon colloquially known as "the pump." Learn to love the pump. For the most part, the more effort you put in, the more you'll get out of it.

Generally try for an **RPE** (Rating of Perceived Exertion) of about 60-80%, which is a subjective measure of the difficulty of the workout. If you feel fatigued with prolonged recovery times, then it is encouraged to **deload** for a short period before increasing the intensity again - a strategy known as **periodization**. The whole point of deloading is to allow the body time to **recover** from pushing it through intense workouts back to back to back. Experiment with doing a variety of high intensity and low intensity workouts and see how your body responds. Over the course of 4-6 weeks you should have made noticeable strength gains, at which point it is appropriate to increase the weight or intensity of the exercise (**progressive overload**). Most will feel a good balance with doing 2-4 weeks of heavy/high intensity followed by 2-4 weeks of light/low intensity exercises.

If you're new to exercising, the abundance of information can be overwhelming, so instead of stressing over small details; just focus on working out consistently, being **well rested, well fed, and well hydrated**.

For OPTIMAL RESULTS, apart from being well rested, well fed, and well hydrated, there are a couple of things you can do with regards to timing. 1) Time each rep so that you spend at least one second controlling the eccentric (negative) portion of the exercise, and be explosively quick on the concentric portion. In the world of strength training, you typically get stronger by using heavier weights, but some people don't know that you can get potentially just as strong by moving lighter weights faster. It's more about the intensity than the number on the dumbbell. 2) Move through a full range of motion **embracing the stretch portion of the movement** to stimulate maximum muscle growth and to protect against muscle injury. If you watch videos of athletes pulling their hamstrings mid-game, the moment of injury always seems to be at the fully stretched position. Gradually get your muscles acquainted with being stretched under load. **Strengthen your weakest links.**

IF YOU HAVE PAIN OR DISCOMFORT THAT IS WORSENING DURING ANY EXERCISE OR ACTIVITY, then either modify technique to make it more tolerable or get examined by a doctor if you think you might be injured.

Yours in health,

RB