

3-day beginner full-body plan

Healthy adults aged 18 and over who are new to resistance training, or returning after a long break.

Three full-body sessions a week. Leave at least one rest day between sessions. Two full-body sessions a week still works — alternate Session A and Session B. Session length: however long the sets and rest take — often 45 minutes to an hour, warm-up included.

Session A — Squat, push, pull (e.g. Monday)

Exercise	Sets	Reps / time	Rest	Swap if busy
Leg press or goblet squat	3	8–12	90–120 sec	Goblet squat with a dumbbell, or a Smith machine squat
Chest press machine or dumbbell bench press	3	8–12	90 sec	Dumbbell bench press, or press-ups
Seated row machine	3	8–12	90 sec	Chest-supported dumbbell row, or a band row
Romanian deadlift with light dumbbells	2	8–12	90 sec	Hip thrust, or a dumbbell hip hinge with lighter weight
Dumbbell shoulder press	2	8–12	60 sec	Machine shoulder press, or a seated dumbbell press
Plank	2	20–40 sec	45 sec	Dead bug, or a front plank from the knees

Session B — Hinge, vertical pull, single leg (e.g. Wednesday)

Exercise	Sets	Reps / time	Rest	Swap if busy
Romanian deadlift with light dumbbells	3	8–12	90–120 sec	Hip thrust, or a dumbbell hip hinge with lighter weight
Lat pulldown or assisted pull-up	3	8–12	90 sec	Assisted pull-up machine, or a single-arm dumbbell row
Split squat or step-up	2 per leg	8–10 each side	60 sec	Step-up onto a low box, or a supported reverse lunge
Incline dumbbell press	2	8–12	90 sec	Incline machine press, or press-ups with the hands raised
Triceps pushdown or lateral raise	2	8–12	60 sec	Band pushdown, or a light dumbbell lateral raise
Dead bug or cable rotation	2	8–10 each side	45 sec	Plank, or a slow bird dog

Session C — Repeat the Session A patterns with slightly more load (e.g. Friday)

Exercise	Sets	Reps / time	Rest	Swap if busy
Leg press or goblet squat	3	8–12	90–120 sec	Goblet squat with a dumbbell, or a Smith machine squat
Chest press or push-up variation	3	8–12	90 sec	Dumbbell bench press, or press-ups
Seated row or single-arm row	3	8–12	90 sec	Chest-supported dumbbell row, or a band row
Hamstring curl or hip thrust	2	8–12	60 sec	Glute bridge, or a light Romanian deadlift
Bicep curl or lateral raise	2	8–12	60 sec	Cable curl, or a light dumbbell lateral raise
Side plank	2	15–30 sec each side	45 sec	Side plank from the knees, or a suitcase carry

Effort: stop each working set with 2–3 reps in reserve (about 4 in week one). Trunk exercises stop when form slips.

Warm-up

Step	What to do
5 minutes easy cardio	Bike, rower or brisk walk until your breathing lifts slightly and you feel warm.
Two mobility drills	Something for the hips and something for the shoulders — for example bodyweight squats and arm circles, 8–10 slow reps each.
Two ramp-up sets	On your first exercise only, do one set with an empty or very light load and one at about half your working weight.

First four weeks

Week	Load	Goal
Week 1	Very light — stop with about 4 reps in reserve in week one	Learn the movements and record every weight you use.
Week 2	Same or slightly heavier	Repeat the same sets with better control; add a little only where every set felt easy.
Week 3	Top of the rep range	Aim to reach the top of each range with 2–3 reps left in reserve.
Week 4	Add the smallest increment	1–2.5 kg upper body, 2.5–5 kg lower body, then rebuild reps from the bottom of the range.

When to add weight

You complete every set at the top of the rep range with clean technique. Add the smallest available increment next session and expect the reps to drop back towards the bottom of the range: 1–2.5 kg on an upper-body movement; 2.5–5 kg on a lower-body movement, or one machine plate. If you miss the bottom of the range twice in a row on the same exercise, repeat the weight; if it happens again, drop it by about 5%. Stop any exercise that causes sharp pain and use the listed swap instead.

Weekly patterns

Pattern	Days	Suits
Classic	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	A steady weekday routine
Weekend-heavy	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday	Busy Mondays and Fridays
Two plus one	Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday	Shift work or family weekends

Run the same programme for four to six weeks before changing anything, and expect it to keep working for roughly two to three months.

A general beginner programme for healthy adults aged 18 and over. It is general information, not personal or medical advice. Stop and get proper advice if an exercise causes pain.

Track every session on the free 12-week workout log at bodywise.io/hub/templates.