



# The First Block

Your first 4 weeks of training, simplified.

# Before you start:

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Most beginner guides you find online are generic programs that are easy to follow but don't teach you anything. This guide will help you understand the basics of training and dieting rather than just telling you what to do.

Three things I want you to know before you start:

- You don't need to commit a ton of time to the gym. 2 or 3 days of hard training is enough to make tons of progress.
- You don't need a perfect diet from day 1. Just getting used to tracking your meals and working towards your calorie goal is a good start.
- Recovery is an equally important piece of the puzzle, sleeping well and making sure you're recovered for your next session are a must if you want to maximize muscle growth and/or fat loss.

## **The only rule of these 4 weeks**

Don't miss two sessions in a row. Missing one isn't ideal but it can happen, missing two in a row will seriously slow down your progress.

*-Stef*

# What this plan assumes

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This guide is built for beginners. If you've never trained consistently, or you've trained for less than 6 months total, you're in the right place. You don't need any experience with training or dieting.

## Equipment you need

- Access to a commercial gym with machines, dumbbells, and cables.
- An app or the training program spreadsheet to track your sets.
- A food tracking app. I recommend FatSecret; MyFitnessPal and MacroFactor also work.

## How to use this guide

The plan has two halves:

- **Training:** 3 days a week, full-body, same structure for all 4 weeks. Progress on the same exercises and practice technique.
- **Diet:** Calorie and macronutrient targets. Plus some simple meal examples. No meal plan just yet.

### Read this before week 1

For the first 4 weeks, focus on consistency and technique. Don't force PR's. Don't add extra cardio. Don't drop calories further than this guide tells you to. This is enough for your first 4 weeks, after this you can adapt your training and diet based on your results.

# The training program: principles first

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## Why 3 days a week?

Because for beginners, 2-3 days a week is enough to grow. More frequency doesn't make a big enough difference for beginners. The most important thing during these 4 weeks is consistency.

## Why full-body?

Because if you miss a day on a 4-day split, not every muscle gets hit twice that week. On a full-body plan, if you miss a day, you still hit every muscle twice. Full-body is the most forgiving structure for beginners.

## Why the same plan for 4 weeks?

Because you cannot get better at lifts you keep swapping out. For 4 weeks, you repeat the same 7–8 exercises. Your form improves. You add weight. This way you can track your progress accurately. You build real strength. A big mistake beginners make is changing their program too frequently.

## Intensity and RIR

RIR Means Reps In Reserve. Basically how many more reps you could have done with the same technique.

## Tempo

Your lifting tempo for each exercise doesn't have to be perfect down to the second but focus on this: lift the weight with some explosiveness, lower the weight under control, pause 1 second, repeat.

**3 RIR** = you stopped with 3 clean reps left in the tank. Feels 'okay' hard.

**2 RIR** = you stopped with 2 left. Reps are getting slow. You'd grind the last one.

**1 RIR** = you genuinely had only one rep left. Reps are slow, form is tight but working.

## Your RIR for weeks 1–4

Week 1: **3 RIR**. Week 2: **2–3 RIR**. Week 3: **2 RIR**. Week 4: **1–2 RIR**.

You start easier than you think you should, and you build. It may feel hard to gauge RIR at first and that's okay, what matters in your first week is practice. It'll get easier over time.

# The 3-day full-body split

Train 3 non-consecutive days a week. Example: Monday, Wednesday, Friday. or Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. Alternate Day A and Day B (you'll do one day twice per week; flip it the following week).

**Week rotation:** A → B → A one week. Then B → A → B the next. And so on.

## Day A — Lower-focused full-body

Exercise	Sets x Reps	Notes
Leg Press	3 x 8–12	Toes slightly out, dont let knees cave in
Seated Leg Curl	3 x 8–12	Sit upright
Chest Press Machine	3 x 8–12	Neutral grip at lower chest height
Seated Cable Row	3 x 8–12	Pull to your bellybutton
Lateral Raise (DB, Cable or Machine)	2 x 10–15	Lead with the elbow, not the hand
Machine Preacher Curl	2 x 8–12	Only move the elbow joint!
Standing Calf Raise	3 x 10–15	Pause 2 seconds at the bottom

## Day B — Upper-focused full-body

Exercise	Sets x Reps	Notes
Incline Chest Press Machine	3 x 8–12	Neutral grip, keep elbows stacked behind wrists
Lat Pulldown	3 x 10–12	Shoulders back, chest up
Hack Squat or Leg Press	3 x 10–12	Toes slightly out, dont let knees cave in
Leg Extension	3 x 8–12	Grab the handles and pull yourself into the seat
Dumbbell Curl	2 x 8–12	No swinging, keep your torso still
Triceps Pushdown (rope)	3 x 10–12	Lock elbows at sides and only move the elbow joint
Lateral Raise (DB, Cable or Machine)	2 x 10–15	Lead with the elbow, not the hand

# How to track progress

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Logging is what separates this from random training. Without it, you can't add weight or reps because you don't know what you did last time. Use a notes app, an app, or print the tracker.

## What to log per set

- **Exercise.** Always the same one across the 4 weeks.
- **Weight.** In kg, including any plates plus the machine's starting weight if you know it.
- **Reps.** One number per set. If you got 12, 12, 10 — log all three.
- **RIR.** How many reps you had left in the tank on the last set.

## What it looks like

Session	Exercise	Weight × Reps	RIR
Mon — Day A	Leg Press	80 kg × 12, 12, 11	3
<i>Wed — Day A again</i>	Leg Press	<b>85 kg × 12, 11, 10</b>	2–3

Same exercise, two sessions later. Weight went up 5 kg, reps held within range, RIR dropped slightly. That's a clean progression. If reps drop hard or RIR goes to 0, hold the weight next session instead of pushing it.

### What if I miss a session?

Missing one session is fine. Pick up where you left off, don't try to cram two sessions into one. The only rule: don't miss two in a row. Two missed sessions back-to-back is where consistency breaks down and progress stalls.

# The 4-week progression

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Same exercises, same reps, same rep ranges. What changes is effort (RIR) and how much weight you use. You add load when you hit the top of the rep range with good form.

## Week 1 — Learn the lifts

RIR: **3**. Goal: finish every set with clean form. Pick weights that feel too easy.

- Log every single set in your app of choice: exercise, weight, reps, RIR.
- If you don't know the weight to start with, start lighter. You'll raise it next session, or even next set if you started far too low.

## Week 2 — Add a little

RIR: **2–3**. On every exercise, try to add 2.5–5 kg or 1–2 reps vs. last week.

- If you hit 12 reps with 3 RIR last week, move the weight up this week.
- If your form breaks down, drop the weight. Good form is not negotiable.

## Week 3 — Push closer to the edge

RIR: **2**. The last 2–3 reps of every set should be challenging.

- Keep adding weight or reps compared to week 2, prioritize good technique over adding weight/reps.

## Week 4 — Measure what you built

RIR: **1–2**. This is your hardest week. You'll end some sets genuinely close to failure.

- After these 4 weeks you're ready to train hard and keep progressing.
- You could continue doing this full body split or move to something like Upper Lower or Push Pull Legs for example.

### The one thing most beginners miss

You don't need to change exercises to progress. You need to add weight or reps to the exercises you already have. That's what progressive overload is. It's not complicated, it just requires you to actually write down what you lifted last week.

# Nutrition: the first 4 weeks

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I'm not giving you a meal plan in this guide. Here's why: I don't know your body, your preferences, or your real baseline intake yet. A meal plan without that context is just a guess.

What I *will* give you is a framework for you to build your own.

## Step 1: Find your maintenance

First you calculate your maintenance calories. Just multiply your weight in kg by 40. For example:  $75 \times 40 = 3000$ . That's your starting calories. This is just a starting point and may not be entirely accurate. Adjust accordingly over the next 4 weeks.

For the first 7 days, **track everything you eat honestly**, and weigh yourself daily (morning, after bathroom, before food). Don't change anything. At the end of the week:

- If your weight is stable ( $\pm 0.3$  kg), your weekly average calories = your maintenance.
- If you gained, you were in a surplus. If you lost, you were in a deficit.
- A week of data is not a lot so if your weight results aren't what you expected after week 2, you can adjust your calories going into week 3.

## Step 2: Set your target

<b>Goal: Fat loss</b>	Maintenance minus 400-500 kcal. Target 0.5–0.8 kg loss per week.
<b>Goal: Muscle gain</b>	Maintenance plus 200-300 kcal. Target 0.2–0.4 kg gain per week.

## Step 3: Hit protein every day

- Target: 2 g of protein per kg of lean bodymass/goal weight every day.  $70 \text{ kg} = 140\text{g}$  protein.
- Spread it across 3–4 meals. 30–50 g per meal is ideal.
- Easy sources: chicken, lean beef, eggs, Greek yoghurt, cottage cheese, protein powder, white fish, tofu.

## Simple meal examples:

- Chicken, rice and vegetables.
- Yoghurt with muesli
- Oats with protein powder and fruit
- Pasta with ground beef, vegetables and tomato sauce

**Macronutrient goals: Having a bit higher protein and lower carbs is okay.**

2g of protein per kg of lean bodymass/goal weight

25% of your caloric intake should be fat

Fill the remaining calories with carbs

# What to expect

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If you follow this plan honestly for 4 weeks, here's what actually happens.

## Week 1

- You'll be sore. Especially legs. This is normal and temporary.
- You'll feel clumsy on half the exercises. This is also normal.
- You'll be tempted to add extra exercises. Don't.

## Week 2

- Soreness drops significantly. Your body is already adapting.
- You'll start adding weight and progressing on (almost) every exercise.
- You may feel like you 'should be doing more. You shouldn't. Trust the plan.

## Week 3

- Training feels real now. You know the exercises, the machines, your numbers.
- If you're in a fat loss phase: you'll start seeing scale + mirror changes. If you're eating at maintenance or surplus: your strength increases rapidly.

## Week 4

- Hardest training week of the block. Reps get genuinely hard.
- You'll surprise yourself comparing your week 4 log to your week 1 log.
- You'll be ready to either repeat the block, upgrade to a 4-6 day plan, or work with a coach to personalize things further.

### The real win

By the end of week 4, you're not a 'beginner who's thinking about starting.' You're a lifter. You have 12 sessions, real logs, a baseline diet, and a proven method that works for you. You now have a foundation you can build on.

# 5 mistakes that'll slow your progress

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## 1. Changing the program before it's had time to work

Stick to 4 weeks of the same plan. You can't 'optimize' something you haven't done yet. You can tweak your daily calories at most once every week if your weight isn't moving as expected.

## 2. Not logging your workouts

If you don't know what you lifted last week, you can't add weight this week.

## 3. Adding cardio

Don't. In the first 4 weeks, your lifting + diet is enough. Adding cardio now just makes recovery harder.

## 4. Skipping protein on 'easy' days

Hitting your macronutrient goals daily is important.

## 5. Weighing yourself once and panicking

Weigh daily, judge weekly. Your weight on any single day means almost nothing. The 7-day average is the data we care about.

# Next steps

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If this plan is doing its job, by week 3 you'll start wondering what comes after. You've finished The First Block. Here's what most of my clients do next:

- **Option 1: Run it back.** Repeat The First Block. The same 3-day full body program will yield results for a long time and is a great option for complete beginners who still have form and consistency to build.
- **Option 2: The Next Block.** Move to a personalized 4-day split with a full meal plan.
- **Option 3: ABC,** work with me directly to maximize your progress.

## Adaptive Beginner Coaching

I don't hand out templates. I base the approach on your needs, your schedule, your lifestyle, your experience, your progress. We check in every week and adjust where necessary, that's what makes it adaptive.

**Online coaching:** €120/month.

**In-person PT:** €650 for 12 weeks at Basic-Fit Vlissingen.

## Ready to talk?

DM me **NEXTBLOCK** on Instagram (@candeiascoaching) and tell me where you are after these 4 weeks. I'll reply within 24 hours with whether ABC is right for you. The first 15-minute call is free, and you'll leave with a roadmap whether or not you sign up.

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*You don't need perfection, you need consistency and structure.*

*See you in the gym.*

**-Stef**