

Feminine Figure Beginner Program

Body progression with a focus on Feminine Form

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About the Author

I am Sky, a NASM (National Academy of Sports Medicine)-Certified Personal Trainer with over half a decade of experience as well as many storied years of exercise myself! I have trained newbies, people recovering from eating disorders, Powerlifters, Bodybuilders, and everyday Joe schmoe's looking to help improve their physical health and physique! I have a specialization for helping people train for high-level workouts, intense periodization, and top-out their strength! I myself am transfemme, with a unique perspective of someone who has weightlifted and done general exercise as a cis male and as a trans female, allowing me to give better accurate advice to trans people! This does not stop me from giving anyone advice that would help suit their needs, as well as provide coaching, training schedules, and extremely detailed programs for very affordable prices!

In my personal skills, I am working towards my BS in Microbiology with a minor in biomedical research, and plan to continue this pursuit as I forward Valkaine Fitness!

Thank you for reading, and feel free to contact for any of your needs!

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INTRODUCTION

INFO AND CONCEPTS OF FEMINIZING WORKOUTS

To ensure that you, as an individual who is seeking more feminine of a figure form exercise with less of a focus on strength, this program's goals should align directly with yours in guaranteeing a better feminine figure. This requires a focus on high-effort and moderate-high variable intensity in training, with weight progression and proper nutrition to ensure your body can adapt and grow. I will include separate sections for specific differences cis and trans women as I have a queer-focused social following. This for cis women assumes post P3 puberty (>16 y/o) and for trans women assumes pre-HRT or >12 months HRT. Cis men can follow this program and can contribute to a decently more feminine figure, but I have both a beginner's overall weightlifting guide, and a masculinization guide that may better suit you in general.

This program in particular is meant to be a 45-60 minute per session program, each of the individual workout regimens will slowly increase in their movement difficulty so that in the case you take up beyond beginner programs, you can fully achieve your physique goals with more advanced movements. The exercises you are given will have side-grade or replaceable exercises in accordance to accessibility or ease of use for all movements. Certain will be considered non-replaceable, but will have simplified or assisted versions to reduce stress and strain on joint issues, mobility issues, etc.

You are your own self. This is a program for feminine figures, meant to help with a mixture of muscle growth and figure shape, with a decent amount of strength progression as well. Strength is essential because muscles require higher weights to continually progress and increase. This concept, called “progressive overload” is key to both muscle growth and strength progression, which go nearly hand in hand. If you want to grow in size and shape, your weights will need to continually increase. If you want to grow in strength, you will need to see an increase in your muscle size.

If you are looking for more help, we have a [community online that you can access here](#). We offer help resources, form checks, meal advice, QnAs, personal training, and are working on an ever-increasing log of exercise instructions.

THIS GUIDE IS MADE WITH A GYM IN MIND. THE DISCORD AND WEBSITE WILL CONTAIN BODYWEIGHT AND ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS IF THAT IS WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR.

Common Myths that hold no truth

Fitness as an industry profits off of misinformation so you can be sold products and programs that have little to no benefit to you or are detrimental to progress in the long run. This combined with a heavily misogynistic view of women and exercise leads to women only being relegated to certain “feminine” types of exercise, ineffective training styles, or outright rebuking of exercise in any form for women. This is not only reductive, but it can be harmful to both the mental and physical health of individuals attempting to exercise in effective, happy means. Below are some common myths, and rebuttals to them. Scientific resources available when necessary.

- 1.) “Women aren’t supposed to have muscle”
 - a.) If this was true, why do women not only have the capacity to gain muscle but human bodies benefit health-wise and physique-wise from exercise?
- 2.) “To be feminine you shouldn’t be training hard”
 - a.) Stemming from the same reductive views, no, not training hard does nothing but diminish both muscle growth and health benefits from training with high effort and training near muscle failure
- 3.) “Cardio and exercise burn what you eat, so work out more”
 - a.) In principle there is truth to this, but if you were to eat 3k calories in a day, to get 1k calories burned, that is over 3 hours of weightlifting, and over an hour and a half of intense cardio (running >10 mph) and to try

and balance out bad eating habits with exercise will only harm you in the long run, both in exercise progress and in health.

- 4.) “Exercise turns fat into muscle”
 - a.) Your body can use fat and can create muscle, but they come from separate components. Without eating enough protein, your body cannot maintain muscle nor grow any muscle, and without eating enough food in general, your body cannot gain a healthy level of fat
- 5.) “Eating low calories is the best way to lose weight”
 - a.) Hazard stop: **NO**. Your body requires a certain amount of calories. The average adult ages 18-50 requires 1400 calories for your brain, liver, and stomach to function **ALONE**. When you have muscle, all your other organs, the amount of activity you do in a day.
 - b.) At 1800-2000 Calories, the statistical average female of 5’4 with 30 minutes of cardio, 45 minutes of resistance exercise (weights, calisthenics, etc) would be losing ~.5lb of fat per week, or 2lb per MONTH. That is great progress without extensive calorie deficits.
 - c.) **Eating too little (anything below 1600 in 99% of cases) can cause serious harm to your organ and your long-term health.**
- 6.) “Losing weight faster makes it easier because you’re not as hungry as long”
 - a.) This is sound in its reasoning, but in practice it actually is the opposite. Losing lower amounts of your bodyweight per week means you can eat more, feel more full and satisfied, and not skip on desserts or parts of eating we enjoy, and still lose weight without straining yourself.
 - b.) Weight loss taking longer via losing weight slower also helps reduce amounts of loose skin, better energy levels, and easier time consuming micronutrients!
- 7.) “Exercise should feel bad” / “Exercise should hurt”
 - a.) Not at all! Exercise is about personal enjoyment and loving what you are doing! All that it requires is a minimum amount of commitment, and moving your body! A bit of cardio, and a bit of resistance training, and you get lots of benefits to your heart and lung health, muscle and bone health, as well as long-term disease risk reduction!
- 8.) “Doing crunches burns belly fat” / “x exercise removes arm fat”
 - a.) It is impossible to remove fat from a specific, targeted area. Body fat is a genetic-determined placement, and the amount of fat in a given area can only go up or down with the total percentage of body fat on your person
 - b.) The healthy levels of body fat for a female is ~22%-33% depending on exercise level, stature, and musculature. There are exceptions to this but for beginners they are not in consideration, as being too low or too high can lead to serious health complications.
- 9.) “Cardio kills your gains”
 - a.) While there is a miniscule of truth to this statement, it is heavily conditional. For best possible results from a [recent 2023 study](#), the effects of cardio not only benefit total muscle growth, but low-intensity cardio like walking, hiking, swimming, biking, all can be done to

improve cardiovascular health and performance without any significant or noticeable strength or muscle decreases.

- b.) There are some notes that high-intensity cardio (springint, distance running, jumping jacks, etc) can diminish muscle growth to a certain degree, but doing them at least 6 hours apart from when you do your strength training near entirely nullifies this concern as it provides ample time for your body to rest and recover.
- 10.) “I need to work out to be happy with my body”
- a.) I myself have fallen into this rather dangerous trap. Requiring an idealized version of yourself to be one that fits not only your perfect world but the (often sexualized and unrealistic) views of general society can lead to serious issues with body-image and what it means to have a real body that you can be happy with. It took me years to work with myself to be happy not having visible abs, years longer to realize I'm healthier and happier that way too. You're not alone in these journeys, and there are ALWAYS others willing to help and be right beside you when looking at finding peace and improvement.
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Programs & Exercise Variations

Program Dictionary

Rep	A rep is a single, complete motion for an exercise. “8 reps” is 8 complete motions of an exercise
Cheat Rep	A rep that is performed with worse form to lift more weight, this often increases injury risks and is a bad ideas in 99% of contexts
Half Rep	A rep that is performed in partial range of motion. This style of rep is either good or bad, it depends on what specific exercises you're trying to do and what muscles you are targeting, but for the most part are not ideal
Set	A set is a group of reps, so if you have “3 sets of 8 reps” you do 8 reps, rest, and repeat that three times for a total of 24 reps with some time between each 8 to rest your muscles
Drop Set	A set where once failure is achieved you lower the weight and go until failure again without rest

Super Set	A set where you combine two exercises are done immediately after one another without rest between them
RPE	“Rate of Perceived Exertion” or otherwise how hard you tried for that specific set. The scale is typically 8 is very hard/2 reps remaining, 9 is 1 rep remaining, and 10 is until failure
RIR	“Reps in reserve” or the flipping of RPE, and is how many reps you had left by the end of the set, so 4 RIR is “I can do 4 more coach” and 0 is “that’s too many coach, I couldn’t do another if I tried”
Cut	To lose weight in a slow, gradual process in order to maintain as much muscle mass as possible while losing fat, typically done with as few calories lost as possible
Bulk	To gain weight with a focus on muscle growth and minimal fat gain, typically done with as few excess calories as possible
Dirty Bulk	To gain weight as fast as possible with focusing on high protein and general high caloric intake, without regard to increases in body fat
“A Plate”	The heaviest weight at a given free weight rack, typically a 20kg/45lb plate
45/35/25/10/5/2.5	any of these are considered the standard weights for US/Lb measured weights
Eccentric	The lengthening component of an exercise; The motion of extending of a muscle
Concentric	The shortening component of an exercise; The motion of contracting a muscle
Program	A set exercise regimen that repeats on a regular basis, typically weekly or biweekly
Overtraining	Training intensely for too long of a time, leading to excess fatigue and underperformance
Deload	A period of time where Training is done at lower intensity and a higher focus on recovery to allow the body to avoid overtraining’s negative effects.

Isometric	Exercises done holding a specific position for longer periods of time.
Time Under Tension	The amount of time you have your muscles in a contracted or stretched position to encourage more muscle growth

Superset	When exercises are highlighted red, do a superset
Drop Set	When exercises are highlighted in yellow, have the <u>FINAL</u> Exercise be a drop set
Tension Focus	When exercises are highlighted blue, slow them down to take several seconds a rep to increase efficacy

Months 0-6:

The very beginning of your exercise regimen should be focused on three core concepts: Understanding your body's movements, Gaining stability, and learning your base strength. This will be honed in using the following plan:

From this, the days will follow a pattern of upper/lower/upper/lower, with half the week training your stability and control, and the other half of the week training your body's strength to properly handle the weights you're testing. This will require time, which is why these first 6 months are designed not only to ease you into resistance training, but it will allow for a very flexible schedule, as these are all sub-45 minute workouts that are mostly isolating exercises, meaning you can do multiple of the exercises back-to-back with not as much fatigue.

Upper 1:

Lower 1:

Upper 2:

Lower 2:

The days do not need to be consecutive, but it would be preferred if they were done in order to allow for proper rest and recovery. All 4 days should be done in a single week

Following the below guide, you will be able to see what day and which exercise to do. I highly suggest tracking what weights you do with those exercises, and attempt at increasing by 2.5 or 5lb every to every other week to get a good start. Understanding *how* to do a proper movement is more important than the weight you are moving.

Workout Breakdown

Day 1 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Quads, Glutes	Lunges	4 Sets, 10 reps per leg	2-1-2	Focus on moving upwards rather than forwards
Glutes	Hip Thrusts	3 Sets, 15 reps	2-0-3	Slow and controlled
Calves	Calf Raises	4 Sets, 12 reps	1-0-3	Quick ascent, slow descent

Day 2 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Biceps, Forearms	Bicep Curls	3 Sets, 8 reps	3-1-2	
Triceps	Tricep Extensions	3 Sets, 8 reps	3-1-2	
Chest, Triceps	Push-ups	4 Sets, 12 reps	2-0-2	
Core, Trunk	Knee Tucks	3 Sets, 15 reps	1-1-3	

Day 3 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Quads, Glutes	Squats	4 Sets, 6 Reps	2-1-2	Focusing on heavier weight

				here, we want to test limits
Glutes	Hip Thrusts	3 Sets, 6 reps	2-0-3	
Hamstrings	Hamstring curls	4 Sets, 10-12 reps	2-1-3	
Abductors	Leg Abductions	3 Sets, 12-15 reps	1-1-1	

Day 4 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Lats, Rear delts	Low Rows	4 Sets, 8-10 reps	1-0-2	
Chest, Triceps	Bench Presses	2 Sets, 12-15 reps	2-1-2	
Lats, mid-back	Assisted Pull-ups	4 Sets, 8-10 reps	2-0-2	
Core, trunk	Knee Tucks	3 sets, 15 reps	1-1-3	

Months 6-12:

The second phase of the beginner program is setting a course for you to fully utilize your experience with exercise in combination with increased strength to begin working on furthering your body's shape along with your physical fitness levels.

The goals for this workout regimen are to allow you to further your skill and technique by adding slightly more challenging movements, and begin focusing on a progression of weight in your routine!

Workout Breakdown

Day 1 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Quads, glutes	Walking Lunges	3 Sets, 10 reps	N/A	Go at your own

		each leg		pace
Calves	Calf Raises	3 Sets, 10-12 reps	1-0-3	
Glutes	Hip Thrusts	3 Sets, 5-6 reps	2-1-2	Focusing on heavy weight you can control
Quads	Leg Extensions	2 Sets, 12-15 reps	2-1-3	Slow and steady, do not overextend at the knee

Day 2 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Lower back, Quads, Hamstrings	Deadlifts	2 Sets, 5 reps	N/A	Go at your own pace, focus on good form
Chest, triceps	Dumbbell Flat Bench	3 sets, 8-10 reps	2-0-1	
Core	Suitcase Carries	2 Sets, 60 seconds	N/A	
Core	Knee Raises	3 Sets, 10-12 reps	1-1-3	

Day 3 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Hamstrings, Glutes	RDLs	4 Sets, 6-8 reps	2-1-2	Ensure your knees are not bending
Quads, Glutes	Squats	4 Sets, 6-8 Reps	2-1-2	
Quads	Leg Extensions	2 Sets, 10-12 reps	2-1-3	
Hamstrings	Hamstring Curls	2 Sets, 10-12 reps	2-1-3	

Day 4 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Chest	Dumbbell Incline Bench	3 Sets, 6-8 reps	2-0-2	
Lats	Low Rows	4 sets, 8-10 reps	2-0-2	
Biceps, Forearms	Bicep Curls	3 Sets, 10-12 reps	3-1-2	
Triceps	Tricep Skis	3 Sets, 10-12 reps	3-1-2	
Core	Leg Raises	3 Sets, 15 reps	1-1-3	

Months 12-24:

This year is focused now upon you learning the improvement cycle! These exercises are generalized for the most part, and I would suggest every 3 months exchanging a variation of an exercise if you get stuck. Please look over the “progression as a beginner” portion of the program to get a full view of how to use this section of the program to its utmost potential! Please always ask if you want more information!

The second year is arguably harder than the first because the newbie gains wear off, and you begin to progress less exponentially, and the slower progress in combination with heavier weights can be incredibly detrimental to the mental aspect of an ever-progressing

Workout Breakdown

Day 1 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Quads, Glutes	Squats	4 Sets, 3-5 reps	2-1-2	This is a heavy day.
Glutes	Hip Thrusts	4 Sets, 3-5 reps	2-0-3	Do your hardest effort here
Quads, Glutes	Step-ups	2 Sets, 10 reps each leg	2-2-2	The goal is force

Day 2 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Chest, Triceps	Bench Press	3 sets, 6-8 reps	2-0-2	Normal working weight here
Lats, Rear delts	Rows	3 sets, 6-8 reps	3-1-2	
Triceps	Tricep Skis	2 sets, 10-12 reps	3-1-2	
Biceps	Bicep Curls	2 sets, 10-12 reps	3-1-2	

Day 3 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Lower Back, Hamstrings	Deadlifts	5 Sets, 3-5 Reps	N/A, Form focus	Heavy here!
Hamstrings	RDLs	3 sets, 10-12 reps	2-1-2	Light here!
Glutes	Hip Thrusts	3 sets, 12-15 reps	2-0-3	
Adductors	Abductors & Adductors	3 sets, 10-12 reps	1-1-3	

Day 4 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Biceps	Bicep Curls	3 sets, 10-12 reps	2-1-2	
Triceps	Behind-the-back Tricep Extensions	3 sets, 10-12 reps	2-1-2	
Core, Obliques	Suitcase Marches	3 Sets, 60 seconds	N/A	$\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ your bodyweight
Core	Leg Raises	4 Sets, 10 reps	1-0-2	

Day 5 -

<u>Muscles Worked</u>	<u>Exercise Name</u>	<u>Sets & Reps</u>	<u>Tempo</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Quads, Glutes	Squats	5 Sets, 6-8 Reps	2-1-2	Moderate weight, looking for steady, controlled reps
Hamstrings	RDLs	3 sets, 10-12 reps	2-1-2	
Abductors	Abductors & Adductors	3 sets, 12-15 reps	1-1-3	
Calves	Calf Raises	3 sets, 10-12 reps	1-1-3	

Lifestyle:

It greatly depends on the individual, but lifestyle for fitness is not nearly as drastic or as hard hitting as many make it out to be. The rotation is mostly what days you work out on, and what times you are available. When you have a time consistently week-to-week that you can exercise and it is not inconvenient to do so, then that is a wonderful time to get in your workouts!

Please do not feel as though you have to throw out the parts of life that you enjoy, or that you must vastly change your habits and living situations. If you're doing any of the 0-12month regimens of 4 days, you could go with a M/Tu/Th/Fri split to allow for weekend rest along with Wednesdays off! If you have long weekends with open plans, opt for a Fri/Sat/Sun/Mon regimen! Anything that you can work with, days do not need to be consecutive or even the same week-to-week. The biggest portion is going out and trying to ensure you get your exercise in!

If you, for whatever reason, are not enjoying your workouts and your time, you can try different variations of the exercises listed, other programs, or look into other types of exercises! Brining a friend or joining sports, community events, or exercise classes can all be ways of getting meaningful exercise in without greatly upsetting your life and maintaining a stable enjoyment of you moving. The happiness of your exercise regimen is just as if not more important than the fact you are exercising in the first place. Please make sure your joy is placed first, otherwise exercise is not truly sustainable in the long run.

Progression as a Beginner

Progression requires a significant amount of effort, trial, and forcing of one's self to truly know your limits. To progress requires three things:

- 1.) Knowing what failure feels like
- 2.) Pushing close to but not always failing
- 3.) Intentionally repeatedly increasing stressors to improve over time

Step 1: Testing your limits

- Testing failure regularly (typically 2-4 times a month) for each major exercise helps for beginners
- Studies show that the muscle size and strength have negligible difference between being within 3 reps of failure and total failure (less than 5% size difference, and slightly reduced or the same strength as near but not total failure)
- Studies also show that there is significantly more muscle damage and near the same muscular hypertrophy (the biological response to muscle stress that increases size) when going to complete failure, causing extended recovery times before a muscle can be exercised at full stress again
- This means that you should be finishing sets with 1-2 reps left in the tank to conserve energy and ensure minimal muscle damage, leading to sets being more efficient, recovery taking less time, and you progress size and strength at 95-99% total potential with considerably less downsides

Step 2: Pushing limits without needing failure

- Knowing what failure feels like will take time, and you will end up reaching muscular failure often because you will be pushing yourself. That is okay, expect it to take a few months to truly learn where that failure point is.
- It is better to go to failure than have 5 reps left in the tank, but learning how and when you are near failure is a skill you should focus on, it mitigates soreness and maximizes strength and muscle volume gain.
- To know you're near failure there are two options:
 - Fight for as many reps as you can do until your muscles give up, and do that for a few weeks to understand what it feels like to give up. When yo-ur muscles are tense and you know the weakness you feel, you give it one more rep and then stop, getting you very close to but not quite hitting failure
 - Do reps in 2s, with a pause between each set of two. If you don't know if you'll be able to do another set of 2, you know you're close to failure, and if you can do one rep but not a second, you have reached within 3 reps of failure.
- Both of these methods can help you learn where your failure point is, and eventually you can know that you're within 1-3 reps of failure simply by the feel of weights when you are pushing yourself

- What can help is a partner who is willing to push you. Each of you can really put the other into a spot where you are constantly pushed, but your failure points are recognized and there's safety with another person to help spot when needed
- Doing the final set of an exercise to failure each day is beneficial, knowing your limits as your strength increases is needed to constantly be near failure

Step 3: Increasing Stimulus

- Track. Your. Progress.
 - If you want to constantly stress yourself, you should be consistently repeating and increasing points of stress.
- Weight
 - Increasing weight is simple: if you're able to do MORE reps than what is specified in a range, increase the weight by 5lb
- Reps
 - Increasing reps is also simple: if you are not within 3 reps of failure when you hit your expected rep range, increase your sets by 1-2 reps
- Sets
 - If you're unable to increase weight or reps, add on one additional set for 2-4 weeks at your current max reps and weight, and after those few weeks you should be able to increase weight by 5lb or so, returning to weight/rep increases
- Rest Periods
 - An alternative to sets is to lower rest periods. Normally you rest 2 minutes between full sets, and working for 1-2 weeks with changed rests between sets on the ONE EXERCISE you are trying to improve, not every exercise, you can add additional stress to the muscle and potentially force growth and strength
 - Regularly rest ~ 1 ½ to 2 ½ minutes depending on how stressing an exercise is. If you're working with squats or bench where it's large muscles, closer to 2 ½ minute rests work, but small muscles like calves, triceps and biceps, shoulders, 1 ½ minute rests will do fine
- Tempo
 - On top of weight and reps, lowering the reps to the lowest of the range but increasing the time your muscles are stretched can increase hypertrophy, and can work as an alternative for increasing stimulus

Increasing stimulus when you are struggling to improve weight can be a massive trouble. Each of the methods above have their own use case, and following the flow chart below can help.

Unable to do your set? Take this example

Barbell bench 4x 8-12 @8 RPE

SET 1: 105lb 10 reps 8 RPE
SET 2: 105lb 10 reps 9 RPE
SET 3: 105lb 9 reps failure
SET 4: 105lb 7 reps failure

This obviously shows that you can do the weight, but over time you're unable to truly stimulate yourself after initially exerting yourself. A reverse pyramid method can help a lot, especially because as you're new, you'll likely be running out of energy with lower endurance tops. Here's some options you have

Weight method:

SET 1: 105lb 10 reps 8 RPE
SET 2: 105lb 10 reps 9 RPE
SET 3: 95lb 12 reps 9 RPE
SET 4: 95lb 12 reps 9 RPE

By lowering the weight right when you know you're going to fail, you can help still stimulate your muscles while not overexerting yourself

Reps method:

SET 1: 105lb 10 reps 8 RPE
SET 2: 105lb 10 reps 9 RPE
SET 3: 105lb 8 reps 9 RPE
SET 4: 105lb 8 reps 10 RPE

OR

SET 1: 105lb 8 reps 7 RPE
SET 2: 105lb 8 reps 7 RPE
SET 3: 105lb 8 reps 8 RPE
SET 4: 105lb 8 reps 9 RPE

by lowering reps but maintaining high stress, your muscles can both have maximal stress and maximum hypertrophy from a good deep stretch, without compromising volume too heavily. This is good for newbies as you could increase your reps by the week, 1-2 reps increasing, and once you hit the top range, you can decrease reps and increase weight (8-12 rep range, can you can do 12 reps without failing?) Increase the weight by 5lb, and lower reps back down to 8, and repeat this process

Sets method:

SET 1: 105lb 10 reps 8 RPE
SET 2: 105lb 10 reps 9 RPE
SET 3: 105lb 10 reps 9RPE

SET 4: 105lb 10 reps 10RPE

Rest 3 mins

NEW SET 5: 105lb 6-8 reps 9 RPE

By adding another set, you can increase the total volume of stress on a muscle, allowing for more hypertrophy. This is useful when you have an inability to increase weight or reps, or if you are doing low rep sets (3-6 reps)

Any of these methods have worked for myself and a multitude of my clients, with both anecdotal and scientific evidence of these methods being effective for improving both strength and muscle size

If you're confused, having trouble improving, or want clarification? Feel free to ask me!

HRT & Exercise

This section is directly entirely at trans women, and provides some information about hormones and changes that come along with HRT that may not be exactly what you hear from the larger population.

When speaking about the effects of HRT, there are few things that are really definitive. Speaking from my own experience, it takes many years to see any significant results at all for most trans women. HRT is not magic, HRT is not some wonder drug that gets you your results in 1-2 years and makes you perfect. Stop browsing r/trans timelines, stop looking at models with botox and plastic surgery and perfect bodies (in a male-dominated standards pov, might I add) and stop worrying about all the tiny insignificant details. You are not the 0.5% of trans girls who will get DDs after 10 months HRT and look like a 10/10 smoking hot goth girl. 99% of us, after 3-6 years, will end up looking like everyday women, and that is the goal. I fell very quickly into the mindset of "oh my god I need to be careful, by a year on HRT I'll look like my sisters and will need to hide from my parents and change everything about me because HRT will cinderella-style transform me into a stereotype of femininity!" This is not going to happen.

You are going to take several years to look like the average random girl at the grocery store, and that's okay. HRT is a process, you didn't go from the average 11y/o boy and magically look 22 when you were 13. It took years of development to get there. HRT is the exact same, it is just swapping your hormones to be female-aligned. So long as you have adequate testosterone suppression (>50 ng/dl) by whatever method you use to do that (Monotherapy w/ injection, Anti-Androgens and pills/patches, etc) with E hitting certain markers (~150pg/ml) you will begin the

development found in typical female puberty, save it be a few things. To give a list of what to expect, follow this image

For myself, some changes lesser talked about but are my lived experience:

- Get used to mood changes. This can affect your motivation and your focus with working out. Progesterone can also change this. It differs depending on the woman, so note that.
- After several years of weightlifting, the least expected change but was welcome was my hips began changing. I literally had to change the squat stance I had been using for years, hitting maximum weight lifts and strong stability, but about 14 months in I had to entirely change my squat position and weight because my hips had changed so much I no longer could have the same stance. This coincided with my wider hips from body fat redistribution

Make note of these, you may have them happen to you, and all the effects stated on the diagram. Please note that changes take MUCH longer than what is typically said, and while optimism is great, don't get yourself caught up in believing that HRT is magic and changes you swiftly and makes you look 100% different. If you want something decent to compare to, your sisters are the closest comparison. FaceApp and gender swap programs are stylized and typically not very realistic unless you got a lot of makeup, are 10 years younger than you currently are, and can get an instant perm just to match what the filters show you.

In terms of exercise, HRT itself is great in its effects between body fat changes and musculature reduction. I found initial strength loss in combination with a brief time of moving across the country led to me having to re-evaluate my strength at male levels and apply them to a body that lost muscle mass in greater quantities than before. If you maintain good exercise and a good routine, you will still increase in muscle size and strength, no doubt about that. Immediately upon HRT beginning, you are going to note some differences. Depending on your serum levels of E and T, your muscle growth, recovery, and size will change to a somewhat noticeable degree. These factors are HEAVILY dependent upon your Testosterone levels as T is a driver in several biological functions that boosts your body's functions. I found that:

- Recovery takes longer, what was previously 1-2 days to recover from a leg day is now 2-3 days, and a similar ~.5 to 1 day increase in soreness for each major muscle group as I progressed on E with a lower total T
- Muscle growth is slowed down significantly! Even when eating 2800 calories/day and 170g protein, I am finding that I do not put on muscle at the same rate with the same factors in diet and exercise. Do take note of this, and remember that the average body fat set point for women is 8-12% higher than men, and that is for biological factors alone

- Muscle size can be reduced, especially if you are not training hard enough or often enough to maintain muscle size. Trust me, it takes a LOT more to maintain large, manly muscles and as you progress on HRT, you will feminize accordingly. Please do not be afraid to train any components of your upper body, and what I have included in this program is specifically designed to help with a feminine physique, even the upper body exercises.

By lowering T levels in the body, you inadvertently lower the potential of each of these factors. The one strong note exception you may notice that is missing here is actually Strength. When taking into account biological components and general kinesthetics, yes with less muscle mass your strength will be less, but you do not need larger muscles to get an increase in strength, but when increasing strength you will gain muscle. The difference here is a very long-winded and drawn out explanation about muscle fibers, muscle density, and several other factors. Long story short, you can still build and maintains strength at very appropriate levels, even in tested federations of lifting (I can get into insane doping another time) there are tons of cis women with the same T levels as trans women who are lifting hundreds of pounds for each total lift, and are ripped while still maintaining total femininity. You do not need to reduce your goals or expectations because you're on MtF HRT, but rather just shift them to be accurate to female levels.

Exercise Methodology & Techniques

I understand you're familiar with all these exercises, but I want to add some specifics to the tempo and the reason why exercises are done, and the order of which those exercises are performed.

For bodybuilding, you want to focus on maximizing muscular hypertrophy, the actual biological reason why your muscles grow, and studies show two main factors:

- Tension in a deep stretch upon muscles
(<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37556026>)
- Training at mildly higher rep ranges
(<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31817252>)

These paired with a good diet and adequate volume allow for maximizing the amount of muscle you will grow without a major concern over strength, but strength will increase at a decent pace with weightlifting programs as a whole

As these are the primary drivers of muscular hypertrophy, the methodology behind every exercise's execution is as follows:

- Maximizing the stretch of muscles within a healthy range of motion

- Longer reps for increased time under tension
- Volume of at least 8 sets per muscle per week
- Increased rep ranges to allow increased strain for maximal muscle hypertrophy

With this, we find a generalize rule of thumb

Concentric-Pause-Eccentric
Shortening-Pausing-Lengthening of the muscle

So, for a bench press
Lowering-Pause-Pushing
Or

2-1-1

2 Seconds of lowering, 1 second of pausing, and 1 second to push the muscle back up

Please ask me if you need further clarification

Tempo List

Chest: 2-1-1

Shoulders: 3-0-1

Arms: 3-1-2

Lats & Mid-back: 3-1-2

Squats: 2-0-2

Quads: 3-1-3

Hamstrings: 2-1-2

Calves: 2-1-3

Reasoning for tempo:

These tempos are extremely important, feel free to count out loud as that's what I do often to help me concentrate, and applying bodybuilding concepts in an active manner enable better focus

By controlling and working slowly, and progressing via control rather than just moving your body with added weight, you add extra tension upon your muscles, and activates muscular hypertrophy further. If you find some exercises are more comfortable to do at a faster pace, work at the same weight but increase the time of each part of the shortening-lengthening cycle until you can do them like instructed above, as it allows for maximizing the muscle growth you'll see out of your workouts.

Recovery, Flexibility, and Stability work

Flexibility

After every workout, ensuring that you stretch and help relax yourself can ensure that you maintain better flexibility, and stretches can benefit your muscular recovery process (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34025459/> / Afonso et al. 2021)

Stretching:

For this, you can choose your own stretches you like, but for each workout we want ~10 mins of post-exercise stretching, allowing each stretch to hit the affected muscles:

Upper Body Days:

- Triceps stretch (Static) 30 second holds x 2
- Pectoral stretch (Static) 30 second holds x 2
- Band mobility stretches (Dynamic) 3 mins constant slow stretching

Lower Body Days:

- Standing Quads stretch (Static) 15 second holds x 4
- Wall RDL Stretch (Static) 20 second holds x 3
- Lumbar twist stretches (Dynamic) slow movements each side 6 times

Recovery

Sleep:

Sleep is EXTREMELY important to muscle growth as well as maintaining energy levels. We are looking at:

Minimum 7 hours of sleep a night

Optimal 8-9 Hours of sleep a night

If fully resting, while no extra benefit a 10-12 hours of sleep can help recover more

Sleep deprivation leads to improperly recovering muscles which then causes longer soreness, decreased strength progression and slower strength progression, less muscle protein synthesis (the process in which your body takes protein you eat and uses it to build muscle) and also leads to general fatigue which drastically impacts your training and your day to day life

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7785053/>

Dietary Recommendations

Supplements:

I am not sponsored by any company, but I do recommend purchasing from [BulkSupplements.com](https://www.bulk-supplements.com) as they have some of the greatest prices at the most fair value. Anything that's not listed there you can grab from your local grocery store or pharmacy. NatureMade is a trustworthy company I often buy from with good sales and good bulk value

- Creatine
 - I **HIGHLY** recommend supplementing ~5g of creatine monohydrate daily, but with a minimum, it is one of the most researched sports supplements out there and increases strength, muscle size, muscle endurance, and can boost energy during workouts.
 - Creatine draws significant water into your muscles, so you may see rapid weight gain in the first three or so weeks and then it will stop. This is completely normal, but you must stay hydrated
 - You **MUST** be drinking at least 120 oz of water a day to make it truly efficacious, ensuring that you're fully hydrated throughout a day while taking creatine avoids the negative side effects caused by creatine.
- Magnesium
 - Unless you're eating lots of seafood each day, this is something I personally supplement for 250 mg a day as it helps muscle recovery and relaxing, as well as boosts some sleep recovery!
- Multivitamins
 - I personally don't recommend multivitamins until you've had 6+ months on a good eating schedule, and you use them as dietary insurance. Relying on them for micronutrients is just bad practice, and it leads to poorer quality of food and overall bodily function as they do not give the same benefits as fruits and vegetables, or a well-rounded diet in general. They're insurance, not maintenance

Macronutrients:

Using a [TDEE Calculator](#), you can begin with finding a good TDEE. I suggest that if you've been on HRT 6 or more months, use the sex of the sex you are transitioning to

You can build your plans off of something like this

If you're 190lb and 5'10, you might see this:
~2750 Kcal/day

- 160-190g Protein (0.7-1.1g/lb body weight)
- ~350g Carbohydrates
- ~75g fats

You can use a tracking app, such as Macrofactor, Lifesum, or MyFitnessPal, or if those either encourage ED behavior or make you feel worse about yourself, I suggest a meal balance method:

(4 meals a day)

Per Meal:

2-3 fist-size portions of protein

2-3 fist-size portions of carbs

Oil no more than the palm of your hand

3-4 portions of fruit or vegetables (~ $\frac{2}{3}$ a broccoli head size worth of food)

Please ask me if you have further questions about this a weight gain/loss guide with MUCH better information will be coming soon!

Don't know what to shop for? Take this list!

Food list w/ estimated prices:

PLEASE feel free to add to this! This is a base list of ingredients that only provides a very basic and overall general view of food! I will be adding more to this over time, but it is a good start for what to look out for! Any fruit or vegetable is worthwhile to add, and plenty of dishes or meals are left out here that you otherwise wouldn't see as they're not in my normal rotation!

My best recommendation to ensure you hit your daily goals for nutrition: One source of protein, one source of carbs, and two different color veggies &/or fruits per day.

This list is as follows

\$ = >\$1 per 25g protein

\$\$ = \$1-2 per 25g protein

Proteins

- \$\$ Chicken breast (lean)
- \$ Chicken thighs (mild fat)
- \$\$ 90/93% Ground Turkey (mild fat)
- \$\$ Tip steak (lean)
- \$\$ Flank steak (moderate fat)

- \$\$\$ Porterhouse steak (Moderate fat)
- \$ 4% or 2% Cottage Cheese (low fat)
- \$ 2% Milk (fairlife preferred)
- \$ Fat Free or 5% (PLAIN) Greek Yogurt
- \$\$ Salmon (moderate-high fat but is good fat)
- \$ Whey Protein Isolate (no fat)
- \$ 85% Ground Beef (moderate fat)
- \$\$ <90% Ground Beef (low fat)
- \$ (per serving) Whey Protein
- \$\$ Tofu (Firm or extra firm)
- \$ Beans & Rice together (Trust me)

Carbohydrates

- White Rice
- Beans (pinto or black cheapest, but all work fine)
- Russet Potatoes
- Gold Potatoes
- Whole-grain bread
- Sourdough Bread
- Non-butter Pastries (biscuits, rolls, etc)

Fats

-
- ~Saturated
- Butter
- Any red meat
- Cheeses
-
- ~Unsaturated
- Olive Oil *extra virgin preferably*
- Avocado
- Nuts

High Nutritional Content

- Apples
- Bananas
- Mangos
- Oranges
- Grapefruit

- Kiwis
- Any and all berries
- Cabbage
- Lettuce (EXCEPT ICEBERG)
- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Carrots
- Green Beans
- Kimchi
- Pickles
- Sauerkraut
- Bean Sprouts