

Minimalist Muscle

More Muscle In Less Time For Busy Guys

by Eric Bach



Module 4: Phase One Workout

Phase One: *V-Taper Specialization*

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You must get your physician's approval before beginning this program.

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Do not take risks beyond your level of experience and abilities.

Don't lift heavy weights if you're alone, injured, fatigued, and inexperienced. Ask for instruction and a spotter for lifts to maximize safety. If you experience lightheadedness, dizziness, or shortness of breath while exercising, stop immediately and consult a physician.

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Phase One: Shoulders and Lats

A set of thick, round shoulders and wide lats is essential to building a phenomenal, head turning physique.

That's why "shoulder's make the man" remains such a popular saying.

In men, a good set of shoulders and lats amplifies the V-Taper and X-Power look. For women, a set of toned, wide shoulders make the waist appear smaller, enhancing feminine curves.

Well developed lats further boost the V-Taper and power look.

By making your shoulders appear wider and waist narrower, you'll look stronger and more muscular.

Plus: shoulders are the key to any masculine physique. Without well developed, thick shoulders nothing else will match up.

Your shoulder has three heads: the anterior on the front, medial on the side, and posterior on the back. Shoulder presses and bench presses hammer the anterior head, so we'll focus on hitting high-volume training on the posterior and medial heads.

To hit your lats, focus on horizontal pulls like dumbbell and cable rows to build thickness in your back. We'll also hit vertical pulls, helping to build the coveted "v-taper" to make your shoulders appear larger and waist smaller.

Both areas, when hammered with heavy weight, volume, and "surprise" finishers, will transform your physique in mere weeks.

Warm-Up

I know, I know. Warm-ups are boring. Still, they're essential to making pain-free progress and optimizing your training.

If you have time to train, you have time to warm-up. Better to skip part of your workout AND warm-up rather than skip your warm-up. So let's look at some of the core benefits to WHY you need to warm-up:

Physiological Warm-Up

As you guessed it, one key goal of the warm-up is to raise your core temperature. Running “hotter” improves oxygen transfer, helping your body becoming more efficient, improve blood flow, and help your body expel metabolic by-products easier. All of which add up to fewer injuries, heavier weights, and more muscle.

Hormones

Well, well.

With a proper warm-up your hormones are primed to release and reach home for maximum muscle growth. By this I mean the big guys like Growth Hormone, Testosterone, and IGF-1 are released to circulate around your body and connect with their receptors. These hormones all help you build strength and muscle, while cutting fat. During your warm-up, mentally imagine your big lifts and get amped up to make some huge gains.

Joint Health

Warming up is all about getting your body ready for your workout. That means getting your joints, tissues, and ligaments ready to go. You don't want to deal with an achy shoulder, sore back, or twinge knee...right?

The Minimalist Muscle warm-up will help you loosen and lubricate the joints so you feel and perform better.

Warm-Up Exercises

Perform the following exercises for one set, minimizing rest between exercises.

Quadruped Fire Hydrant x10 (5/side)

Birddog x10 (5/side)

Lateral Squat x10 (5/side)

Push-Up x10

Elbow Tap x10 (5/side)

Sub-scap push-up x10

Bodyweight Squat x10

Jumping Jack x50

Extra Warm-Up Before Your Main Lifts

After your general warm-up, you'll need a little more work with warm-up sets before hoisting big weights. This "greases the groove" and improves neuromuscular coordination and your technique on the main exercise.

There's a simple, basic progression you should follow. With an empty bar or light dumbbells, you'll perform a few lighter sets focused on warming up the muscles.

Warm Up Set One: 50% of the weight you'll lift for the first set x12 reps

Warm-Up Set Two: 75% of the weight you'll lift for the first set x6 reps

Example: Bench Press starting weight, 200 lbs x 10

Warm-Up One: 100 x 12

Warm-Up Two: 150 x 6

But What About Cardio?

If your goal is to gain muscle, your focus shouldn't be on cardio. Too much cardio will negate your gains in the gym and hinder recovery. That said, you don't want to get soft and pudgy like the Michelin man.

So here's an additional recommendation: perform two days of cardio each week to minimize fat gain. There are many options.

Option One: Low intensity cardio only, such as incline walking for 20-30 minutes, ideally on Saturday by itself or AFTER the optional fourth workout.

Option Two: High intensity methods like sprints, complexes, or sled work 10-15 minutes a day. Don't make it complicated. Get your regular warm-up in, push your heart rate to the max, and have a little fun. The only caveat here is to avoid sprinting the day before heavy lower body lifting.

Beyond these ideas, I don't care what you do for cardio. Just do it twice per week.

Workout Schedule For Weeks 1-6

Monday: Day One

Tuesday: Conditioning

Wednesday: Day Two

Thursday: Off

Friday: Day Three

Saturday: (Optional) Day Four + Conditioning

Sunday: Off

Day One: Pull

1. Chest Supported Row 2x15, rest 30 seconds
2. Chin Up 5x6, rest 60-90 seconds
3. Three Point DB Row 4x8; 3-0-1 tempo, rest 45 seconds between arms and sets
- 4a. Neutral Grip Chest Supported Row with Pause 3x10; 3-2-1, tempo, rest 30 seconds
- 4b. Cable/Band Face Pull 3x10 3-0-1, tempo, Rest 30 seconds
- 5a. Lat Pull Down x8
- 5b. Dumbbell shoulder press x8
- 5c. Dumbbell lateral raise x8
- 5d. Dumbbell rear delt flye x8

Perform the set above as many times as possible in ten minutes.

Workout Notes

- (1) Start with a chest-supported row, going light to pump your back and serve as an additional warm-up.
- (2) The Chin-up is your pure strength exercise. Once able, add weight via a weight belt of a dumbbell held between your feet.
If you fail to get the reps, use a small band or weight assisted pull-up.

Tempo comes into play on the three-point row, chest supported row, and face pull. In all cases, “think” about squeezing the muscle during each rep and maximizing tension.

Finish out with the quad-set killer. Keep rest minimal on the final four exercises, races the 10-minute timer.

Day Two: Lower

- 1a. Box Jump 2x5, rest 0
- 1b. Plank on elbows 2x45 seconds, rest 30 seconds
Move to hands if elbows are too easy.
2. Squat (any variation) Wave Loading 8-6-4; 8-6-4
Rest 60 seconds/between sets. 2-3 minutes after each wave.
3. Dumbbell or Barbell RDL: 4x8, rest 60-90
- 4a. Hanging Leg Raise 2x10, rest 45
- 4b. Goblet Split Squat 2x10, rest 45
- 5a. Single Arm Cable Pull-down x12; 3-1-1 tempo
- 5b. Dumbbell Y-Press x12; 3-1-1 tempo
Rather than pressing dumbbells directly overhead, press out and pause in the “y” position.
Keep these light and squeeze each rep.
- 5c. Inverted Row x12; 3-1-1 tempo

Perform the set above as many times as possible, keeping rest minimal for eight minutes.

Workout Notes

1. The box jump and plank on elbows will first fire up your CNS, helping you train more muscle fibers, while the plank will fire up your core, providing extra stability for your squats.
2. The Chin-up is your pure strength exercise. Once able, add weight via a weight belt of a dumbbell held between your feet.
3. Your money maker here is the squat. This lift alone is responsible for 80% of your lower body gains. Use a front squat, back squat, or back-squat and stick with the chosen variation for the entirety of the phase.
4. The tempo picks up with RDL's, providing a ton of muscle building tension to your glutes, low back, and hamstrings. Use wraps if needed for your grip.
5. Hanging leg raises and split squats will finish your legs and abs off, providing a little vanity while firing up stabilizers through your hip, knee, and ankle.
6. The single arm pull-down and “y” press provide the final “hit” of volume for the focus on your lats and shoulders.

Day Three: Push

- 1a. Clap Push up or Bench Plyo/Push-Up 2x5, rest 30 seconds
- 1b. ½ kneeling pallof press 2x8, rest 30 seconds
2. Barbell Bench Press Wave Loading 8-6-4; 8-6-4
Rest 60 seconds/between sets. 2-3 minutes after each wave.

3. Dumbbell Single Arm Overhead Press 3x8; 2-0-1 tempo, rest 60 seconds
4. Pull-up/Inverted Row 3x8, 2-0-1 tempo, rest 60 seconds
5. Dumbbell 45 degree Incline Press 3x10; 5-1-1 Tempo; rest 90 seconds
- 6a. Close Grip Cable Row x12
- 6b. Push-Up x12
- 6c. Dumbbell Lateral Raise w/pause; 2-2-2 tempo

Perform the set above as many times as possible, keeping rest minimal for eight minutes.

Workout Notes

- (1) The explosive push-up variation will fire up your CNS and improve muscle fiber recruitment.
- (2). Diving into the meat of the workout, you'll use the wave-loading focus, increasing the weight for each set of 8-6-4. After a longer rest, increase the weight again, working close to a 4-rep max on the second wave.
- (3). The dumbbell single-arm overhead press hits important core and stabilizer muscles neglected during bilateral pressing. Stay tall and brace your abs. Your obliques will be smokin' alongside your shoulders.
- (4) Pick either an inverted row or pull-up for the fourth exercise. I always strive for a pull:push ratio of at least 2:1 in workouts for shoulder health.
- (5) The high-dumbbell incline press will smoke the clavicular head of your chest, helping your pecs pop-out and fill out a t-shirt. The final finisher of rows, push-ups, and lateral raises is an eight-minute time challenge. Get after it!

Optional Fourth Day: Challenge Day

Push-Up, Pull-Up Countdown

- 1a. Push-up 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1; rest 0
- 1b. Pull up 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1; rest 0
- 2a. Dumbbell Biceps Curl 3x10; rest 60 seconds
- 2b. Dips or Triceps Pushdown 3x10; rest 60 seconds
- 2c. Dumbbell Farmers walk 3x40 steps; rest 60 seconds

Workout Note

Use the inverted row if you can't do the recommended Pull-ups. Perform a countdown; starting at 10 and working your way to one. Too easy? Start adding a rep each we