TOTAL TRAINING FREQUENCY

1. Strategy Summary

- Strength train 2-4 days a week total.
- For 2 and 3-day programs, train on non-consecutive days with at least one recovery day between workouts (ex. Monday, Wednesday, Friday)
- For 4-day programs, don't train more than two days in a row (ex. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday).

2. Barebones Bullets

1-2 sessions	**2-4 sessions**	5+
Beginners & Busy Professionals	**Natural physique training**	Bodybuilding body part splits
High Intensity/Heavy Duty Programs		Performance athletes

Total Training Frequency

*The body's nervous and hormonal systems require a longer time to recover in between training sessions than localized muscle groups. So we have to look at the body as a whole when balancing intense training with optimal recovery.

*You must also factor in your lifestyle, career, family obligations, social demands, and any other stressors outside of the fitness space that can delay normal recovery time.

*Overtraining generally happens because of systemic issues (hormonal, metabolic, nervous systems) vs. localized muscular ones. The body as a unit is what burns out vs. the biceps.

*Systemic symptoms of overtraining = lowered immunity, general fatigue/burnout, lack of desire to train, reduced training performance/work capacity, mood disturbances, lowered testosterone, impaired thyroid production/metabolic rate, insomnia.

Performance vs. Appearance

*Performance sports require more frequent and longer training sessions to develop specific skills, practice with teammates, study opponents' strategies, improve technique/execution, and adhere to competitive schedules.

*Personally, this transition was tough for me. As a performance athlete, my mentality was always the more you train the better/just outwork the other guy. For physique, I had to learn to allow for more recovery, especially during fat loss/calorie deficit phases. I now train much less (and I love training).

*Performance sports also have off-seasons (and many athletes enter them injured and burned out), whereas physique-focused training is year-round.

Natural vs. Physique-Enhancing Drugs

***Steroids, growth hormone, EPO, etc. speed up the natural recovery process and allow an athlete to train harder, longer, and more frequently without the risk of overtraining. Or, they can at least mask the side effects of sub-optimal programs in the short-term. That is their main benefit, but there are drawbacks in terms of long-term health consequences, as well as negative feedback loops with natural hormone production and normal metabolic rate.

*The natural recovery process involves an ebb and flow of natural hormone fluctuations (including testosterone, growth hormone, cortisol, insulin, and IGF-1).

*If you are taking outside sources of these hormones, you don't need to pay as much attention to the endogenous (within the body) production of them.

*Example - it doesn't matter if too high of a training frequency and duration combined with too low of a carbohydrate intake is chronically elevating cortisol and adrenaline while destroying your natural testosterone, thyroid production, and metabolic rate, IF you are jacking those up to supra-physiological levels with drugs.

*You can admire the physiques of enhanced athletes, and learn a few things from them, but you shouldn't necessarily try to follow their specific programs. Their physiological game is different, and the natural athlete needs to better manage training frequency with optimal recovery.

*Compared to traditional bodybuilding programs, we're recommending training body parts more frequently (1.5-3x per week vs. 1x per week), but with less volume per session, and less total training sessions a week.

3. Cool Quotes

About 15 years ago I cut my off-season workouts from five days per week to three. I started gaining size and strength so fast that people were asking my training partner if I was using steroids. In nine months I gained more muscle than I had in the previous four years. -- Dave Goodin, world champion natural bodybuilder.

Hormones conduct the transition from catabolism to anabolism. Specifically, cortisol, after being elevated by the workout, falls and ultimately drops below initial levels

hours later. Concurrently with cortisol decline, testosterone, in men, after being suppressed by the workout, rebounds, and ultimately rises above initial levels. Growth hormone, meanwhile, trends upward during the recovery period, which is what one would expect given that cortisol is antagonistic (suppressive) to growth hormone and testosterone is complementary (supportive) to growth hormone. Thus, the recovery period begins with catabolism, which yields to anabolism. It is between workouts, particularly during the anabolic period, that the physical improvements wrought by exercise occur. From a fat-burning standpoint, recall that the restoration and rebuilding of the body requires additional energy and thus additional calories are burned for many hours, and sometimes days, after an intense workout. It is crucial that you not short-circuit this physique-renovation process by working the same muscles again too soon or by working different muscles but going overboard with volume such that cortisol remains elevated and energy resources needed for recovery become depleted. Under these circumstances, recovery is derailed. -- Rob Faigin, Hormonally Intelligent Exercise

4. Research & Resources

Training Frequency on a Split Routine by Brad Schoenfeld
http://www.lookgreatnaked.com/blog/training-frequency-on-a-split-routine/

Training Frequency for Mass Gains by Lyle McDonald
http://www.bodyrecomposition.com/muscle-gain/training-frequency-for-mass-gains.html/

Ideal Training Frequency for Bodybuilding by Doug Brignole
http://www.ironmanmagazine.com/ideal-training-frequency-for-bodybuilding/