



## POWERLIFTING/STRENGTH-TRAINING FACT SHEET

Thank you for your interest in powerlifting / strength training / getting strong! If you'd like to keep exploring, I recommend the following resources.

### **'Starting Strength', a great tried-and-tested novice programme**

- You can find an outline of the programme here:  
[http://startingstrengthmirror.wikia.com/wiki/FAQ:The\\_Program#Three\\_Flavors\\_of\\_Starting\\_Strength](http://startingstrengthmirror.wikia.com/wiki/FAQ:The_Program#Three_Flavors_of_Starting_Strength)
- And videos on the main lifts here:  
<https://startingstrength.com/video/lifts/main-lifts>
- Or written descriptions of the lifts if you prefer:  
[http://startingstrengthmirror.wikia.com/wiki/FAQ:The\\_Lifts](http://startingstrengthmirror.wikia.com/wiki/FAQ:The_Lifts)
- (The forums also offer a wealth of advice – and argument – on pretty much any lifting-related question you can imagine.)

### **Programming and nutrition**

Essentially, eat more. In particular, consider eating more carbohydrates before and/or after a session (to fuel your lifting and help your muscles repair themselves afterwards), and more protein overall (again for muscular growth). Remember that the basic principle behind any strength-training programme is to subject the body to a stress great enough to drive adaptation: to force it to make itself stronger than it was before, so it's ready in case the same stress comes along again. The lifting itself, like any intensive use of the muscles, causes damage to the muscle tissue which is repaired in the recovery phase that follows the session. This also means that the time spent not lifting is the time when you actually get strong, so don't be tempted to think that more is automatically better: the 'supercompensation' takes its time. Three sessions a week (on a programme like Starting Strength) is plenty; even one a week will make a difference. The cycle of muscular damage and repair means it's also crucial to warm up for your lifting (basic dynamic stretches for the hips and the shoulders, plus warm-up sets from the empty bar upwards) and stretch after it (if you do yoga, almost any poses you can think of will be useful). I also recommend getting a foam roller for use on your back, glutes, quads, and IT band (down the outside of the thigh).

### **Finding a trainer**

You'll probably also need someone you can trust to give face-to-face help, though. If you're already a member of a gym, ask whether they have a personal trainer who specialises in powerlifting. If he or she asks you whether you're sure you want to do barbell work because women tend to prefer small dumbbells, or tells you not to squat below parallel because it's bad for your knees, or ever uses the word 'toning', show them this article (<https://stumptuous.com/lies-in-the-gym>) and find someone else. If there are no promising PTs around, look for a man or woman with big legs doing squats or deadlifts, and ask them for help. Most people like to share their wisdom.

If you're not already signed up to a gym, Google 'powerlifting gyms' in your area and see what comes up. Specialist lifting gyms will give less space to all the cardio and resistance machines, and will also be staffed by people who know their stuff. The big chains at the lower end (e.g. Pure) and the higher end (e.g. David Lloyd, Virgin) will



have the right kit, but probably little enough of it to be in high demand at peak periods (before and after work). Crossfit gyms will also have a lot of lifting equipment and knowledgeable people, but they tend to be very expensive and slightly cultish, and have a strange obsession with tractor tyres.

### **The health benefits of lifting (for women)**

These may include increasing muscular strength and efficiency, increasing bone density, improving posture and joint health, improving cardio fitness (depending on your programming choices and your baseline fitness), and enhancing your focus and your self-confidence. The benefits of free weights relative to resistance machines lie in the use of multiple muscle groups in a coordinated, three-dimensional, compound movement, rather than the isolation (and often contortion) of specific two-dimensional submovements that machines are designed for. This requires the 'core' and all the smaller stabilising muscles to get involved too, and enhances the real-world usefulness of your training. There can definitely be a role for the machines, and free weights require attention to technique that you can otherwise get away without, but there's really no substitute, physically or psychologically, for lifting something heavy with your whole body.

If you want to dig into the science of strength training, nutrition, and health, you could start with the Starting Strength 'Strength and Health' and 'Science and Medicine' articles (<https://startingstrength.com/article/strength-health>), or try Brad J. Schoenfeld's research: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Brad\\_Schoenfeld/contributions](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Brad_Schoenfeld/contributions).

### **On women and lifting more generally**

Articles and resources on gyms, lifting, and eating with a female focus:  
<https://stumptuous.com/>

Some great reflections on ways to change your thinking about lifting by Fran Mason:  
[https://startingstrength.com/article/how\\_to\\_talk\\_about\\_lifting\\_to\\_adult\\_novice\\_women](https://startingstrength.com/article/how_to_talk_about_lifting_to_adult_novice_women)

A blog post I wrote on how strength training contributed to my recovery from anorexia:  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hunger-artist/201101/what-weight-lifting-can-do-former-anorexic> (Google 'Troscianko weightlifting' and you'll find it)

A video 'Lift like a girl' made by the Oxford University Powerlifting Club:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otI2DOSYWS4&t=17s> (or search YouTube for 'lift like a girl oxford')

You can also view some of my own successes and failures here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVD\\_UhzVTCJuQ7yAlh0LWkg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVD_UhzVTCJuQ7yAlh0LWkg) (beware: form by no means always perfect!) (find it also via the 'social media' page on [hungerartist.org](http://hungerartist.org))

And, for lifting-related in-jokes and gratuitous offensiveness, check out BroScience (<https://www.youtube.com/user/BroScienceLife>), maybe 'Rookie mistakes in the gym' or 'How to skip leg day'

*If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with me:  
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