

40-40 Club

by Joe Giandonato, MS, CSCS

Join exclusive company with this simple program.

So after five years in the iron game you're still wallowing in the minors. Still plodding through your high volume body part splits and still sporting the physique you had five years ago, plus or minus a few pounds of flab. Frustratingly, your PRs remain the same, in spite all of your hard work.

What can you do? The answer is simple. Simplify all of your hard work – you know all the time you're spending on selectorized equipment or functional contraptions and narrow it down to two compound movements each training day at 40 reps apiece.

In baseball, becoming a member of the hallowed 40-40 club is an incredible feat. It requires a rare blend power and speed. Power to crush balls out of the park 40 times a year and speed to swipe 40 bases per year. Only four players have eclipsed the vaunted 40-40 mark in Major League Baseball history.

Gaining admission into this 40-40 club doesn't require you to be an MLB player, nor will you have to fork over three hours of your pay to get through the door of a glitzy nightclub that shares its same name, you will need intestinal fortitude to tackle challenging movements head on. Doing so, will propel your physique and strength to new heights -- thus calling you up from an iron game career of commercial gym mediocrity.

Cut out the crap and focus on things that matter

To baseball enthusiasts, obscure statistics such as 'Double Plays Grounded Into' and 'Intentional Bases on Balls' matter, but to lifters still locked into beginner and intermediate status, performing obscure exercises for variety's sake serve little relevance. Just because you saw a big time strength coach have their athlete do an exercise or just because you saw another big name personal trainer endorse a variation of a lift on their blog, doesn't mean that movement is right for you. You're not that advanced, so let's cut out the crap and stick to basics – the moves that will gain you respect and recognition in your gym as you morph your lagging physique into one that is Herculean and gets you the numbers you're after – whether they be new PRs or digits of the opposite sex.

Muscle up with compound lifts

Powerlifters are among the strongest athletes on earth as are strongman competitors and bodybuilders. Most are powerfully built, with mounds of muscle making up their legs, back, and chest. Powerlifters usually compete in the squat, bench press, and deadlift -- training with them regularly, to maximize their performances on the lifts, whereas strongman competitors employ them as assistance exercises to help them on events such as Caber tosses, Atlas stones, and squatting or deadlifting heavy objects attached to implements, such as vehicles, cinderblocks, or people. Bodybuilders typically use the squat, deadlift, and, bench, among other compound lifts, to recruit slews of muscle fibers to elicit considerable hypertrophy.

Compound lifts by definition, recruit one or more large muscle groups and involve two or more primary joints. Due to these characteristics, they have considerably more carryover to sport and everyday life than do their isolation exercise counterparts such as bicep curls and dumbbell flies.

Compound lifts not only include squats, deadlifts, and bench presses, but rows, presses, and bodyweight exercises (both loaded and unloaded as well). Incorporating compound lifts also evokes a greater hormonal response – triggering the secretion of testosterone and growth hormone, due to the significant demands imposed upon them – having to call on countless fibers, within the muscles that cross multiple joints to generate the incredible amounts of force needed to move heavy loads through a specified range of motion. This action stimulates activity at the cellular level, making muscle cells more sensitive to the anabolic hormones, namely testosterone and growth hormone that are circulating within the body.

Anabolic Hormones – VIP members of the 40-40 club

Growth hormone, secreted by the pituitary gland, governs the production of other anabolic hormones, such as IGF-1, and influences protein synthesis, growth, and metabolic functioning. Testosterone, secreted by the testes in males and ovaries and adrenals in females, interacts with nearly every cell in the body, promoting growth, recovery from exercise, and increases protein synthesis. Obviously the added endogenous secretion of testosterone will boost libido. So not only will squatting lead to better leg development, but perhaps better sex as well!

The template

Again, this program cuts out the fluff found in the workouts of many of the gym goers you see half-heartedly pace through each day. While they're staring at their magazine or trying to mimic what they saw a reputable trainer do with one of their pro athletes, you'll be embarking on day one.

Day One

Select one compound exercise from the following list:

Quad Dominant Lower Body Movement

1. Barbell Back Squat
2. Barbell Front Squat with clean grip
3. Dumbbell Goblet Squat

Perform 40 reps, distributed among a number of sets as prescribed in the program.

Select another compound exercise from the following list:

Upper Body Pulling Exercise

1. Bodyweight or Loaded Vertical pulling exercise (Chin-ups or Pull-ups)
2. Bodyweight or Loaded Horizontal pulling exercise (Inverted Row)
3. Barbell Row

Perform 40 reps, distributed among a number of sets as prescribed in the program.

Day Two – OFF or Active Rest

Use day two to either take off completely to recuperate between sessions or by doing conditioning or restorative work, such as stretching and soft tissue mobilization.

Day Three

Select one compound exercise from the following list:

Upper Body Pushing Exercise

1. Barbell Bench Press
2. Barbell Incline Press
3. Barbell Shoulder Press

Perform 40 reps, distributed among a number of sets as prescribed in the program.

Upper Body Pulling Exercise

1. Dumbbell Row
2. Face Pull

Perform 40 reps, distributed among a number of sets as prescribed in the program.

Dumbbells are optional if you lack barbells at your facility. If you don't have barbells, you really need to quit Planet Fitness and join a real gym. Dumbbells are fine for the dumbbell rows, hence their inclusion as an option in the program.

Perform 40 reps, distributed among a number of sets as prescribed in the program.

Day Four – OFF or Active Rest

Use day four to either take off completely to recuperate between sessions or by doing conditioning or restorative work, such as stretching and soft tissue mobilization.

Day Five

Hip Dominant Lower Body Movement

1. Barbell Deadlift
2. Hex Bar Deadlift
3. Box Squat to parallel
4. Dumbbell Sumo Squat

Upper Body Pushing Exercise

1. Bodyweight or Loaded Parallel Bar Dips
2. Bodyweight or Loaded Push Ups

Programming

The program is intended to get beginner and intermediate trainees to their respective next level. Each workout's tonnage – weights lifted throughout the course of the training session and volume may be too much for a beginner, so these numbers may be reduced to 30 and 30, or 20 and 20, given the person's

training experience and recovery abilities. It should be noted that advanced trainees and steroid users will be far more tolerant of each session's volume and should be able to bounce back in time for the next session.

*The author does not endorse or condone the usage of Anabolic-Androgenic Steroids, Peptide Hormones, or any other illegal performance enhancing drug.

Also, the deadlift should be reserved for later in the week, due to the immense demands it places on the body, specifically the central nervous system.

Sets and Reps

This is the stuff where most people go awry in their training. Many people fall in either end of the spectrum – either they lift too light – moving the bar as if it were unloaded or lifting far too heavy, often to failure, falling short of the prescribed reps.

Each repetition scheme focuses on maximizing different attributes, such as power, strength, hypertrophy, or muscular endurance.

For beginners, who we're to familiarize movements to, a scheme of 12 or more repetitions would be appropriate, as it addresses muscular endurance and develops intermuscular and intramuscular coordination. It is here, where the movements will be patterned, provided they are executed with good form. Once 12 reps are successfully completed, it's time to increase the load.

Beginners: For simplicity sake 12 - 13 reps on each set of each movement. Increase the resistance once you're hitting 12 reps on each set.

Intermediates, who have a decent baseline of strength, perhaps a bench press of 1.25 x BW, squat of 1.5 X BW, and deadlift of 1.75 x BW, should aim for 8 - 10 repetitions on each set. This range will encompass a blend of strength and hypertrophy and will represent roughly 75-80% of their 1RM.

Trainees who are more advanced, might increase the load throughout the workout, or perform five repetitions or fewer to emphasize strength or power. The remaining sets could be reserved for technique work or serve as warm up or adjustment sets with submaximal loads. Ideally, to track improvements week to week, keep the first movement of the day the same throughout the program. Build your own or refer to the sample program below and try it out for four weeks.

Train hard and remain hungry and humble!

Sample Program for Intermediate Trainee

Training Day One

1. Barbell Back Squat 5 sets of 8 repetitions (final three sets at 80% of 1RM)
2. Inverted Row 4 sets of 10 repetitions

Training Day Two

1. Barbell Bench Press 5 sets of 8 repetitions (final three sets at 80% of 1RM)

2. Dumbbell Row 3 sets of 12-13 repetitions

Training Day Three

1. Barbell Deadlift 8 sets of 5 repetitions (final three sets at 87% of 1RM)
2. Chain Loaded Pushups 5 sets of 8 repetitions

Joe Giandonato [insert a bunch of acronyms that don't matter to people outside of the fitness industry HERE], a regular contributor to joshstrength.com, is a sought after personal trainer and performance coach in the Philadelphia-area. He does not have a blog, website, or even a Facebook. He's focused on getting people results and isn't out there to market bogus products or to engage in pissing matches with other coaches. He quietly goes about his business, which includes helping people achieve their fitness goals, writing, and toiling at a desk job during the day, while serving as a de-facto health coach.