



**THE BULKING
BLUEPRINT**

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Preface

This book has been written out of sheer disbelief. Disbelief at the absolute pile of contradictory codswallop that surrounds the fitness industry.

When I first joined the gym at 15, I was told that high rep pump work was going to *fry* my biceps, *obliterate* my shoulders and *explode* my forearms. I did every sort of magazine workout, from 15-minute circuits to insane 20-rep squat protocols. I'd follow this up with low carb diets, low fat diets, the steak & egg diet and then everything else in between.

Believe it or not, switching up my workouts every week, then chopping & changing my eating habits daily meant that I made next to no progress for the best part of 4 years – wasting my 'newbie gains' and meaning I've been playing catch-up ever since.

Thankfully, I got my act together and am finally making the best progress of my life both in & out of the gym.

This book will tell you in simple terms exactly what you need to do from day 1 in order to maximise your gains and learn from my mistakes. There's no 'confuse your muscles & spin a magic wheel to decide the workout for the day'.

Read the following chapters, do these exercises, eat these foods and you will make progress – period.

If you like what you're about to read, follow me on Instagram (**@TheManBlueprint_**), Twitter (**@TheManBlueprint**) and Facebook (**The Man Blueprint**). If you don't like what you read, message me loads of abuse and vent your anger.

Introduction

One thing that stands out to me in the fitness industry is misinformation. One person will tell you that X builds muscle, Y loses fat and then some schmuck comes along and tells you everything is wrong – it's Z that builds muscle AND loses fat.

Well, they're all wrong.

I'll tell you step by step exactly what you need to do if you want to build some muscle. It doesn't involve farting around with a million different drop sets and high rep pump work. It isn't 'tailored specifically to your needs' – it's for everyone. And it works.

I'm going to tell you the two things (yes, just two) that a beginner needs to concentrate on if they want to build muscle. **You need to get stronger and eat in a caloric surplus** (eat more calories than you burn).

That's it.

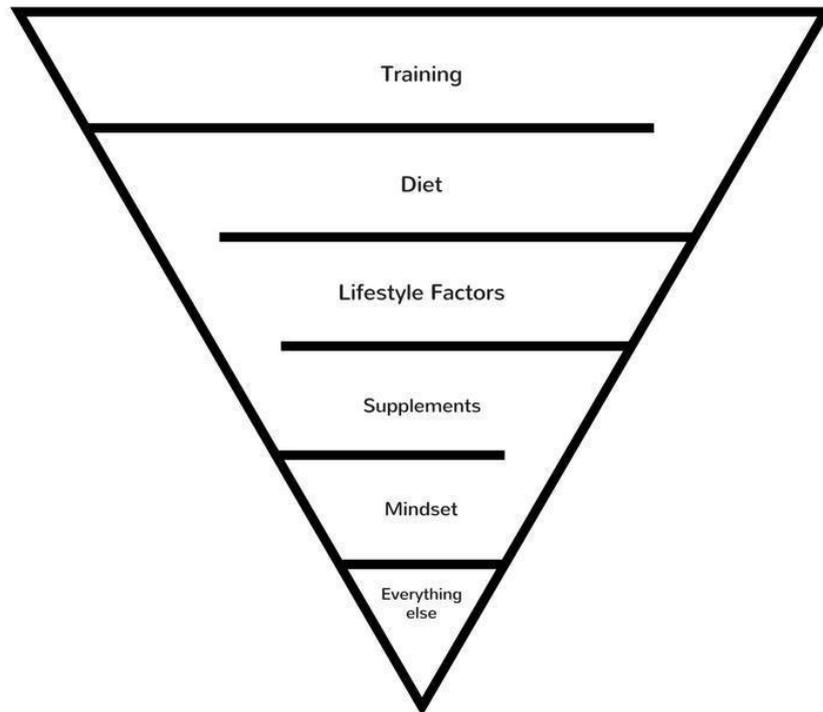
Sort of.

Of course, there are some other factors such as total workout volume and protein intake that will have an effect but if you nail your calories and strength from the off, you won't waste a single second in the gym.

This is the guide I wish someone would have given to me when I first started out. It took me 6 years to realise that the most basic things are what will get you the results you want, not the mad 7-day workout plans that bodybuilding.com would have you spin your wheels on.

The Pyramid

It's all well and good telling you that there's two factors to getting big but if I left it there, you'd still be lost in a wealth of contradicting nonsense. In the following illustration, I'll be fleshing out the precise factors that contribute to muscle growth and the importance of each.



Training

The base of the pyramid is a toss-up between training and diet. Now, some people believe that you can't out-train a bad diet - but as a beginner, if you're eating enough - you will grow.

That's not to devalue diet choices in any way, but it means you can still take your time dialling in your eating habits whilst still making gains as long as your training is of optimal intensity.

Regardless of eating, training hard and making consistent strength gains in the weight room will pack on mass in no time. Just make sure those kilos are going up!

Diet

Now, once you've got that diet of yours dialled in, it's going to be the most important weapon in your arsenal when it comes to body composition. Eat more, gain muscle. Eat less, lose fat.

You'll also want to get your macronutrient split right when it comes to your diet. Macronutrients are protein, carbohydrates and fat. You'll want to get these ratios right in order to maximise muscle gain (this will be explained further later on).

Basically, your workouts are sowing the seeds of muscle growth. Think of your food as the sun, air & water that help to maximise the potential of your seeds.

Lifestyle

Lifestyle factors will help to turbocharge your gains outside of the gym. The most important one you'll have to master is sleeping 8 hours a night.

If you're lacking in sleep, not only are your hormones going to be out of whack, you'll feel too lethargic to go to the gym, your workouts will suffer and your recovery time will be elongated due to you not getting enough hormone release during deep, prolonged sleep.

Other lifestyle factors include lowering stress, keeping physically active throughout the day (walking/standing), knowing when to rest & recover and simply having a schedule to ensure that you always have 30-60 minutes spare for your workouts.

Supplements

The clue is in the name – these should be used to *supplement* your diet and exercise plan, not replace it. Using supplements can help to fill in nutritional gaps, make your mind sharper, regulate hormones and all sorts of other things BUT they should not be used to replace real food. If muscle building was an episode of cribs then real food would be where the magic happens.

Mindset

Your mindset when you enter the gym is of the utmost importance. Sometimes, your attitude towards a certain weight may be the difference between making a personal best and failing. It is the difference between a good workout and a bad workout. The more mental battles you win each day, the quicker you will progress and the happier you'll be – true story.

Everything else

Then anything outside of these top four factors is responsible for about 3% of your lifetime gains. Don't sweat this small stuff if you're not nailing it every day but just because it doesn't contribute a lot to muscle growth doesn't mean it should be ignored.

Things like avoiding plastic, meal timing and meal frequency all have various other benefits beyond the scope of gains and can help you in other areas such as hormonal balance and healthy mindset.

The Big 4

Now with that wonderfully constructed pyramid fresh in your mind, let's address that base. Your training will revolve around 'The Big 4'. These are squats, deadlifts, bench press and overhead press. By getting stronger on these 4 'indicator' lifts, you can gauge your progression against recommended strength standards and see how well you're progressing.

Often people can become discouraged when they feel like they're not making progress but when you look back and see how far you have come on these lifts in such a short time, you will realise just how much progress you have actually made.

Squats

Squat is king. Squat, then squat some more. The squat will build strength, mass and athleticism in your legs and through your core. It will teach you how to brace your body properly and to keep tight and solid under heavy resistance.

The one caveat to the squat is that it is almost impossible to get right on the first few attempts. It took me years to master my squat. You will have to find a stance width that suits you, whether you would like to squat with the bar higher or lower on your back and a myriad of other little cues that will help you to build a competition worthy squat.

If you look at toddlers, they can squat down with ease, often staying in this position for prolonged periods. So, why are we so bloody awful at it once we grow up? Well, because we all have bad backs and tight hamstrings from being sedentary and craning to look at computers and phones all day.

To combat this lack of flexibility which will hinder not only your squatting ability but your health in general – I have devised a couple of mobility routines. These will target key areas that can hinder performance and will help to correct posture and reverse the damage of years of sitting at a desk (and sitting just about everywhere else).

How do I squat?

It's too hard to explain in mere peasant lingo, so I'll link you to a fantastic squatting tutorial from famed strength coach and author, Mark Rippetoe. I'll be linking to tutorial videos for the rest of the Big Four too so don't fret, young Padawan.

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhVC_AnZYyM

Deadlifts

If the squat is king, then the deadlift is queen. We all know she's really in charge...

If you can pull double your bodyweight on a deadlift, chances are that your back will be huge. The deadlift will work your whole back, your abs, your legs, your forearms, your traps and literally just about anything else you can think of. Hell, I'm sure a hefty set of deads will give your toes a pump.

The one thing that must be noted about the deadlift is that it is much like the squat in regards to form. Most people will spend months, if not years trying to perfect their deadlift. Having the core strength and bodily awareness to keep your back from rounding whilst simultaneously hinging at the hips and the knees will take hours and hours of practice in the weight room.

This practice will keep you injury free and will allow you to make big gains. The initial outlay perfecting this weightlifting staple will keep the gains flowing for years to come so don't skimp on it.

How do I deadlift?

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AOBAU-EcYE>

Bench Press

Now, much like all of the compound movements, if you can lift a lot of weight in the bench press the chances are that it will have a carry over effect into muscle size.

Becoming strong at the bench press is the gym bro's holy grail. "How much do you bench bro?" will no longer be a sarcastic joke you make to your mere mortal friends, it will now become YOUR LIFE, you will be constantly gauging peers by their ability to press a steel bar above their chest whilst laying horizontally.

The risk of injury with the bench press revolves primarily around the shoulders. If you bench with your grip too wide and your scapula un-retracted then you're running the risk of your front delts overcompensating to press the load.

In layman's terms, your chest isn't being used as much because of this grip so your triceps and the front portion of your shoulders are drafted in to help.

Not only does this mean that your chest won't grow as quickly as it could be, but you will find yourself developing rounded shoulders, poor posture and getting aches and pains in both your shoulders and elbows from poor form and overuse. Combat this by practicing form religiously and by paying particular attention to the dislocation segment in the mobility routine below.

How do I bench press?

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4T9UQ4FBVXI>

Overhead Press

Out of the big four, if I had to get rid of one exercise, this would be it. It is possible to build a great physique without the overhead press. But – the overhead press has too many benefits to ignore. By increasing your vertical pressing ability, you will no doubt experience massive gains in your horizontal press (Increase OHP -> Increase in bench press).

Not only that, but adding weight to your OHP will build big, round shoulders that only the OHP could build. It builds width and density whilst also adding some mass to the top portion of the chest. Old school bodybuilders would use the OHP to 'fill in' the upper portion of the chest that neither the flat or incline bench press could reach.

One bonus tip I would give with regards to the OHP would be to concentrate on bringing your head through as you push the bar overhead. This ensures that your back isn't overly curved, reducing back pain and also adding power to the eccentric portion of the lift.

How do I Overhead Press?

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnBmiBqp-AI>

Strength standards

Now, I'm not one for judging a person's overall development by an arbitrary percentage, but having numbers to aim for can give you an idea of how far you need to go to get to certain benchmarks in your lifting career.

Don't be disheartened if you're not yet at a certain point, you likely won't make it to 'Good' for about a year or so. These are numbers to aspire to, not that you should be reaching with ease. If it was that easy, everyone would be strong as an Ox and as big as my ego.

The following lifts are based on a 1 rep max.

Squat

Good - 1.5 x BW / Better – 2x BW / Best – 2.5 x BW

Deadlift

Good – 1.5 x BW / Better – 2 x BW / Best – 2.75 x BW

Bench

Good – 1.25 x BW / Better – 1.5 x BW / Best – 2 x BW

Overhead Press

Good – 0.75 x BW / Better – 1 x BW / Best – 1.25 x BW

Mobility Routines

As promised in the last section, here are my AM & PM mobility routines. These will help to alleviate any posture issues, protect your body from injury and improve all aspects of your athletic performance in general.

Morning

Sole roll x 10 seconds each on each foot

The sole roll has been around for years BUT I gave it the snazzy name so I'm claiming it as my own.

Basically, get yourself a golf ball (they cost about a penny) and roll your sole over it until you start to feel the burn. You should feel like the tightness in your sole is being alleviated and knots that you didn't know existed being untied. Keeping the sole rolled out consistently is key to maintaining healthy posture, flexible hamstrings, mobile ankles, sturdy knees and a strong back.

Believe it or not, tight soles can lead to so many problems around the body. Problems that you would probably attribute to other factors and then continue to spin your wheels trying to combat. Doing this easy little exercise can keep you healthy in so many departments and can be the hidden trick to unlock your true physical potential.

Cobra Pose x 5 deep breaths

The cobra pose is the poster child for yogis up and down the continent. People lying on their fronts trying to ascend to a higher realm in the hopes that the yoga gods will grant them safe passage into the land of chill.

It is however, a very effective move if you're looking to increase your lower back flexibility and avoid stiffness every morning. If you're off to sit at a desk all day or if you have a day of strenuous exercise planned, it will help to injury proof you in each instance.

You can't afford to be shirking your lower back mobility when you're going to be performing multiple sets of heavy compounds every single week. Without some form of recovery work, you're asking to be shafted by the injury demons that have plagued many a promising lifting career.

Lunge & Twist x 5 deep breaths each side

This stretch is fantastic at hitting muscles that you didn't even know you had. It helps to stretch out the hamstrings, hips, groin, lower back, lats and just about everything in

between. It's fantastic at giving you a little energy at the beginning of the day – which I attribute to the rush of endorphins associated with full body movements.

Get into a lunge position and twist your torso so that the opposite elbow to the front knee crosses over. For example, if you are lunging forward with your right knee, the outside of your left elbow should be pressed against the outside of the knee. Easy? Thought so.

There's not much else to say on this one other than you better be bloody doing it. Next.

Downward stretch x 5 deep breaths

This exercise is to be done in a superset-like fashion with the exercise below. Bend over as much as you can and grab hold of the back of your legs. Take 5 deep breaths then return to the top of the movement.

This will give your hamstrings a fantastic stretch which can help to keep your posterior chain in check. Tight hamstrings are a hidden culprit when it comes to bad posture and a sore back and don't always get the attention they deserve. By keeping your hamstrings and lower back supple, you eliminate one of the major causes of back pain and improve your strength and sporting performance without barely breaking a sweat.

Upward Stretch x 5 deep breaths

Perform this one straight following your downward stretch. Come up, lengthen your back and stretch your arms as far up to the ceiling as you can. This one is fantastic for stretching out the back in a way that it's not used to. In every day life we are so used to hunching over and bending down for things that we naturally start to adopt this posture on a regular basis.

By flipping this on its head and performing a stretch that pulls in the opposite direction, it acts as a sort of reset button, restoring your body's natural posture and keeping you pain and injury free for the long haul.

This, paired with the downward stretch is an effective one-two combo to help keep your posterior chain healthy and is especially important if you are performing heavy compound lifts in the gym or playing sports multiple times per week as it can boost performance and let you compete at your peak for as long as possible.

Dislocations x 15

Doing shoulder dislocations with a resistance band can really help increase your shoulder flexibility and decrease your risk of pain and injury, definitely do this every morning and night.

Start with your hands outside shoulder width apart grabbing the resistance band in front of you. Raise the band up, over and behind your body until you feel touch your lower back. You should feel your shoulders externally rotating, getting a great stretch in the process. Clicking is normal so don't be alarmed.

Night

Foam Roll x 30 seconds on each body part

The name sends shivers down the spine of every gym goer to have had the misfortune of experiencing it. The foam roller. It is synonymous with pain, torture & heartache.

But, you should be doing it.

Not only does foam rolling give your muscles the recovery boost they need – it also provides much needed support for lesser worked areas such as the inner and outer portion of your quadriceps.

Position the part of your body you want to massage on top of the roller, apply pressure and then roll yourself along it slowly, feeling the breakdown of muscle soreness and stiffness as you go. Focusing on really applying pressure to problem areas is where you're going to feel the most benefit.

Areas you want to work each night (in this order & one side at a time where applicable) are as follows: Calves, hamstrings, quadriceps – Top portion, inner portion & outer portion, glutes (bum cheeks), lower-back, mid-back, upperback/traps, lats, chest and finally, your stomach (known as 'gut bashing' – great for inducing sleep).

This may sound like a lot of work, but in reality, you're working for well under 10 minutes and it's a methodical process, heading up the body so you can't really forget anything. It's easy, it's effective and it means you can join in on foam rolling forums discussing your hamstring PTSD. It's a must.

Wall Slides x 15

Wall slides are the main man when it comes to improving your posture. Stand with your heels, glutes and upper back touching the wall then move your hands up and down, keeping all points of contact stable throughout.

This exercise will help to reverse shoulder rounding and strengthen the shoulders and upper back - essential to keeping great posture and also fantastic for opening up your ribcage and thus improving your breathing quality.

Downward Stretch x 5 deep breaths

See above.

Upward Stretch x 5 deep breaths

See above.

Dislocations x 15

See above.

The Workout

So here we are, the workout. This is your bread and butter. You should be nailing your workouts consistently every single week for the rest of your godforsaken life if you want to see the gains you really deserve.

The following workout is split over 4 days of the week consisting of 2 upper body workouts and 2 lower body (and abs) workouts. Working every muscle twice a week is the optimal frequency for a natural trainer who is looking to optimise muscle growth and recovery time.

I tend to go for Monday/Tuesday, have a rest day and then Thursday/Friday, taking the weekend off. If your schedule doesn't allow for these specific days then play around with it as much as you want. If you're strapped for time, superset the assistance exercises (or scrap them completely, depending on how pressed you are). As long as you're hitting your prescribed weights for the big 4 then everything else is optional and therefore, expendable.

My workout is based on the 5/3/1 principle, meaning you go through 3 weeks of intense resistance, ramping up the weight and dialling down the reps for the big 4 which is then followed by a 1 week deload which allows your body to recover sufficiently for the next 'cycle'.

Each cycle will last 4 weeks and then start again, with your weights upped and your reps reset. This only applies to the big 4, so your assistance exercises can be consistently climbing the whole time.

Enter Wendler 5/3/1...

Below, I'll include a snippet of Jim's explanation of the program (which is a bit better than mine) to help you understand the principles of progressive overload, periodization and the complete ethos of the program a tad better.

Take it away, Jimbo:

"The basic gist of the program is:

- The first week you will do 3 sets of 5 reps (3x5).
- The second week you will do 3 sets of 3 reps (3x3).
- The third week you will do 1 set of 5 reps, 1 set of 3 reps and 1 set of 1 rep (5/3/1).
- The fourth week you will do 3 sets of 5 reps (3x5). This is an easy deload week.
- After the fourth week, you begin again with 3 sets of 5 reps.
- Each week and each set has a percentage to follow, so you won't be guessing what to do anymore.

First, know your maxes for the four lifts (squat, bench, deadlift and standing military press). These are not maxes you think you can do, maxes you've done, or maxes you think you might be able to do. These are maxes you can do RIGHT NOW. This is not the time to be a braggart lifter. If you overestimate your maxes, you'll be in for a rude awakening.

Here's how to do it:

- Estimate your 1RM for the lift. If you can't even do this, you probably shouldn't be doing this program.
- Take 80% or 85% of your supposed max and perform as many reps as possible.
- Plug the reps and the weight into this formula to get your estimated 1RM:
 $\text{Weight} \times \text{Reps} \times .0333 + \text{Weight} = \text{Estimated 1RM}$

Once you have your maxes for each lift (bench, squat, deadlift and standing military press), I want you to take 90% of this number and use this as your training max for the first 4 weeks of the training cycle.

The easiest way to do this is to take your max and multiply it by .9 (that's 0 point 9). For example, let's say you have a 400 deadlift, 385 squat, 190 military press, and a 295 bench press. Your numbers would look like this:

- Deadlift: $400 \times .9 = 360$
- Squat: $385 \times .9 = 345$
- Military: $190 \times .9 = 170$
- Bench Press: $295 \times .9 = 265$

You would then begin the 5/3/1 program using the above numbers (360, 345, 170, 265) as your starting maxes.

This will allow you to use sub-maximal weights to get stronger, and since you won't be handling heavy weights all the time, it'll keep your body fresh and you won't plateau or regress."

Once you have all this *super strenuous* working out boxed off, you can calculate your main lifting numbers by plugging your stats into the following table. That is then a full cycle of training all laid out for you.

You will then increase your lower body lifts by 5kg and your upper body lifts by 2.5kg every cycle until you hit a stumbling block. This will take months - maybe years, so I wouldn't worry too much about that.

If you do hit a plateau however, reset your weight to two cycles ago for the lift you stalled on - keep the others the same if you are still progressing on them.

Anyway, enough waffle - I don't want to blow your head off. Here's the table:

| Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 65% x 5 reps | 70% x 3 reps | 75% x 5 reps | 40% x 5 reps |
| 75% x 5 reps | 80% x 3 reps | 85% x 3 reps | 50% x 5 reps |
| 85% x 5 reps | 90% x 3 reps | 95% x 1 rep | 60% x 5 reps |

Now you clearly understand everything surrounding the principles of the program, here is the workout that I recommend, with each exercise explained and justified.

Workout #1 – Lower

Squat – 3 sets of 5, 3 or 1 reps (dependent on week)

We've been through this, do squats.

Good mornings – 5 sets of 10 reps

Good mornings are fantastic for building strength through the core, lower back and hamstrings. This is one of the best assistance exercises for priming your body against injury and keeping the strength gains consistent.

Hanging leg raises – 5 sets of 10 reps

A great workout for the abs this. 50 total reps of leg raises will fry the abs like nothing else. You can also add progression into this exercise by placing a dumbbell between your legs.

Workout #2 – Upper

Bench press – 3 sets of 5, 3 or 1 reps (dependent on week)

Bench heavy, get big.

Pull ups – 5 sets of 10 reps

One of the most taxing exercises but definitely one which offers one of the biggest returns. This is a lot of back volume and is guaranteed to put some mass on that frame of yours.

If you can't do pull ups, jump up to the top portion of the lift and lower yourself slowly. Do this until can do 10 reps for the full 5 sets. Once you can do that, strap some god damn weight around your waist.

Incline dumbbell flyes – 5 sets of 10 reps

Flyes are perfect for hitting the chest at an angle that no press can. It allows for a deep stretch and new stimulus for the pecs and helps to target lagging areas. There's no need to go heavy here, feel the stretch, keep constant tension and make sure to squeeze at the top.

I tend to up the weight every month or so to really ensure I've got a handle on the weight. Ego lifting on the flyes is not the way to go – you have been warned.

Workout #3 – Lower

Deadlift – 3 sets of 5, 3 or 1 reps (dependent on week)

Big deadlifts, bigger backs.

Lunges – 5 sets of 5-10 reps

Working the legs independently is a great way to build stability and strength in both legs, meaning less imbalances and better long-term strength development in the squat. It also adds mass to the leg area nicely so bear that one in mind when you're thinking about skipping them.

Russian twists – 5 sets of 10 reps

Working the abs with a twisting movement helps to build solid obliques. These will be of benefit to the squat and deadlift as strong obliques help to stabilise the torso during heavy lifts, something you're going to need as you progress in weight.

Workout #4 – Upper

OHP - 3 sets of 5, 3 or 1 reps (dependent on week)

Strong press, strong everything.

Dumbbell rows – 5 sets of 10 reps

These puppies will build a thick back no question. Make sure you're feeling the stretch at the bottom, row up and back towards your hip, then take the lowering portion of the lift slowly over 2-3 seconds. They'll burn but they work.

Dips – 5 sets of 10 reps

Dips are the upper body squat. They work the chest, shoulder and triceps massively. They are also quite easy to load with weight so once you start adding weight to this movement, your upper body is going to blow up. Much like the pull ups, if you can't do dips – jump up to the top of the movement and lower yourself slowly. Once you can do 10 reps for all sets, start adding weight.

Tracking

You should be tracking every single workout. It doesn't have to be complicated, just a simple spreadsheet that allows you to see whether your lifts are progressing or stalling. This allows you to identify and address any issues that may crop up during your training – allowing you to make constant progress and keep those #gains steady.

I have put my exact template down below for you to copy into your own spreadsheet and use for ever and ever and ever. Thank me later.

| Date | Weight | Squat | W | GM's | W | Leg raises |
|------|--------|---------|---|--------|---|------------|
| | | 5//3//1 | | 5 x 10 | | 5 x 10 |

| Date | Weight | Deadlift | W | Lunges | W | Russian Twist |
|------|--------|----------|---|--------|---|---------------|
| | | 5//3//1 | | 5 x 5 | | 5 x 10 |

You can put each table on a new page if you wish. This table allows you to track the date, weight and reps in each set of each workout. The most effective way I have found thus far to track my progression over time – and I'm giving it to you for free you lucky swine.

W-w-w-what about arm work!?!

What about it? You won't need direct arm work when you're just starting out. To be fair, you don't really need it when you're advanced, it's just a vanity thing.

If your aim is to get big and strong, you should be focusing on key lifts that will build strength (The Big 4) and lifts that build size (Rows, Flyes, Pull-ups & Dips). Building abs and lower back strength is also essential to your performance (Good mornings and any sort of crunch/twist). These are what are important unless you're a professional bodybuilder.

Diet

Everyone loves to indulge in marathon 3-hour pump sessions but no one wants to eat to grow. “Eat to grow, bro” is such an overused yet under-practiced phrase. People think they're *smashing* the calories, when in actual fact, they're eating at or below their maintenance.

Tracking your calories accurately and honestly is the only way to guarantee muscle gains in the long run. To do this, you must work out what your maintenance is and then add 500 calories. This way you will be gaining 1-2lbs every month. If you are gaining more, then you should probably scale your surplus down to around 250. If you are gaining less, up it to 750. How simple is this, woah!?

Calories

Take your bodyweight in pounds and multiply the number by 15. Add 500 calories if you're bulking, subtract 500 if you're cutting. If you're not gaining enough weight, add calories. If you're gaining too much, then subtract calories.

It's as easy as that, promise.

Protein

Protein is the benchmark of bodybuilding bro-ism. “Gotta get your protein!”, “Protein is anabolic bro!”, etc, etc. The only thing you need to know about protein is that you don't need as much as you think you do.

Get 1g of protein per 0.8-1lb of bodyweight then the rest will take care of itself. Once you've got the protein boxed off you can play around with your carbs and fats to the tune of 30-40% of your total calories a piece.

Carbohydrates

People demonise carbs – these people are bloody fools. Carbs are essential to your testosterone production, giving you constant energy throughout the day and aiding your body's vital hormone production pathways.

Without carbs, your body would become a lethargic and constipated mess. Sort of, anyway. Without carbs, your body will eventually enter ketosis providing your fat intake is 80% or above but this is a different story and can be covered by someone infinitely more knowledgeable than myself. Just don't do it.

Fats

People also demonise fats – these people are also bloody fools. Fats are to testosterone what my writings are to your life – absolutely ESSENTIAL. Cholesterol, which is demonised by scrawny, unhealthy 'experts' who have clearly practiced what they preach (and felt the awful consequences – ugliness, bitterness and bad breath), is a precursor to testosterone and is therefore essential to your (biological) manhood.

Next time someone says not to eat eggs, turn around and shove one right up their hoop. Don't - but eggs are great for T, a great source of fat and a muscle building essential.

Now, some people don't eat eggs – or animal products full stop, and this is fine. You can build a whole lot of muscle and increase your T whilst on an animal product free diet but it just takes a tad more planning – something which I am too lazy to do nowadays and which is also beyond the scope of this book. But, if you're vegan/veggie, know that it can be done, because I – and many others, have done it in the past.

Your 14-item grocery list

The most simple, yet effective way of getting the perfect macro balance for muscle growth. Buy these 14 things week in, week out and you'll notice the gains in no time.

Apples

Apples are packed with antioxidants and fibre which can help to alleviate workout fatigue and are particularly effective as a pre-workout snack. They aid in keeping the doctor away too, apparently.

Carrots

Beta carotene is the buzzword when we talk about carrots. This is essential for maintaining healthy skin – perfect for those who care about their looks. They are also packed with other vitamins and help you to see in the dark so what's not to love?

Eggs

My love affair with eggs will never die. Packed with cholesterol – the key precursor to testosterone production – these should never be ignored when trying to optimize your hormonal health. Full of protein too.

Spinach

This is the poster boy for health foods. Full of zinc, iron and folate, Pop Eye's food of choice is one you simply can't afford to be leaving out of your daily intake.

Coconut Oil

Using coconut oil instead of your usual 1-cal sprays or vegetable oil nonsense has been shown to increase your testosterone due to its high levels of saturated fat. Coconut oil is one of the best fruit-based sources of this essential nutrient for perfecting your body's T production.

Granola

I use granola as a means for whacking up my calories for the day. A simple 100g serving of granola clocks in at around 500 calories, so playing around with your serving amount can get you closer to your goals easily. Also, this tasty little fella is full of good carbs (from oats and dried fruit), fats (from nuts) and a decent serving of protein.

Frozen berries

Get yourself a big bag of mixed frozen berries and you'll be getting a huge dose of antioxidants, vitamin C and resveratrol which are all fantastic for testosterone production and overall health. Not to mention they make the smoothie taste fantastic.

Bananas

Bananas are full of potassium and aid greatly in boosting recovery due to their high electrolyte content.

Orange juice

Orange juice is a great source of vitamin C. But you already knew this, didn't you?

Milk

Keep it organic & keep it full fat. Full of nutrients like calcium, zinc and magnesium, don't underestimate the teet juice.

Chicken

Chicken is amazing if you're looking to add protein into your diet for relatively low calorie expenditure.

Rice

Rice is a fantastic way of getting in some much needed calories if you're bulking, it also tastes brilliant with basically anything you put it with.

Broccoli

Broccoli is fantastic at flushing estrogen from the body and is full of vital nutrients like folate, vitamin E and manganese. This should be a staple. I usually go with tenderstem broccoli because it looks cool and tastes a wee bit better.

Avocado

The greatest plant source of monounsaturated fat, maybe tied with coconut oil is avocado. They can lower cholesterol, protect your heart and can aid in the absorption in other nutrients – all fantastic things if you want to be healthy and increase your T.

The Easiest bulking diet ever

Breakfast: 100g Granola, 100g Frozen Berries & 50ml Milk. With 100ml OJ.

Snack: 25g Whey w/100ml water & 1 Banana

Lunch: 5 Eggs & 25g Spinach

Snack: 1 Apple & 1 Carrot

Dinner: 200g Chicken Breast, 1tbsp Coconut Oil, 250g Rice & 100g Broccoli

Dinner #2: 200g Chicken Breast 1tbsp Coconut Oil, 250g Rice & ½ Avocado

Total Calories: 2,800 / **Protein:** 186g / **Carbohydrates:** 299g / **Fat:** 97g

To make the meals a little bit sexier, feel free to add in salt, pepper, spices, sauces, etc. If your maintenance calories are higher than mine, meaning you will be bulking on extra calories than those prescribed here, then add in more food that adds to the taste of the meal.

Add in some peanut butter and honey to the granola, some butter to the eggs, chorizo with chilli sauce to the chicken – and so on.

There are so many combos that will keep the meals from being too bland but as long as you are keeping the base stable and you're hitting your protein and calorie needs for the day, then feel free to play around with the taste and extra ingredients.

You don't have to stick with the diet every day either. I often have days when I'll eat a few of the meals then go out for dinner or even just have something I'd been craving that day. It doesn't have to be set in stone. The best diet is the one you can stick to (and that isn't full of processed garbage for the most part).

Tracking

Tracking your foods has never been easier. Dial in all of your food and drink for the day onto an app called **My Fitness Pal** and it will tell you exactly how many calories, protein, carbs and fats you have eaten that day – witchcraft if you ask me...

It's free and it's the best app out there for tracking your diet. If you eat the same thing every day for the most part then you will only have to track it once until you deviate (believe it or not).

To make sure the weight that you're gaining is not just fat, take daily measurements of your weight and average this out at the end of the month. At the end of the month, take your arm, waist, chest and leg measurements.

If everything is growing proportionally then keep going. If your waist is growing quicker than everything else, dial it back a bit and try again. We don't want you becoming a big old porker – not in a fat-shaming way, just some advice (promise).

Lifestyle Factors

These factors will help to supplement your main actions and boost what you're doing both inside and outside of the gym without putting any additional stress on the body.

Stress

We're all stressed. Some of us to varying degrees, but let's face it, we all face stress every day of our lives. Traffic, work, some random pleb on the street. There's so many micro-stressors that can affect us in day-to-day life. We can't control this, BUT we can control how we react to stressful situations and what processes we put in place to deal with stress.

Without a plan in place to deal with life's hassles, you're asking for trouble. The best tactic I have used when combatting stress is **meditation**.

The trick with meditation is to become aware of your body, breathing and thoughts. By recognising your thoughts and taking note of what is actually going through your mind, you become more conscious of your cognitions and therefore can exact more control over your reactions.

Over time, you will have a much more calmful demeanour when dealing with issues and you will be constantly aware of negative thoughts and emotions. This isn't a guide to getting rid of toxic thoughts brought on by things like anxiety and depression, but it can definitely help to alleviate stress, aiding the reduction of cortisol and improving recovery time.

I recommend downloading the app, **Headspace** to help you on your way with meditation. This app has a guide who will take you through the basics and keep you on track. It's free and it works.

Sleep

Sleep is literally one of the most important things you need to be optimising if you want to be healthy, strong and muscular. Whilst sleeping, your body releases anabolic hormones that are used to repair cells and keep the body as healthy as possible. Limiting your sleep is limiting the release of these.

You should be aiming for at the very least, 7 hours of sleep per night. I tend to lean towards 9 hours because I'm a lazy sod but you should not take your sleep lightly.

Things that can affect sleep are stress (addressed above), electricals, darkness, temperature and blue light. Keeping your electricals as far away from your bed as possible and switched off when applicable is a must. Keep your room cold by opening a window or keeping the heating off and keep all lights switched off and your curtains closed to achieve complete darkness.

Now, blue light. This is the light that is given off by screens. Now, we're all familiar with screens, right? These things we look at all day, every day? Well, they're disrupting our sleep and we need to stop them.

One easy tip for reducing blue light exposure is to take a 5-minute break for every hour you spend looking at a screen & then switching all your devices off 1 hour before bed.

One thing that has helped me sleep like a baby is the addition of **blue light blocking glasses** into my daily routine. I'll wear these for about 3 hours before I go to bed and my sleep has never been so good. You can pick them up for about £25 on Amazon and I promise you, they will be one of the best investments you ever make.

Cold Showers

Cold showers have been shown to boost recovery, increase testosterone, decrease stress and stimulate the lymphatic nervous system. These all aid in recovering from training stress and from mental fatigue that you will no doubt accumulate during your time on this program and beyond. Keeping on top of recovery will help you to maximise your potential and keep you injury free (and sane).

Smart Supplementation

Now the final piece of the puzzle. The tip of the pyramid. The cherry on top. Shall I stop? No? The icing on the cake. The finishing touches. Okay I'm finished. The tip of the iceberg.

Supplements.

We love to think that they're the secret sauce to building Mount Bicephious, however that simply isn't the case. You've probably heard it time and time again but, supplements are there to *supplement* what you're doing in and outside of the gym, not to be the main part of your whole program.

With that in mind, here's my recommendations. You can pick and choose which of these you may want to add into your routine but hopefully this will give you some unbiased knowledge to guide your decisions.

Why multivitamins (and the rest) aren't necessary

There is so much bollocks when it comes to the supplements industry. Everything is a new and improved special blend of baloney. There are a select few supplements that really work – and I use them.

This may be rather controversial but I don't believe multivitamins to be all that great. From anecdotal experience, I seem to get ill every time I try a batch for a few weeks no matter how good the quality supposedly is. They're packed with fillers and they aren't full of the right dosages of vitamins to actually justify the outlay on this new super formula you've been duped into.

Of course, some people swear by them but they probably used to put the milk in before their cereal as a kid – so I'd take whatever they say with a pinch of salt.

What I recommend

I recommend identifying your deficiencies and going from there. Get some bloodwork done – lay on the symptoms at the doctors if you have to. It's for your long-term health benefit – you'll be saving your doctors money, not wasting it.

Zinc

This has to be the most effective vitamin per cost that you can get your grubby mitts on. Zinc is dirt cheap and is one of the most important building blocks for testosterone.

We do tend to get our recommended intake of zinc every day from our diets but super-dosing with additional zinc can be of huge benefit to your testosterone, muscle growth, sleep quality, immune function, hair and nail health and overall recovery capabilities.

Dosage: 45mg/day on top of dietary consumption.

Vitamin D3

The sunshine vitamin. This is one of the most important vitamins for overall health. It's such a powerful vitamin that it can reverse low testosterone and depression when administered at high enough levels.

These are the essential supplements you should be taking without fail in my eyes. Now although it is of course advised that you get all your macronutrients AND micronutrients from whole foods, having supplements to help you along the way is a cheap and effective way to hit your goals. Below are a few more optional supplements that I believe will help you if you need that extra little push.

Dosage: 5,000-10,000iu/day whilst getting out in the sunlight

Creatine

Creatine is probably the most widely researched supplement out there on the market to date. There have been countless studies done on this cheap and cheerful powder - most of which concluding that it can increase muscle mass, strength and endurance. I bought a kilo for £10, which is unarguably fantastic value for something so clinically proven.

Dosage: 5-10mg/day

Ashwaghandha

This adaptogenic herb has been shown to improve your sleep and significantly lower stress. Studies have proven its effectiveness at raising levels of free testosterone throughout the body, meaning it allows for more of the hormone to be utilised, leading to better health and overall performance.

You can either take ashwaghandha in pill form which features a concentrated dose of an extract called KSM-66 or you can ingest a powdered form which is a crushed version of the root. I recommend going with the pills but if you would like to add powder into your smoothies then go for it.

Dosage for KSM-66 root extract pill form: 400mg/day

Dosage for powdered form: 5g/day

Maca

Maca may not actually be the potent testosterone booster it was previously claimed as being. However, it is fantastic at balancing hormonal levels, boosting energy naturally and giving your libido a kick start.

Dosage: 7g/day

Argan Oil

Not exactly a supplement but I use it like it is. Buy yourself a tincture of this, using one squirt a day and you'll notice some impressive results. Argan oil is often marketed as a great way to improve your hair, your nail follicles and your skin but one thing that people fail to mention is Argan oil's potential as a testosterone booster.

Argan oil has been shown in human studies to increase serum testosterone by up to 30%! This, in conjunction with my two other favourite oils – coconut (for everything ever) and olive (for dressings) make for an extremely effective triple threat when it comes to optimising hormones. Make this – and the other two – staples in your diet every day and you'll feel like the man you were destined to be.

Dosage: 3-5ml/day

Whey protein

Protein powder is the king of convenience. Add a scoop or two into your daily diet and you're looking at up to an extra 50g protein per day. This can be a big help if like me, you like to eat very carb & fat heavy meals so find it quite hard to get high enough amounts of this essential building block of muscle in your day-to-day life.

Dosage (should you need to use it): 25-50g/day

Mindset

The topic of mindset can be quite a complex one.

With this in mind (pun intended), I have drafted in a guest for this chapter.

Shawn Dodd is a qualified personal trainer/Instagram personality/YouTuber/Decent fella – and also a very good friend who has worked with me on projects on themanblueprint.com in the past.

As I trust him to deliver some bloody good content, I decided to get his expert opinion on this topic.

Take it away Shawn.

As you have probably guessed from the heading, we shall be discussing your mindset during a bulk - or more importantly, what qualities you wish to display.

Let us look at 3 crucial qualities needed, their definitions, and how they are applicable to you and your bulking journey.

Acceptance

'The process or fact of being received as valid, or suitable'.

During a bulk, you will put on body fat - that is a given.

You may hear the term "lean bulk" thrown around religiously these days. This is typically down to social media presenting us with year-round shredded muscular individuals everywhere we turn.

As a drug free lifter, to maximise your muscle mass gains, you have to accept that you will, over the course of time, put on body fat.

By no means do I recommend getting fat, but to optimally make noticeable changes to our physiques, this is a factor we simply must accept.

Self-control

'The ability to control oneself, in particular one's emotions and desires, especially in difficult situations'.

Although I do not recommend putting on excessive amounts of fat no matter what phase you are in, at times you might feel uncomfortable with how you look.

This can be difficult, as we might feel we are looking worse rather than better. Self-control plays a key role here. You must control that desire to give in and end your bulk. Remember why you chose to dedicate yourself to this.

You must then realise that by cultivating self-control - or simply, the ability to endure your impulsive thoughts, you can be successful.

Patience

'The ability to tolerate delay or suffering'.

While it is quite similar to self-control, patience is the most important out of each quality.

Putting on muscle takes time, gaining strength takes time, changing your external appearance takes time. We live in a society where we must have everything yesterday. This thought process is not healthy and it is certainly not realistic.

An illustration used countless times but yet so simple, this is a marathon, not a sprint.

Unless you want to put your health under unnecessary risk, practice patience. Look to the distance, as it is usually much different to our current situation.

These are qualities I wish I had learned to practice during my younger lifting years.

Save yourself the time, learn them now, and reap the benefits of not only a strong mindset, but a stronger and better body.

Putting it all Together

I know this has been a lot of info to consume so I'm going to bullet point the main points.

As long as you're hitting these points day in, day out then you'll be on the right track. This isn't an overnight success formula, it's a lifelong endeavour – remember that.

- Use the 5/3/1 method.
- Track your numbers on a spreadsheet.
- Do the mobility routines to stay injury-free.
- Take daily weigh-ins and monthly measurements.
- Eat in a 500 calorie surplus every day. Adjust surplus if needed.
- Use my diet template if you want an easy and effective plan.
- Track your caloric intake via My Fitness Pal.
- De-stress – try meditation.
- Get adequate sleep – ditch screens.
- Take cold showers.
- Supplement daily with Zinc, Vitamin D3 and Creatine.
- Supplement daily (optional) with Ashwaghandha, Maca Powder, Argan Oil and Whey Protein.
- Keep your mindset focused and driven at all times.
- Stay massive.

Signing Off

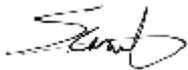
Stick to this plan as much as you possibly can for the next year. No program hopping, no excuses & no quitting. Just get consistently stronger over time & eat in a caloric surplus for one whole year. You'll be strong, muscular and (I'm sure) handsome.

If it is still working (which I assume it will be), then continue into year 2, then 3 and so on until you eventually hit a plateau. By then you will have enough knowledge of your body to choose where to go from there.

Don't forget to follow me on Instagram ([@TheManBlueprint_](#)), Twitter ([@TheManBlueprint](#)) and Facebook ([The Man Blueprint](#)) to keep up to date with new articles. Let me know about your experiences on the program, I'd be more than happy to hear the good, the bad and the ugly.

Remember, consistency is key.

Good luck!



Disclaimer

This routine is a general education health-related information product and is only intended for healthy adults, ages 18 and over. This routine is solely for information and education purposes and is not medical advice. Please consult a medical or health professional before you begin any exercise, nutrition, or supplementation program or if you have any questions about your health.

There may be risks and dangers associated with engaging in activities or using products mentioned in this routine for people with poor health or with pre-existing physical or mental health conditions. Because these risks exist, you will not use such products or engage in such activities if you are in poor health or have a pre-existing mental or physical health condition.

If you choose to participate in these activities, you do so of your own free will and accord knowingly and voluntarily, assuming all risks associated with such activities.