

The push/pull/legs routine: six days a week, and the three-day version

Push, pull, legs, twice through, with a day off. Here's the routine written out, the three-day version for when six days isn't your week, and how to keep it progressing.

Short answer: Push (chest, shoulders, triceps), pull (back, biceps) and legs, each run twice a week with one day off, so every muscle is trained twice. Five or six exercises a session: three sets of five to eight on the first lift, eight to fifteen on the rest, two or three reps short of failure. On three days, run each session once.

By [Diogo](#) · Published October 26, 2026 · 9 min read

Push/pull/legs is the split for people who like being in the gym most days. Three kinds of session, each with one job: push is the presses (chest, shoulders, triceps), pull is the rows and pull-ups (back, biceps), legs is everything below the hips. Run each twice and take a day off, and you have the six-day week the routine is famous for.

This page is the routine written out: the six sessions with sets and reps, the week, the three-day version, the rests, and the rule for adding weight. It's written for a gym. Deciding whether this is your split at all? [Which split](#) compares it with full body and upper/lower; this page assumes you've counted your days and landed here.

Who the six-day version is for

Six days is a lot of days, and it's a choice, not a requirement. The American College of Sports Medicine's 2009 position stand puts training frequency at two to three days a week for novices, three to four for intermediates and four to five for advanced lifters,¹ and its 2026 update makes high-effort lifting at least twice a week, with all major muscle groups trained, the primary recommendation.² The six-day week isn't more effective per set; it's a way to fit more sets, in shorter and more focused sessions, for someone who already has the habit. If you're under a year in, [the three-day full-body plan](#) or [the four-day upper/lower plan](#) will get you further with less of your week.

The week: six days, or three

Day	Six-day week	Three-day week
Monday	Push A	Push
Tuesday	Pull A	Off
Wednesday	Legs A	Pull
Thursday	Push B	Off
Friday	Pull B	Legs
Saturday	Legs B	Off
Sunday	Off	Off

Six days: every muscle is trained twice a week, and the day off can sit anywhere. If a day falls through, do the session you missed next and let the rotation slide; push, pull, legs is an order, not a calendar.

Three days: run the A sessions one week and the B sessions the next, and add a set to each exercise. The week then holds about two-thirds of the six-day version's sets, and each muscle is trained once a week with all of its sets in one session. That's fine for muscle: a 2019 meta-analysis of 25 studies found that how often a muscle was trained made no meaningful difference to its growth once the weekly volume was equated.³ It gives up a little for strength: a 2026 meta-regression of 67 studies and 2,058 participants found strength gains rose with how often a muscle was trained, with diminishing returns, while the effect of frequency on muscle size was compatible with being negligible.⁴ If strength is the goal on three days, **full body** trains every lift three times a week.

Four or five days: run the six sessions as a rolling rotation, the next one on the list whenever you train. On four days everything evens out over three weeks; on five, over six.

The six sessions

Sets and reps are listed with each exercise. "3 × 6–8" is three sets of six to eight reps. The first lift of every session is the heaviest and the one you'll track most closely; the ACSM's 2009 position stand recommends that strength programs order a session so the large muscle groups and multi-joint exercises come before the small and single-joint ones.¹

Push A

1. **Bench press**, 3 × 6–8
2. **Overhead press**, 3 × 8–12
3. **Incline dumbbell press**, 3 × 8–12
4. **Lateral raises**, 3 × 12–15
5. **Triceps pushdown**, 3 × 10–15

Pull A

1. **Deadlift**, conventional or trap bar, 3 × 5–8
2. **Lat pulldown** or pull-ups, 3 × 8–12

3. **Seated cable row**, 3 × 10–12
4. **Face pulls**, 3 × 12–15
5. **Dumbbell curl**, 3 × 10–12 (the arm workout covers which curl)

Legs A

1. **Back squat**, 3 × 6–8
2. **Romanian deadlift**, 3 × 8–12
3. **Leg press**, 3 × 10–12
4. **Leg curl**, 3 × 10–15
5. **Standing calf raise**, 3 × 10–15 (the calf workout)
6. **Plank**, 3 holds

Push B

1. **Dumbbell shoulder press** or **Arnold press**, 3 × 6–8
2. **Incline barbell press**, 3 × 8–12 (incline press form)
3. **Dips** or a **chest fly**, 3 × 8–12
4. **Cable lateral raises**, 3 × 12–15
5. **Overhead triceps extension**, 3 × 10–15

Pull B

1. **Barbell row**, 3 × 6–8
2. **Pull-ups** or lat pulldown, neutral grip, 3 × 8–12
3. **Chest-supported dumbbell row**, 3 × 10–12
4. **Rear delt fly**, 3 × 12–15
5. **Hammer curls**, 3 × 10–12

Legs B

1. **Front squat** or **hack squat**, 3 × 6–8
2. **Hip thrust**, 3 × 8–12
3. **Bulgarian split squat**, 3 × 8–12 each leg
4. **Leg extension**, 3 × 12–15
5. **Seated calf raise**, 3 × 12–15
6. **Dead bug**, 3 × 8–10 each side, slow (the core workout has swaps)

What this adds up to in a week

On the six-day week, the chest gets twelve direct sets (the bench press, two incline presses, dips or a fly), the shoulders eighteen (two presses, two raises, face pulls, rear delt flies), the back fifteen in rows and pulls plus the deadlift, the quads fifteen, the hamstrings and glutes twelve counting the deadlift, and the triceps and biceps six direct sets each plus every press and pull. That's the point of the split: more sets per muscle than three or four days hold, in sessions that stay under an hour.

The evidence says those sets are what you're paying for. A 2018 meta-analysis of 22 studies found that higher training frequencies brought more strength, but that the effect seemed to be driven by training volume: when the volume was equated, frequency made no significant difference, so more days are mainly a way to add sets.⁵ A 2017 meta-analysis of 15 studies found a graded dose-response between weekly sets and muscle growth.⁶ The ACSM's 2026 review found muscle growth enhanced by ten or more sets per muscle group a week,² and a 2022 systematic review of seven studies in young, trained men concluded that 12 to 20 weekly sets per muscle may be an optimum standard recommendation.⁷ The 2026 meta-regression found the strongest support for counting an indirect set, like a press's work for the triceps, as half a set,⁴ so the arms are already inside that range before their own exercises. ([Counting sets per week, explained.](#))

Rest, effort and the warm-up

Rest: two to three minutes after the first lift of each session, about ninety seconds after the others, about a minute after the raises and arm work. A 2018 systematic review of 23 studies and 491 participants found rests of more than two minutes were needed to maximize strength gains in trained lifters.⁸ ([Rest between sets, in more detail.](#)) If the sessions run long, pair the last two exercises as a [superset](#) before you cut a set.

Effort: every set stops with two or three good reps left, one or two on the raises, curls, extensions and calves. A 2024 series of exploratory meta-regressions found strength gains similar across a wide range of reps in reserve, with muscle growth improving as sets ended closer to failure,⁹ so the small exercises, where a missed rep costs nothing, are where you go closest. Not the deadlift. ([How to judge reps left.](#))

Warm-up: two or three lighter sets of the first lift, working up to the first working weight; a set at most for anything after it. ([The full warm-up](#), and [a calculator for the sets.](#))

Progression and the deload

Whenever you hit the top of the range on every set with two or three reps to spare, add weight next time: the ACSM's guidance is a 2 to 10 percent increase once you can do one or two reps more than your target.¹ On the first lift that's the smallest plates; on dumbbells, the next pair; on a machine, one pin. Where you didn't hit the top, repeat the weight and chase the reps. ([Progressive overload, explained](#), has the other levers.)

Six days a week accumulates fatigue faster than three, so plan the easy week instead of waiting for it. Every sixth to eighth week, or when the first lifts have stalled for three weeks, take a deload: the same sessions at about two-thirds of the weight and two sets each. A 2023 expert consensus of strength and physique coaches defines deloading as a period of reduced training stress designed to reduce fatigue, promote recovery and prepare you for the training that follows.¹⁰ ([How to run a deload week.](#)) After the deload, keep the exercises and start adding again; swap one inside its slot only if it has stalled twice.

Common mistakes on push/pull/legs

- **Running six days on a four-day life.** Then push and pull get trained twice and legs once, every week. Use the rolling rotation above, or [the four-day upper/lower plan](#).
- **A pull day that's all arms.** The deadlift, the row and the pulldown are the day; the curl is the last ten minutes.

- **Skipping legs B.** The second leg day is where the quads and glutes get their second session. Shorten it, don't skip it. ([A leg day, written out.](#))
- **No day off.** The seventh day is part of the routine. ([What a rest day is for.](#))
- **Changing the exercises every week.** The logbook is how you know the routine is working, and it only works if the routine holds still.
- **Training through pain.** Sharp pain is not soreness. If you have an injury, a medical condition or a medical question, talk to a doctor before you change how you train. I'm a fitness coach, not a doctor.

Common questions

Is push/pull/legs good for beginners?

It works, but it isn't the place to start. A beginner's lifts go up session to session, and [three full-body days](#) give each lift three chances a week to do that. Come to this routine once you want more sets than three or four days can hold.

Push/pull/legs or upper/lower?

Mostly a question of days: upper/lower fits four, push/pull/legs fits six. On those days both train each muscle twice a week. [The split guide](#) has the comparison.

Where does the deadlift go?

Pull A here, as the first lift, because it's the heaviest pull in the week. If you'd rather keep it with the squats, swap it with the Romanian deadlift on Legs A.

How long is a session?

Forty-five minutes to an hour with the rests above; the five-exercise push and pull days run shorter than legs.

If you'd rather not plan it alone

A routine on a web page doesn't know which six days you have, which lifts your gym makes hard to get to, or that this week has four days in it, not six. Coaching is the version where your workouts live in the Trainerize app, the split is built around the days you actually have, and a weekly call looks at the week you just had and rebuilds the next one. [Coaching to build muscle](#) explains how that works, and [apply](#) tells me about your week. Otherwise: pick your days, put them in the calendar, and start with Push A.

General education only, not medical advice. If you have a medical condition, are pregnant, or take medication, check with your doctor before changing how you train or eat.

Sources

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