

# A wedding workout plan: twelve weeks you can actually keep

A wedding is the one goal that comes with a date on it. That's useful, and it's also where people go wrong: a big program they can't keep, started too late, with something new in the last two weeks. Here's a plan that uses the date without being ruled by it.

**Short answer:** Train three days a week, full body, in twelve-week blocks that repeat until the wedding: weeks one to four to learn the movements, five to eight to add weight, nine to eleven to keep adding, and a lighter wedding week. With more than twelve weeks, run the block again. With less, run the weeks you have and shorten or skip the learning phase. In the last month, change nothing: no new exercises, no new program.

By [Diogo](#) · Published October 26, 2026 · 8 min read

A date on the calendar changes how people train. Some of that is good: a deadline makes the sessions happen. Some of it isn't: the date tempts people into a six-day program they've never kept, a restart every time a week goes wrong, and a brand-new routine in the last fortnight because it's "almost here".

This page is a training plan for the months before a wedding, whatever your date and whatever you want from it. It makes no promise about how you'll look on the day. Nobody honest can, and [how long results take](#) explains why the different clocks run at different speeds. What a plan can do is make sure you walk in having trained for months instead of having started over four times.

# Start with the date, not the program

Wanting it isn't the same as doing it. A meta-analysis of 10 studies and 3,899 people found that nearly half of the people who intended to meet the physical activity guidelines didn't follow through.<sup>1</sup> A wedding date doesn't close that gap by itself; a plan sized to your real week does. So count the weeks to the date, then pick from the table.

| Time to the wedding | What to do with it                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A year or more      | Run the twelve-week block below four times. Swap exercises inside the slots after each block if they've gone stale; keep the slots. This is the version with the most room, so there's no reason to rush any of it. |
| Six to nine months  | Two or three blocks. The first is the learning block; the rest are the building weeks repeated.                                                                                                                     |
| Three months        | One full block, as written.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Six to eight weeks  | Skip the learning weeks if you already lift. If you don't, do two learning weeks, then the building weeks until the wedding week.                                                                                   |
| A month or less     | The building weeks, at three days a week, and the wedding week. Don't start a new program; start this one and keep it after the wedding.                                                                            |

## The plan: three days, full body

Three full-body sessions a week, with a day between them. Two sessions, A and B, alternated: A, B, A one week and B, A, B the next. Six slots each: a squat, a hinge, a push, a pull, one you choose, and a core move.

| Slot        | Day A                                         | Day B                                                      |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Squat       | Leg press or goblet squat                     | Split squat or reverse lunge                               |
| Hinge       | Romanian deadlift                             | Hip thrust                                                 |
| Push        | Dumbbell bench press or a chest-press machine | Overhead dumbbell press                                    |
| Pull        | Lat pulldown                                  | Seated cable row or one-arm dumbbell row                   |
| Your choice | Lateral raises or a curl                      | Triceps pushdown or a curl (the arm workout has the swaps) |
| Core        | Plank                                         | Dead bug                                                   |

**Sets and reps:** two sets of eight to twelve reps in the learning weeks, three sets from week five (from week three if your learning phase is two weeks). Every set stops with two or three reps still in you. (Here's how to judge reps left.) Rest about ninety seconds between sets. A session runs forty to fifty minutes. At home with dumbbells, use the dumbbell plan's exercise list in the same slots.

Why three full-body days and not more: the American College of Sports Medicine's 2026 position stand makes lifting with high effort at least twice a week, all major muscle groups trained, its primary recommendation,<sup>2</sup> and its 2009 stand on progression puts beginners at two or three days a week.<sup>3</sup> A

meta-analysis of 25 studies found that when the total amount of training was matched, how many days it was spread over made no meaningful difference to muscle growth.<sup>4</sup> Already lifting four days? Keep your upper/lower split and run the weeks below on it. ([Which split for the days you have.](#))

## The twelve weeks

### Weeks 1 to 4: learn the movements

Two sets of everything, weights that feel too easy, three or four reps left on every set. Write down the weight and reps of every set. If lifting is new to you, expect soreness after the first sessions: it's common when a kind of activity is new, and one review advises easing into new exercise over a week or two.<sup>5</sup> If you've been lifting for months already, this phase is two weeks, not four.

### Weeks 5 to 8: build

Three sets of everything. Whenever you reach the top of the rep range with reps to spare, add the smallest step next session: one notch of weight, or one rep. The ACSM's progression stand puts the step at 2 to 10 percent more weight once you can do one or two reps beyond your target.<sup>3</sup> ([Progressive overload, explained.](#)) Three sets, three days, is nine hard sets a week for each of the squat, hinge, push and pull, close to the ten or more sets per muscle group a week the ACSM's 2026 review ties to more muscle growth.<sup>2</sup>

### Weeks 9 to 11: keep adding

Same rule. If an exercise has gone stale, swap it for another in the same slot, and only in these weeks, never later. The rest of the week counts too: the WHO guideline behind the two-day lifting minimum also asks adults for 150 to 300 minutes of [moderate aerobic activity](#) a week, or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous activity.<sup>6</sup> Walks are the easy way to get there.

### Week 12: the wedding week

One or two sessions, the first half of the week, same exercises, last week's weights, one set fewer, no testing yourself. The week is full of other things, and the training is already done. In a 2021 review of the least training needed to hold on to performance, strength and muscle could be maintained for up to 32 weeks, at least in younger people, with as little as one session a week, as long as the load stayed heavy for the person lifting it,<sup>7</sup> so one honest session is plenty, and the last two days before the wedding can be rest days.

## The last month: what not to do

- **No new exercises.** A new movement is the one most likely to leave you sore for days; the soreness review's advice to introduce new activities gradually over a week or two<sup>5</sup> is the reason the last month is the wrong time for them.
- **No new program.** A different plan in the last four weeks throws away what the log has taught you. Run the plan you've been running.
- **No doubling up.** Two sessions in a day because the date is close isn't more progress. The ACSM review found that when total volume was matched, frequency didn't change muscle growth,<sup>2</sup> and this plan's volume is already set.

- **No testing a max.** A one-rep max in the last fortnight proves nothing the log hasn't already shown. Save it for after.
- **No crash program of any kind.** This page is the training. Food has its own pages: [calories](#) and [protein](#) is the plain version, and anything medical is for a doctor.

## After the wedding

A honeymoon isn't a reset. Over 24 weeks in one study, young men who bench-pressed either straight through or in six-week blocks with three weeks off between them ended with similar gains in muscle size and strength.<sup>8</sup> Take the two weeks. When you're back, pick up the log where it stopped; if the first session feels heavy, take a set off and build back over the week. Away for longer? [Getting back into training](#) is the restart plan. The wedding was the reason to start; the log is the reason to keep going.

## Five rules for the months before

- **Count the weeks, pick the row, start this week.** Not after the venue is booked, not on the first of the month.
- **Never miss twice.** One missed session is wedding planning. Two in a row is the start of quitting.
- **Tell someone.** A 2016 meta-analysis of 138 studies, about goals in general rather than lifting, found that monitoring progress helped people reach their goals, and helped more when the progress was physically recorded or reported to someone.<sup>9</sup> A log and a person who sees it. ([A workout log you can copy.](#))
- **The last month changes nothing.** Same plan, same exercises, one lighter week at the end.
- **If it hurts, stop and ask.** Sharp pain is not soreness. If you have an injury, a medical condition or a medical question, talk to a doctor before you start. I'm a fitness coach, not a doctor.

## Common questions

### Is six months enough?

Six months is two of these blocks, which is a long stretch of consistent training. What it adds up to depends on where you start, and [how long results take](#) is the honest version of that timeline. Nobody can promise what the mirror shows on the day.

### What about three months, or one?

Three months is one block as written. One month is the building weeks and the wedding week: start now, keep the plan simple, and keep it after.

### Should I do a special arms or shoulders workout for the dress or the suit?

The push, pull and "your choice" slots already train them three times a week. If you want more, add [the shoulder workout's](#) raises or [the arm workout's](#) curls in the fifth slot, in the building weeks, not the last month.

## Do I need a coach for this?

Not for the plan: it's here, free. What a coach adds is the adjusting: rebuilding the week when the planning swallows it, reading the log, and noticing when you go quiet.

## If you'd rather not plan it alone

A plan on a web page can't see your date or the months between. Coaching is the version where your workouts live in the Trainerize app, built around the days you actually have, and a weekly call looks at the week you just had and rebuilds the next one around what's coming. [Here's how coaching works](#), and [apply](#) tells me about your week and your date. Otherwise: count the weeks, pick your row, and do Day A this week.

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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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