



Tasty but Whole™



The He-Man Workout

Six compound lifts, twenty seconds of rest,
and ninety minutes a week.

2

sessions / week

45

minutes each

15

reps per lift

20s

rest between sets

The complete program, both standards, the plate ladder and a printable log.

Written by Adam | Not medical advice. Train within your ability and stop when form fails.

One workout, run twice a week

Every work set uses the same descending ladder: 4, 3, 3, 2, 2, 1. Fifteen total reps at a weight you would normally get five, with twenty seconds of rest between sets.

The weights below are an EXAMPLE, not a prescription. They show the men's standard so you can see the shape of a real session. Start far lighter than this.

#	LIFT	WARMUP	WORK SETS	WEIGHT
1	Barbell Lunge	5 x 135 - 3 x 155	4,3,3,2,2,1	185
2	Barbell Overhead Press	5 x 95 - 3 x 115	4,3,3,2,2,1	135
3	Barbell Back Squat	5 x 185 - 3 x 205	4,3,3,2,2,1	225
4	Barbell Bench Press	5 x 135 - 3 x 155	4,3,3,2,2,1	205
5	Barbell Bent Over Row	5 x 135 - 3 x 155	4,3,3,2,2,1	185
6	Barbell Deadlift	5 x 185 - 3 x 205	4,3,3,2,2,1	245
+	Dips & Chin-Ups (superset)	5 x bodyweight	6,4,4,2,1	BW+25
F	Barbell Burpees (finisher)	-	10 reps	135

The rules that make it work

- Rest is twenty seconds between work sets.
Strict. This is the entire engine of the program. Warmup rest is about forty seconds, and rest between exercises is flexible - but that flexibility is what inflates your total time.
- Run the lifts in rack-descent order.
The pin height only ever goes down: lunge, overhead press, squat, bench, row, deadlift. At twenty seconds of rest, changeover time is the real friction - descending order makes every transition one adjustment in one direction. Exact pin heights vary by rack and by lifter; work out your own and keep them.
- The last compound lift is a full deadlift.
Bar to the floor, knees bend. Hold the bar through the set and start from the top.
- No dip bars? Push-ups work.
Double the reps - your first set becomes 12 push-ups supersetted with 6 chin-ups. Load with a dip belt or a weighted vest.
- The final set of every exercise is as many as possible.
The prescribed rep is a minimum, not a target.
- Optional: the Superman version.
Add five 1km runs in the five gaps between the six compound lifts - after the lunge, press, squat, bench and row. Nothing sits between the deadlift, the superset and the finisher. An air bike at 100 calories can stand in for a kilometer.

ADAPT IT

Make it your own

The barbell is what worked for me. It is not the point. The point is the movement pattern and the rep scheme. Run each pattern at your five-rep-max weight for the prescribed reps.

1

Lunge

Walking or reverse lunge, split squat, step-up, sled push

2

Overhead press

Barbell or dumbbell press, landmine press, push press, machine press

3

Squat

Back squat, front squat, goblet squat, hack squat, leg press

4

Press

Bench press, dumbbell bench, floor press, dip, weighted push-up

5

Row

Bent-over row, single-arm dumbbell row, chest-supported row, cable row

6

Hinge

Deadlift, trap-bar deadlift, Romanian deadlift, hip thrust, kettlebell swing

+

Push / pull superset

Dips and chin-ups, push-ups and inverted rows, ring work

F

Full-body finisher

Barbell burpees, thrusters, clean and press, sled or carry medley

Start so light it feels stupid

Pick weights that let you finish the whole workout in under 30 minutes - about five and a half minutes per lift plus three for the burpees. You should walk out of the first few sessions with no soreness at all. Muscle adapts in weeks; tendon and connective tissue take months to years. Let density be the thing that makes you uncomfortable first, never the plates.

The one hard rule

When your form breaks, that exercise is over. Not the workout - that exercise. Rack it and move on. Broken form on a loaded compound lift puts the load through ligaments and tendons that did not sign up for it, and the whole point of training is to build your body up rather than take it apart. It is also your progression governor: you can absolutely cheat your way to a heavier number with sloppy reps, and at twenty seconds of rest with barbell burpees waiting at the end, that debt always comes due.

Three phases

You are never chasing weight and speed at the same time. Add load, then compress time, then own it.

01 Strength

Add weight. Rest stays flexible between exercises.

- Add 5 lb per session per lift. 10 lb is fine on the deadlift.
- Cap it at +10 lb per session on any single lift.
- Rest between exercises is as long as you need.
- Move to Power when: you can no longer finish inside 1h20 (drop to the nearest rung), or you hit your goal weight in every lift.
- If you hit the goal in some lifts but not others, freeze the ones that arrived and keep building the rest.

02 Power

Freeze the weight. Compress the clock.

- Weights stay exactly where they are. Nothing goes up in this phase.
- Warmup rest 40s. Work-set rest 20s, strict. Rest between lifts still unlimited.
- Once you can complete the session without extra rest between lifts, cut work-set rest to 15s.
- Then cut it to 10s.
- Finish the whole session under 40 minutes and you own the level.

03 Mastery

Same level, under thirty minutes.

- Run it at the same weights in under 30 minutes. Maximum once a week.
- Rebalance the ladder to cut rest - any split works as long as the reps total 15.
- Shave the remaining rest and lift more explosively.
- Then compete against your own time record for the level.

SCORING

The plate ladder

Every lift lives on a fixed ladder built from a 45 lb bar. Train in 5 lb steps; report in levels. Every two full levels is one more 45 plate per side.

LEVEL	TOTAL LB	PLATES PER SIDE	LEVEL	TOTAL LB	PLATES PER SIDE
0	45	bar only	5.5	295	2x45,1x25,1x10
0.5	65	1 x 10	6	315	3 x 45
1	95	1 x 25	6.5	335	3x45, 1x10
1.5	115	1x25, 1x10	7	365	3x45, 1x25
2	135	1 x 45	7.5	385	3x45,1x25,1x10
2.5	155	1x45, 1x10	8	405	4 x 45
3	185	1x45, 1x25	8.5	425	4x45, 1x10
3.5	205	1x45,1x25,1x10	9	455	4x45, 1x25
4	225	2 x 45	9.5	475	4x45,1x25,1x10
4.5	245	2x45, 1x10	10	495	5 x 45
5	275	2x45, 1x25			

The standards

Written in levels. Warmups sit roughly half a level to a level and a half below the work weight.

	LUNGE	OVERHEAD PRESS	SQUAT	BENCH	ROW	DEADLIFT	BURPEES	SUPERSET
MEN	3	2	4	3.5	3	4.5	2	BW+25
WOMEN	2	0.5	2.5	1.5	1.5	3	0.5	BW

Numbers are levels from the ladder above. Superset is bodyweight, loaded with a dip belt or vest.

The women's standard is not a flat percentage of the men's. Women average roughly 70-75% of men's lower-body strength but only 40-60% of upper-body strength, and raw competition data shows the same shape - about 54% of the male median on the bench against about 68% on the deadlift. So the lower-body lifts drop about a level and a half while the presses drop further.

The leg numbers in both standards are intentionally dampened. They were derived from 5RM, and 5RM for legs runs far higher than for upper body; carrying that full proportion into a 20-second rest interval is where injuries live. That is deliberate, and it is not a number you should feel obligated to fix.

TRACK IT

Session log

Print this page. Record the weight you actually used and circle the session if every set met form.

Phase: _____ Week of: _____ Target time: _____

LIFT	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
Barbell Lunge						
Overhead Press						
Back Squat						
Bench Press						
Bent Over Row						
Deadlift						
Dips & Chin-Ups						
Barbell Burpees						

Before you add weight, check all four

- ☐ Every set met form. Nothing was rescued with a shrug or a bounce.
- ☐ You held twenty seconds of rest between work sets without stretching it.
- ☐ The final set of each lift was genuinely as many as possible.
- ☐ You finished inside your phase's time cap without adding rest between lifts.

Built your own version? Tell me how it went.

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The full write-up, including where this program came from and what it is not good at, lives at tastybutwhole.com/notes/the-he-man-workout