

BULLMASTIFF - BASE PHASE

The Base intermediate program uses all 4 big movements follows them up with a developmental variation for the opposite movement and then general bodybuilding work. At this point, the variations and the smaller bodybuilding movements should aim to make lagging areas a priority; don't dedicate time to your third pectoral isolation exercise if that's not the limiting factor in your bench.

| VARIATION EXERCISES

Developmental Bench Press Variations

Spoto, Pause, Tempo, Close Grip, Buffalo Bar, Wide Grip, Feet Up

Developmental Squat Variations

Front Squat, Long Pause, Alternate Stance, Tempo, SSB Bar, Low Box

Developmental Deadlift Variations

Romanian Deadlift, Snatch Grip, Stiff Leg, Tempo, Stiff Bar/Axle Bar, Sumo

Developmental Overhead Variations

Tempo

Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Saturday
Squat	Bench	Deadlift	Press
Dev. DL	Dev. Overhead	Dev. Squat	Dev. Bench
Back	Triceps	Back	Triceps
Hams/Quads	Biceps	Hams/Quads	Biceps
Abs	R. Delts/Rot. Cuff	Abs	R. Delts/Rot. Cuff

BASE MAIN PROGRESSION - SQ, BP, DL, OHP

WAVE 1	65% x 4x6+	4x6+	4x6+
WAVE 2	70% x 5x5+	5x5+	5x5+
WAVE 3	75% x 6x4+	6x4+	6x4+

Bullmastiff operates off of a 3 week wave structure, meaning stress increases each session over a 3 week period before dropping back and building back up. Remember the ‘dirt road’ analogy. The last set of the main exercise is performed for an AMRAP and that number is used to estimate a weight jump for the following week. This is a method of auto-regulation made famous by Doug Young.

To determine your weight jumps each week, add 1% of your 1 rep max for every extra rep you did on the AMRAP. If you are working through sets of 6 and performed 10 on the AMRAP, that is 4 extra reps so your weight jump would be 4% of your 1 rep max. If I’m operating off of a 1 rep max of 400lbs, that’s 16lbs (we can safely round down to 15).

Using this auto-regulation tactic, here’s how that might play out in real life with a 400lb squatter.

WAVE 1	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Squat	260 x 6,6,6,12	285 x 6,6,6,11	305 x 6,6,6,8
WAVE 2	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Squat	280 x 5,5,5,5,12	305 x 5,5,5,5,10	320 x 5,5,5,5,7
WAVE 3	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
Squat	300 x 4,4,4,4,4,11	325 x 4,4,4,4,4,7	335 x 4,4,4,4,4,6

****Note that the AMRAP on the third week doesn't dictate the weight in week 4; it defaults back to the percentage established above.*

Compared to the novice program, the progression change here hits on multiple fronts:

Going from step-loading, which is entirely sub-maximal and volume based, to a program that features an all-out set at the end of each workout represents a major shift in the type of stress. This is a kick in the pants to diminished returns, which prevents the same method of progression from working forever. You will be sensitive to the failure sets and you will grow like you were new all-over again. Think of it like a type of re-virgination.

The weights now increase week to week, making intensity a driving force of progress. This is a new stimulus as well but *also* one that is more strength-specific than the step loading. You've done the work to build a base, now we can start to reap the benefits of specialization.

The training program now has a deadline, meaning you aren't just running it until the wheels fall off. This is your introduction to periodization, where you get to experience how changes in load and volume effect your training week to week and how those weeks combine into blocks of training. Pay attention to how your body

responds and take notes; these are the things you will need to know about yourself down the road.

BASE DEVELOPMENTAL VARIATION PROGRESSION

WAVE 1 3x12 @ 6 RPE 4x12 @ 7 5x12 @ 8

WAVE 2 3x10 @ 6 4x10 @ 7 5x10 @ 8

WAVE 3 3x8 @ 6 4x8 @ 7 5x8 @ 8

Selecting weights for secondary movements requires some extra thought. The main movement gets more demanding as time goes on, which means you will be more fatigued each week going into your variation movements. This makes it more difficult to use linear weight jumps for the secondary movements as the means of progressive overload. You can bank on adding a certain amount of weight to your bench each week, but then adding weight to your close grip, then your dumbbell presses, then your isolation work..... you will find this approach to progressive overload akin to ice skating uphill.

An easy way to get around that is to not worry about jacking the weight up on variation movements week to week. Instead, you can focus on how much total work you do in a workout (what I refer to as 'volumizing') which is done by adding a set each week to the same weight and rep scheme. Many don't like using volume as a tool for progression because, well, it's hard damn work, (save your 'reps over 5 is cardio' memes for you Class 4 Powerlifting buddies).

Sure, a lot of sets across can make your eyes glaze over at times, but I find it to be way more sustainable than trying to maintain

the aggression required to pull out weight jumps across every single exercise week to week. Many of you newbies might be under the impression that going Super Saiyan 5 on every set is the key to long term growth but that just isn't a thing.

As stress continues to increase over an entire phase, you will be tired. You will get disillusioned. You will have fluctuations in neurological and hormonal activity that sidelines the aggression you typically rely on for big attempts.

And yet you will still be responsible for doing something that improves upon last week's efforts.

Don't fall into the 'punish and pray' trap where your workout plan hinges on a prayer that your weekly increases in strength will be enough to keep adding weight onto the bar indefinitely. Save your aggression for the main lift and use the secondary movements as homework.

Rules for volumizing are as follows:

- Start with a weight that puts you around a 6/10 effort for ALL sets and reps, that's something that easily leaves 4 reps in the tank. If fatigue from set to set causes that to go to a 7 or 8/10, don't be a hero: drop the weight accordingly or you won't last through the program. The percentages I provide are a good starting point, but it's ok if you don't have a max to go off of and want to pick your weights based on feel. You'll have to learn to accurately estimate your abilities set to set eventually, so might as well start now.
- Add one working set the following week and keep the same reps. That might seem like an underwhelming method of progression, but the point here is to schedule something sustainable that you can follow for weeks on end. Be concerned about the strain you will be experiencing in week 7, not week 2.

- Weight increases are allowed but **ONLY** if it keeps you at the prescribed difficulty. A grindy or missed rep from an overeager attempt will require dropping the weight back at some point or else you will have no options for moving forward that don't outright abandon this pattern of progression. The sooner you advance weight, the sooner you will have to reset. We aren't here to wing it, we want to keep things moving forward on schedule, so silence your ego and be objective.

Here's an example for our 400lb squatter. He hasn't front squatted in some time, so he bases his numbers off of a conservative 315lb max. Not being used to sets of 12, especially with this exercise, he starts even more conservatively at 50% and resolves to tweak the numbers as needed based on the difficulty of each set.

WAVE 1	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Squat	-	-	-
Front Squat	3x12 @ 155	4x12 @ 155	5x12 @ 155

Week 1 sucked. The first set moved extremely fast and with little effort, but each set was exponentially harder than the one before. 12s were a different ball game. The last set featured burning quads, cramping abdominals and crippling fatigue in the mid-back. That was nothing when compared to the sharp pain in the lungs that worsened with each breath and lingered long after the set was over; think of suicide drills in the snow. Thank goodness for conservative weight selection.

After finishing the squats in week 2, the thought of repeating last weeks effort made for sweaty palms and nervous pacing. After a 10 minute argument with himself to skip the squat variant altogether, our squatter resolved to get it done. "You don't have to break yourself,

just get the work done”. Shockingly enough, each set flew with minimal fatigue. He could not believe how quickly he had adapted.

Week 3, he kicked around the idea of making a weight jump, but decided against it. Week 4 would feature a lower rep range, which seemed to be a better opportunity to increase load. “Just get the volume in and be done with 12s forever!” The 5x12 went easier than 3x12 week 1 and this led to a bump in confidence and excitement for the waves to follow. On to something big for next week!

WAVE 2	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Squat	-	-	-
Front Squat	3x10 @ 175	4x10 @ 175	5x10 @ 185

The amraps on the main squat set were starting to get much more draining. Instead of making an overeager jump and hitting the brick wall in the front squats early, our squatter resolved to stay conservative. The 10s at 175lbs went smooth weeks 4 and 5 and represented more weight and total work in this exercise than he had done in quite a long time.

Knowing that the volume would drop substantially in week 7, he thought, “what the hell, I’ll work a little harder this week”. He bumped week 6 to 185lb and ran through all 5 sets without incident.

WAVE 3	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
Squat	-	-	-
Front Squat	3x8 @ 205	4x8 @ 215	5x8 @ 225

This was the last wave of the Base Phase, meaning that a period of recovery was on the horizon. This is where we leave it all on the table. Week 7 was a nice recovery period from the week before which

allowed a small weight bump into week 8. The difficulty still never climbed over 8/10. It was decided that the last week of the entire phase would be a barn burner, so he went for it, piling on 225 and committing to finishing all 5 sets of 8. The last set went up with 2-3 left in the tank and he grinned, remembering that he couldn't hit a single set of 8 at the start of the phase, let alone 5 easy sets of it.

BASE BODYBUILDING ACCESSORY PROGRESSION

The progression of other accessories (machines, dumbbells, unilateral work, isolation, etc.) is much the same as with the variation of the main barbell lift. We are going to volumize, again adding a set to each workout over the course of a way.

We don't have to worry too much about walking the line of fatigue with these movements since they come later in the workout. Pushing the last few sets of leg extensions or tricep pushdowns can create a huge push for new growth and doesn't lead to the type of systemic fatigue that might hinder performance the following week. But remember, we are prioritizing volume as the yardstick for measuring progressive overload and that's accomplished most easily when weight and reps stay similar week to week.

WAVE 1	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Squat	-	-	-
Front Squat	-	-	-
Split Squat	95 x 2x12	95 x 3x12	95 x 4x12
Leg Extension	100 x 2x15	100 x 3x15	100 x 4x15

I generally start the compound and isolation accessory at 2 sets, building up to 3 and 4 over the first wave. This is a personal preference, since the shock of the repeating high rep sets on the main movement and variation often wipe me out early on. Your goal is to steadily adapt to the demands of the training over many weeks, not to begin a phase by biting off more than you can chew.

When the reps drop a bit in waves 2 and 3 and I'm more conditioned to the work, I'll reset the wave with 3 sets on the accessory and build up to 5, sometimes even higher on smaller isolation movements. Remember that it's the *increases* in work relative to what you are used to that forces new growth, not the adherence to an arbitrary number of sets and reps.

WAVE 2	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Squat	-	-	-
Front Squat	-	-	-
Split Squat	115 x 3x8	115 x 4x8	115 x 5x8
Leg Extension	120 x 4x12	120 x 5x12	120 x 6x12 (ouch)

This might be a lot more work than you are used to. That's a good thing; more work is necessary to continue past the intermediate stage. At the most, we are talking about 6 working sets on the main movement, 5 on the variation and 4-6 on a handful of smaller movements (though most weeks have much less). This is not an exceptional amount of work for a competitive lifter and it's a very small amount of work for most bodybuilders and physique competitors.

If your percentages are on point and you are honest with how you evaluate RPE, the only reason you couldn't recover from this is if you

are starved for food or sleep. There are programs that will attempt to work around those circumstances, but this isn't one of them.

If you do take your role as a competitor seriously and mold yourself to this structure, the end result will be a base so wide you can park an air craft carrier on it.

BULLMASTIFF - PEAK PHASE

Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Saturday
Squat	Bench	Deadlift	Overhead
Targeted DL Dev. Squat	Targeted Overhead Dev. Bench	Targeted Squat Dev. DL	Targeted Bench Dev. Overhead
Back	Triceps R. Delt/Rot. Cuff	Back	Triceps R. Delt/Rot. Cuff

The Peak phase cuts away much of the smaller bodybuilding movements in exchange for targeted movement variations. These are movements that provide more exposure to heavy weights or specifically work areas that the individual lifter is struggling with.

| TARGETED BENCH PRESS VARIATIONS

Board/Pin Press, Floor Press, Pause at Stick Point, Bands/Chains

Targeted Squat Variations

Box Squat, Pin Squat from the Bottom, Short Pause, Bands/Chains

Targeted Deadlift Variations

Bar at Stick Point, Pause at Stick Point, Bands/Chains

Targeted Overhead Variations

Pin Press at Stick Point, Pause at Stick Point, Bands/Chains

PEAK MAIN PROGRESSION

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
WAVE 1	5x3+ @ 80%	3x3+	1x3+
WAVE 2	5x2+ @ 85%	3x2+	1x2+
WAVE 3	5x1+ @ 90%	3x1+	1x1+
TEST/MEET	Deload	Test	

Reps are lower here and percentages will be consistently closer to 90%. The auto-regulation method still determines our weight jumps going into every 2nd and 3rd week but resetting back to the reduced percentages at the beginning of each wave is important to keep this sustainable.

More developed intermediates might find that handling the heavy percentages with 4 movements each week presents a challenge. A technique that flirts with 'advanced' territory is to move the 4 workouts beyond a 7 day week. This is the default move in the advanced template that comes after this one. Below is a 3 day per week example; it can easily be turned into 4 days per week by fixing a GPP day to every Saturday.

3 Days per Week

Monday DAY 1	Wednesday DAY 2	Friday DAY 3
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Monday DAY 4	Wednesday REPEAT
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PEAK VARIATION PROGRESSION (TARGETED AND DEVELOPMENTAL)

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
WAVE 1	4x6 @ 6 RPE	3x6 @ 7	2x6 @ 8
WAVE 2	4x5 @ 6	3x5 @ 7	2x5 @ 8
WAVE 3	4x4 @ 6	3x4 @ 7	2x4 @ 8

All of the variation movements will have to intensify along with the main lifts. You won't have an established one rep max for most of them so it's best to gauge appropriate working weights according to RPE.

ACCESSORY WORK

So much effort will be given to the main lifts and their variations that we will only keep in a few vital accessory movements. The upper back, triceps, rear delts and rotator cuff are the most important here and they can be kept up to standard with one exercise done for 3-5 sets of 8-12 reps. There isn't a need to wave the progression in any complex manner, just keep the reps in that range and keep the effort

high. You can use the advanced fatigue techniques outlined later in the book if things start to stagnate.

Wave 3 of the Peak phase should only feature the main lifts and variations; drop all of the accessory movements at this point.