



A NEWBIE'S GUIDE *to* FITNESS

Level up your life, every single day.

By Steve Kamb

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The NERD FITNESS PHILOSOPHY

Today is the first day of the rest of your life.

Over the next 30 pages, I'm going to teach you my approach to fitness and life. It's not glamorous, it's no big secret, but it will make you strong, it will make you happy, and it will keep you around on this planet for as long as possible. Everything I endorse and promote has been successful. or myself; there's no hypothetical garbage.

1) "Get busy livin, or get busy dyin." The Shawshank Redemption

I'm not exaggerating when I say that I've made a lot of the tough decisions in my life by referencing this quote. I've moved cross-country twice in the past three years and even took a chance on a risky job, which turned out to be one of the best decisions I've ever made. I started this website to make something of myself, and help others do the same.

You can either sit around waiting for genetics, high cholesterol, heart disease, and mediocrity to overtake your life, or you can decide today that you're going to do something about it. We only get one chance in this life, why not make the most of it?

Now, other than the obvious reasons for turning your life around (decreased risk of hypertension, dyslipidemia, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, and osteoarthritis for example), you can look forward to other benefits too:

More Energy People that exercise are less tired than people who don't. It's science.

Sleep Better Regular exercise can help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep, which will give you more energy for the rest of day. Win!

Stronger Heart and Lungs Try living without either one of these things = epic fail.

Feel Better Exercise stimulates various brain chemicals, which can make you feel happier than before you worked out.

Look better naked Sounds good to me. You don't need to see studies to show that you will be more attractive to the opposite sex if you are in shape. It's science. I can't fix ugly, but I sure can fix overweight and out of shape. 2 out of 3 ain't bad, right?

Feel better about yourself Getting in shape will give you more self-esteem and confidence. Woot.

Live longer Studies have proven that those who exercise daily can add 4+ years to their life. Not only that, but your quality of life can dramatically increase for every year you're alive. Tired of not being able to see your shoes? Want to walk up a flight of stairs and not breathe heavily? It's possible if you're willing to work for it.

2) “I’m trying to free your mind, Neo.” The Matrix

Forget everything you know about health and fitness, which should be easy if you’ve never exercised a day in your life. Hours of cardio, low-fat meals, and ab machines are all a waste of time. If you’re willing to free your mind, you’ll realize that amazing things are possible. I will teach you how to hack into your life, bend some rules, and break some others. We’re going to have some fun with this. Now, I won’t blow smoke up your butt and guarantee you results, because that’s up to you. As Morpheus says, “I can only show you the door. You are the one who has to walk through it.”

3) “Appearance is a consequence of fitness.” Mark Twight

This quote comes from Mark Twight, trainer extraordinaire, who was responsible for preparing all of the actors for their roles in the movie 300. You might guess it was steroids, CG, and hours of bicep curls and crunches. Wrong. He trained these guys as if they were actually preparing for war. As a result, they got in the best shape of their lives and it showed. Train to be strong, quick, and agile, and you’ll end up looking great as a side effect. Not too shabby!

Imagine you are one of the legendary 300. You are up against a nearly invincible army of obesity, heart disease, shorter lifespan, no energy, and unattractiveness. With today’s average lifestyle, everything is set up for you to fail, which is why 2/3rds of the United States is overweight. Sure their numbers are daunting, but this is a battle you can win.

4) “Do or do not. There is no try.” Star Wars

Wiser words have never been spoken (thanks Yoda!). It's easy to blame genetics, society, 5 dollar foot-long, World of Warcraft, global warming, the Man, Scientology, your mom, etc...but at the end of the day it's up to you to make a change. You are either getting stronger, running faster, lifting more, living better, or you're not. I don't care if you're overweight and haven't exercised a day in your life; you can make improvements every single day, no matter how small. I'm a big fan of personal responsibility and self-reliance. Are you up for the challenge?

If you're still with me, then you're beginning to believe. Why not take the red pill and see how deep the rabbit-hole goes? Everything in your life that has happened up until now is irrelevant; today is a brand new day, and your life will never be the same.

To put it bluntly: f*** dying, let's get busy living.

DIET

Why start with your diet? **SIMPLE: YOUR DIET IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN TURNING YOUR LIFE AROUND.** Think about it, if you spend 5 hours a week exercising, that still leaves 163 hours a week to screw things up. Without a good diet, you're just spinning your wheels. It's like putting crappy fuel in a Lamborghini. Yeah it will run, but think of all that wasted potential.

People tend to overcomplicate things or look for the quick and easy solution when it comes to losing weight. I hate to break it to you, but there is no such thing. I won't recommend any supplements in this diet (other than pure whey protein), because I don't think the potential risk is worth the reward. As far as what you should eat, I am going to make this very simple: I'll tell you exactly what to eat and what not to eat. If you eat only things on the good list, you'll have great success. If you eat lots of things on the bad list, you won't. It's that simple. It's up to you to find a good balance of food that keeps you happy and healthy.

WHAT IS A GOOD DIET? A good diet is made up of primarily REAL food. This meal has great balance of protein, good carbohydrates and good fats.

WHAT'S A BAD DIET? A bad diet is loaded with bad fats and simple carbohydrates (like processed sugar); it's also severely lacking in actual nutrients. If it came out of a box, from a drive through window, or in a pre-sealed bag, it's probably not good for you. If you get breakfast at Dunkin Donuts, lunch from McDonald's, snacks from Little Debbie, and dinner from Papa Johns, this is you.

In order for you to lose weight, you're going to need to find a way to burn more calories than you consume. If you can generate a calorie deficit, you'll lose weight. If you have a calorie surplus, you'll gain weight. Let's put some numbers on this:

3500 CALORIES = 1 POUND OF BODY WEIGHT.

What does that mean to you? If you can find a way to create a 500 calorie deficit every day, you'll lose one pound a week. If you're not interested in changing what you eat, the next best thing is going to be for you to count calories and find a way to burn 500 more calories than you consume, every single day.

In my opinion, counting calories is boring and no fun, so instead I've created a list of food that is okay to eat in any quantity. That's right, there's no portion control or limit; go crazy. This diet is a slight variation on the Paleo Diet (www.thepaleodiet.com), which I fully support and endorse.

WHAT TO AVOID

If you learn one thing from this whole book, let it be this: fat is not the enemy; simple carbohydrates are. You need to avoid processed carbs because that where most of the weight gain comes from: bread, bagels, donuts, pasta, pizza, cereal, and pretty much anything sugary. If it's processed, artificial, or created in a lab, it shouldn't go through you. All of this stuff turns into fat almost immediately in your system.

But what about wheat bread? Take a look at the ingredients on your wheat bread. I bet one of them is "high fructose corn syrup." It's like saying getting punched in the throat is better than being kicked in the crotch. Sure it might not be as bad for you, but you can still do much better. Cut out the bread when possible if you're serious about dropping weight.

Important note: The only time it's okay to eat foods from this "bad list" is RIGHT after a strenuous workout to rebuild the glycogen stores in your muscles, in which case I'd *only* recommend stuff like whole wheat bread, brown rice, and oats. Other than that, avoid the bad list like the plague. Also, avoid the plague...that's no fun either.

Other things you need to avoid: Soda, pop, Coke, whatever you call it: get rid of it. All of it. Seriously. Sugary juices like lemonade, fruit punch, and sweet tea need to go too. Coolatas and such from Dunkin Donuts? GONE. Gatorade and Vitamin Water are also terrible for you (INSANE amounts of sugar). This is non-negotiable. Once a week is okay, but if you're drinking 3 Cokes a day there's 300+ extra calories a day, which results in an extra 35-40 pounds of body fat a year. These drinks are loaded with so much sugar it's disgusting. Just say no to coke (both kinds - you can thank me later).

FOOD TO EAT SPARINGLY

Dairy and grains – minimize intake! The Paleo diet recommends cutting out all dairy and grains from your meal, which is pretty difficult. After you're done working out, it's okay to eat some carbs from bread and grains, but try to limit it to right after exercising. Oatmeal in the morning for breakfast, brown rice in your post-workout meal...it's all good. Avoid the bad foods in the evening and at night time, because you're generally sitting around watching TV at this point, and those carbs can do nothing but turn into fat while you're sitting there.

If you decide to cut out dairy from your diet, you might worry about not getting enough calcium. Read why the Paleo Diet takes care of that here. (<http://www.thepaleodiet.com/faqs/#calcium>)

Okay, so we wiped out all the stuff you can't eat. I'll let you finish crying. Remember, I'm not saying avoid that stuff completely, but I'm telling you that's the stuff that's keeping you at your current weight. The more changes you can make, the better off you'll be. If you give up those foods completely, your weight will come right off. If you only make a few changes, the weight will come off more slowly. It's up to you to find a good balance.

My recommendation is to eliminate one bad thing from your diet a week, and replace it with a GOOD thing from the list on the following page.

THE STUFF YOU CAN EAT:

Each of your meals should be composed of a good protein and some good carbohydrates. Let's see why:

Protein

Protein is the building block of muscle development. Protein absolutely NEEDS to be a main component of your daily diet. If you're looking to build muscle, you should aim for one gram of protein per pound of body weight per day.

Here are some examples of good sources of protein:

Eggs now you know why Rocky drank raw eggs – I wouldn't recommend that though.

Fish bass, cod, tuna, tilapia, salmon, and pretty much any fish out there.

Poultry chicken breast, turkey breast (though not breaded and deep fried).

Meat extra lean ground beef, lean pork, steak.

Legumes black beans, lima beans, pinto beans, green beans, string beans.

Nuts almonds, walnuts, pecans.

Note on the legumes and nuts: if you're trying to lose weight, keep an eye on your intake of these as they're relatively high in calories (remember, calorie deficit for the win!). If you're trying to gain weight, you want to load up on this stuff to make sure you get that calorie overload.

Now if you're a vegan or vegetarian, you're obviously going to need to eat a LOT of legumes and nuts to get your daily protein requirement, so keep an eye on your total calorie intake.

GOOD CARBOHYDRATES

REAL FOOD! Fruits and Vegetables. Lots of them. They're are high in energy and low in calories, providing you with a steady boost of energy throughout the day rather than spiked energy (and fast withdrawals) from the sugar packed into most carb-heavy meals. For this reason, eat as many vegetables as you want, whenever you want; I guarantee you won't get fat.

Vegetables: asparagus, onions, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, celery, cucumber, eggplants, lettuce, peppers, spinach, squash...and every other vegetable out there.

Fruits: apples, avocados, bananas, blueberries, strawberries, kiwi, grapefruits, oranges, peaches, pears, pineapple, watermelon, tomatoes...and every other fruit out there.

You might say, "This diet sounds boring." Well, do you want to lose weight and feel better? Or do you want to keep doing what you're doing and stay big? Remember, do or do not, there is no try. Your level of dedication is up to you.

Once you find some vegetables and fruits that you love, make a LOT of it, and eat it all week long. Then, mix it up for the next week. Get creative, look up recipes online for Paleo-diet foods, and you'll soon realize that there's all KINDS of stuff you can make that taste great and will help you lose weight.

DIET TIPS AND TRICKS

COOKING YOUR OWN STUFF SAVES MONEY Learn to be a good cook. When you have good ingredients, it's really pretty tough to make an unhealthy meal. Plus, once you drop all that weight and score a hot date, you can say "how about dinner at my place?" Jackpot.

EAT MORE OFTEN If you generally eat three meals a day, instead try to eat four, five, or six smaller meals spaced out about 3 hours apart. By eating more often, you will keep your metabolism operating at peak efficiency.

LOW FAT DOES NOT MEAN HEALTHY Food companies have convinced the world that low-fat equals healthy. Fail. Low fat meals are LOADED with sugar and processed carbs, which turn to fat in your system, spike your insulin levels, and cause all kinds of problems. Stick with real food as often as possible.

KEEP IT SIMPLE Find foods that you like, and buy a lot of them. Frozen vegetables are great to have on hand if you're out of fresh ones. Frozen fruit tastes great in a smoothie.

LIQUID CALORIES STILL COUNT Drink water all day long. Drinking water instead of those two Cokes a day will result in almost 20 lbs. lost in a year. Cut the liquid calories out of your diet. Water!

CHUCK THE JUNK FOOD If you have terrible eating habits, keeping junk food in your cabinet is like the Cookie Monster giving up cookies and then touring the Chips Ahoy factory. Get it out of your house and you won't be tempted.

ALCOHOL The calories in ten beers add up quickly, but it's the awful food you eat while drunk that can really put you over the edge. Try to eat well during the week so you can enjoy some beers on the weekends guilt-free. I'm not telling you to quit drinking (I enjoy drinking beers and watching football like everybody else), just know that it's probably slowing your progress (especially if you hit the sauce hard, which is a whole different issue all together).

BREAKFAST Eat it. Don't skip breakfast, because then you're far more likely to overindulge for lunch. Eat a high protein breakfast and you won't have an empty stomach for the rest of the morning. (Sugary cereals don't count, by the way). Tony the Tiger can suck it.

TRY KEEPING TRACK OF WHAT YOU EAT FOR A WEEK Write down EVERYTHING; every candy bar, every cookie, every soda. I guarantee you eat healthier just by forcing yourself to record everything that enters your system. Use a site like DailyBurn (www.dailyburn.com) to help you keep track of your food.

Before we jump into the exercise portion of this book, know that if you follow the diet above and don't do any exercise, you're STILL going to lose a bunch of weight (depending on your starting point). Diet is probably 80-90% of the battle when it comes to weight loss.

EXERCISE

THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE EXERCISING

When possible, do it with somebody else I guarantee you will accomplish more if you have a friend there with you shouting words of encouragement. When you're having days where you don't want to exercise, your friend can motivate you, and vice versa when it's the other way around (was that redundant?). This is one of the most important things I can pass along. Start exercising with a friend, and you're 47.3% more likely to succeed. I just made that number up by the way, but you get the idea.

Stretch during and after exercising, not before Don't stretch your muscles until they're properly warmed up! Get your heart rate going and your muscles firing with 10 minutes of light cardio (running, jumping jacks, etc.), before you even think of stretching. To kick-start your recovery process (and help prevent future injury), stretch out your muscles AFTER lifting. At this point your muscles are all contracted and jacked up; stretching will make it easier for everything to get where it needs to go.

Keep track of everything: how much you're lifting, how many sets and reps, and how you felt after each workout. If you don't know how many you did last time, you won't know how many you need to do this time to get better. If you don't want to set up your own excel sheet or notebook, use a website like DailyBurn.com (<http://www.dailyburn.com>) to track your workouts.

If you're looking to lose weight Try running sprints on your off days. Just 20 minutes of interval running is enough to jack up your metabolism and seriously burn some calories. Read my article on Interval training here (<http://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/2009/01/27/kick-your-ass-and-kickstart-your-metabolism-in-20-minutes/>).

Abs don't show up unless you have single digit body fat percentage If you want to see your abs, you need to get your body fat percentage below 10. That's all there is to it. You could have amazing abs right now, but you just can't see them unless the fat on your stomach goes away. Remember when I said your diet was important? This is Exhibit A.

You can't spot-train fat You can build muscle in specific places, but you can't remove fat from specific places. As you lose weight, the fat comes off all over your body. Depending on your genetics, your stomach might be the last place for it to come off.

Protein shakes are okay right after you work out A scoop or two of pure whey protein is okay when it comes to supplements. I mix a shake with orange juice, oatmeal, spinach, frozen strawberries, and whey protein RIGHT after I work out. You can't even taste the oatmeal or the spinach, which is great because I don't like the taste of either. If you're looking to bulk up, this meal right after a big workout is crucial.

EXERCISE ROUTINES

I've split the next section into three parts, based on your level of fitness. It's always better to err on the side of caution when starting out, so make sure you check with your doctor before starting physical activity.

Level 1 is for people who are just starting out.

Level 2 is for those of you who want to start building muscle but don't have access to a gym.

Level 3 is for those of you who have access to weights and want to really challenge yourself.

LEVEL 1 : KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Do what makes you happy – If you don't like lifting weights, don't do it! If you don't like running marathons, don't do it! Get creative.

My friend Nate from Massachusetts plays on the Men's US National Field Hockey Team, traveling the world to play everywhere.

My two roommates play Ultimate Frisbee in a competitive league after work.

NF reader Evan practices Muay Thai boxing regularly.

Many of you might never leave this part of the fitness plan. Who cares! If you're happy, and you feel good about yourself, more power to you. If you follow the Nerd Fitness Diet and get twenty minutes of physical activity every day, I guarantee you will start to feel better and look better immediately. Check out this post on [32 Ways to Kickstart your Life](#) if you need some examples on how to get started.

Once you discover some physical activity that makes you smile, find a way to do it every day, even if just for a few minutes. For those of you who are interested in building muscle and developing a solid physique, you're going to want to progress to Level 2 and then Level 3. If you're happy at Level 1 but want to build some strength, it's okay to poach a few exercises from Level 2 - I won't tell anyone.

LEVEL 2 : BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES AND INTERVALS

You're ready to start building some muscle, you want to get stronger, and you want to look better (who doesn't?). No gym membership or weight bench? No problem. We can get quite a bit accomplished with just your bodyweight. Do you think Sparta had a Gold's Gym? Negatory.

The only equipment I'll be suggesting here is a pull up bar, and a bench. If you don't have these things, head down to the local school and use their monkey bars and park bench. Just make sure you're wearing pants, or Chris Hansen will be on the scene faster than you can say "pedophile."

Important: before you begin exercising, spend 5 minutes getting warmed up (a light jog, jumping jacks, jump rope, etc.) Get that heart rate up and get those muscles loose, this will help prevent injury. Secondly, don't overdo it! Take your time, stay within your limits, practice perfect form, and slowly step up the intensity.

Here are the exercises you'll have in your bodyweight repertoire:

1) PUSH UPS Still the bread and butter of all bodyweight exercises. They work your shoulders, your chest, and your triceps all at the same time. You can do these in your hotel room, in your parents' basement (don't tell anybody you still live there), out in a park, wherever. Keep your stomach tight, your back straight, and your hands wider than shoulder width apart.

Too tough? Go to your stairs, keep your feet on the floor, and put your hands on the 4th or 5th step (your body will be at an incline). Do these until you can do 3 sets of 10, and then work your way up to 3 sets of 10 regular pushups.

Level 2: Put your feet up on a bench and hands on the floor; do the pushups at a decline angle. This will require more effort from your shoulders and triceps.

Level 3: Close grip push ups. Keep your hands just barely wider than shoulder width apart, and your elbows close to your side. This will work your triceps extra hard.

2) SQUATS This exercise works almost every muscle in your lower body, back, and abs. Stand with your legs shoulder width apart and your toes pointed slightly out. Put your arms straight out in front of you for balance. As you squat, contract those abs, keep your back straight, your chin up, and your butt WAY back. **Your knees should not extend out past the tips of your toes.**

Go down until your thighs are parallel to the floor, and then explode back up. To test if you have good form, do a squat into a chair. If you can stand right back up **WITHOUT HAVING TO LEAN FORWARD** you are doing them correctly. Remember: keep your butt back and abs tight!

Level 2: For more of a challenge, put your hands behind your head like you're a prisoner, or put them both way above your head like you're getting robbed at gun point. Reach for the sky punk!

Level 3: One legged squats. (Warning: this is really freaking hard). Pick a leg and stand on it with your other straight out in front of you. Do a squat with the correct form above, go down until your thigh is parallel to the floor, and then explode up on that leg. That's one rep. If you don't have the strength for this yet (and few do), try it while standing between the backs of two chairs and grab onto those for support. This will build your stabilizer muscles in your legs like crazy.

3) LUNGES Stand with your feet together and your hands on your hips. Step out with one leg, and drop the other knee (almost) to the ground. Explode up and back with your front leg. That's one rep. Now do the other leg, unless you just want one giant leg (which could be funny).

Level 2: Put your hands behind your head (like you're a prisoner), and step forward with your right foot, and drop down. At the bottom of your lunge, twist your torso to your right 90 degrees. Twist back to straight, then return back to the starting point.

4) STEP UPS If you have a bed/bench/chair and a high enough ceiling, put one foot on the bed, the other on the floor and “step up.” See where the name came from? I knew you were smart! Then, step back down, and step up with the same leg again. Do 10-15 reps on one side, then switch to the other.

Level 2: Jump ups. These are used in the 300 Challenge. Only do it if you have a big enough platform to jump on, and you’re not going to hit your head! Keeping your abs tight and back straight, jump up onto the bed/bench, and as you land come into a squat position. *Important:* don’t jump back down, step down with one foot then the other, and then jump back up for your next rep.

5) PULL UPS Probably my favorite exercise of all. Head over to those monkey bars, grab the bar with your palms facing away from you, and pull yourself up. It’s that simple. If you can’t do a full pull up yet, have a friend come with you to help push you up (feel free to crack Ace & Gary joke here). If you don’t have a friend (awww), try jumping and get yourself above the bar like you just finished a pull up, and then slowly lower yourself back down. This is called a **Negative Pull Up** – be careful with these, you’ll be sore the next day.

Mix it up: Try chin ups, with your palms facing towards you. This will work your biceps especially, along with your forearms and back. To really emphasize your guns, do the pull ups with your hands gripped really closely together.

6) PLANKS Get into a pushup position, resting your weight on your forearms and toes. Pick up your body, contract your stomach, and keep your back straight. At this point, try to stay in this position for 30 seconds, working your way up to reps of 60 seconds.

Depending on your fitness level, you should try to do the following full-body routine once a week, working your way up to three times a week (every other day, never two days in a row). If this is too tough, start with a lower number of reps or sets and build your way up. Remember, small victories each time!

3 Sets of 20 Squats

3 Sets of 20 Pushups

3 Sets of 20 Lunges

3 Sets of Pull ups (do as many as you can in each set).

3 Sets of Planks (30 seconds each set)

Wait approximately 1 minute in between each set.

Try mixing it up with circuit training. Do one set of each exercise after another without stopping. Once you finish one complete circuit, repeat it two more times. This will build muscle AND burn fat.

INTERVALS Rather than run at a constant pace for 60 minutes (more boring than an afternoon with your grandma, unless your grandma is awesome like mine), why not try 20 minutes of sprints instead? Jog for 90 seconds, sprint for 30, jog for 90, sprint for 30. This builds up your heart muscle, your total oxygen capacity, and burns hella calories. Read about intervals here <http://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/2009/01/27/kick-your-ass-and-kickstart-your-metabolism-in-20-minutes/>. Here is a sample week for you:

Monday: Bodyweight Routine

Tuesday: 20 minutes of intervals

Wednesday: Bodyweight Routine (circuit training)

Thursday: 20 minutes of intervals

Friday: Bodyweight Routine

Saturday: 20 minutes of fun exercise (walk, play with kids, Wii tennis, etc.)

Sunday: Drink beer and watch football :)

If any of this isn't clear or doesn't make sense, please e-mail me at Steve@NerdFitness.com and I'll gladly answer any questions.

So you think you're ready for level 3 huh? In my opinion, if you can't do at least 6 pull ups, you should stay at Level 2. Once you are cranking out pull ups like Rocky Balboa, you can graduate to Level 3.

LEVEL 3 : NERD FITNESS ELITE

This is where you find out what you're made of. Remember when I said that "appearance is a consequence of fitness?" You'll find out why here. Rather than promote a crazy number of reps with isolation exercises (like any routine you'll find in Muscle & Fitness magazine), I offer up a deceptively simple routine that will build both muscle and strength. Not only will you get unbelievably strong, but you'll look great too if you stick with it. Each routine should only last about 45 minutes, but you should walk out of the gym drenched in sweat and tingly all over...I'm referring to your muscles, stop giggling.

Before Beginning Level 3:

Squats and deadlifts are crucial - you're going to need to get over your fear of squats and deadlifts if you're going to succeed on the Nerd Fitness Level 3 program, because I won't take you seriously without them.

Don't try to be Superman - you're in the gym to get stronger, not to impress people while you're there. I don't care if you can only lift the bar; start with low weights, practice perfect form, and be safe. It's better to add weight each week, building momentum, rather than forcing too much weight too early and getting injured.

Keep it simple, stupid! Don't worry about doing 15 different chest exercises and 14 different ab workouts. Until you're squatting 1.5 times your body weight, bench-pressing 1.5 times your body weight, and deadlifting 2x your body weight, don't worry about isolation exercises. Compound exercises use multiple muscles at the same time, eliminating the time consuming need for isolation.

If you're allowed, do your squats and deadlifts BAREFOOT. You want to be in complete balance, so I'd recommend either wearing no shoes during these exercises or try a pair of Vibram 5-Finger shoes (<http://www.vibramfivefingers.com>). I wear my Vibrams when I work out and it's amazing. Don't wear shoes with big air pockets in the heels, as these could pop once you start lifting heavy weight and you could really hurt yourself. If you want to wear normal shoes, Chuck Taylors are perfect.

Muscle gets built when you're resting. If you're skinny and looking to pack on muscle, eat insane amounts of good food (a high calorie shake with protein and good carbs right after you work out especially) and rest on your off days - maybe go for a brisk 20-minute walk, but don't overexert yourself. Next, get plenty of sleep, as not enough of this can derail any muscle building effort quickly. You will build muscle and fat with all of this eating (load up on almonds and walnuts!), and then you can cut out the extra calories from your diet and the fat will fall right off...leaving you with just muscle and a striking resemblance to King Leonidas.

This routine is split into two days: A & B. This is similar to Stronglifts' 5X5 routine <http://stronglifts.com/stronglifts-5x5-ebook-download/> (which is another fantastic free download, and one you should consider):

ROUTINE A

Squats

Incline Dumbbell Press

Inverted Rows

Dips Or Pushups

ROUTINE B

Deadlifts

Standing Barbell Shoulder Press

Squats

Pull ups or Chin Ups

I have squats in both Routine A and B. Squats on your A day are where you're adding weight and really going for a personal best. Squats on your B day are more of a "stretch out the muscles and keep them warm" day, so it's okay to do less weight and higher reps.

For your last exercise, alternate dips and pushups on A days, and alternate pull ups and chin ups on B days.

All of these exercises should be completed with free weights or your body weight. Stay away from machines! If you don't know how to do any of the exercises listed above, click on the links below for full descriptions. I highly recommend reading each before attempting them, even if you think you know what you're doing:

Perfect Squats <http://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/2009/07/08/why-you-need-squats-in-your-workout-and-how-to-do-them-right/>

Perfect Deadlifts <http://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/2009/07/22/deadlift-the-ultimate-exercise-not-just-for-zombies/>

Perfect Dips <http://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/2009/09/16/how-to-do-a-perfect-dip-no-tobacco-required/>

Perfect Pull ups and Chin ups <http://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/2009/07/31/how-to-do-a-proper-pull-up-and-why-you-need-to-do-them/>

Inverted Rows (from Stronglifts site) <http://stronglifts.com/how-to-do-inverted-rows/>

Overhead Press (from Stronglifts site) <http://stronglifts.com/how-to-overhead-press-with-correct-technique/>

NOTES ON THE NERD FITNESS LEVEL 3 WORKOUT

This is a routine you can do 3 times a week. It would look something like this:

WEEK 1

Monday A1

Wednesday B1

Friday A2

WEEK 2

Monday B1

Wednesday A1

Friday B2

On the A1 and B1 Days - Lift for strength. Go for 4 or 5 sets of low reps and heavy weight. (4 sets of 5 reps each is good). If you're just starting out, make sure you have perfect form, and slowly add weight. Try to add a little bit of weight each day you're in the gym.

On the A2 and B2 Days - Decrease the amount of weight, decrease the wait time between sets, and increase the number of reps. Do this for each exercise in the routine:

12 reps at X weight, 1 minute rest

10 reps at X+5 weight, 1 minute rest

8 reps at X+10 weight, 1 minute rest

6 reps at X + 15 weight, 1 minute rest

12 reps at X weight

You should be able to complete either A or B days (1 or 2) within 45 minutes. Really push yourself and keep up the intensity.

THE 300 CHALLENGE

If you've seen the Movie *300*, you know those guys are freaking ridiculously strong and in tremendous shape. To explain how he felt after training, Gerard Butler (the actor who played King Leonidas) said this: "You know that every bead of sweat falling off your head, every weight you've pumped — the history of that is all in your eyes. That was a great thing, to put on that cape and put on that helmet, and not have to think, 'shit, I should have trained more.' *Instead, I was standing there feeling like a lion.*" I want to feel like that.

If you're interested in seeing how you stack up against the actors from the movie, try the 300 challenge that many of them completed. Note, you have to finish each exercise before moving onto the next:

- 1. Pullups - 25 reps**
- 2. Deadlifts with 135lbs - 50 reps**
- 3. Pushups - 50 reps**
- 4. 24-inch Box jumps - 50 reps**
- 5. Floor wipers - 50 reps**
- 6. Single-arm Clean-and-Press with 36lbs Kettlebell - 50 reps**
- 7. Pullups - 25 reps**

If you don't know how to do each of these exercises, you can watch this Men's Health video here for a demonstration of each. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggjYjReIWgc>)

I believe the fastest actor completed the entire challenge in like 17 minutes. See how long it takes you. I wouldn't do this routine every week, but maybe once a month to gauge your progress. Oh, and don't half-ass it on the pull ups either, your chin needs to be above the bar, and you need to go almost all the way back down to a dead hang. No cheating!

CONCLUSION

You are now armed with all the knowledge you need for transforming your life. As we are all aware, "knowing is half the battle." The other half is execution: Do or do not. There is no try. Eat better, get stronger, and make progress every day. The door is open; it's up to you to walk through it.

Become who you want to be.

Steve Kamb, NerdFitness.com

FAQ

Q: I DON'T WANT TO GET TOO BULKY, WHAT SHOULD I DO DIFFERENTLY?

A: If you train and lift weights like I listed above, I can promise you that you won't get too bulky. The bulky dudes you see at the gym are on steroids and spend 8 hours a day in there. Also, the Nerd Fitness regiment is very well-rounded, which means you'll end up with an athletic build and not a body-builder one. If you ever get to the point where you're too muscular (which I highly doubt), you can cut back on the heavy weights. I've been training with a variation of the above workout for years and years and years and the last word anybody would use to describe me is bulky. You'll be fine.

Q: BUT WHAT ABOUT MY TRAPS, BICEPS, TRICEPS, CALVES, AND/OR ABS?

A: DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM. Lift heavy with the exercises listed above, eat right, and you'll see the results you're looking for in those other muscles. Remember, appearance is a consequence of fitness. Get strong, and you'll begin to look good as a side effect. Your biceps get a great workout with close grip chin ups, your traps, calves, abs, and traps all get worked during dead lifts.

Q: SHOULD I BE TAKING THESE SUPPLEMENTS: X, Y, AND Z?

A: I don't bother with supplements (other than protein for after my workouts). Why complicate things? Eat real foods whenever possible. The goal isn't to get HUGE. The goal is to get in shape, feel and look great, and live a long life. I can't say for certain what ingredients are in most supplements, so I'd rather not mess with them. Once again, this a case of "better safe than sorry." Hydroxycut was on the market for years before it was pulled off the shelves for health risks. What else is out there that is doing harm to people but hasn't been discovered yet? If you really want to start pumping your body full of supplements, I'm sure there are plenty of bodybuilding sites out there that can help.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

If there is anything in this guide that is confusing to you, or if you have suggestions or comments please email me at Steve@NerdFitness.com.

Your questions will get added to the Q & A section in the next revision so I can help others.

Loved it? Hated it? Email me and let me know! Heck, just email me and say hi. I'd love to hear from ya!

-Steve Kamb

I want to acknowledge a few people that have helped me put this book together, directly or indirectly. I'd like to thank Mike Rickett (www.mikerickett.com), a good friend who knows way more about fitness and health than I ever could. Whenever I have questions about anything wellness-related, he's the first guy I call. Every time we hang out he teaches me something new that changes my whole perspective, and I can't wait to see what's next.

I also want to thank Medhi over at StrongLifts.com (www.stronglifts.com) for offering a great free e-book for his 5x5 workout. I want to give a big thanks to Chris Guillebeau (<http://chrisguillebeau.com/>) who indirectly inspired me to write this e-book and help as many people as possible. I want to thank my friends for their support, guidance, and encouragement. I want to thank my friend and co-worker Ashley Bothwell for designing such a great book for me!

Lastly, I want to thank you, the reader. This world's health problems are spinning out of control, and I'm glad to see you want to improve your life. Hopefully this book has inspired you to make some changes and help others do the same. Thanks for reading!