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AltShift Lift

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Table of Contents

01 INTRODUCTION

03 ONE QUESTION BEFORE WE BEGIN...

04 PROPER FORM IS NOT A SUGGESTION

07 MONITORING PROPER FORM

09 YOU ARE NOT THE EXCEPTION

10 MORE IS NOT BETTER

11 MUSCLE MASS AND THE ASSESSMENT OF FAT LOSS GOALS

13 EXERCISE AND ALTSHIFT

15 EQUIPMENT

18 MUSCLE SORENESS

20 ACHES AND PAINS

21 A FEW DEFINITIONS

22 A WORD ON RANGE OF MOTION

24 PROGRESSIONS

26 INTENSITY AND THE E FACTOR

28 PERIOIDIZATION

29 MISSED WORKOUTS AND DOWNTIME

31 THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS SPOT REDUCTION

32 EXERCISES

33 WARM UP

35 RESISTANCE EXERCISES

38 STRETCHES

40 LIFT SHIFT 1

43 LIFT SHIFT 2

47 LIFT SHIFT 3

51 LIFT SHIFT 4

56 LIFT SHIFT 5

61 LIFT SHIFT 6

65 RETURN TO LIFT SHIFT 2

66 STAY THE COURSE

Introduction

This book has been a long time coming. I have actually been thinking about these concepts for 4 years, but I needed to get AltShift out of my head before I could give resistance training its due. It feels good to finally get this to you.

With the success of AltShift, it has become clear to me that I need to share what I know about resistance training with those beginners who aren't likely to become interested in athletic performance or exercise culture. I realized this because when I tried to find a satisfactory resource, I was left wanting. To be fair, I have certainly not seen every book ever written on resistance training for beginners, but all that I have seen are missing at least one thing that I feel is essential - proper form taught in intimate detail, emphasis on intensity without ever risking safety, and/or a focus on health and fat loss through lifting without trying to turn the reader into an exercise hobbyist. Since I couldn't find such a book to refer you to, this will be that book.

Resistance training, when executed properly, can be a powerful tool in your fat loss arsenal. It helps to improve metabolic rate and even fix damaged metabolisms. It improves glucose control and helps to deplete stored glycogen, which will allow for better use of stored body fat in the hours after exercise. It can even improve mood and self-confidence. What's not to like?

It is my intention to teach you some basic exercises with precise movement

patterns that you can do for a lifetime and show you how to organize and periodize your workouts in a sensible way designed to achieve as much return on your investment as possible. You won't need to join a gym, although you can if you like and you won't need to spend a lot of money on equipment. You won't need to completely rearrange your life to make time for what I am proposing here, either. I guess we could say that this is sort of a minimalist approach to something I feel very strongly about.

Resistance training is something I truly love as a part of my own life. I have always enjoyed moving weights with my muscles, but I have never turned lifting into an obsession or something social. I don't mean to imply that there is anything wrong with working out with friends or in an environment that you like, but I think I'm the right guy to teach you how to lift because I won't be using those things as selling points. I don't have anything fashionable to sell you and I won't be trying to convince you to identify yourself as a weightlifter, bodybuilder, powerlifter, or anything other than a healthy human. If you become any of those things, it will be because you found them on your own. I just want to help you reach your health and fitness goals and show you how to live with more vitality, and I want to do it without intimidating you, overwhelming you, or underperforming as your coach by not delivering to you the results that will keep you motivated to continue forever.

If you promise to try your best, I promise to give you the absolute best possible coaching that can be delivered digitally. Deal? Excellent! Let's do this.

One Question Before We Begin...

Are you walking every day? If not, you aren't ready to start resistance training.

Seriously.

It's very common to get these things out of order. Lifting weights requires more exertion than walking so it feels like it must be doing more for you. In the Western world we tend to live by mantras like *more is better* and *go hard or go home*, but those rules don't apply here.

Make walking a priority every single day and don't start AltShift Lift until you can honestly say walking has been integrated into your life.

Our human bodies evolved under selective pressures that required a lot of walking each day. In fact, if we didn't walk, we didn't eat. However, lifting and sprinting, while common in our lives and often essential for survival, were not the way we spent the majority of our time. Therefore, to bypass walking in favor of more intense forms of exercise is to skip a necessary and ubiquitous component of being human.

Proper Form Is Not A Suggestion

I chose to use videos to teach you proper form for each exercise in this book so that I could emphasize everything you need to know in the clearest possible way. I did this because I feel so strongly about teaching you to move properly. I have tried it before and it just isn't possible to sufficiently teach proper exercise form through pictures and print. At the end of the day, I need to feel good about what I do and I am not willing to compromise with a "good enough" standard of coaching.

There are no exercises in this book that you cannot do for a lifetime. In fact, I hope you are doing everything in this book right up until they put you in the ground. I know I will be. The reason that I can say this with confidence is that I won't be trying to turn you into an athlete, which means we won't ever be putting performance ahead of safety and health.

Athletes often have valid reasons for taking risks. If you play in the NFL, you are always at risk of injury, but enormous paychecks and celebrity status make those risks seem petty in the eyes of the young men who take them. It might make perfect sense to lift the heaviest possible weights in every exercise you ever perform if you intend to use your muscles to keep a 300-pound lineman from sacking your quarterback.

In the last decade, there has been a surge of gyms in which workouts have become the goal and not simply a means to improve other aspects of life. CrossFit is the big leader in this movement, but there are others. In large part, results (improvements to health, vitality, and aesthetics) are no longer the goal, but instead the big question on everyone's mind is, "What's the workout today?" Times, scores, and comradery have replaced the goals that make people patronize a gym in the first place - nobody asks to join a gym so they can make exercise their new sport - and proper form often takes a back seat in those environments in favor of *crushing workouts, leaving it all on the gym floor*, and the constant pursuit of PRs (personal records).

I would like to make it clear that this book takes a very different stance. AltShift Lift is not intended for athletes or people who exercise as their hobby or social life. It was written for the rest of us. For me, and probably you, exercise is a means to an end. It improves everything else in my world by giving me a capable body that I know I can count on to keep me in the game of life and not leave me sitting on the sidelines. It allows me to live without aches and pains. It gives me options that less fit people do not have, like taking long hikes with my family and playing on the playground with my kids instead of watching them or, even worse, poking at my phone while they play.

Since we are not trying to make exercise anything more than a tool in our lives, there is no reason to EVER deviate from perfect form. We will be bragging about what we do in the rest of our lives, not what we did in our workout today, so why

would we ever compromise our safety? Exercise is just practice for real life, and there is no reason to get hurt in practice.

Allow me to wrap all that up in a neat little package for you:
Do not EVER compromise form for the sake of heavier loads or more reps, and do not EVER get sloppy or lazy with your resistance training. Ever!

Monitoring Proper Form

As you can probably imagine, I won't actually be with you while you do your workouts. That means I can show you what to do, but I can't correct your mistakes. In order to make sure you are doing EXACTLY as I instruct in each movement, you will need to see yourself exercising. Unfortunately, training in front of a mirror just doesn't cut it, even if it were feasible for most people working out at home.

The solution is to record a video of yourself using your phone or tablet and then compare your video to the instruction video of the same movement in this book. Simply find a way to lean your camera on something at roughly waist or chest height and then perform the exercise from all appropriate angles (the same angles I use to demonstrate the movement). You don't need amazing cinematic quality because nobody besides yourself ever need see these videos. You just need a way of stepping back and analyzing your movement patterns to see if they actually look the way they feel. Trust me, it is extremely common for beginners to feel like they are doing a movement correctly only to be surprised when they see themselves afterward.

Video yourself so you can check your form, or have a workout partner help you make corrections.

For your first few video check-ups, be sure to use weights that you can easily manage with good form, but not so light that they are a far cry from the weights you will be using in

working sets in your workouts. As you get more comfortable with your lifts, you should still occasionally film yourself to make sure you have not slowly slipped out of proper form over time.

Of course, a workout partner can negate the need for videos, provided that you are actively watching each other with the intent of helping to improve form and safety. If you are both new to resistance training and the exercises in this book, talk out what you are seeing and watch the instruction videos together to make comparisons.

You Are Not the Exception

The exercise form described and demonstrated in this book is not just for certain individuals of a specific level of fitness and above. Everyone must achieve excellent form in order to stay safe and get the most out of this protocol. The reason that I am saying this again in a new section is that you may be tempted to tell yourself things like, “My body doesn’t move that way. He must be talking to other readers.”

If your body does not want to cooperate and follow my instructions, it is not because it is unique or special, it is because you currently lack the strength and/or control to do so. You will need to work hard to overcome some of these deficiencies, but you should never make the assumption that perfect form isn’t for you.

Fortunately, I will be offering you regressions where appropriate, and weights can be reduced until proper form is achieved in exercises that do not have suitable regressions. In the exercise videos, I am crystal clear in my coaching regarding points that cannot be taken lightly.

More Is Not Better

It is a very common misconception that muscle gain and fat loss happen during exercise. In reality, those things are achieved in recovery after exercise. Lifting weights, for example, applies the stimulus necessary for gaining new muscle mass, but it does not actually apply new muscle mass. In other words, muscle gain and fat loss are adaptations to stimuli. We do things and our bodies adapt after the fact.

Understanding this fact about recovery and adaptation will allow you to further understand that a high level of consistency is far more important than high frequency in exercise. Since we don't make gains in the gym, there's no point in desperately adding more hours of exercise to our week if things aren't happening as fast as we would like them to. Staying consistent will be the best way to get a body to adapt. When resistance training is a normal part of your life, a healthy and strong body will also be normal for you. To say this another way, you should live the way you want to look.

Don't fall into the trap of believing that more is better. You can and will make remarkable progress while training no more than 3 days a week if you only stay consistent.

Muscle Mass And The Assessment Of Fat Loss Goals

If you are brand new to resistance training, or if it has been a while, there has never been a better time for you to change the way you value your bathroom scale and your body weight. I have been fighting this fight for a long time and since we took this subject to task in AltShift, I won't beat it to death here, but there are some things you need to know.

Everyone has heard the age old cliche that "muscle weighs more than fat" more times than they can count, but few people seem to really understand what it means in practice. Now that you are becoming someone who values muscle and strength as they facilitate vitality and fat loss, you very much need to never EVER weigh yourself without also taking circumference measurements. The reason for this being that you might find yourself a pound or two heavier on the scale, but with pants that are falling off. If the scale is the only place you look when you want to know if you are getting results, you should expect to be disappointed at times when you could be celebrating.

As for your circumference measurements, it's important to have a very basic understanding of muscle and fat distribution. For example, waist measurement will typically only get smaller when fat is lost and there isn't much that muscle gain can do to change this measurement unless you are very small when you

begin. A much more ambiguous measurement can be found at the chest. While there is often fat to be lost in this area, this measurement also encompasses the lats (latissimus dorsi muscles) which are very large muscles and very prone to increasing in size with exercise. As such, chest measurements can stay the same, increase, or decrease with fat loss depending on the rate of muscle mass gain. Therefore, this is not a great measurement to base your happiness on without first considering what is going on elsewhere on your body. Hips can be another tricky area to measure because, like the lats, glutes (gluteus maximus muscles) are very large muscles that can quickly negate lost inches in the sides of the hips. We could say the same for thighs and upper arms, too.

You will need to take a broad view of your progress instead of focusing on a couple of specific numbers to decide whether or not you are getting results.

Exercise and AltShift

The AltShift Lift protocol, like AltShift, is designed to produce health, vitality, and fat loss. As such, there is no need to alter your workout schedule in relation to AltShift. Just keep following the guidelines of the diet and let your workouts fall where they may. Eating according to how and when you are training is a concept that can be very beneficial for athletes and bodybuilders, but you are reading this book, so you are likely neither of those things.

While we do not need to time our workouts to our Shifts, it is beneficial to understand that your workouts can certainly feel different at different times in the AltShift cycle. On your first day of 5 Shift and throughout 3 Shift, for example, your glycogen (the stored form of glucose) will be nicely topped off and ready to provide you with quick energy in your workouts. Lifting at this time will likely make you feel strong and awesome, leaving your muscles full of blood afterward - a sensation that the cool kids call a *pump*. In contrast, working out on your last day of 5 Shift will often leave you a little weaker, like someone turned up the gravity when you weren't looking.

Your best effort, as long as you are always honest with yourself, will be a better measure of the success of any single workout than the amount of weight you lift or how strong you feel that day.

Regardless of what your workouts feel like, you simply need to work as hard as

perfect form will allow in every workout. If you can't quite lift as much weight today as you did a few days ago, it doesn't matter. What matters is whether or not you put everything you have into every workout.

Equipment

To effectively do AltShift Lift, you will only need an exercise bench and dumbbells of various weights. As you become more advanced, it is my hope that you will also acquire a pull-up bar and resistance bands, but while this will dramatically improve your ability to train the muscles you use for vertical pulling, it is not absolutely necessary and certainly not essential for beginners. If you intend to always work out in a gym, you won't need most of the advice in this section, but please read the last two paragraphs anyway.

Exercise benches come in a few varieties, but you will only need the most basic design. You will not need a bench that inclines, declines, or adjusts in height. You have the option of buying a brand new bench or going with something used from a site like Craigslist or a garage sale. If space is an issue, you can purchase a bench like the one below that folds for easy storage.



You also have a few options when it comes to dumbbells. If space is not an issue, you can go with a traditional set including a rack like the one below.



If space is an issue, selectorized dumbbells are nice, although they usually cost a little more and it will be important to buy a good quality set.



If you choose to buy used dumbbells, you can mix and match pairs of different weights, but don't buy pairs in which the two dumbbells do not match. For example, don't purchase two 20 pound dumbbells at a garage sale unless they match each other, but it doesn't matter if they match your 15 pound dumbbells. This is because dumbbells, believe it or not, usually have slight variances in individual weight and that difference can be greater if dumbbells aren't designed and manufactured in the same way.

You can choose to prioritize space or cost, but get some dumbbells and a bench. Don't try to make this protocol work without these bare minimums.

Pairs of dumbbells ranging from 3 pounds to 30 pounds (3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30) will be

adequate for most beginners to get started, but you will likely need to buy some heavier weights in the not so distant future. No, you are not the exception to that last sentence. If you just said to yourself, “He’s clearly talking to younger/more fit/more experienced people right now,” I’m going to ask you to trust me on this.

Muscle Soreness

If you are new to resistance training, or if you haven't lifted weights in a while, you're going to get sore. Make peace with that fact. Soreness is a normal part of exercise. Expect to be more sore in the beginning than you will be after you have been lifting consistently for a while, but we all still get a little sore after a tough workout, even if we have been lifting for decades. If you have a period of extended downtime, you should expect to get sore like you did early in your adventures in lifting. Personally, I have always seen this last fact as motivation to stay consistent.

Obviously, I can't feel your soreness for you, and you can't feel mine as an example. This leaves me with the difficult job of explaining what you should expect. Sadly, I have had people quit my gym in the past after just one or two workouts because they got sore and didn't like it. Don't let this be you. You should not be so sore that it dramatically impairs your ability to move the next day, but enough soreness to keep you aware of the fact that you worked out yesterday is common. My past is riddled with leg workouts that left me walking a little funny the next day, and I have done many more workouts that made me aware that my lats, for example, were sore when I reached for something overhead, but not really sore prior to using them.

Don't be afraid of a little soreness - it's a normal part of resistance training - but soreness should not be crippling.

If every workout, for weeks, leaves you so sore you can barely function, you are probably training too hard, dehydrated, or both. Try reducing the intensity of your workouts slightly and add a pinch of sea salt to your water each time you drink. Things should improve.

Aches and Pains

Treating aches and pains goes beyond the scope of this book. Often times, just moving better, which AltShift Lift will facilitate, can alleviate minor pain in joints and muscles, but if you feel pain during any movement you should stop doing that movement and get some help. I have created various videos to help with proper mobility (check the AltShift YouTube channel), but I decided to give those away to everyone rather than include them in this book. If the stretches and exercise in this book do not help, and if my advanced mobility videos on our YouTube channel don't help, either, then you need to find a professional in your area who can help you. If you are in or passing through the Portland, Oregon area, find me and I will try to help. I never charge for assessments and I will most likely help you figure out how to solve your problem in that one meeting.

The aches and pains rule of thumb: If you experience pain you can put your thumb on (a small area), it might be a strain or other injury. If you are experiencing discomfort throughout a muscle, it's probably soreness. Stop if you feel any sharp pains while you are training, and get some help from someone who can watch you move and assess your problem directly. These are general guidelines and not medical advice!

A Few Definitions

As we approach the Exercises section of this book, it will be important that you understand a few basic definitions. These might already be in your vocabulary, but I would rather be thorough than leave you scratching your head.

Range of Motion refers to the full distance that you move a load in an exercise. A biceps curl, for example, has been performed through a full range of motion when a dumbbell is moved from a position in which the arm is not bent at the elbow to a position in which the arm is as bent as possible at the elbow and back to the straight arm position again.

Reps are repetitions. One rep of any exercise is one full cycle though the entire range of motion that makes up that exercise. For example, one rep of a squat would involve lowering yourself down to the bottom position, whether that be on a bench or to the full depth of an unassisted squat, and returning to a fully erect standing position.

Sets are groups of reps. A set of 10 reps requires repeating an exercise 10 times before resting.

I prefer to explain other possible new terms to you as they become necessary in your workouts, so I won't confound things with other definitions for now.

A Word On Range of Motion

When it comes to views on range of motion in resistance training, I might differ from some other trainers. As I write this, I am 42 years old and I have been lifting weights in some context, mostly just to feel good, for about 22 years. In that amount of time, I have learned that aches and pains are not ever worth bigger or stronger muscles, at least not in my opinion. As such, I don't always press clients to do things that I know can cause extra strain on their bodies just so they can perform better in a workout.

100% full range of motion might not always be great for your joints, but you need to be honest and don't cheat yourself out of the best reps you can safely perform.

We find an example of my perspective in the subject of range of motion. It does appear to be true that performing resistance training exercises through the widest possible range of motion is a great way to build strength and probably muscle mass, too. However, the most strain on a joint in most exercises will be on one end range or the other (or both). Let's use a biceps curl as our example again because most people know what it looks like.

At the bottom of a biceps curl, full range of motion would require a fully locked elbow. Beginning in this position will mean starting with the biceps at maximum extension (at least without moving the arm at the shoulder) and this will be great for building strength and bigger biceps. Unfortunately, this position is

also where the most compression of the elbow joint will happen in a biceps curl. In fact, if you try a few reps for yourself, you will probably notice that they are slightly more comfortable if you stop at the bottom of a curl just before the elbow actually locks.

I think joints are worth saving. If we can do things that give us even a tiny edge in that endeavor, then we would be crazy not to do those things. But here's where I have to force some honesty into your workouts. You should never fall short of full range of motion by more than a slight distance, and you should never let laziness get the better of you by shortening reps more than necessary while you tell yourself it's all for your joints.

Progressions

In resistance training, the average exercise can be performed by both beginners and advanced lifters by simply adjusting the load. If you are new to lifting, you just need to use lighter weights. However, some exercises require progressions in which the movement itself is slightly altered to allow a person with less strength to effectively train the same muscles in the same basic exercise. Let's use squats as our example.

If you have never performed a proper squat in your life, expecting you to squat with safe form right out of the gate would be ridiculous of me. You will first need to squat to a chair or bench until you can get your muscles working in the right order and your body in the proper position to protect your joints. Then, when you are squatting with assistance like a champion, you will move to unassisted squats. When those look and feel great, you can add some weight in the form of a goblet squat.

Use progressions to get stronger. Don't settle for a regressed form of a movement forever!

Progressions are designed to give you a place to start, but here's the rub: You cannot settle into a regressed form of a movement and stay there forever! Your goal should always be to get to the most advanced form of each movement in this book. That will mean regular testing of the next progression. For example, when you have been squatting to a bench for a few weeks, you need to periodically set up your camera and try a few

unassisted squats to see if you are getting closer and to get a feel for how they differ from squats to your bench.

All progressions are explained in the exercise videos. If a progression is not offered, it means you need to choose a weight that allows you to complete the prescribed reps of that exercise without compromising form and still working hard.

Intensity and the E Factor

Intensity is always the hardest part of teaching exercise at a distance because I can't feel your movements for you and I can't be there to make an educated guess about whether or not you could be doing more. The problem is that it is normal for untrained people to listen to their brains instead of their muscles.

In my gym, it is common to see a beginner move as if they are going to set a weight down after doing some reps only to have the trainer stop them and make them do a few more. If we had let the client set the weight down and then asked her why she did that, she would have told us that she could not do any more reps. This is an example of a brain saying, "This is too heavy!" while the muscles doing the work are only starting to complain.

Another common site in my gym is a beginner client choosing dumbbells that are too light and their trainer exchanging them for heavier ones while the client looks on in terror before completing the prescribed reps anyway. This, too, is an example of asking the brain what it thinks before finding out what the muscles can actually do.

To assist you in overcoming this problem, I have provided you with examples, where appropriate, through my wonderful client, Elane. When you see an E Factor associated with a particular exercise, it means "this is how much weight Elane uses in this exercise."

To be fair, Elane has been training with me for over 4 years. However, Elane is 66 years old. If you find yourself lifting lighter weights than she lifts, that's totally fine for a while, but it's not okay to tell yourself, "This is heavy enough. I think I'll stop here."

Men, I have not provided examples for you because you typically don't need them. I'm generalizing here, but you are usually more aggressive than women when it comes to attempting heavier loads in your lifts. Just work hard in each set and you should be fine.

Mind those E Factors! I hope Elane's examples will help your perspective on what is heavy and what is not.

Periodization

AltShift Lift is a moderately periodized plan. This means that it changes things up from time to time to help stave off plateaus. It does not alter as many factors as it possibly could, but it is also not a protocol aimed at maximum performance or maximum muscle growth. As I have explained, AltShift lift is a basic lifting plan designed to aid your pursuit of health and fat loss. As such, I added periodization that will facilitate that goal and keep you from getting bored. This is very much the same kind of periodization that I use in my gym where appropriate.

Missed Workouts and Downtime

Since you live in the same world as the rest of us, I can easily assume that you will miss workouts on occasion. I can even assume that you will sometimes miss multiple workouts in a row. We go on vacations, we get sick, and we work overtime. It happens.

The primary thing that you need to do when you miss workouts is to spend as much time as possible worrying about how you are losing all your gains and that all your hard work has been a waste. **I'm kidding!!**

Unless you quit lifting for months, everything that you feel like you have lost while you were not working out will return very quickly, usually within your first week back. You should expect to be a little sorer than usual after downtime, but your strength and muscle mass will return in short order.

Breaks happen. Don't let laziness be the cause, but don't worry about losing your hard earned progress.

If you are only down for few workouts, simply pick back up with the next workout on your schedule according to the AltShift Lift protocol. Other than maybe a need to use slightly lighter weights as you get back into the swing of things, there is no need to alter anything.

If you are down for a month or more, you should consider returning to Lift Shift 2.

If you are down for multiple months, I suggest going back to the beginning with Lift Shift 1.

There Is No Such Thing as Spot Reduction

Spot reduction is the belief that training a certain area of the body will reduce fat in that area. Spot reduction is a myth. Let me be perfectly clear: If the backs of your arms are squishy, extra triceps work will not help. Only fat loss will help. You can build bigger muscles under the fat, but you cannot reduce body fat in targeted areas through exercise.

When it comes to body fat, think of your body as a cluster of small silos. Whichever silo tends to fill up first on your body, your belly for example, will tend to be the last silo to give up its fat. If you stored fat on your arms last, you will probably lose fat there very quickly.

Why am I telling you this? Because I don't want you to think it's a good idea to alter this protocol to address areas that bother you the most. That is only a waste of time.

Exercises

It is my hope that you will go through all of the videos presented here, watching each of them all the way through in a comfortable chair. Then, when it is time to get to work, you should watch the video for each exercise just before performing that exercise in your workout. Finally, when you film yourself performing these exercises, you can watch your video and mine side by side.

ALTERNATE EXERCISES

When the workout description gives you a choice between two movements for a specific muscle group, you will be best served to alternate between these two movements within that Lift Shift.

*The names of each of the movements that will follow are links to the instructional videos for that particular movement. When you tap or click them the video will open in a new window.

Warm Up

It is essential to get your joints moving and blood pumping in the area of your body that you intend to train before lifting weights with a lot of effort. What I'm prescribing here are some basic plyometric movements for the hips and shoulders and a minimum of one warm up set for each exercise you will perform that day.

Performing a warm up set simply means doing a full set with a weight that is very light. You aren't trying to get anything out of that set except just waking up your muscles and moving through the full range of motion of the exercise. You are certainly welcome to perform more than one warm up set if you feel that more would be beneficial (especially if an area has been tight or achy in the past), but warm up sets should not wear you out or take any of your strength from your working sets.

Also, please note that I am not in any way claiming that the very basic warm up movements presented here would be adequate for sprinting, high intensity interval training, sports, or even more advanced or performance based lifting. This is a basic protocol and it only calls for a basic warm up. There's no need to huff and puff in your warm up if you won't be doing so in your work out.

WARM UP EXERCISES

Treat these exercises with the same attention and care that you will treat all the resistance exercises in this protocol. If you notice that you are little tight in a specific area, or you just feel like one of these exercises needs a little extra attention on a particular day, follow your instincts and spend more time there. Your warm ups should not be addressed like they are an annoyance that you rush through before getting to the fun stuff. The same can be said for your warm up sets in each lift.

Plyo Legs

Plyo Shoulders

Resistance exercises

Whether you are using dumbbells or the weight of your body, these are are the exercises where the magic happens. As I have already explained in no uncertain terms, but in terms I am definitely not hesitant to repeat, form is everything here. Yes, it is important to work hard and use the heaviest weights you can manage, form must always be priority number one.

RESISTANCE EXERCISES - LOWER BODY

Squats Overview

Watch this one often as you learn and move through the progressions. The points discussed in this video are VERY IMPORTANT!

Chair/Bench Squats

Beginners will start here. Be sure these are so amazing that they would bring a tear to my eye before moving on.

Squats

Basic unweighted, unassisted squats.

Goblet Squats

Weighted squats. The most advanced form of squat that we use in AltShift Lift.

Step-Ups

A unilateral method of training the legs in a fashion very similar to squats. Step-ups have the added value of helping to eliminate muscle imbalances.

Romanian Deadlifts

A classic hip hinge movement that has the potential to help you keep a pain-free low back.

Hip Thrusts

Hamstring and glute work using a bench and your body weight.

RESISTANCE EXERCISES - UPPER BODY

Bench Press

The classic chest exercise.

Push-Ups

I offer multiple regressions of this tried and true bodyweight exercise.

Pull-Overs

Works the lats (back) and pecs (chest).

1 Arm Rows

An awesome pulling movement for the upper back muscles. Truly one of my favorite lifts.

Standing Bent Rows

Great for the upper back and the core.

Shoulder Press

The best exercise for strong shoulders.

Lateral Raises

A great secondary exercise for shoulders. This one should not be done as often as shoulder press, but it's nice for occasional variety.

Biceps Curls
The old standby for training elbow flexion.

Supination Curls
Biceps curls with a twist.

Bench Dips
Bodyweight training for your triceps using your bench.

Overhead Extensions
Solid isolation work for your triceps.

Pull-Ups and Assisted Pull-Ups (Optional)
Maybe the best vertical pulling movement of all time, but it will require extra equipment and it isn't absolutely essential. I would, however, suggest that you integrate pull-ups into your routine eventually. When you do, you can alternate them with Pull-Overs in roughly half of your Upper Body workouts.

RESISTANCE EXERCISES - CORE

Planks
Possibly the best core exercise ever. These will be held for a prescribed time or your best effort. Don't worry about coming up short at first. You will quickly get stronger.

Bench Leg Raises
Core work with a couple of possible regressions.

Stretches

Stretches are to be performed after your workouts, not before. All stretches should be held for a minimum of 30 seconds on each side. If you extend the length of time that you hold a stretch, be sure to stretch for the same amount of time on the other side.

If you have a tighter side in any stretch, always start with that side, stretching it as intensely as possible, and then match the loose side to the tight side by stopping in the same position even though you could go further into the stretch on the loose side.

STRETCHES - LOWER BODY

Hamstrings

More flexibility for the back of the thigh.

Standing Pigeon

A fantastic stretch for the glutes and hips.

Hip Flexor

This one could save your knees and low back.

Calf Stretch

Maintenance for the achilles tendon and healthy range of motion at the ankle.

Adductor Stretch

An inner thigh stretch that can really help with overall hip mobility and control at the knees in squats.

STRETCHES - UPPER BODY

Chest

Open up those pecs for better shoulder health.

Lats

These big muscles get tight and contribute to poor shoulder position.

Shoulder/Biceps

A great stretch for the anterior deltoid, biceps, and better elbow extension.

Triceps

A great stretch for the back of the upper arm and better elbow flexion.

The Lift Shifts

Enough chatting, it's time to begin.

LIFT SHIFT 1 – FOUR WEEKS

Perform the following 2 workouts each week for the next 4 weeks with a minimum of two rest days between workouts. For example, you might do the upper body workout on Mondays and the lower body workout on Fridays.

To reiterate regarding E Factors, I'm simply providing you with an example that you should shoot for over time. If you are not ready for Elane's weights yet, it's no big deal. You will get there.

UPPER BODY WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps followed by

3 working sets of 10 reps of each of the exercises below.

For bodyweight movements, perform 4 working sets.

Rest between sets should be 1-2 minutes.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 2-3 minutes.

Bench Press

E Factor = 30 lb dumbbells

Pull-Overs

E Factor = 25 lb dumbbell

Shoulder Press

E Factor = 20 lb dumbbells

1 Arm Rows

E Factor = 30 lb dumbbell

Biceps Curls

E Factor = 15 lb dumbbells

Overhead Extensions

E Factor = 20 lb dumbbell

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Chest / Lats / Shoulder/Biceps / Triceps

LOWER BODY/CORE WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps followed by 3 working sets of 10 reps of each of the exercises below.

For bodyweight movements, perform 4 working sets.

Rest between sets should be 1-2 minutes.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 2-3 minutes.

Chair/Bench Squats, Squats, or Goblet Squats (Watch the Squat Overview video first)

E Factor = Goblet Squats with a 25 lb dumbbell

Romanian Deadlifts

E Factor = 40 lb dumbbells

Planks

Hold for 1 minute or best effort

Bench Leg Raises

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Hamstrings / Standing Pigeon / Hip Flexor

Calf / Adductor

LIFT SHIFT 2 – FOUR WEEKS

In this Lift Shift, the two workouts below will be performed, in order, on 3 days each week with at least one rest day between workouts.

For example, week one of Lift Shift 2 might look like this:

Monday - Upper Body

Wednesday - Lower Body/Core

Friday - Upper Body

In this example, the second week of Lift Shift 2 would look like this:

Monday - Lower Body/Core

Wednesday - Upper Body

Friday - Lower Body/Core

As you can see from this example, our two day split (upper/lower) with 3 workouts in a week will result in rotating between two Upper Body workouts and one Lower Body/Core workout in one week, and two Lower Body/Core workouts and one Upper Body workout in the next week.

UPPER BODY WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps followed by 3 working sets of 10 reps of each of the exercises below.

For bodyweight movements, perform 4 working sets.

Rest between sets should be 1-2 minutes.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 2-3 minutes.

Bench Press or Push-Ups

E Factor = Bench Press with 30 lb dumbbells

Pull-Overs

E Factor = 25 lb dumbbells

Shoulder Press or Lateral Raises

E Factor = 20 lb dumbbells, 8 lb dumbbells

1 Arm Rows or Standing Bent Rows

E Factor = 30 lb dumbbells, 20 lb dumbbells

Biceps Curls or Supination Curls

E Factor = 15 lb dumbbells

Overhead Extensions or Bench Dips

E Factor = Overhead Extensions with 20 lb dumbbells

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Chest / Lats / Shoulder/Biceps / Triceps

LOWER BODY/CORE WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps followed by 3 working sets of 10 reps of each of the exercises below.

For bodyweight movements, perform 4 working sets.

Rest between sets should be 1-2 minutes.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 2-3 minutes.

Chair/Bench Squats, Squats, or Goblet Squats (Watch the Squat Overview video first)

E Factor = Goblet Squats with a 25 lb dumbbell

Romanian Deadlifts

E Factor = 40 lb dumbbells

Step-Ups

Hip Thrusts

Planks (Hold for 1 minute or max effort)

Bench Leg Raises

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Hamstrings / Standing Pigeon / Hip Flexor

Calf / Adductor

LIFT SHIFT 3 – SUPERSETS – TWO WEEKS

As in Lift Shift 2, the two workouts below will be performed, in order, on 3 days each week with at least one rest day between workouts.
For example, week one of Lift Shift 3 might look like this:

Monday - Upper Body

Wednesday - Lower Body/Core

Friday - Upper Body

In this example, the second week of Lift Shift 3 would look like this:

Monday - Lower Body/Core

Wednesday - Upper Body

Friday - Lower Body/Core

These workouts will be made up entirely of Supersets which, in this case, will mean one set of two different exercises performed back to back with the shortest possible transition between exercises. You will need to be set up to do both exercises before beginning any superset, with the proper weights ready to go for each. Example superset:

Exercise A - 10 reps

Exercise B - 10 reps

Rest 1-2 minutes

Repeat

UPPER BODY WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps of both exercises in each superset (don't do a superset in the warm up), followed by 3 working supersets of 10 reps of each of the exercises below.

Rest between sets should be 1-2 minutes.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 2-3 minutes.

Superset 1

Bench Press

Pull-Overs

E Factor = 25 lb dumbbells, 20 lb dumbbell

Superset 2

Shoulder Press

Standing Bent Rows

E Factor = 20 lb dumbbells, 20 lb dumbbells

Superset 3

Supination Curls

Overhead Extensions

E Factor = 15 lb dumbbells, 20 lb dumbbell

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Chest / Lats / Shoulder/Biceps / Triceps

LOWER BODY/CORE WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps of both exercises in each superset (don't do a superset in the warm up), followed by 3 working supersets of 10 reps of each of the exercises below.

Rest between sets should be 1-2 minutes.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 2-3 minutes.

Superset 1

Chair/Bench Squats, Squats, or Goblet Squats (Watch the Squat Overview video first)

Romanian Deadlifts

E Factor = Goblet Squat 20 lb dumbbell, Romanian Deadlift 35 lb dumbbells

Superset 2

Step-Ups

Planks (Hold for 1 minute or max effort)

Superset 3

Hip Thrusts

Bench Leg Raises

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Hamstrings / Standing Pigeon / Hip Flexor

Calf / Adductor

LIFT SHIFT 4 – CLUSTER SETS – TWO WEEKS

As before, the two workouts below will be performed, in order, on 3 days each week with at least one rest day between workouts.

For example, week one of Lift Shift 4 might look like this:

Monday - Upper Body

Wednesday - Lower Body/Core

Friday - Upper Body

In this example, the second week of Lift Shift 4 would look like this:

Monday - Lower Body/Core

Wednesday - Upper Body

Friday - Lower Body/Core

This Lift Shift will be made up entirely of Cluster Sets. Cluster Sets may have been invented (or at least named) by renowned strength coach, Charles Poliquin, but I have never been entirely sure. For each exercise, you will choose a weight that you can easily handle for 10 reps. This will need to be a lighter weight than you would use for this exercise in Lift Shift 2. For bodyweight exercises, you will obviously not be able to reduce the weight that you use. Using Shoulder Press for an example, a cluster set would look like this:

Perform a set of 10 shoulder presses.

Rest for 5-10 seconds.

Perform as many shoulder presses as possible, but no more than 10.

Rest for 5-10 seconds.

Perform as many shoulder presses as possible, but no more than 10.

Rest for 5-10 seconds.

Continue in this fashion for a total of 10 sets.

Using myself as an example, this cluster set might look like this with 30 pound dumbbells:

10 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

10 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

7 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

6 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

5 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

4 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

4 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

3 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

3 reps - Rest for 5-10 seconds

2 reps

UPPER BODY WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps (not a cluster set) with extra light weights. For bodyweight movements, perform one set and then rest for 4-5 minutes before beginning your cluster set. Then, 1 Cluster Set of each of the exercises below.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 4-5 minutes.

Bench Press or Push-Ups

E Factor = Bench Press with 20 lb dumbbells

Pull-Overs

E Factor = 15 lb dumbbell

Shoulder Press or Lateral Raises

E Factor = 15 lb dumbbells, 5 lb dumbbells

1 Arm Rows or Standing Bent Rows

E Factor = 20 lb dumbbell, 15 lb dumbbells

Biceps Curls or Supination Curls

E Factor = 15 lb dumbbells

Overhead Extensions or Bench Dips

E Factor = Overhead Extensions with a 15 lb dumbbell

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Chest / Lats / Shoulder/Biceps / Triceps

LOWER BODY/CORE WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps (not a cluster set) with extra light weights. For bodyweight movements, perform one set and then rest for 4-5 minutes before beginning your cluster set. Then, 1 Cluster Set of each of the exercises below.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 4-5 minutes.

Chair/Bench Squats, Squats, or Goblet Squats (Watch the Squat Overview video first)

E Factor = Goblet Squats with a 20 lb dumbbell

Romanian Deadlifts

E Factor = 30 lb dumbbells

Step-Ups

Hip Thrusts

Planks

Hold for max effort in each set in the cluster.

They will tend to get very short by the end.

Bench Leg Raises

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Hamstrings / Standing Pigeon / Hip Flexor

Calf / Adductor

LIFT SHIFT 5 – DROP SETS / MAX REP SETS – TWO WEEKS

As before, the two workouts below will be performed, in order, on 3 days each week with at least one rest day between workouts.

For example, week one of Lift Shift 5 might look like this:

Monday - Upper Body

Wednesday - Lower Body/Core

Friday - Upper Body

In this example, the second week of Lift Shift 5 would look like this:

Monday - Lower Body/Core

Wednesday - Upper Body

Friday - Lower Body/Core

This Lift Shift will be made up entirely of drop sets in all of your weighted lifts and entirely of higher rep sets in your bodyweight movements. Drop sets are sets in which you will perform 10 reps of an exercise, immediately perform 10 reps of the same exercise with a lighter weight, and then immediately perform 10 reps with an even lighter weight. Using myself and shoulder presses as the example again, a drop set would look like this:

10 reps at 30 lbs - No rest

10 reps at 20 lbs - No rest

10 reps at 15 lbs

For a beginning lifter and an exercise like biceps curls, a drop set might look like this:

10 reps at 10 lbs

No rest

10 reps at 5 lbs

No rest

10 reps at 3 lbs

Drop sets will require some experimentation, so don't worry about not getting your weight choices right at first. When you choose your weights correctly, your last 10 reps will create a lot of muscular burn. If you don't pick the right weights, you might end up feeling like you could have done more, or you might not be able to finish all 10 reps in your 2nd or 3rd set of 10. Neither of these situations is horrible, but you can use this information to adjust your weights accordingly.

UPPER BODY WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps (not a drop set) with extra light weights. Then, 1 Drop Set of each of theexercises below.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 3-4 minutes.

Bench Press Drop Set

E Factor = 25 lb, 15 lb, and 10 lb dumbbells

Pull-Overs Drop Set

E Factor = 20 lb, 15 lb, and 10 lb dumbbells

Shoulder Press Drop Set

E Factor = 15 lb, 10 lb, and 5 lb dumbbells

Standing Bent Rows Drop Set

E Factor = 20 lb, 15 lb, and 10 lb dumbbells

Biceps Curls Drop Set

E Factor = 15 lb, 10 lb, and 5 lb dumbbells

Overhead Extensions Drop Set

E Factor = 15 lb, 10 lb, and 5 lb dumbbells

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Chest / Lats / Shoulder/Biceps / Triceps

LOWER BODY/CORE WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps (not a drop set) with extra light weights on Romanian Deadlifts and with a longer rest after bodyweight exercises. Then, follow the instructions after each exercise. Rest between exercises should be no more than 4-5 minutes.

Chair/Bench Squats, Squats, or Goblet Squats (Watch the Squat Overview video first)

Complete as many reps as you can, not to exceed 20, in 3 sets with no more than 90 seconds rest between sets.

Romanian Deadlifts Drop Set

E Factor = 35 lb, 25 lb, and 15 lb dumbbells

Step-Ups

Complete as many reps as you can, not to exceed 20, in 3 sets with no more than 90 seconds rest between sets.

Hip Thrusts

Complete as many reps as you can, not to exceed 20, in 3 sets with no more than 90 seconds rest between sets.

Planks

Hold for as long as possible, rest no more than 1 minute,

and repeat for a total of 4 sets.

Bench Leg Raises

Complete as many reps as you can, not to exceed 20, in 3 sets

with no more than 90 seconds rest between sets.

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Hamstrings / Standing Pigeon / Hip Flexor

Calf / Adductor

LIFT SHIFT 6 – TEMPO SETS – TWO WEEKS

As before, the two workouts below will be performed, in order, on 3 days each week with at least one rest day between workouts.

For example, week one of Lift Shift 6 might look like this:

Monday - Upper Body

Wednesday - Lower Body/Core

Friday - Upper Body

In this example, the second week of Lift Shift 6 would look like this:

Monday - Lower Body/Core

Wednesday - Upper Body

Friday - Lower Body/Core

This Lift Shift will be made up entirely of tempo sets. Tempo sets are sets in which all reps are performed at a specific tempo. In this case, the tempo will be 4 seconds applied to the eccentric portion of each rep, or the portion of the rep in which the working muscle is lengthening. The eccentric phase of each exercise is described below. For an example, we can use myself and shoulder presses again. One rep would look like this:

Press the dumbbells to overhead.

No pause at the top.

Slowly lower the dumbbells to the starting position over 4 seconds.

No pause at the bottom.

Repeat.

Using tempo in this fashion will reduce the loads you will be able to handle in each exercise. You may be forced to adjust your weights between sets to complete the prescribed reps.

UPPER BODY WORKOUT

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps (not tempo) followed by 3 working sets of 10 tempo reps, with a 4 second eccentric phase, of each of the exercises below.

For bodyweight movements, perform 4 working sets of 10 tempo reps.

Rest between sets should be 1-2 minutes.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 2-3 minutes.

Bench Press

Eccentric - lowering the dumbbells from the top to the bottom

E Factor = 20 lb dumbbells

Pull-Overs

Eccentric - lowering the dumbbell from over the chest toward the floor

E Factor = 15 lb dumbbell

Shoulder Press

Eccentric - lowering the dumbbells from the top to the bottom

E Factor = 15 lb dumbbells

1 Arm Rows

Eccentric - lowering the dumbbells from the top to the bottom

E Factor = 20 lb dumbbells

Biceps Curls or Supination Curls

Eccentric - lowering the dumbbells toward the floor

E Factor = 10 lb dumbbells

Bench Dips

Eccentric - lowering your rear toward the floor

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Chest / Lats / Shoulder/Biceps / Triceps

LOWER BODY WORKOUT/CORE

Warm Up

10 reps in each position of each of the following:

Plyo Shoulders / Plyo Legs

The Lifts

Perform at least 1 warm up set of 10 reps (not tempo) followed by 3 working sets of 10 tempo reps, with a 4 second eccentric phase, of each of the exercises below.

Rest between sets should be 1-2 minutes.

Rest between exercises should be no more than 2-3 minutes.

Chair/Bench Squats, Squats, or Goblet Squats

Eccentric - lowering your rear toward the floor

Romanian Deadlifts

Eccentric - lowering the dumbbells toward the floor

E Factor = 25 lb dumbbells

Hip Thrusts

Eccentric - lowering your rear toward the floor

Planks

No eccentric. Hold for 1 minute or max effort

Bench Leg Raises

Eccentric - lowering your feet toward the floor

Stretches

Hold for 30 seconds each

Hamstrings / Standing Pigeon / Hip Flexor

Calf / Adductor

RETURN TO LIFT SHIFT 2 – TWO WEEKS

You have completed one cycle through all the Lift Shifts. Return to Lift Shift 2, except that you will only stay there for 2 weeks before moving on to Lift Shift 3. In other words, each Lift Shift will now be 2 weeks (6 workouts) in duration as you move from Lift Shift 2 through Lift Shift 6 and back to Lift Shift 2 again. If you have an extended period of downtime (more than a month), you might consider starting with Lift Shift 1 to get back in the saddle.

Stay The Course

In the pursuit of fat loss and overall health, the AltShift Lift protocol should be adequate for almost everyone for a lifetime. Sure, you could step it up when you're ready, and I have made no claims about this plan being the only one you would ever need to become an elite athlete or bona-fide superhero. But I have given you something that I truly believe will dramatically improve the quality of your life and vitality with which you live in it. I hope you will stick with AltShift Lift and let it and AltShift show you how great you can look and feel.