BARBARA OF NORTH

Strong: the first 12 weeks

Three sessions a week. Ten minutes on the days with no time. A page to write down what you lifted.

What is in here

- Three sessions, A, B and C, with five moves each, and a 10-minute version of every one.
- Every move on its own: how to do it in four lines, an easier way and a harder way.
- Three blocks of four weeks, so you always know how many sets, how many repetitions and when to go heavier.
- Twelve pages to write down what you lifted. That page is the plan working.

Print the week you are in and keep it where you train.

How this works

You have started before. A plan with six days a week and an hour a session, which lasted until the first busy Tuesday. Then one missed day became a missed week.

That was not a lack of discipline. The plan had no version for a day with no time. This one does.

The rules

- Three sessions a week: A, B, C. Never two days in a row. Monday, Wednesday, Friday works. So does any other three.
- Every session has two versions. The full one is five moves and takes about 30 minutes. The 10-minute one is the first three moves, twice through.
- A 10-minute session counts. On a day with no time, do that one and tick it. Nobody has to skip.
- Write it down. The weight and the repetitions, every set. Next time you try to match it or beat it by one.
- Miss a session? Do it the next day and carry on. Miss a week? Repeat the last week you finished.

How to pick your weight

Pick a weight where the last two repetitions of a set feel hard and still look clean. If you could do five more, it is too light. If the last ones turn ugly, it is too heavy.

When to go heavier

When you reach the top number of repetitions on every set, in two sessions in a row, with clean form. Then take the next weight up and start again at the bottom number.

What you need

- Two pairs of dumbbells: one light, one medium
- One kettlebell (or one heavier dumbbell)
- A sturdy chair
- The bottom stair or a low step
- A mat or a folded blanket

What this plan will not do

It will not promise how your body will look or what the scale will say. It gives you three sessions a week and a record of what you lifted. In twelve weeks that record shows numbers going up, and that part is yours to see.

This plan is general information about exercise. It is not medical advice and it is not made for one person's health. If you are pregnant, have a heart condition, high blood pressure, a joint problem, an injury or osteoporosis, or have been told not to exercise, talk to your doctor before you start. Stop if you feel sharp pain, dizziness or pain in your chest.

Three blocks of four weeks

The moves stay the same for twelve weeks. What changes is how much.

Weeks	What it is	Sets	Repetitions	Holds	Carry
1 to 4	Learn the moves	2	10 to 12	20 seconds	10 steps each hand
5 to 8	The same moves, heavier	3	8 to 10	30 seconds	10 steps each hand
9 to 12	One step harder	3	6 to 8	40 seconds	15 steps each hand

Weeks 1 to 4: A weight that feels almost too easy. You are teaching your body the shape of each move.

Weeks 5 to 8: Go up one step in weight where the last two repetitions of block 1 had stopped feeling hard.

Weeks 9 to 12: Heavier again on the big moves, or the harder version of the move where the page offers one.

Rest between sets

About a minute. Long enough that the next set looks like the first one.

Before every session: 90 seconds

- Ten arm circles forward and ten back
- Eight slow cat and cow movements on hands and knees
- Ten hip hinges with your hands on your hips
- Ten slow squats with no weight

After every session: one minute

- Chest: hands clasped behind your back, 20 seconds
- Hips: one knee on the floor, the other foot forward, 20 seconds each side
- Back of the legs: one heel forward, hips back, 20 seconds each side

Session A

Five moves, in this order. Finish all the sets of one move before you start the next.

Move	Weeks 1 to 4	Weeks 5 to 8	Weeks 9 to 12
Goblet squat	2 x 10 to 12	3 x 8 to 10	3 x 6 to 8
Incline push-up	2 x 10 to 12	3 x 8 to 10	3 x 6 to 8
One-arm row	2 x 10 to 12 each side	3 x 8 to 10 each side	3 x 6 to 8 each side
Glute bridge	2 x 10 to 12	3 x 8 to 10	3 x 6 to 8
Dead bug	2 x 10 to 12	3 x 8 to 10	3 x 6 to 8

The 10-minute version

Goblet squat, incline push-up and one-arm row. One set of each, one after the other, then the same again. Same repetitions as the table. It counts.

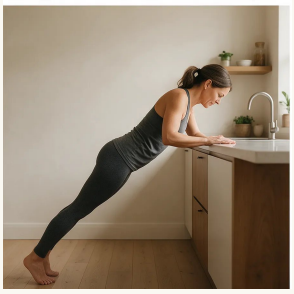


Goblet squat

1. Hold one dumbbell upright against your chest. Feet a little wider than your hips, toes turned slightly out.
2. Sit down and back, as if to a chair. Your knees follow the line of your toes.
3. Go as low as you can with your heels on the floor and your chest up.
4. Push the floor away to stand.

Easier: Sit down to a chair and stand up again, with no weight.

Harder: Take three slow seconds on the way down.



Incline push-up

1. Hands on the kitchen counter or a sturdy table, a little wider than your shoulders.
2. Walk your feet back until your body is one straight line from head to heels.
3. Lower your chest to the edge. Your elbows point back at about 45 degrees, not straight out.
4. Push back until your arms are straight.

Easier: Hands on the wall.

Harder: On the floor, from your knees.



One-arm row

1. One hand and the same-side knee on the chair. Your back is flat, like a table.
2. Let the dumbbell hang under your shoulder.
3. Pull it to your hip, with your elbow close to your side.
4. Lower it slowly. Do all the repetitions, then change sides.

Harder: Pause for one second at the top.



Glute bridge

1. Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat and hip-width apart, heels close to your hips.
2. Press through your heels and lift your hips until shoulders, hips and knees make one line.
3. Squeeze for one second at the top.
4. Lower slowly.

Harder: One leg at a time, the other knee held to your chest.

Dead bug

1. Lie on your back, arms straight up, knees bent above your hips.
2. Press your lower back gently toward the floor and keep it there.
3. Lower one arm and the opposite leg slowly toward the floor.
4. Bring them back and change sides. One repetition is both sides.

Easier: Move the legs only.

Harder: Hold a light dumbbell in the hand that moves.

Week 1

Learn the moves: 2 sets of 10 to 12. Write the weight and the repetitions of every set.

Session A	Aim	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3
Goblet squat	10 to 12			
Incline push-up	10 to 12			
One-arm row	10 to 12 each side			
Glute bridge	10 to 12			
Dead bug	10 to 12			

Date: _____ Full session [ ] 10-minute version [ ]

Session B	Aim	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3
Deadlift	10 to 12			
Overhead press	10 to 12			
Split squat	10 to 12 each side			
Bent-over row	10 to 12			
Side plank	20 seconds			

Date: _____ Full session [ ] 10-minute version [ ]

Session C	Aim	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3
Step-up	10 to 12 each side			
Floor press	10 to 12			
One-arm row	10 to 12 each side			
Suitcase carry	10 steps each hand			
Forearm plank	20 seconds			

Date: _____ Full session [ ] 10-minute version [ ]

THE REST OF THE PLAN

Sessions B and C, and weeks 2 to 12

- Session B: deadlift, overhead press, split squat, bent-over row, side plank.
- Session C: step-up, floor press, one-arm row, suitcase carry, forearm plank.
- Every move with its four lines, an easier way and a harder way.
- Twelve week pages, with the sets and repetitions of each block already filled in.
- The page after week 12.

The whole plan is at barbaraofnorth.com/strong-12-weeks.

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