

Powerlifting – The Basics

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Getting Started

So you want to have a go at Powerlifting. Well, it's time to stop those dumbbell kickbacks, forget those flyes & start moving some serious weight...

What is Powerlifting

Powerlifting, at it's most basic is doing 3 lifts as heavy as you can. You get 3 attempts at each lift. Firstly, you get three attempts at the Squat, this is followed by three attempts at the Bench press, finally, you get three attempts at the Deadlift. Different Federations have different rules about what can be worn & exactly how the lifts are completed, but basically it's the person who lifts the most (in their weight class) on the day wins.

The Squat



To squat you usually lift the bar on your back & take one step backwards, out of the rack. You then often have to wait for the referee to say "Squat", then you lower yourself until the line of your knee & your hip joint breaks parallel. You then rise & usually have to wait for the referee to say "Rack".

The Bench Press



After you take the weight from the rack you often have to wait for the referee to say you can start. Once you get the signal you should lower the bar to your chest & pause, sometimes you must wait for a judge to order you to begin to press, but in other federations you just pause for a second or so, then lift. The bar should not rise unevenly during the ascent & is usually held with arms locked until the order is given to rack.

The Deadlift



The bar starts on the floor, walk up to it, bend down & stand upright holding the bar in both hands. Hold it until a referee tells you to lower it.

That's it...Powerlifting at it's most basic. If you'd done that, you'd have successfully completed your first Powerlifting meet. Okay, there's technique to learn, weak points in your lifting to iron out etc. But at it's heart, THAT is what Powerlifting's about, it's about going up to the plate & lifting large amounts of iron for your own satisfaction. It's about **lifting!**

A basic workout plan

First of all let me say that in Powerlifting you don't get a *one size fits all* style of training. Of course you do the big three lifts, but the rest of your training should be governed by your *weak-points*.

Let's take a basic workout for beginners:

Monday – Squat 5 sets of 5 reps

Wednesday – Bench Press 5 sets of 5 reps

Friday – Deadlift 5 sets of 5 reps

There, in itself, you have the core of your training. These are the moves you want to improve, they should be first in your training. You should go all-out on lifting as much as you can & increasing the amount you lift (with good form) as much as possible.

Now we come to the art of Powerlifting. To improve your lifting you have to overcome weak points:

Let's suppose that your back is rounding during **Squats** & your finding it hard to straighten up in the **Deadlift**, then, my friend, you've got to strengthen your back: Bent over rowing, Hyper-extensions, Stiff leg deadlifts etc can all help.

Maybe your having trouble retracting your shoulder blades at the end of the **Deadlift**, well looks like you need some shrugging, pullovers, rowing etc to sort things out.

You get the idea? You've got to carefully study your form & see which bit of the lift is letting you down, then correct the fault. It's what makes Powerlifting as much an art form as a science. Try to keep these **assistance exercises** to the days you do the lift itself (i.e if you are working on a problem with your bench press, do it after you've bench pressed). Follow the same protocol for all your exercises, do the lift itself first, then do any assistance you need to do after the main lift.

Getting a trainer

If you're serious about lifting I'd go & get myself a trainer. Someone who knows what they're doing is a goldmine of information, tips & experience. A good trainer can spot flaws in your technique, make slight adjustments in form & be able to cycle your training so you peak at the exact time to be at your best for a contest. The British Amateur Weightlifting Association (www.bawla.com) has some good trainers, as do several other associations.

Am I strong enough to enter a Powerlifting meet?

You have to be strong enough to compete against one person at a Powerlifting meet...**yourself!** Although it's always nice to win, the aim of the contest is to better your total, you must compete against yourself. If you have put in your all, & really done your best, then it doesn't matter if you came first or last, if you've done better than before, then you are a champion!!!

Interested in giving it a go?

For full details on Powerlifting training, events etc contact:

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