

Powerlifting



The aim of powerlifting is very simple, lift the most weight possible, however lift techniques required to do so are not so simple and demand a focused approach. Powerlifting consists of three different lifts; bench press, deadlift and squat. Each lift has its own skill requirement and must be adapted to the body strength of participants. Correct powerlifting technique not only ensures a safe environment for athletes but also is necessary for continued improvements.

Powerlifting athletes rely on technique and strength to lift the most weight as possible. Studies have shown that a minimum of two to three training sessions per week is necessary to improve strength. SO athletes, in general, train only one time per week making strength development minimal. Most lifting progress will therefore be dependent on technique and motivation unless more time in the weight room is made available.

Learning basic technical skills is essential for SO powerlifters. Some programs have excellent coaches with great technical background while others have athletes lifting with low technical skills. All SO athletes we have met love powerlifting, a sport where it is relatively easy to go into a gym and start lifting small weights. However, unless proper supervision is done and correct techniques learned, progress will be slow and injuries more frequent.

Strength is the main physical component of powerlifting. Important aspects of healthy living such as aerobic activities are not usually part of programs, and therefore extra aerobic activity, core strength development, agility and speed training found in other activities such as Club Fit must be added.

Basic skills are listed in the powerlifting basic skill section (upcoming pages). These sheets can be used as a guide, and when all skills are marked “yes”; athletes are ready for heavier weights.

Guidelines for using the skill sheet (next page) for powerlifting

1. Starting with bench press, learn basic technique (with low weights) until athletes can bench press 70% of their body weights.
2. When this is achieved (it can take 20 hours of practice or more), begin then with dead lift technique. Squats will be the last lift to learn.
3. Follow each step of the skill sheet (one at a time) until all basic skills and body weight percentages are acquired. Progress will be directly related to the amount of focused practice time.

Powerlifting Basic Skills

Basic Skill: Bench (using 70% BW) YES NO Comments

Sub Skills		
Grip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leg drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bar path and horizontal level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breathing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Basic Skill: Dead lift (110% BW) YES NO Comments

Sub Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bar position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weight distribution on feet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bar path and horizontal level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breathing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Basic Skill: Squat (using 75% BW) YES NO Comments

Sub Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bar on back	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bar path and horizontal level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weight distribution on feet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breathing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**When athletes achieve all “YES”, they have acquired basic skills.
Expectations are critical to skill acquisition**

20-hour acquisition

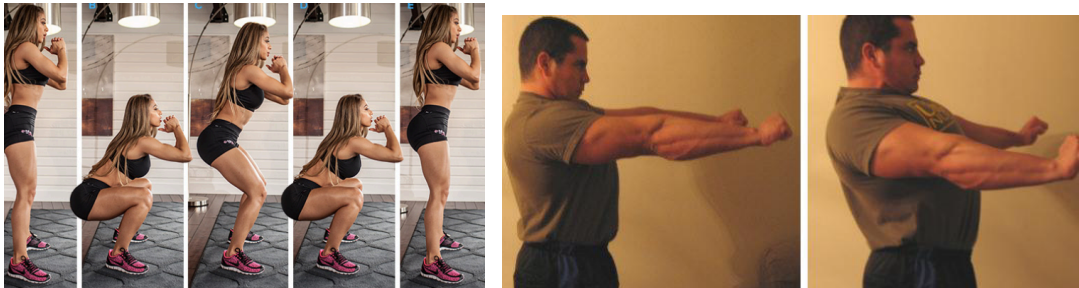
Skill Breakdown: Examples of priority elements to focus on during practice

Spend time on each one until acquired

1. Bench Press: Grip – Arch – Leg drive – Breathing – Bar path (shortest) – Range of motion – Individual moment arms
2. Deadlift: Grip – Bar position – Weight distribution on foot – Breathing - Bar path (shortest) – Range of motion – Individual moment arms
3. Squat: Grip – Bar position on back – Weight distribution on foot – Breathing - Bar path – Range of motion – Individual moment arms

Use correct demonstrations and video, slow down demonstration when introducing a new skill, use hands to guide movements when necessary.

Many of these skills will require a 20-hour program for each one of them.



Home practice can be done with bodyweight or with lightweights

Squat, bench press (push up) and sit up technique should be practiced as often as possible at home.

Powerlifting Example: Focused Basic Skills Session for one week

Three sessions per week

Warm up (3 sets of the following exercises)

1. 10 Squats no weight (just like home)
2. 10 Romanian deadlifts (bar only)
3. 10 Push ups

Changing Expectations in Special Olympics

4. 10 Pull ups
5. 20 seconds Hip stretching

Day 1

Squats: 3 sets of 8 repetitions (low bar position)
Bench press: 3 sets of 8 repetitions (grip position hand and bar)
Pull-ups: 3 sets of 10 repetitions
Plank: 3 times to your limit

Day 2

Squats: 3 sets of 8 repetitions (individual moment arms)
Overhead press: 3 sets of 10 repetitions
Romanian Deadlift: 3 sets of 10 repetitions (bar path)

Day 3

Squats: 3 sets of 8 repetitions (weight distribution – breathing)
Bench press: 3 sets of 8 repetitions (arch – breathing)
Deadlift: 2 sets of 5 repetitions (use squat weight as a guide)
(individual moment arms)
One-arm row: 3 sets of 12 repetitions

Changing rest and repetitions every three to four weeks is necessary. When starting a program, focus on correct technique using different weights. When technique is acquired then focus on weight. In many instances, it's better to lift a heavy weight less often than a lighter weight more often.

For technical learning, it is possible to focus only on one lift per practice instead. For example you may want to focus only on bench press on Day 2.

Conclusion:

Proper technique is key to successful powerlifting. As with all SO programs, training once a week will not develop strength and will not promote healthy living. Without strength development progress will be limited.

Home training (at a fitness club if possible) and Club Fit can make a huge difference and should be included in SO powerlifting programs when adequate technique and lifting etiquette are acquired. When athletes reach the recommended basic performance guidelines with proper technique, they are ready to move on to intermediate lifting skills.

Basic performance objectives with proper technique

Squat with bar set at 75% bodyweight (BW)
Bench press with bar set at 70% of BW
Deadlift with bar at 110% of BW

Lesson Plan
Basic Skill Acquisition Program
(weekly or monthly)

Sport _____ Athlete Name: _____

Program Expectations

1- Weekly Practice (attend all practices)

Day (S) _____ Time _____

Location _____

“What the group is working on”:

2- Club Fit 100% attendance (Including Functional Testing exercises)

Day _____ Time _____

Location _____

“What you need to concentrate on”:

3- Basic Skill Development Homework (4 times per week - 1 hour per day)

Skill _____

“Individual Home Practice Objectives”