

Specific Exercise Warm-Up Guidelines

Specific exercise warm ups are the warm ups you do before an exercise to get ready for that exercise. For example, you are getting ready to do your first working set of squats at 185 pounds. You don't want to jump right in and do 185 pounds. Your body isn't ready for that yet! That's an injury waiting to happen.

So, you need to do a few sets of squats with lighter weights until your body is ready to lift 185 pounds for your first working set. How many sets do you do? How much weight do you use for each set?

You want to slowly raise the weight each set while decreasing the number of reps each warm up set. Continuing with our example, you would start with only the barbell for the first warm up set of squats and then continue from there as shown:

1. Barbell only (45 pounds) for 8 reps
2. 85 pounds for 6 reps
3. 125 pounds for 4 reps
4. 145 pounds for 2 reps
5. 165 pounds for 1 rep

The above is only an example. It's a good example for someone who needs to lift 185 pounds on their working sets. I'm going to give you some guidelines to follow. There is no perfect answer for the amount of weight and reps to perform during warm ups.

Follow the **guidelines** below, and you'll be lifting heavier weights, building more muscle, and gaining more strength.

1. Never do more reps than the target number of reps for a working set. For example, if the target number of reps for an exercise is 8 to 10 reps, do not do more than 10 reps for any warm up set.
2. Start with only the barbell at the beginning of a workout or very light weights and work up from there. If you don't know where to start on other exercises, start with about 50 percent of the weight you'll be using on your working sets.
3. Raise the weight each warm up set by 10 to 20 percent of your working weight while decreasing the number of reps. For example, if you will be doing 250 pounds for squats, increase the weight each warm up by 25 to 50 pounds.
4. Your last warm up set should use a weight around 10% lighter than your working weight. For example, if you'll be doing 200 pounds on your working sets, you should end your warm ups at 180 pounds.
5. Only do as many warm up sets as needed to properly warm up. This is a give and take situation.

The more warm ups you do, the more you decrease the risk for injury. But, as you do more warm up sets, you add fatigue and decrease the amount of weight you can lift during your working sets.

6. Decrease the number of warm up sets as the workout progresses. For example, you'll need fewer warm up sets towards the end of your workout compared to the beginning of the workout. In some cases, you might not need any specific warm ups for the exercises scheduled later in your workout. Your body warms up more and more as a workout progresses.
7. Add warm up sets as needed for muscle groups or joints that need more warming up. For example, I always do more warm up sets on squats because I've had knee problems in the past. I like to get my knee joints warmed up and ready to go before moving onto my working sets.

Let me walk you through a few examples so you get a better idea of how to perform proper warm ups for exercises...

Example 1

Working Weight = 185 pounds

Target Reps = 6 reps

Warm-Up Increment = 20 to 40 pounds

Beginning of Workout

Warm Up Set 1: 45 pounds for 6 reps

Warm Up Set 2: 85 pounds for 4 reps

Warm Up Set 3: 125 pounds for 3 reps

Warm Up Set 4: 145 pounds for 2 reps

Warm Up Set 5: 165 pounds for 1 rep

Notice how I set the weight increment for warm up sets at approximately 10 to 20 percent of the working weight of 185 pounds.

An easy way to figure out 10 percent of your working weight is to simply look at the first digit (for 2 digit numbers) or the first two digits (for 3 digit numbers). For example, ten percent of 80 is 8. Ten percent of 300 is 30. Ten percent of 250 is 25. Ten percent of 75 is about 8. That's a quick and easy way to figure out weight increments.

Example 2

Working Weight = 60 pounds

Target Reps = 10 reps

Warm-Up Increment = 6 to 12 pounds

Beginning of Workout

Warm Up Set 1: 30 pounds for 10 reps

Warm Up Set 2: 40 pounds for 7 reps
Warm Up Set 3: 45 pounds for 4 reps
Warm Up Set 4: 50 pounds for 2 reps
Warm Up Set 5: 55 pounds for 1 rep

Example 3

Working Weight = 225 pounds
Target Reps = 12 reps
Warm-Up Increment = 20 to 50 pounds
End of Workout

Warm Up Set 1: 175 pounds for 3 reps
Warm Up Set 2: 205 pounds for 1 rep

Notice that you don't need as many warm up sets because this exercise is done at the end of a workout. You simply do a few sets with low reps to get acclimated to that movement.

As I've said before, there is no exact warm up protocol to follow for the number of sets, reps, and the amount of weight to use. Simply use the guidelines given and your common sense to warm up properly. If you don't feel warmed up before doing an exercise, do another warm up set.

Do not wear yourself down during any warm up sets. You will affect the muscle building potential of each workout if you fatigue yourself during warm ups.

If you don't need any warm ups towards the end of your workout, do not do them. For example, you've been working out for around 30 minutes. You've performed rows, pull ups, and a few other exercises that work your biceps. Your next exercise is dumbbell curls for 12 reps. Do you really need to do a warm up?

Most likely, you do not. You've already warmed up your biceps through the other compound exercises. If you feel like you do need a warm up, simply do one warm up set for a few reps with a weight 10 to 20 percent lighter than your working weight.

You can use the table below to help you estimate the amount to increase the weight between warm up sets. Remember, this amount should be between 10 to 20 percent until you get within 10 percent of your working weight.

You'll find the working weight in the first columns below (highlighted in yellow) followed by values for 10% and 20% of the working weight. The 10 and 20 percent numbers are the approximate weight increments to use during your warm up sets.

Weight Increases Percentage Table

| Weight | 10% | 20% | Weight | 10% | 20% | Weight | 10% | 20% | Weight | 10% | 20% |
|--------|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|
| 10 | 1 | 2 | 110 | 11 | 22 | 210 | 21 | 42 | 310 | 31 | 62 |
| 20 | 2 | 4 | 120 | 12 | 24 | 220 | 22 | 44 | 320 | 32 | 64 |
| 30 | 3 | 6 | 130 | 13 | 26 | 230 | 23 | 46 | 330 | 33 | 66 |
| 40 | 4 | 8 | 140 | 14 | 28 | 240 | 24 | 48 | 340 | 34 | 68 |
| 50 | 5 | 10 | 150 | 15 | 30 | 250 | 25 | 50 | 350 | 35 | 70 |
| 60 | 6 | 12 | 160 | 16 | 32 | 260 | 26 | 52 | 360 | 36 | 72 |
| 70 | 7 | 14 | 170 | 17 | 34 | 270 | 27 | 54 | 370 | 37 | 74 |
| 80 | 8 | 16 | 180 | 18 | 36 | 280 | 28 | 56 | 380 | 38 | 76 |
| 90 | 9 | 18 | 190 | 19 | 38 | 290 | 29 | 58 | 390 | 39 | 78 |
| 100 | 10 | 20 | 200 | 20 | 40 | 300 | 30 | 60 | 400 | 40 | 80 |

Use the table above to help you figure out how much to increase the weight between each warm up set.