

Progressive Overload Cheat Sheet

A quick-reference guide to applying progressive overload safely and effectively

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1 What Progressive Overload Means

Progressive overload = gradually increasing training stress over time so your body can adapt without unnecessary setbacks.



It is not about doing more every workout.

2 Progress in This Order

- 1 Add reps first
- 2 Add weight second
- 3 Add sets only if planned



3 Which Set Do I Progress First?

Start with the last set.



3 sets of 8–10 reps

Session 1: 8, 8, 8

Session 2: 8, 8, 9

Session 3: 8, 9, 10

Session 4: 9, 10, 10

Session 5: 10, 10, 10 → increase weight

4 When Do I Increase Weight?



- All sets reach the top of the rep range
- Form stays consistent
- You could still do 2–3 more reps

5 How Much Do I Increase?



- Upper body: 2–5%
- Lower body: 5–10% max

6 What If It Feels Easy?



- Add 1–2 reps to the last set
- Do not jump ahead
- Do not increase reps and weight at the same time

7 What If It Feels Hard?



- Stay at the same weight if you complete the reps
- Reduce slightly if form breaks down
- Do not force progression

8 Progress Is Not Only Weight



- Add reps
- Add load
- Add sets if planned
- Improve control and technique
- Slow tempo or add pauses
- Increase range of motion
- Change leverage or variation
- Slightly reduce rest, when appropriate for the goal

9 If the Next Weight Jump Is Too Large



- Use the heavier weight with fewer reps
- Reduce reps first
- Build reps back up gradually

10 Rules to Follow



- One change at a time
- Small increases only
- Repeat workouts consistently
- Track what you did
- Match progression to your ability, recovery, and technique

11 Avoid



- Big jumps in weight
- Extra sets or exercises
- Random workout changes
- Testing your max every session
- Increasing multiple variables at once



Key Reminder

Progressive overload works best when changes are small, controlled, and repeatable.