Training split decision card

Choose a training split from the days a client completes in a bad week. Two reliable days call for full-body A and B, three for full body with heavy, light, and medium days, four for upper/lower, and five or six only after a full block at four. Aim for every movement pattern twice a week.

Training split by reliable days a week, with how often each pattern trains and why.

Reliable days	Split	Each pattern per week	Why it fits
2 days	Full body A and B	2 times	The shortest week that trains every pattern twice. Keep each session to 45-60 minutes so both days survive a busy week
3 days	Full body: a heavy, a light, and a medium day	3 times	Miss a day and every pattern still trains twice. The usual answer for general-fitness clients
4 days	Upper/lower, each half twice	2 times	More sets for each muscle in a session of the same length. Miss a day and half the body trains once, so use it only when four days hold
5-6 days	Five: upper, lower, push, pull, legs. Six: push/pull/legs twice through	2 times	The most weekly sets and no slack: any missed day drops a pattern to once. Add the fifth day only after a full block of completed four-day weeks

What to change for five common client constraints.

Constraint	What to change	Watch for
Very busy	Two full-body sessions of 30-40 minutes with four exercises each: a squat, a hinge, a push, and a pull. A carry finishes the session only if time allows. Offer a third session of 20-30 minutes on good weeks	The extra session turning into a requirement
Returning from a layoff	Full body on two or three days at RPE 5-6 for the first two weeks, then RPE 7 as soreness settles. Add a fourth day only after four weeks of full attendance. After a year or more off, start the 12-week beginner strength program	Soreness that lasts into the next session
Wants to add muscle	Train each muscle at least twice a week and start near 10 hard sets (RPE 7 or higher) per large muscle group per week, fewer for the arms, shoulders, and calves. Add a set at a time while recovery holds. Four-day upper/lower is the usual frame when four days hold, and three full-body days when they do not	Adding days before adding sets
Trains around an injury flag	Keep the split. Swap the exercises the flag rules out, note each change for coach review, and apply the pain bands before any progression	Pain that changes how the client moves
Team sport in season	Two full-body sessions of 30-40 minutes. Keep the loads, cut each lift to 2-3 sets, and put the heavier session at least two days before the next game	A fixture list that moves the days each week

Educational template for qualified coaches. It does not diagnose or treat pain.

Pain and readiness bands: change the session before you change the split

Signal	Change for the session
Pain 0-2/10 and familiar	Continue and monitor
Pain 3-5/10	Reduce load or range first, then adjust the setup, then change the exercise
Pain 6-7/10	Stop the movement that provokes it and choose a conservative alternative
Pain above 7/10, or sharp, worsening, radiating, or unfamiliar pain	Stop loading and refer to a qualified professional
Readiness 70% or more	Train as planned
Readiness 60-69%	Trim: drop a set or cut load 5-10%
Readiness under 60%	Cut: drop a set, cap effort at RPE 7, and lengthen rest

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