

Candito Linear Programming

By Jonnie Candito

The goal with this program is to provide a very simple layout with linear progression. That means the program will not change week to week, simply steadily increasing weight without altering other training variables. This lack of variation can be used to your advantage as simply a mental break from percentage based programming, or as a novice program to take advantage of beginner gains. However, there is some variation within the week for not just specific physical reasons, but also due to the fact that the psychology of a lifter plays a huge role in how effectively strength can be developed.

Another purpose for this program is to give you a more flexible regimen. My 6 week periodization program does have a more specific schedule, and I understand that some people might not have an opportunity to complete a full cycle uninterrupted.

Also I want to say that with any program I make for you, I have actually used it prior to coming up with it. Because anyone can just come up with a random program, but I've actually found this style of training to not only be efficient in theory, but also extremely effective personally. This is where those psychological factors come into play. An example I'll give is that with all of my programs I keep lower body training to a very minimalistic outline. Even in terms of frequency some say 3 leg sessions a week is ideal for everyone. But the truth is it just isn't that simple. Your programming has to put you in a position where you can not only stimulate growth via adequate volume, but more importantly be able to focus 100% of your energy into the heavy lower body sessions. **Motivation is a training variable.** Like all other variables, they are interconnected. Raise the volume, loading, and frequency too high? Well then not only is recovery/risk of injury now an issue, but long term motivation is also decreased. My mentality has always been that squats and deadlifts are never going to be easy. I've noticed that squatting 315 lbs x 10 is still difficult, even though I can squat 405+ lbs x 10. These big lifts require you to be mentally ready. I noticed when I did just train legs more often without a sense of purpose because it is always difficult, I was fooling myself into thinking I was training adequately. Yet I wasn't really progressing quickly. When I started training 3 sets of 6 reps on squats, 2 sets of 6 reps on deadlifts, long rests in between sets, focused on setting a personal record, that was when I started progressing very rapidly. I went from squatting 325 lbs, to 395 lbs, to 465 lbs in a period of about 1.5-2 years. This was done without bulking as well, just gaining 10-15 lbs of bodyweight while decreasing bodyfat percentage.

That doesn't mean those exact numbers of sets and reps are magical, **rather it shows how effective a minimalist setup can be.** I have since refined my training methods into this linear program and the 6 week periodization program, I personally never use a program outside of those two for my own training. **Overall, this program is just an effective way to implement very simple programming for strength/muscular development.**

3 Different Templates

The entire goal of this is to focus on simple strength training. That is why there are 3 templates, but all of them include the same exact setup on the heavy strength days. However, each program is set up to modify the variation days to serve different purposes. The three templates are the **strength/control program, strength/power program, and strength/hypertrophy program.**

Strength/Control

Of all 3 templates, this setup is the main one I'd recommend for general strength. It is also ideal for **beginners**. When I say beginners, I mean new to serious strength training. If you have absolutely no experience with lifting in general, then you may want to give yourself 6 months or so to lift with lighter weights. You will need to know how to perform the lifts safely with a full range of motion prior to this. As a beginner you likely won't be very efficient or consistent with your form, but I don't want anyone starting this program without being able to at least perform the lifts with proper form using an empty barbell.

I anticipate most people seeing this program will want to use this template. The beauty in this format is that you will not only be lifting with a high intensity to take advantage of the quick progression new lifters have, but also the pause variations will force you to strengthen your form. Notice how I said strengthen your form rather than learn proper form. That is because something which seems to be downplayed is the fact that maintaining proper form requires more than skill and even mobility, it also strength in specific areas. You may be able to squat down with your knees opening up, but if your hip flexors/external rotators (I group them together because the hip flexors also aid in external rotation as well) are weak, then once the weight gets heavy enough your knees will cave in.

The goal with the control day is to develop the skill of the lifts, increase time under tension which will help build muscle, and increase effective mobility by strengthening form. Another benefit, which is possibly the most significant, is the control day allows for lighter weights to be used without dropping the overall intensity. So you can train your squat without worrying about battling the same numbers every workout which may cause mental barriers. **This isn't just for beginners.** Paused lifts are actually used by not just by advanced, but even elite lifters very often. So while including these variations can be extremely useful to develop form for novice lifters, it will always be effective no matter the experience of the lifter. I know I'll constantly use this exact setup for different periods of my training in the future.

This program follows an upper/lower split, which is generally going to be more effective than a 5-day bodypart split for natural athletes in terms of building strength/muscle. I suggest upper/lower rather than fullbody routines simply because that setup can make it difficult to adequately train the entire body without losing focus due to fatigue near the end of the workouts.

Strength/Control Program

Monday - Heavy Lower Day

Squat - 3 sets x 6 reps
Deadlift - 2 sets x 6 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Tuesday - Heavy Upper Day

Bench Press - 3 sets x 6 reps
Primary Upper Back Exercise - 3 sets x 6 reps
Shoulder Exercise - 1 set x 6
Upper Back Exercise #2 - 1 set x 6
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Thursday - Control Lower Day

Pause Squat - 6 sets x 4 reps
Pause Deadlifts (pause right after weight comes off floor) - 3 sets x 4 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Friday - Control Upper Day

Spoto Press - 6 sets x 4 reps
Pause Primary Upper Back Exercise (pause at full contraction) - 6 sets x 4 reps
Shoulder Exercise - 1 set x 10
Upper Back Exercise #2 (not paused) - 1 set x 10
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Note - The sets/reps listed are for the working sets. That means it does not include the warm up sets to be done prior to the prescribed sets/reps. Also, upper back exercise #2 is a slot for a vertical pull, while the first upper back exercise should be a horizontal pull (rowing movement).

Progression Of Loading

To start for the heavy days, **pick a weight you can perform for 3 straight 6 rep sets without any trouble.** Now that isn't to say you should start with an extremely light weight, just make sure there is no chance of failure. Around 75-80% of your 1 rep max is generally going to be where you want to begin. So someone who benches 225 for a 1 rep max, would work with anywhere from 170-180.

For the control day, the rules are the same. For the 6 sets of 4 reps, make sure you can comfortably complete the weight you start out with as well. The weight is going to be lighter than your heavy day since you are performing so many sets and the pause variations make it more difficult. So typically for the pause squats, pause deadlifts, spoto presses, and pause upper back movements, you'll be using around 70% of your normal 1 rep max in those lifts.

Now as far as progression, **each week add 0-10 pounds.** Now I know your first thought is probably why include 0? Well the truth is often times one of the main lifts, usually the bench press, will develop slower than the lower body lifts due to less weight/force being involved. This may cause you to want to take two weeks to increase by the smallest increment your gym has available (5 lbs for most people in standard gyms). And also, sometimes you may feel great one week, and want to throw on 10 more pounds than last week. This is very possible if you are a beginner, are on a bulk, or are just usually not training for strength with 100% focus throughout the year. But generally speaking, adding the smallest increment (5 lbs for most) each week will be the goal for each lift. **Overall the end goal is that the heavy days will be very intense sessions where you have to put 100% of your focus into each working set.** The first couple weeks will be easier to build into it, but

You may be thinking, **does this progression apply to the control days?** The answer is yes, you want to progress in the pause variations as well. But like the main lifts, I leave it open to 0-10 pounds because you need to listen to your body. The heavy days should be intense after a couple weeks so odds are you'll be fairly sore going into these control days. So if that is the case, then you can adjust by not raising the weight for the control session to match the weekly raise in the normal lifts. Then from there you could start raising both the standard heavy lifts and control lifts at the same rate again with the discrepancy increased between the heavy/control days. **The control days should be challenging overall but you should never be at serious risk of actually missing a rep.** The heavy days should be where the limits are being pushed at the start of the week.

Accessory Exercises

I intentionally want to leave the exercises besides bench, squat, and deadlift to be open for you to choose. **For the shoulder, upper back, and bicep exercises I suggest you pick a movement and stick with it for at least 4 weeks.** So for example if you choose to use dumbbell rows for upper back, stick with it for at least 4 straight weeks rather than switching every week or so. **By sticking with a movement it allows you to master it while focusing on progression.** But then I also don't want you to be too limited, which is why after 4 solid weeks of dumbbell rowing, then you could use another movement, like weighted pull ups for example for the upper back exercise.

As far as progression goes for the accessory lifts, it can depend on the lift. **For the primary upper back movement (horizontal pull), the goal is to increase by 0-10 lbs each week just like the bench press.** Generally speaking from what I've seen, most trainees typically are able to progress quicker by a significant margin in both the bench and a form of row in comparison to a shoulder press and vertical pull. That is one of the reasons why the volume is lower on those movements as they are included more to balance out strength development rather than being the foundation of upper body strength in the program. With this in mind, **progression for the shoulder/vertical pull exercises should be at 0-10 lbs per each 3 week period.** So to recap, for the main lifts you'll try to increase every week if possible, but on these lifts, every 3 weeks bump up the weight.

Suggested Exercises For Accessory Lifts

Upper Back Exercise #1 Options (horizontal pulls)

1. Dumbbell row
2. Barbell row
3. Any machine upper back movement

Shoulder Exercises

1. Seated dumbbell press
2. Standing dumbbell press
3. Military press
4. Seated barbell press
5. Any machine shoulder movement

Upper Back Exercise #2 Options (vertical pulls)

1. Weighted pull-up
2. Weighted chin-up
3. Pulldown

Optional Exercises

The main lifts and accessory movements are the focus of this program. The goal is to master the basics. However, that doesn't mean you have to exclude any other exercises altogether. As I said in the beginning of this write-up, there needs to be a balance between simplicity and plasticity when it comes to programming. **The optional exercises allow for you to not worry about numbers too much, just lift.** It also allows for you to adjust based on how you are feeling for that particular day, **you can change which optional movements you choose from one workout to the next.** Have some shoulder imbalances causing discomfort? Well then throw in some light external exercises along with a rear delt movement. Simply having this flexibility within the program will help mentally as well. If you want to just pump yourself up with some lateral raises for your delts, or maybe want some tricep isolation then you can work it in. **These movements can be either isolation or compound lifts.** Also note that a reason I don't include direct tricep work is because the pressing movements tax the triceps to a great extent, usually extra tricep work can impede recovery. On pulling movements this usually won't be the case because the biceps are rarely actually the limiting factor of a back movement as the triceps can be in a pressing exercise. So that is why direct bicep work is included in the accessory lifts, while triceps are left to the optional exercises.

Examples of Optional Exercises (not limited to this list)

Upper Body

1. Rear delt fly
2. Tricep pushdown
3. Close grip bench
4. Extremely strict dumbbell curl
5. Incline cable fly
6. Incline dumbbell press
7. Lateral raises
8. Face pulls
9. "Loose form" db bicep curls
10. Barbell bicep curls

Lower Body

1. Leg Press
2. Hamstring curls
3. Front squats (performed with relatively light weight)
4. Stiff Legged Deadlift
5. Single-legged leg press
6. Overhead squats
7. Snatch Grip Deadlift

Note - These are in no particular order. Just a list of some exercises that could fit well into the program.

Resetting After Hitting Failure

Since this is a linear program, and you are pushing yourself on the heavy days, you will eventually hit a point where you miss a weight. **Once this happens, drop the weight by 15 pounds for the next week.** That is just for a particular lift too. So if you just miss a squat set but are able to still deadlift the 2 sets for 6 reps each, then keep the deadlift progression the same as you drop the squat weight. Fluctuations of lifts are very common and if you try to hold back all of your lifts for the sake of being “even”, then you will essentially hold yourself back to the weakest link. Generally the weak link will come up in due time anyway, so there is no need to force it.

Now once you have had to reset the weight 3 times on a lift, then you need to start progressing every 2 weeks. This will likely take you a long time to even reach this point if you are a beginner, but if you do, then allowing for slower progression is the best way to handle this situation. Also, if you are starting as a more experienced lifter, you may want to consider taking this approach from the start. I personally prefer to give my bench 2 weeks at times to progress but even now at my strength, I am still comfortable bumping up the weight week to week in the squat and deadlift for short periods of time. **If you fail more than 3 times progressing every 2 weeks, then that is why you need to take a break from the program.** This would be when I recommend my 6 week periodization program. You can actually use both of these very well by using the 6 week cycle to take a break from this linear program. From there I generally suggest you run 3 straight 6 week cycles if you can, but also you can alternate between the two however you see fit.

Warming Up

All of the sets listed are not including warm up sets. When it comes to warming up you can use other movements if you'd like, but the requirement is to simply take the time to gradually increase weight with the movement itself. Check on my channel “Heavy Lower Body Workout (every rep/set)” for an example of how I warm up. Your warm up will likely not take as long as mine if your working sets are somewhere in the 200-300 pound range. If you do have some joint soreness, it will be a good idea to throw in some extra warm-up drills.

Diet

For this program all that I ask is that you are eating at least at maintenance calories and are getting an adequate amount of protein. However, If you are above 15% bodyfat by a considerable amount, then you will still be able to gain strength while gradually losing weight. But if you are relatively lean, I don't want you to bulk into obesity, rather just gradually gain weight/strength. You can also simply recomp on this, which is usually what I personally am doing. I suggest in my 6 week program to eat 3 scoops (25-35 grams) of whey protein a day for those who don't want to meticulously track macronutrients. That guideline applies here as well.

The brand of whey protein doesn't matter as long as it has enough grams per serving so you aren't being shortchanged. Then get some cheap monohydrate creatine if you'd like. I personally don't use it as it does nothing for me, but scientific research has repeatedly shown it can be very effective for many people. Both the whey protein and creatine are very cheap relatively speaking. A preworkout might help mentally but is absolutely not a necessity.

Rest In Between Sets

This is one of the most commonly overlooked issues when it comes to strength training. If you are not resting enough in between sets, then you will not be able to progress. **You need full rest in between sets to ensure you are able to complete the workouts.** This usually means anywhere from 3-10 minutes in between each working set. I have had times where a full 15 minutes was needed so just make sure you are resting however long you need to be 100% focused for the next set. For the control sessions you likely will only need around 3 minutes in between sets to fully recover as the weight/intensity won't be quite as high as the heavy days. The only exceptions to this rule of allowing for full recovery are the optional exercises. While performing those movements you can rest shorter intentionally to increase the intensity while using lighter weights. That is actually usually what I recommend, having just 1-2 minutes in between sets.

If you want to make your workouts shorter, you can superset upper body movements. Now I don't mean that you should bench, then immediately start your back movement. Rather still give yourself some time in between, just alternate between the movements to allow the workout to go quicker without compromising recovery for a particular lift. So for a given upper body workout superset bench/back, shoulder/curl, and then the two optional movements. You don't have to do this if it isn't convenient for you at your gym or if you simply don't prefer it, but as I said it is just a way to make the training sessions a bit more efficient in terms of time management. This will work well on upper body lifts, but of course this will not be a good idea when it comes to squats/deadlifts.

Strength/Power

As I previously explain, chances are most of you will primarily want to use the strength/control program. This version's strength day is the same, actually the only difference in this program is the lower body variation day. Instead of control it is focused on developing explosiveness. This can be helpful not only to ensure fast twitch fibers are adequately trained without having to use heavy weights relative to your max, but also to train the nervous system. **This is obviously going to help with athletic activities like increasing your vertical leap or sprint acceleration.** It also help your max lifts as well of course as max strength and power are strongly interconnected (I have a 36-38 inch standing vertical from focusing almost entirely on strength). But overall you do not have to include explosive training if your goal is just strength, rather it is just another tool you can utilize.

Strength/Power Program

Monday - Heavy Lower Day

Squat - 3 sets x 6 reps
Deadlift - 2 sets x 6 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Tuesday - Heavy Upper Day

Bench Press - 3 sets x 6 reps
Primary Upper Back Exercise - 3 sets x 6 reps
Shoulder Exercise - 1 set x 6
Upper Back Exercise #2 - 1 set x 6
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Thursday - Power Lower

Weighted Explosive Exercise #1 - 6 sets x 4 reps
Weighted Explosive Exercise #2 - 6 sets x 4 reps
Optional Explosive Exercise - 5 sets x 4 reps
Optional Explosive Exercise - 5 sets x 4 reps

Friday - Control Upper Day

(see note at bottom of page)

Spoto Press - 6 sets x 4 reps
Primary Upper Back Exercise (pause at top of lift) - 6 sets x 4 reps
Shoulder Exercise - 1 set x 10 reps
Upper Back Exercise #2 - 1 set x 10 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Note - The reason why there is no power upper body day is because the range of motion used for upper body movements is smaller and there simply aren't many effective explosive upper movements that allow for consistent progressive overload. This is a scenario in which I must put aside theory and recognize practicality. If you do have bands/chains to provide accommodating resistance, a variety of med balls and other equipment, then you can include a power upper day. But the overwhelming majority of people will not have this nor will it be worth their time to try to make it work.

Weighted Explosive Exercises

1. Barbell Jump squat
2. Box jump
3. Power clean
4. Speed deadlifts (deadlifts with 50-70% of max performed explosively)
5. Speed squats
6. Trap bar jump
7. Dumbbell jump squat
8. Dumbbell lunge jump
9. Any machine which allows for an explosive concentric portion of lift.

Unweighted Explosive Exercises

1. Squat jump (jumping using squat stance width/depth)
2. Box jump
3. Broad jump
4. One legged box jump
5. One legged broad jump
6. Any other jump variation

note - these jumps are performed for max power, so jump as high/far as possible on each rep rather than just going through the motions.

Strength/Hypertrophy

This program is more for bodybuilding, although I will say that the strength/control program will develop musculature just fine as well. The differences between these programs are very subtle. The major distinction for the hypertrophy day is that it has a higher volume overall. There is also slightly more variation on the hypertrophy days. For the deadlift variation, I recommend either stiff legged deadlifts, deficit deadlifts, or snatch grip deadlifts. For the chest pressing movements, I strongly recommend prioritizing dumbbells.

Strength/Hypertrophy Program

Monday - Heavy Lower Day

Squat - 3 sets x 6 reps
Deadlift - 2 sets x 6 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Tuesday - Heavy Upper Day

Bench Press - 3 sets x 6 reps
Primary Upper Back Exercise - 3 sets x 6 reps
Shoulder Exercise - 1 set x 6
Upper Back Exercise #2 - 1 set x 6
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 3 sets x 8-12 reps

Thursday - Hypertrophy Lower

Either Back Squat Or Front Squat - 5 sets x 8 reps
Deadlift Variation - 3 sets x 8 reps
Hamstring Curl - 3 sets x 12 reps
Calf Raise - 5 sets x 15 reps
Optional Exercise - 4 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 4 sets x 8-12 reps

Friday - Hypertrophy Upper

Chest Press (flat or decline) - 4 sets x 8 reps
Incline Chest Press - 4 sets x 8 reps
Upper Back Exercise #1 - 4 sets x 8 reps
Upper Back Exercise #2 - 4 sets x 8 reps
Shoulder Exercise - 3 sets x 10 reps
Bicep Exercise - 3 sets x 10 reps
Optional Exercise - 4 sets x 8-12 reps
Optional Exercise - 4 sets x 8-12 reps

Thank you

I want to end this program by simply saying thank you because odds are if you downloaded this, you are a supporter of the Candito Training HQ youtube channel. Every like/comment/view has allowed for me to take the time to spread this information on how to properly train in the weightroom. If you find this program to be helpful, you can donate what you think it is worth to you, but if not, just please share it with your friends to get the word out.

This outline is just giving you an opportunity to make yourself stronger. Lift hard with focus and assume that you will get stronger with each workout, each session is slightly modifying your body composition and building up your strength where the last one left off. If you fully expect to add weight over time onto the bar, rather than just try to workout for the sake of doing so like 99% of people in the gym, you will see incredible progress.

Update 11/18/13

3 Day Routine

To make these programs into a 3 day routine, simply keep both heavy days and alternate the variation day. So if you are on the strength/control program, the first week would be heavy lower, heavy upper, control lower. Then the next week heavy lower, heavy upper, control upper. Also this would be on a Monday/Wednesday/Friday schedule. **This will be extremely efficient for anyone with limited time dedicated towards training.**

Update 5/13/14

Upper Back Exercise Replacing Bicep Slot

I will always update my free programs when I believe a certain aspect can be improved. That was the case with the most recent update as I altered it so that now there are 2 upper back movements; one vertical pull and one horizontal pull, and no longer is there a slot of a required bicep movement. This makes more sense in terms of developing complete upper body strength most effectively and avoiding muscular imbalances causing possible issues (particularly shoulder problems) from performing presses without matching it with pulling as well. Also keep in mind that you can still involve curls as an optional accessory or even target your rear delts in the optional accessory slot to further ensure you don't have shoulder imbalances from pressing. Does that mean if a program does not have equal upper back volume as it does pressing that it will doom you to all sorts of chronic injuries? Absolutely not in my opinion. Especially since deadlifting for example does train your upper back, albeit isometrically, to a noteworthy extent. But I believe now including a vertical and horizontal pull is generally just a good idea as I said to avoid imbalances and develop total body strength.

