

For surfers 40+ training for general health and time in the water. Work through the steps in order, then fill in your routine on the last page.

Know these three ideas first

TISSUE TOLERANCE

How much stress your muscles, tendons, and joints can handle right now. Go past it and you get pain, injury, or soreness that wrecks your next session or surf.

PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD

Doing a little more, consistently, over time. If you are not doing more over time, your results stall.

ADAPTATION

Your body gets better at whatever you repeatedly ask it to do. How you overload the tissue decides what it adapts to.

1

STEP

Pick your days

How many days a week will you actually train?

- **2 days:** minimum effective dose. Enough to maintain, and you can still progress.
- **3 days:** a little more buffer and a little more stimulus to progress. Most people do well here.
- **4+ days:** gym rat territory, with more room to focus on body regions and patterns per workout.
- **2 to 3 days = full body every session.** 4 or more lets you split by region or pattern.
- **Pick what you will actually do.** Start low, then add a day once it is ingrained. Plan lifting around the surf forecast and adjust week to week. Consistency over weeks and months is the payoff.

2

STEP

Choose your movements

Balance opposing muscle groups. Pick one or more from each pattern.

Pattern	Examples
Upper push	Horizontal: bench press, push-up. Vertical: incline press, military press.
Upper pull	Vertical: pull-up, lat pulldown. Horizontal: bent-over row, seated cable row.
Squat or lunge	Single-leg squat, lunge variations, step-ups. Single-leg stances resemble the surf stance and stop the stronger leg from taking over.
Hinge	Romanian deadlift or single-leg RDL. Hard on the low back, so if you are not competent or have a low back history, start with a hip thrust or hip bridge.
Carry	Farmer's carry, suitcase carry. Grip and core strength.
Supporting work	Banded shoulder work for rotator cuff and shoulder blade endurance. Lateral hip or glute work for low back and knee stability.

Make it more surf-specific, safely: start with low complexity movements. Once you own one, add a single element at a time, like an offset load or a little rotation on a reverse lunge.

Train every major joint through its full available range of motion, with good form and control. Modify for injury or your current tissue tolerance.

3

STEP

Pick the goal for each movement

Ask: how does this apply to my surfing and daily life?

- **Strength:** leg drive, pumping down the line, turns, pop-up, absorbing force through your legs.
- **Endurance:** paddle stamina and shoulder resilience over a long session.
- **Hypertrophy (muscle growth):** helps prevent injury, manage old orthopedic injuries, and maintain function as lean mass declines with age.

Some answers will be both. **Pick the most important one and start there.**

4

STEP

Set your reps and rest

Your goal decides how you perform each set.

Goal	Reps	Load	Rest	Surf link
Strength	5 to 10	Heavier, close to fatigue	90 sec to 2 min	Leg drive, turns
Endurance	15 to 30+, or by time	Much lighter	10 to 30 sec	Paddle stamina
Hypertrophy	Wide range	Light or heavy	Varies	Close to failure plus enough hard sets

Guidelines, not hard and fast rules. As long as you are safe, you can blend the ranges.

5

STEP

Set your effort

How close to failure should each set end?

- **RPE (rate of perceived exertion):** a 0 to 10 scale of how hard the set felt. A 10 is failure: you could not do another rep safely.
- **Reps in reserve (RIR):** how many good-form reps you had left. An RPE of 8 is about 2 reps in reserve.
- **Failure:** another rep is not possible because you are too fatigued or your form is breaking down.
- **Stop about 1 to 3 reps shy of failure.** New or returning? Stay several reps shy for the first few weeks to build tissue tolerance.

6

STEP

Set your weekly volume

- A simple target: build up to **10 or more hard working sets per week** for each movement pattern or major muscle group.
- Build up gradually. Starting conservative protects your consistency.

7

STEP

Progress it over time

- **Levers:** increase weight, reps, or sets, or change the tempo.
- **Example:** split squat for 5 to 10 reps at 25 lb. Work up to 10, move to 30 lb, drop back to 5, and build back up. Repeat week over week.
- The goal is a challenge your tissues can recover from, so you can show up again next session.

8

STEP

Run it safely

- **One bad rep rule:** one bad rep is fine. Multiple bad reps in a row means stop, rest, and reassess.
- Use a mirror or video to check your form.

SEE IT IN ACTION: TWO WORKED EXAMPLES

	Leg strength	Paddle endurance
Goal	Drive through turns, pump down the line, perform maneuvers.	Fatigue resistance in the rotator cuff and shoulder blade muscles.
Exercise	Reverse lunge	Banded W with alternating overhead reach
Load	Heavier	Light band
Reps	5 to 10, challenging by the last few reps	15 to 30+, or 30 to 60 sec of constant work
Effort	1 to 3 reps shy of failure	1 to 3 reps shy of failure
Rest	90 sec to 2 min	10 to 30 sec
Progress	Add weight within the rep range.	Add reps or longer bouts, a slightly heavier band, or shorter rest.

Form cues for each exercise are demonstrated in the video.

YOUR ROUTINE

Fill this in from Steps 1 to 8. Print it and keep it in your gym bag.

My days per week: _____ Days I will lift: _____ Plan around: surf forecast

Pattern	Exercise I picked	Goal (S, E, H)	Sets x reps	Rest	Effort (RPE or RIR)
Example	Reverse lunge	Strength	___ x 5 to 10	90 sec to 2 min	1 to 3 reps shy
Upper push					
Upper pull					
Squat or lunge					
Hinge					
Carry					
Banded shoulder work					
Lateral hip or glute work					

Progress it: add a little more over time. Stop the set when your form breaks.

Longevity
In The Lineup

Want more guidance?

Surf Trip Prep Foundations is built for getting back into training. You scale the resistance to your own level using RPE.

Want a program built around you? Apply for one-on-one coaching at surfersperformance.com

Dr. Jon Saul, DPT, ATC / Surfers Performance – Longevity in the Lineup

This is general education, not individualized medical advice. If you have pain, an injury, or a medical condition, check with a qualified clinician before starting a new program.

