THE Pull-up Solution

By John Sifferman



The COMPLETE Pull-up & Chin-up *Training System*

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Dedication

To my good friend, Kyle Battis, my first strength and conditioning coach and business mentor, who has believed in me since the day we first met.

Acknowledgements

Believe it or not, this humble program has taken nearly two years to bring from the idea stage to completion. And as I look back on the actual research and development that has gone into creating The Pull-up Solution, the origins go back much further than that.

Now, while it's true that my name is on the cover of this manual, this project has been anything but a solo undertaking. The reality is that this project has actually been a collective effort by many people from many corners of my life, and I'm grateful for each and every one of you for the support, encouragement, assistance, and faith you gave to me before and during this process. And so, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize a few key people whose influence has been of significant importance to this project, in particular.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my parents for encouraging and supporting my interest in fitness and athletics at an early age. Thank you, Dad, for getting me all those fitness books, for building a pull-up bar in our basement for me and my brothers to practice on, and for letting me keep all those free weights and other junk down there for years.

To my good friend, Kyle Battis, thank you for reaching out to me all those years ago and taking me under your wing – for believing in me, investing in me, and providing me with several unique opportunities. I'll never forget your generosity. You've been a good coach, training partner, and mentor all these years, and I wouldn't be where I am today without your support and friendship.

To Tom Venuto, thank you for your guidance, support, and encouragement over the years. I've learned more about business from you than any other person, not only from our weekly training calls back in the day, but also from the example you set with Burn The Fat. I've enjoyed our friendship and am glad you've been a part of my life – even from a distance. Thank you for leading from the front and keep up the good work.

Some of the concepts and methods that I've incorporated into this program have been influenced by the Circular Strength Training system. So, I'd like to thank the creator of that system, Scott Sonnon, in particular, whose much-needed work in *health-first* fitness has been invaluable in our industry and pivotal to my development as a fitness professional. Your work has not only influenced my training philosophy and practices, but has also had a direct, positive impact on my life. Thank you.

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And to the many other teachers, trainers, coaches, and mentors that have weaved in and out of my life in one way or another over the past several years, thank you for all you have done. You have shaped me into the professional I am today, and I am indebted to you for it. My work, and this project, is only possible because of you, and I'll do my best to pay it forward.

I am also indebted to Brian Silfies, the owner of One2One Fitness in Concord, NH, for allowing me the use of his facility – free of charge – to film my product videos. I'd also like to thank my brother, Josh, and my mother for assisting me with the film shoot for this product. I couldn't have done it without you guys. To Russ Shiebler, for allowing me the use of his office as my backup writing cave, thank you.

To all of my beta-testers, thank you for putting your trust in me as your coach and for your hard work, dedication, and determination to see the program through until the finish. Your efforts and invaluable feedback have helped me to refine this program and turn it into a turn-key product that I hope will help many people reach their pull-up and chin-up goals and beyond.

I'd also like to thank the hundreds of people who have given me the honor and privilege of being their personal trainer over the past several years, and to the many that have followed my work online since 2008. Your support means so much to me.

And finally, to my loving wife, Renée, thank you for your constant, unwavering support, and your infinite patience with me. Not to mention all your help with the video editing, graphic design, and some of the other technical aspects of selling a product online. None of this would have been possible without you, my love.

Table of Contents

Introduction....6
What kind of results can you expect to receive?....9
Quick-Start Guide....11
Summary of the Training System....12
How This Program Works....13
Tips to Make the Most of This Program....16
Personalization Guide....17
Self-Testing Protocol and Guidelines....20
Pull-up and Chin-up Strength Standards....21
Choosing the Proper Exercise Level Based on Your Test Results....22
Instructions for Matching Your Skill Level to the Workout Program Protocols....23
The Pull-up Solution Workout Program....24
    Phase 1: Greasing the Groove (Weeks 1-4)....25
    Phase 2: Pyramid Training and High-Volume Sessions (Weeks 5-8)....33
    Phase 3: High Intensity Training (Weeks 9-12)....37
What to do After You've Finished the Program....40
Appendix A: Phase 4: Maintenance Phase (Weeks 13 and beyond)....41
Appendix B: Alternative Options for the Program's Duration....43
About the Author....44

Introduction

Right around the time that I was ten or eleven years old, my Dad installed a pull-up bar in our home's basement. It was nothing fancy; just a straight metal bar hanging from a pair of flooring joists – constructed out of some odds and ends we had laying around the house. And now that I think about it, I'm pretty sure it was actually an adjustable metal cane he repurposed since one end was much wider than the other – even with the athletic tape wrapped around it. It certainly wasn't high-tech, but it worked!

My brothers and I immediately took to it, trying to see who could do the most pull-ups. Being the oldest, I always won – even if I could only do a few repetitions. And over the next few years, I managed to work my way up to a solid six pull-ups from my haphazard pull-up training regime, which consisted of doing a set or two whenever I happened to walk past the bar. And it was right around this time, when I was feeling pretty good about myself, that my Dad decided to tell us boys a little story about a pull-up contest he competed in at a high school party he attended back in the day.

It turns out that despite my Dad being anything but a Jock, he walked into a garage at a party where an impromptu pull-up contest was being held between the school's football players. You know what I'm talking about – a pull-up *contest!* It was a chest-thumping, muscle-pumping, absolutely crazy scene. Complete teenager mayhem. If you and I had been there, we could have smelled the testosterone in the room.

And my poor Dad, who was probably looking for a cooler full of drinks, accidentally wandered right into the middle of it. Being the self-proclaimed geek that he was, he was immediately challenged by some of the football players.

C'mon, Andy. How many can YOU do?

Not expecting to win, but also wondering how many pull-ups he *could* do if he really tried, he took off his glasses and stepped up to the bar to find out what he was made of.

And then he started. And to everyone's surprise (including his, I'm sure), he quickly passed some of the lower scores from earlier (woohoo for not being last!). And he kept going! He just kept cranking them out while jaws were dropping in disbelief. It wasn't long before he surpassed the highest score, but he didn't stop then either.

Cheering ensued and when all was said and done, he beat *everyone,* by a long shot. And the cherry on top is that when he finally jumped down and put his glasses back on, his first words were, "how many did I do?"

Or, at least, that's how the story goes. You just can't make this stuff up. And if you knew my Dad, you'd know he isn't one to embellish a story like that.

And that's part of the reason why I think an affinity for pull-ups runs in my blood. And after hearing my Dad's story, I just *had* to get better at them. Soon after, I got a book with

a complete workout program that happened to emphasize pull-up training. And over the next three months, I went from barely doing six pull-ups to doing over 30 reps in one set. I still remember the feeling I had when I broke the big Three-O like it was yesterday. I mean, I was pretty proud when I hit 20 reps for the first time, but when I crossed that big 30, well, I'll just say it was pretty cool. But it wasn't easy. And while I haven't always maintained that level of pull-up conditioning since then, pull-ups have had a special place in my training program ever since.

Because the truth is that getting better at pull-ups isn't easy for anyone. It's true that some people *seem* to have a natural affinity for pull-ups and chin-ups, but it's an illusion. The reality is that improving pull-up performance is downright *hard*. And that's why so few people can do them, and the ones who can usually can't do them *well*. The fact of the matter is that impressive pull-up numbers have to be *earned*, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

The good news is that anyone, and I mean *anyone*, can get better at pull-ups. I don't care if you're old, young, fat, fit, strong, or weak. Anyone can get better at pull-ups. In fact, most people can make measurable progress in a week or two. And in my experience, if you devote a solid four weeks to pull-up training, you will amaze yourself with the results, as many people have with this very program. And in all seriousness, if you choose to devote a full three months to pull-up training, you could change your life. And I mean that.

Now, we could talk all day about how pull-ups and chin-ups are great for back and bicep development, vertical pulling strength, shoulder stability, etc. The list of benefits goes on and on.

But the truth is that the pull-up is just another great strength training exercise like squats, deadlifts, pushups, and many others. It's one of the basics – a staple. And so, it doesn't matter if you're an athlete, bodybuilder, fitness trainee, firefighter, police officer, soldier, or anyone else for that matter. Pull-ups will do your body good.

And the best part is that getting better at pull-ups is *empowering*. And that's the real value of a program like this. It will provide you with a blueprint to empower yourself through the catalyst of physical training; to change yourself, not just physically, but mentally, into a new-and-improved *you*. The added physical strength and physique perks are just bonuses.

So, welcome to The Pull-up Solution and thank you for investing in my program. If you use the system outlined within these materials, I'm sure you'll be very happy you made the choice to invest in *this* specific pull-up training product, as it is truly one-of-a-kind.

But I must warn you. Digital files are very good at remaining dormant on an internet server or on your local hard drive for a very long time. They don't even need your help to do this. The truth is that these bytes and gigabytes of data will do nothing to help you if you're not willing to help yourself.

As your coach, I've made it my responsibility to provide you with everything you could possibly need to succeed, but *you* will need to do the work. The pull-ups and chin-ups won't perform themselves, and I won't be there to tell you to keep going when you need to.

And that's why I've created this system to be action-oriented. Because that's the underlying goal of every fitness program – behavior modification. You will need to make some changes to your lifestyle, however subtle or grand, in order to successfully complete this program.

Fortunately, all of the prep work has already been done for you, and literally, everything you need to do has been laid out in advance. I've made it my goal as your coach to leave ZERO room for guesswork. Just follow the instructions. All it takes for you to succeed is for you to do the work. Take action. Apply effort. Sweat.

There's no other way around it, and judging by the fact that you've made the decision to do this, I'm guessing you're the type of person who is ready to tackle this challenge. I would lie to you if I said that it's going to be easy, but I can absolutely assure you that it will be worth it.

In the following pages, you'll figure out exactly what you need to do in order to work your way through the program. The quick-start guide, in particular, is meant to take you by the hand, and show you step by step how to use these materials in the most efficient manner.

There's a lot of material to work through. So, please use the quick-start guide to get heading in the right direction. It's ok to skip ahead and review most or all of the materials ahead of time, and if you have the time to do that, then you'll have an advantage while working through the various program modules. But literally, all you need to do is follow along with the instructions below, stick with the program, and you will succeed like so many others have before you. I guarantee it.

Thanks again for putting your trust in this system. Now, it's time to get to work.

John Sifferman
Health-First Fitness Coach
Pull-up Training Extraordinaire

What Kind Of Results Can You Expect To Receive?

That's an impossibly difficult question to answer definitively. Suffice to say, you will get out of this program what you put into it. Of course, nobody likes hearing that. So, allow me to explain by comparing two messages I received from people whom have followed my program.

A gentleman named Gary left a comment on my website to inform me that…

"I followed this program to the letter, and went from 8 pullups to 9 pullups…pretty frustrating." – Gary

So, in other words, he wanted to inform me that he followed the program from A to Z and only added one repetition to his max after *three months* of dedicated training. If that strikes you as strange, then you're in good company.

Now, a couple weeks later, I got another message from a gentleman named Dom who also wanted to report in on his results from using the SAME PROGRAM.

Dom told me…

"Hi John

When I started I could just about do 1 pull-up. Slightly embarrassing but that was my starting point. ;) At the end of month 1, I can do 5 with proper form. I'm double happy.

Thanks for your help, it's much appreciated."

- Dom

So, apparently, Dom went from *almost* doing one pull-up to doing FIVE "with proper form," in just *one* month. That's a 400% improvement in performance, not counting the fact that his technique has presumably improved as well. And going from zero strict pull-ups to any number is a huge accomplishment. The fact that he nailed five reps after only a month is a true testament to his hard work.

So, let's compare the two. In just *one* month, Dom did four times better than Gary did in *three* months. Needless to say, I'd assume that Dom put in a lot more effort than Gary did, and I'll reiterate that they both followed the same exact program.

So, again, my point is that you will get out of this program what you put into it. And here's the thing. There are many factors that contribute to your pull-up training success. And just implementing one tip or making one change could mean the difference between struggling with pull-ups or mastering them.

For instance, someone left this comment on one of my pull-up technique instructional videos:

"This is THE best guide I have ever seen on pull ups… Been trying to get this right for so long. Instantly went from barely 1 pull up to 5." – Dowork Son (username).

Listen. Strength training isn't rocket science. It's very simple actually, and we've known *how* to do it for a long time. But getting stronger isn't easy – never has been. And isn't that the whole point of strength training? To get better at something that's hard.

So, needless to say, you won't find any magic tricks in this system. Instead, you'll find a carefully-selected and organized collection of ideas and strategies to help you pinpoint exactly what *you* need to do in order to improve your pull-up and chin-up performance.

The fact of the matter is that it's very difficult, if not impossible, to quantify your expected performance improvements accurately. It depends on a lot of different variables such as your conditioning level (i.e., how strong you are already), skill level with the exercises, how much you weigh, whether you have any injuries or other pre-existing conditions, how much time you have to train, your age and your body's rate of recovery, among many other things.

So, in the first month alone, you could go from zero pull-ups to one pull-up, or five pull-ups. And if you can already do five, then doing ten after the first month is definitely possible. And if you commit to the full three month program, there's no telling how much you'll improve. You could go from zero to five, or five to ten, or ten to thirty. It all depends on the various factors aforementioned and also how much you put into the program.

Quick-Start Guide

The best way to begin this program is to go through all of the materials beforehand: read the whole manual (estimated read time is 45 minutes) and watch all of the videos (estimated viewing time is 1 hour and 15 minutes). This way, you'll have a thorough understanding of what is involved. However, if you don't have a couple of hours to devote to this, then here is a much faster way to get started.

1st Day:

Step 1 – Download all program materials.

Step 2 – Perform your pre-program pull-up test and record your results (see page 20).

Step 3 – Identify which exercises you'll be starting with based on your test results using the instructions in the section: Choosing The Proper Exercise Level Based on Your Test Results (see page 22).

Note: if you cannot perform standard pull-ups or chin-ups yet, see the Instructions for Matching Your Skill Level to the Workout Program Protocols (see page 23).

Step 4 – Print out your Progress Tracking Journal (or use the digital version).

Step 5 – Read through the Phase One instructions of the workout program, and begin your first day of training when ready (see page 25).

Note: if you cannot commit to the full 3 month program, see the section on Alternative Options for the Program's Duration (see Appendix B on page 43).

1st Week:

- Watch and study the 8 Key Components of Optimal Pull-up Technique Videos (total runtime: 18 minutes).
- Watch and study the follow-along warmup and cooldown videos (total runtime: 10 minutes).
- Watch and study the exercise instructional videos, especially the ones most applicable to your starting point and skill level based on your pull-up test results (total runtime: 9 minutes).

1st Month:

- Read the rest of the manual at your leisure.
- Review the Tips, Tricks, and Techniques Videos at your leisure (total runtime: 36 minutes).

Summary of the Training System

There are a few elements contained within this system that you should be aware of prior to getting started.

1) Program Manual: This PDF document that you're reading now is the official program manual. Inside here is where you'll find all of the information you need about WHAT TO DO. It will guide you through the process of using this system, including the actual workout program.

2) Instructional Videos: Within these videos, you will learn HOW TO DO the work needed to achieve your goals.

a) Technique Training Videos – The 8 Key Components of Optimal Pull-up Technique:

- Introduction Video
- Grip Considerations
- Elbow Considerations
- Shoulder Considerations
- Spinal Considerations
- Core Considerations
- Hip Considerations
- Leg Considerations
- Breathing Considerations

b) Follow-Along Training Videos for Pull-up Pre-habilitation and Injury-Prevention

- Joint Mobility Warmup Video
- Yoga Cooldown Video

c) Exercise Instructional Videos:

- The Deadhang Exercise
- The Flexed-arm Hang Exercise
- Negative repetitions
- Assisted repetitions
    - Band-assisted pull-ups
    - Bench-assisted pull-ups
    - Jumping pull-ups
    - Partner-assisted pull-ups
- Standard pull-ups
- Weighted pull-ups
    - Weight-belt Pull-ups
    - Weight-vest Pull-ups
    - Backpack-weighted Pull-ups

d) Tips, Tricks, and Techniques Videos to Improve Pull-up Performance

- The Assisted Deadhang Exercise
- Assisted One-Arm Pull-ups
- Australian Pull-ups
- Common Pull-up Mistakes
- Finisher Repetitions
- Forearm Stretches
- Grip Variations
- Improving Grip Strength
- Improving Shoulder Pack
- Tempo and Speed Considerations
- Vibration Training

3) Progress Tracking Materials:

- Progress Tracking Journal – Printable Version (Adobe PDF Format)
- Progress Tracking Journal – Digital Version (Microsoft Excel Document)

How This Program Works

You don't need to understand how or why this program works to get results from using it. However, if you have a basic understanding of the principles and strategies built into the curriculum, you will be better for it. So, here's a quick explanation of some of the core principles that guide this program. Keep these in mind while progressing through the curriculum and refer back to them in the future.

Specificity – The human body only ever adapts specifically to the demands that we impose upon it. Your goal is to stimulate your body to adapt, and thus, get better at performing pull-ups and chin-ups. Obviously, the best way to do that is to perform pull-ups and chin-ups or their individual components (e.g., the Flexed-arm Hang, the Deadhang, etc.). And that's why this program will have you doing just that. Additional assistance exercises may have value in certain situations, but your primary strategy should be to practice pull-ups and chin-ups, or their components as frequently as possible (i.e., as frequently as you can fully and safely recover from). This will be the best strategy to improve your pull-up and chin-up performance, and is one of the foundational principles on which this program is based. Rest assured that if you follow this program as-is, you'll be practicing pull-ups and chin-ups as frequently as you can fully and safely recover from, and thus, will receive optimal results.

Incremental progression – There are many ways to progress in a physical training program. The key is knowing which technique to use, when to use it, and *how* to use it. In almost all cases, slow and steady progress via baby steps is the best way to go, and we should train with this in mind. So, small victories gained by taking baby steps should be

your primary focus. Don't expect to dramatically increase your performance in a day or two, but instead meet yourself where you are today and commit to your own gradual development. Commit to doing a little more each day you train – another set, a few more reps, a slightly harder exercise. If you focus on making incremental progress each week, then the so-called big jumps in progress will come in good time.

Overload – In order for the body to adapt and get stronger, you must stimulate it to change. That stimulus must be strong enough to elicit a positive adaptation. In other words, you will need to push past your current conditioning threshold to develop a greater capacity to do pull-ups and chin-ups in the future by overloading your body with a training stimulus (i.e., lots of pull-ups and chin-ups!). You must reach outside of yourself and do the thing which you have not done before (e.g., the repetitions you could not do before). This means pushing yourself to the edge of your potential each and every time you train, if possible. This also means you'll have to get out of your comfort zone. So, if it feels easy, then chances are, you're not working hard enough. Please note that this doesn't mean working at a maximum intensity all the time, but knowing *when* to do so. I can't stress the importance of this principle enough. Suffice to say, if you don't initiate overload, then you will not make any progress. But if you follow this program as-is, the overload principle should take care of itself.

Sophistication – One of the best ways to progress in a strength training program is through exercise sophistication. An example of exercise sophistication in practice is using the knee-pushup exercise until you can do regular pushups without using your knees, and then eventually doing one-arm pushups or another advanced variation that is more sophisticated than the former. This is a great strategy for taking a complete beginner to an intermediate and eventually advanced training level.

The Pull-up Solution uses exercise sophistication to make sure that you are adequately challenged each and every training session. Your goal should be to use the highest level of exercise sophistication that you can maintain excellent technique with. Below, you'll find a hierarchy of pull-up exercise sophistication, in order of least sophisticated to most sophisticated (i.e., easiest to hardest). So, the assisted deadhang for time is the easiest exercise in this list, and the weighted pull-up is the most difficult. Complete beginners will start near the top of the list, and more advanced pull-up trainees will start near the bottom of the list:

1) The Assisted Deadhang exercise held for time.
2) The Deadhang exercise held for time.
3) The Assisted Flexed-arm Hang held for time.
4) The Flexed-arm Hang held for time.
5) The Assisted Negative Repetition Pull-up or Chin-up Exercise.
6) The Negative Repetition Pull-up or Chin-up Exercise.
7) The Flexed-arm Hang, into Negative Repetition, into Deadhang for time.
8) The Assisted Pull-up or Chin-up Exercise.
9) The Standard Pull-up or Chin-up Exercise.
10) The Weighted Pull-up or Chin-up Exercise.

So, as you can see, the least sophisticated exercises are more suitable for beginners, and the latter exercises are more suitable for intermediate and advanced trainees.

Note: this is a suggested progression for beginners. There are other ways to work your way through the various levels, and you are encouraged to use your intuition to try and find what works best for you.

Intuitive training – This program can show you the way, but you've got to take the journey yourself. You'll have to be your own coach, and it's going to take some intuition to do it right. The general training protocol that I want you to focus on is maintaining excellent technique at *all* times, minimizing discomfort, avoiding anything that causes pain, and working as hard as you can while addressing the former considerations. Ensuring optimal technique is the most important point to take away from this. It is the foundation on which intuitive training rests.

Once your technique is dialed in and you have no pain or significant discomfort to deal with, feel free to increase the intensity level according to the program's recommendations. But when your technique begins to decline, that should be an indicator that it's time to back off or stop completely.

This is a simple protocol for ensuring the program stays safe and effective, but using your intuition is important in other areas as well, which leads us to the feedback loop strategy.

Feedback loop – The feedback loop strategy is one in which you will use the results that you obtain from training as your guide for future decision making. For example, if you begin the program and you start getting excellent results from week to week, then that's positive feedback and indicates that you should keep doing what has already been working. On the other hand, if you're *not* getting good results, or if you're not getting *any* results from week to week, then that's *negative* feedback that indicates something needs to change. If that's the case, then you may need to increase the training volume or intensity of the program to boost your results, or if you think your lack of progress is a result of overtraining or under-recovery, then take some time off the program to rest and recover. Ultimately, you should let your results be your guide.

Pay attention to your week to week progress (hint: you should be getting a little better each week), and pay attention to the internal experience of going through this program. If, at any point, you feel something may be wrong (e.g. no progress, pain/injury occurs, exhaustion, etc.), then address it immediately. The bottom line is that without using the feedback loop strategy, you may run into problems while going through the program because neglecting it means neglecting your personal development. No program can fully account for your day-to-day needs. So, you have coach's permission to adjust the program to your needs, even if it means deviating from the suggested programming.

5 Tips to Make the Most of This Program

Following this program step by step will deliver excellent results in-and-of-itself, but these tips will help you to squeeze as much benefit out of it as possible.

1) Avoid deviating *too far* from the suggested programming. It can be tempting to just "wing it" and cherry-pick certain aspects of the program to follow. As your coach, it's my job to make sure you understand the risks this presents. This system has been fine-tuned for optimal results over a period of several years. It's true that there is always a need for personalization and you will get the best results from customizing *any* program to your needs, but the reason the system was designed this way is because it's the best method my clients and I have discovered thus far. It works. There may, and probably are better ways to accomplish the goal of improving pull-up performance, but they have yet to be discovered. So, stick to what we know works. This is the best pull-up improvement system I currently know about, and men and women from all walks of life have used it successfully. If you deviate from the recommended routine, you'll be moving into uncharted territory and risk injury, overtraining, lack of results, and otherwise failing the pursuit of your goal towards pull-up mastery. So, employ caution when customizing it to your needs.

2) Listen to your body. This system was created with personalization in mind, but it's impossible to account for the day-to-day and moment-by-moment needs you'll encounter over the coming weeks and months. You'll need to self-regulate your training frequency and intensity level, among other things. This may mean taking an extra day off when necessary, spending extra time practicing a particular technique, or prioritizing recovery over training. This system is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It's meant to serve as a guide to help you tune into your own unique needs throughout this training process, in much the same way as a competent coach would.

Note On The Rule Of Recovery: If, at any time while following The Pull-up Solution, you are feeling overly-tired, lethargic, or any other symptoms of overtraining, then please take *at least* a day or two completely off from pull-up training and use that time to work on the warmup and cooldown exercises, along with any other active recovery you can. It is much better to err on the side of getting extra recovery than risking overtraining. This is one area where you have coach's approval to deviate from the program. You can always take an extra day or two off. In the same breath, don't be afraid to test your limits and trust in your body's ability to adapt to new challenges.

3) Prioritize your recovery, and especially your active recovery training. This means performing your warmup and cooldown exercises before and after all training sessions at the very minimum. Even better than that would be to also perform them on your non-training days as well to solidify the recovery benefits. These drills are not just to warmup and cooldown from the session itself, but to maximize the benefits you receive during your training sessions and *in-between* training sessions. They will make you stronger,

more resilient, more mobile, and healthier. And in most cases, prioritizing these drills will have a direct impact on improving your pull-up performance, too.

4) Make it your number one goal to improve your exercise technique every session. The better your technique is, the better your long-term results will be. Make it your number one goal to master the subtle nuances of each exercise's technique. Review the main points often and check yourself each and every set. This is a foundational strategy in every successful strength training program. Ignore it at your peril.

5) Practice as often as possible, but never to exhaustion, and never at the expense of your recovery. Your training is worthless if you cannot recover quickly and fully from it. Training is queen, and recovery is king. It's during the recovery process - when you're not training - that your body is actually adapting to the training stimulus. So, make sure that you're training as much as you can safely and fully recover from. This means managing not just your intensity, but the amount of fatigue that you allow into your program. So, train, don't strain. Stimulate the body to adapt, yes, but don't annihilate your muscles and energy stores. Only train with a maximum level of effort when the program specifically calls for it.

Personalization Guide

No program is perfect. And without instructions for how to customize this program to your needs, goals, and circumstances, it would merely be another generic, one-size-fits-all, "cookie-cutter" training program that are often altogether ineffective. That's why the program was designed to be personalized to your own unique situation, and why it's not just a WHAT TO DO program, but a HOW TO system.

And that's why I've created this to be not just dictatorial in nature, but instructive. I want you to not only have a proven blueprint to follow, but I also want you to learn how it works so that you can get not just results out of this program, but an education from your experience while using it, too.

Naturally, I don't know what your unique situation is. So, it's up to you to customize this program to your needs, goals, and circumstances. You'll find specific instructions for how to do that all throughout the program materials. On top of that, here are some general recommendations and special considerations depending on your circumstances.

Special Considerations

If you fit into any of the criteria below, you'll find some additional thoughts that may be more pertinent to your unique situation. Consider this some additional advice or feedback that may help you better customize the program to your needs based on your unique situation.

Athletes: The best thing you can do is run this program by your coach to see how it would best fit into your overall strength and conditioning routine. For most athletes, this program will not be your primary focus in training and you will want to prioritize it accordingly. That may mean modifying it to involve less total work or only using it in the off-season among other possibilities. Again, work with your coaches and trust their judgment.

Bodybuilders and fitness trainees: This program was designed to be an adjunct to your existing physical activity regime. It can and should be done on top of your current training program. However, what you want to avoid is over-training the movement patterns and muscle groups that are involved in the pull-up and chin-up exercises. So, if you use a body part split, incorporate the pull-up workouts into your back and bicep training days and consider lowering the total training volume you do for those muscle groups. If you use an upper body, lower body split routine, perform the pull-up workouts on your upper body training days. If using full body workouts, this program's sessions can be done on any day you train. Also, if you want to prioritize your pull-up performance, all sessions should be done at the beginning of your normal training sessions (after warmup), or as a separate session entirely. If improving your pull-up performance is not one of your *primary* goals, then performing the routine after your normal sessions should be satisfactory. (Note: Phase 1 can be done on *any* training day, regardless of your body part splits)

Injured persons: If you have a health condition, injury, or other pre-existing condition that may be affected by exercise, then you need to reread the medical disclaimer at the beginning of this manual. Ask your doctor if this exercise program is right for you. This program was designed for healthy persons, and particularly those who's joint and muscle tissue health is satisfactory, especially the neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hands, and fingers.

If you have a pre-existing injury, yet you *have* been cleared for exercise, then you'll want to use this program very carefully. Make liberal use of the warmup and cooldown routines, and consider further study into these modalities. At the very least, perform them diligently before and after your pull-up training, and at other times for additional benefit. Study the exercise technique videos and the 8 key components of optimal pull-up technique until you understand them fully. Only ever train when you can do so with proper technique. Do not train through pain. And if your condition worsens, do not continue using this program.

Middle age persons and senior citizens: The primary consideration for older trainees is that your recovery needs will be greater, and thus, your progress will be slower. If worked up to incrementally, and otherwise done properly, you will still be able to train with high intensity and get peak performance results from using this program. However, you will likely require more time to recover between sessions. So, you may need to either a) decrease the frequency of sessions that you complete, and/or b) decrease the total training volume and/or intensity that the program calls for, and/or c) increase the number of recovery days between workout sessions.

This program was meant to be customized to your needs. So, you'll find instructions on how to do this all throughout the program materials. If you find yourself excessively sore, easily fatigued, tired all the time, and dreading your training, then you may be over-training and under-recovering. When in doubt, focus additional attention on your recovery efforts. Getting enough rest - and sleep - is only the beginning. When you get a little older, the details start to matter a little more (e.g., sleep, nutrition, stress management, active recovery, etc.) As a minimum, prioritize your warmup and cooldown exercises and consider doing extra joint mobility training, yoga, and other active recovery methods on top of the provided routine.

Military, firefighters, and law enforcement professionals: The primary consideration for service people is maintaining a level of fitness to support your vocation and also to prepare for fitness testing. You don't want to train in a way that will negatively impact your day to day performance on the job. So, if you're on active duty, avoid training to complete muscle failure, if at all possible. Instead, perform your pull-up sets to the point that you cannot maintain good technique. And always finish with a proper cooldown as per the program's recommendations.

When you have a fitness test coming up, try to schedule your training so that you finish Phase 3 of the program approximately one week before your test. Also, you will perform best during your test if you have about 3-7 days off from pull-up training. If you're feeling good and you don't think you need all that much of a rest, you can lean towards the lower end of that range. And if you're feeling exhausted and stressed out, lean towards the upper end of that range. But for most people, 3-5 days off from strength training is a good rule of thumb.

Overweight persons: The pull-up is a tough exercise even for people at a healthy weight. So, it's no surprise that overweight persons are usually greatly challenged by this feat of strength. That said, there's no reason an overweight person cannot build up to multiple-repetition sets of pull-ups and chin-ups by following a wise training strategy. If you use the incremental formula contained in this system, you will see measurable progress regularly – probably weekly, and possibly every time you train.

Obviously, every pound of extra weight is a pound you'll have to pull-up. And naturally, every pound of excess body fat you lose will be working in your favor. So, if you want to accelerate your pull-up and chin-up results, taking measures to lose some body fat will dramatically increase your performance.

In the mean time, start at whatever level of pull-ups you can perform with good technique, even if it means you need to start with the basic Deadhang exercise. If you train with specificity in mind, you will see results in due time.

Women: The number one thing you need to know is that women can absolutely work up to performing pull-ups and chin-ups *without assistance* just like men can. Women tend to have less upper body strength and muscle tissue, and as a result, it usually takes longer to

see significant pull-up progress. So, your strategy needs to stem from frequent, consistent practice of the fundamental strategies outlined in this system, which is how everyone – men included – *should* be training anyways.

The vast majority of women can work up to sets of 10, and even 20 or more pull-ups, given enough time and wise training. It's just that the details start to matter a little more. It also takes a long-term perspective and a willingness to work hard every time you train. So, pour your energy into your effort. Strive to do a little more, go a little harder or longer each and every session. Set a personal record in your performance every time you train so that you can see measurable progress each and every training session. Your results will be directly related to the amount of effort you put in.

Self-Testing Protocol and Guidelines

Purpose: The purpose of this test is two-fold. First, it is meant to establish your current conditioning level on your first day of the program so that you can figure out where to start in the program materials. Secondly, this will help serve as a baseline performance standard to refer back to as your starting point to show you how far you've come over the coming weeks and months.

The First Day Test

Perform the following test using the instructions below. It would be best if you tested yourself *before* learning any of the techniques in this system to give yourself an objective starting point. Looking over the exercise instructional materials beforehand is optional.

Note on Technique Guidelines for Testing: For testing purposes, in order for a pull-up or chin-up repetition to be counted, the chin must clear the bar in the top position (and/or the elbows must be fully-flexed), and the elbows must be fully locked in the bottom position (i.e., arms straight – no bent or partially-flexed elbows).

Step 1: Test your pull-ups *and/or* chin-ups performance and record your results in the progress tracking journal. Strive for a 100% effort. Rest and recover for at least 3-5 minutes before moving onto step two.

Note: if you already know you cannot do any pull-ups or chin-ups, then simply move on to step two.

Step 2: Test your flexed-arm hang performance and record your results in the progress tracking journal. Rest and recover for at least 3-5 minutes before moving onto step three.

Step 3: Test your deadhang performance and record your results in the progress tracking journal.

Pull-up and Chin-up Strength Standards

Note: These are *general* standards that will serve as a foundation for tracking your starting point and future performance while going through The Pull-up Solution program.

Pull-up & Chin-up Performance Standards:

Women:
1-3 repetitions = beginner
4-6 repetitions = intermediate
7-9 repetitions = advanced
10-12 repetitions = expert
13+ repetitions = master

Men:
1-5 repetitions = beginner
6-10 repetitions = intermediate
11-15 repetitions = advanced
16-20 repetitions = expert
21+ repetitions = master

Flexed-Arm Hang Performance Standards:
15 seconds = minimum standard
30 seconds = satisfactory
60+ seconds = optimum

Deadhang Exercise Performance Standards:
15 seconds = minimum standard
30 seconds = satisfactory
60+ seconds = optimum

Choosing The Proper Exercise Level Based on Your Test Results

Your test results will determine which exercises you begin using during the first phase of the program. Use the instructions below to determine which exercises to begin with.

If your best effort was…

10+ pull-ups (women) or 16+ pull-ups (men), then begin the program with standard pull-ups, and/or weighted pull-ups, and/or another advanced variation such as assisted one-arm pull-ups.

4-9 pull-ups (women) or 6-15 pull-ups (men), then begin the program with standard pull-ups and use easier variations as necessary to increase your performance.

1-3 pull-ups (women) or 1-5 pull-ups (men), then begin the program with standard pull-ups and use assisted pull-ups and negative repetition pull-ups as necessary to increase your performance.

60+ second flexed-arm hang, then begin the program with assisted pull-ups and chin-ups, using negative repetitions as necessary to eventually work up to your first unassisted standard pull-up.

30+ second flexed-arm hang, then begin the program with the negative pull-ups and chin-up exercises (aka negative reps), using easier variations as necessary to increase your performance and work your way towards performing assisted pull-ups and chin-ups.

15+ second flexed-arm hang, then begin the program with the flexed-arm hang exercise, using the assisted version as necessary, and work your way up through the levels of sophistication toward performing negative repetitions and eventually assisted repetitions.

60+ second deadhang, then begin with either the flexed-arm hang or assisted flexed-arm hang, and work your way up through the levels of sophistication toward performing negative reps and beyond.

30+ second deadhang, then begin with the assisted flexed-arm hang, and work your way up through the levels of sophistication toward the flexed-arm hang and beyond.

15+ second deadhang, then begin with the deadhang and/or assisted deadhang exercise and work your way up through the levels of sophistication toward the flexed-arm hang and beyond.

Instructions for Matching Your Skill Level to the Workout Program Protocols

For the sake of brevity, I've written the workout program for people who will be using standard pull-ups and chin-ups – not the easier variations such as assisted pull-ups, flexed-arm hangs, negative repetitions, and deadhangs.

So, when the program calls for doing "X amount of pull-ups," your job is to substitute your chosen exercise for your skill level into the program.

For example, let's say that a workout instructs you to do "X amount of pull-ups" in as few sets as possible, but you can't do any standard pull-ups yet and you're still working on your flexed-arm hang. In that case, you would use this rubric to make an appropriate substitution.

So, when the program calls for you doing 1 pull-up, here are some equivalent options:

1 assisted pull-up or chin-up
1 negative repetition pull-up or chin-up
3 second flexed arm hang
3 second deadhang

So, if the program says to do 10 pull-ups, then you can do 10 assisted pull-ups, 10 negative rep pull-ups, a 30 second flexed arm hang, or a 30 second deadhang as an appropriate substitution.

Tip: It helps to keep in mind not only your ultimate goal (lots of pull-ups!), but also the next step up the ladder. For instance, if you've been doing flexed-arm hangs, then try experimenting with negative repetitions from time to time (assisted reps, if necessary). If you've been doing negative reps already, then try doing assisted pull-ups. You will make faster progress if you make it a point to keep pushing the edge of your ability by working your way up through the various levels of sophistication.

The Pull-up Solution Workout Program

In the following pages, you will find the actual program you'll be using over the next few months.

Note: if this is your first time reading through the manual, I suggest reading and studying the instructions in Phase One to absorb the training concepts as much as possible, and then skimming over phases two and three just to have an idea of the direction you're heading.

Warmup and Cooldown Protocol

A pair of follow-along warmup and cooldown instructional videos are included in this product. Each one is approximately five minutes in duration and will serve as an adequate warmup and cooldown routine for pull-up training.

Obviously, warmup exercises are to be done *prior* to pull-up training, and cooldown exercises are to be done *after* your training has concluded, and preferably *immediately* after. These exercises can also be done on non-training days for additional recovery benefits.

After you have learned the exercises and no longer require the videos, you can perform the warmups and cooldowns intuitively. For the warmups, I recommend a bare minimum of 3-5 repetitions of each mobility drill (in each direction) and up to a full minute for each exercise. For the cooldowns, I recommend a bare minimum of 20 seconds per yoga pose. However, you'll get much better results if you spend a minute on each one. Also note that the cooldown yoga routine can be repeated up to three times for maximum benefits.

Phase 1: Greasing the Groove (Weeks 1-4)

Phase one is arguably the most important phase in the entire program, and you'll most likely experience the greatest results, in terms of total improvement, during phase one. The reason why it works so well is because it's designed around *you* – your unique needs, goals, and circumstances including your skill and conditioning level. Instead of writing a generic, cookie-cutter training program that is the same for everyone, I've provided a customizable program to meet you where you are *today* - that will take you right to your edge, and no further, each time you train.

So, please pay close attention to the finer points of this phase as it will serve as a foundation for your future pull-up and chin-up success. If you make it a point to take this phase seriously and really make the most of it, then I am confident that you will amaze yourself with the results you achieve in just a few short weeks.

Many beginner to intermediate trainees will double or triple their pull-up score in the first few weeks of Phase 1. And if you cannot do *any* pull-ups, it's not uncommon to go from 0 pull-ups to 3-5 in the first month alone. Now, if you already have a base of conditioning to work from, then increasing your total reps by 50% or more is not unheard of either. For example, if you can do 10 pull-ups on day one, then hitting 15 after a few weeks is definitely a strong possibility. If you can do 20, then 30 certainly isn't out of reach either. Of course, there's no way to accurately predict exactly what kind of results you will get, but the bottom line is that while dramatic improvement may not be typical, it certainly *is possible*. It's all about what you put into it.

Needless to say, the higher your pull-up numbers are to begin with, and thus, the closer to your peak conditioning level that you are, the slower your progress will come. There is a certain aspect of beginner's luck or newbie's gains to be made in the beginning of *any* training program, and beginners usually experience the best results in terms of total numbers gained. Advanced trainees generally have to work a little harder for a little longer, and they usually don't get the kind of rapid results a beginner will experience.

And while the main contributing factor to your success will be actually *showing up* and working hard each and every day, there is a certain finesse incorporated within the program design that will help you to maximize your phase one results regardless of your starting point.

Once you understand *how* this phase works, you will be able to craft your own workouts that will be perfectly matched to both your skill and conditioning level. So, study the following instructions until you're comfortable with the protocol, and then get to work!

The Purpose Of Phase 1: Perfect Practice

The purpose of the first phase is five-fold:

1. To study and *practice* the actual technique of pull-ups, chin-ups, and the other exercises you'll be using in this program.
2. To gradually introduce high-frequency, high-volume training (i.e., lots of reps!) into your lifestyle in order to prepare your body for peak performance and training, in an effort to maximize your results and minimize the chance of injury.
3. If applicable, to work your way up to your first, unassisted pull-up, and at the very least, be able to perform multiple *assisted* pull-ups in one set.
4. To set a strong foundation for future pull-up training success.
5. To maximize initial gains and build momentum going into phase two.

Summary Of Phase 1 Instructions

For the entire first phase, the most important thing you can do is practice proper pull-up technique as frequently as possible, at a sub-maximal effort, without accumulating any significant fatigue.

You will accomplish this using the grease the groove strategy, which is based on the premise of: Specificity + Frequent Practice = Success. Said another way, if you practice a specific skill frequently, you will succeed in improving it. Strength is a skill, after all. So, phase one is all about practicing the skill of pull-ups as often as possible. In order to do this frequently, it must be done at a submaximal effort – never training through excessive fatigue or to exhaustion.

So, several times each training day (up to 5-6 days per week, and no less than 3 days per week), you should perform a sub-maximal set of pull-ups (or assisted pull-ups, negative repetition pull-ups, the flexed-arm hang, or the deadhang - whichever is appropriate for your skill level). Your goal should be to do as many *easy* repetitions as possible throughout the course of each day, and gradually increase your total daily score over the course of each week and the entire phase.

Note: if you are still working up to your first standard pull-up, then part of your goal in phase one is to work your way up through the exercise levels to try and get your first un-assisted pull-up, and at the very least, be able to perform multiple assisted pull-ups in one set going into phase two.

Detailed Phase 1 Instructions

Frequency Considerations

Your goal is to practice pull-up technique as *frequently* as possible throughout each training day of phase one. Ideally, these sets of pull-ups should be spread apart throughout the duration of a full day, but they can be done over the course of a few hours or even during a workout session.

Here are a few examples of how to schedule your sets:

Good option: 1 set of pull-ups every 5-10 minutes during a 1-hour workout.

Better option: 1 set of pull-ups every 15-30 minutes for a few hours in the morning or evening.

Best option: 1 set of pull-ups every 30-60 minutes for 6-12 hours throughout the day.

Or, you could do it another way. Please note that these are just examples, and how you choose to schedule your sets is ultimately up to you. Maybe a few sets in the morning and a few more in the evening would work best for your schedule. Regardless, I'd suggest choosing a training frequency that you are most likely to stick with each day – that you're 90-100% sure you can comply with – and is most convenient for you. Just remember to stick with the main protocol, which is to do low-moderate intensity sets of pull-ups as often as you can without accumulating any fatigue.

Also note that you should train as frequently as you can fully recover from. So, pay attention to your rate of recovery and make sure that you're not training too many times per week. Some signs that you may need to back off a little on the training frequency include excessive muscle soreness, chronic fatigue, and an apprehensiveness to train.

Intensity Considerations

Your goal in phase one is to *practice* optimal pull-up technique at a *sub-maximal* intensity level. So, your phase one training should…

- Require a Low-Moderate Effort
- Be Performed at a Sub-Maximal Intensity
- Produce Low-Moderate Fatigue & Exertion

The number of repetitions you do each set is dependent on two things:

1) Your perceived level of maximum repetitions (percentage of your max).
2) The amount of sets you're planning on doing throughout the day.

So, if you can do 10 pull-ups in a max-effort pull-up test (i.e. you cannot do 11 no matter how hard you try), then 10 pull-ups is your maximum ability. Therefore, 50% of your max would be 5 pull-ups, and 30% of your max would be 3 pull-ups, etc.

Now, the *more* frequently you train (i.e., the more sets you do each day), the *lower* your intensity level should be, and the *less* frequently you train, the *higher* your intensity level should be.

So, if you only do a handful of sets throughout the course of each training day, then your repetition amounts should be on the higher side, but never higher than 80% of your maximum ability. On the other hand, if you do a ton of sets throughout each day (e.g., 10-20 sets), then you should train at a low intensity level, and thus, the repetition amounts you perform should be much lower as a result. If that's the case, then stay down in the 20-40% of maximum effort range. Even doing 1-3 pull-ups or holding a flexed-arm hang for 5-10 seconds is fine, as long as it's at the appropriate intensity level.

Here's an example of what your intensity level should be like depending on how many sets you're able to fit in each day (note: these are examples, feel free to adjust the parameters to better suit your needs):

Good: 3-5 sets of Pull-ups per day - intensity level around 60-80% of max

Better: 5-12 sets of Pull-ups per day - intensity level around 40-60% of max

Best: 12-20 sets of Pull-ups per day - intensity level around 20-40% of max

So, in essence, the more sets you do throughout the day, the lower the repetition amount or duration should be each set.

Keep in mind that training at a high intensity level is NOT the key this month. Fatigue and exhaustion is to be avoided, no matter how tempting it may be to train harder. Put your effort into your other training workouts, and hold back on the effort until phase two. You'll be glad you did.

Coaching Tip: A good way to work through the first phase is to begin the first week with many frequent, low intensity sets (i.e., 20-40% of max intensity level), and as the month progresses, gradually increase the intensity level of your sets. So, by the last week of the first phase, you'll be performing sets in the 60-80% of max range.

Example of your target intensity levels:

Week 1: 20-40% of max
Week 2: 40-60% of max
Week 3: 40-80% of max
Week 4: 60-80% of max

This strategy will help to maximize your initial gains and will also better prepare you for the rigors of Phase 2.

Volume Considerations

Volume refers to the total number of pull-ups you perform over the course of a training day, week, and month. Your goal should be to do more pull-ups than the day before – every single day you train in phase one. Essentially, you'll be slowly building training volume over the course of the phase in order to prepare your body for high-volume workouts in phase two.

However you accomplish those repetitions is ultimately up to you, but I'd suggest starting the phase with a very conservative daily total (i.e., much lower than you *could* do), and gradually building to a respectable amount of pull-ups per day by the end of the phase.

For example, your first day training, you may only do 10-20 total repetitions, but by the last week of the phase, you may be doing 100+ total reps each day. Regardless, the beginning of the phase should be relatively easy, and the end of the phase should be fairly challenging (but not *intense*). Also, you should increase your daily training volume very *gradually* over the course of the month. Incremental progression should be your goal, even if it means you're only performing one more rep than you did the last day you trained.

Obviously, you will accumulate a very large number of pull-up repetitions over the course of phase one, which will lead to dramatic strength and conditioning gains.

A Note on Tracking Your Progress

It is essential that you keep track of your progress throughout the whole program, but this is especially true during phase one. So, keep your progress tracking journal or a sheet of paper handy to record the actual number of pull-ups you perform each set.

It may also be helpful to make a note of your intensity level, technique level, and any other notes you may feel are appropriate. For example…

- 5 pull-ups (approximately 30% of max) – excellent technique
- 5 pull-ups (40% of max) – excellent technique
- 5 pull-ups (50% of max) – didn't lock elbows at bottom
- 4 pull-ups (30% of max) – excellent technique
- 4 pull-ups (40% of max) – excellent technique, starting to feel tired

Now, at the end of the day, tally up your total number of repetitions and make it your goal to beat your record the next day. So, if you do 10 sets of 5 pull-ups your first day (i.e., 50 total pull-ups), a couple ways to beat your record are to either do 11 sets of 5

pull-ups (i.e., 55 pull-ups) or 10 sets of 6 pull-ups (i.e., 60 pull-ups) the next day. Regardless of how you do it, your goal is to out-perform your last session each time you train in order to gradually build volume over the course of the month.

Note: it's ok if you have a bad day and don't meet or exceed your daily repetition goal. Just pick up where you left off the next day. And if you find that a sub-par performance becomes a trend, take some time off from pull-up training and begin again at a lower volume and/or intensity level.

Sample Program

Here is a sample program to show you how phase one may actually look in execution.

Week 1: Your first week on The Pull-up Solution should be considered a preliminary break-in period to help you ease into the new workload and allow your body a little extra time to adjust to the stress, especially if you haven't been working on pull-ups recently. So, for the first week, you will do grease the groove training every *other* day and gradually build up the frequency of your sets.

For example...

Week 1: low volume, low-moderate frequency, low intensity

Day 1 – 3 sets of pull-ups
Day 2 – rest + recovery + studying program materials
Day 3 – 4 sets of pull-ups
Day 4 – rest + recovery + studying program materials
Day 5 – 5 sets of pull-ups
Day 6 – rest + recovery + studying program materials
Day 7 – rest

Then in weeks 2, 3, and 4, increase your training frequency to near-daily grease the groove sessions for the remainder of the cycle - the goal being to gradually build your training volume each and every session (increasing your total number of pull-up reps each day).

For example...

Week 2: low volume, moderate-high frequency, low intensity

Week 2, Day 1 – 5x4 pull-ups (20 total reps)
Week 2, Day 2 – 6x4 pull-ups (24 total reps)
Week 2, Day 3 – rest & recovery
Week 2, Day 4 – 7x5 pull-ups (35 total reps)
Week 2, Day 5 – 8x5 pull-ups (40 total reps)

Week 2, Day 6 – 8x6 pull-ups (48 total reps)
Week 2, Day 7 – rest & recovery

Week 3: moderate volume, high frequency, low-moderate intensity

Week 3, Day 1 – 9x6 pull-ups (54 total reps)
Week 3, Day 2 – 10x6 pull-ups (60 total reps)
Week 3, Day 3 – 11x6 pull-ups (66 total reps)
Week 3, Day 4 – rest & recovery
Week 3, Day 5 – 10x7 pull-ups (70 total reps)
Week 3, Day 6 – 11x7 pull-ups (77 total reps)
Week 3, Day 7 – 12x7 pull-ups (84 total reps)

Week 4: high volume, high frequency, moderate intensity

Week 4, Day 1 – 10x8 pull-ups (80 total reps)
Week 4, Day 2 – rest
Week 4, Day 3 – 11x8 pull-ups (88 total reps)
Week 4, Day 4 – 11x9 pull-ups (99 total reps)
Week 4, Day 5 – 12x9 pull-ups (108 total reps)
Week 4, Day 6 – 11x10 pull-ups (110 total reps)
Week 4, Day 7 – 12x10 pull-ups (120 total reps)

Summary of Key Points

-Ease into the program gradually over 1-2 weeks to help your body adjust to the new training stimulus.

-Practice optimal pull-up technique in low-moderate intensity sets as frequently as possible throughout the day, up to 5-6 days per week, and no less than 3 days per week.

-Never train to muscle failure, or anywhere near it.

-Stay well-below your threshold for fatigue. This is a *practice* phase, not a *training* phase.

-If you are *not* feeling “fresh,” and are tired, sluggish, or worn-out, then do not grease the groove until you have recovered. If this persists, then either cut back on your total training volume or take some time off from physical training completely. Always prioritize recovery over training, even if it means you have to train less.

-If you are sore from training, then do not grease the groove until your soreness level has dropped below a 3 on a scale of 1-10 (1 being no soreness at all, and 10 being extremely sore and practically immobile).

-Incrementally increase your total daily pull-up repetitions throughout the phase.

-Incrementally increase your pull-up intensity level throughout the phase (i.e., do more reps per set as the phase progresses).

-During phase one, use the instructional resources to learn the *optimal* execution of the exercises, and only allow yourself to practice when you can do so with excellent technique. This is of paramount importance and will directly transfer over into better performance once you get into phases two and three. Don't train with bad technique.

-Testing your pull-up performance once a week with a maximal set is optional.

Closing Remarks

Most people will notice a huge increase in their pull-up numbers just after phase one, which usually astonishes them because although it required frequent practice, it did NOT require much effort. You can chalk it up to practicing the technique and training the nervous system to perform the exercise efficiently. If you've done this right, you'll be primed for compressing your training into actual workout sessions and building volume in the next phase.

Should You Extend Phase One Or Not?

Phase one officially lasts for four weeks, but some people are able to grease the groove for up to six, even eight weeks – without any signs of burnout or over-training. This is sometimes the case with beginners, but not very common with advanced trainees.

But how do you know if you should extend phase one or not? Let your *results* be your guide. So, if you're feeling strong and making steady progress with your daily repetition totals (i.e., consistently adding more reps to your daily tallies), and you're not showing any signs of slowing down, then you may be able to extend phase one for a little longer – perhaps a week or two, but no longer than 4 additional weeks. On the other hand, if you're feeling burned out or lethargic and notice that you need more time to recover, or you can't stand the sight of a pull-up bar, then it might be time to move onto phase two. Ultimately, it all comes down to your day-to-day results and whether you're still making good progress without burning yourself out. So, use the feedback loop as discussed earlier in the manual to monitor your progress to make sure you keep making optimal gains without petering out.

Note: if you reach the end of phase one and cannot perform at least five repetitions of assisted pull-ups, then you are not quite ready for phase two yet. If that's the case, take 3-7 days off from pull-up training and then go through phase one again.

Phase 2: Pyramid Training and High-Volume Sessions (Weeks 5-8)

Greasing the groove is all over now. So, no more practice sets throughout the day, no matter how tempting it is. Be glad about the progress you've made, but it's time to move on to a new training strategy before you hit a plateau. In this phase, your primary goal is to build volume during actual training sessions (i.e., workouts). You'll be using four different customizable workouts that you'll be alternating throughout each week.

This is arguably the most difficult of the three phases due to the sheer volume of the workload and the recovery demands you'll be placing on your body. So, this is where you really start pouring in the effort and finding out what you're really made of. Some of the pull-up sets will and *should* be extremely difficult, and these sessions should leave you feeling quite fatigued. In fact, you probably won't want to do another pull-up after your first single-step pyramid, and that's a sign you did it correctly.

If you can find a way to integrate these pull-up workouts into your current training sessions, then by all means, do so. If it just won't work, then either do these at the end of your workouts as "finishers," or perform them at a different time entirely.

And of course, be sure to allow yourself ample time to recover from these rigorous workouts – even if it means you need to take an extra day or two off between sessions. It would be better to perform these sessions when you're well-rested and otherwise "fresh," even if it means you need to extend the phase by a week or so to complete all 10 scheduled workouts. When in doubt, make rest and recovery your priority. You'll get better overall results.

So, now is the time to work hard. And if you *decide* ahead of time that you are willing to go the distance – that you *will* keep going when it gets tough – then you will continue to build your pull-up numbers and succeed in this phase. It won't be easy, but it *will* be worth it.

The Purpose of Phase 2: High-Volume, Strenuous Training

The main purpose of the second phase is three-fold:

1. To compress your pull-up training into high-volume workout sessions, greatly increasing the level of exertion and the resulting overload on the body.
2. To continue making significant gains using the momentum you built during phase one.
3. To prepare your body for the high-intensity training demands of peaking in phase three.

Phase 2 Instructions

Note: take a minimum of 2-3 days, but no more than 1 week, completely off from all pull-up training before beginning phase two.

Below, you will find four workouts with specific instructions along with a training schedule to follow during phase two. Please note that assisted pull-ups and negative repetition pull-ups can be substituted for standard pull-ups during these workouts. Also, if you need to substitute with the flexed-arm hang and/or the deadhang exercises, then use a 3 second duration as the equivalent of 1 repetition. That is, 1 pull-up = 3 second flexed-arm hang, 2 pull-ups = 6 second flexed-arm hang, 3 pull-ups = 9 second flexed-arm hang, and so on and so forth.

Pull-up Workout A1: Double-Step Pyramid Training

Instructions: Perform a pyramid of pull-ups all the way up to your max and then back down again using multiples of two's to climb each step. In this A1 session, you're going to go up by doubles.

Here is an example of the progression: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 (max), 8, 6, 4, 2 = **50 total pull-ups**

Go up as high as you can while maintaining proper technique, and rest as much as necessary between sets. Instead of following a rigid structure for rest, just rest as much as you feel is necessary to complete the next step. Generally, I recommend using as little as 15 seconds of rest on lower levels, and up to 2 minutes on upper levels.

Keep in mind that the max set at the top of the pyramid is the most important set of this whole workout. It's that last rep or two that really matters, and so, this is when you must go beyond yourself and strive for a 100% effort. That highest set is what will ultimately provide the necessary overload to stimulate your body to adapt, grow, and get stronger. So, hold nothing back.

Note: when descending the pyramid after your max set, if necessary, use assisted repetitions, negative repetitions, or other less-sophisticated exercises in order to reach the required repetition amounts. For example, if you maxed out your pyramid at 10 reps, but can only do 6 reps in the following set, perform 2 additional assisted pull-ups or negative repetitions to reach the required 8 reps.

Pull-up Workout A2: Single-Step Pyramid Training

Instructions: This is identical to the pyramid workout above, except this time (A2) you're climbing the pyramid one repetition at a time.

Here is an example of the progression: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (max), 4, 3, 2, 1 = **25 total pull-ups**

Here's another example for performing 100 total pull-ups: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (max), 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 = **100 total pull-ups**

Go up as high as you can while maintaining proper technique, and rest as much as necessary between sets. Instead of following a rigid structure for rest, just rest as much as you feel is necessary to complete the next step. Generally, I recommend using as little as 15 seconds of rest on lower levels, and up to 2 minutes on upper levels. You'll probably find you need to rest a little longer on this single-step pyramid than on the double-step one.

Keep in mind that the max set at the top of the pyramid is the most important set of this whole workout. It's that last rep or two that really matters, and so, this is when you must go beyond yourself and strive for a 100% effort. That highest set is what will ultimately provide the necessary overload to stimulate your body to adapt, grow, and get stronger. So, hold nothing back.

Note: when descending the pyramid after your max set, if necessary, use assisted repetitions, negative repetitions, or other less-sophisticated exercises in order to reach the required repetition amounts. For example, if you maxed out your pyramid at 10 reps, but can only do 8 reps in the following set, perform an additional assisted pull-up or negative repetition pull-up to reach the required 9 reps.

Pull-up Workout B1: Low-Rep, High Volume Training

Instructions: Select a number of repetitions based on approximately 25% of your maximum. So, if you can do 10 pull-ups in a maxed-out set, then your number is 2-3 repetitions. Perform 15-20 sets with as little rest as possible, and no more than 1 minute between sets. Keep doing sets until you can no longer maintain proper technique, and stop if you reach 20 total sets. You'll need to rest more during the latter sets, of course. Set a personal record each time you do this session by doing more total reps than you did in your last session.

Pull-up Workout B2: Moderate-Rep, High Volume Training

Instructions: Select a number of repetitions based on approximately 30-50% of your maximum. So, if you can do 10 pull-ups in a maxed-out set, then your number is 3-5 repetitions per set. Perform 8-15 sets with as little rest as possible, and no more than 90 seconds between sets. Keep doing sets until you can no longer maintain proper technique, and stop if you reach 15 total sets. Set a personal record each time you do this session by doing more total reps than you did in your last session.

Phase 2 Training Schedule

Here is the training schedule to follow during phase two:

Week 1 – A1, B1 (e.g., A1 on Monday, B1 on Thursday)

Week 2 – A2, B2 (e.g., A2 on Tue, B2 on Sat)

Week 3 – A1, B1, A2 (e.g., Mon, Wed, Fri)

Week 4 – B1, A2, B2 (e.g., Mon, Wed, Fri)

Note: these sessions can be done on any non-consecutive days, but ideally, they should be equally spaced apart throughout the week.

Phase 3: High Intensity Training (Weeks 9-12)

You've already laid a foundation of good exercise technique in phase one, and you've built a solid base of training volume in phase two. Now, in phase three, you're going to drop the training volume down, but crank up the intensity. The goal is to prepare for your final pull-up test by doing some max and near-max training in order to squeeze out a little bit more results before hitting a plateau. These workouts won't take quite as long as the phase two workouts, but they'll be just as intense, if not more so.

The Purpose of Phase 3: Peak for the Final Pull-up Test

The purpose of phase three is four-fold:

1. To take the gains you've made in phases one and two and continue to squeeze out a little bit more results without hitting a plateau.
2. To cut down on the total training volume in order to increase the intensity of your pull-up workouts.
3. To acclimate your body and mind to performing max and near-max pull-up sets.
4. To prepare you to dominate your final pull-up test at the end of the program.

Phase 3 Instructions

Note: the first week of phase 3 (i.e., week 9 of the program), is a rest and recovery period. See training schedule below for details.

Below, you will find three workouts with specific instructions along with a training schedule to follow during phase three. Please note that assisted pull-ups and negative repetition pull-ups can be substituted for standard pull-ups during these workouts. Also, if you need to substitute with the flexed-arm hang and/or the deadhang exercises, then use a 3 second duration as the equivalent of 1 repetition. That is, 1 pull-up = 3 second flexed-arm hang, 2 pull-ups = 6 second flexed-arm hang, 3 pull-ups = 9 second flexed-arm hang, and so on and so forth.

Pull-up Workout C1: Descending Pyramid Session

Instructions: This is essentially half of a pyramid, and you are starting at the top and working your way down. Begin by performing a near-max set of pull-ups, stopping just one repetition before muscle failure (approximately 95% of your max reps). Then rest for as long as necessary before performing a set of one less repetition, and continue this until you reach the final set of 1 pull-up.

Here is an example of the progression: 10 (max), 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 = **55 total reps**

Obviously, it's very important that you're adequately warmed up prior to starting this session since the first set is a near-max effort.

Pull-up Workout C2: 25-100 Reps in as few Sets as Possible

Instructions: Perform between 25-100 pull-ups in as few sets as possible. Select a number that is challenging, but doable, based on your conditioning level and past workout performances – no less than 25, and no more than 100 reps. Perform each set at around 60-80% of your maximum ability. So, if you can perform 10 pull-ups, then sets of 6-8 reps are probably best for this session. Rest as necessary.

Here's an example for a goal of 100 repetitions:

10, 10, 10, 10, 9, 9, 8, 8, 7, 7, 6, 6 = **100 total reps**

Pull-up Workout C3: Maximum-Set Practice Sessions

Instructions: After one warmup set, repeat the following 3-5 times.

1 Set of maximum pull-ups with 3-5 minutes of rest between sets

These are an all-out effort, and you should be trying to hit 100% exertion every time. Your repetition numbers will likely decrease every subsequent set. This is a sign that you're doing it right. When you repeat this workout later in the month, try to score more total reps each set, and especially on your last set.

Phase 3 Training Schedule

Here is the training schedule to follow:

Week 1 – Rest. No pull-up training at all. This is a time for your body to recover from the high volume training that you've done over the last two months and prime you for a few weeks of higher-intensity training. Other fitness training is ok, but depending on your program, it might be a good idea to take a 5-7 day break anyways (highly recommended if you haven't taken a week completely off from strength training in the last 12 weeks).

Week 2 – C1, C2 (e.g. C1 on Mon, C2 on Thur)

Week 3 – C3, C1, (e.g. C3 on Mon, C1 on Thur)

Week 4 – C2, C3, C1 (e.g. Mon, Wed, Fri)

Week 5 – After 3-5 days of rest (i.e., enough time to get *fully* recovered), pick a day for your official, end-of-program pull-up test. Plan ahead, and give it a shot.

What To Do After You've Finished The Full 3-Month Program

Step 1) Tell me about your experience!

Congratulations! You've finished the program and I'd love to hear about your experience. Please let me know how you did and what you thought about the program by emailing me at **john@thepullupsolution.com** or by using the **Contact Page** .

Step 2) Have your name added to the Hall of Fame!

If you don't mind, I'd like to add your accomplishment to **The Pull-up Solution Hall of Fame** to officially recognize your accomplishment and inspire others like you to achieve their pull-up goals, too.

So, once you have your final test results, please contact me using the form on the following webpage to tell me about your journey:

Click Here to Visit the Hall of Fame Entry Form on ThePullupSolution.com

Step 3) Decide what to do next

Now that you've finished the whole program, what are you going to do *next*? Depending on your training goals, you may want to repeat the program, try another program, or give the pull-up training a break for a while. Here are a few options with my recommendations:

- If you're happy with your results and don't wish to improve your pull-up numbers any further, then proceed to phase four, the maintenance phase, for instructions on how to maintain your progress (see Appendix A on page 41).
- If you want to continue building your pull-up repetition numbers, then the program can be repeated. Just start over in phase one.
- If you'd like to try your hand at a more advanced pull-up exercise (e.g. weighted pull-ups), then you can also restart the program with the new variation.
- Try another pull-up training program altogether. There are some other good options out there.
- Or, just give the pull-up training a break for awhile. You've earned it!

Also, you should know that any one of the three phases in The Pull-up Solution can be used as a distinct training program at any time. Keep in mind the unique purpose of each phase as explained in the instructions and don't extend the phases longer than they already are.

Appendix A – Phase 4: Maintenance Phase (Weeks 13 and beyond)

To maintain your pull-up numbers and possibly even increase them, you may implement these simple, high-intensity strength training methods into your exercise program.

Option A: 1-Set High Intensity Training

Instructions

When well-rested and recovered (i.e., "fresh"), perform just *one* near-maximum set of pull-ups or chin-ups with good technique per workout session, on non-consecutive days, up to three times per week, and no less than once a week. Your set of pull-ups should continue until you cannot maintain good technique and/or you are about one repetition away from muscle failure.

This should be sufficient to maintain your current pull-up conditioning level, and you may even make continued pull-up gains with this simple strategy.

Tip: change your grip every 1-3 repetitions for added benefit. For example…

3 standard pull-ups, immediately followed by…
3 standard chin-ups
3 neutral-grip pull-ups
2 wide-grip pull-ups
2 wide-grip chin-ups
2 narrow-grip pull-ups
2 narrow-grip chin-ups
1 mountain climber pull-up
1 assisted one-arm pull-ups
1 assisted one-arm pull-ups (opposite side)

= 20 total pull-ups

This will give you a short burst of recovery during grip changes to allow you to perform even more repetitions in one extended set, and will overload your muscles even more than just one set of standard pull-ups or chin-ups, etc.

Option B: 3-Set Escalating Intensity Training

You may find that one set of pull-ups per workout is not enough to maintain your fitness level. If that's the case, implement this 3-set escalating intensity strategy instead.

Instructions:

Perform the following 3 sets of pull-ups during your normal workout session, on non-consecutive days, up to three times per week, and no less than once a week.

The whole idea behind this strategy is to build intensity from set to set with the ultimate goal of peaking on the last set for an optimal performance. We want one *really* good set of work for the chosen exercise. A really good set is one in which excellent technique is maintained throughout and you've met or exceeded your target intensity level (e.g. your target rep range – or higher). In other words, you want to work as hard as you can safely maintain excellent technique and avoid muscle failure.

So, assuming you're ready to do the work portion of your strength training session (i.e., you've already warmed up, and are primed and ready for strength training), you will complete the following:

First set (low intensity) - The first set is a warmup set performed at approximately 50% of your maximum ability. So, if you can perform roughly 10 pull-ups, then your warmup set should be somewhere around 5 reps. The focus here is grooving optimal technique. Smooth and controlled repetitions should be used. Obviously, you will be able to do much more, but don't give in to the temptation. Stop once you've hit 50% of your maximum ability and trust in the system to work even better if you save your effort for the last set. **Rest 1-2 minutes.**

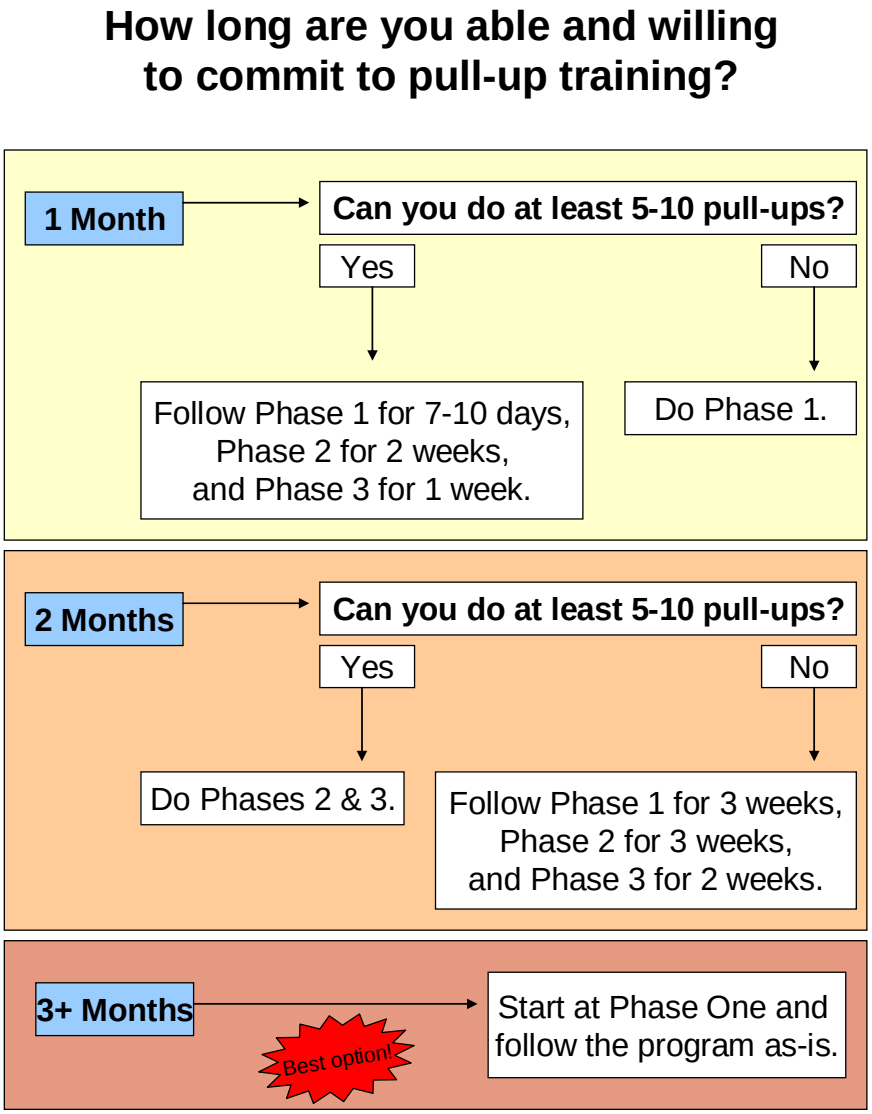
Second set (moderate intensity) - The second set is meant to start building intensity and should be performed at approximately 60-70% of your maximum ability. When in doubt, err slightly on the lower repetition side (do one or two less than you think is necessary if you're just not sure what 60-70% would be). The goal of this set is to send your body a signal that it's going to have to work hard soon. But this should not be a high intensity set and should not fatigue you very much. Again, save your energy for the final set. **Rest 2-3 minutes.**

Third set (high intensity) - The last set should be a near-max effort. I say *near*-max because you should not train to complete muscle failure. As long as you can maintain excellent technique, you should stop one rep short of failure. This is where you really crank up the juice and go to work. And chances are, when you first start feeling really tired, that's when you're about halfway done. Decide beforehand that you're going to press through the discomfort and put in a full effort. Expect to surprise yourself, and visualize yourself succeeding. This is where you figure out what you're really made of. So, go get it. And when you think you're done, just hold onto the bar for a little longer in the deadhang position and do another one.

Appendix B – Alternative Options For The Program's Duration

What if you don't have 3 months or longer to devote to pull-up training? What if you want or need a more abbreviated program?

The official program's length is three months, but if you don't have that much time to focus on pull-up training, here are a few other options to match your schedule.



About the Author



John Sifferman is a health-first fitness coach who lives and works in the Southern New Hampshire area. He has been teaching, training, and coaching people in various capacities since 2006 when he was first certified as a personal trainer through the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA-CPT). Since then, John has worked with hundreds of people from all walks of life – offering services ranging from health club and in-home personal training, to group fitness programs and "boot camp" style workouts at local gyms, public parks, and churches.

Since 2006, John has been a member of the Burn The Fat team at www.BurnTheFat.com and at www.BurnTheFatInnerCircle.com, home of Tom Venuto's best-selling Burn the Fat system. In 2012, John became the official full-time Burn The Fat Fitness Training Specialist and Burn the Fat Training Department Manager, making him the resident training expert at the Burn The Fat Inner Circle. John has also sat on the judging panel for every Burn The Fat Body Transformation Challenge to date.

In 2008, John founded www.PhysicalLiving.com, where he continues to teach health-first fitness and physical culture to his readers around the world. He is passionate about helping people transform their lives through the conduit of physical transformation. He has written over 500 articles about health and fitness, and has been featured in Shape magazine, RMAX International magazine, and on dozens of websites including Bodybuilding.com, T-Nation, FitWatch, and Conditioning Research.

In 2009, John attended one of the very first MovNat Natural Movement seminars in the United States, and was temporarily appointed to an advisory position for the MovNat board. Also in 2009, John became certified as a Circular Strength Training Instructor (CST) and a CST Kettlebell Specialist (CST-KS) through RMAX International, and in 2011 he earned his CST Coach-Level certification.

John lives with his wife, children, and Akita dog in beautiful New Hampshire.

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