

TRAINING GUIDE

The Quad Training Guide

Build stronger, bigger legs. The exercises, the programming, and how to progress week to week

Quads get trained wrong more than almost any other muscle group, either completely neglected, or hammered with high-rep leg extensions that do very little. This guide covers the exercises that work, how to build them into your week, and exactly how to keep progressing.

8 Best Exercises

Weekly
Programming

Progressive
Overload

Do's & Don'ts

BILLY BUTLER

PT · Dad of 2

WHY QUADS MATTER

Your quads are involved in almost every lower body movement, squatting, walking, climbing stairs, standing up from a chair. Beyond aesthetics, strong quads protect your knees, support your lower back, and are one of the biggest drivers of overall strength as you get older. Neglecting them is one of the most common and costly mistakes in a dad's training.

VOLUME & FREQUENCY

● FREQUENCY

2x per week is the sweet spot for most dads with limited time. 3x works if recovery allows and you're managing fatigue well.

● WEEKLY SETS

10–14 working sets per week is plenty for growth and strength without overreaching or burning out recovery.

● REP RANGE

Mix it. 6–8 reps for strength on your main lift, 10–15 reps for growth on accessory and isolation work.

THE FOUNDATION RULE

Every quad session should include at least one compound movement (squat, leg press, or split squat variation) before any isolation work. Compounds build the strength foundation, isolation work refines it.

8 BEST EXERCISES TO BUILD YOUR QUADS

Back Squat

COMPOUND

3-4 × 5-8

The king of lower body movements. Nothing replaces it for overall strength and mass.

Front Squat

COMPOUND

3 × 6-10

More upright torso shifts extra emphasis onto the quads specifically.

Leg Press

COMPOUND

3-4 × 8-12

Loads the quads heavily with far less spinal and technical demand than a squat.

Hack Squat

COMPOUND

3 × 8-12

The fixed path biases the quads even more directly than a free squat.

Bulgarian Split Squat

UNILATERAL

3 × 8-12 ea.

Builds single-leg strength and irons out imbalances most dads don't know they have.

Walking Lunge

UNILATERAL

3 × 10-12 ea.

Functional carryover to everyday movement, with a strong glute and quad crossover.

Step Up

UNILATERAL

3 × 10 ea.

Builds single-leg strength and stability, genuinely useful outside the gym too.

Leg Extension

ISOLATION

3 × 12-15

Direct quad isolation. Best used as a finisher after compound work, not the main event.

HOW TO FIT THIS INTO YOUR WEEK

Pick the structure that matches the days you can realistically commit to, not the one you wish you had.

2-3 Days Available — Full Body

One quad-dominant compound lift per session (rotate squat, leg press, hack squat). Add an isolation finisher like leg extensions once or twice a week if time allows.

4 Days Available — Upper/Lower

Two leg days. Day 1: heavier strength focus (Back Squat as the main lift, 5-8 reps). Day 2: higher volume focus (Leg Press, Bulgarian Split Squats, Leg Extension, 10-15 reps).

5-6 Days Available — Push/Pull/Legs

Quads land on your Legs day(s). Lead with your heaviest compound, then 2-3 accessory movements. Higher frequency here means you can push more total volume across the week.

PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD — HOW TO GET STRONGER

Doing the same weight for the same reps forever is why most people stop seeing results. Progress needs to be tracked and deliberate. Use these methods, in this order of priority.

1

Add reps first (double progression)

Work within a rep range, e.g. 8-12. Add a rep each week before adding weight, once you hit the top of the range for all sets, increase the load.

2

Add weight

Once reps are maxed out, add 2.5kg and drop back to the bottom of your rep range. Repeat the cycle.

3

Add sets

Increase total volume gradually across a training block — e.g. 3 sets in week 1, building to 4-5 sets by week 4.

4

Improve technique and range of motion

A deeper, more controlled squat at the same weight is genuinely harder and drives more progress than people realise.

5

Manipulate tempo

A slower 3-4 second lowering phase increases time under tension without touching the weight on the bar.

EXAMPLE: 4-WEEK BACK SQUAT PROGRESSION

Week	Target
1	3 × 8 @ moderate working weight
2	3 × 9 @ same weight
3	3 × 10 @ same weight
4	Add 2.5-5kg, reset to 3 × 8, repeat cycle

DO

- ✓ Prioritise depth over weight on your squats. A shallow heavy squat is doing less than you think.
- ✓ Warm up properly. Cold quads under load is how knees get upset.
- ✓ Progress load gradually — 2.5kg a week is plenty. Chasing PBs too fast leads to breakdown, not growth.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't skip leg day because it's hard. This is exactly why most people plateau.
- ✗ Don't let your knees cave inward on squats, this is the fastest way to injury. **Unless that technique is normal for your anatomy, but please reach out and ask if you have any issues.
- ✗ Don't rely only on leg extensions. Isolation without a compound lift builds imbalance, not real strength.

WANT THE FULL SYSTEM, NOT JUST ONE PIECE?

This guide is one piece of the puzzle. The Fit Dad Challenge brings training, nutrition and mindset together into one 6-week programme built around a dad's actual life.

[Join the Fit Dad Challenge — £99](#)