

Dumbbell Workout Plan

Complete 3-day full-body and 4-day upper/lower routines for home. Includes exact sets and reps, a 12-week roadmap, no-bench substitutions, and a simple progression system.

Start with the 3-day plan if you are unsure. Train on nonconsecutive days, stop most sets with 1-3 good repetitions left, and add repetitions before adding weight.

Choose your schedule

Plan	Example schedule	Best fit
3-day full body	Mon / Wed / Fri	Beginners, home training, busy weeks
4-day upper/lower	Mon Upper / Tue Lower / Thu Upper / Fri Lower	Consistent lifters who recover well

How to use the plan

- The listed sets are working sets. Complete lighter practice sets first.
- Rest about 2 minutes after squats, presses, rows, lunges, and hinges.
- Rest 60-90 seconds after raises, curls, triceps work, carries, and core work.
- Keep the main exercises stable long enough to compare performance.
- Resume the next uncompleted workout after a missed day. Do not double sessions.

This guide is general education for healthy adults, not individualized medical or rehabilitation advice. Read the safety notes on page 6 before starting.

3-Day Full-Body Dumbbell Plan

Train on three nonconsecutive days. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are examples, not requirements.

Workout A

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
Goblet squat	3	8-12	2 min
Dumbbell floor press	3	8-12	2 min
One-arm dumbbell row	3	8-12 / side	2 min
Dumbbell Romanian deadlift	3	8-12	2 min
Standing shoulder press	2	8-12	90-120 sec
Suitcase carry	2	30-45 sec / side	60-90 sec

Workout B

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
Dumbbell reverse lunge	3	8-12 / side	2 min
Close-grip floor press	3	8-12	2 min
Two-dumbbell bent-over row	3	8-12	2 min
Dumbbell glute bridge	3	10-15	90-120 sec
Dumbbell lateral raise	2	12-20	60-90 sec
Dead bug	2	8-12 / side	60 sec

Workout C

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
Dumbbell split squat	3	8-12 / side	2 min
Neutral-grip floor press	3	8-12	2 min
Supported one-arm row	3	10-15 / side	2 min
Dumbbell Romanian deadlift	3	8-12	2 min
Arnold or shoulder press	2	8-12	90-120 sec
Hammer curl	2	10-15	60-90 sec
Overhead triceps extension	2	10-15	60-90 sec

Weeks 1-2: complete only 2 working sets per exercise and leave about 3 good repetitions. From week 3, use the listed sets when recovery is normal.

4-Day Dumbbell-Only Plan

Use at least one rest day between the two weekly upper sessions and between the two lower sessions.

Upper A

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Dumbbell floor press	4	6-10
One-arm dumbbell row	4	8-12 / side
Standing shoulder press	2	8-12
Dumbbell lateral raise	2	12-20
Dumbbell curl	2	10-15
Lying triceps extension	2	10-15

Lower A

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Goblet squat	3	8-12
Dumbbell Romanian deadlift	3	8-12
Dumbbell reverse lunge	2	8-12 / side
Standing calf raise	3	10-20
Suitcase carry	2	30-45 sec / side

Use roughly 2 minutes of rest for the first three exercises and 60-90 seconds for the remaining work.

Weekly schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Weekend
Upper A	Lower A	Rest	Upper B	Lower B	Rest / easy activity

4-Day Dumbbell-Only Plan

Upper B

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Neutral-grip floor press	4	8-12
Two-dumbbell bent-over row	4	8-12
Arnold press	2	8-12
Bent-over rear-delt raise	2	12-20
Hammer curl	2	10-15
Overhead triceps extension	2	10-15

Lower B

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Dumbbell split squat	3	8-12 / side
Dumbbell deadlift	3	6-10
Dumbbell glute bridge	3	10-15
Dumbbell lateral lunge	2	8-12 / side
Standing calf raise	3	10-20
Dead bug	2	8-12 / side

If four sessions repeatedly become three, switch to the 3-day routine. That is a plan-design decision, not a failure.

12-Week Roadmap and Progression

Weeks	Focus	How to train
1-2	Learn	Use 2 working sets, leave about 3 good reps, and record starting loads
3-6	Build	Use the listed sets, add repetitions before load, and leave 1-3 good reps
7	Easier week	Complete about half the listed sets and leave 3-4 good reps
8-11	Build again	Resume the listed sets and continue from your established loads
12	Review	Reduce sets by about one-third, use clean reps, and review the next block

Double progression

Keep the load stable while adding controlled repetitions. When every working set reaches the top of the range with 1-2 good repetitions left, increase the dumbbell and return near the bottom of the range.

Session	Load	Floor-press repetitions
1	25 lb each	10 / 9 / 8
2	25 lb each	11 / 10 / 9
3	25 lb each	12 / 12 / 12
4	30 lb each	8 / 8 / 8

When the next dumbbell is too heavy

- Use the heavier dumbbell for the first set and the current load for the remaining sets.
- Move another set to the heavier load only after the first set reaches the range cleanly.
- Use a stable single-arm or single-leg variation when appropriate.
- Add a brief controlled pause, then keep that version consistent.
- Change one variable at a time and record it.

No-Bench Substitutions

Bench exercise	No-bench substitution
Dumbbell bench press	Dumbbell floor press
Incline dumbbell press	Standing low-to-high squeeze press or elevated push-up
Chest-supported row	Supported one-arm row or two-dumbbell bent-over row
Seated shoulder press	Standing or half-kneeling shoulder press
Hip thrust on bench	Dumbbell glute bridge from the floor
Bulgarian split squat	Split squat or reverse lunge

Workout log

Date	Exercise	Load	Reps	Useful note

Safety

This plan is general education for healthy adults, not individualized medical or rehabilitation advice. Select loads, ranges, and exercises appropriate to your ability. Build gradually and keep the training area clear.

If you are pregnant, recently postpartum, returning after surgery, managing a chronic condition that affects exercise, or dealing with a current injury, get individualized guidance from a qualified professional.

Stop and seek urgent assessment for chest pain or pressure, fainting, severe or unusual shortness of breath, or another acute concerning symptom. Stop or modify an exercise for sharp, localized, or worsening pain.

Sources

American College of Sports Medicine, 2026 resistance-training guidance: acsm.org/resistance-training-guidelines-update-2026/

CDC adult physical-activity guidance: cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/adults.html

Full article, exercise cues, evidence notes, and interactive plan generator: bodybuddy.app/blog/dumbbell-workout-plan