HIGHER HEIGHTS FITNESS
BRECKSVILLE, OHIO

Your First 4 Weeks: A Beginner Strength Template

A real, usable starting program — bodyweight and dumbbells, no gym required.

01 HOW THIS TEMPLATE IS BUILT

ACSM beginner guidance calls for just 1 set of 10–15 reps per exercise, 2–3 days/week. Research on beginner dose-response found that volume drives real gains — trained lifters typically need 4x the volume a true beginner needs for the same result.

02 THE TEMPLATE — FULL BODY, 3 DAYS A WEEK

Same routine all three days (e.g. Mon/Wed/Fri), at least one rest day between. Repetition is the point at this stage, not variety.

EXERCISE	WHAT IT TRAINS
Bodyweight Squat (or Goblet Squat)	Legs & hips
Push-Up (knees or incline OK)	Chest, shoulders, triceps
Glute Bridge	Glutes & hamstrings
Dumbbell or Band Row	Back
Dead Bug	Core

03 WEEK-BY-WEEK PROGRESSION

Weeks 1–2 — 1 set of 10–15 reps, 3x/week. Leave every set feeling like you could do a few more — your nervous system is learning the pattern.

Weeks 3–4 — Add a 2nd set, same 5 exercises. If 15 reps feels easy with room to spare, add light dumbbells rather than more exercises.

After week 4 — Add a 3rd set or increase load slightly — the same progressive-overload principle, continued.

> **WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE NERVOUS SYSTEM & GUT**
>
> Early strength gains come mostly from the nervous system getting better at recruiting muscle, not from the muscle itself growing yet. Repeating the same few movements at a controlled, moderate effort is exactly what lets that neural learning happen cleanly.

04 QUICK TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **Less is enough to start**
  1 set per exercise, 3x/week, is genuinely enough volume for real beginner progress.
- ✓ **Repeat the routine on purpose**
  Consistency beats variety at this stage — your nervous system needs reps to learn the pattern.
- ✓ **Progress one thing at a time**
  A 2nd set at week 3, then load — not everything at once.

Sources: Garber et al., ACSM Position Stand (2011) · Rhea et al., Med. Sci. Sports Exerc. (2003) · Liu et al., Frontiers in Physiology (2022).

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