



Free Gym Acclimation Program

Since starting Cane and Able Fitness, we've been about the sharing of information through articles, seminars, workshops and more.

Now, we're adding our free gym acclimation program for the visually-impaired into the mix. That's right, free!

Below you'll find Google doc files of each day of the program, and you can also find an accompanying YouTube video [here](#) for each day of the program, as well as an introduction.



Meet your Instructor



Evan Schwerbrock developed Leber's Hereditary Optic Neuropathy shortly after earning his Bachelor's Degree in Health Science. Within two weeks, he had massively impaired sight and had to figure out how to adapt to the gym and life with the new circumstances.

Evan has helped people all over the world to problem solve and overcome the issues that come with low vision to live healthier, happier lives.

After receiving his Masters Degree in Kinesiology, Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist certification and more, Evan was a professor, rehab specialist and personal trainer. In 2020, he founded Cane and Able Fitness, a resource providing applicable and accessible health information to the blind of the world.

Evan also competes in strongman, using the same principles he teaches to still achieve things in a competitive setting.

Using this Document

This document is predominantly text but includes pictures demonstrating the mentioned exercises throughout.

On the last page of each individual day (for example, Week One Day One, is a "speaker" icon. If you click this it will direct you to a YouTube video where Evan talks through each of these sessions.

Introduction

Purpose of Today

Today is an icebreaker day. You are going to explore the gym with a friend or gym employee and find all the important landmarks of the gym such as bathrooms, water fountains, and different exercise areas. Then you will work up a very light seat to get the ball rolling and leave. Think of today as a little introduction to the environment. After this day, you will better understand how to navigate your gym and where the essentials are.

Independence Builders of the Day

1. Complete the gym exploration checklist
2. Do 10 minutes of low-intensity cardio

Gym Exploration Checklist

With a knowledgeable friend or gym employee, find each of the following.

1. Bathrooms on the gym floor
2. Locker rooms if necessary
3. Cardio area
4. Weight machines area
5. Free weights area
6. Stretching/calisthenics area
7. Any other area or amenities the gym has that could be important (i.e. access to a sauna or pool area)



Warm-Up

Today's warm-up was completing your gym exploration checklist.

Workout

Pick a cardio machine you are comfortable with or can try out with your friend or A gym employee.

Set a timer for 10 minutes.

Perform slow, steady-state cardio on the machine you chose for just that 10 minutes then leave. Your intro day was very successful! Feel free to repeat this day once before starting Week 1 so you have a better grasp of the gym layout.

Need Audio? Click on the speaker for a voiceover of this section!



Week One. Day One

Purpose of Today

Today you will be familiarizing yourself with more specific areas of the gym such as dumbbell racks and how they are ordered. For your workout, you will be performing the classic 3 sets of 10. This is a simple exercise prescription that will result in thirty high-quality reps for hypertrophy and movement practice

Independence Builders of the Day

1. Ask someone to teach you where the dumbbell racks are and the order in which they are arranged
2. Walk down the dumbbell rack, touching each pair and naming each quietly or in your head to get a better feel and memory for where each weight is
3. If using weight machines, practice adjusting the seat and weight settings smoothly.
4. If using barbells, practice finding and loading weights smoothly.

Warm-Up

5 minutes of cardio on your favorite machine or one you've been wanting to try out!

Workout

Exercise 1: Vertical Pull

Perform 2 warm-up sets of 10, working up to your working weight for 3 sets of 10. Take rest as needed during warm-up then 60 to 90 seconds rest between your 3 sets of 10 at your top weight.

Movement examples:

- Assisted Pull-ups
- Assisted Chin-ups
- Lat Pulldown Machine with an overhand grip
- Lat Pulldown Machine with an underhand grip

Exercise 2: Vertical Press

Perform 2 warm up sets of 10, working up to your working weight for 3 sets of 10. Take rest as needed during warm up then 60 to 90 seconds rest between your 3 sets of 10 at your top weight.

Movement examples:

- Seated Upright Dumbbell Press
- Standing Barbell Press
- Seated Shoulder Press Machine

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Exercise 3: Hip Hinge Movement

Perform 2 warm up sets of 10, working up to your working weight for 3 sets of 10. Take rest as needed during warm up then 60 to 90 seconds rest between your 3 sets of 10 at your top weight.

Movement examples:

- Romanian Deadlift with dumbbells, kettlebell, barbell or mobility cane
- Good Mornings with barbell or mobility cane
- Back Extension Machine
- Back Extension on Glute-Ham Developer Machine (ask if gym has this)

Exercise 4: Core circuit

Movement 1: Front Plank on elbows or in pushup position with locked out elbows

Movement 2: Side Plank on forearm, feet on the floor for more advanced version, knees on the floor if you need to!

Perform each movement (Front Plank, Side Plank on left forearm, Side Plank on right forearm) for 10 to 20 seconds each, for 3 sets. Rest as needed in between sets and each movement.

Use these exercises to feel for a neutral spine position. Keep that core tight and safe!

Exercise 5: Burnout Interval

Use an interval timer to perform 10 seconds of hard effort and 50 seconds of easy effort on the cardio machine of your choice. Perform this sequence for 5 to 10 rounds sandwiched by a warm up and cool-down. So your interval work will look like this.

Warm Up: 2 minutes

Intervals of 10 seconds difficult pace, 50 seconds easy pace for 5 to 10 rounds.

Cool-down: 2 minutes

Examples of good equipment to use:

- Stationary Bike
- Rowing Machine
- Recumbent Bike
- Airdyne Bike (which also has arm handles to push and pull)
- Battle Ropes (you can perform slams with one arm at a time rhythmically or two hand slams)
- Jump Rope

If using jump rope or battle ropes, feel free to alter the interval times as you need to to get a good workout.



Week One. Day Two

Purpose of Today

Today's purpose is to work Horizontal Pull, Horizontal Press and Squat movements with your familiar 3 sets of 10. You will also be practicing loading and unloading a barbell which is an immensely useful skill for independence and workout efficiency and effectiveness.

Independence Builders of the Day

Today's independence task will be to practice loading a bar for the bench press.

Let's go Step by Step

1. Locate the bench press bench, rack, and nearby weights.
2. Ensure the barbell is centered and secure on the rack.
3. Find the clips to secure the weight plates.
4. Identify the weights and their locations (may be attached to the bench).
5. Load the bar to these weights, securing the clips each time:
 - 95 pounds (40 kg)
 - 135 pounds (60 kg)
 - 70 pounds (32.5 kg)

Keep in mind the bar typically weighs 45 pounds or 20 kg. If any weight feels uncomfortable to lift, skip it. This task helps you practice tactile weight selection, plate math, and efficient loading.

Warm-Up

5 minutes of cardio on your favorite machine or one you've been wanting to try out!

Workout

Exercise 1: Horizontal Pull

Perform 2 warm-up sets of 10, working up to your working weight for 3 sets of 10. Take rest as needed during warm-up then 60 to 90 seconds rest between your 3 sets of 10 at your top weight.

Movement examples:

- Bent Over Row with dumbbells or barbell
- Cable Bent Over Row with rope or two-handle attachment
- Seated Row Machine

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Exercise 2: Horizontal Press

Perform 2 warm-up sets of 10, working up to your working weight for 3 sets of 10. Take rest as needed during warm-up then 60 to 90 seconds rest between your 3 sets of 10 at your top weight.

Note: If using pushups, use a warm-up variation to make it easier to ease into the movement.

Movement examples:

- Barbell Bench Press
- Dumbbell Bench Press (Incline Bench press As Well)
- Bench Press Machine
- Pushups (With hands on Bench/Wall If needed)

Exercise 3: Squat Movement

Perform 2 warm up sets of 10, working up to your working weight for 3 sets of 10. Take rest as needed during warm up then 60 to 90 seconds rest between your 3 sets of 10 at your top weight.

Movement examples:

- Barbell Back Squat
- Smith Machine Squat
- Goblet Squat with dumbbell or kettlebell
- Squat onto box or bench
- Squat holding dumbbells at sides

Exercise 4: Core circuit

This will be a repeat of Day 1's core circuit. This time, try to squeeze your glutes during the entirety of your planks. This will help ensure proper alignment as you can't really squeeze your glutes when in a bad pelvic position.

Movement 1: Front Plank on elbows or in pushup position with locked out elbows

Movement 2: Side Plank on forearm, feet on the floor for more advanced version, knees on the floor if you need to!

Perform each movement (Front Plank, Side Plank on left forearm, Side Plank on right forearm) for 10 to 20 seconds each, for 3 sets. Rest as needed in between sets and each movement.

Use these exercises to feel for a neutral spine position. Keep that Core tight and safe

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Exercise 5: Steady-State Cardio

1. Perform 10–20 minutes of steady-state cardio at a conversational pace (able to talk without gasping).
2. Keep intensity low for tougher exercises like battle ropes, taking short breaks as needed.
3. Optional: Switch exercises every 5–10 minutes for variety or relief from repetitive motion.

Suggested Equipment:

- Stationary Bike or Airdyne Bike
- Rowing Machine
- Recumbent Bike
- Battle Ropes (one-arm or two-hand slams rhythmically)



Need Audio? Click on the speaker for a voiceover of this section!



Week Two. Day One

Purpose of Today

The goal today is to get you used to the 8 sets of 8 hypertrophy protocol. It will consist of (you guessed it) 8 sets of 8 reps at a light weight separated by 30 to 45 seconds of rest. Seems easy, but it will catch up to you. You'll get a lot done in a short amount of time. And if you can be one thing, you should be efficient.

Independence Builders of the Day

1. Remind yourself of the order of the dumbbell rack
2. Try a new cardio machine



Warm-Up

5 minutes of cardio on your favorite machine or one you've been wanting to try out!

Workout

Exercise 1: Vertical Pull

Perform 2 light warm up sets of 8 to 12 reps to work up to your working weight. Try doing your sets of 8 at a weight you estimate is 50% of your max OR is a weight you could handle for an all out set of 15 to 20 repetitions. Perform your 8 sets of 8 with just 30 to 45 seconds of rest between sets. Use an audible timer or count in your head.

Movement examples:

- Assisted Pull Ups
- Assisted Chin Ups
- Lat Pulldown Machine with overhand grip
- Lat Pulldown Machine with underhand grip

Exercise 2: Vertical Press

Perform 2 light warm up sets of 8 to 12 reps to work up to your working weight. Try doing your sets of 8 at a weight you estimate is 50% of your max OR is a weight you could handle for an all out set of 15 to 20 repetitions. Perform your 8 sets of 8 with just 30 to 45 seconds of rest between sets. Use an audible timer or just count in your head.

Movement examples:

- Seated Military Press
- Standing Barbell Press
- Seated Shoulder Press Machine

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Exercise 3: Hip Hinge Movement

Perform 2 light warm up sets of 8 to 12 reps to work up to your working weight. Try doing your sets of 8 at a weight you estimate is 50% of your max OR is a weight you could handle for an all out set of 15 to 20 repetitions. Perform your 8 sets of 8 with just 30 to 45 seconds of rest between sets. Use an audible timer or just count in your head.

If using a compound move such as the deadlift, make sure your low back is nice and safe the whole time. Never let your technique break down. If it does, take longer rests, lower the weight, or end the exercise.

Movement examples:

- Romanian Deadlift with dumbbells, kettlebell, barbell or mobility cane
- Good Mornings with barbell or mobility cane
- Back Extension Machine
- Back Extension on Glute-Ham Developer Machine (ask if gym has this)
- Conventional Deadlift with barbell

Exercise 4: Core circuit

Let's hit those planks again. This week, we are going to increase your workload.

Perform 3 sets of 20 to 40 seconds of your front plank and side planks. As before, rest as needed before sets and keep great spinal alignment as you do them.

Exercise 5: Burnout Interval

Let's up the intensity on your intervals this week!

Instead of 10 seconds difficult and 50 easy, let's switch it to 20 seconds difficult and 40 seconds easy. Try to do the same number of rounds as you did Week 1, or if you are feeling up to it, do even more rounds. Remember, it was 5 to 10 rounds in Week 1 but feel free to go a few more if you're able to.

Examples of good equipment to use:

- Stationary Bike
- Rowing Machine
- Recumbent Bike
- Airdyne Bike (bike which also has arm handles to push and pull)
- Battle ropes (you can perform slams with one arm at a time rhythmically or two hand slams)
- Jump Rope

Alter intervals as needed if doing battle ropes or jump rope

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Week Two. Day Two

Purpose of Today

Today's purpose is to test your senses in a different way then test your work capacity in the same 8 sets of 8 rep scheme but with different exercises.

Independence Builders of the Day

Stand against a wall or sit in an appropriate spot near the free weights and/or cardio area. Listen to the different noises that machines and people make. From the hum of the rowing machine fan to the odd grunts telling you a guy is doing curls in front of the dumbbell rack, learning all kinds of noises and recognizing them quickly will help you to better navigate the gym. It has helped me greatly to know what machines are being used and if someone is in the path I hoped to take. Feel free to practice this in between sets as well.



Warm-up

5 minutes easy pace on the machine you tried out last time.

Workout

Exercise 1: Horizontal Pull

Perform 2 light warm up sets of 8 to 12 reps to work up to your working weight. Try doing your sets of 8 at a weight you estimate is 50% of your max OR is a weight you could handle for an all out set of 15 to 20 repetitions. Perform your 8 sets of 8 with just 30 to 45 seconds of rest between sets. Use an audible timer or just count in your head.

Movement examples:

- Bent Over Row with dumbbells or barbell
- Cable Bent Over Row with rope or two handle attachment
- Seated Row Machine

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Exercise 2: Horizontal Press

Perform 2 light warm up sets of 8 to 12 reps to work up to your working weight. Try doing your sets of 8 at a weight you estimate is 50% of your max OR is a weight you could handle for an all out set of 15 to 20 repetitions. Perform your 8 sets of 8 with just 30 to 45 seconds of rest between sets. Use an audible timer or just count in your head.

Movement examples:

- Barbell Bench Press
- Dumbbell Bench Press
- Incline Dumbbell Bench Press
- Bench Press Machine
- Pushups
- Pushups with hands on bench or wall

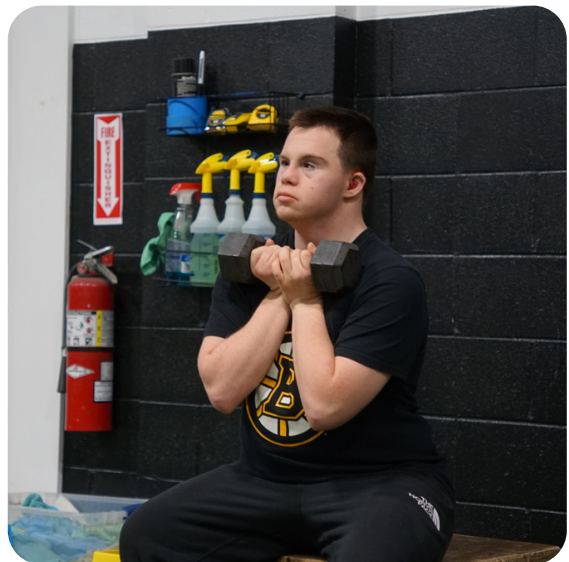
Exercise 3: Squat Movement

Perform 2 light warm up sets of 8 to 12 reps to work up to your working weight. Try doing your sets of 8 at a weight you estimate is 50% of your max OR is a weight you could handle for an all out set of 15 to 20 repetitions. Perform your 8 sets of 8 with just 30 to 45 seconds of rest between sets. Use an audible timer or just count in your head.

If using a compound move such as barbell back squats, make sure your low back is nice and safe the whole time. Never let your technique break down. If it does, take longer rests, lower the weight, or end the exercise.

Movement examples:

- Barbell Back Squat
- Smith Machine Squat
- Goblet Squat with dumbbell or kettlebell
- Squat onto box or bench
- Squat holding dumbbells at sides



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Exercise 4: Core Circuit

Let's hit those planks again. This week, we are going to increase your workload.

Perform 3 sets of 20 to 40 seconds of your front plank and side planks. As before, rest as needed before sets and keep great spinal alignment as you do them.

Exercise 5: Steady State Cardio

Perform 10 to 20 minutes of steady-state cardio. If you are doing a naturally more difficult exercise such as battle ropes, keep the intensity low on the slams and take short breaks as necessary.

You should maintain a conversational pace this entire time, meaning you should be able to carry on a conversation, stringing sentences together without gasping for breath.

You also have the option of doing more than one exercise for this time duration, switching between movements after 5 to 10 minutes. This will mix it up or give you relief if one repetitive motion for over 10 minutes is difficult.

Examples of good equipment to use:

- Stationary Bike, Air Bike, or Recumbent Bike
- Rowing Machine
- Battle Ropes (you can perform slams with one arm at a time rhythmically or two hand slams)

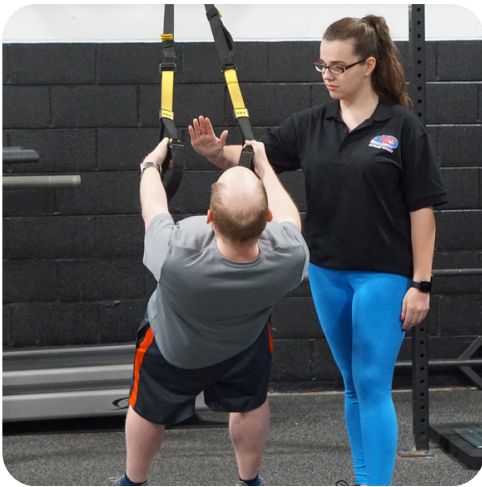
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Week Three. Day One

Purpose of Today

The purpose of today is to touch some heavier weight safely and then practice an intensity technique called rest-pause. It is a great way to be able to add intensity to an exercise without having to relocate or change weight.



Independence Builders of the Day

1. Talk to one person you've never spoken to before. It is very enriching to build your social network at the gym, so you might as well start today. My go to is asking "What are you working on today?" or some variant thereof.
2. If you have your phone or other media device and headphones, find a song you really like to listen to for your heavy sets and use it today.

Warm-up

5 minutes easy pace on the machine you tried out last time.

Workout

Exercise 1: Vertical Pull

2 warm up sets of 5 reps.

Then, 3 sets of 5 that are fairly difficult. You should only feel like you have another one to three reps in the tank. Adjust the weight up or down between sets as necessary. Rest at least 2 minutes between these sets. This is because with heavier weights, your body needs more time to fully recover.

After your last set of 5, cut the weight in half and perform one rest-pause set.

This consists of 3 mini-sets to almost failure separated by very short rest. Try:

1 set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form

Rest 15 seconds

A second set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form

Rest 15 seconds

One last set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form. If you are in a machine where you can safely push to failure, you may do so here.

Movement examples:

- Assisted pull-ups or Chin-Ups
- Lat pulldown machine with overhand or underhand grip

(Continued on the next page)

Exercise 2: Vertical Press

2 warm up sets of 5 reps.

Then, 3 sets of 5 that are fairly difficult. You should only feel like you have another one to three reps in the tank. Adjust the weight up or down between sets as necessary. Rest at least 2 minutes between these sets. This is because with heavier weights, your body needs more time to fully recover.

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Rest 15 seconds

A second set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form

Rest 15 seconds

One last set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form. If you are in a machine where you can safely push to failure, you may do so here.

Movement examples:

- Seated Military Press
- Standing Barbell Press
- Seated Shoulder Press Machine



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Exercise 2: Hip Hinge Movement

*****Note***** For this movement, try to use a machine that allows you to use good form in a safe environment for the rest-pause sets. If you have your heart set on something that is tougher on the low back like deadlifts, leave a few more reps in the tank for rest-pause and do not approach failure, even in the last set.

2 warm up sets of 5 reps.

Then, 3 sets of 5 that are fairly difficult. You should only feel like you have another one to three reps in the tank. Adjust the weight up or down between sets as necessary. Rest at least 2 minutes between these sets. This is because with heavier weights, your body needs more time to fully recover.

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Rest 15 seconds

A second set of as many reps as you can.

Rest 15 seconds

One last set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form. If you are in a machine where you can safely push to failure, you may do so here.

Movement examples:

- Romanian Deadlift with dumbbells, kettlebell, barbell or mobility cane
- Good Mornings with barbell or mobility cane
- Back Extension machine
- Back Extension on Glute-Ham Developer Machine (ask if gym has this)
- Conventional Deadlift with barbell



Exercise 2: Core Circuit

Ok, we have let you get used to all these planks for a couple weeks. Now let's limit the rest time.

First, perform a side plank on your left side for 3 sets of 20 to 30 seconds with only 15 seconds of rest between.

Next, repeat on the right side.

To cap it off, repeat for the front plank.

I bet these have improved a lot in the last few weeks!

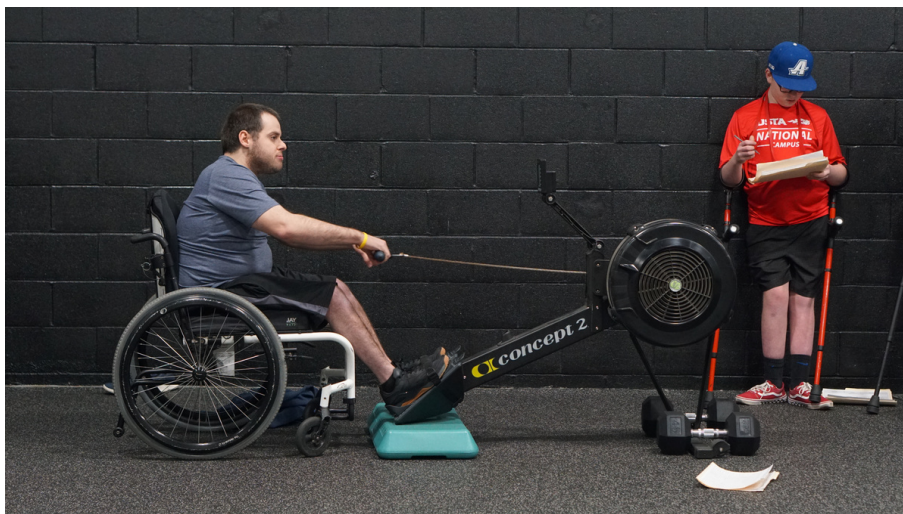
Exercise 5: Burnout Interval

Here we go, your last interval burnout of the program.

Now, perform your 2 minute warm up then 5 to 10 rounds of 30 seconds high intensity and 30 seconds low intensity, then another 2 minutes of cooldown. By now, you should be a master with whatever timing app you are using and how to push hard and rest even harder.

Examples of good equipment to use:

- Stationary Bike
- Rowing Machine
- Recumbent Bike
- Airdyne (bike which also has arm handles to push and pull)
- Battle Ropes (you can perform slams with one arm at a time rhythmically or two hand slams)
- Jump Rope



Need Audio? Click on the speaker for a voiceover of this section!



Week Three. Day Two

Purpose of Today

Today is capping off the program. Some heavy, some light. Think back to a few weeks ago and realize how much you've improved.

Independence Builders of the Day

Stand at the entrance of the gym floor and talk through where everything is in your mind

Warm-up

You already know! 5 minutes nice and easy of your choice!

Workout

Exercise 1: Horizontal Pull

2 warm up sets of 5 reps.

Then, 3 sets of 5 that are fairly difficult. You should only feel like you have another one to three reps in the tank. Adjust the weight up or down between sets as necessary. Rest at least 2 minutes between these sets. This is because with heavier weights, your body needs more time to fully recover.

After your last set of 5, cut the weight in half and perform one rest-pause set. This consists of 3 mini-sets to almost failure separated by very short rest.

Try this:

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A second set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form

Rest 15 seconds

One last set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form. If you are in a machine where you can safely push to failure, you may do so here.

Movement examples:

- Bent Over Row with dumbbells or barbell
- Cable Bent Over Row with rope or two handle attachment
- Seated Row Machine

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Exercise 2: Horizontal Press

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One last set of as many reps as you can until you feel like you could only get one more with good form. If you are in a machine where you can safely push to failure, you may do so here.

Movement examples:

- Barbell Bench Press
- Dumbbell Bench Press
- Incline Dumbbell Bench Press
- Bench Press Machine
- Pushups



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Exercise 3: Squat Movement

*****Note***** For this movement, try to use a machine that allows you to use good form in a safe environment for the rest-pause sets. If you have your heart set on something that is tougher on the low back like back squats, leave a few more reps in the tank for rest-pause and do not approach failure, even in the last set.

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Movement examples:

- Barbell Back Squat
- Smith Machine Squat
- Goblet Squat with dumbbell or kettlebell
- Squat onto box or bench
- Squat holding dumbbells at sides



(Continued on the next page)

Exercise 4: Core Circuit

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Next, repeat on the right side.

To cap it off, repeat for the front plank.

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Exercise 5: Steady state cardio

Perform 10 to 20 minutes of steady-state cardio. If you are doing a naturally more difficult exercise such as battle ropes, keep the intensity low on the slams and take short breaks as necessary.

You should maintain a conversational pace this entire time, meaning you should be able to carry on a conversation, stringing sentences together without gasping for breath.

You also have the option of doing more than one exercise for this time duration, switching between movements after 5 to 10 minutes. This will mix it up or give you relief if one repetitive motion for over 10 minutes is difficult.

Examples of good equipment to use:

- Stationary Bike, Air Bike, or Recumbent Bike
- Rowing Machine
- Battle Ropes



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