# Beginner gym workout

Four-week plan | Two nonconsecutive sessions per week

Use the same six exercises at both sessions, for example Monday and Thursday. Leave at least one full day between strength sessions. Repeat a week if you are not ready to progress.

## Your exercise list

| Exercise | Setup reminder - learn it with gym staff |
|---|---|
| Seated leg press | Keep your back supported and heels on the plate; do not lock your knees. |
| Seated leg curl | Have staff fit the pads and seat; curl and return without lifting your hips. |
| Seated chest press | Set handles near mid-chest; keep wrists straight and back supported. |
| Seated cable row | Pull toward your lower ribs with a steady torso; avoid rocking backward. |
| Machine shoulder press | Use a comfortable forward-facing grip; avoid arching your back. |
| Dead bug | Move opposite arm and leg slowly; shorten the reach if your back lifts. |

## Progression - working sets only

| Week | Each machine / cable exercise | Dead bug | Main task |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 x 8 | 1 x 5 per side | Learn the setup |
| 2 | 1 x 10 | 1 x 6 per side | Repeat with control |
| 3 | 2 x 8 | 2 x 5 per side | Add a second set |
| 4 | 2 x 8-12 | 2 x 5-8 per side | Build within the range |

Before lifting: Warm up with 5-10 minutes of easy walking or cycling, then rehearse each machine exercise with a very light load. Warm-up sets do not count in the table.

During sets: Leave 2-3 good reps in reserve. Rest about 90-120 seconds for machine work, or longer if needed; about 60-90 seconds for dead bug. Breathe throughout. Stop for pain, dizziness, or other concerning symptoms.

Progressing: No automatic weekly weight increase. After two consecutive sessions with 12 controlled reps in both machine sets and 2-3 reps still available, try the smallest suitable increase at a later session. Return toward 8 reps.

Original introductory schedule. Guidance: ACSM 2026; Mayo Clinic; ACE exercise library. Read the companion article for full technique notes and sources.

# Week 1 - Learn the setup

Four-week plan | Two nonconsecutive sessions per week

Target per session: Each machine/cable exercise: 1 set(s) of 8 reps. Dead bug: 1 set(s) of 5 reps per side.

Choose light loads. Record seat and pad settings. End each set with 2-3 good reps still possible.

## Session 1 Date: _____

| Exercise | Load* | Set 1 reps | Set 2 reps | Settings / notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seated leg press | | | -- | |
| Seated leg curl | | | -- | |
| Seated chest press | | | -- | |
| Seated cable row | | | -- | |
| Machine shoulder press | | | -- | |
| Dead bug | BW | | -- | |

## Session 2 Date: _____

| Exercise | Load* | Set 1 reps | Set 2 reps | Settings / notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seated leg press | | | -- | |
| Seated leg curl | | | -- | |
| Seated chest press | | | -- | |
| Seated cable row | | | -- | |
| Machine shoulder press | | | -- | |
| Dead bug | BW | | -- | |

*Record the machine load and its unit (kg or lb). BW = bodyweight. Dead-bug reps are per side. A dash means no second working set is planned this week.

Next-session decision: keep this target / repeat an earlier week / ask for help

What should I change or remember? _____

# Week 2 - Repeat with control

Four-week plan | Two nonconsecutive sessions per week

Target per session: Each machine/cable exercise: 1 set(s) of 10 reps. Dead bug: 1 set(s) of 6 reps per side.

Keep the same loads and add reps only if form and recovery are comfortable. Otherwise repeat Week 1.

## Session 1 Date: _____

| Exercise | Load* | Set 1 reps | Set 2 reps | Settings / notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seated leg press | | | -- | |
| Seated leg curl | | | -- | |
| Seated chest press | | | -- | |
| Seated cable row | | | -- | |
| Machine shoulder press | | | -- | |
| Dead bug | BW | | -- | |

## Session 2 Date: _____

| Exercise | Load* | Set 1 reps | Set 2 reps | Settings / notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seated leg press | | | -- | |
| Seated leg curl | | | -- | |
| Seated chest press | | | -- | |
| Seated cable row | | | -- | |
| Machine shoulder press | | | -- | |
| Dead bug | BW | | -- | |

*Record the machine load and its unit (kg or lb). BW = bodyweight. Dead-bug reps are per side. A dash means no second working set is planned this week.

Next-session decision: keep this target / repeat an earlier week / ask for help

What should I change or remember? _____

# Week 3 - Add a second set

Four-week plan | Two nonconsecutive sessions per week

Target per session: Each machine/cable exercise: 2 set(s) of 8 reps. Dead bug: 2 set(s) of 5 reps per side.

Keep the loads steady; reduce them if the second set needs it. Repeat Week 2 if you are not ready.

## Session 1 Date: _____

| Exercise | Load* | Set 1 reps | Set 2 reps | Settings / notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seated leg press | | | | |
| Seated leg curl | | | | |
| Seated chest press | | | | |
| Seated cable row | | | | |
| Machine shoulder press | | | | |
| Dead bug | BW | | | |

## Session 2 Date: _____

| Exercise | Load* | Set 1 reps | Set 2 reps | Settings / notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seated leg press | | | | |
| Seated leg curl | | | | |
| Seated chest press | | | | |
| Seated cable row | | | | |
| Machine shoulder press | | | | |
| Dead bug | BW | | | |

*Record the machine load and its unit (kg or lb). BW = bodyweight. Dead-bug reps are per side. A dash means no second working set is planned this week.

Next-session decision: keep this target / repeat an earlier week / ask for help

What should I change or remember? _____

# Week 4 - Build within the range

Four-week plan | Two nonconsecutive sessions per week

Target per session: Each machine/cable exercise: 2 set(s) of 8-12 reps. Dead bug: 2 set(s) of 5-8 reps per side.

Add reps only while keeping 2-3 in reserve. There is no required weight increase this week.

## Session 1 Date: _____

| Exercise | Load* | Set 1 reps | Set 2 reps | Settings / notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seated leg press | | | | |
| Seated leg curl | | | | |
| Seated chest press | | | | |
| Seated cable row | | | | |
| Machine shoulder press | | | | |
| Dead bug | BW | | | |

## Session 2 Date: _____

| Exercise | Load* | Set 1 reps | Set 2 reps | Settings / notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seated leg press | | | | |
| Seated leg curl | | | | |
| Seated chest press | | | | |
| Seated cable row | | | | |
| Machine shoulder press | | | | |
| Dead bug | BW | | | |

*Record the machine load and its unit (kg or lb). BW = bodyweight. Dead-bug reps are per side. A dash means no second working set is planned this week.

Next-session decision: keep this target / repeat an earlier week / ask for help

What should I change or remember? _____