

FIELD GUIDE · STRENGTH

FOUNDATIONS OF **STRENGTH**

Corrective strength fundamentals for a body built to last. The unsexy principles that separate strength that protects you from strength that breaks you.

By **James V. Wood** · Founder, Hybrid MVMT · NASM-CPT, CES, PES, WLS · TRX L1/L2 · Clinical Massage Therapist · RockTape Certified

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WHAT'S INSIDE

This guide builds your strength from the ground up — principles first, then the six movement patterns, then a real program to follow. Resist the urge to skip to the workout; the principles are what keep you healthy.

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STRENGTH IS A SKILL

Strength isn't just how much you can lift. It's how well you can produce and control force through a full, healthy range of motion — under load, on demand, without breaking down. That's a skill. And skills are trainable at any age.

Most people treat strength like a number to chase: add weight, hit a target, repeat. But the number is just the output. The real thing you're building is your body's ability to **generate and manage force safely**. When you understand strength as a skill, everything changes — you stop ego-lifting broken patterns and start building something that lasts decades.

DON'T ADD STRENGTH TO DYSFUNCTION.
BUILD STRENGTH OUT OF IT.

WHY THIS MATTERS MORE AS YOU AGE

Strength is the single most protective quality you can build for a long, capable life. It preserves muscle and bone, keeps your metabolism healthy, protects your joints, and is the difference between aging into frailty and aging into independence. The good news: your body responds to strength training at every age. It's never too late to start, and the foundations in this guide are exactly where to begin.

THE TRAP OF CHASING THE NUMBER

Here's how most people get hurt: they add weight to a pattern they haven't earned. They load a squat they can't perform with control, a hinge with a rounded back, a press with unstable shoulders. The number goes up for a while — then something gives. We do it backwards on purpose: **earn the position, then load it**. Slower at first, unbreakable later.

The reframe: your goal in the first weeks isn't to lift heavy — it's to move beautifully. Heavy comes naturally once the movement is clean. Quality is the foundation; load is what you build on it.

THE 5 PRINCIPLES

These five rules never change, regardless of your age, goal, or experience. Internalize them and you'll train productively and safely for life.

1 · MASTER THE POSITION BEFORE THE LOAD

If you can't own the bottom of a squat with just your bodyweight, you have no business adding a barbell. The position is the prerequisite. Earn it first, every time. This single rule prevents the majority of training injuries.

2 · TRAIN MOVEMENTS, NOT MUSCLES

Your body moves in patterns — push, pull, hinge, squat, carry, rotate. Build the patterns and the muscles come along for free. Chase isolated muscles and the patterns (the things you actually use in life) fall apart. Strong patterns make a strong, useful body.

3 · PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD, PATIENTLY

Strength is built by asking your body for slightly more over time — a little more weight, one more rep, a cleaner range, a touch more control. Small and relentless beats big and reckless. The tortoise wins every single time in strength training.

4 · BRACE BEFORE YOU MOVE

A strong, stable core is the platform every limb pushes against. Learn to brace — 360 degrees of tension around your spine — and you unlock more strength while protecting your back. Bracing isn't optional; it's the foundation of every lift.

5 · RECOVER LIKE IT'S PART OF THE WORK

You don't get stronger in the session — you get stronger recovering from it. Sleep, fuel, and rest aren't the reward for training; they're half of the training itself. Skimp here and you'll train hard for little return.

FIVE RULES.
FOLLOWED FOR LIFE,
THEY BUILD A BODY THAT **LASTS**.

THE RIGHT ORDER

There's a sequence to building strength the right way, and skipping a stage is how people end up strong but broken. Respect the order and your progress compounds for years.

STAGE	WHAT IT BUILDS	WHY IT COMES FIRST
1. Mobility	The range to get into positions	You can't safely load a position you can't reach
2. Stability	Control of that range	Range you can't control is a liability
3. Strength	Force through the controlled range	Now it's safe to add load and build power
4. Power	Force produced quickly	The capstone — only on a strong base

Picture building a house. Mobility is clearing and leveling the ground. Stability is pouring the foundation. Strength is framing the structure. Power is the finishing work. Try to frame a house on unlevel ground with no foundation and it doesn't matter how good your framing is — the whole thing is compromised.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

If a movement is restricted, mobilize it before you load it (our mobility guide is built for exactly this). If you can reach a position but can't control it, earn stability with slow tempo and bodyweight before adding weight. Only then do you progressively load. Power work — jumps, throws, explosive lifts — comes last, once the base is solid.

The corrective-first philosophy: this is why Hybrid MVMT assesses your movement before prescribing load. Building strength on a restriction or instability just makes the problem stronger. Fix the base, then build the structure.

BRACING & BREATHING

Before you train a single pattern, learn this. Bracing is the platform that every strong, safe lift is built on — and almost nobody is taught it properly.

WHAT BRACING ACTUALLY IS

Bracing is creating 360 degrees of tension around your spine, like a natural weight belt made of your own muscles. It's not sucking your stomach in. It's the opposite — you expand and stiffen, creating pressure that stabilizes your spine so your arms and legs have something solid to push against. A braced trunk is a strong, protected trunk.

HOW TO BRACE

1. **Breathe into your belly**, not your chest — feel your stomach and sides expand 360 degrees.
2. **Stiffen as if about to be lightly punched** in the gut — tension all the way around, not just the front.
3. **Keep breathing shallowly** behind that tension on lighter work; on heavy efforts, hold the braced breath for the rep, then reset.

Practice drill: lie on your back, hand on your belly. Breathe so your hand rises (not your chest). Then brace against your hand without losing the air. That's the feeling you want to carry into every lift.

THE BREATHING RHYTHM FOR LIFTING

For most strength work: **inhale and brace before the hard part, exhale through or after it.** Breathe in and stiffen at the top of a squat, descend and drive up, exhale as you finish. The brace protects your spine exactly when the load is highest.

Master this first. A solid brace will instantly make you stronger and safer on every pattern that follows. It's the least glamorous and most important skill in this entire guide.

THE HINGE

The most important — and most butchered — movement in strength training. The hinge is how you safely pick anything up off the floor, and it's the foundation of the deadlift, the most honest strength exercise there is.

What it builds: Powerful, resilient hamstrings, glutes, and lower back; a back that's protected because it's trained to do this job. Master the hinge and you'll pick things up safely for the rest of your life.

THE KEY CUES

- Push your **hips back**, not your knees forward — the motion is at the hips
- Keep a **long, flat back** from head to tailbone the whole time
- Feel the stretch load into your **hamstrings** as you descend
- Drive your **hips forward** to stand, squeezing your glutes at the top
- Keep the weight close to your body throughout

THE PROGRESSION LADDER

1 HIP HINGE (DOWEL ON BACK)

[Learn](#)

Hold a dowel along your spine; keep all three contact points (head, mid-back, tailbone) touching as you hinge. Grooves a perfect flat-back pattern.

2 ROMANIAN DEADLIFT (LIGHT)

[Build](#)

Hinge with a light dumbbell or kettlebell, feeling the hamstrings load and the glutes drive you up.

3 CONVENTIONAL / TRAP-BAR DEADLIFT

[Strengthen](#)

Load the full pattern from the floor once your hinge is clean and braced.

THE SQUAT

The king of lower-body strength. The squat builds powerful legs and hips and keeps you able to get up and down off the floor — one of the truest markers of staying young.

What it builds: Strong quads, glutes, and core; resilient knees and hips; the everyday ability to sit, stand, and lower yourself with control. A full-range squat is a fountain of youth for your lower body.

THE KEY CUES

- Sit **between your hips**, not just down — let the hips and knees bend together
- Keep your **knees tracking over your toes**, never caving inward
- Stay **tall through the chest** with a braced trunk
- Descend to the **depth you can control** with a flat back; build depth over time
- Drive the floor away through your whole foot to stand

THE PROGRESSION LADDER

1 BOX SQUAT

[Learn](#)

Squat to a box or chair to learn depth and control. Touch, don't crash, then stand.

2 GOBLET SQUAT

[Build](#)

Hold a weight at your chest; it counterbalances you and grooves an upright, deep squat.

3 BARBELL FRONT / BACK SQUAT

[Strengthen](#)

Load the bar once your bodyweight and goblet squats are clean and deep.

THE PUSH

Pressing force away from you — horizontally (push-up, bench) and overhead (press). The push builds a strong, capable upper body and shoulders that are stable instead of cranky.

What it builds: Chest, shoulders, and triceps strength; stable, healthy shoulders; the real-world ability to push, press, and hold yourself up. Done right, pressing builds shoulders that last.

THE KEY CUES

- Keep your **shoulder blades set** — down and slightly back, not shrugged to your ears
- Maintain a **braced trunk**; don't let your lower back arch on overhead presses
- Move through a **full range** you can control
- Keep **wrists stacked** over elbows for efficient force
- Press in a straight, efficient line

THE PROGRESSION LADDER

- 1 INCLINE / WALL PUSH-UP** [Learn](#)
Start with hands elevated to master the plank-tight pressing pattern, then lower the surface over time.
- 2 FLOOR / FULL PUSH-UP & DB PRESS** [Build](#)
Build pressing strength horizontally with full push-ups and dumbbell presses.
- 3 OVERHEAD PRESS** [Strengthen](#)
Press overhead once your shoulders are mobile and stable and your brace is solid.

THE PULL

Pulling force toward you — rows and pull-ups. The pull is the direct antidote to desk posture and the key to a strong, healthy upper back and shoulders. Most people are far weaker here than they should be.

What it builds: Upper-back and lat strength; healthy, balanced shoulders; the posture-saving counter to all the pushing and sitting you do. A strong back holds you upright through life.

THE KEY CUES

- **Initiate with your shoulder blade**, pulling it back and down before your arm bends
- Keep your **trunk braced** and torso still — don't heave with your whole body
- Pull to a **full contraction**, squeezing the back at the end
- Control the lowering — the **negative builds strength too**
- Avoid shrugging; keep the neck long

THE PROGRESSION LADDER

1 BAND PULL-APART / INVERTED ROW [Learn](#)
Learn to drive the movement from the upper back with bands or a bar set at an angle.

2 DUMBBELL / CABLE ROW [Build](#)
Build pulling strength with single-arm and two-arm rows through a full range.

3 PULL-UP (ASSISTED TO FULL) [Strengthen](#)
Progress from band-assisted to full pull-ups as your back strength climbs.

THE CARRY

Pick something heavy up and walk with it. The most honest, transferable strength exercise there is — and the most underused. Carries build a core and grip that nothing else touches.

What it builds: Total-body and grip strength; a rock-solid braced core; posture and shoulder stability under load. Carries train your body to stay strong and aligned while moving — exactly what life demands.

THE KEY CUES

- Stand **tall and braced** — ribs down, shoulders set, core tight
- Take **controlled, deliberate steps**, not a rush
- Resist the load **pulling you out of position** — that resistance is the work
- Keep your **breathing steady** behind your brace
- Grip hard — it switches on your whole upper body

THE PROGRESSION LADDER

1 SUITCASE CARRY [Learn](#)
Hold a weight in one hand and walk tall, resisting the lean. Brutal, simple core work.

2 FARMER CARRY [Build](#)
A weight in each hand, walk with perfect posture for distance or time.

3 FRONT-RACK / OVERHEAD CARRY [Strengthen](#)
Carry weight at the shoulders or overhead for advanced core and shoulder stability.

THE ROTATE

Creating and resisting rotation through a braced trunk. This is where real-world, athletic power lives — swinging, throwing, twisting, changing direction — and where a healthy back is protected from bad rotation.

What it builds: Rotational power and, just as importantly, anti-rotation core strength that protects your spine. Most everyday and athletic forces are rotational; training this pattern makes you powerful and bulletproof.

THE KEY CUES

- Generate rotation from the **hips and mid-back**, never the lower back
- Keep the **core braced** to transfer force, not leak it
- For anti-rotation work, **resist the pull** and stay perfectly square
- Move with **control** — rotation is powerful but easy to overdo
- Breathe behind the brace throughout

THE PROGRESSION LADDER

1

PALLOF PRESS

[Learn](#)

Hold a band or cable to your chest and press it straight out, resisting its pull to rotate you. The anti-rotation foundation.

2

CABLE / BAND CHOP & LIFT

[Build](#)

Move the resistance diagonally across your body, driving from the hips with a braced core.

3

ROTATIONAL THROWS / POWER WORK

[Strengthen](#)

Add explosive rotational throws once your control and base strength are solid.

THE 4-WEEK ON-RAMP

You don't need a complicated program to start — you need consistency on the fundamentals. Three full-body sessions a week, built on the six patterns. This is your first month.

THE WEEKLY TEMPLATE

Each session (3 per week, e.g. Mon / Wed / Fri):

- **Warm-up (5 min):** the Daily 8 mobility routine to prepare your joints.
- **Lower body:** 1 hinge + 1 squat variation.
- **Upper body:** 1 push + 1 pull variation.
- **Core/carry:** 1 carry or rotation movement.

SETS, REPS & EFFORT

VARIABLE	WEEKS 1-2	WEEKS 3-4
Sets	2 per exercise	3 per exercise
Reps	8–10, easy & clean	6–10, slightly heavier
Effort	Stop 3–4 reps short of failure	Stop 2 reps short of failure
Rest	60–90 seconds	90–120 seconds
Tempo	Slow & controlled, master form	Controlled, add a little load

The rule for month one: every rep should look good. If form breaks down, you're done with that set — quality over quantity, always. You're grooving patterns you'll use for years; make them clean.

THE NEXT 8 WEEKS

Once the patterns are clean and the habit is set, you progress. The goal now is to get measurably stronger — patiently, sustainably, without breaking the form you just built.

HOW TO PROGRESS (THE SIMPLE RULE)

When all your sets for an exercise feel clean and you're finishing the rep range with 2 reps still in the tank, it's time to progress. Add load in small jumps, or add a rep, or add a set. **Change one variable at a time** and only when the current one feels solid. This is progressive overload, and it's the entire secret to getting stronger.

WEEKS	FOCUS	WHAT CHANGES
5–6	Add load	3 sets of 6–8, heavier. Patterns stay clean; weight creeps up.
7–8	Add volume	Add a set on your main lifts; introduce a second variation per pattern.
9–10	Add intensity	Work closer to your limits on key lifts (still 1–2 in reserve); harder progressions.
11–12	Deload & test	One easier week to recover, then test how much stronger you've become.

THE DELOAD — DON'T SKIP IT

Every 4–6 weeks, take an easier week: same movements, less weight and volume. This isn't lost time — it's when your body consolidates the gains and you come back stronger. Pushing hard forever leads to burnout and injury; planned recovery leads to long-term progress.

BORING ON PAPER. TRANSFORMATIVE IN PRACTICE.

After 12 weeks you'll have a clean, strong foundation across all six patterns — and the knowledge to keep progressing. This is also the point where a coach can take you much further, faster, with programming tuned precisely to your body and goals.

RECOVERY & FUEL

You don't grow in the gym — you grow recovering from it. This is the half of strength training that gets ignored, and it's why so many people work hard for little reward.

SLEEP: THE #1 PERFORMANCE ENHANCER

Sleep is when your body actually repairs and builds the muscle you stimulated. Skimp on it and you blunt your strength gains, slow recovery, and raise injury risk. Aim for 7–9 hours on a consistent schedule. No supplement comes close to the impact of good sleep.

PROTEIN & FUEL

Muscle is built from protein, so getting enough is essential — a useful target is roughly 0.7–1 gram per pound of bodyweight per day, spread across meals. Around that, eat enough total food to support your training (under-eating stalls strength) and favour whole, minimally-processed foods for the nutrients that aid recovery.

REST DAYS & ACTIVE RECOVERY

Your three weekly sessions need recovery between them — that's why full-body training with rest days works so well for building a foundation. On off days, gentle movement (a walk, the Daily 8 mobility routine) promotes recovery without adding stress. Rest is productive; treat it that way.

HYDRATION & STRESS

Well-hydrated muscle performs and recovers better, so drink consistently through the day. And remember that your body doesn't distinguish training stress from life stress — they share the same recovery budget. In high-stress periods, dial training back rather than pushing through; you'll progress better for it.

The equation: Training stimulus + Recovery = Progress. Nail one and ignore the other and you get nothing. The vitality side of the equation is exactly as important as the lifting.

EQUIPMENT & GETTING STARTED

You need far less than the fitness industry wants you to believe. Here's how to start strong whether you're at a full gym or your living room floor.

THE MINIMALIST HOME SETUP

You can build a serious foundation with almost nothing. In order of value-for-money:

- **Your bodyweight.** Free, always available, and enough to master every pattern's foundation. Push-ups, squats, hinges, lunges, planks — start here.
- **A pair of adjustable dumbbells or kettlebells.** The single best purchase. They cover squats, hinges, presses, rows, and carries.
- **Resistance bands.** Cheap, portable, perfect for pulls, pull-aparts, and Pallof presses (the pull and rotate patterns).
- **A pull-up bar.** A doorway bar unlocks the king of pulling exercises.

Don't let equipment be an excuse. A pair of dumbbells and a band cover all six patterns. People have built remarkable strength with less. Start with what you have today.

THE FULL-GYM ADVANTAGE

A gym adds barbells (the gold standard for progressive overload on big lifts), cable machines (smooth resistance for rows and rotation), and a deep range of loads so you can progress for years. If you have access and feel comfortable, it's the most efficient long-term setup. If you don't, you lose nothing essential in your first months.

THE TWO NON-NEGOTIABLES

Whatever your setup, you need two things: a way to **progressively add resistance** over time (adjustable weights or enough band tensions), and **enough space** to move through full ranges safely. Everything else is a nice-to-have.

Start today, upgrade later. Begin with bodyweight and whatever you own. Add equipment as your commitment proves itself. The best setup is the one that gets you training now.

WARM-UP & COOL-DOWN

The five minutes on either side of your session are where you protect your progress. Skip them and you leave performance — and safety — on the table.

THE WARM-UP: PRIME, DON'T DRAIN

A good warm-up raises your body temperature, lubricates your joints, activates the muscles you're about to use, and rehearses the movement patterns — without tiring you out. Save long static stretches for later; before lifting, you want dynamic, active preparation.

1 THE DAILY 8 (ABBREVIATED) 3–4 min
Run through the mobility reset to open every major joint.

2 MOVEMENT-SPECIFIC RAMP-UP 2 sets
Do the day's main lifts with just bodyweight or a light load for 1–2 sets to rehearse the pattern.

3 ACTIVATION 1 set
Wake up key stabilizers — glute bridges before lower-body day, band pull-aparts before upper.

THE COOL-DOWN: DOWNSHIFT & RECOVER

After training, your goal flips: bring the nervous system down, and use the warm, pliable tissue to gently work on range. This is the ideal time for longer static holds and slow breathing.

1 STATIC STRETCHING 3–4 min
Hold stretches for the muscles you trained, 30–45s each, while they're warm.

2 SLOW NASAL BREATHING 1–2 min
Long exhales to shift from 'training mode' into 'recovery mode' and kick-start recovery.

The rule: dynamic before, static after. Mixing them up — long passive stretching before heavy lifting — can actually reduce your power and stability for the session.

TRACKING & PROGRESSION

What gets measured gets managed. A simple training log is the difference between drifting and progressing — it turns 'I think I'm getting stronger' into proof.

WHAT TO TRACK

- **The lift, weight, sets, and reps.** The core data. "Goblet squat, 3×8 at 40lb" tells you exactly what to beat next time.
- **How it felt.** A quick note — easy, solid, or a grind — guides whether to progress or hold.
- **Reps in reserve (RIR).** Roughly how many more you could have done. Aim to keep 1–2 in the tank on most sets.

THE PROGRESSION DECISION

Your log makes progression simple and objective. The rule: when you hit the top of your rep range on all sets with 1–2 reps still in reserve, it's time to add a small amount of load next session. If a session felt like a grind or form slipped, repeat the same numbers until it's clean. Let the data decide, not your ego or your mood.

IF LAST SESSION WAS...	NEXT SESSION...
All sets clean, 2 reps in reserve	Add a little load or a rep
Completed but a real grind	Repeat the same weight and reps
Form broke down / missed reps	Reduce load slightly, rebuild quality
Felt great, easy throughout	Add load with confidence

Keep it dead simple. A note in your phone is enough. The act of recording — and beating your last number — is one of the most motivating and effective habits in all of strength training.

THREE SAMPLE WORKOUTS

Theory into practice. Here are three ready-to-run full-body sessions built on the six patterns — rotate through them across your training week. Pair each with the Daily 8 mobility warm-up.

WORKOUT A — SQUAT FOCUS

1 GOBLET SQUAT 3×8

Squat pattern. 3 sets of 8, controlled and deep.

2 ROMANIAN DEADLIFT 3×8

Hinge pattern. 3 sets of 8, feel the hamstrings.

3 PUSH-UP (OR DB PRESS) 3×AMRAP

Push pattern. 3 sets of as many clean reps.

4 DUMBBELL ROW 3×10

Pull pattern. 3 sets of 10 each arm.

5 FARMER CARRY 3 walks

Carry pattern. 3 walks of 30–40 metres.

WORKOUT B — HINGE FOCUS

1 TRAP-BAR / DB DEADLIFT 3×6

Hinge pattern. 3 sets of 6, braced and clean.

2 BOX SQUAT 3×8

Squat pattern. 3 sets of 8, control the depth.

3 OVERHEAD / INCLINE PRESS 3×8

Push pattern. 3 sets of 8.

4 INVERTED ROW / PULL-UP

3×max

Pull pattern. 3 sets to near failure.

5 PALLOF PRESS

3×10

Rotate pattern. 3 sets of 10 each side.

WORKOUT C — BALANCE & CARRY FOCUS

1 FRONT-RACK SQUAT

3×6

Squat pattern. 3 sets of 6.

2 SINGLE-LEG RDL

3×8

Hinge + balance. 3 sets of 8 each leg.

3 DUMBBELL BENCH / FLOOR PRESS

3×8

Push pattern. 3 sets of 8.

4 CABLE / BAND ROW

3×12

Pull pattern. 3 sets of 12.

5 SUITCASE CARRY

3 walks

Carry + anti-rotation. 3 walks each side.

How to use these: run A / B / C across three sessions a week (e.g. Mon/Wed/Fri). Start at the lighter end of the rep ranges, nail your form, and add load gradually as described in the progression chapter. Substitute the variation that matches your current level on each pattern.

COMMON MISTAKES

Sidestep these and you'll be ahead of most people who've trained for years. Each one comes straight from watching people stall or get hurt.

LOADING A PATTERN YOU HAVEN'T EARNED

Adding weight to a broken squat or rounded hinge. Fix: master the position with bodyweight first, every time.

EGO OVER EXECUTION

Chasing a number while form falls apart. Fix: the weight only counts if the rep looks good. Leave your ego at the door.

PROGRAM-HOPPING

Switching plans every two weeks chasing novelty. Fix: pick a sound plan and run it long enough to progress. Consistency beats variety.

SKIPPING THE WARM-UP AND THE BRACE

Jumping into heavy work cold and unbraced. Fix: mobilize first, brace every rep. Five minutes saves you months of setback.

IGNORING RECOVERY

Training hard, sleeping little, eating poorly, then wondering why nothing improves. Fix: respect recovery as part of the program.

NEVER PROGRESSING — OR PROGRESSING TOO FAST

Doing the same weights forever, or adding too much too soon. Fix: progressive overload — small, steady, one variable at a time.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

BUILD IT ON A **REAL FOUNDATION.**

Templates are a starting line. Your real program should be built around how YOUR body actually moves, where it's restricted, and what needs correcting first — so you get strong without breaking down. That's exactly what we do together, starting with a free intro call. Phoenix and remote coaching available.

BOOK YOUR FREE INTRO CALL · HYBRIDMVMT.LIFE