Training Split: Leg Workout

Leg workouts are a staple part of most training splits, such as Push/Pull/Legs, Upper/Lower, and Bro Splits (1 target muscle per workout). Leg workouts target the glute, quadriceps, hamstrings, and calves. Although the volume and frequency might be a bit different between training splits, the structure of a leg workout should be similar among all training splits. In this article I will give my recommendation on how you should structure your leg workout.

Conventional Deadlift

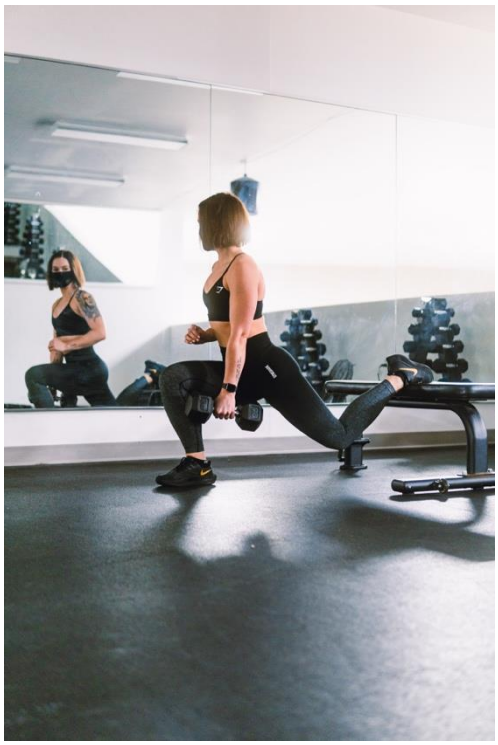
During a ***Leg*** workout you will start with 1 of 2 compound exercises, squats, or deadlifts. For squats, I recommend high bar back squats, low bar back squats, and front squats. For deadlifts, I recommend conventional deadlift, sumo deadlift, and trap bar deadlifts. Although there are different muscles stimulated for different variations, these differences are not significant, and it is most important you pick the variation that you enjoy and are most comfortable with.

High Bar Back Squat

For both exercises, I recommend you focus on strength for first 2-3 sets, working with a heavy weight in the 3-6 rep range. After performing the strength focused sets, perform 1-2 sets in 8-12 rep range focusing on hypertrophy. For more advanced lifters, you may add a few additional strength focused sets and include single/double rep sets. On the other hand, novice lifters should focus on the 8-12 rep for all working sets. Regarding intensity of the exercise, I recommend you do not go to failure for any of the sets. Intermediate and advanced lifter should train to around 0-2 reps in reserve without failing on the last rep for 0 reps in reserve, while novice lifters should train with 2-4 reps in reserve.

If you performed a squat for your first exercise, I recommend your second exercise be an exercise targeting the posterior chain (glutes and hamstrings). For the second exercise, I recommend you perform a hip hinge exercise, an exercise focused on flexion and extension of the

hips. Common exercises include hip thrusts and Romanian deadlifts. If you performed a deadlift as your first exercise, I recommend your second exercise be a squat variation, but one that loads the lower back minimally. Examples of squat exercises with minimal low back engagement include hack squats, leg press, and split squat variations. For this exercise perform 3-5 sets of 8-12 reps, performing to 0-2 reps in reserve.



Bulgarian Split Squat

For your third exercise, I recommend you perform a unilateral exercise (1 leg at a time). This includes lunges, single leg hip thrust, single leg Romanian deadlift, and many other exercises. The main purpose of this exercise is to fix any muscular imbalance between your left and right leg. Perform this exercise with your weaker leg first for 2-3 sets in the 8-15 rep range, with 0-2 reps in reserve

For the fourth exercise, pick an isolation exercise for either a leg muscle that you find lagging or want to emphasize more in your workout. Examples of leg isolation exercises include leg curls, leg extension and cable glute exercises. Perform the isolation for 2-3 sets in the 8-15 rep range, training to failure.
*****Optional Advanced lifters may include 1-2 more leg isolation exercises for higher leg volume.

Leg Press

The last exercise in the leg workout will be a calf raise. For your calf raises, alternate between a seated and standing variation between workouts, as they target different calf muscles. As all calf raises are similar, I recommend you find the variation that you enjoy and find most effective for your body. Perform 2-3 sets in 15-25 rep range, as the calves are primarily slow twitch muscle fibres, training to failure.

The recommended rep ranges are based on the goal of muscle hypertrophy, the rep range can always be lowered to focus on strength and increased to focus on endurance. It is important to note, muscle hypertrophy will occur in any rep range if there is sufficient volume and intensity.

Here are 2 examples of a leg workout following the principles stated above:

High bar back squat: 3 sets 3-6 reps, 1 set 10-12 reps
Romanian deadlift: 3 sets 8-10 reps
Reverse lunges: 3 sets 12-15 reps
Leg curl: 3 sets 12-15 reps
Seated calf raises: 3 sets 20-25 reps

Conventional deadlift: 3 sets 3-6 reps, 1 set 8-10 reps
Bulgarian split squat: 3 sets 8-10 reps
Single leg hip thrust: 3 sets 12-15 reps
Leg extension: 3 sets 12-15 reps
Standing calf raises: 3 sets 20-25 reps

If you are interested in learning exercise technique or interested in obtaining a workout program tailored to your goals, please contact personaltraining@curtishealth.com or speak to your Fitness Coordinator during your next visit.