



# STONE LIFTING TEMPLATE



liftingstones.org

***Cha'n fhiach duine gun neart gun innleachd.***

***(A man with neither strength or art is worth nothing)***

***— Peter J Martin***

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Written by Sean Urquhart



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## Stonelifting template overview

Welcome to the liftingstones.org stonelifting template - developed by Sean Urquhart, based on his own successful training.

This template accompanies the two training articles written by Sean. And I recommend reading those articles to get the full picture of how his training works.

[Stonelifting training part 1: Structure](#)

[Stonelifting training part 2: The workout](#)

Sean's articles and this template could be easily sold as a product. However, Sean has graciously offered to publish his two articles and this template for **FREE** to the stonelifting community.

So, if you've learnt *anything* from Sean's articles and this template, follow him on [Instagram](#).

## Introduction

Since my tour of the Faroe Islands, a number of people have asked me about how I structure my training for stonelifting and how I prepare for a stone tour. Everyone is different, but I have found what seems to work for me and I continue to make progress year after year — and I want to share that with you.

## Who is this template for?

This template is aimed at a few groups of people:

1. People who have been training for over a year.
2. People who want to incorporate stonelifting into a training routine.
3. People preparing for a stonelifting tour.

This isn't a template that has *everything* done for you - you need to do some work to build your program. Knowing how to select relevant exercises as well as sets and rep ranges for those exercises is important. Understanding how to manipulate intensity and volume across a block of training is essential too.

Think of this more like a *framework* for consistent long-term stonelifting progression.

## How to use this template

Choose between a 3 day or 4 day training week and use the appropriate weekly template.

Select your exercises and adjust the sets and reps to match your goals, weaknesses, and available equipment.

## Progression

My typical lifting blocks are done over 4 weeks. Intensity and volume wave up and down throughout the block to build fatigue. Then the fourth week is a priming/testing week where I try to test one lift (either deadlift, good morning, or squat) and a few different stone lifts. If the block went well, I could expect a good test day here.



To manage fatigue, I will treat the final lower body day as a lighter speed day. The 2nd to last heavy day will have percentages approaching 85-90% with accommodating resistance while the speed day directly preceding the testing day will be a day in which I am priming my body for the heavier loads to come. This priming day will have a reduction in overall volume and intensity. I do not consider this a deload as I am still training with the same intent and focus I would at any other time in the block.

I like to make sure that I always have a day off before I lift stones or do lower body because those workouts are (obviously) the most important to me.

## **Deloading**

Deload weeks are not taken unless necessary. In many cases, I let life dictate when I need a deload. If on a max effort day, I am feeling beat up and the weights feel extra heavy, that becomes a speed day. It doesn't take the place of my next speed workout. I will just do two in a row. If I haven't slept or eaten well, I will usually take the day off and continue with my regular scheduled workout the following day.

I feel that forcing your body to underperform due to a lack of nutrition or sleep is like taking two steps back and on step forward. There's no need to worry if you get out your routine. The only thing that could possibly happen by taking an extra day off is that you are more recovered when you hit the gym the next time.

After a particularly long stone tour, I will stay out of the weight room completely for however long I feel fit. After my first tour of Scotland in which I lifted 12 total stones, I was back in the weight room within a week and competing in professional highland games that weekend.

After my third stone tour (Faroe Islands and Iceland) in which I lifted 34 total stones, I didn't touch a weight or stone for almost three weeks. It wasn't that my body didn't want to, but I fell into quite a depression after that trip, something that I have battled and learned to manage for nearly 20 years.

## Exercise selection

Each workout is split into five categories. I find that doing any more than five exercises in a single workout is just too much. If you are really pushing things hard then you won't be able to do five exercises anyways. If you can then you need to lift with more intensity.

This stonelifting template allows you to *pick your own exercises* based on your goals, equipment, and personal preference. Choose exercises that fit within each day's guidelines.

### Lower Body categories

1. Warm-up accessory lift
  - To bring up lagging muscle groups that aid in stone lifts (glutes or hamstrings)
  - 3-6 sets for 5-20 reps
2. Main lift
  - Choose a variation of the squat, deadlift, or good morning
  - Squats are completed in 80% of the workouts
  - Max effort 1-3 rep max
  - Dynamic effort 6-10 sets, 2-3 reps
3. Stones
  - Choose to work either a full lift, extension, pick, or carry
  - Get creative and have some real fun here
4. Supplemental lift
  - Choose a lift that will build your main lift
  - If the main lift was a squat, perform a goodmorning or deadlift variation here
  - If the main lift was a deadlift or a goodmorning, perform a squat variation here
  - 3-6 sets, 5-8 reps
5. Accessory lift
  - Choose one lift that will bring up a lagging muscle group to aid in stone lifts
  - 2-4 sets, 10-20 reps

## **Upper Body categories**

1. Warm up accessory lift
  - To bring up lagging muscle groups (upper back, traps, rear delts)
  - 3-6 reps, 10-20 reps
2. Main lift
  - Choose a variation of the bench press or overhead press
  - Bench is completed in 80% of the workouts
  - Max effort 1-3 rep max
  - Dynamic efforts sets/reps 6-10 sets, 2-3 reps
3. Horizontal lats AKA rows
  - Choose a row variation
  - Often the lift targeted with the most intensity on upper body days
  - 3-6 sets, 5-10 reps
4. Vertical lats AKA chin-ups
  - Choose a chin-up or lat pulldown variation
  - 2-4 sets, 10-20 reps
5. Core
  - Choose an abdominal exercise
  - A strong core is essential for lifting big stones. This is not the time to go light.
  - 2-4 sets, 8-12 reps



## **Example exercises**

Here's a list of just some of the exercises that you can plug-in to the lower-body template.

### **Squats and variations**

- Back Squat
- Front Squat
- Zercher Squat

All of the above can be performed with or without a box, with a specialty or regular bar, with or without accommodating resistance, with or without a belt, wide stance or narrow stance, etc.

### **Deadlifts and variations**

- Floor
- Deficit
- Blocks
- Sumo
- Conventional

All of the above can be performed with or without accommodating resistance, with or without a belt, etc.

### **Goodmorning**

- Wide Stance or Close Stance
- High Bar or Low Bar
- Suspended or Regular

All of the above can be performed with a specialty or regular bar, with or without accommodating resistance, with or without a belt, etc.

## **Quads**

- Hatfield Squat
- Front Squat
- Leg Press
- Belt Squat
- Paused Squat
- Backwards Sled Drag

## **Hamstrings**

- RDL
- GHD
- Nordic Leg Curls
- Forward Sled Drag

## **Glutes**

- Heavy Swings
- Dimel Deadlift
- Pull Throughs
- Belt Squat Marches

## **Low Back**

- Good Mornings
- Hav Lifts
- Flat Back Extension
- 45 Degree Back Extension
- Reverse Hyper

## **Stone lifting exercises**

- Plate picks
- Sandbag box squats
- Hav lifts

## Plate picks

Heavy plate picks simulate the movement of lifting a stone to the hip. Using plates on a loadable pin makes it easy to vary the weight as needed, allowing for a more consistent progression.



## Sandbag box squats

Sandbag box squats are great for improving the extension and the explosive power needed to lift a stone from the lap to the chest.



## Four day template

In a 4 day week, I split my training into upper-body and lower-body days. And then those are split into heavy and speed days. So I'll do lower-body speed, upper-body speed, a rest day, lower-body heavy, another rest day, upper-body heavy, and a final rest day before repeating. Like this:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Lower speed	Upper speed	Off	Lower heavy	Off	Upper heavy	Off

Here's a basic outline with muscle groups and movements added in based on the five exercise categories:

Lower speed	Upper speed	Lower heavy	Upper heavy
Hamstrings	Upper back	Hamstrings	Upper back
Squat	Press	Squat	Press
Low back	Horizontal lats	Glutes	Horizontal lats
Stone Extension	Vertical lats	Stone Pick	Vertical lats
Glutes	Core	Quads	Core

And here's some sample exercises for those days:

Lower speed	Upper speed	Lower heavy	Upper heavy
GHD	Shrugs	GHD	Face pulls
Dynamic effort box squat	Bench against bands	Max effort box squat	Close grip bench
Camber goodmorning	Deadstop dumbbell rows	Ultra Heavy Kettlebell swings	Dumbbell rows
Sandbag squat to low box	Chins	Stone pick or HAV lifts	Lat pulldowns
Belt squat march	Decline weighted sit-up	Belt squat	GHD sit-up

Remember, feel free to change the exercises in each category to ones that are a closer match for your goals, weaknesses, and equipment access.

Now let's take those exercises and give them some sets and rep ranges.

### Day 1 (lower speed)

Category	Exercise	Sets and reps
Warm up	GHD	3-6 sets, 5-20 reps
Main lift	Dynamic effort box squat	6-10 sets, 2-3 reps
Stones	Sandbag squat to low box	
Supplemental	Camber goodmorning	3-6 sets, 5-8 reps
Accessory	Belt squat march	2-4 sets, 10-20 reps

### Day 2 (upper speed)

Category	Exercise	Sets and reps
Warm up	Shrugs	3-6 sets, 10-20 reps
Main lift	Bench against bands	6-10 sets, 2-3 reps
Horizontal lats	Deadstop dumbbell rows	3-6 sets, 5-10 reps
Vertical lats	Chins	2-4 sets, 10-20 reps
Core	Decline weighted sit-up	2-4 sets, 8-12 reps

### Day 4 (lower heavy)

Category	Exercise	Sets and reps
Warm up	GHD	3-6 sets, 5-20 reps
Main lift	Max effort box squat	1-3 rep max
Stones	Stone pick or HAV lifts	
Supplemental	Ultra Heavy Kettlebell swings	3-6 sets, 5-8 reps
Accessory	Belt squat	2-4 sets, 10-20 reps

## Day 6 (upper heavy)

Category	Exercise	Sets and reps
Warm up	Face pulls	3-6 sets, 10-20 reps
Main lift	Close grip bench	1-3 rep max
Horizontal lats	Dumbbell rows	3-6 sets, 5-10 reps
Vertical lats	Lat pulldowns	2-4 sets, 10-20 reps
Core	GHD sit-up	2-4 sets, 8-12 reps

## 4 week off-season progressions

What do these workouts look like in the context of a 4 week training block? Here's one of my 4 week off-season blocks for lower body (speed and heavy) days. Notice how the volume and intensity of different exercises wave up and down to build fatigue:

### 4 week off-season progression (Lower body speed)

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Glute ham raise	Glute ham raise	Glute ham raise	Glute ham raise
4 sets x 5 reps	5 sets x 5 reps	6 sets x 5 reps	2 sets x 5 reps
Dynamic effort box squat safety squat bar w/ chains	Dynamic effort box squat safety squat bar w/ chains	Dynamic effort box squat safety squat bar w/ chains	Dynamic effort box squat safety squat bar w/ chains
10 sets x 2 reps @65%	8 sets x 2 reps @70%	6 sets x 2 reps @75%	6 sets x 2 reps @50%
Camber bar goodmorning	Block deadlift mid shin snatch grip	SSB goodmorning	Romanian deadlift
4 sets x 5 reps	4 sets x 6 reps	4 sets x 8 reps	2 sets x 5 reps
Stone to chest	Stone to chest	Stone to chest	Stone to chest
5 sets x 1 rep @370lbs	5 sets x 1 rep @395lbs	5 sets x 1 rep @410lbs	3 sets x 1 rep @345lbs



Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Belt squat march  2 sets x 60 seconds	Forward sled drags  12 trips	Hip thrust with bands  2 sets x 50 reps	Belt squat march  2 sets x 60 seconds

## 4 week off-season progression example (Lower body heavy)

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Ultra-heavy Kettlebell swing  4 sets x 10 reps	Ultra-heavy Kettlebell swing  5 sets x 10 reps	Ultra-heavy Kettlebell swing  6 sets x 10 reps	Ultra-heavy Kettlebell swing  2 sets x 10 reps
Max effort squat, Parallel box, Camber bar w/ chains  Work up to a 3 rep max	Max effort box squat, low box, SSB w/ reverse bands  Work up to a 1 rep max	Modified max effort box squat, parallel box, Yukon bar w/ bands  6 sets x 2 reps @85%	Max effort squat test  Work up to a 1 rep max
Dimel Deadlift  3 sets x 15 reps	Zercher harness from pins  4 sets x 5 reps	Chair deadlift, sumo stance  4 sets x 8 reps	Stone lift test
Plate pick  4 sets x 3 reps	Plate pick  4 sets x 2 reps	Plate pick  4 sets x 1 rep	Sled drag  12 trips @135lbs
Belt squat  3 sets x 15 reps	Bulgarian split squat  3 sets x 10 reps	DB step up  3 sets x 12 reps	

## Three day template

In a 3 day week, we still do upper body and lower body days. However, instead of 2 speed days for upper/lower, we change it into a full body day, like this:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Lower heavy	Upper heavy	Off	Off	Full Body	Off	Off

Here's a basic outline with muscle groups and movements added in based on the five exercise categories:

Lower heavy	Upper heavy	Full body
Hamstrings	Upper back	Hamstrings
Squat	Press	Squat
Low back	Horizontal lats	Stones
Quads	Vertical lats	Press
Glutes	Core	Horizontal lats

And here's some sample exercises for those days:

Lower heavy	Upper heavy	Full body
GHD	Rear laterals	Forward sled drags
Max effort box squat	Bench with chains	Dynamic effort box squat
Rack pulls mid shin	Dumbbell rows	Stone lifts
Bulgarian Split squat	Chins	Incline bench
Belt squat march	Decline weighted sit-up	Barbell row

Remember, feel free to change the exercises in each category to ones that are a closer match for your goals, weaknesses, and equipment access.

## Day 1 (Lower heavy)

Category	Exercise	Sets and reps
Warm up	GHD	3-6 reps, 5-20 reps
Main lift	Max effort box squat	1-3 rep max
Stones	Rack pulls mid shin	3-6 sets, 5-8 reps
Supplemental	Bulgarian Split squat	3-6 sets, 5-8 reps
Accessory	Belt squat march	2-4 sets, 10-20 reps

## Day 2 (upper heavy)

Category	Exercise	Sets and reps
Warm up	Rear laterals	3-6 reps, 10-20 reps
Main lift	Bench with chains	1-3 rep max
Horizontal lats	Dumbbell rows	3-6 sets, 5-10 reps
Vertical lats	Chins	2-4 sets, 10-20 reps
Core	Decline weighted sit-up	2-4 sets, 8-12 reps

## Day 5 (fully body)

Category	Exercise	Sets and reps
Warm up	Forward sled drags	3-6 reps, 5-20 reps
Main lift	Dynamic effort box squat	6-10 sets, 2-3 reps
Stones	Stone lifts	3-6 sets, 5-8 reps
Supplemental	Incline bench	3-6 sets, 5-10 reps
Accessory	Barbell row	3-6 sets, 5-10 reps

## Resources and contact

For stonelifting articles, news, and resources visit [liftingstones.org](https://liftingstones.org).

If you have any questions about this template (or if you've made huge stonelifting gains with it), you can contact Sean at [instagram.com/seanurq](https://www.instagram.com/seanurq)