



## The Physician's Strength Training Glossary

### Intro

As a personal trainer with extensive experience in helping medical professionals achieve their health & fitness goals, I understand the unique challenges you face. Balancing a demanding career with personal well-being is no small feat, and incorporating strength training into your routine can significantly enhance your physical health, mental clarity, and overall performance.

This glossary is designed specifically for physicians like you, providing clear and concise definitions of common strength training terms. Whether you're new to strength training or looking to deepen your understanding, this resource aims to demystify the jargon and help you confidently navigate your fitness journey.

In the medical field, precise terminology is crucial for effective communication and understanding. The same principle applies to strength training. By familiarizing yourself with these terms, you'll be better equipped to implement the *Physician Vitality Playbook* workouts and track your progress with clarity and precision.

### What Do the Acronyms Mean in the Exercise & Lift Names?

SA	Single Arm	BB	Barbell
SL	Single Leg	RFE	Rear Foot Elevated
BU	Bottoms Up (refers to position of kettlebell – you would hold the kettlebell upside down from the handle)	OH	Overhead
KB	Kettlebell	RDL	Romanian Deadlift
DB	Dumbbell	TRX	TRX is a brand of exercise straps used to perform various exercises

### What Are “Reps”?

“Reps” – short for repetitions – indicates the execution of a specific exercise, lift, or drill in regard to the individual's best abilities for one single effort.

### What Are “Sets”?

Sets consists of a specific number of repetitions done consecutively before stopping and resting. For example, I might be doing split squats and I execute 10 repetitions before stopping and resting.\* That is considered one set of split squats.



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\*There are also specialized types of sets where you may rest for a few seconds before continuing to do more repetitions or perform mini-sets within one big set. This can get a bit confusing if you're new to this, so I will stop there.

### What is "Tempo"?

Tempo is the speed at which you execute a repetition. In your program, you will see three numbers.

The tempo is written in a three-number sequence on your sheet, or in some cases with a few letters. For example, you may see a tempo of:

**301**

**The first number** always equals the lowering phase of the movement. ALWAYS. This can be confusing to some as we don't always start each movement with the lowering phase. This starts the confusion as most people will think the first number represents the first part of the movement.

**The second number** represents either a pause at the bottom or the top of the movement. If you aren't sure where to put the pause, then do it both at the top and bottom. In cases where it is crucial that you do it at either/or, then we will make a note in the "notes" section.

**The third number** is the overcoming phase or, more simply put, the phase where you move the weight from the most biomechanically disadvantageous position.

For squats, presses, and RDLs the most biomechanically disadvantageous will be after the initial lowering phase of the movement.

For deadlifts, rows, and chin-ups the most biomechanically disadvantageous position will be the first part of the movement (deadlifts = standing up with the weight, rows = pulling the resistance toward your torso, chin-ups = pulling yourself to the bar from the bottom of the rep).

So, using our example from above of "301" we would lower ourselves for 3 seconds, no pause at the bottom or top, and then take 1 second to overcome the resistance.

### Why Are There Numbers and Letters Next To Each Exercise?

This helps with organization of the training session.

If two or more exercises have the same number, then they are paired together and completed for the prescribed number of sets & reps before moving on to the next set of exercises.



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For example, let's say you have 1A, 1B, & 1C followed by 2A & 2B. You would perform all of the 1's as a group before moving on to the 2's.

### **How Long Should I Rest?**

You may have noticed there aren't rest periods given for your strength training exercises & lifts.

Are rest periods important?

Absolutely

If we're focused on building lean muscle, at least 60 seconds between sets is ideal.

If we're focused on building strength, then 2–3 minutes is ideal in order for the fatigue to dissipate which will allow us to fully express our force-producing capabilities (aka strength).

However, you're busy. There's ideal, and then there's real life.

With all that said, go with rest periods which work for you.

Don't have a lot of time?

Then you will probably be doing 30–60 seconds between sets.

If you do have a lot of time, then follow the recommendations from above.

Worth noting – don't think you're doing better for yourself by pushing yourself to the point of exhaustion. The increased risk of injury, increased fatigue masking your strength levels, and sacrificing your technique to simply feel like you worked hard isn't worth it. I promise you, if you follow the reps and tempos listed, then you will feel like you put in some serious work by the end of your workout.

### **RIR ("Reps in Reserve")**

In the next couple of paragraphs I'm going to help you understand how hard you should be pushing yourself. "RIR"(reps in reserve) is simply a proxy to measure the intensity of a set.

Many clients don't know how to push themselves initially, which is expected and totally fine. You learn more and more over time of what you're capable of, but this section is to give you a solid understanding so you can get a jumpstart on this process.

#### **What is RIR?**

This is a pretty crucial aspect of your training process to get a grasp on and implement. Again, your understanding of what "RIR" truly means will evolve over time so don't stress over getting it perfect.



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Reps in Reserve (known as "RIR" moving forward) means how many extra reps you could have done after you finish your final rep for any given set.

For example, let's say you're doing a back squat for 10–12 reps and you're using 135 lbs. You do 12 reps with 135 lbs and stop because you reached the peak of the range of reps listed.

How many more reps beyond the 12<sup>th</sup> rep could you have done?

That's your RIR.

In this case, let's say your response was "I could have done 2 more reps."

Then your RIR = 2.

### **Why is RIR Important?**

RIR helps us have a metric to determine if we're pushing ourselves hard enough.

One of the common mistakes I've made as a trainer when I first started is having people subscribe to rep ranges, but not having anything to act as a guide to help them determine if they're pushing themselves hard enough.

RIR gives us that metric (although it's not perfect...I know).

### **Why Not Just Push Things to Failure (or "0 RIR")?**

Doing this every now and then is fine, but there's a few reasons not to.

- 1) It creates high levels of "fatigue". Your body's central nervous system needs to recover between sessions. Going to 0 RIR regularly will push your CNS to its limit and as a result you may see things like increase in incident of injury, illness, and mental/psychological fatigue which can lead to burnout.
- 2) In the short term, it can create excessive "peripheral fatigue" which leads to your muscles not being able to generate the same high levels of force, which means less load lifted, which means less volume accumulated. This can be intentional for a workout from time to time, but done chronically will hurt your long-term strength & muscle-building gains.

### **"Okay, So Which RIR Are We Striving For?"**

***Most of your training should focus on an RIR of 1–3 (use this as a guide if I don't list RIR).***

Anything higher than a 3 will probably not be enough of a stimulus to create change. Keep in mind: strength training is a stressor. When we apply a stressor, our goal is to push our bodies to adapt and change. If there's not enough demand for change, then change will not occur ("change" referring to increases in strength, muscular hypertrophy, etc.).



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### Does RIR Apply to All Lifts?

No.

If it's something like a core exercise, mobility exercise, or explosive lift/movement (e.g. hang clean, vertical jump, etc.), then RIR will not apply.

If you're not sure if it applies to a lift you're doing, then please message me in the Telegram group.

### What If.....

You have a set where it demands 12–15 reps at a 1 RIR.

Let's use the back squat again.

You've got 135 lbs for 12–15 reps at a 1 RIR.

You hit 15 reps, but feel like you could do 3–4 more reps.

Now what?

Keep pushing until you hit a 1 RIR.

This might mean you get 17–18 reps.

In this case, I would bump the weight up the following session.

Now let's run the same scenario: 135 lbs for 12–15 reps at 1 RIR.

This time, though, you hit rep number 9 and you know you only have 2 reps in reserve. Stop. Next set, decrease the weight and try again for the 12–15 rep range at 1 RIR.

Use the reps as a guideline to help you determine the approximate weight(s) you should be using.

### **How Do I Fill In My Sheet?**

Write down the number of sets x the weight x the reps.

For example, let's say that I completed split squats for 3 sets of 15 reps with 15 lb dumbbells in each hand.

I would write in my folder in the specific row for the given week "3 x 15 x 15 each leg". The "3" represents the number of sets, the first "15" represents the weight (although you can write the total of the two dumbbells combined which would be 30 lbs – for some reason, in my mind, I



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process the single DB better; either way is fine as long as it is consistent), and the second "15" represents the number of repetitions completed.

But what if for one of my sets I didn't do all 15 reps and instead I did 12?

Then I would write "2 x 15 x 15 each leg, 1 x 15 x 12 each leg".

What if the weight was different for one of the sets and I did 10 lbs in each hand for the first set and then bumped up to 15 lbs?

Then I would write "1 x 10 x 15 each leg, 2 x 15 x 15 each leg".

Hopefully, those examples make sense to you.

If things are still a little unclear, then I highly encourage you to watch the video series I created for you.

### Videos:

[How to Interpret Your Program](#)

[How to Build Out Your Warm Up](#)

[How to Properly Progress Yourself](#)