

ZAG YOUR WAY TO A HARDBODY

Alternate heavy and light exercises for each muscle group for a fast but effective total-body workout

BY BILL GEIGER, MA

WHILE THE LATEST do-it-all phone/camera/music player/Internet pocket device may be ultracool, its complexity is matched only by the 300-page instruction manual that comes with it. Five hundred bucks is a lot of money to spend on a phone, considering that you may know how to use only three of its features. Nothing seems to be missing—nothing, that is, except simplicity.

While your gym workout isn't nearly as complex, sometimes it's needlessly complicated. Routines can include multiple exercises to hit a target muscle from different angles using a battery of free weights and machines; they may call on intensity-boosting techniques like triple drop sets, partials and supersets and require cycling your sets and reps for every workout. But does a routine really have to be highly complicated to be highly effective?

Like your old-fashioned cord phone, your workout doesn't need to have a lot of bells and whistles to be worthwhile. In fact, one of the easiest training programs ever designed consists of just two exercises for a given body part and involves relatively heavy sets of one exercise, followed by several light sets of another. The benefits are that you're able to thoroughly work up to three body parts with just six exercises in a single workout—getting you in and out of the gym quickly—and you can focus on targeting each muscle group with different intensity in a zigzag pattern. Training heavy with a lower-rep range is optimal for building size and strength, while training with higher-rep sets is better for developing muscle endurance and generating a hard muscle pump. A fast and effective method of working your body from top to bottom doesn't get much simpler than this.

THE MAXFIT HEAVY-LIGHT PLAN

To ensure that you get the most benefit from the simplicity of the heavy-light training method, several key elements of the program are involved.

► **The workout shown in the Maxfit heavy-light routine follows a three-day split.** You train your legs on day one, your pushing muscles on day two and your pulling muscles and abs on day three, but you can adjust the split according to your needs. Because the workouts are fairly brief (just six exercises each training day), you don't really need to expand into a longer split. Every fourth day is a rest day.

► **You will do two exercises for each major muscle group.** Typically, you will combine a

compound move (in which more than one pair of joints is working, therefore recruiting a greater degree of muscle mass) with a single-joint exercise (also called an isolation exercise). The exercise pairing includes movements that work the target muscle from different angles (such as incline and decline presses for your upper and lower chest, respectively) to build in variety and stimulate maximum muscle growth.

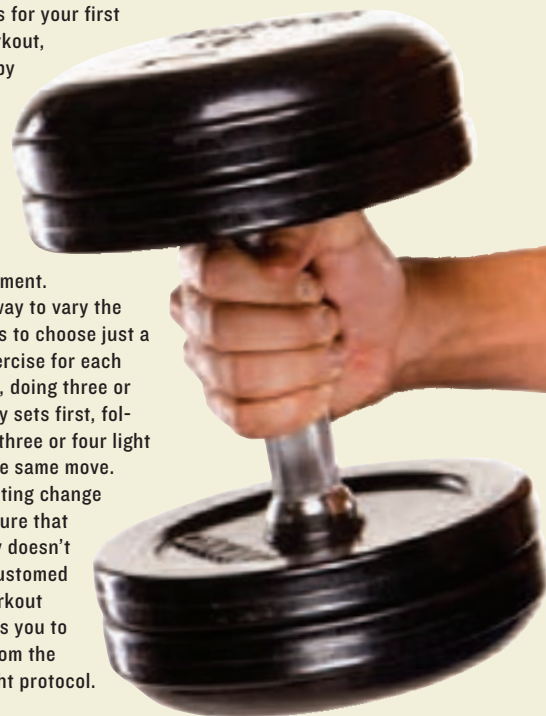
► **You will hit each target muscle group with both heavy and light weights.** The first exercise is done relatively heavy (choose a weight in which you can do just six to eight reps with good form before reaching muscle failure) to target the fast-twitch muscle fibers and promote increases in strength and muscle size. The second exercise is performed with relatively lighter weights so

that you can complete about 15 reps. This lower intensity thoroughly fatigues the muscle, pumping blood and promoting an increase in capillaries within the muscle so that it eventually becomes more efficient at carrying oxygen and nutrients.

► **Choosing the right weight for each move is key.** If you can do more than the target rep, increase the weight on subsequent sets; conversely, if you can't reach the target rep, lighten the load. Rest one or two minutes between sets. Take a shorter rest period for smaller muscle groups (such as your arms, calves and abs) and a longer rest period on heavy sets for larger muscle groups (such as your back, chest and legs).

► **The easiest way to add variety to this routine is to make exercise substitutions that work the muscle from**

different angles. For example, you could do decline presses with a barbell or dumbbells for your first chest workout, followed by pec-deck flyes or flat-bench dumbbell flyes for your second movement. Another way to vary the workout is to choose just a single exercise for each body part, doing three or four heavy sets first, followed by three or four light sets of the same move. Incorporating change helps ensure that your body doesn't grow accustomed to the workout and allows you to benefit from the heavy-light protocol.



photos by: paubuceta.com

READER
EXCLUSIVE

MaxFit Reader Jason Phillips went from scrawny to sliced and strong with this workout

THE MAXFIT HEAVY-LIGHT PLAN

DAY 1 LEGS

EXERCISE	SETS *	REPS **
Leg press	5	6-8
Leg extension	4	15
Smith machine Romanian dead lift	3	6-8
Lying leg curl	3	15
Standing calf raise	3	8
Seated calf raise	3	25

DAY 2 CHEST, SHOULDERS & TRICEPS

EXERCISE	SETS *	REPS **
Barbell bench press	5	6-8
Incline dumbbell flye	4	15
Smith machine shoulder press	4	6-8
Dumbbell lateral raise	4	15
Lying triceps extension	4	6-8
Triceps press-down	3	15

DAY 3 ABS, BACK & BICEPS

EXERCISE	SETS *	REPS **
Bent-over barbell row	5	6-8
Pull-down to front	4	15
Standing barbell curl	4	6-8
Preacher curl	3	15
Cable crunch	3	10
Reverse crunch	3	25

*Doesn't include warm-up sets. Do as many as you need, but never take warm-ups to muscle failure.

**Choose weights so that you reach muscle failure by the target rep listed with good form.

LEGS



LEG PRESS

SETUP Sit squarely on the machine with your shoulders and lower back pressed against your back pad, your feet shoulder width apart on the sled and your toes pointed slightly outward.

EXECUTION Lower the sled by bending your knees so that your knees travel directly in line with your shoulders. To reduce stress on your lower spine, reverse direction before your glutes lift off the pad and press into a full extension without locking out your knees.

LEG EXTENSION

SETUP Adjust the back of the seat so that your knees are just off the edge of the pad and sit squarely in the machine, positioning your feet below the roller pad so that it sits just above your ankles.

EXECUTION Contract your quads to straighten your legs and raise them as high as you can, squeezing your quads at peak contraction. Lower with control, never allowing the weight stack to touch down between reps.



LYING LEG CURL

SETUP Adjust the foot lever so that the pad sits just above your ankles. Lie face-down on the machine, grasping the handles to stabilize your body, with your knees just off the end of the bench.

EXECUTION Contract your hamstrings to curl your feet up as high as you can, holding the peak contraction momentarily before releasing. Don't allow the weight stack to touch down between reps.



STANDING CALF RAISE

SETUP Adjust the machine so that the weight stack doesn't touch down when you're in the bottom position. Position your shoulders squarely under the pads, keeping your back flat, and put your toes on the foot plate so that your heels hang freely, with your feet hip width apart and your knees unlocked.

EXECUTION Rise up as high as you can on the balls of your feet, holding the peak contraction before releasing. Try to lower your body as far as you can and reverse direction without bouncing.



SEATED CALF RAISE

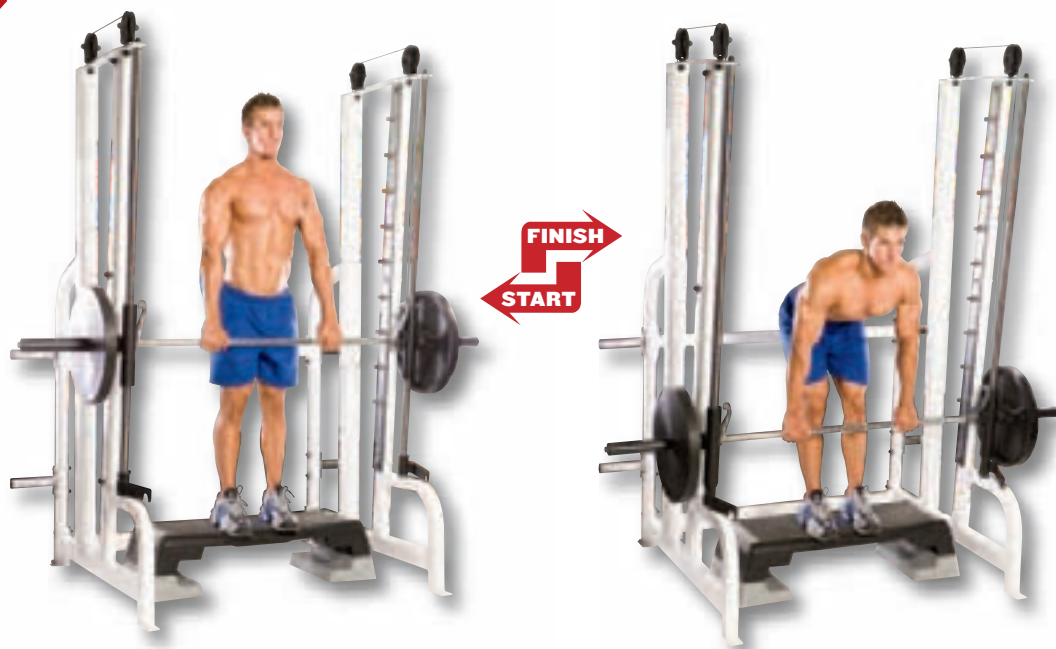
SETUP Adjust the knee pad to your limb length and position your thighs under the pad so that the balls of your feet rest securely on the foot plate. Keep your feet, knees and hips in-line to reduce knee torque.

EXECUTION Contract your calves and rise up on the balls of your feet. Lower with control for a deep stretch and reverse direction without bouncing.

SMITH MACHINE ROMANIAN DEAD LIFT

SETUP Stand upright in the center of the Smith machine with your feet hip width apart, your knees slightly bent and your back slightly arched. Grasp the bar with an overhand grip just outside your thighs.

EXECUTION Unhook the bar and bend over so that the bar travels straight down to mid-shin height. Push your hips rearward and keep the bar close to your body throughout the move. Don't try to achieve greater depth at the expense of rounding your back. Reverse direction by rising up and pressing your hips forward, keeping your back flat throughout the move.



CHEST,

SHOULDERS & TRICEPS

BARBELL BENCH PRESS

SETUP Lie back squarely on a flat bench and grasp the bar with your arms well outside shoulder width. Keep your shoulders and glutes on the bench at all times and your feet wide and flat on the floor.

EXECUTION Lower the bar to your lower pecs—you should feel your chest expand as your shoulder blades retract in the bottom position. Without bouncing the bar off your chest, press back up into a full arm extension as the bar travels backward toward your head.



LYING TRICEPS EXTENSION

SETUP Lie faceup on a flat bench, holding an EZ bar (with collars attached) with an overhand grip, about shoulder width apart, at arm's length above you. Keep your upper arms locked in this position, perpendicular to the floor.

EXECUTION Bend at your elbows to slowly lower the weight to the top of your forehead—this move is called a skull crusher for a reason, so control the bar's descent. Keeping your elbows as close to your sides as you can, smoothly reverse direction by contracting your triceps until your arms are fully extended.



SMITH MACHINE SHOULDER PRESS

SETUP Bench positioning is critical: Set the bench midway between the machine's two posts, moving it forward or backward so that it just clears your nose when the bar is in the down position. Sit upright with your chest out, your back slightly arched and your feet spread wide for stability. Grasp the bar with a wide overhand grip—the bar should be level with your ears in the down position.

EXECUTION Press up into a full arm extension and lower with control so that your elbows are pointing down and out to your sides. Don't bounce the bar when reversing direction.



INCLINE DUMBBELL FLYE

SETUP Set the incline bench at a 30-degree angle and lie back squarely against the bench with your chest out and your feet wide for stability. Hold a pair of dumbbells above you with a neutral grip, palms facing inward and your elbows slightly bent.

EXECUTION Lower the weights out to your sides in a wide arc, making sure to maintain a slight bend in your elbows—if you open and close your elbows, you're pressing the weights rather than isolating your pecs. When you feel a deep stretch in your pecs, reverse direction smoothly, bringing the weights back up together along the same path.

DUMBBELL LATERAL RAISE

SETUP Stand upright with your chest out, your shoulders back, your knees unlocked and your feet hip width apart, holding the natural curvature in your spine. Hold a pair of dumbbells in front of you and at your sides with your palms in and your elbows slightly bent.

EXECUTION Leading with your elbows, raise your arms out to your sides in a wide arc, bringing them to shoulder height while keeping your arms slightly bent throughout the move—don't open and close up at the elbows to ensure that your triceps don't assist in the move. Lower the dumbbells back to the starting position along the same path.

TRICEPS PRESS-DOWN

SETUP Stand upright with your chest out, your shoulders back and your back slightly arched and bent over slightly at your waist so that you're just leaning into the bar. Keep your upper arms locked at your sides and your knees slightly bent for balance. Use an overhand grip on the bar, with your arms slightly less than shoulder width apart.

EXECUTION Contract your triceps to push the bar down into a full arm extension, keeping your elbows locked by your sides throughout the move. Reverse direction, allowing the weight to pull your forearms just above perpendicular.



ABS,

BACK & BICEPS

BENT-OVER BARBELL ROW

SETUP Stand upright, with your arms slightly beyond shoulder width and your knees slightly bent, and grasp a barbell with an overhand grip. Keeping your back flat and your chest out, bend over at the waist, about 45 degrees, and lock your torso in this position for the duration of the set.

EXECUTION Without rising up from this bent-over position, pull your elbows up and back as high as possible behind the plane of your back, squeezing your shoulder blades together and pulling the bar into your mid-section. Lower with control into a full arm extension without rounding your



PULL-DOWN TO FRONT

SETUP Sit upright at the cable station with a horizontal lat bar attached. Grasp it with a wide, overhand grip in the outer bends, keeping your body upright and your chest big throughout the move and holding the natural arch in your lower back.

EXECUTION Without leaning backward, pull the bar into your upper chest by bringing your elbows as far back and down as possible. Release with control into a full arm extension.

PREACHER CURL

SETUP Sit or stand so that your body is pressed squarely against the bench, with your underarms snug on top of the pad, and grasp the bar with an underhand, shoulder-width grip. Keep your elbows slightly bent at the bottom of the rep.

EXECUTION Curl the bar as high as you can by contracting your biceps, squeezing them hard momentarily at the top and lowering them with control into a full arm extension. Keep your elbows under your forearms at all times—don't let them flare out.



CABLE CRUNCH

SETUP Grasp a rope handle attached to an upper pulley and kneel about two feet in front of the cable, with your hands by the sides of your head throughout the move.

EXECUTION Bend over at your waist by contracting your abs (don't keep your back arched) as your head approaches the floor, flexing your spine one vertebrae at a time. Don't sit back as you bend forward—the movement should be restricted to your abs. Hold the bottom position briefly and release with control.

STANDING BARBELL CURL

SETUP Stand upright with your chest out, your shoulders back, your lower back slightly arched and your knees unlocked. Grasp the bar with an underhand, shoulder-width grip so that it hangs in front of you.

EXECUTION With your elbows locked at your sides, contract your biceps to curl the weight up to about shoulder height, but don't pull your shoulders forward in an effort to raise the bar higher. Squeeze the muscle hard at the top before releasing with control and fully extend your arms.



REVERSE CRUNCH

SETUP Lie faceup on a bench, holding the top to secure your body. Extend your feet and hips so that they're just slightly bent and keep your feet together.

EXECUTION Contract your lower abs to pull your knees over your chest while keeping your knees slightly bent throughout the range of motion. Your glutes should just curl off the bench at the top and lower with control.