

Strength Hacking Course Day 1: Prioritizing and Planning

Part 1: Prioritizing

“You can’t prioritize without deprioritizing”

- Former senior kettlebell instructor Rob Lawrence



If there’s one problem that seems to plague enthusiastic exercisers more than anything else, it’s the paradox of choice. Like the mythical Sirens of ancient lore who lured sailors straight into a shipwreck with their soothing, reassuring song voices, so too are many exercisers lured away from sure-fire gains and incremental, noticeable progress by the siren song of a shiny new exercise or program. It’s so common there’s even a name for it in the strength world: program hopping.

To be sure, there’s nothing wrong with chasing after a number of different physical goals (in fact, later in this course I’m going to be showing you how to stack your goals to help avoid plateaus more easily and keep charging forward as the months and even years go by).

However, the inability (or rather, unwillingness) to finish what you start will do more to damage your long-term gains than just about anything else. This makes it one of those under-the-radar hacks that SHOULD be common sense, but by now has practically become a secret weapon.

Physiologically, your body can only adapt to so many things at once. Eventually, you’ll have to make a choice – otherwise your body will choose for you (that choice, by the way, is to keep you mediocre at all of them).

There are ways you can “trick” your body into adapting to a few things more efficiently at the same time (a special type of periodization out of Soviet Russia proved this – and no, it wasn’t steroids), but it’s a little complicated, and honestly, it’s outside the scope of our goals for the time being. Suffice it to say, if you want results, prepare to define your success. You’ll do this by setting your priorities.

A priority is whatever you deem most important. What do you most want to achieve? Do you want to go from pressing a 24 kg kettlebell to pressing a 32 kg? Do you want to go from doing 5 pullups to 10? Want to bang out 100 snatches in 5 minutes with a 24 kg kettlebell? Whatever your physical aspirations

may be, they need to be prioritized explicitly – on paper, in detail, and unambiguously. Whatever you chose, you'll need at least 1, and no more than 3. You can change them if you need, but at least get them on paper now.

What's more, your justifications and rationale behind choosing them must be solid, otherwise you won't stick with them.

To figure this out, you'll need to ask yourself a few questions. Most importantly, you'll need to write them down in detail. Some of the information may be private and may make you feel a little vulnerable (i.e. I want to do more pullups so I can impress the hot girl at the gym). That's okay – no one is going to see them. But you need to be honest about your motivations because if you're not, it WILL catch up with you.

In your accompanying map, you'll see the following questions.

- **Why do you want to achieve this?**

This could be anything, but there should be some emotion attached to it. For example, one of my goals last year was to press a 36 kg kettlebell with one arm so that I could pass my SFG II recertification. Not passing it would have meant proving to my onlooking colleagues that I didn't take my training seriously and that I was weak. That was my emotional trigger, and so I never skipped a lesson. Your "why" may not have your career riding on it, but

- **What are the benefits of achieving this goal?**

Will you be more confident? Will you have surpassed a plateau that has plagued you for years? Will you have fewer aches, stiffness, and discomfort? Will you be able to keep up better with your kids?

- **What are the obstacles you may need to overcome along the way?**

Is your schedule busy beyond belief? Is it hectic? Do you have a new baby who is throwing your sleep and training out of whack? Will you be travelling?

- **What skills and knowledge will be required to achieve each goal?**

Are you acquiring a new skill or are you enhancing an existing one? Will you need to come up with a special program or do you already have someone who can write one for you?

- **What equipment, training space, people, etc. will you need to help you succeed?**

Do you have the necessary equipment? Do you have equipment that will get the job done even if it's not perfect? If you're cramped for space, how can you make the most of the little space you have? Do you need to hire a trainer to keep an eye on you from time to time?

- **Where are you currently in relation to your 'Point B'?**

Are you starting from Square 1 or do you have a big head start? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- **What's your deadline for achievement of each goal?**

Is it in 8 weeks? 12 weeks? Something to be done by the end of the year? Something to be done by summer?

Part 2: Preparation

"The will to win means nothing without the will to prepare."

- Juma Ikangaa, 1989 NYC Marathon Winner



One thing that you'll notice is that successful people in any endeavor aren't necessarily the ones with the most natural talent, or the most ideal life situations, or anything else like that. The most successful people are the ones who don't leave success susceptible to chance.

I'll give you an example of a (very) recent transgression of this principle. While writing up this portion of the course, I had a meeting I had to get to and decided not to bring my computer to continue working on it because I figured I wouldn't have more than a few minutes to work on it anyway.

As it turns out, I arrived about half an hour earlier than I expected, and I ended up having to put my thoughts on paper, and stay up much later at night once I finally got home so that I could do the work I could have done in the 30 minutes of dead time I had.

The point is that all it takes is a little cog to destroy a big machine. If you race around your house every morning for 15 minutes looking for your keys, that can cause you to show up late for work daily, get skipped over for a promotion, etc. The same is true for exercise.

So before you even put your priorities into a super slick, Hebrew Hammer-approved program, you need to get an eagle's eye view of your life and schedule, THEN plan an attack.

- **Which days can you unfailingly commit to training toward your goals for the next 6-8 weeks (be realistic)?** If you say you want to work out 5 days a week because you think it's the "right" answer, I have news for you: 2 days a week for 6 straight months beats the hell out of 5 days a week for 2 ½ weeks, followed by 7 months of sedentary living and excuse making. You can always do more than you commit to, just don't start right out of the gate by over-extending

yourself.

One of my best clients ever – “Charlie”, a high-powered female executive – trained with me only 2 days a week, and that was all it took for her to get the first legit, full chin-ups of her life. And this was a woman in her 50s! Even as little as 2 days a week will get you great results if you keep going.

- **In the morning or the evening? From what time to what time?**

This might seem pedantic at this point, but my experience has been that if my students know an exact day, hour, and start/stop time, it is so much easier to remain consistent with their workouts. It also eliminates decision fatigue, because you’ve already made the appointment with yourself, and now all you have to do is show up.

- **What preparations will you need to do ahead of time to ensure you successfully complete each session?**

Do you need to dig any equipment out of storage? Do you need to have something to eat ready to grab before you race out in the morning? Do you need to have your gym clothes set out so you can get them on and get at it immediately? Do you need to bump your workout ahead an hour so that you can get it in? Know these things the day(s) before and you’ll rarely (if ever) miss a workout.