

# Starting Strength

## Starting Strength Gyms: An Update

by

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Four months ago, Rip announced our goal of opening [100 Starting Strength Gyms in five years](#) to become the only national gym chain that offers actual strength coaching to the general public. We've been hard at work putting the finishing touches on the model, and wanted to share an update:

### The Numbers

- 1.32 million visits to StartingStrength.com from our top 40 US cities in the last year
- 180 people inquired about opening a Starting Strength Gym
- Five franchisees signed on to open Starting Strength Gyms
- Three of these have signed on to open more than one gym
- Nine gym openings scheduled across Texas, Colorado, and Massachusetts

### Our Purpose

A Starting Strength Gym will be a place for people to train. There will be no sales desk because there will be no sales people on the payroll. We've designed all processes to match the way we'd prefer to be treated as trainees. We are attempting to do things logically and fairly, which in many cases is exactly the opposite of the way things are currently done in this industry. There are no long term commitments. There are no cancellation fees. Or sign-up fees. Or dumbbells. Or treadmills. Or bosu balls. Or college-aged staff in shirts that say "Master Trainer." You get the idea.

In stark contrast to the standard commercial gym model, we actually want trainees to show up. Paying your dues means getting a guaranteed space in a small group training session, at a set time, three days a week. Missing a training session means You're Not Doing The Program – and we don't



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want that, since getting strong requires showing up. Especially if all 96 spaces in the gym are full and there are people waiting to join.

We call our service a Coaching Subscription because membership (access to the gym) isn't the important part of what trainees are paying for – they're paying for coaching. The purpose of the gyms is to provide trainees with Starting Strength coaching in a properly equipped facility three times per week. Most gyms will have a \$315 monthly subscription fee, which is around \$25 per coached training session which, for contrast, is roughly the cost of a [spin class](#). The market can bear a higher price – Brent Carter, our Dallas franchisee, has recently come from a gym that charges [\\$720 a month](#) to get Starting Strength coaching 3x/week. We may need to raise our prices at some point since commercial real estate is grossly overpriced in major cities, but our goal will always be to keep prices as low as possible.

A Coaching Subscription gets trainees expert coaching on all of their lifts, individualized programming, recovery advice, nutrition guidance, and access to a facility with all equipment designed for and approved by Starting Strength. Trainees that have advanced beyond being able to make progress in three 90-minute sessions per week (post HLM) will have the option to switch to a Keycard Access plan to have time for more advanced programming on their own, with access to coaching during our Saturday open gym sessions.

## **Trainee Experience**

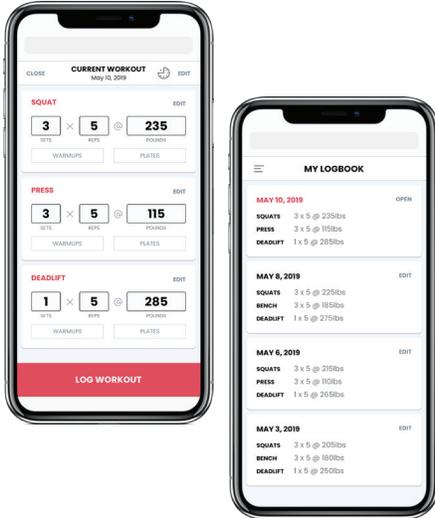
The reality of the fitness industry is that most of us can't recommend a good gym or "coach" to the people we care about, because both the facility and the person being paid for coaching are typically not equipped to make people strong. Most gyms don't have enough racks. Or they don't allow chalk. There are no microplates, and there are either terrible barbells or no barbells at all. Most of us that don't have a home gym or a nearby affiliate must deal with sub-optimal equipment and a compromised training experience. At scale, the Starting Strength Gym model solves this problem by making the program accessible to anyone who lives near a gym and is willing to show up and work hard.

To improve the current state of affairs, we've recently announced a [custom line of barbell equipment](#) to create a training environment that's as close as possible to that which Rip describes in the [blue book](#). Our gyms will have 7-9 platforms and will be outfitted with equipment that's purpose-built for Starting Strength. The [Starting Strength Power Rack](#) is 400 lbs of bare steel, designed to fit the needs of novice, intermediate, and advanced lifters. The [Starting Strength Bar](#) is the perfect diameter, with just the right knurling, and has withstood [Chase Lindley](#) dropping a 635 squat on the pins *without bending even a little*. The butcher block (yes, red oak) [Starting Strength Bench](#) is as simple and utilitarian as it gets. Everything from the deadlift jack to the plate racks has been designed by Rip. Dominion has produced our [Starting Strength Belt](#) for trainees to borrow at the gym if they haven't purchased one yet. And Starting Strength Weightlifting Boots by White's are in development now.



Other aspects of the gym model have been customized to make sense for what we do. We've invested in custom software to make sure that signing up and being a member of the gym is dead

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simple. We've built a digital logbook app so that keeping track of training sessions is easy. We'll be measuring how much stronger we make people over time, and we are looking forward to being the only national gym chain that publishes how much stronger our trainees become. And we'll be using this data to proudly display trainee PRs on 65" screens in the lobby of each gym – both gym PRs and franchise-wide PRs.

## What's Next

We have important work to do in bringing barbell training to people that need it – to [make people's backs stronger](#) and hurt less, to help trainees [rehabilitate from life-altering injuries](#). And more generally, to enable people to become more useful, by improving their physical capability and psychological fortitude.

The goal is bigger than building gyms – we are building an ecosystem of trainees, coaches, and gym owners that requires a great deal of care to ensure that the entire proposition is beneficial for everyone involved. In line with the Starting Strength ethos, the gym model will be constantly refined as we learn from our experience.

To see what gyms are opening this year, we've published [websites for the gyms that are next up in the build-out pipeline](#). And we've just [launched a new webstore](#) with branded shirts, hoodies, stickers, and city-specific merchandise. If the store does well, there will be more official Starting Strength gear to come.

To stay up to date on future announcements, make sure you're signed up for the [Starting Strength email newsletter](#).



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