

Starting Strength

100 Starting Strength Gyms in 5 Years

by

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I wrote the first edition of *Starting Strength* in 2005, to distill my decades of strength coaching experience into a guide for other coaches. The purpose was to answer the deceptively simple question: What is the most efficient way to get stronger? What exercises should be used? How should they be performed, and why? And how should they be organized into workouts so that they can be used over time for the closest approach to the athlete's potential?

To my surprise – really! – the general public was far more interested in these questions than coaches were. The second edition was a rewrite of the book with the language directed at coaches changed to reflect the real audience for the material: you. Tens of thousands of copies were sold, and as more people got strong following the program, hundreds of thousands bought the third edition. As word spread, the third edition of *Practical Programming for Strength Training* also sold tens of thousands of copies. They continue to sell, in six languages all over the world, and are known as the most important books on barbell training ever written.

A following emerged online. Since 2014, startingstrength.com has had over 12 million unique visitors. The simplicity and straightforward effectiveness of the program appealed to people who might not otherwise have attempted to do a barbell exercise program. But as is often the case, when one problem is solved, another takes its place.

The book is very dense with material, and usually requires more than one reading for adequate comprehension. The techniques are described in precise detail, but must be performed with a high level of conformity to the models in the book. The programming is specific, and does not usually need to be adapted to the individual beyond adjustment for starting weights – it is based on human physiology, which does not vary nearly as much as individual ability. To help you with this, the Starting Strength Coach certification, and later the Starting Strength Affiliate Gyms program and Starting Strength Online Coaching were born. These programs make Starting Strength in its originally intended form more accessible to more people.

In the meantime, and with a little help from us, barbell training exploded. The global fitness industry surpassed \$87 billion in 2017. And even though 24 Hour Fitness and other globo-gym chains have replaced some of their less useful floor space with Crossfit-style rigs and barbells, no national fitness brand has brought a legitimate strength training program to the market.

Which is a good thing. Imagine how deeply flawed a standard commercial gym's strength program would be. Consider what LA Fitness might deem to be appropriate exercise selection for a

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strength trainee. What sort of programming would an Orange Theory suggest to its strength athletes? The product would be designed by a committee, approved by Doctors, Physical Therapists, Exercise Physiologists, and lawyers, and administered by minimum wage employees – none of whom have ever made anybody strong. Or even strong-er. The potential for an unqualified brand to misrepresent actual strength training to a still-largely-uninformed public is very real, and the resulting damage to public perception would be irreparable.

This is why we are getting into the gym business. We have the most effective strength program in the world. We have the most rigorous credentialing process in the industry. We have the most qualified coaches. And we now have a templated business model for opening Starting Strength Gyms. Entrepreneurs that are passionate about Starting Strength and can adhere to our rigorous standards will be bringing Starting Strength to more people, in person, in major cities across the US – and later, across the world. It starts today, with Joyce Luke SSC and Starting Strength Austin. Two more will follow shortly in Texas, and inquiries are coming in every day.



Building our own gym model means we get to do things our way – quite the opposite of the status quo in the gym industry. For example, we aren't going to have a sales department in the gym pushing members to sign contracts – because we aren't going to have membership contracts at all, and all sales will be conducted online. At Starting Strength, if you're paying your dues, we actually *want* you to show up. Members get a reserved space in the gym, with a Starting Strength Coach, in a small group training session. And since the total number of memberships at each gym are limited, we only want your money if you're committed to showing up consistently so that we can make you strong.

Starting Strength Gyms are going to be placed only in major population centers, in cities where thousands of our website visitors work and live. Gym memberships will be priced at a premium. The cost will be less than hiring a Starting Strength Coach for individual coaching on a regular basis, but considerably more than a standard fitness industry gym membership. Commercial gyms charge for access they hope you won't use – we charge for actual coaching, which is available only to members who plan on using it.

The Starting Strength Affiliate Gym program will continue as it is. Not every market will qualify for a Starting Strength Gym. For example, Wichita Falls Athletic Club – A Starting Strength Affiliate Gym will remain an affiliate, because the North Texas market is too small to support the Starting Strength Gym franchise model. Smaller markets will continue to be served by the Affiliate program, and major markets can look for the logo in a prime location. The goal is 5 next year, and 100 in 5 years. Ambitious, I know. Hide and watch.

We've spent a significant amount of time and money on this important step in Starting Strength's progression as a company. If you'd like more information, the website is www.startingstrengthgyms.com and the email is info@startingstrengthgyms.com.

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