



THE COMPLETE
BUTT BUILDING
GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

The number one area that most people want to build today is the butt. Take a look around next time you're in the gym. I am willing to bet that a majority of those in your gym are doing exercises or entire workouts to build, shape, and sculpt their butt.

And this is a good thing. Sure, we all want a great butt, and we want others to compliment us on it. But good glutes go far beyond appearance. The muscles in our butt serve many purposes. They are a sign of strength and stability. They give our bodies the support they need to function properly in everyday life.

If we're honest, most of us don't really care about that, and that's ok. We just want our butt to look better, so we squat, lunge, thrust, and spend thirty minutes a day on the abductor machine.

Unfortunately, that's not doing the job.

One of the most common questions I get as a fitness coach goes something like this: "Adam, I'm working my butt two days per week. I'm doing squats, lunges, jumps, and thrusts until the cows come home, but nothing is changing. What should I do?"

This common question is the reason for this guide, and this guide is the answer to all of your glute questions.

You can do all of the exercises in the world for you glutes, but that doesn't mean they are going to grow. There are many factors that come to play when we want to physically change a part of our body. Simply doing more is not the answer.

If that's not the answer, then what is?

In each section of this guide, we will go over what it takes to build a better butt. From the connection to your muscles to your exercise selection, the information you gather from this guide can change your glutes for the better, if you apply what you learn properly.

First, let's discuss the glutes themselves.

THE GLUTES: WHAT DO THEY DO?

The glutes are comprised of three different muscles.

The muscle we are most familiar with is the gluteus maximus. It is the main muscle responsible for extending the hip. It takes up a large portion of your butt and plays a big role in the strength and shape of our bum.

The two minor muscles are the gluteus medius and the gluteus minimus. The gluteus medius sits underneath the gluteus maximus. It is responsible for the rotation of your hip and bringing your leg away from your body (abduction). A portion of this muscle is covered by the gluteus maximus and is therefore not as visible. The gluteus minimus is the smallest of the three muscles and is located even deeper than the gluteus medius. It is also responsible for rotation of the hip and abduction.

The gluteus medius and minimus muscles don't contribute to the shape and appearance of your butt as much as the maximus does, but they are still very important muscles to train. They can support and aid the strength and stability of your thighs and hips, which can contribute to greater gains in your gluteus maximus, the muscle that makes your butt pop.

BUTT-BUILDING: COMMON MISTAKES

I feel it is a good idea to set up the common mistakes of glute training in order to better understand the purpose and intent of proper glute training.

Understanding how to use certain exercises is one thing, but understanding why not to do them a certain way will shed more light on building your butt.

MISTAKE #1: HAVING THE WRONG INTENT

Thanks to Instagram and "fitness influencers", the intent of glute workouts has changed for the worse.

Social media feeds are loaded with small, pulsing workouts intended to "feel the burn" in the muscle. Pulse lunges have gained more popularity than full range of motion lunges. Half reps on the abductor machine are getting more attention than heavy deadlifts. Heck, I've seen more people use the assisted dip machine for a standing leg press than I've seen people squat.

The intention of a good glute workout sets the tone. You must make sure that you're not working for the burn, but rather to increase your strength and volume. More to come on that topic later.

MISTAKE #2: CHOOSING THE WRONG EXERCISES

The wrong intent that I touched on in the last section has led people to have poor exercise selection when it comes to building their butt.

Feeling the burn has turned people away from heavy squats and deadlifts, and toward upside down leg presses with the smith machine, banded walk squats, and other pulse-like movements.

Don't get me wrong, some of those exercises have their place, but they are best used as accessory movements, rather than the meat and potatoes of every workout.

MISTAKE #3: CHOOSING THE WRONG EXERCISE ORDER

Not only are people choosing the wrong exercises, they're also not ordering their exercises in an optimal fashion.

After they've done all their half-rep pulse movements, their muscles are too fatigued to do barbell squats, deadlifts, and hip thrusts.

Choosing the proper exercises is crucial, but making sure your exercises are in the right order is just as important. Changing the order of your exercises can completely change the signal you're sending to your body, thus changing the end result.

MISTAKE #4: SLEEPY BUTT

"I do squats, lunges, deadlifts, and hip thrusts, but my butt will not grow. What am I doing wrong?"

This is a common question I'll get. It's not that this person is doing anything wrong. In fact, they're doing most everything right. For some reason, their glutes aren't responding to the signal being sent to them from the workout.

Nine times out of ten this is due to what we call "sleepy butt syndrome"

Medical professionals would argue that there is no such thing as sleepy butt syndrome, and they are right. There is no medical syndrome for sleepy butt. There really isn't a condition where the glutes are sleepy, dead, and completely inactive.

The issue isn't that the muscles don't work. They have to work in order to stabilize the body. The issue is that the individual doesn't have a good connection to their glutes when they train.

They never feel their glutes contracting. They never feel the glutes doing the work. When they squat, they only feel their quads. When they lunge, they only feel their quads. When they thrust, they only feel their hamstrings. Their connection to their glutes is therefore “sleepy”. It’s wonderful that they’re doing the exercises that will send the loudest muscle building signal to their glutes. But if they aren’t able to command their glutes to take over a majority of the work, it’s all a wash.

MISTAKE #5: POOR PROGRAMMING

Believe it or not, how you program your workouts plays a big role in the results you see. Rest periods, repetitions, sets, and how you change those over time are some of the most important elements in your workout routine.

Too many people go to the gym without a plan, do 4-6 exercises that are supposed to target their glutes, and call it a day. They’ll do 10 reps for squats on Monday, but then do 15 reps on Wednesday.

In some cases, undulating reps may show results, but having a put-together plan that allows your body to improve week after week, phase after phase is the best route to take.

THE SOLUTIONS

As I said, knowing the mistakes are one thing, but knowing the mistakes, understanding the solutions, and having tangible takeaways to apply them into your life is next level stuff.

You know the mistakes. Let’s go over the solutions and tangible applications.

SOLUTION #1: GOING INTO YOUR WORKOUT WITH THE RIGHT INTENT

I’ll cut to the chase. The intent of your workout should be to build strength in your glutes, and send a very loud muscle-building signal.

Well, what does that mean?

The strength part is relatively easy. Instead of going into the workout with the intent to make your glutes burn, go into the workout with the intent to be stronger than you were last time. If you squatted 100lbs for 6 reps last week, shoot for 105lbs for 6 reps this week. Training for strength and muscle building is similar to the principles found in one of my favorite books, “The Compound Effect”. Small improvements over time will compound to yield significant results.

Strength is very central nervous system focused. The CNS requires more rest in between sets, and is usually activated more with heavy weights and lower reps. Significant strength increases can be found while completing 2-8 reps with 90 seconds to 3 minutes in between sets. I have found the sweet spot for strength to be between 2-6 reps and 90-120 seconds of rest in between sets.

I want to make sure you understand something. There is no such thing as the perfect rep range, set range, or rest period in fitness. The rep, set, and rest scheme that will bring you the greatest results is likely the one that you have not been doing.

For example, most of my female clients train in the 15-20 rep range before they begin to work with me. I know that because their body is used to such high reps, they will likely see strength increases at 8-10 or 10-12 reps, even though 2-8 is the traditional range for strength.

THE TAKEAWAY

At the end of the day, do what you have not been doing. For most people that I know, that means training with heavier weights for 2-6, maybe 2-8 reps with 90-120 seconds in between sets.

When going through your workout, train with the intent of gaining maximum strength. Test your limits, push heavier weight while maintaining good form. Lose the thought of training for the burn. If you happen to feel a burn as a result of training heavy, that's totally fine.



SOLUTION #2: CHOOSE THE EXERCISES THAT SEND THE LOUDEST SIGNAL

Now, let's talk about sending that muscle building signal.

The signal is simply a slang term for how you're telling your body to respond to the activity that you're asking it to do.

Different workouts send different signals to your body and will therefore cause your body to see different kinds of results. Fast paced workouts with higher reps and minimal rest will send an endurance signal to your body telling it to become more energy efficient, like a Prius. Slower paced workouts with longer rest periods and heavier loads will send a strength and muscle building signal, causing your body to gain strength, muscle, and **speed up its metabolism**.

The exercises you select will play a role in the results your body sees, too. When aiming to build the muscles of the butt, it's important that the muscles have a good foundation on strength. We know that our bodies respond well to a progressive increase in volume (weights x sets x reps) over time. The stronger your glutes are, the more volume you can apply to them week over week, creating room for greater results and a greater looking butt.

Movements that allow the body to move heavier loads (heavier weight) are the movements you want to use to increase your strength and apply more volume over time. Compound, multi-joint movements should be the foundation of your butt-building program.

Simply put, exercises that incorporate multiple joints should be able to command your body to move more weight. For example, your body should generally be able to squat more weight than it can on a leg extension machine, or hip thrust more weight than it can on the hip abductor machine. More than one joint involved means more than one muscle involved, creating an opportunity for more weight and volume applied to the glutes you want to grow, which means more significant progress over time.

As I mentioned, compound movements should be the foundation of your training program. What I mean is that your program should center around those movements. Exercises like squats, lunges, split squats, hip thrusts, and deadlifts are all examples of multi-joint movements that can be used to build your glutes by sending a louder signal.

THE TAKEAWAY

The glutes, just like any other muscle, need a loud muscle building signal to see significant progress. Select exercises like squats, split squats, lunges, hip thrusts, and deadlifts to be the focal point of your training program.

Spend more time focusing on increasing your strength in those movements. Don't exhaust yourself with too much band work as that may impede your ability to add weight to those movements week after week.

SOLUTION #3: BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR EXERCISE ORDER

As we touched on this in the previous solution, exercise order plays a massive role. It is a common misconception that the big movements should be placed at the end of a workout. Many believe that because their glutes are already exhausted and they are pumped up and feeling the burn, they will therefore get the most out of squats if they are the last exercise to be done.

Although there is value at times to placing smaller, isolation (single joint) movements before the big movements, the idea that big movements done at the end of the workout to bring the greatest results is a myth.

As you now know, the body responds to the volume that we apply to it over time. Volume is weights x sets x reps. It also responds well to a slow, progressive increase to volume week after week. One of the simplest ways to increase volume is to add weight to your exercises each week as your body will allow.

This is best done with the body primed, and ready to go, rather than exhausted and ready for a few days off.

Think of an athlete getting ready for the big game. They need to make sure they are confident, and fresh before going in. Pitchers use the bullpen to warm up, gain confidence with their pitches, and prepare themselves for the task at hand. The bullpen is not the place to completely exhaust yourself before you get called in during the 9th inning when the game is on the line.

The same concept applies to your workout. The exercises that will deliver the greatest increases to volume need to be prioritized before others. As discussed, there is value at times to doing an exercise or two before the big movement, but only to create a better connection to those muscles (more on that later).

Your central nervous system and muscle fibers need to feel fresh and engaged before going into the big lifts rather than wiped out and out of energy.

I'll see exercise programs on Pinterest and Instagram that call for the following order.

- Abductor machine
- Pulse lunges
- Pulse squats
- Reverse lunges
- Glute bridges
- Romanian deadlift
- Barbell deadlift

The order of these exercises should be reversed when trying to improve the strength, shape, and size of your glutes. The barbell deadlift will send the loudest muscle building signal to the glutes, and you need more muscle on those glutes to build and shape them. Therefore, you should have the most energy to apply more weight than last week to that big movement. There is no sense in using six exercises before and then saving the big kahuna for your most energy depleted stage of the workout.

THE TAKEAWAY

Prioritize the big movements in your workout before any others. Increases in squat strength and volume will translate to fuller and rounder glutes than banded glute bridges will, so apply a majority of your energy to those squats, deadlifts, lunges, and other compound movements.

Later on we'll go over what a sound glute workout program looks like.



SOLUTION #4: WAKE THAT BUTT UP

One of the mistakes or pitfalls we went over earlier was sleepy butt syndrome. If you recall, this is not a real medical syndrome, but is in fact a very common factor that keeps people from building their butt.

They pick all the right exercises, have the right order down, increase their weight over time, but don't feel anything in their glutes and therefore don't see any results.

Remember, you can have all the right things in place, but if your glutes aren't doing any work, they won't see any change.

Do you have a sleepy butt? If you have a more sedentary lifestyle, work in an office, and/or find yourself sitting a lot during the day, chances are you don't have the greatest connection to your glutes. When you do squats, you feel your quads and quads only. When you lunge, you feel your quads and quads only. When you deadlift, you feel your quads and back. When you thrust, you only feel your hamstrings.

If this is you, don't worry. We can increase the connection to those glutes so you can finally see the results you work so hard for.

Although those big multi-joint movements send the loudest signal to the glutes and should be prioritized most of the time, this is where single-joint, isolation movements can come in handy.

Isolation movements focus on one muscle only. For example, a bicep curl focuses on the bicep. A calf raise focuses on the calf. A glute bridge focuses on the glutes.

Placing single joint exercises before your big movements can help ensure your glutes are doing the work on the exercises that really make a difference. The key is using the isolation movements with a specific purpose. They are there to increase your connection to your glutes, not exhaust your glutes.

Question is, how do we use isolation exercises to feel our glutes if we don't know how to feel them work in the first place?

Flex.

Flexing is one of the best ways to practice feeling your muscles squeeze. After all, lifting weights is simply flexing with resistance. The more you practice flexing your glutes, the better you'll be at feeling them work during your isolation movements.

Try it right now. Lie down on the ground, face down. With your leg straight, bring your heel up to the ceiling as you squeeze your glute.

The better you get at flexing your glutes on command in any position (seated, standing, etc.) the better your connection will get. From there you'll be able to really engage with the muscles during your isolation movements, ensuring that you can properly tell them to contract and take over the load during your big movements.

THE TAKEAWAY

Lifting is flexing with resistance. The better you can flex your muscles, the higher the likelihood that you can feel them work during your workout.

Use isolation movements like bridges and kickbacks to increase your mind-muscle connection. Take that connection to your squats, deadlifts, lunges, and thrusts in order to apply more load and bring that muscle building signal straight to that butt.

SOLUTION #5: IMPROVE YOUR PROGRAMMING

In the mistake of poor programming section, we discussed how having some order to things will improve your chances of having a better looking butt.

Chaotic training programs with reps and sets changing every day are a very difficult way to see and measure progress. This is why we need progressive overload.

Progressive overload is a fancy term for applying more volume/weight slowly over time, in an ordered fashion.

I use progressive overload to **train my coaching clients**, and they are able to see results all while having the ability to note and see when they saw the most change, and why.

When putting the proper program together with progressive overload, we need to think of a few different factors. A couple of these include what the individual is used to doing, and what the goal of the program is.

In this case, the goal of the program is to build a better looking butt. We can do this by applying heavier weights to the glutes to increase overall strength as well as the muscle building signal. Given that the majority of those have spent a significant amount of time trying to build a better butt in the higher rep ranges, we will take a look and what it looks like to use lower reps and heavier weight to call the glutes to change and grow.

Training programs consist of a few things. Well programmed routines contain phases, sets, reps, rest, and change in those factors phase after phase.

Let's start with phasing. Generally, the body can take anywhere from three to

six weeks to see the results of the work that is put in at the gym. For the sake of the schedules we live our lives by, I have found that meeting in the middle and creating phases that are four weeks long are usually best. When creating a program to build your butt and improve your fitness, I suggest three phases, each of which are four weeks long, a total of twelve weeks.

Each phase should have a specific goal in mind that aids in reaching the overall goal. Your overall goal is to build a better butt, so we need to tailor the phases according to that goal.

As discussed, building a better butt requires increasing overall strength, then using that strength to send a loud muscle-building signal.

During my time spent training hundreds of clients, I have found that having the strength phase be completed first usually works best. In this initial strength phase, reps are lower, sets are moderate, and rest is longer in order to create an environment where the body can apply as much weight to the exercises while maintaining proper form. For phase one of your butt building routine, I recommend 4-6 reps, 3-5 sets, and 2 minutes of rest in between sets.

After phase one is completed, strength increases should have taken place, and those strength increases need to be applied to build some muscle on that butt of yours.

Phase two should consist of increased reps, moderate sets, and shorter rest in between sets. The intention of this phase should be to focus on the connection of your muscles while using as much weight as possible. Rather than focusing on sheer strength, focus on your glutes squeezing hard as you perform the exercises. This is where flexing and those isolation movements can come in handy.

I recommend 10-12 reps, 3-4 sets, and 60-90 seconds of rest in between sets. This will create an opportunity for more muscle fibers to work increasing the likelihood of muscle growth.

Again, focus on the glutes contracting. Think of things this way. You're not moving the weight to work the glutes, you're squeezing the glutes in order to move the weight.

After phase two is completed, we need to tap into the rest of our butt-building potential. Strength has been gained, muscle growth has taken place, and now it is time to use the pump to our advantage. This is where the burn and pump has a place.

In phase three, I recommend 12-15 reps, 3-4 sets, and 30-45 seconds of rest in between sets. The intent of this phase is to pump as much blood into the muscles as possible. Although we spend some time putting serious work into building as much muscle as possible in phase two, the pump has been shown to have some additional muscle building effects.

Phase three is where the mind muscle connection is extremely important. Continue to use flexing practice and isolation movements to improve your body's ability to squeeze your glutes during all of your exercises.



THE TAKEAWAY

Let's outline what a sound butt-building program looks like.

Phase 1:

- Intent: Lift for maximum strength increases
- Reps: 4-6
- Sets: 3-5
- Rest: 2 minutes
- Sample Schedule:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Full Body	Off	Full Body	Off	Full Body	Glute Focus	Off

- Sample Glute Focus Workout:
 - Barbell Hip Thrusts
 - Bulgarian Split Squat
 - Romanian Barbell Deadlifts
 - Reverse Lunges

Phase 2:

- Intent: Focus on the squeeze of the glutes through each rep
- Reps: 10-12
- Sets: 3-4
- Rest: 60-90 seconds
- Sample Schedule:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Full Body	Glute Focus	Off	Off	Full Body	Glute Focus	Off

- Sample Glute Focus Workout:
 - Banded Glute Bridge
 - Cable Kickback
 - Barbell Hip Thrusts
 - Bulgarian Split Squats
 - Stability Ball Bent Knee Bridge

Phase 3:

- Intent: Pump as much blood into the muscles as possible.
- Reps: 12-15
- Sets: 3-4
- Rest: 30-45 seconds
- Sample Schedule:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Lower Body	Upper Body	Off	Off	Lower Body	Glute Focus	Off

- Sample Glute Focus Workout:
 - Superset:
 - Banded Glute Bridge
 - Romanian Barbell Deadlift
 - Superset
 - Cable Kickback
 - Bulgarian Split Squat
 - Reverse Lunges

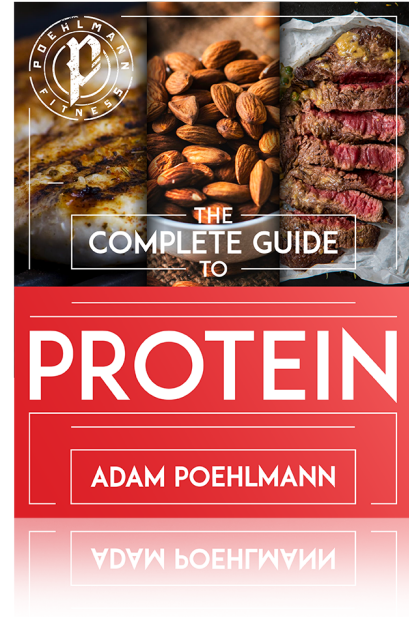
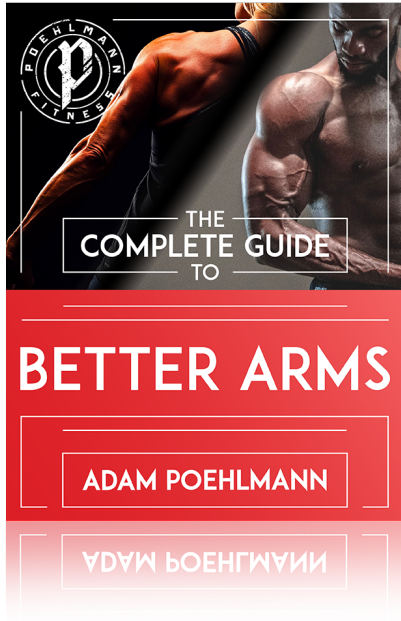
CLOSING

Building a better looking butt doesn't need to be complicated. As with most things, when you focus on the inputs, the outcomes will take care of themselves.

When you focus on getting stronger, improving your connection to your glutes, and improving your consistency in the gym, it will show.

Use the five solutions in this guide to build your butt for the better.

CHECK OUT OUR OTHER GUIDES AND EBOOKS



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Adam is a fitness professional, baseball fan, and cookie fanatic based in Fort Collins, Colorado. After hanging up the cleats, he found a strong interest in the human body and how it performs. Since then, Adam has been transforming lives through fitness in a fun and encouraging atmosphere. As an ACE CPT and Fitness Nutrition Specialist, he is constantly moved to help people improve in all walks of life.

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