

Reboot: Strength Training with StrongLifts 5x5

I needed a reboot of my exercise routine. For cardio, I've been practicing the [Galloway Method](#) (see [my take on it here](#)), but I also want to build some muscle - ideally: lean muscle. I was bulking up on a [Muscle & Fitness program](#), but it seemed a little much. So I took a look at a program called [StrongLifts 5x5](#). It seems to fit.

Here's the basics:

The core exercise of StrongLifts is the barbell squat. As Medhi, the program's founder, says, the squat builds all your muscles, especially your biggest and usually most-ignored group of muscles - quadriceps, hamstrings and glutes (legs). There are four other exercises that make up the routines (bench press, deadlift, overhead military press, bent-over row). It's a pretty simplistic structure, but offers great progress and results. You work out 3x/week, taking a day in between workouts. Each workout you start with squats, then you do two of the other exercises. You start each exercise with just the bar (45 lbs) and add 5 lbs each subsequent day. The 5x5 is because you do 5 sets, 5 reps each set.

The brass ring of the StrongLifts program: you start with just the bar, but by the end of 12 weeks you'll be squatting 5 sets, 5 reps of 225 lbs. Not a bad goal to strive toward.

If you want to see the whole program (there are a few other nuances, and a pretty cool [app for the iPhone](#) (or [Android](#))), go to www.stronglifts.com and order the report. (It's a good report, and all you have to do is sign up for Medhi's mailing list - a daily email that always has good supporting info.)

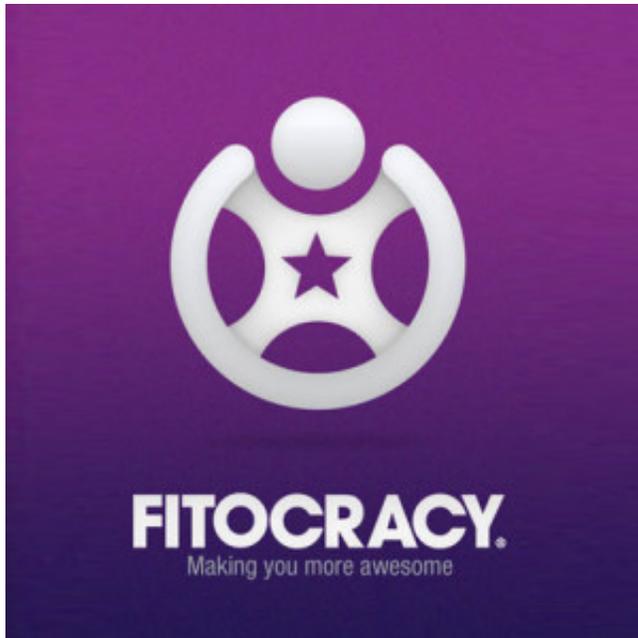
How's it working? Well, I'm liking it a lot. I felt a little silly just lifting the bar or very light weights around all the "Captain Upperbodies" who bench 185 or more and the guys who "half-squat" 225+, but knowing what I'm doing and where I'm heading, I got over that quickly.

I've lost about 6 lbs since I started the program, and have been able to keep increasing the amount of weight in each exercise - with one exception that I'll explain. I can increasingly see more definition in my muscles and I definitely feel stronger.

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In addition to StrongLifts, I've also been tracking my workouts on a fitness community called [Fitocracy](http://www.fitocracy.com). A real bonus of Fitocracy is the StrongLifts group - particularly the welcoming of "form checks" by the group's members. You take a video of yourself lifting, post it, and others give you their critique and advice on your form. While I was able to lift the heavier weights, my squat form was getting sloppy (if not risky) - I was leaning forward, rounding my back, doing other things that were counter-productive. The advice and encouragement I received really helped. I de-loaded (reduced the amount I was squatting) and am working on my form before starting again.

So, if you're looking for an easy to follow weight-lifting program that helps you build strength slowly but surely, give StrongLifts a try. Read the report, get the app or print out/write out the workout plan and get going. And stop by Fitocracy (www.fitocracy.com). Whether you just track your workouts there or get into the groups, it's a great community for anyone interested in getting and staying fit.

Let me know if you have any questions or suggestions. Thanks for reading!