



The Personalized Prilepin's Chart

WEEKLY

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What's this about?

This is an article that will help you develop a personalized guideline training chart like the famous Prilepin's table. It's for folks who sometimes screw up counting your fatigue percentages. If you are consistent and accurate in that, this probably won't help you much. Me, I get a bit hyped up when I hit a good "Initial" set or if my technical mastery is feeling really good and over-do it sometimes. If you sometimes regret the extra volume of yesterday's session, then maybe this will help you.

What do you consider to be a great training session? Is it a PR day or the session before the PR day? I'd argue it's the session before. On the day you hit the PR, you had the strength when you walked into the gym. All the PR session did was allow you the opportunity to display it. You built that strength in a prior session(s). I am always interested in finding number based answers that sometimes allow me to create PR days. I also want to manage myself such that in the midst of PR day, I still manage the work and stress on that day to build more strength – not just temporarily display PR strength. You know, build momentum and keep the progress rolling forward! This article will give you a real time tool to refer to while you're still in the midst training each lift before you get home and kick yourself "I should have done 1 more/less set".

I'm sure there's more to long term recovery and adaptation processes than just what occurs from session to session, but I'm not sure about how to rate longer periods of training data. If you rely on training plans that utilize delayed adaptations, this article probably won't help you either.

The idea for this analysis came together thinking of three different things. First, is the well known Prilepin's table. In case you're not familiar with it, here's [a link](#). Most of us who have bought into RTS would probably agree no table should be that universal to all lifters at each stage of their career, etc. Nevertheless, the simplicity has an appeal. Second, I'd had a near perfect squat cycle for a meet last spring and I badly wanted a diagnosis of what I did right and have spent a lot of time staring at that data. Third is a quote from the Dr. Mike Zourdos' presentation at the [Australia seminar](#) where he said "adaptations are related to training volume not muscle damage". If you haven't seen this video, I highly recommend it. So, it's this idea that training is cumulative and not just related to a single session.

It was a coincidence that some forum discussions and direct discussions with Mike Tuchscherer at the Brooklyn seminar pushed me into a higher volume direction last spring. It was also a coincidence that I always hit a volume in each session of that cycle that did not retard my volume in the subsequent training session. In my limited understanding of Dr. Zourdos' quote that would mean each session was in a near optimal range as it was as much volume as I could do that day without negatively impacting the next session and allowed me to maximize my cumulative volume. Basically, I never blew my momentum by overdoing it and I wanted a table of guidelines to try and repeat that success.

Methodology

This is how I set up the analysis. First, get some of your data together, either your logs or spreadsheets. You will definitely need the 1RM percentages you trained at, the rep range you were training and the total reps from the session. Select a period of training, such as your last 6 months or a recent meet prep cycle. I picked my spring meet cycle (but am already working on broadening it). Here's a slice of the data I studied.

Train like an animal. Think like a human.

Squat training

wk	Top %	fatigue%	tonnage	reps total	reps target	notes
1	79	6	12,500	34	5s	
1	81	5	9,000	24	3s	
1	80	5	10,000	28	5s	
2	81	5	11,500	30	5s	
2	83	5	10,000	27	3s	
2	82	5	11,000	30	5s	
3	85	5	9,000	23	5s	
3	85	5	9,000	24	3s	
3	85	6	8,500	22	5s	
4	91	7	7,500	18	3s	
4	90	3	4,500	12	3s	injury
4	95	5	5,500	14	2s	

The percentages are based on the "initial" and the rep totals include both work-up sets and back off volume. This isn't critical as long as you are consistent with how you keep track of your training and personalize your table – it should fit how you train.

Next, I chose some percentage ranges. You could look at your RPE table and pick the percent that goes with your 6@9 and your 5@9 and your 4@9 and so on. You could even pick every 5% or so. Be flexible and let the parameters fit your data and your lifting.

		Reps						
		7	6	5	4	3	2	1
RPE	10	83%	85%	88%	91%	93%	95%	100%
	9		83%	85%	88%	91%	93%	95%
	8			83%	85%	88%	91%	93%

You can do a paper based approach or Excel, I'm not recommending any calculations, but Excel will give you some more options. You want to record data on every session that did not retard the subsequent session. Ignore the sessions that left you un-recovered. I know that is subjective but think most of us can see when we lifted as we should have versus when we were under-recovered and the weights/reps/volume were unusually low. That means you also ignore the "beaten down" days as they might not provide an adequate training stimulus for the next session. Here's an example where I altered my actual data and you can see where I noted a low volume beat down day preceded by a high volume day. Both are scratched out as not relevant for this table:

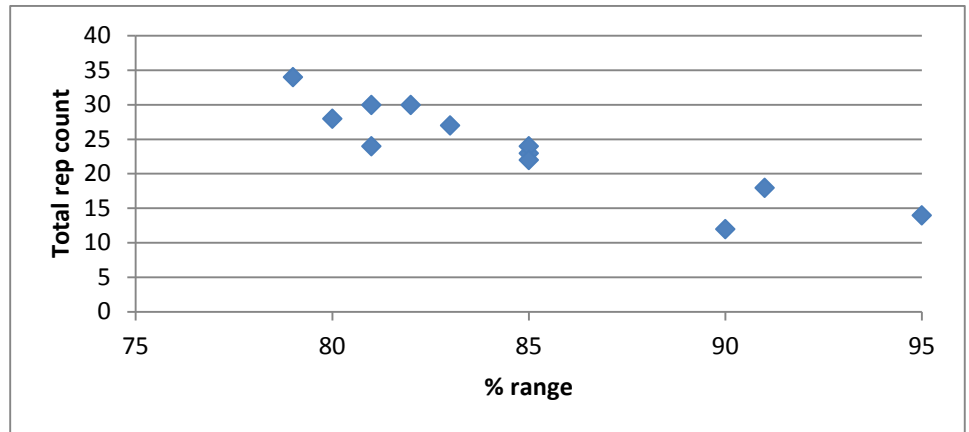
Squat training						
wk	Top %	fatigue%	tonnage	reps total	reps target	notes
1	79	6	12,500	34	5s	
1	81	5	9,000	24	3s	
1	80	5	15,000	41	5s	
2	81	5	4,000	11	5s	beat down

Low Hi	less		83%		88%	
	reps	total	reps	total	reps	total
	5s	34	5s	23	3s	18
	3s	24	3s	24	3s	12
	5s	28	5s	22	2s	14
	5s	30				
	3s	27				
	5s	30				

For the relevant sessions, record the rep range you were training and the total training reps. So, for example you might have trained 4s and hit 24 reps. That's it. Record those numbers next to or under the relevant percent range and repeat. I know I look at tonnage a lot too but the point is for the table to be useful while you are still in the session

and a tonnage calculation isn't what I'd call "real time" useful. Here are those numbers again:

If your data is in excel, of course it's easier to manipulate. You could sort it on a variety of things. That may make trends or ranges more obvious. If you see things visually best, here's a graph:



Finally, observe a central tendency in your numbers, which simply means throw out the extremes. Here's what I got.

% Squat		reps total		reps/set	
lo	hi	lo	hi	lo	hi
75	83	25	35	3	6
84	88	20	25	3	5
89	95	12	20	2	3

RPE approach

I repeated these steps with RTS pyramid days. This is what most of you are familiar with as a rep range/RPE/fatigue percent, such as x3@9,5%. I only did the analysis for @9 lifts since I didn't have enough @8 or @10 sessions. As before, I recorded only the total training repetitions of sessions that did not retard the subsequent session. Ignored the sessions that led to the beaten down days and the beaten down days as well. And no need to record the reps per set since that's embedded in an RTS pyramid scheme. Here's what I came up with.

Reps RPE	reps total	
	lo	hi
x5@9	23	32
x4@9	19	24
x3@9	16	22
x2@9	12	16

Limitations

The first limitation in this custom table is that it doesn't define proper training frequency. Just like the original Prilepin's table doesn't tell you what frequency you should do. By individualizing the table, you are answering that so long as you train regularly. Simply, if you always train after 48 hours rest, then perfect. You have your table. But if you sometimes train on a 24 or 48 or 72 hours rest cycle, you may need separate tables. I realize that's more work, but I bet you saw that coming. Secondly, this seems to work best for primary lifts and not so well on secondary or assistance lifts. For example, if your next session is Competition Squat/Competition Bench/Assist Deadlift, the deadlift slot may not work well for this type of analysis.

Summary

Hopefully you see overlaps in your tables that make sense for you and your RPE table. I did. As far as next steps, I plan to update this about as often as I update my RPE table which has been an annual drill for me. If I make further gains in my work capacity these numbers should move up. And while I will want to use these tables to consider before I go over these "guidelines" I know eventually I've got to push my volumes higher for continued gains.

About the Author

Roy Andrew is a raw masters powerlifter from Virginia. Roy advocates RTS principles and is a student of his sport and his numbers. Good luck with your training volume and let me know if this helps any of you. Special thanks to Chad Hydro for helping me to formulate my thoughts into coherent text.