

20-Minute Beginner Dumbbell Workout

From Brett at Me-Fitter.com, a certified nutrition coach and dad of four who lost 50 lbs. I did my dumbbell workouts 3 nights a week, about 20 minutes each, in my bedroom with a 40 lb adjustable set and a foldable bench. This plan builds on that routine and adds legs and back, so every major muscle group gets trained.

When 3 days a week, with a rest day between (e.g., Mon / Wed / Fri)	How 2 sets of 10-12 reps per move. Rest about 60 seconds between sets.	Gear Light adjustable dumbbells. A bench is optional (use the floor).
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The workout

#	Exercise	Sets x reps	How to do it
1	Goblet squat	2 x 10-12	Hold one dumbbell at your chest. Sit back and down like into a chair, then stand up.
2	Dumbbell bench press	2 x 10-12	Lie on the bench (or floor). Press both dumbbells up together, lower slowly to chest level.
3	One-arm dumbbell row	2 x 10-12 each side	Hand and knee on the bench, back flat. Pull the dumbbell to your hip, lower slowly.
4	Romanian deadlift	2 x 10-12	Dumbbells in front of thighs, soft knees. Push hips back, lower to mid-shin, stand tall.
5	Bicep curl	2 x 10-12	Elbows at your sides. Curl up, then lower slowly. No swinging.
6	Overhead triceps extension	2 x 10-12	Hold one dumbbell with both hands overhead. Bend elbows to lower behind your head, press back up.

Picking your starting weight

- **Start lighter than you think.** The biggest mistake I made, and the one I see most, is going too heavy too soon.
- Pick a weight where the last 2 reps of each set feel hard, but your form still looks the same as rep 1.
- Most beginners start around 5-15 lb per hand for arms and a little heavier for squats and deadlifts. Your own numbers may differ.
- My curls started at 12.5 lb per hand. Today I use 20 lb per hand.

How to progress

- When you can do 12 good reps on both sets, add 2.5-5 lb next time.
- Keep it to 3 short sessions a week. Showing up matters more than a perfect plan.
- Pair it with daily walking and a calorie target. Strength work helps you keep muscle while you lose fat.

Check off your workouts

Week	Mon	Wed	Fri	Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				

Guidance based on the American College of Sports Medicine's 2026 resistance training position stand: train all major muscle groups at least twice a week, 2-3 sets per exercise. This is general information, not medical advice. Check with your doctor before starting if you have a health condition, injury, or haven't exercised in a while. More free guides at me-fitter.com.