IRON FATHER

TRAINING GUIDE

THE 5 IRON STATES

Know when to push, when to hold and when to reset. A two-minute morning check that tells you which session to train today.



Ember
RECOVER

Smoulder
HOLD

Burn
TRAIN

Blaze
PUSH

Furnace
TEST

Train the man who showed up today.

01 · THE IDEA

Train the man who showed up today

Your program was written for a man who slept eight hours, ate well and had a quiet week. Some mornings that man turns up. Many mornings he doesn't.

A father's recovery is never steady. A sick toddler, a deadline, a long shift or a bad night's sleep all draw on the same account your training does. Push hard on an empty account and you stall, get sick or get hurt. Skip every time you feel flat and you never build anything.

The Iron States are the middle path. Each morning you take a two-minute reading of how you've recovered, and it puts you in one of five states. Each state tells you what kind of session to train. You still turn up. You just train the right session for the day.

> **The state is a reading, not a mood.**
> "I don't feel like it" isn't a state. Score the five questions honestly and let the number decide. Most days it will say train. Some days it will say push. A few days it will tell you to rest, and that is the plan working, not you quitting.

02 · THE FIVE STATES

From ember to furnace



Ember RECOVER | **Smoulder** HOLD | **Burn** TRAIN | **Blaze** PUSH | **Furnace** TEST

STATE	WHAT IT FEELS LIKE	WHAT YOU DO
Ember	Wrecked, run down or barely slept	No lifting. Walk, mobility, sleep.
Smoulder	Flat, sore or stressed	Train lighter. Fewer sets, nothing heavy.
Burn	A normal day	Train the plan as written.
Blaze	Fresh, strong and keen	Push: add weight or reps.
Furnace	Fresh, and you planned for it	Test: a heavy single or a rep max.

03 · THE MORNING CHECK

Five questions. Two minutes.

Before your session (ideally first thing, before the coffee) score each question from 1 to 5. Then add them up.

	QUESTION	1 MEANS	5 MEANS
1	**Sleep.** How much, and how well?	Under 5 hours, or broken all night	7 to 9 hours, woke up rested
2	**Soreness.** How do the muscles and joints feel?	Very sore, stiff or limping	No soreness at all
3	**Energy.** How much fuel is in the tank?	Running on empty	Full tank, ready to go
4	**Stress.** How heavy is life right now?	Overwhelmed	Calm and on top of it
5	**Drive.** How much do you want to train?	Dreading it	Can't wait

04 · YOUR SCORE

Find your state

TOTAL SCORE	STATE	TODAY'S SESSION
5 to 10	**Ember**	Recover. No lifting.
11 to 14	**Smoulder**	Hold. A lighter version of the plan.
15 to 19	**Burn**	Train the plan as written.
20 to 25	**Blaze**	Push. Chase a little more than last time.
20 to 25 + planned	**Furnace**	Test. Only on a day you set aside for it.

Two overrides

- **Any single score of 1** caps you at Smoulder, whatever the total. One very bad night or one angry joint is enough to hold back.
- **The neck check.** A head cold above the neck (runny nose, mild sore throat) can still train at Smoulder. Anything below the neck (fever, chest cold, aches, stomach bug) is Ember, full stop.

What each state asks of you



Ember

SCORE 5 TO 10 · RECOVER

SIGNS	Barely slept, run down, getting sick, or so sore that normal movement hurts.
THE SESSION	No lifting. A 20 to 40 minute easy walk (a Silence Walk counts), 10 minutes of mobility, then an early night and a proper meal.
THE RULE	An ember still glows. Log it as a session done: recovery is training.



Smoulder

SCORE 11 TO 14 · HOLD

SIGNS	Flat, heavy legs, short on sleep, or a stressful stretch at home or work.
THE SESSION	Train the planned session, but lighter. Drop the weights by 10 to 20 percent *or* cut a third of the sets. Stop every set with 3 to 4 reps left in the tank. No new bests, no finishers. Aim for under 45 minutes.
THE RULE	You keep the habit and the movement patterns without digging the hole deeper.



Burn

SCORE 15 TO 19 · TRAIN

SIGNS	A normal day. Not perfect, not broken.
THE SESSION	The plan as written. Most working sets finish with 1 to 3 reps in the tank. Add weight or reps where the plan says to.
THE RULE	This is where most of your sessions should live. Progress is built on ordinary Burn days stacked week after week.



Blaze

SCORE 20 TO 25 · PUSH

SIGNS	Slept well, nothing sore, bar feels light in the warm-ups.
THE SESSION	The plan, plus a push. Add 2.5 to 5 kg to your main lift or 1 to 2 reps per set. Take one top set to 1 rep in the tank, and add an extra back-off set if it's still moving well.
THE RULE	Push, don't max. A Blaze day banks progress. It isn't a licence to test everything.

05 · STATE BY STATE



Furnace

SCORE 20 TO 25 AND PLANNED · TEST

SIGNS A Blaze-level score on a day you set aside to test. Never stumbled into.

THE SESSION A thorough warm-up, then work up to a heavy single, triple or rep max on *one* lift. Use a spotter or safety arms. Stop when bar speed dies or form breaks. Keep the accessory work short, and plan a Smoulder day after.

THE RULE No more than once every three to four weeks. In the Iron Journey, this is your monthly Trial.

06 · HOW HARD IS HARD?

Reps in the tank

Effort is measured by how many more clean reps you could have done when you racked the bar.

REPS LEFT IN THE TANK	HOW IT FEELS	USED IN
4 or more	Easy, smooth	Smoulder, and every warm-up
2 to 3	Working hard	Burn: most of your sets
1	Very hard, bar slowing	Blaze: one top set
0	Couldn't do another	Furnace only, with a spotter

Score the morning, not the excuse.

A toddler up at 3 am counts. So does the big week at work. Be honest in both directions: don't talk a 2 up to a 4 to chase a heavy day, and don't talk a 4 down to a 2 to dodge one.

07 · READING THE PATTERN

One day is weather. A week is climate.

A single Smoulder day means nothing. The pattern over a week or two tells you whether your training, sleep and life are in balance.

Three Smoulder or Ember days in a week	Take a deload week: the same exercises at half the sets and lighter weights. Check your sleep and food first.
Mostly Smoulder for two weeks	Your split may be more than your recovery can carry. Drop a training day or move to a simpler split.
Blaze three sessions running	You're ready. Plan a Furnace day in the next week.
Ember twice in a fortnight, with no clear reason	A new baby or a sick house explains it. If nothing does, book in with your GP.

Red flags: don't train, get checked.

Chest pain or pressure, unusual breathlessness, dizziness or fainting, a fever, or sharp pain in a joint (not muscle soreness). These aren't a low score. They are a reason to stop and see a doctor.

08 · IN THE LEGACY LEDGER

Write the state down

Write your score and state at the top of each training diary page, before the first set. After a month you will see your own patterns: which days of the week run low, what a short night costs you, and how often you really have a Blaze in you.

On the Iron Journey, the states slot straight into the rhythm. The Iron Wake is the perfect time to take the reading. The weekly recap is where you spot the pattern. Your monthly Trial is a Furnace day you plan for.

"The fire doesn't burn the same every day. A good smith reads it before he strikes."

This guide is general information, not medical advice. If you have a health condition, an injury, or are new to training, check with your GP before you start.

28 days of readings

DAY	DATE	SLEEP	SORE	ENERGY	STRESS	DRIVE	TOTAL	STATE	DONE
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
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5–10 Ember **11–14** Smoulder **15–19** Burn **20–25** Blaze **20–25 + planned** Furnace Any single 1 = Smoulder at most