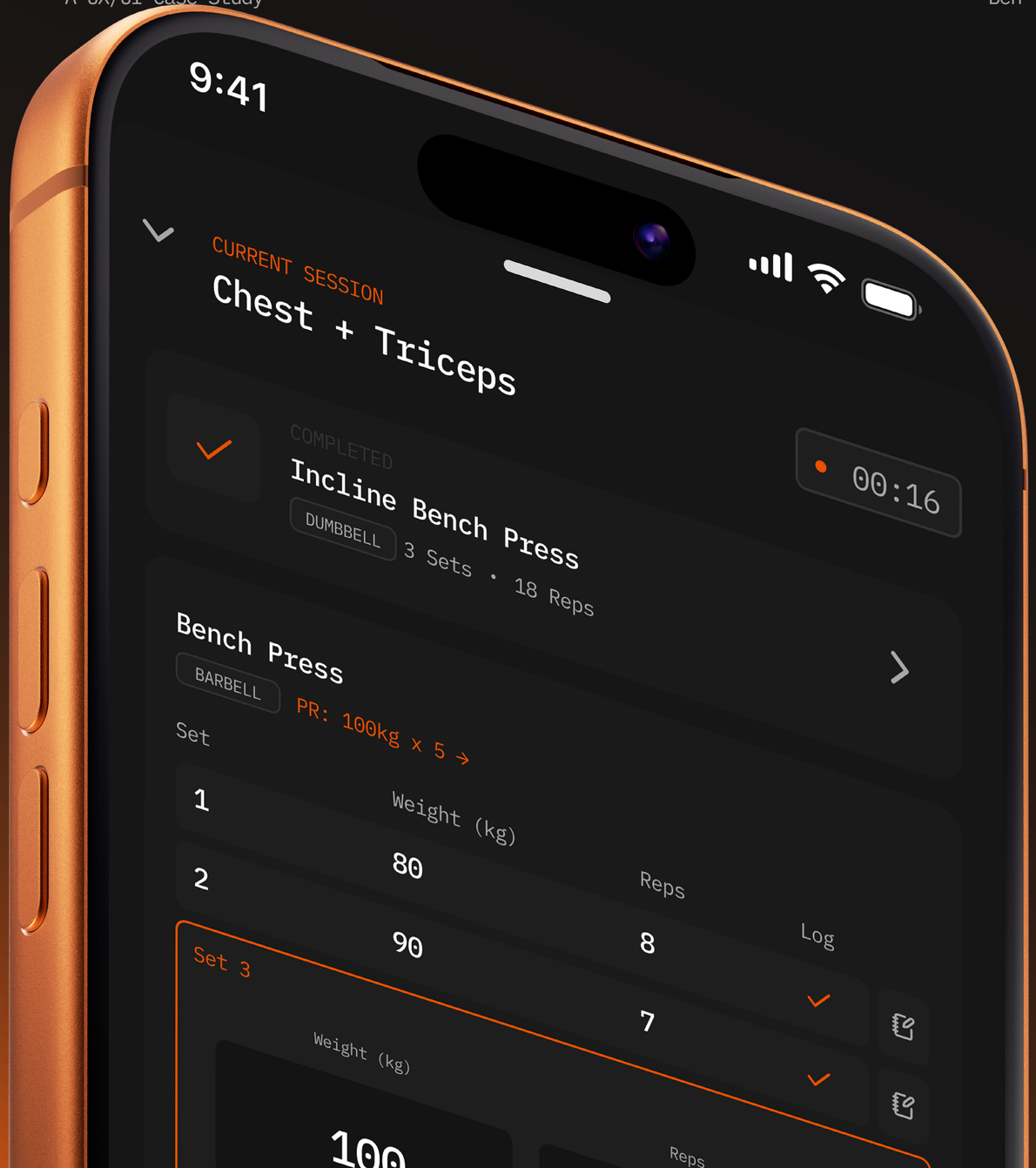
A UX/UI Case Study

Ben Timms

February 2026



SESSIONS

Log fast, see progress, lift better.

Sessions is a minimal gym tracking app. A “digital gym notebook” for intermediate+ lifters. It focuses on fast workout logging, progression tracking, and AI-driven insights without social features, gamification, or bloat.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sessions was built around a simple idea: people make better progress in the gym when they track what they train and improve it over time. Strength and muscle gains rely on gradually increasing effort and making small, consistent adjustments, which is hard to do from memory.

Sessions' aim is to make science-based progression simple by removing friction and turning structured tracking into an easy, everyday habit.

01: THE PROBLEM

Intermediate lifters want fast, distraction-free workout logging.

Most fitness apps prioritise social feeds, gamification, or automated programming over speed and clean data tracking.

02: THE OPPORTUNITY

Create a focused, speed-first training log that removes friction and surfaces meaningful progress insights.

03: THE SOLUTION

A distraction-free, minimalist app that logs sets in ≤3 taps, automatically tracks personal records, and highlights training patterns over time, without social features or algorithmic workouts.

BUSINESS GOALS + SUCCESS METRICS

USER GOALS

FAST, FRICTIONLESS LOGGING

Target: Log one set in <10 seconds

CLEAR PROGRESS VISIBILITY

Target: Users can identify PRs and trends in <10 seconds

LOW COGNITIVE LOAD

Minimal decisions or choices during active session

BUSINESS GOALS

HIGH USER ENGAGEMENT

Target: 3+ workouts logged per active user per week

LOW CHURN

Users return week after week because it improves training

MONETISATION

Advanced training based insights as paid tier

ALIGNMENT

By reducing logging friction and showcasing meaningful progress signals, Sessions increases weekly workout frequency. Driving retention and supports a sustainable subscription model.

RESEARCH + DISCOVERIES

METHODS

01: USER INTERVIEWS

8 intermediate lifters. Pain points, workflow, app quit triggers.

02: SURVEY / QUESTIONNAIRE

42 responses. Feature prioritisation, social importance

03: COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Hevy, Strong, Fitbod. Taps-to-log, friction points.

04: APP STORE REVIEW ANALYSIS

100+ reviews across Hevy, Strong, Fitbod.
Logging friction, feature bloat.

KEY FINDINGS

USER QUOTE

“I don’t need a community or leaderboards. I want to finish my set and log it in seconds before I forget.”

SURVEY

73% described logging as ‘slow’ or ‘too many steps’ in their current app.

COMPETITORS

Apps optimise for features. Sessions optimises for speed.

ASSUMPTION

Users follow structured, pre-determined programs, don’t need a workout generation and know how to perform the exercises

PRIMARY PERSONA

A speed-focused intermediate lifter. Represents the majority pattern observed across interviews and survey data.

> “I just want to log my sets and get back to the exercise.”

PROFILE

Experience:
6-24 months consistent training

Frequency:
3-5 sessions per week

Training pattern:
Follows a structured split (PPL, Upper/Lower etc.)

Age:
18-40

Tech:
Comfortable with apps, expects speed and good UI

KEY NEEDS

- Fast and intuitive logging
- Clear progress visibility (PRs, trends)
- Minimal UI optimised for one-handed or quick use

GOALS

- Track progressive overload
- Beat previous PRs and track consistency
- Log seats with ease and without breaking focus

PAIN POINTS

- Current apps are slow or overstimulating
- Social feeds and leaderboards are a distraction / can harm ego
- Hard to use mid-exercise

USER JOURNEY

A typical workout session using Sessions.

PRE-SESSION

Preparing to Train

Actions
- Opens the app before going to gym
- Reviews previous session
- Sees planned/upcoming exercises

Thoughts
“What did I lift last time?”

Emotions
- Focused
- Motivated

Pain Points
- Needs quick access to history

DURING SESSION

Active Logging

Actions
- Starts session with one tap
- Logs sets during rest periods
- Quick edits if weight/reps wrong

Thoughts
“I need to log this before I forget”

Emotions
- Time-pressured
- Distracted

Pain Points
- Limited attention
- One-handed use
- Short rest windows

POST-SESSION

Reviewing Progress

Actions
- Completes session
- Reviews performance trends
- Plans next session

Thoughts
“Did I beat my last numbers?”

Emotions
- Satisfied
- Accomplished

Pain Points
- Unsure whether to progress, maintain, or adjust
- Risk of misinterpreting short-term fluctuations

RESEARCH → DESIGN PRINCIPLES → IMPLEMENTATION

Turning key findings into actionable design principles

INSIGHT	DESIGN PRINCIPLE	PRODUCT IMPLEMENTATION
Logging friction causes drop-off	Speed over configuration	Persistent “Active Session” strip
Social features go unused	Progress over posts	No social feed, likes, or leaderboards
Users train with one hand	Touch targets first, aesthetics second	Minimum 48pt tap targets
Gym = high cognitive load	Reduce decisions, not features	Glanceable performance indicators

DESIGN ITERATIONS

Exploration, rejected ideas, and what I learned from testing

01: APPLE HEALTH KIT INTEGRATION

Initial design featured a health data widget at the top of the home screen.

Rejected: Risk of becoming a generic fitness app, potentially locked to just IOS. Shifted focus from gym logging to overall fitness

Outcome: Removed feature and kept focus on logging efficiency and speed

02: SHARING WORKOUTS (STRAVA FOR GYM)

Explored workout sharing feature inspired by Strava to increase discoverability.

Rejected: Research found gym-goers weren’t receptive to sharing progress like runners. Social features often went unused in competitor apps.

Outcome: Abandoned. Reinforced an anti-social positioning.

03: PERSISTENT ACTIVE SESSION STRIP

Assumed users would stay in the active session view until workout complete.

Rejected: Usability testing showed users navigated away (to check insights, view history) and couldn’t easily return.

Outcome: Added persistent session strip at bottom of every screen.



PERSISTENT NAVIGATION + SESSION CONTEXT

PRIMARY ACTION: CENTRED + BUTTON

60×60pt tap target for starting new sessions. Positioned centre-bottom for universal thumb reach.

Most important action gets the most prominent placement.

PERSISTENT ACTIVE SESSION STRIP

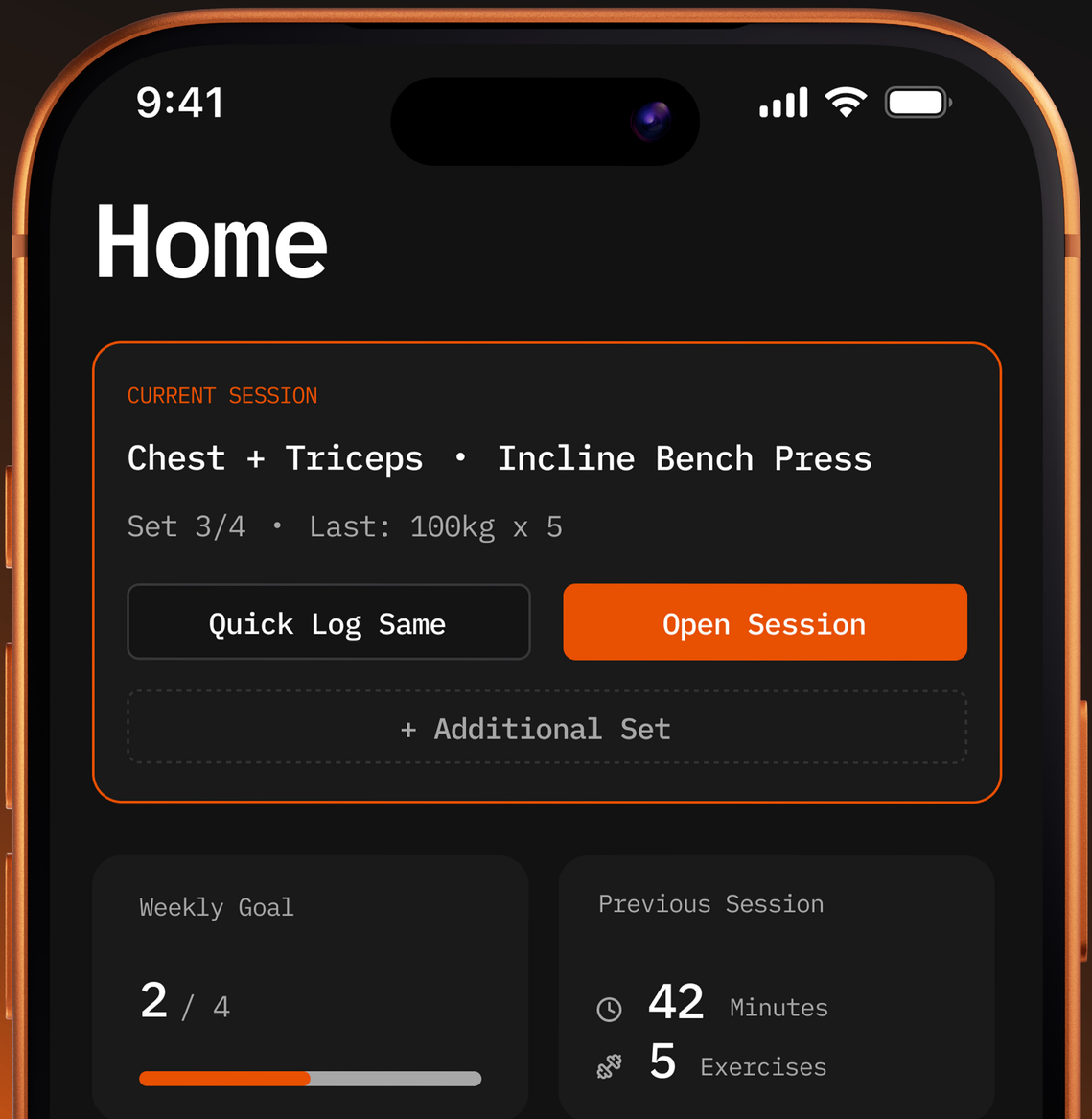
Shows current workout (Chest + Triceps), rest timer (3:00), and elapsed time (28:14). Visible on every screen. Tap to enlarge/return to logging.

Solves the “getting lost mid-session” problem discovered in testing.

BOTTOM NAVIGATION

Four core sections: Home (dashboard), Sessions (history), Activity (analytics), Timer (rest tracking). Large 44×44pt touch targets.

Clear labels + icons for scannability.



CURRENT/ACTIVE SESSION WIDGET

QUICK LOG SAME BUTTON

Logs a repeat set without opening the session view. If weight and reps match the previous set, users can log in 2 taps total: tap the home icon, tap “Quick Log Same.” No navigation required.

CURRENT SESSION CONTEXT

Shows split name, current exercise, set progress (3/4), and last performance (100kg × 5).

Users always know where they are in their workout without opening the session.

SAFETY FALLBACK: OPEN SESSION

If weight or reps changed, “Open Session” button takes users to the full logging interface.

Optimizes the common path without blocking the less common one.

ACTIVE SESSION/LOGGING SCREEN

INLINE WEIGHT/REP EDITING

Large increment/decrement buttons (+/–) on both sides of the value. No typing required mid-set. Weight adjustments happen in 2.5kg or 5kg jumps. Fast, forgiving, and designed for motor precision under fatigue.

Ability to manually type number also available.

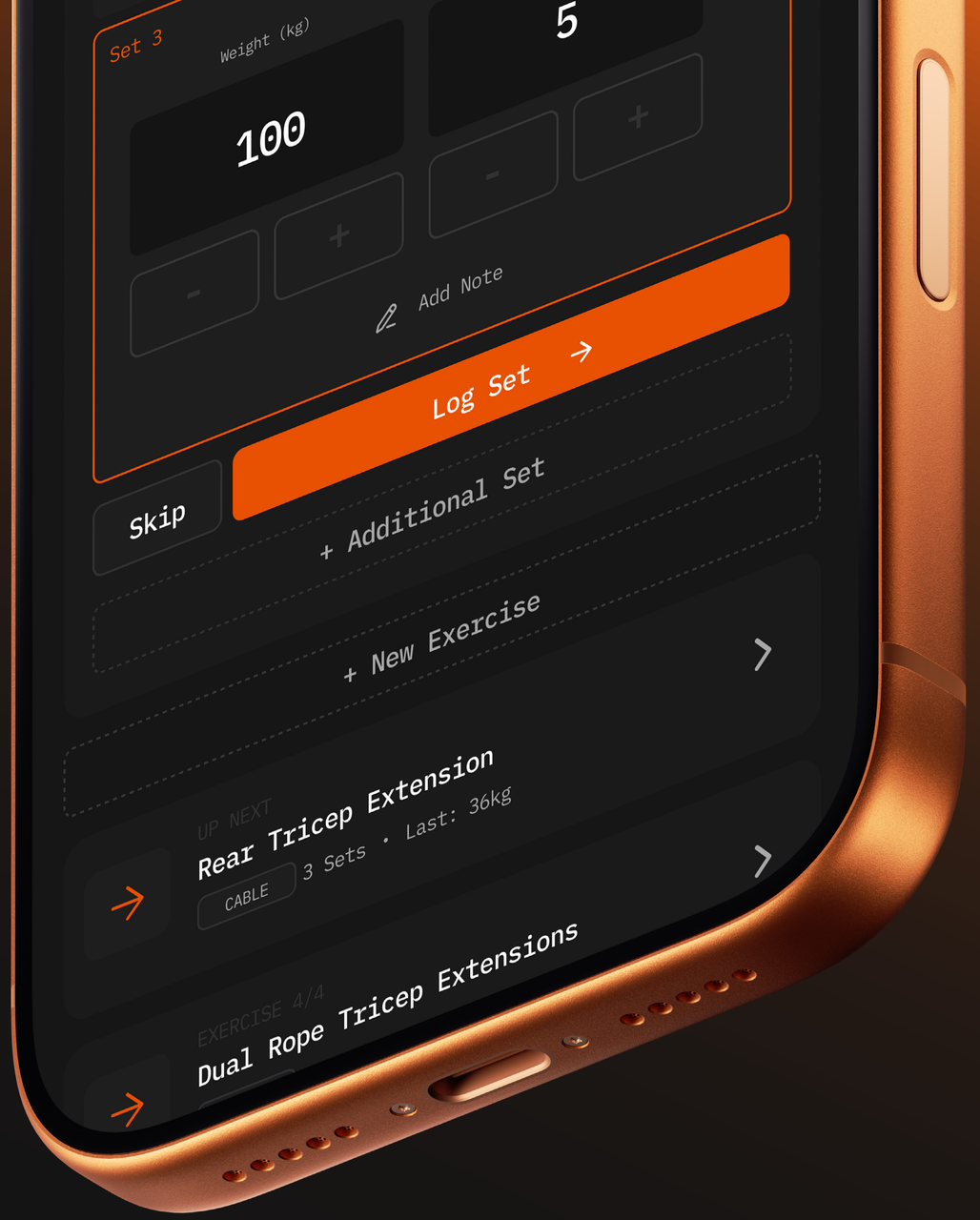
INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

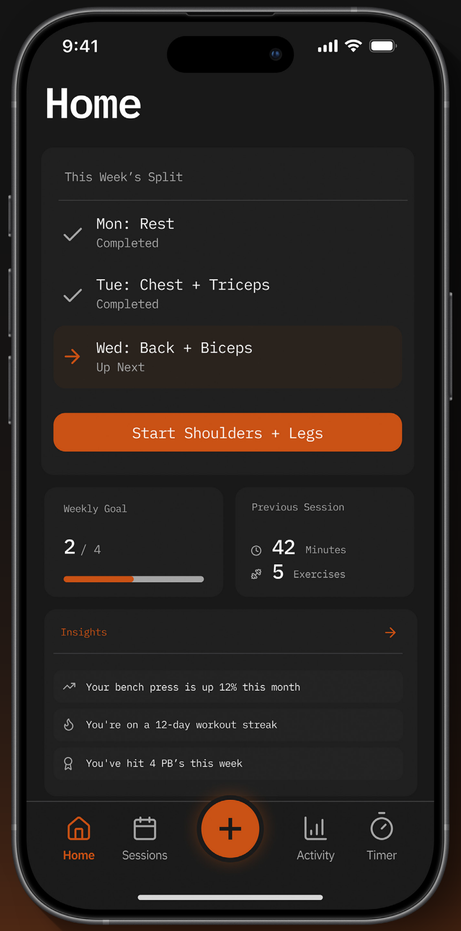
Skip, Add Note, Additional Set, and New Exercise are visible but secondary. Primary path (logging the current set) dominates the interface. No visual competition.

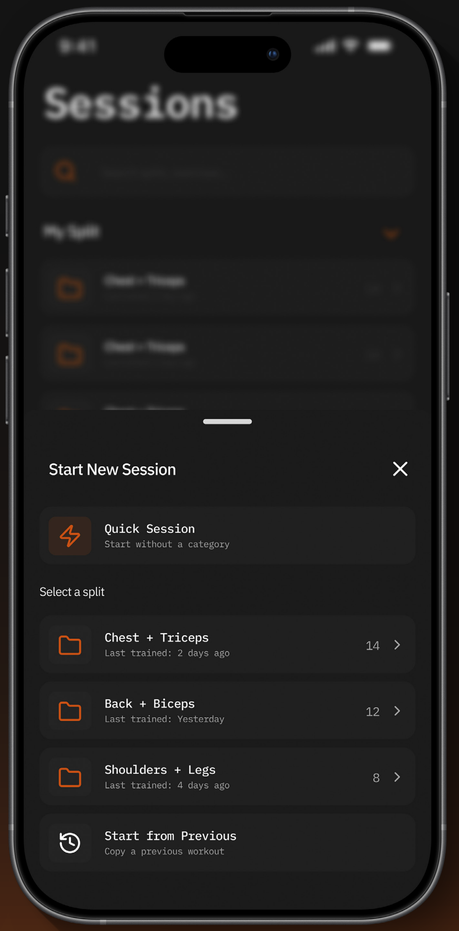
SET CONTEXT ALWAYS VISIBLE

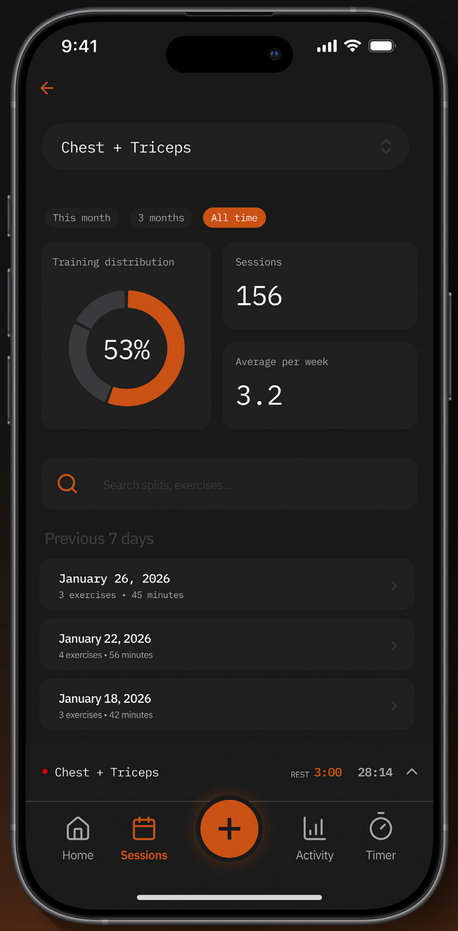
Set indicator at top with weight/rep labels. Users know exactly where they are without scrolling or navigating.

Reduces cognitive load during high-intensity training.




9:41
Home
This Week's Split
Mon: Rest
Completed
Tue: Chest + Triceps
Completed
Wed: Back + Biceps
Up Next
Start Shoulders + Legs
Weekly Goal
2 / 4
Previous Session
42 Minutes
5 Exercises
Insights
Your bench press is up 12% this month
You're on a 12-day workout streak
You've hit 4 PB's this week
Home
Sessions
Activity
Timer


Sessions
Start New Session
Quick Session
Start without a category
Select a split
Chest + Triceps
Last trained: 2 days ago
14
Back + Biceps
Last trained: Yesterday
12
Shoulders + Legs
Last trained: 4 days ago
8
Start from Previous
Copy a previous workout


9:41
Chest + Triceps
This month
3 months
All time
Training distribution
53%
Sessions
156
Average per week
3.2
Search splits, exercises...
Previous 7 days
January 26, 2026
3 exercises • 45 minutes
January 22, 2026
4 exercises • 56 minutes
January 18, 2026
3 exercises • 42 minutes
Chest + Triceps
REST 3:00
28:14
Home
Sessions
Activity
Timer

ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Inclusive design here isn’t only about disability. It addresses stress, fatigue, distraction, and time pressure. The same constraints apply in financial decision-making contexts.

WCAG 2.2 AA BASELINE

- Text contrast ≥ 4.5:1
- Accent contrast 5.26:1 (orange on black)

Why it matters:

Supports low vision, fatigue, and dim gym environments where clarity is critical.

Touch & Motor

- Minimum 44x44pt targets (Apple HIG compliant)
- Bottom-aligned primary actions for thumb reach
- Big, primary + button for new session (core feature)

Why it matters:

Users often log between sets, with elevated heart rate and limited focus.

Interaction must tolerate movement and imprecision.

Cognitive Load Reduction

- One primary action per screen
- Clear hierarchy and predictable patterns
- No competing notifications or social prompts

Why it matters:

Reduces decision fatigue and supports focus during high-intensity training.

Feedback & Error Tolerance

- Inline validation for weight / rep entry
- No permanently destructive actions
- Clear system feedback for completed sets

Why it matters:

When users are fatigued or distracted, mistakes happen. Clear feedback and reversible actions reduce anxiety and build trust.

REFLECTION + OUTCOMES

WHAT WORKED

Minimalist design resonated
Users preferred this over competitors

One-handed use held up in real conditions
Testers were able to log while holding equipment

Removing social elements reduced cognitive noise
No one asked for feeds or leaderboards during testing

Clear visual hierarchy improved scanning speed
Users could identify the primary action immediately

WHAT I'D REFINE

- Test beyond ideal users (beginners, older users)
- App should suggest adjustments based on progress or plateus
- Make rest timing clearer. User's didn't realise it was automatic

WHAT I LEARNED

- Test early: Assumptions about finding PR's were wrong
- Real-world context matters. Sweaty/shaky hands expose weaknesses
- Simplicity requires more decision discipline, not fewer decisions

NEXT STEPS

- Run a 4–6 week closed beta with 10-20 intermediate lifters
- Introduce pro insight tier for monetisation
- Explore Apple Watch or lock screen logging for hands-free interaction