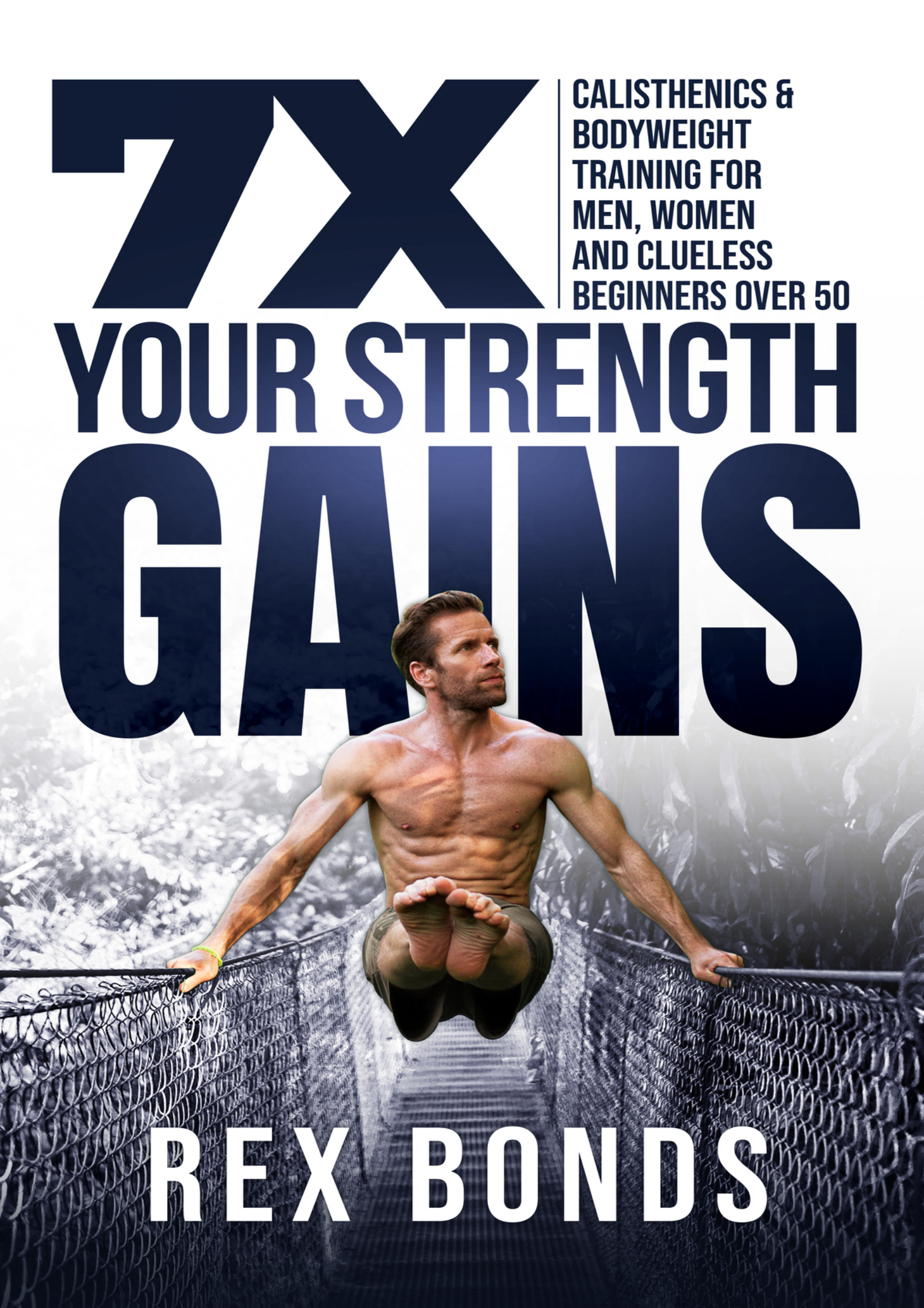
7X YOUR STRENGTH GAINS

CALISTHENICS & BODYWEIGHT TRAINING FOR MEN, WOMEN AND CLUELESS BEGINNERS OVER 50



REX BONDS

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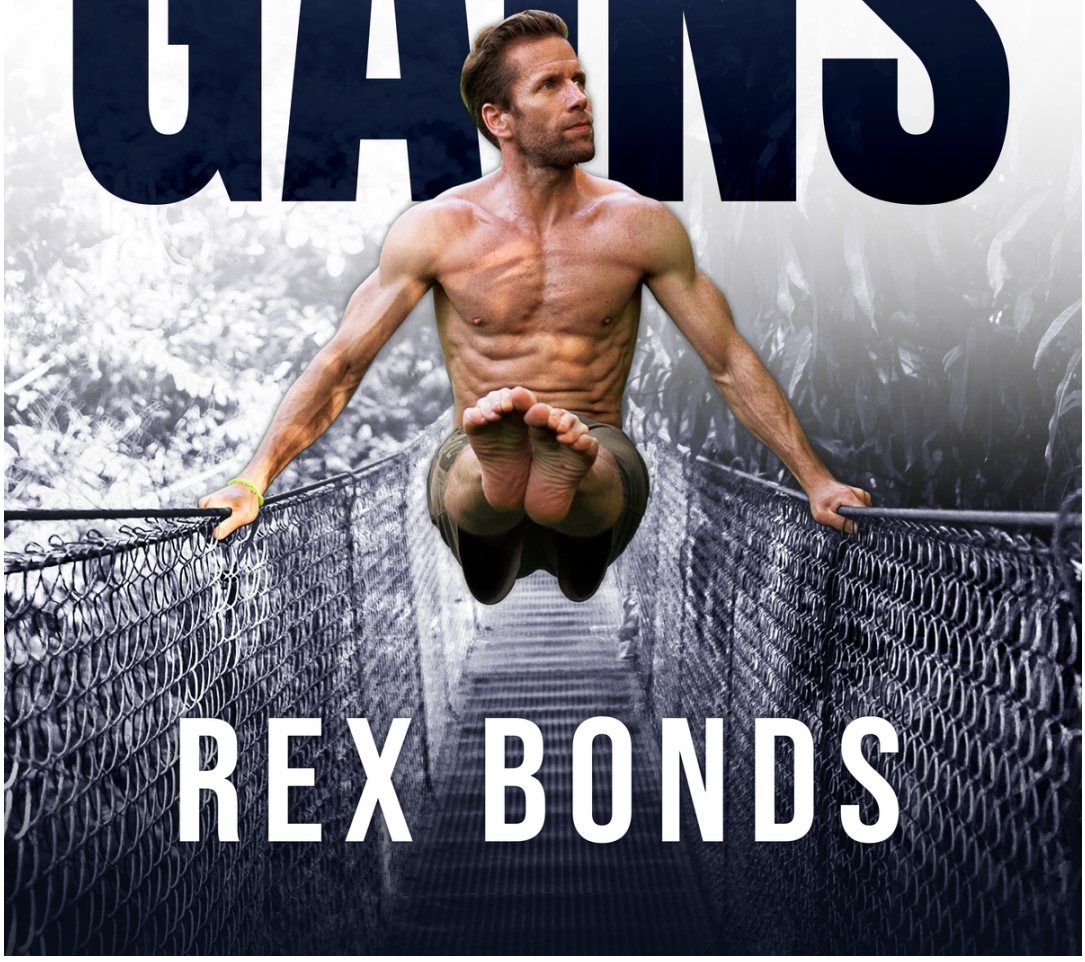

REX BONDS

7X YOUR STRENGTH GAINS: BEGINNER LEVEL CALISTHENICS & BODYWEIGHT TRAINING FOR MEN & WOMEN OVER 50

Bodyweight Training Exercises and Workouts A.K.A. Calisthenics

Rex Bonds

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Before we get started, I'd like to offer you this free gift. It's my way of saying thank you for spending time with me in this book. Your gift is a Special Report titled, ***"The Ultimate Guide To Eating Out: 11 Healthy Meals You Can Find Anywhere."*** It's an easy-to-use guide that pulls together a ton of analysis I've previously only shared with clients. I think you're going to love it. This guide is a collection of 11 Healthy Meals you can find anywhere that will give you the system, tools, info, and mindset you need on the path to achieving your fitness dreams. This guide will teach you where to find clean, nutrition-packed meals to build lean muscle, burn fat and bump up your confidence in every situation no matter where you are.

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In this guide you'll learn:

- ✓ Where to find the 11 healthiest meals when you're eating out
- ✓ A rock-solid meal plan for any time of day & every location
- ✓ The exact script for which menu items to order
- ✓ Nutritional information for each dish at your fingertips

Plus as a Bonus!

- ✓ A Nutrition and fitness Journal to stay on track daily to your fitness dreams!

I'm willing to bet you'll find at least a few ideas, tools and meals covered in that guide that will surprise and help you. This guide will set you up for success and is a proven system when eating out. With this guide you will be armed with the info & focus you need. You will be giving your body nutritious fuel and enjoy eating out. With downloading this guide, you're taking a solid step on the path to your fitness success.

How can you obtain a copy of ***The Ultimate Guide To Eating Out: 11 Healthy Meals You Can Find Anywhere?*** It's simple. Visit RexBondsBooks.com and sign up for my email list (or simply click the link above). You'll receive immediate access to the Report in PDF format. You can read it online, download it or print it out. You will also get a Free Fitness Journal and Planner for signing up for my email list as well. Everything you need to get started and stay on your fitness journey is included in **signing up for my email list.**

Being on my email list also means you'll be the first to know when I release a new health and fitness book. I plan to release my books at a steep discount (or even free) for the first 24 hours. By signing up for my email list you'll get an early notification.

If you don't want to join my list, that's completely fine. This just means I need to earn your trust. With this in mind, I think you are going to love the information I've included in the ultimate guide. More specifically, I think you're going to love what it can do for your life.

Without further ado, let's jump into this book.

Join the Rex Bonds Fitness Community

Looking to build your specific fitness habits and goals? If so, then check out the Rex Bonds Fitness community: Rex Bonds Fitness Group

This is an amazing group full of like-minded individuals who focus on getting results with their lives. Here you can discover simple strategies, build powerful habits, find accountability partners and ask questions about your struggles. If you want to "level up" in your fitness journey, then this is the place to be.

Just click the link

Rex Bonds Fitness Group

to join the Rex Bonds Fitness Community.

INTRODUCTION

Strength, muscles, stamina. Who doesn't want all three of them? While it would be great to have each in abundance, the fact is that the human body is designed to be great at either strength or stamina. Having said that, this doesn't mean your stamina needs to be terrible in order to maximize muscle. It is perfectly possible to have levels of strength and stamina that together ensure a healthy and happy life.

Unfortunately, attaining even a fraction of both of these things seems impossible for a lot of people. The fitness industry doesn't make things any easier. There are seemingly endless fitness programs and workouts, all of which have fancy names, along with a list of supplements that promise to make you healthier than ever. Health itself is something that changes depending on who you're listening to.

The muscle building websites tell you to build as much strength as possible and train to exhaustion. The specialized program websites tell you that following their principles is the best, and then there's the MMA crowd that tells you to ditch the weight and start punching things. All of this can be aggravating to the extreme.

An additional concern for you, given that you've picked up this book, is age. If you're beyond 50, I hate to break it to you, but society now considers you old. Although whatever society might say, the fact is that your body is not what it used to be. When you were younger, you could get away with taking a few shortcuts with regard to your fitness and diet and still expect to function well .

These days though, slight deviations from what your body is regularly used to can potentially cause significant harm. Training for someone of your age is as much about preservation as it is about strength and stamina building. By preservation, I'm talking about your joints, tendons, and ligaments. In your younger days, you could get away with not knowing what these things were, but this is not the case now.

There are a lot of myths surrounding the muscle and strength building process for older people. One popular myth is that you cannot put on any muscle beyond the age of 30 and that you're better off running on a treadmill once past this age. Another myth is that the best workout for someone of your age is to simply walk briskly and to stay away from weights altogether since these might damage your joints.

When taken all together, it's no wonder that people over 50 are intimidated at the thought of getting fit. After all, if there are so many things to figure out and so many things to be careful of, is it even possible to get fit?

I'm here to tell you that yes, it absolutely is. What's more critical is that your life depends on it.

Fitness and Age

Let's face it: You're not getting any younger. I'm not trying to put you down but just highlighting that it is more important than ever for you to get serious about your fitness. I'm not saying you need to turn into Superman or Wonder Woman, but you should be able to climb a staircase without sounding like a banshee by the end of it.

The fact is that you're going to receive just one body in your lifetime. It is also a fact that it is going to start creaking as you get older. No matter how hard you try to avoid it, age is going to get you one day. The best thing you can do is to make this process as enjoyable as possible .

This means being able to play with your grandkids without clutching your back. This means being able to take care of yourself on family vacations without your loved ones having to research every doctor and medical facility in the area. It means giving your loved ones the least amount of headaches and not having to worry about your health all the time.

Health and exercise are priorities and responsibilities. I understand it is intimidating to begin, but this is precisely why I'm here. By the end of this book, you're going to gain deep knowledge on how to build your strength best and also how to design your own fitness program. You will be able to work on

your fitness wherever you are, without having to worry about signing up for a gym membership or any other fancy workout course.

The question at this point is: why should you listen to me?

Trainer and Guide

I could list all of the accolades I've won over the years as a bodybuilder and a personal trainer. I could list all the testimonials from hundreds of my satisfied clients. Instead, I'll just say this: I've helped tons of clients who are over the age of 50, and I get it. As someone who's been in the fitness industry all my life, both as a customer and as someone who's sold his services to clients, I deeply understand how tough it is for someone to get started at an older age. The fact is that a lot of marketing that is prevalent in the industry is geared towards making you feel bad about yourself.

This sort of guilt-tripping and shaming is far worse when someone starts off late in life. The truth is that it is never too late to begin exercising correctly. Over my many years of experience, I've learned one unassailable fact: your body is your biggest asset when it comes to getting fit .

That might sound like a strange statement to make. Isn't fitness supposed to aid the body? How does the body aid fitness? The answer is bodyweight training. I've sustained and recovered from many weight lifting related injuries over the years, and those alone would be enough to make a great case.

I don't mean to say that weightlifting is bad or worse. It's just that for someone in your position, whether you're too busy to work out or whether you're just getting started and have no clue about how to train well, the fact is that bodyweight training is as close to risk-free as training can get, as well as being the most repeatable form of exercise.

Life gets in the way regularly, and it can be tough to set aside times during the day when you can go to the gym or go out for a run or a swim. By relying on bodyweight training routines, you can workout literally anywhere in the world. All you need to do is to find a place where you can stretch out your body a little bit. How easy is that?

I've been following the routine outlined in this book myself and have been prescribing it for my clients who are over the age of 50. In my case, I prevented a ton of common injuries most people have attained throughout their fitness journey. Bodyweight training isn't going to cause muscle loss or strength reduction as well. If anything, you'll be able to maintain your levels a lot better and also increase them.

You will learn actionable steps to take to your goals through this bodyweight training program, and you can now workout anywhere in the world, including right in your own living room. You will be working out with a lot less stress on your joints because it allows you to have a lot of more natural range of motions. Pains and kinks in your knees, elbows, and shoulders will fade away over the next year, and by practicing perfect form, you will have no injuries since starting the program. Your knees and ankles won't crack in the morning when you walk around the house, and you will be more limber and supple than you have ever been. All of your chronic pain will simply be gone. You're going to look lean and fit, but most importantly, you're going to truly feel lean and fit.

Benefits

All of my clients report higher levels of strength than before starting these routines. They're able to carry objects that were once too heavy for them and are not worried about sustaining joint injuries anymore. Not only are their strength levels up, but their stamina and endurance have also increased as well. Clients have been commenting on the increased muscle mass in their chest, back, and shoulders.

Some of my clients who've been lifting weights for years and have now switched to this routine are seeing even bigger benefits to their body and strength. The best part is the complete lack of injury to their ankles, wrists, and shoulders. All of these results could be yours. However, it requires you to understand one simple thing.

You need to act. The best time to have gotten started with this routine was 20 years ago. The second best time is right now. You've taken the first right step by purchasing this book. As

you read through it, remember that every step in here is meant to be implemented, not read about, and then forgotten.

My promise to you is that once you begin implementing this routine, you'll have a body that doesn't just look strong but is strong and fit. All you need to do is act. After all, you owe it to yourself and your loved ones.

So without further ado, let's dive into the fundamentals of bodyweight training.

PART 1

SETTING THE FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 1:

THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BODYWEIGHT STRENGTH TRAINING

So why is bodyweight training so effective? More importantly, if it is effective, why does weight training hog all the limelight and why do a lot of people think that it is superior to bodyweight training? This chapter is going to give you a few foundational principles you should keep in mind when you begin to exercise.

Most importantly, it is going to show you that you don't need fancy equipment or a gym to be able to get strong, lose fat, and build your stamina.

Why Bodyweight Training?

The word "training" most likely conjures images of a sweaty gym with people huddled over machines and dumbells moving to and fro. There's no doubt that training with weights is effective. I mean, I am a heavy weightlifter myself! However, to think that it is the only worthwhile form of training is a mistake.

Weightlifting has its positives, but one of the biggest negatives to do with it is the prevalence of injuries. In order to progress, you need to keep increasing the weight you lift. There eventually comes a point where you'll be close to your maximum strength limit, and with the intention of completing your exercise set, you'll end up injuring yourself since your body will simply fail.

Injuries sustained from weightlifting can be life-altering, especially if they involve your joints or back. Aside from injuries, it's no secret that these types of exercises place a

massive load on your joints ("Most Common Weightlifting Injuries and 5 Tips to Avoid Them", 2019). You will also need tons of equipment to weight train correctly.

The Advantages of Bodyweight Training

This is where bodyweight training is far superior to weight lifting. All you need is your body. You don't need any equipment or accessories of any kind. The reason most people find bodyweight training ineffective is that they perform the exercises incorrectly.

For example, one of the most common bodyweight exercises is the pushup. It's pretty simple. Lie flat on your stomach and push yourself up off the ground. You'd be surprised at how many people fail to perform this exercise correctly and end up sustaining injuries to their shoulders and wrists.

It is possible to sustain injuries from any movement that is performed incorrectly. The form is what determines the likelihood of injury, not the type of exercise. The critical point is that the injuries you can potentially sustain when training with just your bodyweight will be far less severe than the ones you sustain from weight lifting. This is because your body is not being pushed past its limit to much.

Recovery and energy levels after a workout are higher on average with these types of exercises. You don't need to buy medicine balls or sign up for yoga classes to preserve flexibility unless you want to. Your body will be working within safe limits while pushing itself to grow stronger at the same time. Let's look at some of the benefits of bodyweight training in more detail.

You Don't Need a Gym or Accessories

This one is self-explanatory. You don't need special equipment for a pushup. Some exercises do need accessories, but even these are so easily obtained that it's laughable to think of them as accessories. For example, you need a bar of some kind to perform a pullup. This can be a particular accessory you purchase, or it can be a monkey bar you find on a playground or beach.

It can be a wooden or metal beam in your home or garage. It can be a tree branch. What I mean is that you're not going to have to spend too much time figuring out how to perform the exercise, but I still highly recommend buying an actual pull up bar for your home.

Optimum Power to Weight Ratio

Here's how progress in weightlifting occurs. You lift a certain amount of weight today and tomorrow (or some preset time limit later), you lift the weight that is one degree higher than it. The idea is that your muscles are continually being challenged and have to grow in order to make progress.

This works for the most part, but the problem is that your body isn't a machine. It has days when it isn't at its best. It has days when it needs ample rest. Forcing an arbitrary weight number on it externally will lead to injuries. Training this way also assumes that everyone's body responds the same way to training routines .

This is simply untrue since everyone's body is different. By training with your body weight, you're allowing your body the room to adjust and modulate how much energy it can devote to that particular exercise without overexerting itself. This prevents a lot of injuries that are commonplace when weight lifting.

Greater Flexibility and Balance

Thanks to your body having more room to work with (in terms of being able to better adjust to the weight it needs to push), it develops more agility and flexibility. The communication between the different parts of your body becomes better, and you'll find that you'll utilize your muscles far more efficiently.

For example, once you begin performing pushups, you'll notice your core becomes stronger, even though you're not directly exercising it. This will impact the way you walk, and you'll find yourself standing up straighter because your core is now more actively supporting you.

Weight training involves a lot of isolation exercises. You can train your biceps to look as good and robust as they can be, but

when you lift something off the floor, you're using your legs, glutes, back, shoulder, core, and your biceps. If these muscles aren't used to talking to one another, the amount of weight you can lift in real life will not be equivalent to the weight you lift in the gym.

Bodyweight training simply avoids all of these issues by never having to isolate anything in the first place. Your sense of balance and flexibility will remain what they were before you began training and will even increase .

Clear Targets

Given that your body will be able to adjust far better to your training methods, you'll be able to set and hit your training targets better. A common occurrence in weight training regimes is stalling. This refers to when the trainee cannot lift beyond a certain amount of weight after a while.

Stalling occurs due to fatigue building up over time and the body reaching a level beyond which it cannot move forward without significant rest. Most trainees have no idea how to handle stalls, and it takes a bit of experience to move past one. There is no risk of stalling with bodyweight training since you're always within your body's limits.

In effect, it sets the rate of progress and the tone of your training. Thus, your goals are a lot clearer, and you're never in any doubt as to which level to aim for.

Variations

Our bodies are incredibly versatile and can adapt to a lot of situations. Once you begin training, you'll realize that your body will adjust and get used to that movement. As a result, progress occurs in shorter bursts, and you'll take longer to see the same level of gains as you previously experienced.

When this happens with weight training, you'll need to figure out different exercises to perform, which means learning new movements. With bodyweight training, adjustments are far easier to make. Sticking with the pushup, if you find your body adjusting to it, lift one of your legs off the floor the next time you do it.

Even better, place your legs on an elevation and push up from a decline. You can do the Rocky Balboa pushup where you pushup with one arm, explode at the top and come down on the other and repeat the action. You can bring your arms closer to your body or push wider. Lift both your legs off the ground etc etc. There is almost no end to the number of variations you can deploy when training like this. All of this enables you to keep surprising your body, and you'll make more constant and consistent progress.

Tailormade

Bodyweight training is an immensely flexible and versatile training method. Through such routines, you'll be able to work towards multiple goals at the same time since it helps develop your strength, endurance, and agility (Why bodyweight training, 2019). Furthermore, if you're looking at taking up a new sport, bodyweight training has a number of benefits for you since it will provide a strong foundation for any other form of activity.

The Most Common Training Mistakes - And How to Avoid Them

One of the reasons most exercise regimes fail is due to the fact that people commit some highly avoidable errors. A lot of these apply equally to bodyweight training routines. With this in mind, let's look at some of the mistakes that you should avoid.

Training Beyond Capacity

This mistake is almost impossible to commit when training with your body weight, but it still occurs. The most common way is when the trainee decides to get creative with their training and sticks an additional dumbbell or weight plate onto the exercise, and all of a sudden, the body is being pushed beyond its capacity .

Exercising Till Failure

Unlike the previous mistake, this one is eminently possible when training with just your bodyweight. This occurs mostly due to the stereotype that surrounds training hard. Common motivational sayings such as ‘go hard or go home’ and so on get people to think that unless they’re puking their guts out, they haven’t really trained.

The truth is that the ideal strength level you want to hit is around 90% of your maximum capacity. This means that you should stop performing the exercise when you feel that you’ll tap out within a couple more repetitions of it. Admittedly, this is a feel based metric that will be difficult to figure out at first.

However, over time you’ll get to know your body better and will avoid this mistake.

Lack of a Plan

How often have you seen people get dressed up in their fancy workout gear upon reaching the gym, and all they do is randomly train at various things before packing up to go home at the slightest hint of sweat? The fact is that you need to plan your training in the gym much before you decide to step into it.

This means having a clear and precise workout plan that lists how many repetitions or the interval for which you will perform an exercise. Not only does this planning need to be done for a daily session but also across sessions. How will you make sure you’ll keep pushing yourself to the ideal limit?

This is where a workout routine helps immensely. It doesn’t have to be fancy, but you need a basic plan in place. Anything else, and you’ll end up looking clueless .

Too Many Reps

Rep is short for repetition, and high rep exercises are one of the most common mistakes that beginners make. It isn’t just beginners, even people who have been training unsuccessfully for a while, end up committing this error. The reason this error occurs is that most people don’t understand that training methods depend on goals.

To be honest, the weightlifting world is more susceptible to this than the bodyweight trainers. What usually happens is that a beginner goes to the gym and sees the hulk in the corner, lifting tiny weights for a large number of reps. The reason the hulk trains this way is because he already has a high level of strength, and these low weight/high rep routines give him a good pump.

A beginner is not going to see any benefit from these routines since they have no muscle to pump in the first place. They need to be working on building their strength before worrying about how they'll look. When performing bodyweight exercises, you want to concentrate on pushing your strength forward as much as possible instead of trying to perform an inordinately large number of reps for an exercise.

Ignoring Illness or Injury

One of the most perverse results that motivational speeches and quotes create is to get sick people to go workout instead of staying at home and getting better. Trying to train when sick is a bit like trying to run with one leg incapacitated. You're just not going to do it very well.

Even worse, training and exercise place stress on the body, and when sick, stress is the last thing you need. So be kind to yourself and lay off for a while. Injury is a tricky thing for most beginners because they cannot distinguish between soreness and injury .

Soreness is the result of a lack of blood flow through a particular area, whereas injury is the result of tissue damage. The former feels uncomfortable all the time but disappears once you perform the same movement that caused it, thereby forcing blood to flow through the muscle again. An injury will be accompanied by a sharp pain at all times or a pain when you try to perform the movement that caused it. You will also feel weakness in that area when you move it.

Learning to identify the difference between soreness and injury takes time. The key is to minimize the potential for injury before you learn the difference.

Inadequate Rest

No matter the routine you choose to follow, you need adequate amounts of rest. This is usually allowing a rest period of 24 hours between your workouts. As you become more experienced, you can shorten this since you'll know your body better. However, in the beginning, it's best to train on alternate days, especially when you're looking to build strength.

Rest periods are extremely important because true progress occurs when you rest, not when you train. It is during the resting period that your body repairs itself and breaks down existing muscle fibers to build bigger, stronger ones. This is where strength is built. So never underestimate your rest periods and always prioritize them.

Lack of a Warm-Up

Have you ever tried starting a car in the dead of winter? Or have you ever tried accelerating it to top speed immediately after you start the engine? If your car happens to be brand new, it won't need much of a warm-up period, but it is unlikely that the engine will be able to hit peak performance immediately. An old car might just die on you if you try to do this.

Your body is much the same. I'm not saying you're going to drop dead from a lack of warmups, by the way. What I mean is that you need to take the time to get the blood flowing to various parts of your body before pushing it close to its limit. This is common sense, but most people who train don't follow this simple rule.

They jump in and immediately try to lift the weight they're supposed to lift during that session. This is the easiest way to injure yourself. You might have gotten away with it when you were younger, but trying to do this at your current age is a terrible idea.

Ignoring Nutrition

When you exercise, you burn calories. Your body is placed under stress, and to recover, it needs food (fuel). Not eating well and eating inadequate amounts of food is one of the most

significant mistakes trainees make. To be honest, this mistake usually occurs due to a lack of planning.

Plan your meals ahead of time, so you're not going to come home to an empty kitchen or fridge after your workout. Grabbing some fast food after your workout might be fine once or twice, but you don't want to make a habit of this. Remember that as you grow older, you're going to need to pay more attention to the micronutrients in your food, such as the vitamins and minerals.

Junk food is full of processed chemicals that give you a short term sugar rush but nothing in terms of nutrition. So plan your meals and quantities ahead of time and make sure you don't go hungry and undo all your progress .

Improper Macros

Macros refer to macronutrients. There are three of them, namely protein, fat, and carbohydrates. Protein is required to build muscle while fat and carbs form the fuel for your body. Trying to work out and exercise without eating the right amount of carbs and fat is a bit like trying to drive a vehicle without any gas in it.

There is a lot of literature on proper nutrition partitioning and so on, but the best way to make sure you're eating the right amount of nutrients is to eat a balanced diet. This way, you're guaranteed to receive the right levels of nutrition.

Not Varying Your Workouts

I mentioned before that our bodies are incredibly adaptable and can adjust themselves to any workout or activity level over time. Once they adapt, they expend less energy in performing that activity. The result is that your rate of progress will slow down. The best way to avoid this is to switch your routines up and keep your body guessing.

There is the danger of going to the other extreme and varying your workouts too much. I'm not saying you should be doing something different every day, but an excellent way to determine when it's time to change is to monitor yourself for

boredom. When you feel this coming on, change things, and charge your body again.

Lack of Tracking and Measurement

If you've worked out before, did you ever go to the gym with a notepad and a pen and keep track of how much and what you have lifted? Odds are you have never done this. This is pretty normal across all trainees. They assume that adopting a workout routine somehow guarantees they'll make progress and fail to realize that in order to progress, you need to measure and track performance. When you begin your workout session, you should know exactly what you're going to do as well as the duration and amount of time you'll be doing it for. Your training log contains all of this information, and you should be tracking everything you do. Think of it as being your progress log.

Poor Form

Many beginners rush into their workout routine full of energy and excitement and promptly injure themselves. This is because of them practicing improper form. Form here refers to the exercise technique. For example, if you're performing the pushup, you need to make sure your back remains straight and that it isn't bent. This is a straightforward instruction, but in a bid to squeeze that extra rep, some people are liable to bend their backs.

With bodyweight exercises, improper form will not result in massive injuries. However, this doesn't mean you should ignore form. Proper form ensures that you'll be building strength the right way and will be hitting the right muscles when you perform the exercise. Thus, in addition to preventing you from injuring yourself, form also guarantees a good level of strength and stamina.

Isolation too Soon

As I mentioned earlier, the huge guys at the gym tend to perform isolation exercises because it ties in with their goals (Why bodyweight training, 2019). Their goals happen to be very different from yours, and as such, it makes zero sense for

you to follow their lead. Isolation exercises are best for those who are looking to give their muscles better shape .

They're not really geared towards building overall strength. For them to be effective, the trainee needs to possess a decent amount of muscle to begin with. At that stage, an isolation routine will help them develop both shape as well as help with their other lifts because it will ensure every muscle in the muscle chain is as strong as it can be.

Strength training is what gets your muscles talking to one another and working in tandem. It is pointless to strengthen one part of the chain when the chain itself barely exists. Hence, focus on the basics of strength first and worry about shape later. You'll look pretty good once you hit a decent level of strength, so don't worry about this.

What You Need to Succeed

Having covered the mistakes, a good question at this point is to ask what does one need in order to succeed? This is an extremely simple question to answer, thankfully. It comes down to two things:

- Patience and dedication
- Understanding the basics

Patience and Dedication

Rome wasn't built overnight, and neither will your strength and body be. On average, it takes around three months of consistent training for you to be able to see visible results in the mirror and for others to notice changes in you. If you feel three months are too far away, then understand that there is no magic pill or procedure you can undergo that will get you to where you want to go immediately. Life just doesn't work that way.

Besides, three months isn't really that long. Your first month will be spent getting used to your routine, and your second month is where you'll begin to start connecting things together. By the third month, exercise will become a habit for

you, and you'll begin to feel the changes long before they appear in the mirror.

Things such as the difference in the way your clothes fit and your energy levels will make themselves known towards the end of the first month itself. The best way of looking at your routine is to break it down into a series of small tasks. By doing this, you'll prevent yourself from becoming overwhelmed and will be able to stay true to your course better.

Understanding the Basics

So how is strength built? How do your muscles grow? This process is a lot simpler than you can imagine. The amount of muscle mass in your body is referred to as your lean body mass. The higher your lean body mass is, the lower your body fat percentage. The greater your strength level is, the higher your lean body mass.

Thus, it's pretty simple: the more muscle you have, the less body fat you carry, and the stronger you are. When you exercise, your body is placed under stress. Now, you might think of stress as being a bad thing, but it's important to differentiate between good and bad versions of it.

Stress is terrible for us when it lasts for long periods of time. This is when your body starts producing hormones that disrupt your digestive system and place your brain on edge, ready to strike back against any perceived threats (Stoppler, 2018). When present for short durations, stress is good for us since it forces us to grow and learn new skills.

This is pretty much what exercise does. If you try to exercise for hours on end, you're going to be harming yourself. An ideal workout lasts for around an hour, followed by a nutritious meal within an hour of completing it. Post-workout nutrition is important because, during your exercise session, your body will be breaking down muscle fibers.

During your post-workout nutrition and resting period, you'll be providing your body with the fuel it needs to repair itself and grow stronger. Putting all of this together, the formula for

muscle building is pretty straightforward: Focus on building strength, eat well, and rest well.

How This Book Will Work For You

Every exercise presented in this book is going to get you to build a basic level of strength before moving up a notch. One of the best ways to keep your body from adjusting to your current routine as well as to challenge itself continually is to keep adding new workouts that are aimed at increasing your strength level.

Thus, take the time to master a particular exercise prior to moving on to the next one. Do not be in a rush to try everything at once since this will result in you sabotaging yourself. Be patient and understand the basics. Review the common mistakes, and make sure you don’t commit them.

It sounds simple, and in reality, it is. The key to success is often as simple as avoiding complicating things unnecessarily.

CHAPTER 2:

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A HEALTHY LIFE

While exercise forms an integral part of a healthy lifestyle, it is just one part of it. If anything, exercise is only half the portion of it. This might sound surprising to you, but it is a fact (Carroll, 2015). There are three other things that are way more important for your health, and ensuring these are in order will go a long way towards good health.

In no particular order, these three things are:

1. Water
2. Sleep
3. Diet

This chapter is going to break down all of these three items, and by the end of it, you're going to know precisely what you need to do about all of them. Let's begin by looking at water first.

Water

The old adage that recommends drinking eight glasses of water per day is a useful metric to determine how much water you need to drink. However, keep in mind that this is a general piece of advice that is not meant to fit everybody's needs. As you've probably learned thus far, everyone's different .

Around 60% of the human body is made of water (Carroll, 2015). It is close to impossible to overstate how vital water is for healthy functioning. Water affects our body's processes right down to the cellular level, where it helps flush waste and re-energizes us. Water also plays a significant part in disposing of this waste via urine and sweat.

Speaking of sweat, water is what maintains your body's temperature at healthy levels. If you get too hot, sweat cools

you down and ensures you don't melt from the inside (Carroll, 2015). In addition to this, water also plays a massive role in lubricating your joints and cushioning them. Layers of water around your sensitive organs protect them from harm as well.

These are just some of the ways in which water assists your overall health. One of the leading causes of poor health in the average American adult is dehydration. Dehydration occurs when you simply don't provide your body with enough water, and your body will immediately let you know when this occurs.

Some of the symptoms of dehydration are:

- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Lack of energy
- Inability to concentrate on tasks
- Tiredness or exhaustion

There are a few factors that go into determining how much water you need to drink every day. While the eight glass recommendation is a good place to begin with, depending on certain factors, you might discover that you need to drink a lot more .

Ideal Quantity

To figure out how much water you need to drink, we need to take a look at the factors that affect fluid levels in your body. The first and most obvious factor to look at is the climate you live in. Adult males living in temperate or pleasant climates require around 16 cups (four liters) of water, while adult females require 12 cups (three litres) per day.

The hotter the climate you're living in is, the more you're going to sweat, and you will need to replenish the fluid you lost. There's no way to calculate this accurately, but it's always better to increase the frequency at which you drink water the hotter it gets. The next factor that influences fluid intake is exercise.

The more you exercise, the more you sweat, and hence your need for water is higher. It is a good idea to drink a little water before your workout since this will energize you and ensure you don't dehydrate yourself in the middle of your workout. In between exercises, make it a habit to sip a little water. Once you're done, take a large swig of water as you rest and prepare to consume your post-workout meal.

I advise sticking to regular water instead of consuming fancy sports drinks. These drinks have their uses for people who work out for periods lasting longer than a couple of hours. When working out for this long, your body will lose electrolytes, and these drinks can help replenish them. However, for the purposes of the exercise program in this book, you don't need them.

Avoid consuming heavily caffeinated drinks before your workout since these dehydrate you to a greater extent than regular drinks. They will provide you with a nice kick of energy, but unless you're working out first thing in the morning, you don't need such stimulation .

Lastly, women who are pregnant or are breastfeeding should increase their fluid intake by at least two cups over the recommended intake amounts mentioned earlier (Gunnars, 2018). Monitor yourself for signs of dehydration and consult your doctor at all times.

How to Consume

You can consume water in multiple ways. First off, there is drinking, which is the most obvious way to do it. You can drink water or have any fluid, other than heavily caffeinated drinks. To make it clear, these drinks do contain water, but their calories come at a cost as you'll shortly learn. Don't consume them in excess.

Drinks such as milkshakes, smoothies, or juices contain ample amounts of water. If you're an avid juicer, you can consume juices of vegetables that contain high levels of water, such as leafy greens or cucumbers. Drinking juices of fruits, such as watermelon, is also an excellent way to get your daily dose of water.

Develop a routine around drinking water. Personally, I use a 40 oz flask to make sure I'm drinking the right amounts of water every day. I refill the flask at least three times, so I know that I'm drinking at least 120 oz per day (roughly just under a gallon of water). You can keep sipping from your flask throughout your day and monitor yourself for signs of inadequate fluid intake.

The signs to look out for are (Gunnars, 2018):

- Constantly feeling thirsty or hungry
- Urine is yellow in color or is not colorless

Thirst is sometimes confused as hunger, so always drink a little water when you feel hungry just to make sure you aren't getting your wires crossed. All in all, with a bit of discipline, you can ensure you'll never have to worry about your water intake throughout your day .

Too Much Water?

Is it possible to drink too much water? Technically yes. Excessive water consumption leads to a condition called hyponatremia (Gunnars, 2018). This occurs when your blood is heavily diluted to the extent where its sodium content is far too low. In such conditions, your kidneys cannot excrete the excess water.

Athletes who train for long periods of time are susceptible to this. Generally speaking, it is difficult for the average American adult to ever reach such levels of risk, so you probably don't need to worry about this.

Sleep

I've already mentioned in the previous chapter how vital the recovery period is for your progress. Indeed, your gains are made not during your workout but during your resting period. The most significant factor that affects the quality of your recovery is sleep. To be more precise, the quality of it.

Just like with water, the average adult requires at least eight hours of sleep every 24 hours (Roland, 2019). There are some exceptions of people who can get by with as little as six hours

of sleep, but these people are truly rare. If you think you're one of them, odds are that you're underestimating your need for sleep.

The fact is that the average adult carries a significant sleep deficit. This is due to a variety of lifestyle factors. Furthermore, the type of lifestyle you lead also determines how much sleep you need. Some people actually require more than the customary eight hours. Let's take a look at what happens when we sleep before trying to figure out how much of it is needed .

Phases of Sleep

Sleep is often thought of as being a passive or inactive state. After all, all you need to do is lie there like a log and keep your eyes closed as your brain and body take care of everything else. While your body is at rest, the same is not true for your brain. If anything, it's just as active as it is when you're awake. The difference is the processes it carries out differ depending on the phase of sleep you're in.

There are two broad phases of sleep: Non REM and REM sleep. REM stands for Rapid Eye Movement. When you lie down to go to bed, you enter the non REM phase, which is subdivided into three stages. The first stage lasts for around 10 minutes and is characterized by light sleep, and you can be easily woken up at this time.

The second stage of non REM sleep lasts for close to 30 minutes and is when you slide deeper into slumber. You can be woken up at this stage, but it's a bit tougher to do so. The final stage is the longest lasting one and lasts for around 40 minutes or so. This is when your brain finally decides that the time is right to begin carrying out what it needs to do. Your blood pressure drops, as does your heart rate, and you begin to enter REM sleep.

REM, as the name suggests, is characterized by to and from eye movements underneath your eyelids. While in non REM mode, your brain is slowing things down, but here it picks the pace back up (Roland, 2019). Your heart rate and body temperature increase as your brain begins processing the

things that happened during the day and begins embedding all the new skills you have learned.

In essence, this is the period when your brain is forming new neural pathways and is forging connections within itself. Research suggests that REM sleep is primarily concerned with restoring the brain and not so much the body (Roland, 2019).

When you sleep, you drift between periods of REM and non REM sleep. After the first period of REM sleep, you won't drift back into the first stage of non REM sleep but will hover around the second stage. This is why loud noises in the middle of the night can wake you up. Physical repair takes place during the non REM phase.

This is when human growth hormone or HGH is secreted, and this is used to repair your muscles and other soft tissue that has been placed under stress when exercising. HGH is what is responsible for muscle growth, and the only time it is present in the body in large quantities is during non REM sleep. Thus, skip on sleep, and you're not giving your body a chance to recover as it needs to.

Quality

It's tempting to think of sleep in terms of quantity and think that as long as you're logging in the hours, you're all right. This is a mistake. It's a bit like thinking that standing around in the gym doing nothing is going to cause muscle growth. There are a number of things that affect the quality of your sleep. The recommendation to sleep for eight hours assumes that those eight hours are high in quality.

If you exercise regularly or lead an active lifestyle, you need more than eight hours of sleep. The exact amount is not known, but an excellent way to get the ideal amount of sleep is to simply go to bed without setting your alarm. Wakeup whenever your body wants to the next day. If you have to wake up at a specific time, taking power naps throughout the day is a great way to boost productivity (Roland, 2019).

Ensuring total darkness in your bedroom and developing a sleep routine is essential to getting quality sleep. Limit the amount of time you stare into a bright screen such as your

smartphone or a TV. Your brain will process the large quantity of light as being a cue to remain awake. Read a book as you lie down to start preparing your brain for sleep.

While white noise (regular and rhythmic noise at a low pitch) can help produce good quality sleep, you want to limit irregular noise since this has been proven to reduce sleep quality (Roland, 2019). You should ensure your bedding and pillows are of good quality as well.

Deficits

The reality of our busy schedules often makes it impossible to ensure high quality sleep at all times. This doesn't mean you should give up hope on ever sleeping well. One way to still receive your requisite hours is to take power naps during the day. These naps can be up to 30 minutes in length and will leave you feeling refreshed. It'll also help you avoid the mid-afternoon fog that affects people around 2:30-3 PM.

Another way is to go to bed on the weekends (or whenever you have a day off) without setting your alarm. Let your body and brain decide how much sleep you need. If you feel the need to sleep all day, so be it. It's not possible to completely overcome a large sleep deficit. What I mean is you can't stockpile a month's worth of lost sleep and then try to make up for it over the course of a week by not setting your alarm.

To overcome that deficit, you'll need to follow good sleep habits and make sure to develop a routine that will ensure as high a quality of sleep for you as possible. Lastly, develop some consistency around your sleep habits. In other words, go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Your body will get used to this and will automatically begin shutting down during these times .

If you didn't sleep well during the night, get up at the same time in order to maintain consistency and try to make up for the lost sleep during the weekend. Prioritize sleep, and you'll find a lot of your problems related to fatigue and lethargy will disappear.

Diet

When it comes to fat loss and getting healthy, exercise is essential, but more than this, it is your diet that plays the most significant role. In fact, it is possible to lose fat without exercising, although I don't recommend this approach for the sake of your overall health.

If you think the fitness industry produces material that confuses people, this is nothing compared to what the diet industry does. There are all sorts of fancy diets out there that restrict one form of food and promote the other. These work to varying degrees. Truth be told, the majority of them are legitimate. This is mainly because eating healthy isn't rocket science.

Our bodies have an intuitive knowledge of what it needs to nourish ourselves. The problem is that we overcomplicate eating to the point where we end up confusing ourselves. The following tips will help you ensure you eat clean and maintain a healthy diet.

Choose Fresh

Always choose fresh and whole-food over refined and processed food. More than anything else, this will go a long way towards ensuring you eat healthily. Whole food refers to the stuff that exists in its natural form and is consumed with a little bit of cooking. Examples of whole food include grains, vegetables, meat, fruit, and so on. There is a school of thought that advocates eating food in a form that is closest to its natural state. This is generally good advice to follow, but there's no need to get fanatical about it.

Processed food can be a little confusing to get your head around at first. Technically speaking, anything that isn't present in nature is processed. For example, wine is processed, as is cheese. In moderate quantities, these aren't harmful. The types of processed foods you want to avoid at all costs are those that are chemically manipulated.

The food industry makes more money by producing stuff that lasts longer. To ensure this, they add chemicals and sugar that achieve this objective. The problem is that these chemicals wreak havoc on our internal organs and disrupt our digestive

system. Anything that comes in a box, such as frozen pizza, fast food, TV dinners, and so on, should be avoided.

Meat and oil are two foods that suffer the most from processing. With meat, the processing usually occurs in the type of feed the animal is provided and the conditions it is housed in. Needless to say, most supermarket meat is sourced from farms that follow horrible practices (Myers, 2016). In some cases, livestock is fed plastic and other unnatural feed that results in all kinds of diseases being transferred to you when you consume them.

Oil is processed to ensure that it cooks better. A telltale sign of processed oil is its color. Natural, cold-pressed oil such as coconut or extra virgin olive oil is either not clear in color or tends to freeze quickly. In addition, they tend to be viscous. Processed oils have an almost watery texture and are clear in color.

Chemicals are added during the extraction process to squeeze the last bits of oil out of the husks of whatever the oil is being drawn from. For example, olive oil itself can be processed, which is why it is best to stick to extra virgin olive oil, as opposed to olive pomace oil, which is chemically processed .

Choose the Right Sugar

In addition to meat and oil, sugar comes in processed and unprocessed forms. Processed sugar is generally bad for you and is responsible for the majority of fat gains. Natural sugar, such as that found in fruits, honey and even in whole grains are naturally occurring carbohydrates and are important for your nutrition.

Choose natural sugar as much as possible. Having said that, remember that an excess of anything is bad. Just because natural sugar is good for you doesn’t mean you can drink honey all day instead of water. Make sure your diet is balanced. Choosing whole grains and fresh fruits in your diet is the best way of making sure you receive the right quantities of this.

Eat Protein

Your muscles are literally made of protein, and the fact is that the average American diet is heavy in carbs and severely lacks protein. A good rule of thumb is to eat 0.7-1 grams of protein per pound of bodyweight. So if you weigh 200 pounds, you need to eat between 140 to 200 grams of protein as a part of your diet.

There are a number of healthy protein sources, both animal and plant-based. Animal sources tend to be denser and contain a higher concentration of protein within them. Plant-based sources usually contain a higher level of carbs along with protein. This isn't bad in any way. It's just that you might need to exercise at higher levels of intensity to burn the excess carbs .

Monitor Salt and Sugar

I've already mentioned sugar, but salt is something that most people ignore. They either consume too little or eat too much. The eating too much crowd usually ends up doing this by eating processed food, which happens to be high in sodium (i.e salt.) It's easy to eat too little by merely forgetting to add salt to the food you cook or not adding enough.

There's no need to overthink this. Add a few pinches of salt and monitor how much water your body is retaining. If you find that your stomach is full of water and you're constantly thirsty, you're probably overeating salt (as long as you aren't dehydrated.)

As for sugar, it is possible to eat too much of the right sort of sugar. Any excess carbs or sugar your body receives tends to get converted to fat, so you need to make sure you limit your consumption of it.

Break Your Meals Down

This is a contentious topic, but for beginners, it's best to eat multiple small meals throughout the day. This is because it keeps your blood sugar levels consistent, and you'll avoid experiencing the hunger spikes that occur when blood sugar levels drop. Be careful, though: it can be easy to overeat when

doing this. Fix your meal portions ahead of time to minimize this risk.

Watch What You Drink

When planning your meals, it's easy to measure how much you eat, but most people forget to account for how much they drink. A cup of coffee here and a juice there adds up over the day, and you can easily consume more than 500 calories in this manner. It's best to stick to plain water if you want to drink something.

If drinking coffee, minimize the milk and sugar you add to it or even better, stick to herbal teas or green tea. Processed drinks such as Coca Cola and other assorted carbonated drinks only make things worse. Needless to say, alcohol of any kind guarantees you'll consume more calories than you need.

I'm not saying you should eliminate these things. Just minimize them while recognizing that elimination is the best option.

Exercise

All of us routinely eat more calories than we need. The best way to make sure we remain fit is to be physically active. Your bodyweight training routine will go a long way towards ensuring this but seek to be as active as possible. This means walking short distances instead of driving them. Take the stairs when you can instead of using the elevator.

Don't think of this as a routine. Simply make physical activity a part of your daily life, and you'll find yourself burning calories naturally. Furthermore, exercise makes you hungry, which is a sign that your body is burning what you give it efficiently.

Meal Prep

How would you like a method whereby you can guarantee that you'll always eat the right food in the right quantities? Meal prep is your answer! The way you choose to prep will be different from what someone else might decide to do. After all, your schedule determines how you'll go about doing this .

Many elements go into a good meal prep, so let's take a look at them one by one.

Storage

Figuring out food storage should be your first step. This is easy enough to do. You can buy plastic containers or glass bowls that you can use for this purpose. Storing food in plastic is not a great idea over the long term since the food will interact with it and produce harmful chemicals (Zandonella, 2010).

Storing your food in glassware is the best because of the lack of harmful byproducts and the fact that you can safely reheat your food in the bowl itself. In addition to this, you also want to refer to the United States Department of Agriculture guidelines about food storage safety. As a rule of thumb, don't aim to store food for more than three days in the fridge.

This means your cooking schedule is easy to figure out.

Cooking Schedule

If you're going to be storing food for three days at the most in your fridge, this means you'll be cooking twice a week. While the three-day rule applies to a lot of food, there are some items you can store for longer such as chopped vegetables, cooked beans, and so on.

A twice a week cooking schedule means you'll be cooking once over the weekend and once during the week. The weekday cooking session will need to be carried out efficiently if your schedule is packed. This is why it's a good idea to bake or slow cook your food. Take your time creating fancy dishes and recipes over the weekend .

I'm not saying your weekday cooked meals need to be lacking in flavor. It is entirely possible to cook food quickly and easily and still have it taste great. It's just a matter of learning how to cook.

Your Tools

If you're short on time to cook, one of the best things you can do is to focus on baking or slow cooking your dishes. This

allows you to throw your food into the appliance and do something else while it cooks. The best part of this is that almost all types of food can be cooked in this manner. You can bake or slow cook meat, vegetables, grains etc.

Make sure you have the right tools to prep your food. This means having good quality knives, baking dishes and sheets, and a food processor. I recommend a food processor over a blender since this will enable you to do more than just a blender would.

Use Smart Recipes

Understand that the taste of your dish and the time it takes to create it have nothing to do with one another. A simple five-ingredient recipe that takes just 10 minutes to put together can be just as delicious as a recipe that has 20 ingredients and takes two hours to cook.

A great way to reduce your cooking time is to have smoothies or juices. This is especially true during breakfast time. A good lifehack is to add cocoa powder to any smoothie whose ingredients are less than appetizing to you. You can throw some protein such as eggs, milk, greens, avocado, peanut butter, or whatever strikes your fancy and have a readymade breakfast in no time.

If you feel hungry in between meals, consider carrying around trail mix or assorted nuts. These are packed with calories and will keep you full with a small helping. Focus on creating recipes that need simple cooking or baking and don’t need multiple cooking methods in order to come together.

Salads are really easy to put together, generally speaking. You can prep the ingredients beforehand and store them in the fridge. If you’re adding meat to it, you can choose to cook just this part of the recipe prior to consuming your meal.

Maintain Balance

The best way to create balanced meals is to ensure a variety of textures and colors on your plate. It seems absurd to suggest diversity in color, but this is one of the best ways to ensure you’re eating a balanced meal. A simple formula of

grain+protein+vegetables followed by a fruit-based snack or dessert almost always works.

Ensure you have a small helping of greens with your meals and you'll tick almost every box.

Meal prep doesn't need to be complicated. With a little planning and prioritization, you'll ensure that your meals will be tasty and delicious as well as healthy.

CHAPTER 3:

BODYWEIGHT TRAINING KNOWLEDGE: PROPER WARM-UP, STRETCHING, AND BREATHING

Now that we've covered some lifestyle basics, it's time to delve into the basics of bodyweight exercise. The good news is that you don't need any form of equipment other than a pullup bar. Even this is optional since what you basically need is a sturdy platform to hang from and pull yourself up. As you progress to more advanced calisthenics, you will need some equipment, but for now, a pullup bar is more than sufficient.

The rest of this chapter is going to give you everything you need to know about breathing, progression, frequency, and so on.

Workout Frequency and Other Concerns

When starting out, you should be working out three times a week with a day's gap in between workouts, as mentioned earlier. This is to give your body enough time to recover and also gives you the mental space to get adjusted to your workouts. Remember, the best kinds of trainings are ones that are as repeatable as possible.

If you were to rush headstrong into a new workout routine, your brain and body will rebel at the sudden change. Habit is a powerful thing, and if you're not accustomed to working out, your body isn't going to simply accept the new changes to its routine, no matter how excited or motivated you are.

Pretty soon, you'll find yourself becoming lazy or will develop mysterious 'injuries' that will cause you to miss workouts, and sure enough, you'll be back sitting on your couch in no time. Stick to the schedule mentioned above, and you'll be just fine.

You might initially find this extremely easy and may not feel the ‘burn’ of a workout. This is intentional and allows your body to acclimate to the new routine slowly.

Where to Start

The chapters after this one will list the exercises you will need to perform. Each chapter will start by describing the easiest form of the exercise and will then proceed to more challenging forms. Every one arrives with differing strength levels, so it can be tough to figure out where you need to start exactly.

A good rule of thumb is to try all the versions of an exercise. When you find that you can do around four repetitions of an exercise variation, begin by performing the exercise that is one step lower. For example, the next chapter is all about pushups, and the progression is as follows:

- Incline Pushup
- Knee Pushup
- Pushups
- Diamond/Archer/Incline one arm Pushup
- One arm Pushup
- Weighted Pushup

Let’s say you can perform four pushups. This means your starting level will be the knee pushup. You should do three sets of four reps of knee push-ups, to begin with. Performing four reps of the knee pushup counts as one set. You will perform one set, take a rest, and then perform another and so on until you complete three sets.

Rest Periods

How long should you rest between sets? Aim for an average rest period of one minute with a maximum of two minutes. Despite the word average, don’t rest for 30 seconds after the first set and one minute thirty seconds after the second set. Keep your rest periods consistent, and you’ll see progress. Do not rest for more than two minutes.

If you feel the need to do so, you're probably progressing too fast and need to take things down a notch.

Progression

When you begin, you'll be performing three sets of four reps per exercise variation. After the first day, you'll be resting for one day. The next session, aim to increase the first set by a single rep while keeping the remaining number of reps the same. For example, your pushup progression will look like the one below:

Workout day #1 - knee push ups (4,4,4)

Rest day

Workout day #2 - knee push ups(5,4,4)

Rest day

Workout day #3 - knee push ups (5,5,4)

Rest da y

Workout day #4 - knee push ups (5,5,5)

Rest day

Workout day #5 - knee push ups (6,5,5)

And so on. You should aim to hit three sets of eight reps with each variation before moving onto the higher level. Sticking with our pushup example, once you can perform (8,8,8) of the knee pushup, your next workout will be to perform the pushup for (3,3,3). Aim to increase your reps in the same manner.

Don't try to shortcut this process by adding more than one rep for the reasons mentioned earlier with regard to how your body adjusts to your new routine. Take it slow, and you'll find yourself making greater progress in the long run.

Shortcuts

I'll keep this one simple: There are none. You need to perform every rep in the full range of motion without trying to shortcut progress. Any rep that you cannot perform with the full range of motion doesn't count as a valid rep. Don't take a breather of

10 seconds in between a set to get the last rep out. Keep your cadence as consistent as possible.

Cadence

Speaking of cadence, you should spend two seconds in the concentric phase and three seconds on the eccentric phase. Concentric phases are the ones where you're tensing your muscles, and eccentric is when you're releasing the pressure. In a pushup, the concentric phase is when you go down towards the floor, and the eccentric phase is when you push off the floor (Cross, 2018).

You should pause for about a second in between phases .

Stalling

With this program, stalling should not be a major concern. If you follow the progression as outlined, you'll find that moving from (8,8,8) to (4,4,4) of the higher level should come easily. Sometimes, it is possible that the next level is too tough, and you cannot complete (4,4,4). In such instances, increase the number of reps at the lower progression to 12 and try again.

In other words, if you find yourself unable to complete (4,4,4), go down one level and aim to increase your reps to (12,12,12) from (8,8,8.) This will generally fix all problems. If you're still unable to complete (4,4,4) of the higher progression, aim for (3,3,3) and start from there.

Another form of stalling that occurs is within the current level itself. For example, you might find yourself unable to progress beyond (7,7,7) for whatever reason. A single session's worth of a lack of progress doesn't count as a stall. If you find yourself unable to progress beyond three sessions, deload the number of reps you're performing.

This means you'll perform (6,6,6) during the next session and then work your way back up to (7,7,7). This applies to all rep combinations. For example, if you were stuck at (7,7,6), you'll still deload to (6,6,6) and work your way back up. Another good idea is to monitor your rest and recovery periods. You want to feel fresh and ready to go prior to your workout. If

you’re exhausted just thinking about it, take an additional rest day and come back refreshed.

Imbalances

You’ll eventually progress to one arm exercise variations, and these will present a challenge. Almost everyone has some form of strength imbalance, and you’ll find that you’ll be able to perform more reps on one side than the other. To eliminate this, begin with your weak side first and perform the same number of reps on your stronger side, even if you can do more.

Warm-Ups

A great workout routine starts with a great warm-up. As I mentioned previously, warm-ups are something we innately understand and yet fail to implement when it comes to exercising. I’m not sure what the reasons for this are, and it’s unimportant to get into all of it. Suffice to say that you should be warming up no matter what.

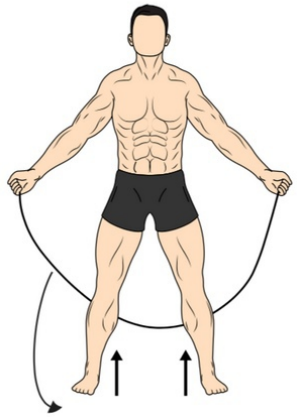
An excellent warm-up reduces your risk of injury by heating your body’s temperature to a certain point (Cross, 2018). Warm muscles are more pliable and are more responsive to stimulation. In practical terms, this means you’re going to perform better, and you’ll have reduced soreness post-workout.

Soreness is something you’ll have to deal with in the beginning since your body isn’t used to the activity you’re subjecting it to. This makes it even more critical for you to prepare your body before a workout. A good warmup ensures that your body is prepared for the more strenuous movement that is to follow, and it also gets you mentally prepared for your workout.

So with this being said, let’s look at the best warmup routine you should implement prior to your workouts.

Step #1 - Jump or Skip Rop e

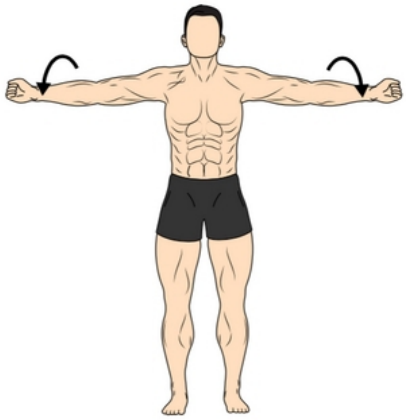
Skipping a rope has long been used as an effective warmup by not just bodybuilders but also by athletes and boxers. It gets the blood flowing and also helps with your coordination. If you cannot skip a rope to save your life, you can jump in the same spot, run in the same place or do jumping jacks.



Run on the spot or skip rope for 5 minutes.

Step #2 - Shoulder Rotations

Opening up your joints is extremely important, and shoulder rotations do the job admirably. The exercise is pretty simple. Simply rotate both of your arms backwards in a controlled manner. You can move them forward as well if that's more comfortable for you. Alternatively, you can do one arm at a time.



Perform 5 shoulder rotations per arm.

Step #3 - Arm Raises

This exercise also focuses on loosening your shoulder joints. Simply raise your arms above your head and swing them up and down in a controlled manner. You don't want to exercise your power here while swinging. Just focus on how your shoulder moves and focus on the increased sense of warmth as blood flows through it.

Perform 5 arm raises for both arms.

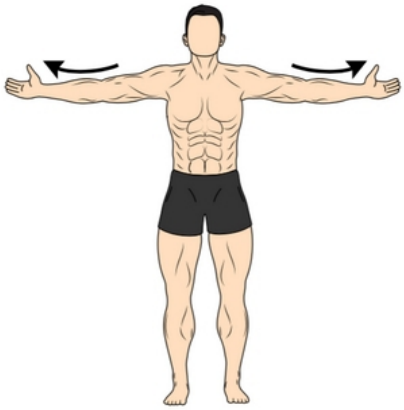
Step #4 - Torso Twist s

From the shoulders, we now move to the hips. Twist your core to the left and right in a controlled manner. As you twist, notice how your lower back feels. You can try to tighten your core as you reach the extremity of your twist.

Perform 5 torso twists. Remember that one twist to the left and right counts as a single twist.

Step #5 - Chest Expansion

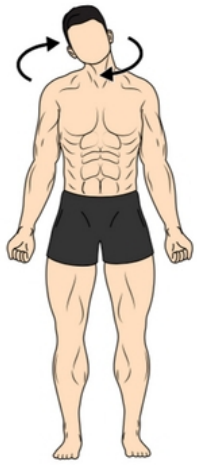
Your chest is one of the biggest muscles in your body and is more of a muscle chain than a single muscle. It comprises pretty much all of your upper body, so loosening this up is essential if you want to perform well in your workout. Place your arms by your side; bring them up and out as you expand your chest.



Perform 5 chest expansions with palms facing upwards.

Step #6 - Neck Rotations

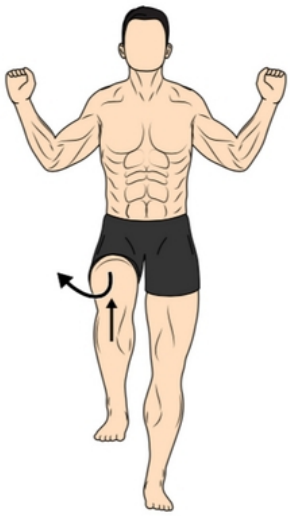
Your neck contains important muscles that stabilize your head. When exercising, these muscles receive an automatic workout, and if they're not warmed up properly, it can lead to sprains and other unwanted things. Simply rotate your head in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction.



Perform 5 to the left and 5 to the right.

Step #7 - Hip Rotatio n

Thanks to sitting down all day, your hips are probably locked shut. The hip joint is one of the most flexible in the body and has a wide range of motion. This exercise unlocks it. Adopt a staggered stance, much like a boxer would. Lift your back leg off the ground and rotate your hip in order to bring it forward. This is a single rotation.



Perform 5 hip rotations on each leg.

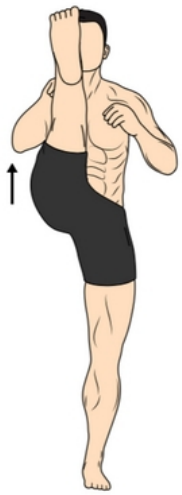
Step #8 - Reverse Hip Rotation

Once the previous exercise is done, rotate your hips in the opposite direction from the same stance. In the previous exercise, you brought your leg forward. Now rotate your hip backwards to loosen them up even more.

Perform 5 reverse hip rotations on each leg.

Step #9 - Leg Swing

From a standing position, place your right arm out in front of you. Now, raise your right leg out front until it reaches the level of your extended arm. Bring your leg up in a controlled manner. This is a raise and not a kick. Having said that, you don't need to bring it up too slowly. Experiment with what speed works best for you and focus on loosening your hips and your hamstrings.



Perform 5 leg swings per leg.

Loosening your hips is extremely important, and if you feel that they're still not warmed up properly, you can perform a couple of variations of the leg swing. Hold onto a vertical frame of some kind at arm's length and stand next to it. Your arm will thus be extended out to your side. Swing the leg that is farthest away from the frame back and forth. Repeat this with the other leg.

Now face the frame and place both hands on it, with your torso bent at a roughly 60 degree angle. Swing your left leg from side to side while keeping your torso as straight as possible. Repeat with the right leg.

Post Workout Routine

Don't be alarmed by reading the name of this section. There are no additional exercises for you to perform once you're done. Instead, you'll need to begin stretching after your workout in order to start your recovery process. A lot of people ignore this portion of their workout, including experienced trainees.

The fact is that post-workout stretches play an essential role in recovery. You'll be less sore the following days and will feel more relaxed once done. Let's look at some of the benefits of an excellent post-workout stretching routine.

Flexibility

Strength is not measured just by the amount of muscle you have but also by how flexible that muscle is. While mass generates power, flexibility is what ensures that the muscle is pliable and won't give in when stressed in uncommon ways. During your workout, your muscles are going to be packed together in order to generate power.

Loosening them up improves flexibility and also improves your performance for your next workout by enhancing the recovery process.

Blood Circulation

Once a muscle tenses up, blood flow into it is constricted. In addition to this, your heart will pump at a higher rate, and your body overall is under quite a lot of stress. Stretching while cooling down improves blood circulation. Recovery begins when oxygen-rich blood begins to flow through your muscles. This enables the cells in your muscle tissues to repair themselves and become stronger.

Lactic Acid

As your muscles are stressed, the oxygen within them depletes since your body is going to be using all the oxygen it can get its hands on. This leads to the formation of lactic acid, which gradually increases as you workout. One of the things that

increases the rate at which lactic acid is dissipated is increased blood flow.

Stretching achieves this goal by enhancing blood flow through your muscles, and thus, the damage caused by lactic acid production is reduced significantly.

Energy Boost

As your body cools down, your brain releases endorphins. These chemicals are commonly known as ‘feel good’ chemicals and are what energize you after a workout. Stretching speeds up the recovery process, and thus endorphin production occurs at a faster rate. As a result, you feel energized and ready to go sooner.

Pain Minimization

Sore and tight muscles often lead to injury. Stretching after a workout reduces the risk of this by loosening them up and minimizing any pain you might feel.

Better Coordination

Stretching your muscles after a workout has been shown to increase their functional mobility (Cross, 2018). One of the reasons this occurs is because your muscles are forced to relax together as you stretch and, thus, learn to work in tandem better. The result is that they synchronize better, and your effective strength increases.

Mind-Body Connection

Stretching helps slow the body down gradually instead of abruptly stopping it after a workout. Stretching involves a lot of slow breathing and observation of your muscles. This increases the connection your mind has with your body, and you’ll become more aware of what’s going on within you.

The result is an increased sense of peace and awareness and a better mood overall. Now that you understand the benefits of stretching post workout, let’s look at the routine itself .

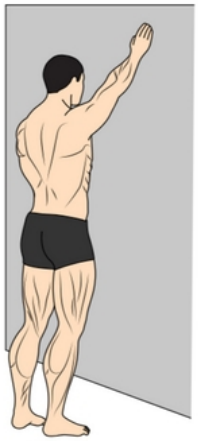
Your Post Workout Routine

Follow this step by step post-workout stretch routine to maximize your recovery. Hold these poses for 12 seconds in order to return the muscles to their original length. You can hold the poses for up to 20 seconds in order to increase flexibility.

Step #1 Pectorals Stretch

Stand a few feet ahead of a pole or any vertical frame you can hold. Stretch one hand back with your palm facing up and push your hand against the frame in order to stretch your upper chest. Repeat the motion with the other arm.

Step #2 Lats Stretch

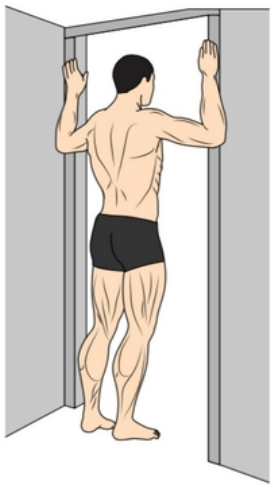


Stand in front of a wall a few feet away, and raise one hand up, palm fully open. Place it on the wall and press yourself towards the wall gently. Repeat with the other arm.

Step #3 Triceps and Lats Stretch

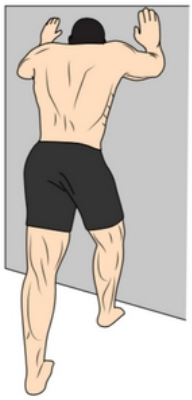
Raise your arms up and bend them at the elbow behind your head. Using the fingers of one hand, gently pull the elbow of the other arm inwards until you feel a stretch in the tricep muscle. Repeat with the other arm.

Step #4 Pecs and Rotator Cuff Stretch



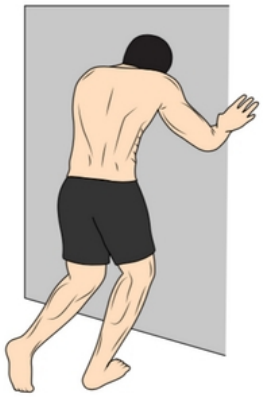
Place your forearms flat on either side of a doorway and lean forward gently.

Step #5 Calf Stretch



Stand a few feet away from a wall facing it and lean forward to place your palms on the wall with one leg ahead of the other . Repeat with the other leg.

Step #6 Calf Stretch #2



From the same position as the previous exercise, place your back leg on its toe and gently bend your front knee towards the wall. Repeat with the other leg.

Step #7 Quad Stretch

Stand on one leg and bend the other leg backwards at the knee until you can grip your toes. Pull the toes to increase the stretch. Repeat with the other leg.

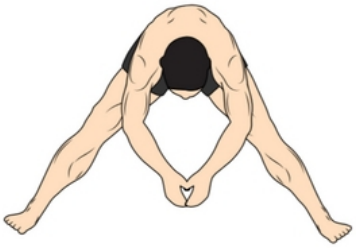
Step #8 Hamstring Stretch

Place one leg on a bench with your leg straight. Without bending your knee, lean forward as much as you can. Repeat with the other leg.

Step #9 Hamstrings and Adductor Stretch

Rotate 90 degrees to the outside from the previous position and bed sideways towards the bench. Repeat with the other leg.

Step #10 Adductor Stretch

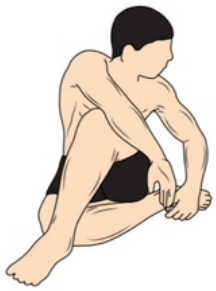


Stand with your legs wide apart and bend forward as low as you can.

Step #11 Adductors and Calf Stretch

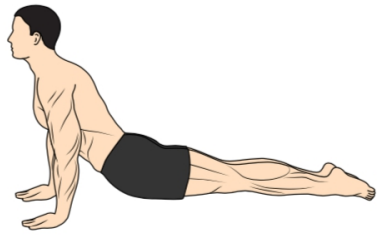
Sit on your heels and squat as low as you can. Place your elbows on the inside of your knees and push your knees outwards.

Step #12 Glute Stretch



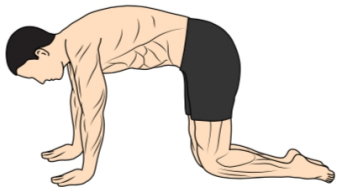
Sit on the floor and bend one leg 90 degrees at the knee. Simultaneously lift the other leg and place it on the outside of the knee of the bent leg. Repeat with the other leg.

Step #13 Cobra Stretch



Lay down on the floor on your belly and raise your chest off the floor with your palms planted firmly on the floor.

Step #14 Cat Stretch



Place yourself on all fours on your knees and palms. Make sure your head is in line between your palms. Now, bend your neck forward while rounding your upper back.

Breathing

One of the most basic things you can do to guarantee better performance and to ensure you don't suffer from injuries is to breathe properly. Breathing is something many beginners don't pay attention to and understandably so. They focus on proper form and the weight they need to lift and forget that breathing well is a part of the equation.

Breathing not only oxygenates your blood, but it also helps firm your body up against stress. If your body isn't firm during the right time when exercising, you're liable to injure yourself. Figuring out when to breathe isn't all that complicated. Always remember to breathe out during the exertion phase of an exercise.

For example, on the pushup, the exertion phase is when you push yourself off the ground. This means you breathe in on the way down and exhale as you push up. In a pull-up, the exertion phase is when you're pulling yourself up and breathing in is when you lower yourself down. So you inhale on the way down and exhale on the way up.

One of the other advantages of breathing correctly is that as your blood becomes more oxygenated, it burns fat and carbs more efficiently. In other words, not only does your body fuel itself better, but it also burns fat faster. Additional weight loss

is also realized thanks to the body being able to excrete excess water and toxins better under such conditions.

So always remember to breathe correctly. Perform your exercises slowly at first to get used to the breathing rhythm, and as time goes by, you'll adjust to it.

PART 2

FUNDAMENTAL EXERCISES

CHAPTER 4:

MASTERING THE PUSH - PROGRESSIONS FOR THE PUSHUP

The first exercise you're going to learn is the pushup. This is a versatile exercise and has long been considered a barometer for upper body strength. The pushup engages not just your upper body but your core and lower body as well. Your arms, chest, and shoulders work to stabilize and push you off the ground. Your core ensures you don't twist and bend your back while your lower body works to make sure you remain stable.

The best part about the pushup is that you can modify it easily to suit your strength level quickly and easily. There is no end to the number of variations of a pushup since you can modify both the speed as well as the form of your pushup. Let's begin by looking at the classic pushup and the form you must hold to perform it well.

Pushup Form

For a simple exercise, it's startling to see how many people get this basic movement all wrong. Aside from the reasons mentioned earlier about how form plays a vital role in determining progress, proper pushup form allows you to evaluate your strength from session to session accurately. If you were to perform one session with perfect form and the other with poor form, there's no way of knowing your true strength level.

Let's break down the various elements of pushup form one by one.

Hand Position

Your hands should be placed slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. This is a step that a lot of people get wrong, and

they tend to place their arms too wide. This results in flared elbows when they go down and push themselves back up. Think of it this way: when looking at your body from above, you should look like an arrow, not like a T with your arms out to the side.

Wrists

Your wrists need to be flexible to do a proper pushup. This isn't the case for a lot of people. If this applies to you or if your wrists hurt when performing the exercise, you can use bars to grasp. These will reduce the pressure on your wrists. Alternatively, you can perform them on softer ground such as grass or dirt.

Another modification you can make here is to clench your palms into fists and place these on the ground. These clenched fist pushups will hurt at first so you can build up to them by performing them on soft surfaces first and gradually increase the degree of difficulty. Although I recommend you starting with open hands with palms touching the floor, perform easier variations, and slowly your wrists will become stronger and stronger.

Fee t

Your feet should be out behind you in a position that is most comfortable for you. You can place them wide or close together, the choice is entirely yours, and there's no single right way to do this. Generally speaking, the wider your feet are, the more stable your base will be, but to gain the most benefits, always have your feet together and knees straight so your body looks like a pencil.

Core

An essential part of pushup form is to make sure your backside isn't sticking up in the air. This happens when your lower back hinges at the hips. A good way to ensure this never happens is to tighten your glutes (backside) and abs and think of your entire body from toe to head as being one single unit. A tip is to tighten every muscle in your core and legs straight. As you

lower and raise your body, be aware of your back's position at all times.

Some people tend to bend their upper back as well by rounding it. Again, contracting your abs makes sure this will never happen.

Head

As you push up and down, your head should be looking slightly down and not straight ahead. Looking ahead will place your head out of alignment with the rest of your torso, and this will likely strain your neck muscles. Simply look slightly down and not straight ahead.

Elbow s

At the top of your pushup, you want your arms to be straight, but you should not lock your elbows. Locking your elbows will just leave you in an awkward position, so don't do this.

All of these points might seem like there's a lot to remember. The best way to practice this is to place yourself into the pushup position and then gently lower and raise yourself as you practice all of these points. One of the things that makes push-ups so easy to get wrong is that they're challenging to practice consciously. What I mean is that it's pretty tricky to hold your position at the top and then lower yourself slowly as you think about your form as well.

The best way to monitor this is to film yourself as you perform a pushup. Setup a camera off to the side or have a friend film you. Don't forget to film yourself from above as well since you want to make sure your elbows are not flaring out. When performing the regular pushup, you don't want your elbows to flare. This is not the case with some of the more advanced variations, such as the one-armed pushup, as you'll see later in this chapter.

Performing the push up from this position is pretty straightforward. With your glutes and abs tight, lower yourself gently. Don't do this slowly at first since you'll exhaust yourself. You can take around two seconds to lower yourself. The lowest point is different for everyone. A good rule of

thumb is to have your elbows bent at 90 degrees or as close to it as possible.

At this point, either your nose or your chest will be touching the ground. Make sure you repeat the movement as consistently as you can so that you're measuring the same move repeatedly. Don't measure one rep as your nose touching the ground and the next with your chest and so on. Consistency is key here .

Take special care to keep your elbows tucked. Don't tuck them in deliberately, but just make sure they don't flare out. This usually happens when you begin to get tired and can't raise yourself anymore. Flaring elbows will cause injuries to your shoulders and wrists, so avoid this when performing the standard pushup.

The push up might be a standard exercise, but this doesn't mean everyone can perform it by default. A lot of people struggle with it, and if you find that you can't perform a single rep, then you need to start at lower levels and work your way up as detailed previously. The way to do this is to practice incline pushups and then knee push-ups. Let's take a look at them one by one.

Easier Variations

These two variations of the pushup will enable you to strengthen your upper body muscles in preparation for a regular pushup. Remember that the objective here is to strengthen your upper body with a view to performing the pushup down the road. So don't get too comfortable with these exercises since they aren't the ultimate objective.

The first variation we'll look at is the knee pushup.

Pushup Progression

As mentioned earlier, all exercises in this book range from the level of a novice to an expert. I've already described how to find your ideal starting point and work forward from there. If you happen to start from the knee pushup level, you'll progress from there to the incline pushup. From there, you'll

progress to the regular pushup. Once you can perform (8,8,8) on the regular pushup, you will need to take things up a notch .

Knee Pushups

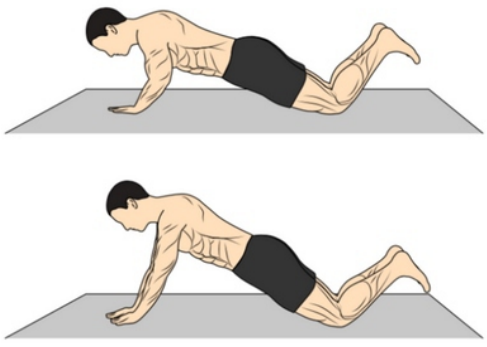
To begin the knee pushup, kneel down and roll your body forward until you're supporting yourself on all fours. You might want to roll your torso forward a little to reduce the load on your kneecaps. If they hurt, you can place a cushion under them or perform the push up on a soft ground.

Gently lower yourself by bending your elbows. Go as low as you can go and then push up through the palms of your hands. Throughout this movement, make sure you observe proper form as outlined previously.

While clenching your glutes is less important here since you're kneeling, you should make sure your back remains straight. Do not arch or round your back since this takes the load off your shoulders and also forces your body into an unnatural position. Begin by performing three sets of four reps (4,4,4) as previously outlined and follow the progression.

You can place your palms slightly wider than shoulder-width when performing this pushup. As with every other pushup variation, you can change the difficulty level and the muscles hit by modifying the placement of your palms. Place them close together, and you'll place greater strain on your biceps and triceps.

Place them far apart, and you'll engage your upper back and chest more. The shoulder-width stance is a good in-between place to engage both sets of muscles optimally.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Incline Pushups

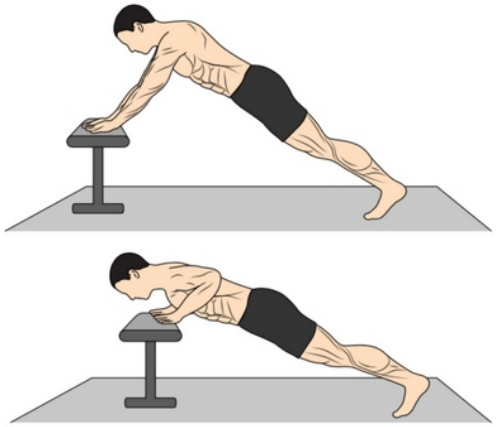
Incline pushups are one level up from knee push ups. In other words, once you're able to complete (8,8,8) of knee push ups, you should progress to inclines. You can think of incline pushups as having the same technique as regular pushups but performed with your hands on an elevated platform instead of on the floor.

To begin, kneel down and extend your arms forward until they're on a bench or some elevated platform. You can place your hands on your bed as well. With your arms fully extended, lift your knees off the ground and clench your glutes and abs. Your body should be a straight line from your heel to the crown of your head.

Gently lower yourself onto the bench (or whatever platform you're using) and push yourself up until your arms are straight. Perform the rep progressions as indicated previously. You will need to pay more attention to your form here than with knee push ups .

The first thing to look for is the placement of your elbows. Don't allow them to flare outwards and do not lock them at the top of your motion. Do not round your back and don't stare down. In other words, you need to follow the same form tips as with a regular pushup.

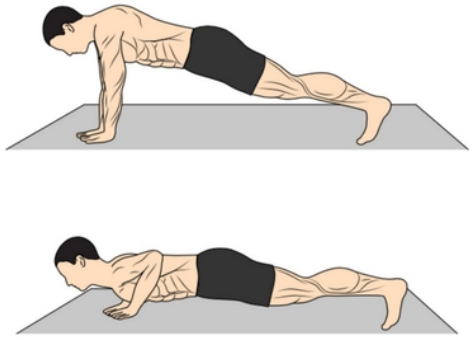
An additional concern here is the platform you're using. Make sure it's stable and that it won't slide out in front of you. This will result in you falling flat on your face and you might sustain an injury. As with the knee pushup, you can adjust the placement of your elbows to place stress on different parts of your upper body. As recommended earlier, keep it simple and place your palms at a little more than shoulder width apart.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Basic Pushup

The form for this has been explained already. Place your arms slightly outside your shoulder and lower yourself. Now exhale as you push yourself off the ground. Make sure your elbows are tucked in and your core remains tight.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

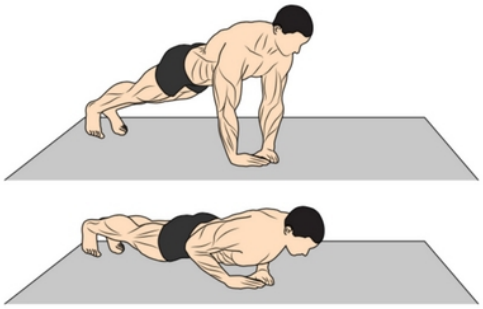
Diamond Pushup

The form for the diamond pushup is exactly the same as a regular pushup except for the placement of your palms. In this variation, you'll place your palms close together, right underneath your chin, and form a diamond-shaped pattern with your hands. The index fingers from both hands will touch one another as will your two thumbs. This results in a diamond shape, which gives the variation its name.

To perform the push-up, lower and raise yourself as you would with a regular pushup. Diamond pushups are a lot harder on the biceps and triceps and don't engage the chest as much as the regular variation does. As such, these are pretty difficult to perform so don't be afraid to take your time with them .

A variation you can introduce here if you find the step from a regular pushup to a diamond too steep is to do the knee pushup with a diamond grip to help you out on those final few reps. These don't officially count towards your progress, but it can help you achieve some mental satisfaction and reduce your fatigue in the moment.

Either way, follow the same progression and training pattern when performing this and be careful of flaring your elbows out wide.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Archer Pushup

The Archer is a step above the diamond pushup. This variation prepares you for the next level, the one armed pushup, which is extremely tough to perform. Finding your ideal starting point with the Archer pushup takes some time, so be patient with it. The form is exactly the same as with a regular pushup except for your hand placement.

In the Archer, you'll be placing one arm out straight in a position where it doesn't help with your pushup. How far you choose to place it depends on your comfort level. The further out your hand is, the tougher the exercise will be. You need to find a balance between your comfort level and toughness. In

other words, you want to be comfortable enough to perform a few reps of the exercise, but don't make it so easy that it doesn't vary from a regular pushup all that much.

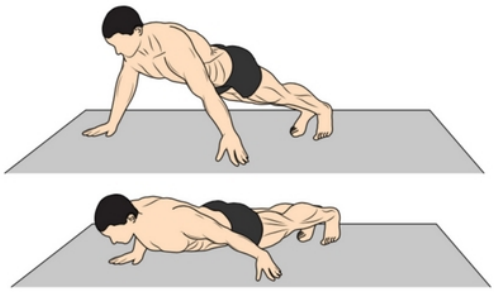
Lower yourself on one arm and push back up while making sure your torso is straight and that your elbows aren't flaring out to the side. Look forward and not directly underneath you in order to maintain a straight line from your ankles to your head. The Archer is a tough variation to perform, so here are a few things you can do to enhance your performance.

Tighten everything. From your toes to your glutes to your abs, your chest, your back, whatever else you can think of, tighten it. Tightening everything ensures you won't suffer from an injury and also ensures that you won't have to waste energy trying to make up for something else that's sagging behind you, such as your hips or belly. This way, your energy can be concentrated in your upper body where it's needed the most.

Remember to breathe properly at all times. As you do this, you might find your breath steps out of sync with your push up. In such cases, simply abandon the set and try again.

As you push up, push through your armpit and not your shoulder. This will help you engage your lats better and will add additional force to your movement. A variation of the Archer you can try is to place your other hand out to the side on a dumbbell or a slightly raised surface. This makes the exercise a lot harder and will build your strength.

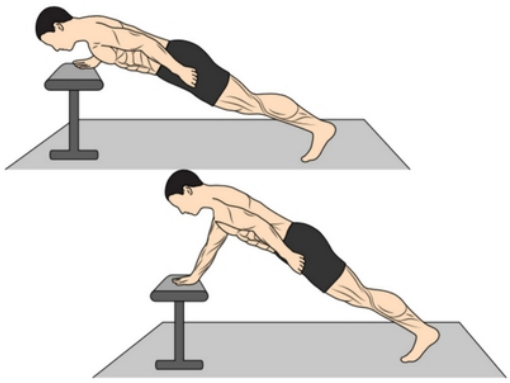
Once you've done all of this, repeat it on the other arm!



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Incline One Arm Pushup

These are exactly the same as incline pushups , but you'll be doing them with one arm instead of two. Place your arm slightly outside your shoulder and lower yourself. Now push up off the bench to complete the movement. Make sure your elbow doesn't flare out too much to the side and you keep your hips in line with your spine. Repeat with the other arm.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

One Arm Pushups (OAPs)

The one-arm pushup is the ultimate form when it comes to pushup progression. It will build serious strength in your upper back, shoulders, and arms along with your chest. You will also develop a solid core since you will need to stabilize yourself. As with everything else, it is best to follow a progression on OAPs as well.

The first level is the incline OAP. Tuck one arm behind your back and press downwards into the bench or platform. You can go as low as you feel comfortable going. Generally, this level is when your elbow is bent at a 90-degree angle. Take care to maintain a steady torso angle and don't slip sideways by opening your chest too much.

The next level is the negative OAP, where you focus only on the decline portion of the exercise on the floor. In other words, you lower yourself down, and that's it. Don't try to push yourself back up. Doing this increases your awareness about your core and lets you know the optimal level for your lowest

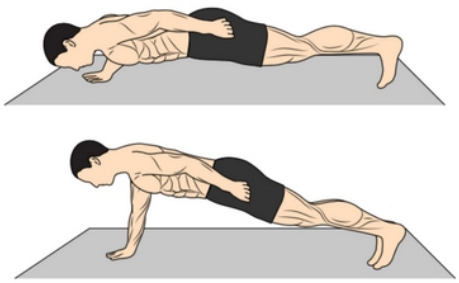
position on the pushup. You can push yourself up with both arms once you've gone down.

The third level is the wide arm OAP, also called the Rocky variation after the movie of the same name. This variation requires you to flare your working elbow out wide. In addition to this, your opposite leg will also be placed wide in order to provide greater stability. Keep your biceps parallel to the floor and your elbow at a 90-degree angle as you flat it out wide at the top of your position.

Lower yourself down and activate your chest muscles as you push yourself up. I'd like to mention at this point that flaring your elbows out wide in this position is not harmful for you. The issue arises when you place your hands close to your torso and flare your elbows. This results in a rotation of the shoulders that is unhealthy.

In the Rocky pushup, you're placing your arm out wide, and as such, there is no danger of injury. The next level of progression is the decline OAP where you place your feet on an elevated surface and lower yourself. Given that your feet are at an incline, this makes pushing up incredibly difficult. The rewards are worth it though.

The final and highest level of progression is the single-leg OAP. In this, you lift the leg on the working side up. Thus, your support will be along a diagonal line between your working arm and the leg on your nonworking side. You can place your arm out wide or close to you as you desire. By the time you reach this level, you'll probably know yourself enough to understand what works best for you.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8) .

General Progression Option

You're free to follow the progression as indicated, or you can alternatively choose to weigh your pushups. The best way to do this is to wear a weighted vest and increase the weight gradually. This allows for a longer progression cycle since you can keep increasing the weight infinitely.

Ideally, you can explore weighted pushups once you can perform some form of a one-handed pushup. The decline and one-legged OAP are both pretty tough, and the weighted pushup is a good option at this point. If you don't have access to a weighted vest, you can place some form of weight on your upper back. The problem with this approach is that the weight is likely to slide off you, and unless you have access to barbell plates, you cannot measure the weight accurately.

However, if you wish to take this option, it is a great one to increase your strength.

CHAPTER 5:

THE PERFECT PISTOLS: ACHIEVING PERFECT FORM FOR SUPERIOR LEGS

Leg day is synonymous with torture in the regular gym-going circles. Odes have been written to this mythical day when the average gym-goer prepares to go through hell. I might be exaggerating a little bit, but there's no doubt that training your legs is not an easy task. There are a few reasons for this. The first is that our leg muscles comprise a significant amount of our overall muscle mass.

Training such a large group of muscles requires a lot of effort and time. This brings me to the second point as to why training your legs is hard. We use them to support ourselves throughout the day and after our workout. If you've just trained your legs, it isn't uncommon to feel as if you can't support your weight anymore.

This is quite normal and is just a feeling. In other words, your legs are more than capable of holding you up no matter how much you train them in this program. So don't worry about collapsing. While you won't be able to run up a flight of stairs, walking about will be perfectly possible.

When it comes to bodyweight training for your legs, there's just one exercise you need to master: The squat .

Squats

Squats are the king of all exercises. Everyone from Olympic athletes to bodybuilders to regular gym trainees accept this as a fact. There's a very good reason for this. Squats are often thought of as being a leg movement but are, in fact, a total body movement. There isn't any other exercise that will work out every single muscle in your body like the squat can.

Your legs bear the primary load that you will carry during squats. The rest of your body assists in lifting the load and stabilizes it, but it is your legs that will drive the weight up and down. In our case, the weight is simply your body weight. Bodyweight squats are a basic form of exercise, and you should seek to master them before even thinking about adding additional weight.

The reason is that the squat is an extremely technical exercise and is practically worthless if not performed with proper form. Even worse, squatting with heavyweight and improper form leads to pretty bad injuries. This is not a concern for you; however, you shouldn't assume this to be a free pass to squat incorrectly.

A lot of people can squat but few squat well. There are a lot of myths surrounding the squat, so let's take some time to clear these up as well as look at the benefits of a good squat.

Natural Motion

In the Western world, we aren't accustomed to squatting and tend to think of the movement as being bad for our knees. However, travel to the less developed parts of the world, and you'll find loads of people squatting all the way down, with their knees fully bent and their backsides near their ankles .

The fact is that the human body is designed to squat, and the movement signifies a certain level of fitness. This is because, in order to squat all the way down (bodybuilders refer to this as ATG- Ass to Grass), you need to be flexible. Your hips need to be unlocked fully, your knees need to be loose enough to bend fully, your core needs to be strong enough to balance you, your lower back needs to be stable enough to support your core, and your ankles need to be flexible enough to bend.

Squats are also a traditional resting position and relax your body a lot more than sitting down does. This is because a full squat (with your hands around your knees) allows you to hold yourself and exhale and inhale better. Thus, you'll find that your lungs fill with air more efficiently, and you won't be out of breath for so long.

Not to mention the fact that if there are no chairs around, you can still sit and relax.

Versatility

I've already mentioned how the squat trains every part of your body. It demands both strength and flexibility. It develops core strength and makes your lower back stronger. The lower back is an area that is often left untouched or is trained incorrectly by most people. When trying to train the lower back, most people perform stretches and bend over. This does train the lower back to a certain extent, but its true purpose isn't to stretch (Hadim, 2012).

Instead, the lower back is needed to stabilize you along with your core. Thus, the best way to train it is to place it under heavy loads, and to have it remain stable. Squats, when performed with weights or with bodyweight, does this job perfectly. As you squat down, your lower back needs to remain stable while supporting your upper body .

Simultaneously, your core is pushing in from the front and assisting your lower back. This develops the muscle communication process within your core and builds the mind and body connection.

Joint Training

While your muscles contribute quite a lot to your overall flexibility, your joints are the ones that do the heavy lifting. When you perform a bodyweight squat, your hips, knees, and ankles are tested and strengthened. There is a lot of misinformation with regard to squats and knee health.

You will often hear a lot of people recommend against performing the squat thanks to the possibility of knee injuries. This is a bit like saying you should never drive since you could end up in a fatal accident. It doesn't depend on the nature of driving as much as in the way you drive. With squats, your form is everything.

Contrary to the myth, squats actually strengthen your knees and hips (Hadim, 2012). When performed correctly, your knees are forced to remain stable, and the muscles around it

are strengthened. Your hips are forced into their full range of motion, and as a result, you'll find that once you are squatting well, you'll feel looser in that part of your body.

Your ankles are also strengthened thanks to the load they need to bear and remain stable. The only joint missing from all of this is your shoulder. However, when you perform squats with a bar, your wrists and shoulders are also tested. Don't worry about this for now since we're solely focused on bodyweight squats .

Squat Form

So now that we've looked at the benefits, it's time to look at what makes a great squat. Being a full-body exercise, it will take some time for you to fully come to grips with all the things you need to do. As you read these points, take the time to practice your form. You won't get it right the first time.

It's best to video yourself and take pictures of your form to get feedback on how you're doing.

1. Stand up with your feet around shoulder-width apart. To improve your balance, keep your feet pointed slightly towards the outside.
2. Keep your neck in a neutral position, and don't lock it. Your gaze should be fixed ahead of you and will move in a straight line up and down as you lower and raise yourself. Pick a spot that's at eye level or slightly below it.
3. Extend your hands out in front of you or touch your shoulders with the opposite arm, so you can touch your right shoulder with your left arm and left shoulder with your right. As your arms bend, they will create a platform. Take a deep breath and inhale air into your diaphragm (not your belly). Contract your abdomen in and tighten your abs.
4. Now comes the tough bit. The key to squatting is to bend through your hips, not your knees. The way to do this is to sit back.

5. Extend your hips backward and gently lower yourself. If you don't know what a hip extension feels like, think of it as lowering yourself onto a chair. Except, keep your arms and chest up.
6. Your knees should remain in the same position, and it will be fine if it moves forward a bit. They will bend, of course, but during the descent should they come ahead of your toes slightly.
7. Your weight when you descend should be on your heels. You might feel as if you're about to fall backward, but don't worry. This will not happen unless you deliberately try to do so.
8. Remember to keep your chest big and arms up at all times!
9. As you descend, aim to break parallel. This means your hips should be lower than your knees and your thighs will be at a slight angle to the ground. Don't aim to go all the way down at first. Simply break parallel.
10. A squat isn't a squat unless you break parallel!
11. Hold your position at the bottom for a beat. Now, it's time to rise back up.
12. With your belly still pushed in and chest up, tighten your glutes. Your glutes are extremely powerful muscles, and once fully activated, you'll find that they can literally throw you out of the bottom position.
13. Keep your chest up and abs contracted to stabilize your core. If your chest isn't up, you'll find that your knees will roll forward.
14. Raise your hips and chest together. What you will experience at first is that your glutes will push your hips up, but your chest will lag. With some practice and video feedback, this will correct itself. Think of your torso as being one block. Raise it upwards at the same time.
15. Raise yourself up to a standing position.

16. Repeat!

That's a lot of steps you need to follow, but don't worry about not being able to master them. With repeated practice, it'll become second nature to you .

Achieving Flexibility

To perform deep squats, you need to be flexible. Some people just aren't as flexible as others are, and with this in mind, the following warm-up routine will get you primed to squat as deeply as possible. Perform this routine regularly, and you'll find yourself becoming more flexible as time goes by.

1. Loosen your hips by performing the exercises listed in the warm-up routine two chapters ago. The leg swings help with this the most.
2. Squatting, by itself, is a great way to loosen your muscles. Simply squat as low as you can. You'll feel your hamstrings stretch when you do this. Don't look to raise yourself out of this position. You might even find that your back rounds. This is fine as long as you're not placing any major load on it.
3. From this deep position, bring your right knee to your left toes and your left knee to your right toes.
4. Next, stretch your right leg out to the side and maintain your balance on your left foot as best as you can. This stretches your right leg out nicely.
5. Repeat the motion with your other leg.
6. Stand up and place your legs wide apart from one another. Maintaining this position, reach as far forward as you can while keeping your knees straight.
7. Stand up and rotate your ankles to loosen them up.
8. Perform a few more leg swings if you still feel tightness in your hips.

Squat Progression

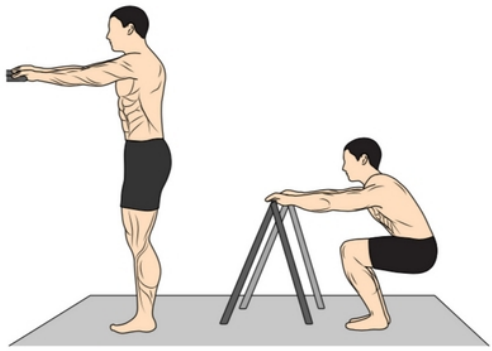
Find your ideal starting point, as mentioned in the earlier chapter. Work your way through the progression in the same way as you would through the pushups. Begin by completing (4,4,4) of these and then progress to the next level once you complete (8,8,8.)

Assisted Squats

You can use a chair for an assisted squat. To begin, place a chair in front of you with its back towards you.

Place your hands on the top of the chair and squat down with proper form. Remember to keep your chest up, and as you ascend, make sure you squeeze your glutes. Follow the same form as detailed with regard to the squat previously. Keep your chest up at all times and squeeze your abs in as you ascend.

Avoid using the chair to propel yourself upwards too much. In other words, don't use your arms to push yourself up or to stabilize you too much as you descend or ascend. Think of it as providing support instead of it being a prop to push yourself up or lower yourself.



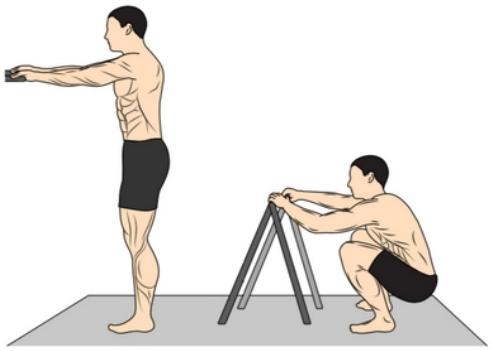
Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Deep Assisted Squats

These are the same as the previous exercise except for the depth at which you'll be squatting. In the previous exercise, you'll be breaking parallel, but here you'll be squatting all the way down with your knees fully bent.

In other words, assume the same form as in the previous progression but squat all the way down until your bottom is almost touching the floor and your knees are fully bent.

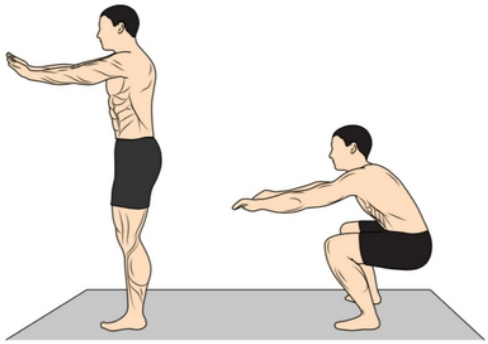
When coming back up, make sure you don't use the assistance off the chair too much to pull yourself up. Keep your abs tight and chest up and look straight ahead (as opposed to upwards.)



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Squats

This is the proper squat. Descend until your thighs are parallel with the floor. When lowering yourself, monitor your back to make sure it doesn't round. A symptom of your back rounding is when your lower back sinks inwards towards your knees. Follow the form discussed earlier in this chapter.



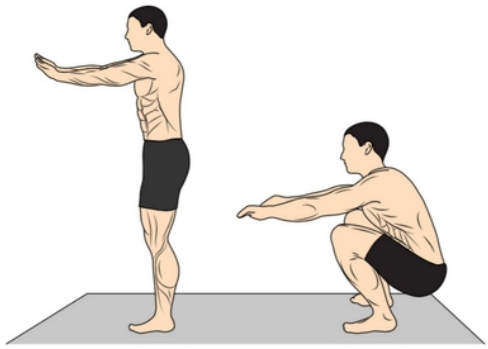
Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Deep Squats

Same as the previous one, except here you'll be going all the way down. In other words, instead of squatting past parallel, you'll be going all the way down to the ground.

A particular problem most beginners have here is with regard to their back rounding when they move below parallel. Keep your chest up and abs tight and descend past parallel as slowly as you can. A sign of back rounding is when your lower back dips inwards towards your knees at the bottom.

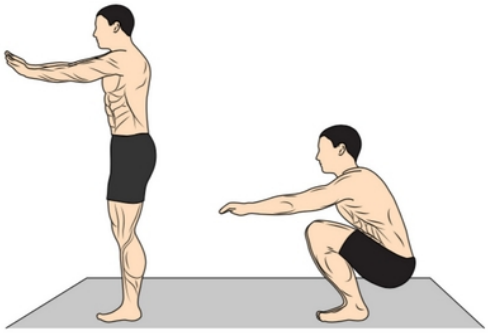
You can film yourself to make sure your form is correct and ensure you aren't rounding. As always, remember to look straight ahead and not up.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Closed Squats

Place your feet close together until they're touching one another. Now squat as you normally would by extending your hips backwards. In this variation, you'll find that your upper back will round a bit. This is fine. Take care to not round it too much though , since this is harmful in the long run.



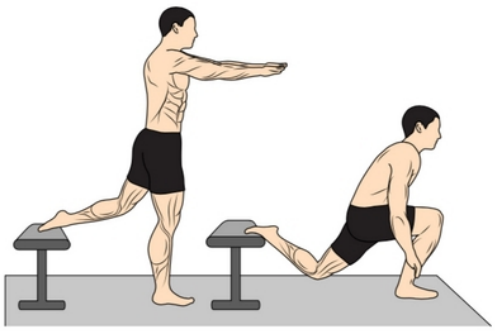
Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Bulgarian Split Squats

Place a platform or bench behind you. Now, extend one foot back and place your foot on the platform with the sole of your foot pointing upwards. Extend your back foot as much as possible by moving forward. Make sure your front thigh is perpendicular to the floor. This is the starting position.

Gently lower yourself and try to get your back knee to touch the floor or get as close to it as possible. Make sure your back foot is still in contact with the bench behind you. It will take some time to find the ideal spacing for this, so take your time with it and don't rush the process.

When lifting yourself back up, remember to squeeze your front glutes to propel yourself upwards. Keep your abs tight throughout the routine.

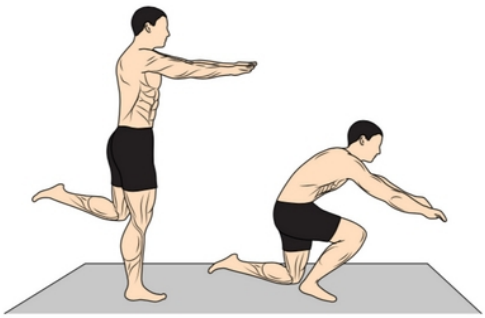


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Shrimp Squats

Remove the bench from the previous exercise and squat with your back leg in the air. Lower yourself to the floor until your back knee and toes touch the floor at the same time. In other words, the lower part of your extended back leg should be straight.

Make sure you descend in a straight line and don't overbalance out to the sides too much. Keep your abs tight and look straight ahead as you ascend and descend.



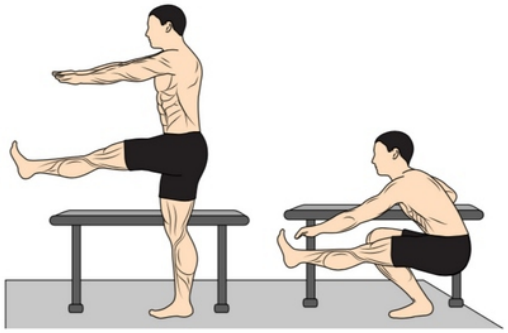
Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Assisted One-Legged Squats

Place a bench or a chair next to you. Now, stretch one leg out in front of you and one arm out in front to stabilize yourself.

Lower yourself until your backside touches the back of the heel of the foot that is not extended. You can use the bench to push yourself back up by applying pressure on it with your hand. Make sure your back heel remains flat on the floor, and your front leg remains elevated.

Repeat the routine on the other leg as well.



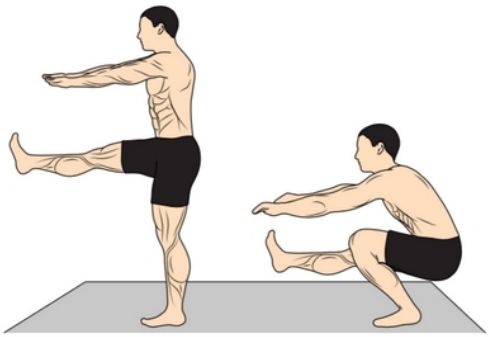
Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Pistol Squats

These are unassisted one-legged squats. Make sure your arms are extended out in front of you. Descend on one leg with the other extended out in front of you. Follow the same tips here as in the previous step. Your shoulders should be in a neutral position, and you should not roll them forward as you ascend.

If you do this, your back rounds, and this is something you want to avoid with squats. Also, make sure you don't move your torso ahead of your knees when descending since this is improper form.

Descend and ascend in a controlled manner and tighten your core at all times to maintain stability.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

CHAPTER 6:

THE PERFECT PULLUP: PROGRESSIONS TO THE PULLUP

The pullup is perhaps the second most popular bodyweight exercise along with the pushup. Just as with the pushup, the pullup is an essential component of your workout regime, and the better you get at this, the better your overall performance will be. The primary muscles targeted in the pullup are your back and shoulders, along with your core receiving some secondary benefits.

As with the pushup, there are many variations you can implement with the pullup to make it even more potent. You can add a variation that targets your back a lot more and another that works your arms out.

Pullups

Beginners to strength training often fail to grasp how in-tune your entire body is and how a balance exists within it. For example, your core has two sides to it: Your front core, which is comprised of your abs, and your rear core, which is your lower back. Similarly, your upper body has two large chains of muscles that work to support it at all times.

The chain of chest and arm muscles stabilize the front while the back muscles work the rear. Generally speaking, every training program has to have a balance in terms of training the front and back. Without this, imbalances develop. For example, if you have an imbalance where your chest is a lot stronger than your back, you'll find that your shoulders will roll forward since the back isn't strong enough to pull them back into position.

Thus, as tempting as it might seem to choose to perform just the pullup or just the pushup, you need to focus equally on

both for optimum performance. Finding a balance between exercises can be as simple as looking at the motion that is being carried out in them. The push up requires you to push while the pull up requires you to pull. It really is that simple. Having a good balance between your exercise motions will ensure you'll grow strong evenly.

Benefits

The chain of muscles in your back is even more intricate than the chest muscles in the front. The back muscle chain comprises of your lats, scapular retractors, and the upper back muscles. All of these work together to help you move and lift weight, and it can be tough to train all of them at once.

The pullup is one of the few exercises that trains all of them together. The only other exercise that is comparable to this is the deadlift, and that requires you to lift a weight off the floor and is not a bodyweight exercise.

The back muscles aren't just all about strength. They also play a significant role in your posture. Given that they exist on the other side of the shoulder joint, your back muscles work to stabilize your body up top. Poor posture often leads to injuries that are brought about by muscle imbalances. Furthermore, strength in the body that is in balance will lead to healthier shoulder blades and a healthier body .

Speaking of the shoulder, the pull up trains your shoulder heads as well. You can perform a variation of the exercise to target the trapezius muscles that exist just below the back of your neck. Performing the pullup well also results in your performance on your other lifts, increasing it proportionally. This is because a lot of the muscles used in those exercises are used in the pullup.

Lastly, the pullup is often used as a standard gauge of strength by armed forces all around the world. It's pretty easy to see where you rank by comparing your performance to the standards demanded by them.

How to do Them

Like the pushup, the pull up looks simple to perform, but people still manage to practice it with improper form and don't do themselves any favors. The first thing to do is to get yourself either a pullup bar or find something you can grab onto to pull yourself. This can be a metal rod or a wooden beam of some sort. Although the shower curtain rod does not count!

If there's nothing at home, you can check out a playground or a park that has an outdoor gym. Famous beaches often have pull up bars that you can use. Grab the bar overhead and hang from it. Pull yourself up until your chin passes the bar and lower yourself. That's pretty much all there is to it. Make sure you follow the points below with regards to your form.

1. Begin by paying attention to your grip - Your palms should face away from you and should be shoulder-width apart. You can modify your grip to change the muscles targeted. Holding your hands close together and having your palms face, one another will target your arms. A wide grip will target your lats and back a lot more. For now, keep them shoulder-width apart.
2. You will be hanging, to begin with - You can bend your knees or let them hang if you have space below. Take care not to bend your knees and then use them to give yourself a jerk upwards. You should keep your legs as still as possible. Take care to start the hang by making your body a dead weight.
3. Now deeply inhale and pull yourself upwards!- Like with the pushup, make sure your elbows are tucked in and don't flare outwards. Doing this shortens the distance you need to travel and will also result in an injury. So, avoid doing this.
4. As you pull yourself up, make your chest big and as you raise yourself, try to touch the bar with it.
5. Remember to breathe and exhale during the ascent! This might become difficult as you progress. In such cases, breathe in on the way down and exhale on the way up.

6. When pulling, think of the motion as being one where you're pulling your elbows down and bringing your shoulder blades together, as opposed to one where you're pulling yourself up by the shoulders. Lead with your chest on the way up.
7. At the top - Make sure your chin goes above the bar or else it doesn't count. When lowering yourself, make sure you extend your arms fully. Don't lock your elbows at the bottom.

Here are some other things to keep in mind:

1. Head - Keep a neutral position and don't try to reach forward. Don't end up headbutting the bar in your enthusiasm to get up there. Look ahead, and don't tilt your head at any angle.
2. Lower back - Arching your back will give you a bit of a boost, but don't do this. Over time, you'll weaken your back and will sustain an injury.
3. Shoulders - It might seem tempting to do this at the top, but don't squeeze your shoulder blades together too much.
4. Thumbs - Curl your thumbs around the bar and grip it as hard as you can. This will activate your muscles more. The bar should rest at the point where your fingers meet your palm.
5. Palms - One variation of the pullup is referred to as a chin up. The only difference between the two is the grip. In a chin up, you'll hold the bar with your palms facing you.

Pullup Progressions

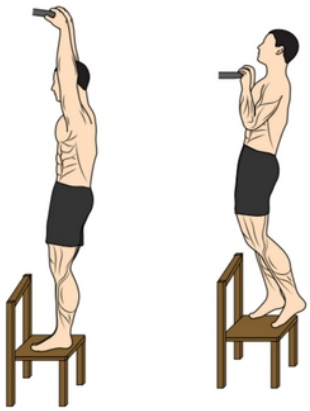
If you cannot do a single pullup or think that you're far too heavy to be able to do pull ups successfully, think again. These progressions will help you build your strength up to a point where you can perform pull ups efficiently. As for being too heavy, the issue isn't your weight as much as it is to do with your lack of strength. Keep working out, and you'll have no

problems with pullups. But also, keep in mind the less fat you have, the easier this exercise will be.

Leg Assisted Pullups

If you've ever been to a gym, you've probably seen the assisted pullup machine. This machine has a platform that you can stand on, and this pushes you up and down as you pull on the overhead bar. This exercise is a home version of it. Stand on a chair and grab onto the overhead bar.

As you pull, lift one leg off the chair and curl it like you would on a standard pullup. Use the other leg to push yourself and assist with the process. The great thing about this variation is that you can choose your exact level of assistance as well as modify it over time. Needless to say, you want to keep reducing the level of assistance you receive and begin using your upper body to pull yourself up.

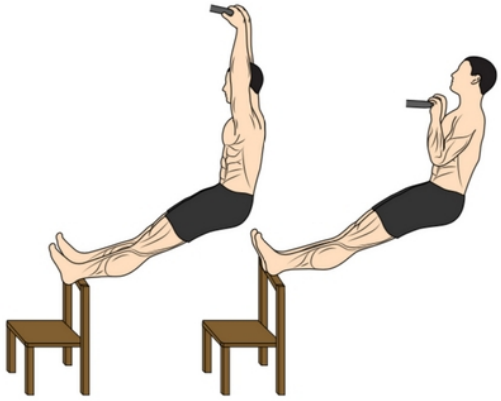


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Jackknife Pullups

Jackknifes are a bit tricky to get right. The way they work is like this: place a chair or a platform far enough away from you so that you can rest your heels on top of it. Grip the overhead bar and rest your feet on the platform in front of you. Perform a pullup as you usually would. This is a tough progression, and you might find that you'll need to begin with (3,3,3) instead of (4,4,4.)

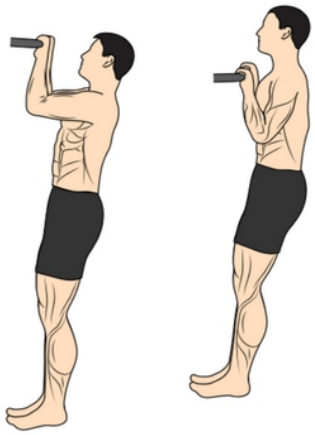
Don't lose hope or get discouraged. Pullups are harder to progress through than pushups, and for this reason, you need to be patient.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Half Pullups

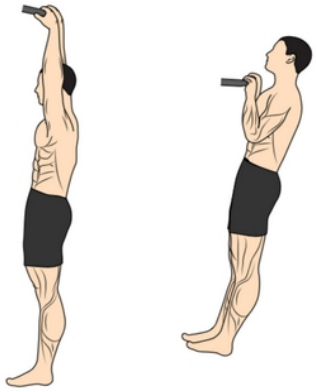
As the name suggests, this is a half pullup. Raise yourself to a level equal to the midpoint of a full pullup. Your arms should be bent around 90 degrees at this point. From this point, raise yourself upwards until your chin is above the bar. Do not use any assistance to do this.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Pullups

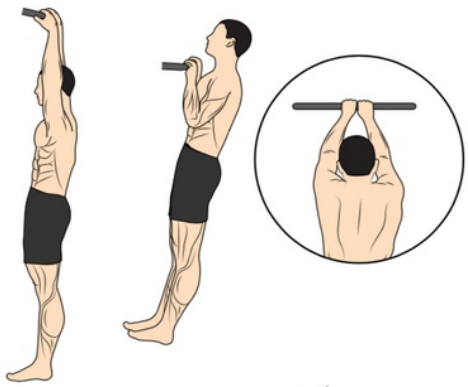
The full exercise, as described at the beginning of this chapter.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Close Grip Pullups

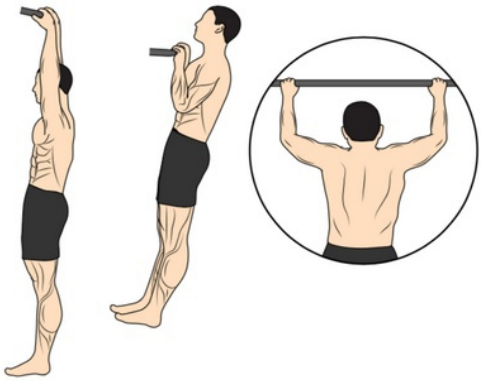
As mentioned earlier, this variation places a lot more emphasis on your arms. Bring your hands closer together on the bar. You can place them as close as you'd like. Ideally, the thumbs of both hands should be touching one another.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Wide Grip Pullup s

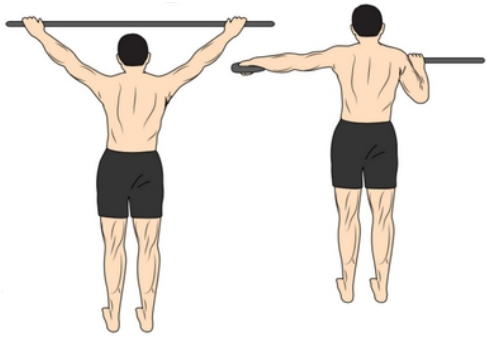
Place your hands out wide and lift yourself up. The range of motion on the variation is shorter. You'll find that your back will be worked a lot more.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Archer Pullups

Yup, Archer exists with pullups as well. To do these, begin by using one arm to a greater degree to pull yourself up. Over time, keep moving the other arm out wider until it is fully extended. The aim is to be able to pull yourself up with one arm, with a bit of assistance from the other. With the Archer, it's important to alternate pull between both arms.



Also, the maximum number of reps you should aim for here is six. So aim for (6,6,6) before progressing.

CHAPTER 7:

A SIX PACK OF STEEL: LEG RAISES

Let's face it. One of the reasons you want to get fit is to be able to rock a six pack. Well, the best way to gain a six pack is by performing a leg raise. Aside from cosmetic purposes, there are many reasons you want to have a strong core. In this chapter, you're going to learn how your core muscles work to keep you stable and fit and why you should care about them beyond purely visual purposes.

The Core

To understand why leg raises are so efficient at building a great core, we need to take a step back and examine how any muscle is developed. As I mentioned earlier in the section on exercise basics, there are two types of training you can engage in. The first is to perform a compound movement that recruits a large number of muscles, and exercises in this category closely resemble tasks you'll carry out in real life.

For example, the squat is a compound movement that tests and trains a large number of muscles throughout your body. It helps you perform movements in real life as well as develops your overall flexibility. This is perhaps the biggest positives of compound movements. Not only do they help you build muscle, but they also make those muscles flexible since the entire muscle chain is developed .

The second type of training is referred to as isolation training. As the name suggests, this involves training a muscle in isolation and concentrating all your effort into moving just that muscle. For example, curling your arms with a weight at the end of each is an isolation exercise aimed at increasing the size of your biceps.

Isolation exercises don't develop the muscle chain, and with this, any strength gains that they bring make the muscle a little

less flexible. This is why beginners don't benefit from isolation training. If the muscle chain is not well developed in the trainee, the isolated muscle has no way of expressing its strength. It simply doesn't know how to talk to the muscles surrounding it, and this results in dangerous strength imbalances.

Isolation exercises do have their place, but it isn't in a beginner's workout routine. As I mentioned earlier, the perfect time to begin implementing isolation routines is when you've already developed a base level of strength. The best way to increase your strength is to perform compound movements that recruit as many muscles as possible.

So what is the best compound movement to train your abdominals?

Ab Training

Your core muscles, which include your abdominals, are tasked with a number of functions. First, they need to maintain your posture and keep you from simply falling over. Your front abdominals and lower back work hard to prevent this from happening. Next, below your abs is another layer of muscle that is far more important. This muscle acts like a band around your body and keeps your internal organs in place.

It also plays a vital role in breathing and helps you exhale forcefully should the need ever arise. Thus, without the abdominals doing their thing, you're likely to run into several issues. This is why fitness is a lot more than just having six pack abs. A six pack isn't much of an indicator of fitness at all. It merely means that the person with it understands the importance of low body fat in conjunction with abs.

All compound movements train your abs to a certain degree. The squat, pushup, and pullup need you to maintain a stable torso, and thus your abs will be trained on a secondary basis. Whether you can see your abs or not is a function of how much fat you're carrying around your midsection. This area of our bodies is where most of us carry the majority of our fat.

In men, it most certainly is where the most substantial amount of fat collects while in women, the midsection and butt are

where fat resides. Understand that there is no way to laser target fat via exercise. Losing fat is a function of eating healthy, in the right amounts, and building muscle. Do these three, and fat loss will take care of itself. Performing a million crunches is not going to help you develop your abs or get them to show themselves any more than walking will.

Crunches are an example of an isolation exercise that doesn't do much for beginners. You can crunch away all you want, but if your entire abdominal chain isn't developed, there's not much the exercise is going to do. The best way to train your abs is to perform exercises that target the spinal column and place stress on it.

Training in general, and all exercises in this book, do this automatically. However, leg raises focus on maintaining spinal stability under stress and therefore are just the ticket when you're looking to train your core. By performing them well, you'll develop a strong core, and a six pack will become inevitable. Once you've developed initial strength in your core, feel free to do as many crunches as you want. Understand that isolation exercises on your core will only give them better definition. You're not going to grow new abs all of a sudden by doing them .

The leg raise is a fundamental movement that can be done pretty much anywhere. You need a bar to hang from, which can be your pullup bar or some beam you use to pull yourself up. One of the great things about leg raises is that they work the obliques as well, which are the core muscles on the side of your abs. Since your spine stretches during the movement, you'll be training the muscles that are responsible for spinal stability as well.

Throughout the movement, your lower back needs to be stable, and this further strengthens it. The flip side of all this is that leg raises are not an easy exercise to execute. Almost everyone, even experienced trainees, will begin near the bottom half of the progression simply because most people don't train their abs using compound movements.

Form

The leg raise, or hanging leg raise as it's more commonly called, has many variants. The purest form requires you to hang from a pullup bar and lift your legs straight up and curl your pelvis up until your toes touch your fingers. The key to working your core with every version of the leg raise is to tilt your pelvis upwards. Your pelvis is the bone that accompanies your hip joint.

An easy method of making sure you're doing this is to place a mirror in front of you. When you perform a raise of any kind, make sure you can see your backside come upwards as you lift your legs. If you cannot see your backside, you're not fully engaging your core.

One of the variations that a lot of experienced trainees use is to bend their knees and lift them up to their shoulders. This is a step below the straight-legged hanging leg raise and also works your core out strenuously. Whatever the variation, remember to keep your chest balanced and don't try to exaggerate its position .

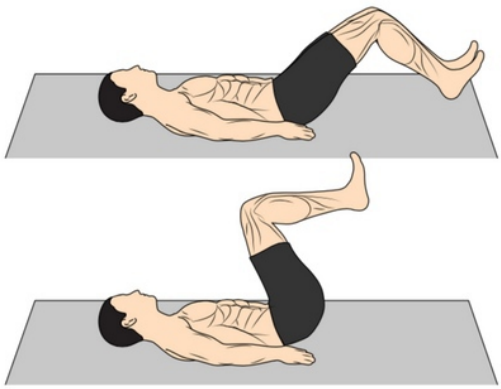
Another thing to keep in mind when hanging is that you will need to engage your shoulders a little as you raise your legs upwards. Some variations include suspending straps and delegating the hanging bit to these. This reduces the degree to which you can activate your core, so you're best off engaging your shoulders to pivot you upwards.

Progression

As I mentioned earlier, you will most likely be starting at the very bottom or close to it, no matter your training experience level. This is perfectly fine. Figure out your level using the method previously mentioned and work your way up.

Flat Knee Raises

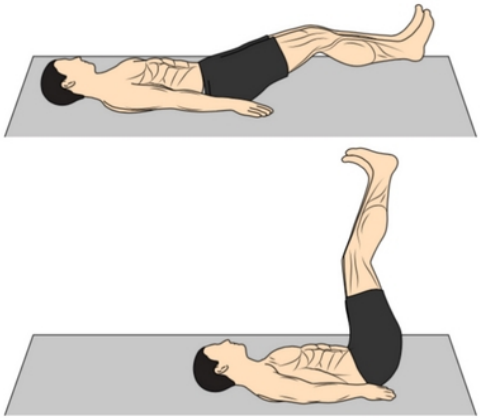
Lie down on the floor, bend your knees at 90 degrees and bring them upwards as much as possible. Remember to breathe out on the way up and in on the way down. Keep your spine in as neutral a position as possible. Remember to swivel your pelvis upwards to fully engage your core.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Flat Bent Leg Raises

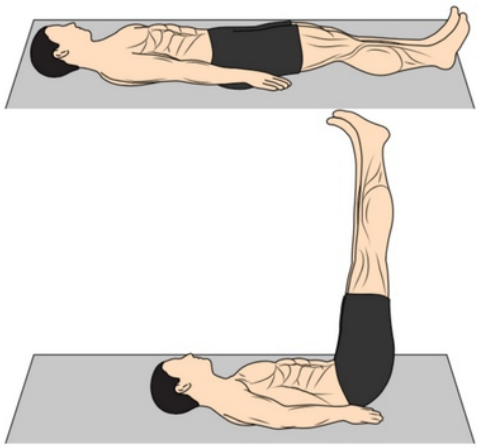
In this variation, you'll still be lying on the floor, but instead of bending your legs 90 degrees at the knee, you'll be keeping them upright with a slight bend in them. Lower your legs to the floor without touching it and bring them back up. When tilting your pelvis up, don't exaggerate the movement and bring your entire lower back off the floor. Keep it as natural as possible.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Flat Straight Leg Raise s

This variation is the same as the previous exercise except instead of bending your legs when vertical; you'll keep them straight. Remember not to touch the floor on the way down.

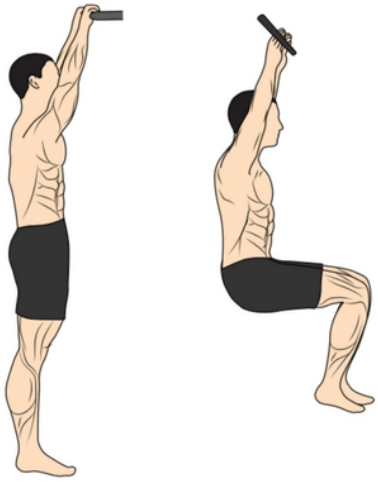


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Hanging Knee Raises

While hanging from an overhead bar, which can be the same as your pullup bar, bring your knees up until your thighs are parallel to the floor and gently lower them. You will need to engage and contract your core muscles in order to bring your knees up.

The exact height to which you bring your knees depends on how your body is structured. This is why paying attention to the placement of your thighs is essential. Make sure you keep your arms and shoulders in a neutral position. You don't need to hang limply from the bar, but you shouldn't be pulling yourself up in order to get your knees to rise either

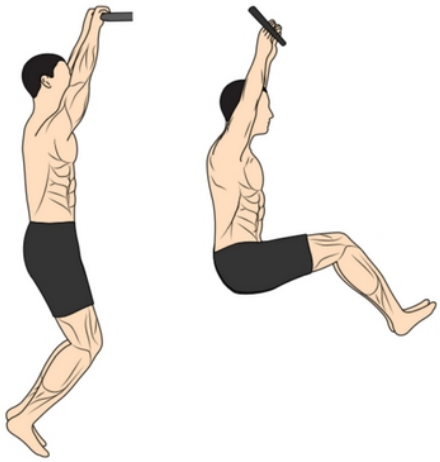


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Hanging Bent Leg Raise s

This is the same as the hanging knee raise, except you'll be bending your legs slightly while lifting them. Raise them roughly beyond a 90-degree angle and gently lower them. Your legs should be between a knee raises and a straight leg raise. The objective is to raise your knees to a height that is higher than a knee raise (about parallel to the floor) but isn't touching the bar overhead.

Do not raise your legs by activating or engaging your shoulder on the upward motion. Use your core muscles as much as possible to do this.

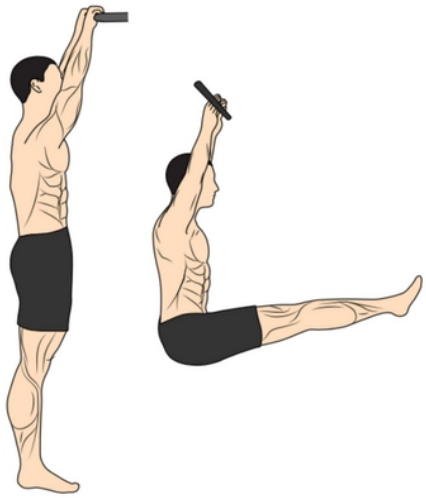


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Hanging Straight Leg Raise s

Hang yourself from an overhead bar and bring your legs up to a level where they're parallel to the floor. Gently lower them and repeat. Remember not to engage your shoulders to activate the upward movement. You should be activating your core muscles to pull your legs upwards.

You don't need to hang from the bar as a deadweight, either. Support yourself well using your shoulders, but don't engage them or your lats to pull your legs up.

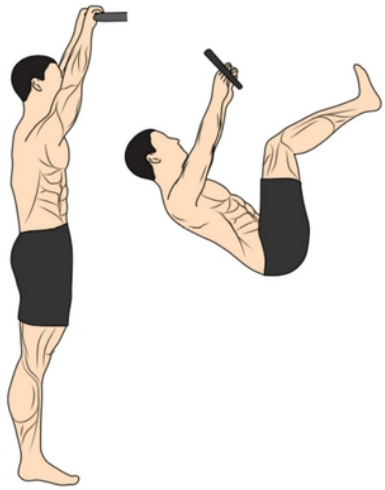


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Hanging Bent Leg V-Raise s

Bend your legs at a 45-degree angle and bring them up until they're level with your shoulders. Keep your arms as straight as you can throughout the motion. You will need to engage your shoulders to some extent to perform this exercise. You might find the need to swing your legs at the bottom to get some momentum before the upward push, but do not do this.

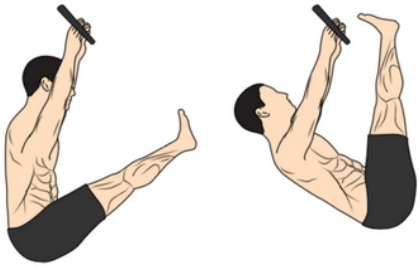
Remember to reach the bottom in as controlled a manner as possible. Descend too fast, and you'll begin to swing like a pendulum. Lift your legs by contracting your abs and core instead of pulling up with your shoulders and then swiveling your hips upwards.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Hanging Straight Leg V-Raise s

The same setup as before, but this time instead of bent legs, you'll be keeping your legs straight and touching your toes to the top of the bar. The key here is to make sure you don't use your shoulders too much. You will engage them to the extent that they keep you stable on the bar, but don't contract your lats to pull yourself upwards.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

CHAPTER 8:

SUPERIOR SPINE STRENGTH - BRIDGES

The bridge is an exercise you won't find in too many exercise manuals. This particular exercise is borrowed from the world of yoga, where it is commonly called the bridge pose. While yoga doesn't focus on progressions with regards to specific poses, in this chapter, you're going to learn all about them.

Before all of that, though, you might be wondering what's so special about the bridge? After all, if you were to look at a picture of this exercise in action, all you'll see is someone contorting themselves into what looks like an inverted U shape. The efficacy of the bridge goes a lot further than simple flexibility. It is the bedrock upon which the health of your spine is built.

Bridges and You

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, your core consists of muscles in the front and the back. Your back muscles need to remain stable under loading as well as under twisting. Loading refers to when weight or effort is placed on the muscles around the lower back, and it needs to remain stable. As far as twisting goes, it is precisely what it sounds like .

While the spine needs to remain stable, it also needs to be able to move to a healthy degree. Think of the movement as being when you twist your back from side to side. You can train your arms, shoulders, legs, and abs all you want, but these do not directly address the issue of the degree of twist in your spine.

Bridges are what do this for you. In addition to your spine, the bridge also opens up a lot of other joints throughout your body. For starters, it forces your spine to support itself as you raise yourself off the ground. Next, it also opens your shoulder joints and clears and constrictions in the chest and your abs, thereby allowing for a freer flow of air.

In yoga, this is one of the most significant benefits of the pose that is stated. As you can imagine, a great deal of emphasis is placed on yoga about the energy flowing through the body and the free flow of it at all times. While we're not so concerned with this aspect of bridges, there's no denying that you will feel more energized once you execute a bridge.

Despite its somewhat convoluted looking structure, the bridge functions best as a relaxing pose. This is because it opens your joints and extends the front of your body and respiratory system. In addition to this, it also opens your hips and gives you a good stretch, thereby increasing blood flow throughout your body.

Soreness and muscle stiffness usually evaporate once you perform the bridge well. As with all exercises, you need to perform it with good form, or else it isn't of much use. The other benefit of a good bridge is that it will help your performance in other exercises thanks to the overall flexibility it brings about.

All in all, the bridge is an exercise that exposes your weaknesses throughout your body. If there's any joint or muscle that is out of place or sore, you'll immediately feel it. Now, most trainees shy away from this sort of thing because it doesn't bring immediate progress and can be discouraging. However, this is the wrong way of looking at it .

You should welcome exercises such as the bridge because it lets you know exactly what to focus on in your next workout. Therefore, as you read through this chapter, remember that the benefits of the bridge are two-fold. First, you're strengthening your spine, and second, you're getting to know your body better to make it stronger the next time around.

Lastly, performing bridges also leads to a reduction in lower back pain issues since it strengthens your spine. Older people generally benefit greatly from this exercise.

Form

The variation of the bridge I will be referring to here is the full bridge. This is the same as the yoga pose of the same name. You start by lying down on the ground. Bring your arms up

and place your palms slightly above your shoulders, with the palms flat on the floor. Thus, your elbows will be bent, and your wrists will be bent in such a way that your fingers will be pointing towards you.

Bring your feet closer by bending your knees. Bring them to a position that is as close to you as possible. Next, drive your body up whatever muscles you can recruit. Use your heels to lift your lower legs off the ground and squeeze your glutes to push your midsection further up.

Push your palms down into the floor and lift your chest as well. Stretch your abs and front core to generate as much of a bend as you can and hold them tight to stabilize yourself once fully off the ground. Believe it or not, this is the easy bit. The tough part is exiting the pose and lowering yourself back down without injuring yourself.

You need to lower both the upper and lower portions of your body simultaneously. Your lower body will want to descend a lot faster, so squeeze your glutes to minimize this. Alternatively, you can focus on lowering your upper body back down to the ground by trying to reconnect your upper back and the back of your shoulders with the ground first.

Following this, you can gently lower your glutes and your thighs back down. When you first perform this exercise, you'll likely find that your glutes fall to the floor with an almighty thud. Squeeze your glutes as much as you can to avoid a freefall situation and perform the exercise on a soft surface to minimize any discomfort.

When in the pose, you can push your abs towards the ceiling to increase the amount by which you'll bend. Don't overdo this too much. The higher you go, the less stable you'll be, so try to find that fine line between challenging yourself and losing stability completely. Remember to keep your heels planted on the floor at all times and don't shift your weight to the toes or lift the toes off the ground completely.

The entirety of your foot should remain planted. Weight distribution is also critical in the bridge. Your wrists will be bearing a lot of the load since your body will automatically

push backwards onto them. You can push back using your wrists to drive your weight back down your body.

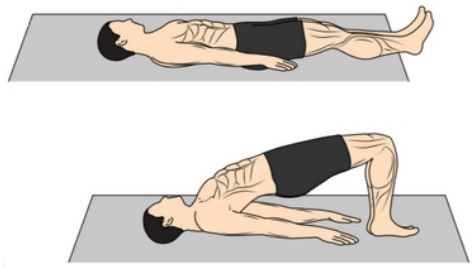
Progression

Given the complexity of the exercise, there are several progressions to the bridge. Let’s look at them one by one. As always, find your ideal level by using the method indicated previously.

Short Bridges

Lie down on your back with your hands by your side. Place your palms down on the floor. Bend your legs at the knee and bring them up to a 45-degree angle. With your feet firmly planted on the floor, squeeze your glutes and raise your torso off the floor. Utilize your leg muscles and rest yourself on your shoulders. Do not put your weight onto your neck.

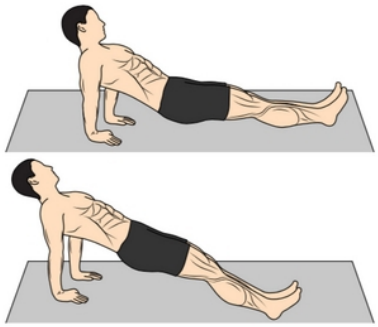
Gently lower yourself, and don't drop yourself down to the floor.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Straight Bridges

Sit on the floor upright with your legs fully stretched out in front of you. Place your arms by your side and contract your glutes and core. Now, lift yourself off the floor using your arms and balance your lower body on the back of your heels. Gently lower yourself to complete one rep.



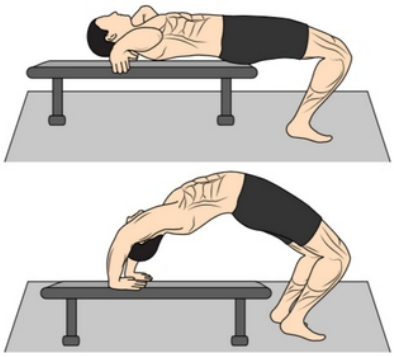
Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Angled Bridges

This is a tough variation at first, but with practice, you'll get it. You'll need a bench or a small chair for this to work. Stand in front of the platform and bend backward until your body is almost horizontal, and you can support yourself on the chair/platform with your head looking backward(upside down.) Keep your feet firmly planted on the ground.

If you find your toes coming up off the ground, then you're probably leaning too far back. If the extremity of the platform is somewhere near your hip, it's too close, and you should create some distance between it and yourself. Push yourself up with arms extended and lower your self to the starting position.

To exit the pose, lower your hips to the ground gently and sit down on the floor and bring your arms back by your side.

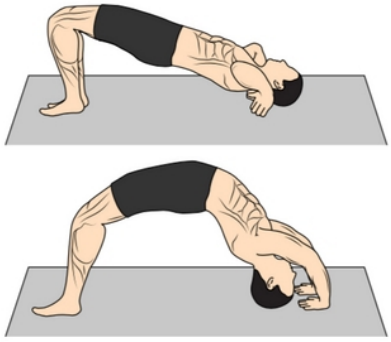


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Head Bridges

This exercise is the same as the previous one, except you won't be resting on the platform. Instead, you'll go all the way down and rest your hands on the ground. Hold this position and gently aim to touch your head to the ground.

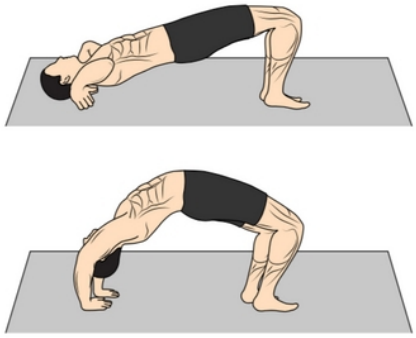
Hold this position and then lower your back down to the ground gently in order to exit the position.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Half Bridges

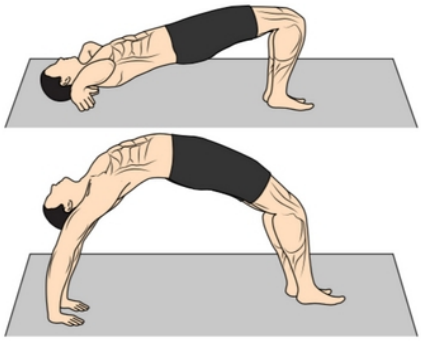
You will need a circular prop or an exercise ball of some kind for this. Alternatively, you can use a soft prop. Place this under your lower back and lie down with your feet planted firmly on the floor. Now, contract your core muscles and lift your lower back off the prop and support yourself on your hands and the balls of your feet. Gently lower yourself back down and take care not to drop yourself onto the prop.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Full Bridges

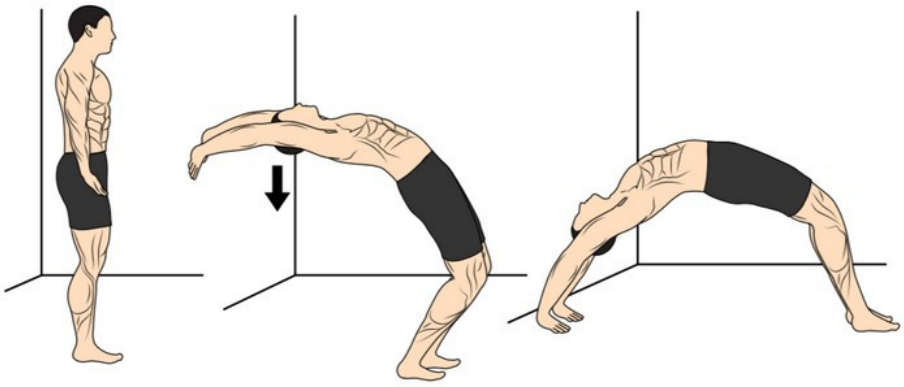
The technique for this has already been described above. Start by laying on the ground and extending your arms back, with elbows fully bent behind you. Make sure your palms are flat on the floor. Push yourself up off your palms and heels until you form an inverted U position with your body. Hold this position and then gently lower your back down to the ground in order to exit the pose.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Wall Walking-Down

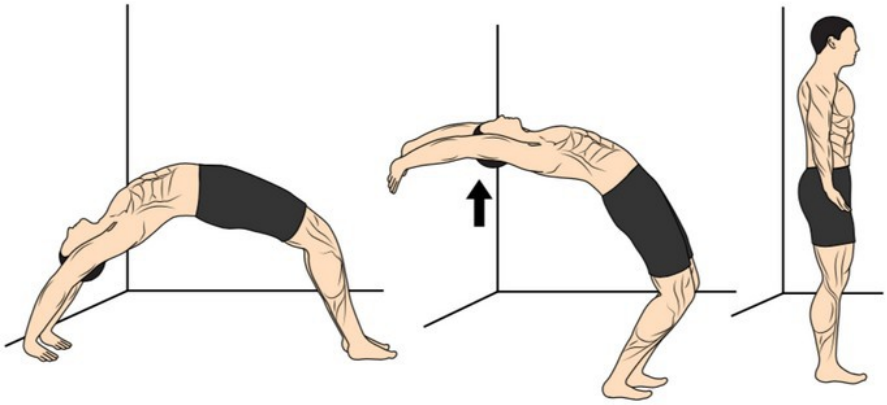
Stand at a rough distance from a wall from where you can assume a bridge position. Lean backward and place your palms fully on the wall. Now, gently start walking downwards until you reach the bottom into a full bridge pose.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Wall Walking- Up

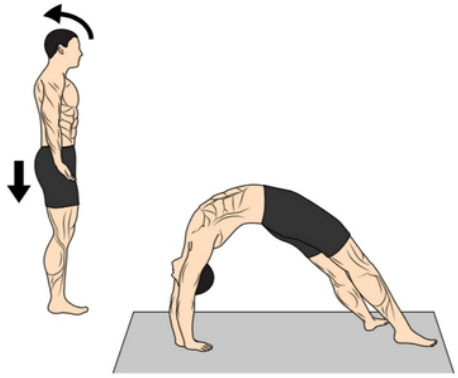
Complete walking down the wall, but instead of lowering yourself to the ground, hold your position there for a second or two. Now, walk your hands back up the wall gently and work yourself into a standing position. This is a challenging exercise, so take it easy at this point.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Closing Bridge

At first glance, this exercise will seem impossible. Stand upright and gently begin leaning backwards. You will eventually reach a point where you can no longer maintain balance on your feet. At this point, look backward, upside down, and throw your arms out behind you for support while descending. Lean backwards until you land in the bridge pose. Hold this position. Now relax and start the exercise again from standing.

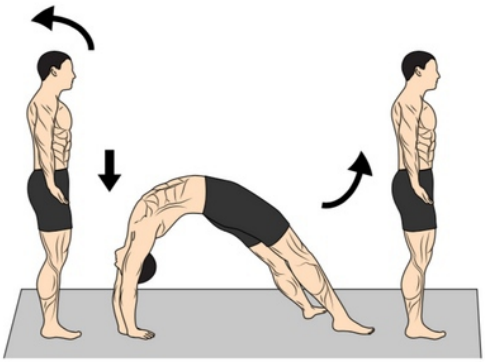


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Stand to Stand Bridge

This variation is exactly the same as the previous one, but it requires you to stand back up from the bridge position up to a fully upright position. Flip back into a bridge pose and, as gently as you can, then flip back into a standing posture. This is as hard as exercises get, and you will need almost perfect body control and flexibility to pull this off.

Throughout all the progressions of the bridge, make sure you keep your feet planted on the ground. Don't let your toes rise off the ground, and don't use your heels to solely support yourself.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

CHAPTER 9:

POWERFUL, HEALTHY SHOULDERS

Your shoulders are the final part of your body we will be targeting in this routine. The importance of healthy shoulders cannot be overstated. Given that your shoulder joint is what connects your arms to your torso, it goes without saying that this joint assumes a lot of work every time you perform any physical activity.

There is an aesthetic part of all of this as well. Healthy shoulders tend to pop and give your body a more rounded look. In men, big shoulders accentuate the V shape of their torso, while healthy shoulders tend to give women a healthier look and dispel any notion of physical weakness.

If you wish to lift anything, including your body weight, it is crucial for you to train your shoulders correctly.

Handstands and Shoulders

Your shoulders can be subdivided into three components, often referred to as heads. While the medical terms for these are different, you can think of them as being the front, middle, and back head. The thing that makes shoulders tricky to train and balance is that even compound movements tend to hit only two heads most of the time .

One of the most common strength training exercises in the gym is the overhead press or simply the press. In this exercise, you stand up tall and lift a weighted barbell over your head and bring it back down close to your chest before lifting it back up again. This exercise doesn't hit the back of the head with too much force, and as a result, you'll find that most gym trainees tend to have underdeveloped back shoulder heads.

The only way to ensure you train all heads evenly is to perform a combination of compound as well as isolation

exercises. This means more time spent in the gym and more opportunities to get injured by performing an exercise with poor form. I'm not saying that you should not train in the gym, it's just that if you have the option of performing one exercise that can target your shoulders effectively, why do you need to focus on anything else?

This is where handstands come into play. To be more precise, I'm talking about wall handstand pushups. The name pretty much conveys what the exercise is all about. You'll be upside down, supported against a wall, or slightly away from it, and you'll be pushing yourself up and down.

The reason wall handstand pushups are so effective is due to the fact that they recruit more than just your shoulders in order to deliver strength and stability. Your triceps and arms need to work overtime to stabilize and push you. Your lats need to engage in order to perform an effective handstand pushup.

Most important of all, the three heads of your shoulders need to work together to execute the exercise flawlessly. Your traps will also be bearing significant weight, and this is one of the few exercises that will target them. Aside from the fantastic physical benefits, there's the vanity factor as well .

Simply put, how many people do you know who can execute a wall handstand pushup? Forget a handstand, how many do you know who can execute a regular pushup perfectly? Odds are this number is not going to be very high. Performing a perfect handstand pushup is going to give you serious bragging rights.

All jokes apart, though, handstands simulate the real-life action of lifting something over your head using your body weight and helps you maintain good shoulder health.

Form

The final posture of the handstand pushup is easy enough to understand. You'll be upside down and will support yourself against a wall as you push up and down. To execute this correctly, you'll need to pay special attention to your form to make sure you don't injure yourself. Furthermore, good form ensures that everything stays close to one another, and you won't lose stability.

You first need to ensure your feet are firmly placed against one another. It even helps to tense your leg muscles to make sure they don't start flapping around. This will cause an imbalance, and you're likely to have your feet come crashing down to the ground if you do not keep everything tight.

Your arms need to be straight. Think of them as forming a straight line that runs right into the floor. You'll be supporting yourself on your palms, and your wrists will also be supporting a significant amount of weight. This is where bridges come in handy since they'll help immensely with wrist flexibility.

An excellent way to balance yourself is to spread your fingers as wide as possible on the floor. Make sure that your middle finger is in line with your elbows.

Next up is your head. Most people tend to tense their facial muscles or their necks when performing the handstand pushup. This is not a good thing to do. Instead, maintain as neutral a position as possible and move your head in line with the rest of your body. Think of it as being cemented onto your torso and not as an independent thing.

Lastly, getting your breath right is crucial to performing the handstand pushup correctly. Breathe incorrectly, and you'll lose all sense of stability and strength. The correct way to do this is to inhale as you descend and exhale your breath and tighten everything as you push back up.

Doing this makes sure that you'll have an adequate amount of force on the pushup leg of the exercise, and you won't run out of breath when it's most needed. Throughout the exercise, make sure you tighten your abs and everything else you can think of. Tightening your muscles causes your body to focus more of its strength where it's needed the most, and you won't risk having something fall out of place and destabilize you.

Progression

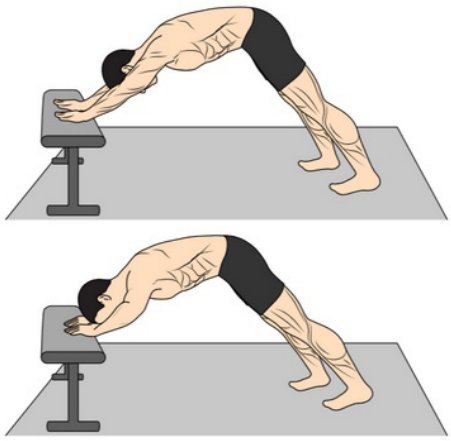
Handstand pushups seem intimidating, but rest assured that by following these simple progressions, you'll be doing them like an expert in no time. The key is to execute each and every step

of the progressions with perfect form and not rush along and try to bite more than you can chew. For all of these progressions, start off with (4,4,4) as explained previously and progress to the next level once you can perform (8,8,8.)

Incline Pike Pushups

These are also called incline military press pushups. You will need a bench or a platform to execute these. Place the platform in front of you and bend down towards it. You want to bend at the waist and maintain your head and torso in a straight line. Lower yourself towards the bench by bending at the elbows and perform a push up.

Lower your head to a point where it is close to your hands. From this position, raise yourself back up again, much like you would in a pushup. Raise yourself back up to your starting position.

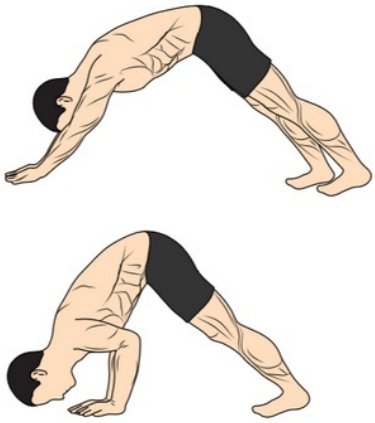


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Pike Push Ups

Remove the bench and lower yourself all the way to the floor. Try to keep your feet as planted as possible. Make sure your head travels in a straight line between your arms and keep it in a straight line with your arms and torso.

Once again, make sure your elbows don't flare out to the side and that you breathe in on the way down and exhale as you push yourself back up from the lowest position.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

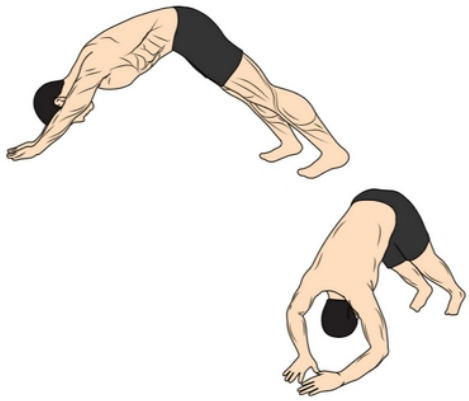
Wall Bent Waist Handstand Diamond Pushu p

These are the same as the previous exercise version, except you'll be placing your hands in the diamond position.

Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Pike Diamond Push Ups

The exact same exercise as above but this time place your hands in the diamond formation, with your thumbs and index fingers touching one another. Lower and raise yourself back to the starting position. Make sure your elbows don't flare outwards and that you exhale on the way up and inhale on the way down.

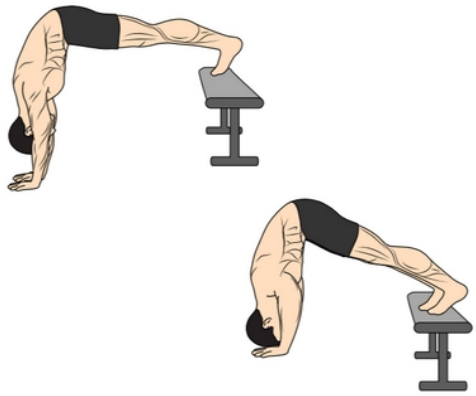


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Decline Pike Push Ups

Bring the platform you used in the first variation back, and instead of placing it in front of you, place it behind you instead. Place your feet on top of the bench and lower yourself with your arms out to your side and your head in a straight line between them. Remember that your torso should be perpendicular to the floor and your head in a straight line with it.

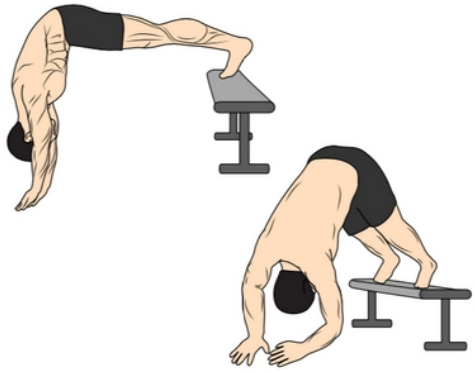
Remember to not flare your elbows out to the side and exhale on the way up and inhale on the way down.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Decline Pike Diamond Push Up s

The same exercise as the previous one, but this time you'll be placing your hands in the diamond formation. Remember to maintain proper form; otherwise, it doesn't count! Keep your elbows tucked in and breathe on the way down and exhale on the way up.

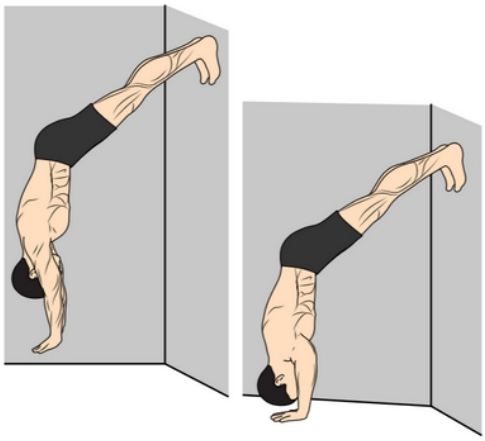


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Wall Bent Waist Handstand Pushup

Begin by being in a plank position close to a wall and walk your feet up until you reach a stable point. You don't need to go all the way up. The key is to keep your waist bent. Finding the exact distance you need to be from the wall might be a little tricky, so take your time with this.

Your face will be facing the wall as you lower your torso and head in line with one another and in between your arms. Once you've lowered yourself, raise yourself back up to your starting position, and complete your reps. Walk your legs down the wall back to the ground to complete the exercise.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Kick Up to Handstands

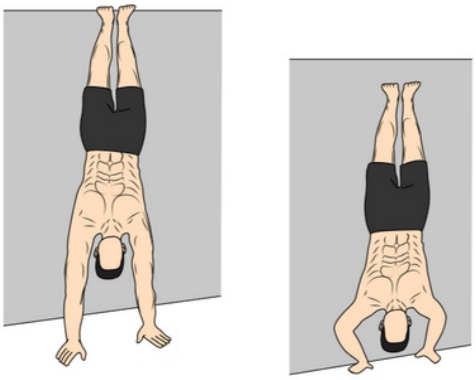
This variation requires you to have excellent core stability. Make sure you're in an open space, and there aren't any objects nearby where you could hurt yourself. Position yourself in an inverted V shape on the floor with your palms out in front of you and your legs primed on your toes.

Now, kick up and bring your legs up while simultaneously supporting yourself on your palms. Tighten your core muscles to make sure your legs manage to stay upright and unsupported. Hold this position for 5 seconds at first and work your way up to 20 seconds. This exercise is so you can safely position yourself in the correct handstand position against the wall.

Wall Half Handstand Pushup

As the name suggests, this is a half version of the exercise. Place yourself against a wall, upside down, and lower yourself until your arms are half bent. Push yourself up until your elbows are almost locked. You can place your toes gently along the wall to stabilize yourself easily.

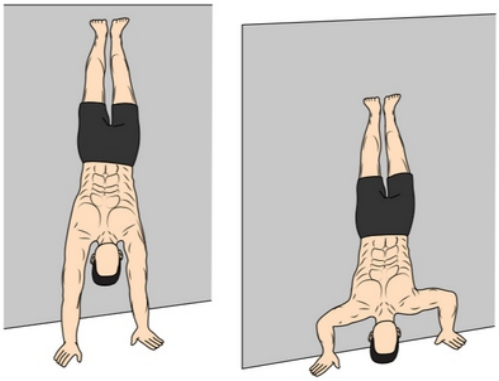
Do note that you will be facing away from the wall when performing this. In other words, your back will be towards the wall.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Wall Handstand Pushups

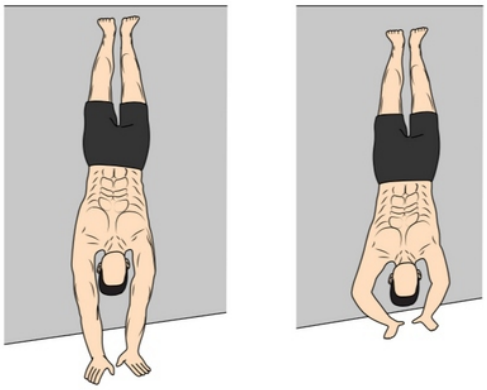
Perform the full exercise as previously detailed, except of going halfway, you will be going all the way down. Make sure your head touches the ground very gently at the bottom. Remember to lower your head to the point where it touches the ground lightly. All the while, maintain a tight core and take note of your stability during the routine. Now push yourself back up to the starting position to complete your reps.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Wall Handstand Diamond Pushups

The same as the previous exercise, but this time place your hands in the diamond shape.

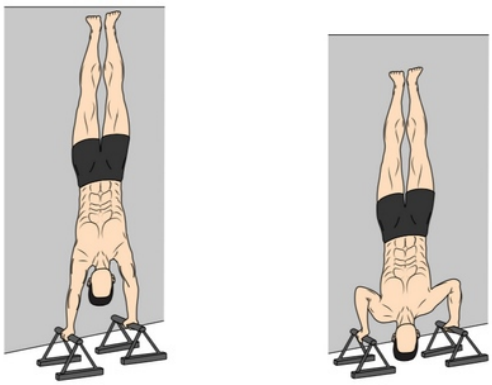


Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

Wall Raised Handstand Pushups

Instead of balancing your hands on the floor, place them on any raised object such as on some paralette bars for the best performance and safety. Perform the exercise as detailed previously. The higher the object is from the floor, the greater is the range of motion you will subject yourself to. Increase this gradually as you build your expertise at this.

Lower yourself as with the handstand pushup described already. You will be sinking lower can perform this exercise near a wall or some other vertical object you can rest your feet on in order to stabilize yourself as you lower yourself once you complete your reps. Then push yourself back up with arms almost locked. Repeat to finish your reps.



Begin by doing 3 sets of 4 reps (4,4,4). Work your way up to 3 sets of 8 reps to move on to the next progression (8,8,8).

PART 3

BUILDING YOUR PERFECT ROUTINE

CHAPTER 10:

SELF TRAINING

One of the things that will ensure you make constant progress with your workouts is to learn the skill of designing your own training routine and to intuitively understand what works for you and what doesn't. I've mentioned elements of a workout routine throughout this book thus far, but I'll be condensing all of it together in here.

The fact is that once you make progress and develop certain levels of strength, you're likely to find that some exercises work better for you, or some variations feel a lot more comfortable. You might even find that modifying the routine itself works better. Wanting to design your own workout is a perfectly normal thing.

This is why it's essential to understand how you should do this. There are a few elements that go into it. Before all of the technical stuff, it's important to look at the most critical aspect of exercise and workout routines.

Listen

A lot of people skip working out entirely or settle for unchallenging workouts due to the fear of injury. Getting injured and working out is thought to go hand in hand, and this is an extremely unfortunate development. The desire to continually improve and not get injured while doing so seems to be at odds with one another, but the reason for this is that a gross misconception exists.

Here's the thing: your body is constantly communicating with you concerning how it feels and what it's experiencing. You can choose to listen to it or not. Obviously, when you're completing mundane tasks such as brushing your teeth and so on, you don't need massive levels of input from your body. This is not the case when exercising.

One of the things that makes exercise so powerful is that not only does it strengthen you physically, it also develops your mind and body connection. In other words, you'll get to know your body better. More than anything else, this is what prevents injuries. Exercising isn't an activity like playing sports is. What I mean is that when playing sports, there are many external factors that can cause an injury.

Another player could run into you, or you could trip on the ball or whatever object you're handling, and as such, preventing injuries is close to impossible. It usually depends on how lucky you are. In some sports such as football or hockey, it's almost impossible to avoid injuries.

Prevention

When working out, you're exercising by yourself and have complete control over which movements you choose to carry out. The key to exercising well is to find that zone where you're challenging yourself but aren't so far outside your comfort zone where your body just can't handle the movement.

As a beginner finding this zone is a tough task. You've likely never worked out for long enough periods to get to know the signals your body sends you. So what do these signals look like? As with everything else to do with the mind, these signals manifest as feelings. When you try to perform a movement that is well outside your comfort zone, you're going to feel as if it's too tough or that it's uncomfortable.

This is why figuring out your body's signals can be complicated. One of the biggest stumbling blocks in the process is to differentiate between the feeling of laziness and a genuine signal. To be honest, both feel the same for the most part. The difference is in how your body responds to the activity, and you can think of it as a two-step process.

The first step is when you acknowledge the feeling. The second step is you taking action to confirm that feeling. Let's say you're on your way to the gym and feel tired or just don't feel like working out. Your mind is telling you that you'd be better off asleep or bingeing your favorite TV show. Acknowledge the presence of this feeling, but continue doing what you need to do to prepare for your workout.

Once in your workout space, which can be at home or a gym, begin your warmup routine and try to perform the first set of exercises. This is the crucial part. Observe how you feel at this point. Do you still feel tired and unable to complete the workout? Did your warmup leave you even more exhausted or fatigued? Or are you energized and find it easy to continue?

The former is a case of being genuinely tired, and the latter is laziness. Then there's a third confounding case where you'll feel tired but will still be able to perform your workout easily. In such cases, proceed with caution. It might just be that your body is expending a burst of energy to get you through, or it could be a delayed reaction from your mind before it acknowledges that the workout is refreshing. In such situations, it pays to be mindful of your movements and not try to get fancy with things.

If you're pushing for a new level of performance, take it as slowly as you can and ensure you're practicing proper form at all times. Some trainees sacrifice form in order to achieve higher levels of strength. If you're an intermediate level trainee (someone who's been working out for at least three years), then you can safely do this since you'll know when to curb the habit of breaking form.

As a beginner, you should never break form, even if it means you cannot progress. You should never become pedantic about form, but this is something that takes time to develop. What I mean is that if strength gains are your ultimate goal, sometimes you need to make an additional effort to burst past your previous strength levels.

In such cases, you'll find that you won't be able to maintain perfect form. The trouble occurs when you make a habit of this. Intermediate and above trainees understand that breaking form for a rep or two is fine, but if they cannot consistently perform the movement with proper form, then it isn't a real gain.

Signals

Often you will find yourself in the middle of a workout, and your body might send a signal that the upcoming movement is something it cannot do. Again, this is a feeling you'll receive. You might have completed your pushups easily but might suddenly feel that pullups don't sound like a good idea.

It's tough to tell you precisely what you need to do in such situations because so much depends on your intuition. Generally, here's what you can do. Try the absolute minimum you can for a pullup. This means you hang from the bar and try to do a half pullup. Don't rush this and ensure proper form. If you still find it tough to do or if the feeling persists, don't do the exercise.

In such situations, your body has already performed a set of exercises well, and it's unlikely to be a case of laziness. Thus, it's likely that your body is communicating that something is wrong with the muscles that are needed to execute a pullup well. Try the minimum and test this feeling out. Over time, you'll become accustomed to the degree of signals and will be able to determine if you even need to test the signal out.

Generally speaking, you should follow a simple principle when it comes to developing your intuition while working out. To summarize it into a sentence: Always do something. This means that as a beginner, you should pay attention to your feelings and then test them out. Since you aren't experienced enough to figure out what they mean as yet, do whatever you can and see how it feels.

Never go about your workout robotically or treat yourself like one. You're human, and your body will progress at the rate that is best suited for it. If Jane next door is progressing faster than you, so be it. You're perfectly fine wherever you are. Fitness is a very personal thing and isn't something to be compared with one another.

You can compare your strength to commonly accepted standards, but that's where it should stop. Don't look at someone who is at a higher level than you are and wish to be there. Focus on where you're at, and

you'll do just fine. Above all else, always listen to your body and develop the mind to body connection.

New Movements

Special mentions must be made about practicing new movements. In such cases, your body and mind aren't used to it, and as a result, they don't know what is going to cause an injury. You will experience discomfort when practicing them, and much like you have to learn to differentiate between laziness and intuition, you'll need to distinguish between the discomfort that comes from unfamiliarity and intuition .

As a rule of thumb, take it slow when it comes to exploring new movements. Practice the form with as low a weight as possible before going all in. Observe your breathing and how your body feels when performing the movement. As I said previously, you want to find that zone where you're pushing your limits but not so far outside it where you'll injure yourself.

Your intuition will let you know where this is, so trust that you'll build it over time. Meanwhile, take it slow and be mindful of the movements you're performing.

Your Routine

The structure of your basic routine has been outlined previously as well as the progression that you will be following. Take the time at this point to review that. You will be performing the appropriate variation of each exercise outlined in this book thus far for appropriate reps, starting with (4,4,4) or (3,3,3) if that variation happens to be too tough. In order to progress to the next level, you will need to perform (8,8,8) or (12,12,12) on certain exercises. Here is what your basic workout routine would look like. Repeat this every other day, or whenever you feel rested enough to adequately perform the workout.

Exercise	Sets/Reps
Dynamic warm up routine	10 min
Appropriate variation for squat progression	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Appropriate pull up variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Appropriate handstand pushup variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Appropriate leg raises variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets

Appropriate pushup variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Appropriate bridge variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Static stretching routine	10 mi n

Having said that, if you're an intermediate trainee and are already performing at a high level, you can customize the workout routine to suit your needs better. Generally speaking, rep ranges up to five are suited for strength training programs. Ranges between five to eight are in the realm of strength/hypertrophy.

Hypertrophy refers to a training process that forces muscle fibers to become thicker, and as a result, your muscles increase in size. The strength/hypertrophy rep range ensures that you'll be training for strength as well as size. While you won't be maximizing either one, you'll receive the best of both worlds, so to speak.

Pure hypertrophy reps range between eight to 12. Rep numbers over 15 are geared towards endurance. A thing to note at this point is that as you increase the number of reps you perform, the weight you can lift will also decrease. In order to build muscle, you need to lift as much weight as you can. Training for endurance is not going to build muscle.

This doesn't mean you shouldn't train your cardio system. It's just that your training shouldn't be optimized around it unless you're looking at becoming a professional marathon runner. For everyday purposes, training in the strength/hypertrophy range is ideal.

Rest Periods

The rest periods corresponding to each rep range are different. Strength training routines tend to have more extended rest periods, which can be up to five minutes and start from two to three minutes. Strength/hypertrophy training requires rest between two to three minutes between reps, although you can rest for shorter periods.

Hypertrophy training calls for rest periods of around a minute or so. Endurance training reduces the rest period even less with some programs such as high-intensity interval training having periods of about 15 seconds or so. As you progress, it can be tempting to increase the size of your rest period to enable you to recover better and perform the exercises better.

Understand that the rest periods are a part of the form and are just as important. If you cannot perform the exercise with proper form after resting for the requisite period, then it isn't a true rep.

Splits and Isolation

As I've mentioned earlier, isolation routines (also called splits) are not suitable for a beginner to practice. For intermediate trainers, though, they provide a lot of benefits. The program outlined in this book can be modified to a split program. The advantage of a split routine is that you can target muscles individually, and you can load them up more.

Since you won't be performing as many compound movements, your body will recover faster. Standard split routines call for workouts four days per week or more as compared to three days per week for strength routines. This frequency simply corresponds to how long it takes the body to recover.

Designing a split routine with bodyweight training is a little more complicated since it's not fully possible to isolate your muscles like you can with free weights. As a result, you can follow either a two day or a three day split. You could follow a push/pull two day split, which will have you performing squats, handstands, pushups, and leg raises on the push day.

On the pull day, you can perform pullups, horizontal pulls, and planks, for example. You can add additional exercises if you wish, such as deadlifts and dips as well. I'm not going to go into the intricacies of these other exercises since I'm assuming that as an intermediate trainee, you'll have prior training knowledge of them. Do note that to make a split work well, you will need access to a gym.

A three day split could be on a push, pull, and core and legs and core rotation. An excellent option to turbocharge your splits is to perform supersets. Supersets involve performing two or more exercises in quick succession that target the same muscle. This exhausts the muscle but provides more strength and hypertrophy boosts .

How to Create A Workout Plan

Let state right off the bat that creating a custom workout plan is a time-consuming process. It's easy to write a bunch of exercises down on a piece of paper, but it's entirely another thing to see it through successfully. You'll find that your body will respond differently to each exercise, and rep ranges, as well as volume, so you will need to be adjusting accordingly to how you respond to them.

Designing a great workout routine for yourself begins with your existing training log. Remember how I mentioned that you need to track your progress with your workouts and write down how many reps of each exercise you're performing? Well, this log will form the basis of your own custom-designed program.

Go over the exercises you like performing and make a list of them. Classify them based on push versus pull, as well as the areas of your

body they target. Almost every bodyweight exercise is a compound movement, so, for the most part, you will need to ensure there is a balance between the push and pull aspect.

If you find an imbalance between push and pull, you have two choices. You can either find alternative movements to compensate for the ones you don't like, or you can suck it up and do the ones you don't like.

Next, you need to figure out your rep method.

Reps

There are different methods of implementing an exercise rep range. You can do supersets, pyramid style reps, or classic reps. The rep method used in this book is the classic style rep. In this method, the number of reps remains constant, and so does the weight .

Pyramid style reps vary both the weight and the number of reps. Generally speaking, the number of reps is increased or decreased by two. So you could have (8,6,4) or (4,6,8). The weight is accordingly increased or decreased. Cases where the weight is decreased (that is, the reps are increased over sets) are called inverse pyramids. These are considered to be the best when it comes to strength/hypertrophy programs since you'll be lifting the heaviest weight when you're fresh and lighter weight as you become more exhausted.

Designing a pyramid rep range with bodyweight exercises is tough. An option you have is to perform different variations of the exercise for different reps. For example, you could do four diamond pushups, six regular pushups, and eight assisted pushups.

Progress

The next element to figure out is how you'll handle progression and stalling. Stalling can be controlled by dropping down the variation a notch or decreasing the number of reps. Progression is a little more challenging to figure out. You already have a template when it comes to the classic rep range progression in this book.

Pyramids are more difficult to handle. You can choose to add more reps to each set until it hits a specified number. For example, you can start off with (4,6,8) on the pushup progression and increase the number of reps by one every time you workout. Once you reach (6,8,10), you can increase the level of the progression and switch back to a (4,6,8) for this higher level.

In other words, you started off by performing the diamond pushups first. You'll be performing the next, higher progression second and the next progression as your third set. It is a bit more complicated and takes more tracking. The flip side is that you can make better strength gains. As with everything else, there's always a trade-off.

Keep in mind that your workout routine needs to be backed up by good nutritional principles and the right amount of sleep and water consumption. The fanciest workout routine will fail if you don’t sleep enough, eat right, or drink too little water.

CONCLUSION

So, are you ready to get fit and strong? Throughout the course of this book, I've tried to convey to you that fitness is a question of applying some basic principles and then backing them up with hard work. It seems intimidating only because of the large quantities of marketing nonsense that exist in this space.

Whether you're a beginner or whether you're over 50 or even 70, getting fit is not a complicated process. Sure, it takes work, but this doesn't mean it's impossible or that you cannot achieve it. It all begins with understanding the basics of exercise and how strength-building works. More importantly, you should understand why you need to prioritize it.

Next comes the understanding of the three fundamental factors that determine your overall fitness: Food, water, and sleep. It seems so simple, but it's often ignored by most people. Ensuring you tick the boxes with regard to all three will do a lot more for your health than any form of exercise you can undertake.

As you do this, you'll need to start working out. This book has given you a great routine to get started with along with giving you directions on how to figure out where you need to begin. Every exercise in this book targets a large group of muscles, and thus your entire body will be receiving a thorough workout .

Remember to perform all the exercises with perfect form since this will prevent injuries and also build actual strength. It will be tempting to take shortcuts, but these won't bring about any real change. Your gains will be temporary and will fade at the slightest hint of stress.

There are many variations to each exercise, so take the time to get to know all of them. Perform them slowly at first, and don't overestimate your abilities. It's better to start slow and achieve steady long term progression than having to stop and start all the time.

Lastly, I'd like to remind you to be patient. You might want immediate gains, but it doesn't work that way. You'll need to be persistent and consistent in your efforts. Before you know it, you'll be there and you will be a different person.

I wish you all the luck in the world. It's an exciting journey you're going to embark on, and it's normal to feel some level of trepidation and nervousness. You may also be feeling some form of excitement! Use this to fuel you further and remember, nothing is impossible!

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