

The 3 Keys to Greater Health & Happiness

A Beginner's Guide to Exercise, Diet & Mindset

By Dale L. Roberts

©2015

(PDF Audiobook Accompaniment)

The 3 Keys to Greater Health & Happiness: A Beginner's Guide to Exercise, Diet & Mindset (Second Edition, March 2015)

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Heart Rate Training

Cardio Training

The heart is a muscle and much like any other muscle in your body, you must train it. It pumps life through your body and the condition of your heart can dictate the speed of your progress in all your goals. If you develop a strong heart, the body will follow. You can build the heart at a specific intensity known as cardio-respiratory training or commonly known as cardio.

For those of you with special conditions or needs and are taking prescribed medication, consult your doctor on the appropriate heart rate for your cardio training. Based on the complexity of your situation, you need a heart rate range that is safe and effective. With practice in fitness, your doctor will adjust your training level over time.

Cardio is training the heart at a 50-85% of maximum heart rate¹ (MHR) or maximum beats per minute. I'll discuss the relevance of the percentage of maximum heart rate a little later. First, you must know your maximum heart rate so that you can train safely and effectively. You don't want to put too much stress on your heart, much like you wouldn't wish to pull a car uphill. Sure, you may be able to do both, but each shares more risk than reward and are far too strenuous for your body. Training between 50-85% of your maximum heart rate puts enough stress on your heart to build strength and endurance while burning calories.

Harvard Men's Health Watch published a recent study by Colorado scientists that revealed a formula that closely estimates maximum heart rate². The formula is:

$$\text{Maximum heart rate} = 208 - (0.7 \times \text{age in years})$$

Based on this formula, here is a chart to help with maximum heart rate (MHR) relative to age and the heart beats per minute needed for minimum and maximum guidelines for cardio training:

Age	MHR	50%	70 - 85%
20	194	97	136 - 165
25	191	95	134 - 162
30	187	93	131 - 159
35	184	92	129 - 156
40	180	90	126 - 153
45	177	88	124 - 150
50	173	86	119 - 147
55	170	85	115 - 140
60	166	83	111 - 135
65	163	81	107 - 130

The lower intensity of 50% MHR is for someone who is just starting a fitness routine. Fifty percent of maximum heart rate is a great starting point, but if you find it too easy, increase your heart rate by 5% and see how you can handle that intensity. Gradually over the course of 3-4 weeks, work your way up towards the higher intensity.

It's okay if you don't get to 70-85% MHR in one month. In due time and consistent cardio exercise, you will train your heart to handle higher intensity levels.

The higher intensity of 70-85% MHR is ideal for someone who is experienced in exercise. If you are new to exercise, this should be a big goal for you to achieve.

As you exercise, periodically check your pulse by a heart rate monitor, or by checking your pulse. The first option of using technology is becoming cheaper and easier to get these days. Simple wrist watches can cost \$10-15 with a heart rate monitor feature and more complex models can cost upwards of \$100. The more cost-effective solution is checking your pulse on your radial artery in your wrist. Practice pulse checking before working out so that you have a firm grasp on finger placement. American Heart Association is a great resource for [proper pulse checking](#).

Warm-Up Exercises



Basic Warm-Up (Jog & Drum)

This warm-up is basic. If you feel this is not intense enough, then put in more effort. If you find you don't get warmed up with this example, then move to the advanced warm-up exercises.

Find a sturdy chair to sit in for this exercise. With your butt in the back of the seat, sit up straight, pinch your shoulder blades back and lift up your chin. Your arms should be hanging directly at your sides.

The interval routine is:

Interval 1 - 30 seconds of fast paced seated jogging (fast-paced seated march)

-30 seconds of deep breathing

Interval 2 - 30 seconds of fast paced lap drumming with the hands

-30 seconds of deep breathing

Interval 3 - 30 seconds of seated jogging and lap drumming

-30 seconds of deep breathing

Interval 4 - 15 seconds of single-leg seated jogging

-15 seconds of opposite side single-leg seated jogging

-30 seconds of deep breathing

Interval 5 - 15 seconds of single-arm lap drumming

-15 seconds of opposite side single-arm drumming

-30 seconds of deep breathing

Interval 6 - 30 seconds of fast paced seated jogging

-30 seconds of stomach flatteners

Interval 7 - 30 seconds of fast paced lap drumming with the hands

-30 seconds of stomach flatteners

Interval 8 - 30 seconds of seated jogging and lap drumming

-30 seconds of stomach flatteners

Interval 9 - 15 seconds of single-leg seated jogging

-15 seconds of opposite side single-leg jogging

-30 seconds of stomach flatteners

Interval 10 - 15 seconds of single-arm lap drumming

-15 seconds of opposite side single-arm drumming

-30 seconds of stomach flatteners

If your heart is not pumping by now, increase your intensity. When you are done, you should be lightly sweating and breathing a bit more rapidly.



Advanced Warm-Up (Jog & Shadowbox)

If the basic warm-up doesn't cut it for you, then the advanced warm-up is the next best thing. The advanced warm-up assists you in getting your body fully warmed-up and is intended for someone that is more physically conditioned.

Pick an area that is clear and uncluttered.

Begin this routine with a slightly separated stance and neutral posture. When you jog in place, pick your knees up to hip level and place them down rapidly while your arms swing up at the opposing side to complement your movement, as with walking, jogging or running.

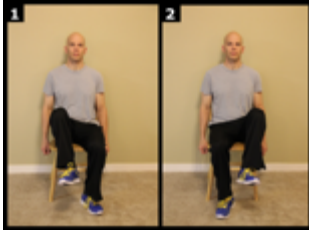
When shadowboxing, worry about punching forward rather than becoming the next Ali or Tyson. Shadowboxing is just to warm-up your upper extremities, not to prepare you for combat. The technique is not crucial—no need to evaluate your positioning, timing, stance or control. With shadowboxing, separate your feet, keep your shoulder blades pinched back, chin tucked, arms up with elbows bent and single jab forward, alternating one arm at a time.

The interval routine is:

- Interval 1 - 30 seconds of fast paced jogging
- 30 seconds of deep breathing
- Interval 2 - 30 seconds of shadowboxing
- 30 seconds of deep breathing
- Interval 3 - 30 seconds of fast paced jogging
- 30 seconds of deep breathing
- Interval 4 -15 seconds of left arm jabs
- 15 seconds of right arm jabs
- 30 seconds of deep breathing
- Interval 5 - 15 seconds of fast paced jogging
- 15 seconds of arms above the head jogging
- 30 seconds of deep breathing
- Interval 6 - 30 seconds of fast paced jogging
- 30 seconds of stomach flatteners
- Interval 7 - 30 seconds of shadowboxing
- 30 seconds of stomach flatteners
- Interval 8 - 30 seconds of arms above the head jogging
- 30 seconds of stomach flatteners
- Interval 9 - 15 seconds of left arm jabs
- 15 seconds of right arm jabs
- 30 seconds of stomach flatteners
- Interval 10 - 30 seconds of arms above the head jogging
- 30 seconds of stomach flatteners

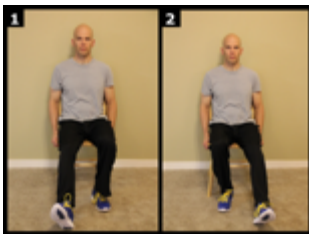
Your heart should be pumped primed for your workout after this warm-up. If you aren't fully warmed up, then kick up your intensity.

Seated March



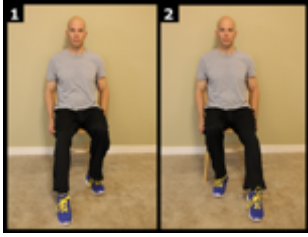
As the title of this exercise indicates, this is the raising and lowering of the bent knees with the lifting of the feet in an alternating fashion. Set a cadence that is appropriate to your fitness level. Find your favorite song and march along to it or keep it as simple as counting aloud each step performed. This exercise is an excellent precursor to the following exercises since it utilizes the largest muscles in your body (in the legs) to get the blood pumping at a faster rate to all your vital organs and working muscles. Repeat this exercise for 1 minute.

Alternating Heel Tap March



Much like the marching exercise before this exercise, this is the raising and lowering of the bent knees with the lifting of the feet. However, extend the knee slightly, and bring the heel to the floor just 6-12 inches ahead of its start position. Then raise the knee, bend it and allow it to come back to its original resting place. Alternate the movement sequence between legs for 1 minute.

Alternating Toe Tap March



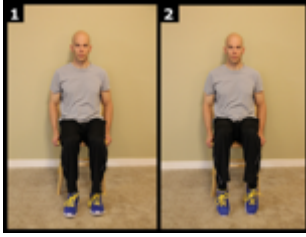
The toe tap is just a modification of the Heel Tap exercise and requires a tapping of the toes instead of the heel. Alternate the movement sequence between legs for 1 minute.

Alternating Sidestep



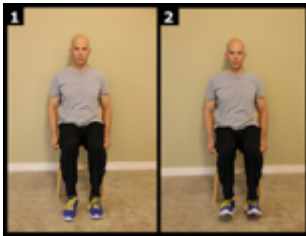
This is a modified version of the march. Sidestep one foot at a time, and no more than 6-12 inches from the midline of the body. Then return the foot to the start position. Alternate the movement sequence between legs for 1 minute.

Heel Raise



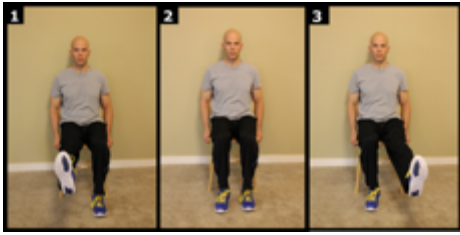
Start this exercise with the feet flat on the floor and together. The balls of your feet (the rounded space just below your toes and above your arch) should be firmly anchored to the floor throughout the exercise with the heels directly below the knees. Raise the heel while still pressing the balls of your feet into the ground then drop your heels back to the ground. Alternate the movement sequence between legs for 1 minute.

Toe Tap



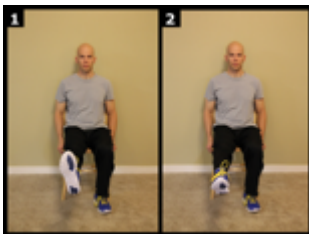
Begin with the feet together, flat on the floor and parallel. The heels of your feet should be firmly planted below your knees. Raise and lower the balls of your feet in an alternating fashion. Tap along to your favorite song and set a steady rhythm. Do this exercise for 1 minute.

Alternating Leg Extensions



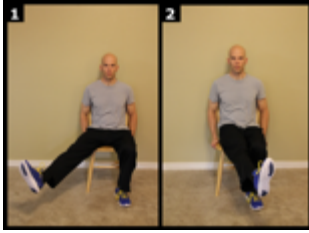
Begin with the feet separated hip-width apart, flat on the floor and parallel. Extend one leg, then bend at the knee and return your foot to the floor. Alternate the movement sequence between legs for 1 minute.

Foot Extension



Begin with the feet separated hip-width apart, flat on the floor and parallel. Extend one leg, and then hold this position with your foot directly in alignment with your hip. Bring your toes toward your shin, and then point them away from your shin. Repeat this movement for a given amount of repetitions. Bend at the knee and allow the foot to return to the resting position just below the knee on the floor.

Leg Sweep



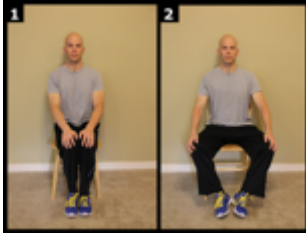
Begin with the feet separated hip-width apart, flat on the floor and parallel. Extend one leg, and then hold this position with your foot directly in alignment with your hip. Sweep the leg from outside the hips through the mid-line of the body, alternating back and forth in a controlled and smooth movement. The foot can be extended toward the shin. However, the modification of flexing the toe away from the knee is an excellent alternative. Bend at the knee and allow the foot to return to the resting position just below the knee on the floor. Repeat the movement sequence on the both legs.

Knee Close



Begin with the feet separated hip-width apart, flat on the floor and parallel. Rest your hands on your knees and keep your feet planted in place throughout the exercise. Draw the knees together to meet in the middle, and then return the knees to the starting position. This exercise is excellent for loosening up the outer hips. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Knee Open



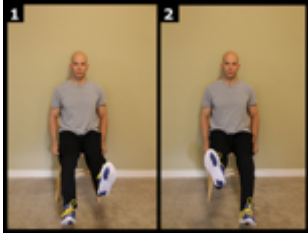
Start with the feet together, flat on the floor and parallel to each other. Rest your hands on your knees and keep your feet planted in place throughout the exercise. Separate the knees through its full range-of-motion then return the knees to start position. This exercise is great for loosening up the inner thighs. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Knee Lift



Begin with the feet separated hip-width apart, flat on the floor and parallel. Rest your hands on your knees. Raise one knee just above hip level (without the assistance of your hand), extend the leg out. This movement is very similar to using your feet for the brake/accelerator in a car. Repeat the movement sequence on the other leg for equal time.

Flutter



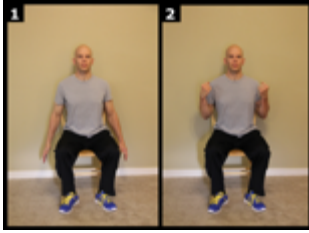
Extend both legs with the feet pointed directly out from the hips. Alternate the legs in a semi-rapid up-down fashion with movements of about 6-12 inches. When you have completed the set number of repetitions, bend your knees and allow the feet to rest below the knees. In the event of excessive low back tightness in this exercise, flex your feet toward your shins. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Scissors



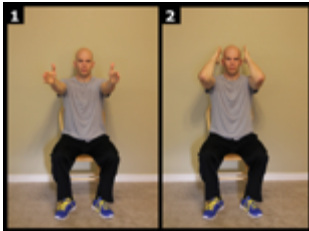
Extend both legs with the feet pointed directly out from the hips. Separate then close the legs through your natural range-of-motion in a semi-rapid fashion. After completing the repetitions, bend your knees and allow the feet to rest on the floor. In the event of excessive low back tightness in this exercise, flex your feet toward your shins. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Arm Curl



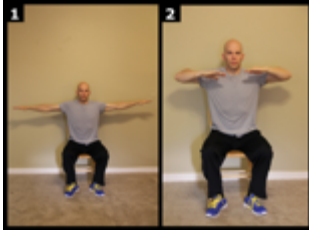
Your arms should be fully extended to the ground with palms open, facing forward. Keep your upper arms stable with the shoulder blades pinched back, bend at the elbows, and sweep the forearms towards the shoulders. As you collapse your arms at the elbow, close the hands into a fist like you are grabbing an object. When the fist meets the shoulder, reverse your action by opening your hand and elbow while returning back to the start position. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Forward Arm Extension



Begin by extending both arms in front of the body at shoulder level with palms open and facing each other. Keep the upper arms stable as you bend at the elbow and bring your hands outside of your ears. Return to start position by extending the elbows and both arms are straight with the palms still facing each other. This movement can be likened to a runway air traffic controller directing planes to a dock. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Side Arm Extension



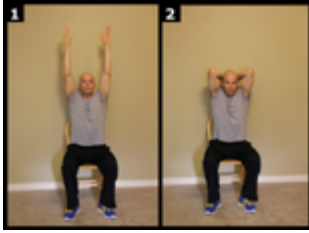
Begin with the arms extended out from their respective sides at shoulder level with the palms open and facing down. Keep the upper arms stable as you bend at the elbows, allowing the hands to end at the upper chest level. Return to the starting position by extending at the elbows with the hands returning outside of their respective shoulders. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Overhead Arm Raise



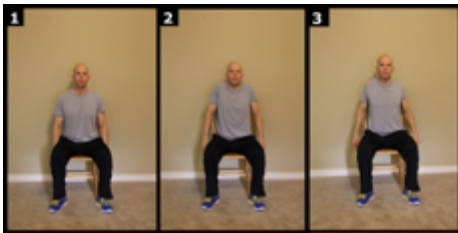
Start with the arms bent at a 90° angle at the elbow and armpit just outside of their respective shoulders. Extend the arms above your head until they are completely straight and parallel to each other. Return to the starting position by allowing the elbows and shoulders to collapse back into 90° angles. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Overhead Arm Extension



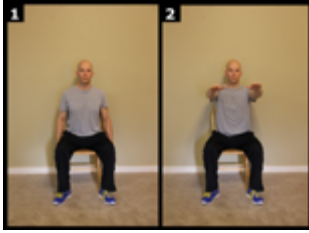
Begin with your arms at shoulder-width apart, parallel, directly overhead and the palms are facing inward. With the upper arms remaining stable, bend at the elbows allowing the hands to come to the back of the head. Return to the beginning position by straightening the elbows while keeping the arms perfectly parallel. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Rolling Shoulder Shrug



With arms rested at their respective sides, shrug your shoulders up toward your ears, rotate the shoulders back, and then pull the shoulders down toward the ground. Rest your shoulders back to neutral. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Forward Shoulder Raise



Starting with your arms straightened and rested at their respective sides, slowly raise your arms to the front of your body at shoulder level having your palms meet in the middle. As you are raising your arms, have your palms scoop from the mid-line of your body to finish with both palms face-up. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Stick Up



With elbows slightly bent and hands resting on your knees, slowly in a rotational fashion, raise your arms up with palms facing away from your body. As you raise your arms to your respective sides, bend your elbows and armpits to a full 90° and pinch your elbows back. Stop once the palms are fully up and faced away from your body. Reverse this motion by slightly straightening your elbows, collapsing at the armpit and resting your palms on your knees. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Cross-the-body Overhead Pulls



This movement is a single-arm variation of the Overhead Pulls. Begin with one arm reaching across your torso with your hand rested on the opposite knee and a small twist at the trunk to accommodate. Raise your arm up above your respective shoulder, bending 90° at your elbow and armpit, pulling your elbow back and facing the palm away from your body. As you are raising your arm up, slowly rotate your trunk toward that direction and look over that shoulder. Return your hand back to the start position and turn your trunk back to neutral. Alternate each side for 1 minute.

Row



Extend your arms out in front of your shoulders reaching with your hands while keeping the torso rigid. Pull the hands in toward the sternum while collapsing the elbows and tucking them behind your back. Return to the start position. Visualize rowing a boat while keeping your body hips and torso still. To progress this movement, when you reach out with your hands, bend forward at the hips while maintaining a neutral posture. Pull your arms back and extend back at the hips back into the start position. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Bent One-Arm Row



Place your right hand on your right knee with your arm extended. Bend 45 degrees at the waist and reach your left hand toward your right ankle with your arm fully extended. Pull your left hand up toward your sternum while tucking your left elbow behind your back. Return your left hand to start position. Duplicate this movement on the other side for the same amount of repetitions Repeat this movement for 30 seconds, then switch sides and repeat the movement for another 30 seconds.

Lap Push-up



Place both hands on your knees and bend slightly forward at the hips. Allow the torso to relax while still maintaining a neutral posture. Place the weight onto your hands as you bend at the hips more. Let your elbows collapse outward and you keep your chin up as your torso nears your lap. Once you have reached your full range-of-motion or touched your lap, press from your hands, extend at your elbows and return to the upright position. Avoid using your low back to extend your torso into the upright position. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Stomach Flattener



Place your hands with fingers spread out onto your stomach at your lower ribs. You use your fingertips to check that you engage your abs. Take a deep breath in through the nose, allow the stomach to expand then tighten the stomach as tight as possible at the peak of your breath in. Hold your breath for a moment, and then slowly exhale out through the mouth as you continue to engage your abdominals. This exercise can be used even in a quick tighten-loosen action. However, the breathing would remain normal throughout the activity. Employ this exercise anywhere and anytime you wish for maximum results. In fact, this movement can improve digestive health, posture, and lung power. Repeat this movement for 1 minute.

Side Bends



Place one hand behind your head with the elbow bent and the other hand freely hanging. Bend to the side with the free hand, flexing laterally (to the side) through your range-of-motion as if reaching for something on the ground. Then tighten your midsection as you return to an upright position while avoiding a bend toward the opposite side. Perform this exercise for 30 seconds each side, being sure to switch the hand behind your head when you switch to the opposite side.

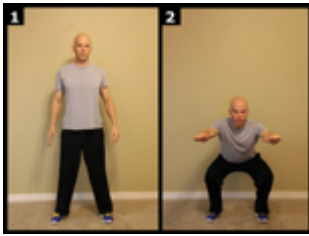
Trunk Twist with Pull



Begin with your hands pulled into your stomach and elbows collapsed and resting on your ribs. Turn your upper body to one side and reach out, fully extending your arms. Then pull your hands back into your midsection, and bend your elbows while turning your trunk back to neutral. Repeat this motion toward the opposite side to complete the movement. Do this exercise for 1 minute.

Squat Exercises

Traditional Squats



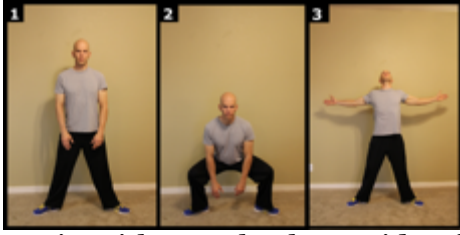
Begin in a standing position with feet separated shoulder-width apart, spine in neutral alignment and arms loosely dangling at the sides. Your weight should be slightly shifted to the heels of your feet while keeping your big toe slightly lifted to keep the weight to the back of your feet. Bend at the hips and knees while maintaining neutral spinal alignment and raising your extended arms in front of your shoulders. As you descend, breathe in deeply to load your lungs with vital oxygen for your muscles to function at their maximum. Stop bending your hips and knees when you have reached a 90° bend or have come to a pseudo-seated position. Arms should be completely extended and completely in front of the shoulders. Press your heels into the floor, squeeze your glutes (aka butt) and extend at the hips and knees, returning to the top position while dropping the extended arms back to your sides. As you are coming to a standing position, breathe out with some force while tightening your midsection to fully expel carbon dioxide from your lungs. Repeat this motion over and over again to build quality strength, conditioning and muscle.

Close Foot Squats



Begin at a standing position with legs and feet together while your arms dangle loosely at the sides. Keep your weight placed on your heels while squatting. As you bend at your hips and knees, keep your posture upright and avoid leaning forward. Breathe in as you come down and exhale as you stand up. As you are dropping, extend your arms directly in front of your shoulders. Come to a stop when the hips and knees are bent at 90°, pause, and then press your weight through your heels and into the floor. Be sure to breathe out as you exert your way to a standing position while forcefully pressing air out of your lungs through your midsection. As you are returning to the standing position, your arms should come back to your sides.

Sumo Squat



Begin with your heels outside of your hips and feet pointed 30-45° out from the body. Your arms should be hanging loosely in front of your pelvis. Bend at the hips and knees until you come to about a 90° bend in the legs' joints, and then pause. When coming downward, breathe in deeply. As you press your weight through your feet to a standing position, forcefully breathe out by tightening your midsection to collapse your lungs. At the same time, raise your arms in an arching fashion to your sides while gently raising your chin. On your next repetition, as you squat down, allow your chin to return to neutral and your arms to come back to between the legs at pelvis level.

Single-leg Squats

Now that you have learned the basics of a two-legged squat, the single-leg squat is a challenging progression. Try to focus on the both sides equally. With all single-sided movements, begin with your non-dominant side or the side used the least. Therefore, if your non-dominant side tires out, you will not further feed into an imbalance that encourages growth in your dominant side.

Think of your body as a team and every part is a vital player in the role of the team. Each player's skills should be sharpened individually yet through the assistance and guidance of the rest of the team. Notice the emphasis placed on keeping the team involved and not just having the individual player focusing on solo efforts. Unlike a team that has many players that can separate, we occupy a body that never separates and is 100% accountable for all actions. So, this is why I stress to avoid isolation exercises when beginning your fitness journey. Isolation exercises are great if you are looking into bodybuilding or physique competitions. Specifically, isolated exercises are used in the gym with pin-select equipment and go through one plane of motion encouraging strength and conditioning growth in only one area. Good examples of isolated exercises are bench presses, biceps curls, and triceps extensions.

A single-leg squat is not an isolated exercise because it requires much more than just the single-leg to perform a single repetition. When you perform a single-leg squat, you will notice that both sides have a role in the movement. For example, after so many step-ups, you will not only feel the lead leg overloading, but the rear leg works the calf through easing down and a gentle press off to assist the upward movement.

Not to mention, the entire midsection will be engaged in balance and propulsion. As with two-legged movements, you engage the entire core steadying the body and building the upper torso movements.

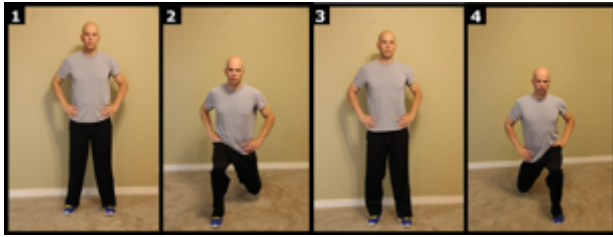
Walking Lunges



Adequate space is needed to perform a sequence of long strides in either a circular or back & forth fashion. With feet separated shoulder-width apart, hands on your hips, take one long step forward with your lead foot landing squarely on the ground. The back heel will lift so the weight is distributed on the balls of the back foot. Breathe in deeply. Bend 90° at both knees. The lead leg should have the knee bending until it is directly above the heel of the foot. The back leg should have the knee bent and about 1-2 inches from the ground. Step far enough forward that the back knee is behind the front heel. The more separation you have between the lead heel and the back knee, the more difficult the exercise is. Your posture should remain erect with your shoulder blades pinched back, chin tucked and head lifted up. Drive your weight through the lead heel as you extend your front leg while pressing the back foot off the ground. Tighten the midsection and forcefully breathe out as you extend the lead leg fully and bring the back leg in line with the front leg. Without placing the back leg down, begin extending it out and repeat the movement chain. Repeat the sequence of moves over and again in a walking fashion.

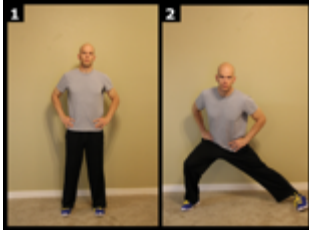
If you find lunges to be particularly hard or taxing on the knees, re-evaluate your form. Be sure to separate your feet shoulder-width apart at all times as most mistakes happen when you come from a lunge to a full standing position and place the feet together. With most exercises, the more that you have your feet separated, the easier it is to balance. Also, too much pressure can come to the lead leg if you step with your feet too close together and the knee extends far beyond the toes. A general rule to follow with most squatting movements is to keep your knee behind your toes at all times. The exception to this rule is if the torso is parallel with the lead leg's shin, the pressure will not be as great on the knee. Use this rule with caution.

Forward Lunges



Forward lunges are performed with the same form as walking lunges. However, forward momentum is removed from the sequence of movements. Place your hands on your hips. Separate your feet shoulder-width apart. Take one long step forward, landing squarely on the lead foot while lifting the back heel. Breathe in deeply. Bend 90° at both knees. The lead knee will bend until squarely above the lead heel. The back knee will bend until it is 1-2 inches from the ground. Slightly lift the big toe of the lead foot, drive your weight through the heel and press backward. At the same time in pressing off the floor, tighten your midsection and breathe forcefully out, expelling all the air from your lungs. As you continue the backward momentum, come to a full standing position with your lead foot returning to start position. When you are returning to this start position, you balance on the back foot as it returns to flat to the floor. The feet should be parallel and shoulder-width apart. Your posture should remain upright at all times with shoulder blades pinched back and chin tucked and up.

Lateral Lunges



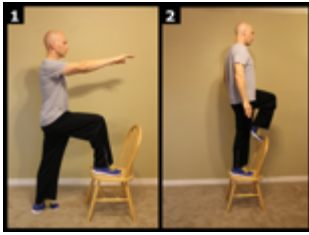
Begin with your feet parallel and slightly separated. Place your hands on your hips. Your torso should stay upright with your attention focused directly forward. Step out widely to one side, bend 90° at the knee and hip of the leading leg while keeping the opposite leg rigid, planted firmly and straight. Breathe in deeply as you descend in this single-leg squat movement. Press your weight through the lead foot as you straighten your leg, press up into the start position. When you are bringing yourself back into a start position, be sure to tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out. Repeat this action in the opposite direction.

Reverse Lunges



You may find it more helpful to have a mirror to review your form since this exercise requires more balance and proper positioning. Reverse lunges are similar to forward lunges. Instead of stepping forward, you go backward. Place your hands on your hips. Separate your feet shoulder-width apart. Take one long step backward, landing on the balls of your rear foot while keeping the front foot squarely on the floor. Breathe in deeply. Bend 90° at both knees. The rear knee will bend until it is 1-2 inches from the ground. The front knee will bend until squarely above the heel. Slightly lift the big toe of the front foot, drive your weight through the heel and press upward. At the same time in pressing off the floor, tighten your midsection and breathe forcefully out, expelling all the air from your lungs. As you continue the forward momentum, come to a full standing position with your rear foot returning to start position. When you are returning to this start position, you will use a little balance with the rear foot as it returns flat to the floor. The feet should be parallel and shoulder-width apart. Your posture should remain upright at all times with shoulder blades pinched back and chin tucked and up.

Step Ups



Precaution #1: Before beginning step ups, be sure to choose the item carefully that you will be stepping onto. It must be a reliably stable surface to step onto with no obstructions to trip or slip on. Please choose your item of stepping wisely and avoid using broken chairs or furniture that is less than safe to be stepping on. A sturdy chair with no wheels, a flat surface and braced against a wall is good for this exercise. Or more importantly, if you own a good workout bench or plyometrics box, this suits step ups best. Another option is using stairs or steps with hand rails for stabilization.

Precaution #2: After choosing the equipment for stepping up onto, be sure the work surface is not at a compromising height. Place one foot flat on the surface of your equipment directly in front of you. The knee should be lower than your hips. If your knee is higher than your hips, you must choose a lower work surface. It is detrimental to your knee to have it higher than your hip when you are stepping up.

With your equipment about one foot in front of you, place your leading foot flat onto the surface with your knee and hip bent no more than a 90° angle. Your back leg should remain straight with the foot planted. Your arms will begin extended directly in front of your shoulders. Press your weight through the leading foot while pushing off from the floor. Tighten the midsection as you forcefully exhale air out of the mouth. The lead leg will come to a full extension while having the back leg come up to tap the chair with the toes and keeping the knee slightly bent. During your ascent, use your extended arms for momentum by pulling them directly to your sides. Carefully return your back foot to the ground while bending the lead knee and hip to start position, no greater than a 90° angle. Breathe in deeply and have the back foot absorb the impact to return to the start position. Duplicate this motion and the same number of repetitions on both sides.

A couple options can be used in setting a steady rhythm with step ups. One method is to keep your lead leg loaded up on the surface for the entire exercise. Complete the exercise set and then switch legs. The second method is to alternate legs with each step up. The latter method really builds great conditioning and endurance with a set rhythm.

Side Step Ups



The same precautions as step ups must be taken when choosing the right equipment. With your equipment one inch to the side of you, place your leading foot flat with your toe pointed forward. Your opposite leg should remain straight with the foot planted. Your arms will begin extended directly in front of your shoulders. Press your weight through the leading foot while pushing off from the floor. Tighten the midsection as you forcefully exhale air out of the mouth. The lead leg will come to a full extension while having the opposite leg come up to tap the surface with the toes and keeping the knee slightly bent. During your ascent, use your extended arms for momentum by pulling them directly to your sides. Carefully return your opposite foot to the ground while bending the lead knee and hip to start position, no greater than a 90° angle. Breathe in deeply and have the opposite foot absorb the impact to return to the start position. Repeat this motion equally on each side.

More caution should be shown to side step ups than the traditional front-loaded step ups. As you are loading and unloading, be sure the knees are staying in alignment, just above the foot. Maintain a deliberate pace and gradually increase when you can properly perform the movement.

Split Leg Squat



You need equipment, such as a chair or workout bench, that is sturdy and reliable for use in rear foot support. Place the equipment about 2 feet behind you. Extend one leg behind you with your toe placed onto the surface. You may need a wall, banister or stable surface for balance when first trying this exercise. Keep your front leg directly below your hip at the start with your posture in neutral alignment. The lead knee and hip will bend 90° and pause at the bottom. The further the lead leg descends, the more the back knee should slightly bend while the back hip extends. Slightly lift the big toe of the lead foot, drive your weight through the heel and extend the leg. At the same time in pressing off the floor, tighten your midsection and breathe forcefully out, expelling all the air from your lungs. As you continue the upward movement, come to a full standing position with your lead leg returning to start position. When you are returning to this start position, carefully balance with the back leg. The feet should be forward facing and parallel at shoulder-width apart. Extend your arms at shoulder level when you squat down, then pull them back to your sides as you come up.

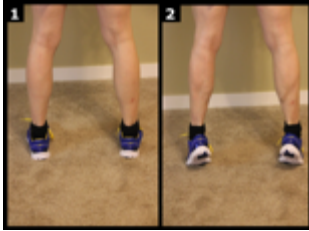
Calves



The calves, or the back of your lower leg between your ankle and knee, are crucial to your complete mobility and way of walking. Training your calves improves all forms of mobility. Most of the previous movements require the lower leg for propelling yourself into position. For instance, step ups require a lot of calf-involvement, so you may experience some soreness in the calves after doing this exercise.

Calf Raises

Equipment or a work surface can be easy to find. The beginner option is the floor while the advanced option would be a step or staircase. Whatever the surface maybe, as mentioned in previous exercises, be sure to inspect your work area and ensure the area is clear of hazards and faultiness.



Beginning option: Start with your feet separated shoulder-width apart and flat on the floor. Place your hands on your hips or a wall/table for stability. Extra stability is needed if your balance is not good and you can catch yourself from falling. Your body should be upright and maintaining neutral alignment. Slowly press your weight into the balls of your feet while lifting your heels up from the floor. Tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you raise your heels. Once you extend your heels all the way, slowly lower them to barely touch the ground. Keep your heels hovering above the ground yet avoiding contact. Breathe in during your descent. Repeat this motion for your desired set of repetitions.



Advanced option: You can use a staircase, step or raised surface. Begin with your feet separated shoulder-width apart, the balls of your feet placed on the step and heels are hanging off the edge of the step. You should feel a stretch in your calves. Put your hands on your hips, or stay close to a wall/banister for stability. Your body should be upright while maintaining neutral alignment. Slowly press your weight into the balls of your feet while lifting your heels upward. Tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you raise your heels. When you extend your heels at its highest point, slowly lower them back down so that they dangle from the step. Breathe in during your descent.

Single-leg Calf Raise



When you can handle the regular calf raises with no issue, move to the single-leg calf raise. You may want to begin on a flat floor then work your way to a staircase or step. A stable surface for balance is needed when performing a single-leg calf raise. Start with one foot on the step and the other foot raised off the surface. The ball of your foot is placed on the step with the heel hanging off the edge of the step. You should feel a stretch in your calves. Your body should be upright while maintaining neutral alignment. Slowly press your weight into the balls of your foot while lifting your heel upwards. Tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you raise your heel. Then, slowly lower your heel back down so it is dangling from the step. Breathe in during your descent. Train both sides equally.

Toe Taps



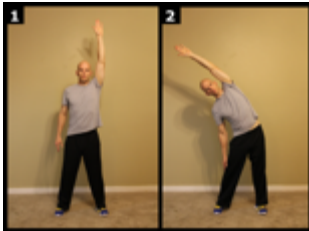
You can do the simplest exercises and have fun while you do it. This exercise can be done from standing, sitting or even easier yet, lying down. Begin from a standing position with your posture upright while maintaining neutral alignment. Keep your weight on your heels and your hands on your hips (or loosely at the side). Lift both sets of toes toward your shins, and then bring them down to the ground. Repeat this motion. If you can become ambidextrous and alternate tapping between feet, then go ahead. Lift one foot off the ground and tap with one foot. You may feel a slight burning sensation in the front of your shin, that's good, but don't go overboard. This exercise can be done anywhere, so have fun with it.

Front & Back Bends



Bend forward at the hips as low as you can and pause. Tighten your midsection for 3 seconds while breathing out forcefully. Loosen your midsection and come to an upright position as you breathe in. Bend backward as much as you can. Be careful to not bend too far and fall off balance. Breathe out as you bring yourself to an upright position.

Side Bends



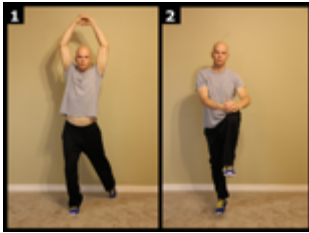
Extend one arm to the ceiling, keeping your upper arm close to your ear while performing this movement. You will bend directly to the side of the downward-hanging arm as you breathe deliberately in through the nose. Pause, then exhale through the mouth as you tighten your midsection and come back to an upright position. Train each side equally.

Helicopters



Extend your arms directly out from your shoulders and pinch your shoulder blades back. Twist your torso to the left while allowing your right heel to pop off the floor and pivot on the ball of your right foot. Pause once you have come to your full range-of-motion, tighten your midsection and breathe out. Return to the forward facing position and breathe in. Twist your torso toward to the right while allowing your left heel to pop off the floor and pivot on the ball of your left foot.

Knee-up



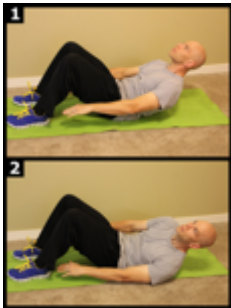
Bring your extended arms above your head with the hands clasped together. Place the ball of your left foot 1-2 feet behind you. Your right leg is kept straight and used for balance. Press your left foot off the floor, draw your knee upward. Simultaneously, bring your hands down to meet your knee while breathing out. Pause and tighten your midsection. Breathe in and return to the starting position. Train each side equally.

Crunch



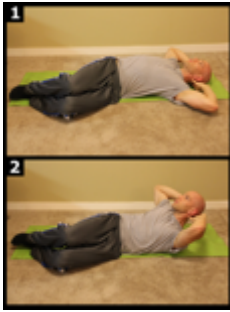
Place a towel or exercise mat on the floor for cushion. Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place your fingertips gently behind your head for support. Breathe out and tighten your midsection as you press your ribs up toward the ceiling. This exercise only requires about 3-6 inches of movement to be effective. Pause at the top. Breathe in as you slowly lower your back to the floor. Caution: Avoid tucking your chin into your chest. Keep your low back flat by pressing your heels into the floor.

Side-to-side Crunch



Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Extend your arms toward your feet. Lift your ribs slightly toward the ceiling. Then bend and reach on your left side toward your heel. Now bend and reach on your right side. Every time you reach toward a heel, pause, squeeze your abs, and then bring your torso back to the start position. Breathe out when reaching toward a heel then breathe in when coming to back. This exercise should be slow. Caution: Be careful with this exercise since no support on the head may strain your neck if you are not conditioned enough. Rest if this movement bothers your neck.

Side Crunch



Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Keep your knees together, and then bring them to one side while your back remains flat on the floor. Place your fingertips gently behind your head for support. Breathe out as you slowly lift your ribs up to the ceiling. Once you've come up, pause, then slowly lower your ribs back down as you breathe in. Train each side equally.

Reverse Crunch



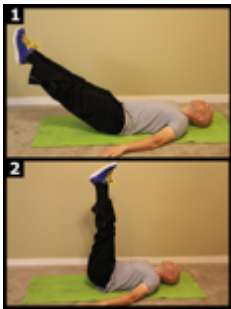
Lie on your back with your hips, knees and ankles bent at a 90° angle. Place your extended arms at your side with your palms flat on the floor for support. Exhale as you drive your knees up toward your head, lifting your butt off the floor. Pause, and then slowly lower your butt back to the floor, returning your hips back to a 90° bend.

Knee-to-chest Leg Extensions



Lying on your back with your hips, knees and ankles bent at 90°, place your extended arms at your sides with palms flat on the floor for support. Slowly breathe out as you extend your legs to a 45° angle from the floor. Pause, and then breathe in as you bring your legs back to the start position. Caution: Your low back must remain flat at all times during this exercise. If you are unable to keep your back flat, aim your legs at a higher angle from the floor.

Leg Lift



When you have mastered the knee-to-chest, you can look into this progression in leg lifts. Begin by lying on your back with your extended arms at your sides and palms flat on the floor for support. Extend your legs to the ceiling. Slowly lower your legs to 45° while breathing in. Pause, and then lift your legs back up to the ceiling as you breathe out. When you are able to handle this exercise without the low back arching off the floor, you may lower your legs closer to the ground. Caution: In the event your low back pops up off the floor, slow down your pace and keep your legs pointed up further.

Flutters



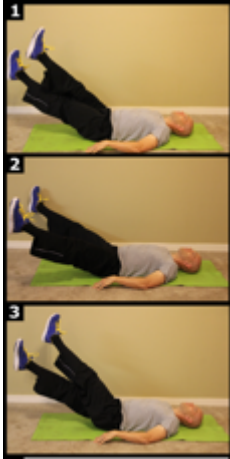
Flutters are essentially performing an alternating leg lift. Begin by lying on your back with your extended arms at your sides and palms flat on the floor for support. Extend your legs to the ceiling. Slowly lower one leg to 45° while keeping the other pointed at the ceiling. Match your pace with your breathing, so that as you lower one leg, you breathe in and as you raise that same leg, you breathe out.

Pumpers



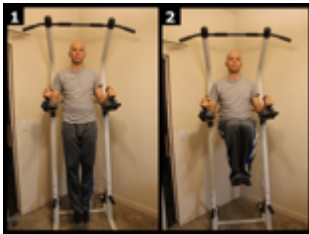
Lying flat on your back, legs together at a 45° angle from the floor with your feet pointed away from your body, you will crunch your ribs up toward the ceiling. Keep your eyesight on the ceiling directly above you. Extend your arms at your sides and palms out and facing the floor. Pump your arms slowly up and down about 3-6 inches. For every 5 pumps, breathe in gently, and then breathe out slowly with another 5 pumps. When you can accomplish 100 repetitions, you are fast on your way to mastering this exercise.

Scissors



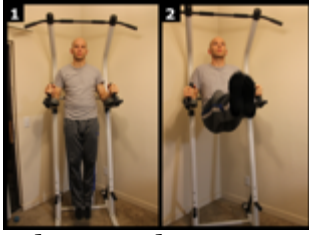
Lie flat on your back with your legs together at a 45° angle from the floor. Point your feet away from your body, and place your arms flat on the floor. Slowly cross your legs as you breathe out. Pause, and then uncross your legs while breathing in. The breathing can be switched for either movement since the steady breathing dictates a slower movement pattern for the best core development. When you can complete 50 repetitions in and out, you are fast becoming a master of this exercise.

Supported Knee Lift



When you have mastered the lying leg lifts, progress to a supported leg lift. However, I stress caution when choosing your piece of equipment. Begin with your arms extended at your sides, palms placed on your surface and posture upright in neutral alignment. Your legs begin extended below you. Breathe out as you drive your knees upward. Pause, and then tighten your midsection. Breathe in as you straighten your legs and extend them back to the floor.

Supported Leg Lift



When you have mastered the knee lifts, you may progress to leg lifts by extending your legs to hip level. Breathe out as you lift your legs, pause, and then tighten your midsection. Breathe in as you lower your legs back to the floor.

Hanging Knee Lift



When you have mastered the supported leg lifts, you may progress to a hanging leg lift. Begin with your arms extended above you. Grasp the bar, slightly bend your elbows and keep your posture upright. Your legs will begin extended below you. Breathe out as you drive your knees up. Pause, and then tighten your midsection. Breathe in as you extend your legs back to the floor.

Hanging Leg Lift



When you have mastered the knee lifts, you may progress to leg lifts by extending your legs to hip level. Breathe out as you lift your legs, pause, and then tighten your midsection. Breathe in as you lower your legs back to the floor. Repeat this movement for a set number of repetitions.

Toe Up



When you have mastered the hanging leg lifts, you may progress to toe ups. This movement requires decent flexibility in your legs for full range of motion. Begin by grabbing the bar with your arms extended overhead and a slight bend in your elbows. Your legs begin extended below you. Breathe out as you collapse you extend your legs up to the bar you are holding onto. Pause, and then tighten your midsection. Breathe in as you bring your legs back toward the floor. Caution: This is an advanced exercise and is not for beginners. If your grip is not good, you'll fall. Do not do this exercise if your legs are tight or inflexible.

Planks



Begin with your legs separated shoulder-width apart and your toes placed into the ground for support. Now, place your forearms flat on the floor with your elbows bent at 90°. You should be straight from ankle to shoulders and keep your head in a neutral position with your eye sight set on your hands. Tighten your midsection and glutes then hold the position. Try breathing normally. It's all right if your body shakes a little. As long as it is not painful, it is not detrimental. Caution: Don't let your head droop, butt come up or pelvis slump down. If you find planks to be too hard, begin by supporting at the knees instead of the toes. However, if planks are too easy, bring your feet together or even raise one leg up.

Side Planks



With your legs together, lie on your left side with your left elbow bent a 90° angle and forearm placed away from you onto the floor. Pop your right hip up to the ceiling while keeping your left ribs faced to the ground. Point your extended right arm toward the ceiling. Your vision should be directly in front of you and not at the ground. Keep your posture in neutral alignment, straight from your ankles to your shoulders. Breathe naturally and keep your body rigid in this position. After a set time, flip over and repeat the same amount of time on the other side. Caution: Watch out for your hips dropping too close or too far from the floor, your head slumping or your shoulders rolling forward. Side planks can be difficult and you should not set your expectations based on your victories from traditional planks. In the event side planks are too difficult, try splitting your stance with your upper leg placed slightly behind your bottom leg for stability. Also, you can put your free hand on your hip or on the floor in front of you.

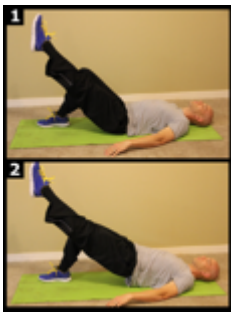
Bridge



Lie flat on the floor with your arms extended at your sides and palms flat on the floor for stability. Bend your knees, place your feet flat on the floor and separate your legs shoulder-width apart. Pop your pelvis up to the ceiling and hold. Breathe naturally. Focus on keeping your shoulders to knees at a 45° angle from the floor. Squeeze your glutes, tighten your abs, and then hold. When a set time is complete, slowly allow your butt to come back to the floor.

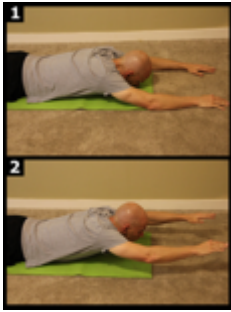
A great progression of this exercise is to incorporate movement. Pop your pelvis up, squeeze your glutes, and tighten your abs. Breathe out through your mouth as you lift your butt. Allow your butt to come back to the ground as you breathe in deeply. Touch the floor, and then repeat the movement sequence. A moving bridge is similar to doing crunches for your back side.

Single-leg Bridge



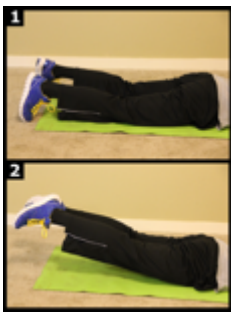
Lie flat on the floor with your arms extended at your sides and palms flat on the floor for stability. Bend your knees, place your feet flat on the floor and separate your legs shoulder-width apart. Pop your pelvis up to the ceiling and hold. Then, with both thighs kept in alignment, extend one leg out while pointing that toe away from the body. Breathe naturally. Focus on keeping your shoulders to knees at a 45° angle from the floor. Squeeze your glutes, tighten your abs, and then hold. When a set time is complete, slowly lower your butt to the ground. Complete the same amount of time on the opposite side.

Upper Superman



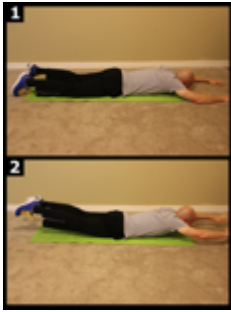
Lie flat on your stomach with your arms extended above your head, palms placed flat on the ground. Your legs should be extended below you with your toes pointed away from your body. Squeeze your glutes for support and protection as you raise your torso from the floor. Look up as you pull your ribs off the floor and extend your arms to the ceiling. Breathe out as you exert yourself to your highest position. Pause, and then slowly lower your ribs to the floor while breathing in.

Lower Superman



Lie flat on your stomach with your arms extended above your head, and palms placed flat on the ground. Your legs should be extended below you with your toes pointed away from your body. Squeeze your glutes for support and protection as you raise your hips from the floor. Keep both legs together as you aim to lift your thighs from the floor. Breathe out as you exert yourself to your highest position. Pause, and then slowly lower your thighs to the floor while breathing in deeply.

Total Body Superman



Lie flat on your stomach with your arms extended above your head, palms placed flat on the ground. Your legs should be extended below you with your toes pointed away from your body. Squeeze your glutes for support and protection as you raise your torso and hips from the floor. Keep both legs together as you aim to lift your thighs from the floor while arching your upper body to the ceiling. Breathe out as you exert yourself to your highest position. Pause, and then slowly lower your ribs and thighs to the floor while breathing in deeply.

Quadruped



Position yourself onto all fours with your knees and palms placed on the floor. Your hips, knees and ankles are bent at 90° angles and your posture should remain neutral throughout the entire exercise. Raise your extended left arm to point above your head while kicking your right leg back and up. Both arm and leg should be parallel to the floor while maintaining the same positioning with your body. Squeeze your glutes, tighten your abs and breathe out as you simultaneously raise opposing appendages. Pause at the top and slowly return to the starting position. Repeat the movement on the opposite arm and leg. Remain steady, slow and pretend like you are balancing a glass of water on your mid-back. Stay level and maintain a neutral spine throughout this exercise. Caution: Do not allow your head to slump or move your supporting hip with each repetition.

Push Exercises

Push-up



Placement: Lie flat on the ground with your feet separated shoulder-width apart and your hands placed flat on the floor just outside of your shoulders. Keep your elbows fully bent. Your body should not change from this straightened position.



Place your toes on the ground while keeping your base of your feet perpendicular to the floor. Tighten your midsection, squeeze your butt and keep your legs rigid. Take a deep breath in through the nose, then press through the palms of your hands and extend your arms. When you press off the floor, you should be breathing out, forcefully expelling the air. Pause at this position, and then bend at the elbows 90° while taking a deep breath in through the nose. Pause while holding your body in a rigid form with elbows bent 90° , midsection kept tight, glutes squeezed and you are straight from ankles to shoulders.

When performing push-ups:

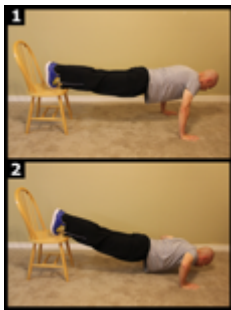
- Don't let your head lead the way
- Don't allow your butt to lead the way as you press up
- Don't let your hands go above the shoulders
- Don't just bend your elbows slightly and push back up too soon
- Don't bang your chest against the floor

Decline Push-ups



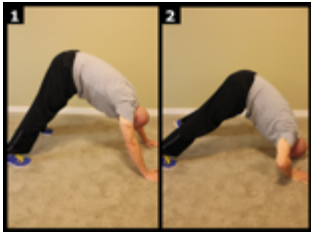
A sturdy chair, bench (braced against a wall) or a wall can be used for decline push-ups. The greater the angle from the floor, the easier the exercise becomes. Begin with the feet together, toes into the ground and the soles at an angle from the floor. Your body should stay straight from ankles to shoulders while maintaining neutral spinal alignment. Place your hands flat with your arms fully extended. Breathe in as you allow your elbows to bend and gradually descend. Stop when your elbows are bent 90°. Tighten your midsection and forcefully exhale through your mouth as you press your weight through the palms of your hands to extend your arms.

ADVANCED: Incline Push-ups



Use a sturdy and reliable piece of equipment for placing your feet onto while allowing your upper body to maintain close contact with the floor. Begin with your feet placed together on the raised support surface. Keep your body straight from ankle to shoulder with your arms extended and your palms placed on the floor. Your hands should be in line with the outside of your shoulders. Bend your elbows 90°, allowing your chest to lead the way to the floor. Press through the palms of your hands, and fully extend your arms. Breathe in while going down and exhale out while coming up.

ADVANCED: Pike Push-ups



Begin at a standing position with your feet separated shoulder-width apart. Bend at the hips, slightly raise your heels and place your hands just outside the shoulders and flat on the floor. You may have to adjust your hands and feet placement depending on how this feels to you. To make this exercise harder, bring your hands and feet closer together. And, for an easier option, separate your hands and feet. Your butt should be directly up in the air with your legs and torso each at a 45° angle from the floor, and the hips are bent at a perfect right angle. Bend at the elbow about 90° or until the top of your head comes in contact with the floor. Breathe in while you go down. Pause, then press your weight into your hands and extend your arms while forcefully breathing out through the mouth as you come up.

EXPERT: Hindu Push-ups



Hindu push-ups are a bit of an anomaly in the exercise world as many people try to perform them, but few master the form. It has been known by many names including downward-dog push-ups and dive bombers, but the movement is all the same nonetheless. Show caution with Hindu Push-ups and take it slow at first.

Begin at a standing position with your feet separated shoulder-width apart. Bend at the hips, slightly raise your heels and place your hands just outside the shoulders and flat on the floor. You may have to adjust your hands and feet placement depending on how this movement feels to you. To make the exercise tougher, bring your hands and feet

closer together and for more ease, separate your hands and feet. You should be looking directly towards your feet. Now comes the hard part and the following steps may have to be read and absorbed a few times before performing. Place an imaginary line that is parallel to the floor and 2 inches away from the back of your neck. Dive your body downward, bending your elbows about 90° while arching your body under the imaginary line. Allow your heels to slowly lift from the floor until the soles of your feet are perpendicular to the floor. Breathe in during your descent. Pop up your chest and extend your arms. Your pelvis should be close to the floor, but not touching. Your head and neck will arch upward looking toward the ceiling with your arms fully extended. Follow the next steps according to your physical aptitude.

Beginning option: Tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you pop your hips back up toward the ceiling to return to the beginning position. You should be again looking at your feet and ready for another repetition.

Advanced option: Tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you reverse your order of movements. Slide yourself below the imaginary line and reverse arch your body back to the start position. You should be again looking at your feet and ready for another repetition.

Hand Positioning

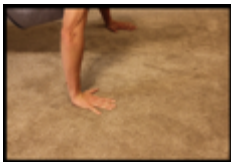
The instructions in the many different push-ups are very specific on hand and foot placement. However, a variety of hand placements is great for changing up your routine. Master the basics for the first 30-60 days of exercising. Once you have found you can handle the fundamentals you can try different hand positions. You may find it more challenging for some of the push-ups yet less complicated for others.

Close Position



This is an excellent way to overload the triceps, the back of the upper arm. For the best results, tuck your elbows toward your ribs.

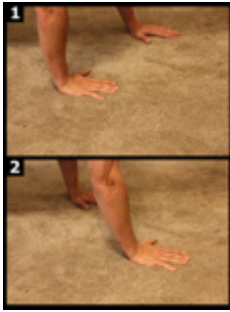
Wide Position



This position incorporates more chest and shoulder development. Place your hands further out from your shoulders and not just below your shoulders as with the traditional push-ups. Experiment with different widths to see how your body responds best. The best positioning will require equal hand separation from the shoulder.

Be cautious with this movement, due to the potential of overloading or overworking the shoulder complex which can lead to injury in the rotator cuff (the entire shoulder area that is responsible for full arm rotation). Wide position on Hindu push-ups will be very hard as opposed to the normal movement. If an exercise requires many cues, adding another task makes it even harder.

Alternate Position



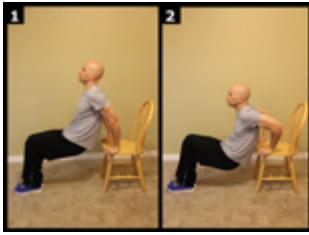
This is another way to change up your routine by placing one hand higher than the other hand. A good example of the hand placement is to get into a push-up position and before starting, bring one hand 3 inches higher than the other hand. Though performing this movement is awkward at first, you will find it affects your body differently than the traditional form. Remember to switch your hand positioning and perform equal repetitions.

Plank Push-ups



Begin this exercise with the soles of your feet perpendicular to the floor and toes supporting your body up. Bend your elbows 90° below your shoulders and place your forearms flat on the floor with both hands joined in the middle. Keep your spine in neutral alignment so that you are straight from ankle to shoulder. Carefully shift your weight to your right side, extend your left arm and place your left hand on the ground. Then shift your weight to your left side, extend your right arm and place your right hand on the ground. Perform this while keeping your body rigid in neutral alignment. Reverse your movement, by shifting your weight to your right, bend your left elbow, and place your left forearm flat on the floor. Then shift your weight to the left, bend your right elbow, and place your right forearm on the floor. Repeat this action up and down. Plank push-ups may become more and more difficult as you progress with each repetition, so try to breathe normally.

Supported Dips



Choose something reliable such as a weight bench or a sturdy chair. Sit down on the surface with your arms extended and your palms flat on the edge of the surface. Have your fingers grip the surface edge. Keeping a 90° bend in your hips, walk your butt away from the surface and support yourself with your hands. Your shoulder blades should be pinched back, keep your chin up and knees bent at 90°. Slowly bend your elbows back until they come to a 90° bend. Breathe in during your descent. Pause then press your weight through your palms and extend your elbows, bringing your body back up to the original position. Before pressing up, tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you exert yourself. Repeat this motion. Discomfort in the shoulders is normal, however, discontinue if you have any pain. Pain is indicative of bad form or your body is unable to handle this movement.

Pull Exercises

Inverted Rows



Pull-specific movements require a small degree of searching for the right place and equipment. By no means am I saying you should be camping out at playgrounds or having to invest in gym memberships to get the quality results. However, if you are resilient, resourceful and results-driven, you can avoid making excuses and create your greatest fitness endeavors.

Finding the right equipment for inverted rows may take a bit longer since what you are searching for is a bar about hip height. You will begin with your chest directly below the bar just below armpit level with your torso parallel to the ground. Keep your knees bent at a 90° level and feet together and flat on the floor. Beginning with your arms extended, tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you pull your chest up to meet the bar. Your elbows are collapsed when you have reached the top of your repetition, pause, then breathe in as you slowly open your elbows and allow your torso to return to the ground.

Inverted rows are excellent for starting in pull-specific motions. Though they aren't easy, they are certainly a great preface to building to more advanced movements. With consistent application of inverted rows, you can find many more pulling movements easier.

Pull-Ups



Choosing your equipment may be a bit more difficult, but if you have a playground or park nearby, rest assured you can perform pull-ups. Be sure the equipment you choose is sturdy and stable. I have used monkey bars previously with great success. Stand below your equipment and reach up, grabbing the bar with both palms faced away from your body. Give yourself a small boost by gently hopping up. Keep your hips straight, bend your knees back 90° and cross your ankles over each other. Tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you pull your chest up to the bar. Collapse your elbows, keep your chin up and pause when you have pulled your body all the way up to meet your chest to the bar. Breathe out as you slowly open your elbows and allow your body to descend. Stop once the arms are extended and keep your shoulder blades pinched back the entire exercise. Repeat this motion for a set number of repetitions.

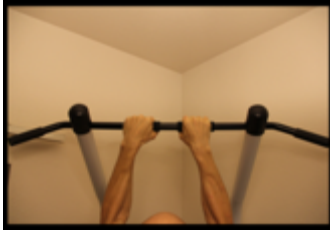
Isometric Pull-ups

Most beginners struggle with pull-ups at first. Remember the quality that you train matters most, not the number of repetitions. When you hold in one position while putting the muscles into a contracted or working state, this is called isometrics. Despite the lack of forward movement, by keeping your muscles contracted, you are developing strength.

In due time, your body adapts to isometric pull-ups when done for seconds at a time and repeated. Eventually, you will gain some upward movement and progression. Take every last millimeter as a victory, because one day your chest will meet the bar and you will be successful in doing a pull-up.

By the way, isometric pull-ups are for everyone involved regardless of fitness levels. Incorporate this into your routine by holding in an isometric position (i.e. closed elbow, partially-open elbow or fully open elbow) for 10-30 seconds at a time. Be sure to breathe normally. Isometrics can be taxing on your blood pressure if you are not careful about breathing according to your work rate. If you feel at all light-headed, sit down, pop your posture up, keep your chin up and breathe deeply. Wait until this light-headed feeling subsides before standing, moving or progressing in your current routine.

Inside Grip Pull-ups



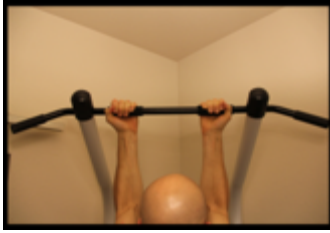
Much like the push-ups, when changing hand placement you can manipulate how and where the body is affected. Depending on your athletic level and genetic predisposition, each grip will come to you with various difficulties. For instance, grab the pull-up bar with your hands close together. With an inside, or close, grip you will find this effects your biceps (upper front of arm) while still emphasizing great back and core development.

Outside Grip Pull-ups



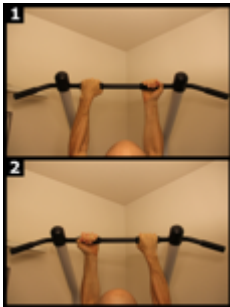
Grabbing an outside, or wide, grip will bring more emphasis to the upper back development. You may find this to be a bit more taxing doing it this way because it requires the larger back muscles to perform

Underhand Grip Pull-ups



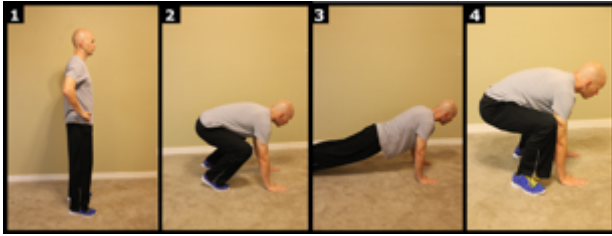
Now that you've learned how to pull-up in the standard overhand grip try out an underhand grip where your palms will face toward you while grasping the bar. This type of grip will call upon more forearm strength and even improve grip strength. I stress caution with this type of grip as this may be a bit much if you aren't quite conditioned for this type of grip. If your body is not ready for it, you may find a great deal of discomfort or even cramping in the forearms. Take your time getting to this type of grip and you may want to incorporate the underhand grip with your inverted rows before your pull-ups.

Mixed Grips Pull-ups



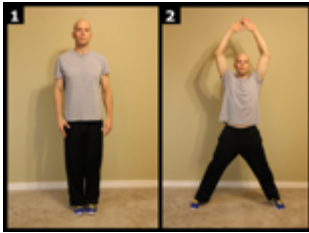
Once you have mastered both hand grips and are looking for a little variety in your exercise, incorporate a mixed grip of one underhand and one overhand grip. As with the Alternate Hand Placement Push-ups, be sure to equally train in both grips to avoid any imbalances. A great way to use mixed grips is to have the bar perpendicular to your body, directly overhead. Grasp the bar in a mixed grip position, pop up from the ground, and bend your knees while keeping your hips straight. Tighten your midsection and forcefully breathe out as you pull one shoulder to the bar while collapsing your elbows. Pause, then slowly release down as you breathe in. Into the next repetition, pull up to the opposite shoulder. Alternate the repetitions between your shoulders. This movement, much like the close grip pull-up is great in upper arm/bicep development.

Squat Thrusts



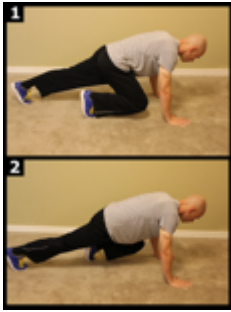
Choose a large, clear area for performing squat thrusts. Start from a standing position with your hands on your hips, posture upright with your shoulder blades pinched back, chin up and your feet separated shoulder-width apart. Squat down and reach your hands in front of your knees, placing your palms directly on the floor. Support your upper body weight on your palms as you pop your feet off the floor and extend your legs directly behind you. At this point, you should be in a push-up position. Explode your feet up again, drive your knees toward your chest and come back to the squatted position with your palms still flat on the floor. Squat up and return to the start position.

Jump Jacks



Jump up, separate your feet more than shoulder-width apart while your extended arms rotate from your sides to overhead. Jump again, bringing your feet back together and return your extended arms to your sides.

Mountain Climbers



Begin with your palms placed shoulder-width apart on the floor. Keep your body straightened out and your toes placed on the floor for support. You should be straight from ankles to shoulders and your gaze should be directed at the floor between your palms. Bounce your feet slightly off the ground, drive one knee up toward the chest, and land both feet on the ground. Again, bounce your feet up, extend your forward leg back while driving your other knee up toward the chest and land both feet on the ground. Your midsection should remain tight and rigid and avoid collapsing or extending at your hips while keeping your spinal alignment neutral throughout the movement.

Bounce & Reach



Use a wall and pick a spot just out of reach and bounce towards it. Stand up with your arms raised overhead, your feet separated and posture neutral. Bounce on the balls of your feet as you try to reach the highest spot on the wall. Rapidly repeat this movement. If you are not coordinated enough to jump rope, this is a good alternative.

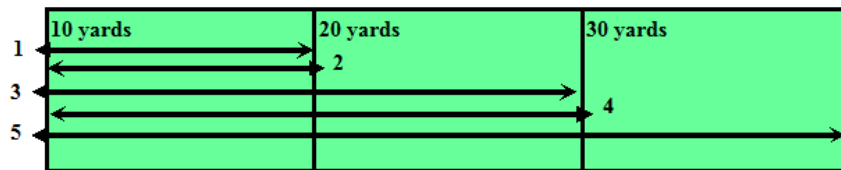
Sprints



Sprinting consists of using a short distance for running at your fastest speed possible. You will explode off one foot, then another while your arms move in a locomotive fashion. Pump both legs and arms in succession and in coordination with each other. Allow yourself a little stopping room beyond 50-100 yards used for sprinting.

Shuttle Runs

Shuttle runs will require a 30-yard space that is marked off by a start position and 3 separate 10-yard increments. I prefer cones. However, any object that can remain unmoved during this exercise will do. Short bursts of sprinting are used in this exercise as you dash from start position to the 10-yard position and back. Then race from the start position to the 20-yard position and back. Lastly, burst from the start position to the 30-yard position and back. Rest, and then repeat the sequence. Touch each marked position or marker to indicate completion of each station sprint. When you have mastered this exercise, increase your distance or add 2-3 more stations of 10 yards each. See the diagram below for the proper steps in shuttle runs, numbered in sequential order.



High Knee Jog in Place



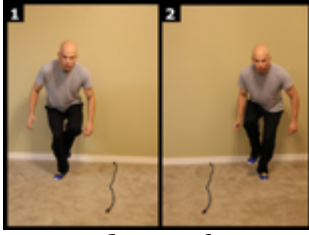
Just as the title of the exercise indicates, you will be jogging in place, however, emphasize your jog with very high knee lifts. Drive your knee above your belt line while you keep your posture upright, draw in your belly, and tighten your midsection. If you wish to quickly elevate your heart rate, extend your arms overhead.

Side to Side Shuffles



Allow yourself about 10-30 yards width. Stay in a partial-squatted stance with your butt low. Bend your elbows and extend your arms in front of you. Separate your feet shoulder-width apart, and then bring your right foot to meet your left foot, push off your left foot moving it to your left side. Your left foot should be exactly planted shoulder-width apart and repeat the steps over until you have reached the finish line. Then repeat the steps moving all the way to the end of your space on the right. This exercise should be explosive and fast-paced. Keep your butt low at all times with your chin up and posture proud.

Skaters



Get a clutter-free space that is about 6 feet wide. Begin with elbows bent and arms slightly in front of you. You will explode up and over to your left side on your left foot while raising your right foot off the ground with the right knee slightly bent. Without rest, hop the same distance to the right onto your right foot while lifting your left knee and foot.

The Workout Programs

Here are a few terms you should learn:

1. Sets - an entire attempt or repeated attempt at one specific exercise
2. Repetitions - the number of times an exercise is repeated within a set
3. Circuit - a sequence of exercise sets

Start with this simple test workout to see how well you perform. Complete each exercise for 1 minute with little to no rest. The first time doing this routine, count the number of reps for each set. Then write how many you did in your journal with the date you completed it. Repeat this process after one month of consistent workouts and use this to measure your progress. You should see marked improvements after 30 days of practice. Come back to this test workout as frequently as you like to see how well you have improved.

The Test Workout

Requires: 15 minutes, clock/stopwatch

First set: Squats

Second set: Push-ups

Third set: Crunches

Repeat these sets 5 times for 1 minute each, totaling 15 minutes. If you feel tired, or otherwise unable to complete each exercise with proper form, please rest. Remember to do this exercise routine to the best of your abilities, so make this routine a competition with yourself. Try your best to beat the clock and challenge yourself to a personal best with each workout. Be honest with yourself and push hard every time.

Bodyweight Exercise Workouts

Now that you have plenty of exercises to get you started let's piece them together for some great workouts. Ideally, you need a well-rounded program with movements that uses all of your body in some capacity. Perform each exercise for 1 minute before moving onto the next. Ideally, the circuit should be done in 3 sets. Rest when you need to throughout the workout. Stick with this program for 30 days before making changes.

<p>Day 1</p> <p>Squats Push-up Crunches Jumping Jacks Isometric Pull-up with Close Grip</p>	<p>Day 5</p> <p>Sumo Squats Helicopters Incline Push-ups Dynamic Bridges Inverted Rows</p>
<p>Day 2</p> <p>Left Forward Lunges Left Side Bends Right Forward Lunges Left Side Bends Inverted Rows</p>	<p>Day 6</p> <p>Step-ups Leg Lifts Side Step-ups Push-up Planks Total Body Superman</p>
<p>Day 3</p> <p>Close Foot Squats Decline Push-up Reverse Crunches Isometric Pull-up Front & Back Bends</p>	<p>Day 7</p> <p>Squats Supported Dips Side-to-side crunches Walking Lunges Inverted Rows</p>
<p>Day 4</p> <p>Left Lateral Lunges Left Knee ups Right Lateral Lunges Right Knee ups Push-ups</p>	

Lying Figure-4 Glutes



Lie on your back on the floor, your knees bent and feet placed on the floor. Keep your head rested on the floor at all times. Lift your left foot off the floor; bend at the hip more as you turn your outer left ankle to rest on your right thigh just 2 inches above the knee. If you find this slightly uncomfortable, stay in this position, and press gently on the inside of your left knee. If you have excessively tight hips, sit up and support yourself on your elbows. Otherwise, grab the back of your right thigh and bring it in toward your chest. Simultaneously, push your elbow into your left inner thigh, guiding it away from your body. Hold this position, then slowly release. Duplicate the same movements on your right side.

Lying Knee Hug



Lie on your back on the floor, your knees bent and feet placed on the floor. Keep your head rested on the floor at all times. Slowly lift your knees toward your chest and collapse your legs completely at the hips and knees. Reach around your knees at the shin level and hug them toward your body. Avoid lifting your head. Hold this position while breathing deeply and deliberately. Gradually return to the start position.

Lying Cross Leg Glutes



Lie on your back on the floor, your knees bent and feet placed on the floor. Keep your head rested on the floor at all times with your arms extended directly out to your sides and palms placed on the floor. Slowly lift your left foot off the floor then cross the left leg over the right leg, so that the left foot is just outside the right calf. Gently and gradually guide your left leg to the right with your right leg until the left leg touches the floor on the right. Hold this position, and then return to the start. Repeat the process with the right side.

Hip 1



Place your left knee on the ground with the left foot providing balance and support. Put your right foot flat on the floor with your knee and hip bent at 90°. Keep neutral posture at all times throughout this stretch. Move your right foot further away from your left knee, allowing more separation at the groin area. Now, visualize your belt line as the top rim of a bucket. Slowly lift the front rim of the bucket up while the back rim of the bucket drops back. You should feel a stretch in the front of the left hip. Hold this position, breathing deeply and deliberately. Release, then switch your legs and repeat on the right side.

Hip 2



One progression that includes the outer hips and obliques (your lateral abs just below the ribs) is a small variation in movement. Place your left knee on the ground with the left foot providing balance and support. Put your right foot flat on the floor with your knee and hip bent at 90°. Keep your posture neutral at all times throughout this stretch. Begin to move your right foot further away from your left knee, allowing more separation at the groin area. Turn your trunk away from the left side, placing your left elbow on the outside of the right knee and have your right arm brace for support on the right outer thigh. Now, visualize your belt line as the top rim of a bucket. Slowly lift the front rim of the “bucket” up while allowing the back rim of the “bucket” to drop back. You should feel a stretch in the front of the left hip. Hold this position, breathing deeply and deliberately. Relax, and then switch legs.

Hip 3



Another great progression that includes a deeper anterior hip and oblique stretch is using a more advanced variation of this movement. Place your left knee on the ground with the left foot providing balance and support. Put your right foot flat on the floor with your knee and hip bent at 90°. Keep your posture neutral at all times throughout this stretch. Begin to move your right foot further away from your left knee, allowing more separation at the groin area. Extend your left arm toward the ceiling. Now, visualize your belt line as the top rim of a bucket. Slowly lift the front rim of the “bucket” up while allowing the back rim of the “bucket” to drop back. With your right hand braced on your right knee for support and balance, begin to bend your trunk away from your left side. The stretch will be a lot deeper and bit more intense than the first or second variation. You should feel a stretch in the front of the left hip and into the left oblique (side abdominal area just below the ribs). Hold this position, breathing deeply and deliberately. Relax and allow your left arm to come down, and then switch legs.

Standing Hip 1



From a standing position, separate your stance shoulder-width apart and stagger your feet with one foot further ahead of the other. Place your hands on your hips, pinch your shoulder blades back and stand up straight. Slowly bend the front knee and keep the back knee straight with the rear heel anchored into the floor. Equal weight should be distributed between the feet with an emphasis on weight to each heel. Visualize your belt line like a rim of a bucket and slowly tilt the “bucket” backward until you feel a pull in the front of the hip of the rear leg. Hold this position, release the stretch then slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time. Switch legs and repeat the stretch on the opposite leg.

Standing Hip 2



Once you have bent your front leg and kept your back leg straight, turn your torso away from the rear-positioned leg and place both hands on the outer hip of the lead leg. Visualize your belt line like a rim of a bucket and slowly tilt the “bucket” backward until you feel a pull in the front of the hip of the rear leg. Hold this position, release the stretch then slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time. Switch your legs and repeat the stretch on the opposite leg.

Standing Hip 3



Once you have bent your front leg and kept your back leg straight, on the side of the rear-positioned leg extend your arm toward the ceiling. Visualize your belt line like a rim of a bucket and slowly tilt the bucket backward until you feel a pull in the front of the hip on the rear leg while stretching the oblique on that side, too. Hold this position, release the stretch then slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time. Switch your legs and repeat the stretch on the opposite leg.

Cat/Dog



Come down to the floor so that both knees are placed on the floor hip-width apart with your toes set on the floor for support directly behind your knees. Bend 90° at the hips and place your palms directly below your shoulders into the floor for support. Keep your posture in a neutral position with your eye contact on your thumbs as your start and finish placement. Take a deep breath in through the nose as you arch your back up toward the ceiling and your belly button away from the ground while allowing your eyesight to turn to your knees. Upon full inhalation, your back should be at the highest position it can go while your palms and knees maintain contact with the floor. Now, breathe out, arch your spine away from the ceiling, press your belly button towards the floor and lift your head. Repeat this movement for a total of 3 or more repetitions.

Pigeon Pose



Come to a kneeling position on a soft mat placed on the floor. Place your extended arms directly below your shoulders with your palms firmly resting on the floor for support. Bring your bent left knee further forward as you extend your right leg all the way behind until your knee and hip are straight, flattening your right thigh into the ground. Very carefully and slowly guide your left calf across your body on the floor until your outer left ankle is resting on the floor just in front of your right hip. Your outer left hip and thigh should begin to slowly lower toward the ground.

Advanced Pigeon Position 1

Now that you've completed the directions above, begin to bring your torso to the ground. Your chest and abdomen should come down toward your left thigh (or lead leg) while your extended arms outstretch above your head. Take deliberate, deep breaths as you press your chest into the floor. You should feel a deep stretch in the left leg (lead leg) around the outer hip and hamstring (back of thigh). Hold this position then slowly release the position by pressing your palms into the ground, extending your arms to raise your body. Slowly bring your legs out of position then switch your legs to stretch the opposite side equally.

Advanced Pigeon Position 2

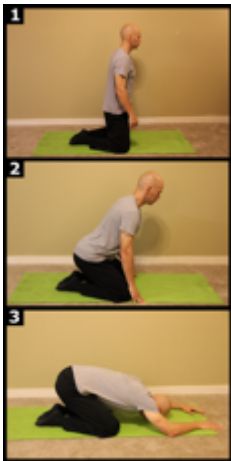
Begin by completing the first steps of the Pigeon Position, but this time press your palms into the ground, pop your chest up and chin up to the ceiling. Press your inner thigh toward the ground. This stretches the front right hip and both inner thighs. Breathe deeply. Hold this position, then release your pressure and slowly come to a regular seated position. Switch sides and repeat.

Cobra Pose



Lie flat on the floor, stomach down. Place your forearms and palms flat on the floor, with your elbows bent directly below your shoulders. Extend your arms, pressing your palms into the floor while lifting your chest and stomach from the floor. As your back begins to arch away from the floor, raise your chin and look up until your arms are fully extended. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth as you focus on relaxing your anterior hips and spine. Hold this position, slowly release and repeat the movement.

Child Pose



Kneel down on the floor, and place your glutes on your heels. Slowly bring your stomach to your thighs, your chest to the floor and extend your arms out above your head. Breathe deeply and deliberately as this loosens your legs, low back and shoulders. Hold the position, come up slowly.

Calf



Stand directly facing a wall about 1 foot away. Place the palms of your hands into the wall with your arms slightly extended. Separate your stance about shoulder-width apart. Bring one foot closer to the wall with a slight bend in that knee. The back leg should be fully extended. You should feel a good stretch in the calf area. If you don't feel a stretch, separate your feet more or step further away from the wall. Hold this position, bend your knees, relieving the stretch, then extend the legs again for one more stretch. Switch your stance and stretch the other side equally.

Deep Calf



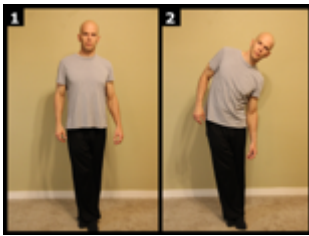
Stand directly facing a wall about 1 foot away. Place the palms of your hands into the wall with your arms slightly extended. Separate your stance about shoulder-width apart. Bring one foot closer to the wall with a slight bend in that knee. Bring the back foot just behind the heel of the front leg. Bend both knees, sinking into the heels of both legs while lifting both big toes. You should feel a good stretch in the calf area (just above the heel and below the knee) of the back leg. If you don't feel a stretch, separate your feet more or step further away from the wall. Hold this position, straighten your knees, relieving the tension, and then bend the knees again for one more stretch. Switch your stance and train the other side.

Bent Hamstring



From a standing position and feet slightly separated, bring one foot further out from the other. Keep the front leg straight; bend at the waist and knee of the rear leg while supporting yourself with both hands on the back leg. The further you drop your butt down, the deeper the stretch will be felt on the hamstring (back of the thigh) of the front leg. Hold this position, release the stretch by standing up straight and slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time. Switch your legs and repeat the stretch the opposite leg.

Cross-Legged Glute



From a standing position, bring one leg to cross over the other and place the foot of the front leg just outside the ankle of the rear leg. Bend your torso to the side away from the lead leg. Hold this position, release the stretch then slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time. Switch your legs and repeat the stretch the opposite leg. For a deeper stretch, extend the arm toward the ceiling and bend your torso away from the lead leg.

Chest, Shoulder & Neck 1



Stand with one side faced just one foot from a wall. Keep your posture upright at all times. On the side closest to the wall place your elbow and forearm on the wall just outside of your shoulder. With the foot nearest the wall, step forward while keeping the heel of the back leg firmly planted. Pinch your shoulder blades back and turn your torso slightly away from the wall. You should feel a deep stretch in the pectoral and shoulder area closest the wall. Hold this position, release the stretch by stepping back then slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time. Change your direction and repeat on the opposite side. For a deeper stretch, turn your head away from the wall.

Chest, Shoulder & Neck 2



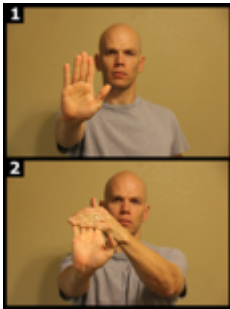
From an upright position with your shoulder blades pinched back and arms at your sides, reach one arm behind your back, bend that elbow and grab the other arm at the elbow. Tilt your head away from the rear-positioned arm. You should feel a full stretch in the shoulder and neck area of the rear-positioned arm. Hold this position, release the stretch then slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time. Switch arms and repeat on the opposite side.

Chest, Shoulder & Neck 3



Find a trustworthy and sturdy doorway for this stretch. Step just 1-2 feet behind the door jam, place your hands on the doorway just outside of the shoulders then lean your torso forward while keeping your heels anchored into the floor. Lift your chin up and breathe deliberately. Hold this position, release the stretch by stepping forward then slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time.

Wrist & Forearm



Extend one arm directly in front of the shoulder with the palm faced away from the body and the fingers pointed toward the ceiling. With your opposite hand, grasp and pull the fingertips back toward your shoulder. Hold this position, and then release the stretch. Slowly ease into the position again for the same amount of time. Repeat on the opposite side.

My Gratitude & Contact Info

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Thank you, again! I hope to hear from you and wish you the best.

-Dale

This book is dedicated to my loving wife, Kelli, my supportive family & friends, Colleen Schlea and to the memory of Fraysher Ferguson.

About The Author



My name is Dale Lewis Roberts and I'm an American Council on Exercise Personal Trainer, Certified, with an ACE Specialty Certification in Senior Fitness. Since beginning my personal training career in 2006, I have earned numerous certifications in personal training, yoga, nutritional coaching, among others. I have worked with hundreds of clients with a variety of health & fitness goals.

While my greatest passions are health & fitness, writing and reading, I also love to spend time traveling with my wife, watching pro wrestling and playing guitar. I currently reside in Phoenix, Arizona, with my wife, Kelli, and our rescue cat, Izzie.

Subscribe to my blog at DaleLRoberts.com for all the latest posts on health and fitness tips. This is also one of the best ways to connect with me directly. Please, remember that whatever you do in life, make sure that you do what you love. Stay happy, healthy and strong!

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