

---

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED WITH CALISTHENICS

MASTER FUNDAMENTALS.

*How to Become Insanely Strong,  
Look like a Gymnast, and Develop  
All Round Fitness with Progressive  
Calisthenics*

- Get Step-By-Step, Proven System for Insane Strength, Mobility and Health
- Learn the Principles and Create your own Personalised Workout Routine
- Access the Mastery System which Tells you Exactly When and How to Progress
- BONUS: **PROGRESSION POSTER**



**CALISTHENICS**  
ACADEMY.co



**All rights reserved, Calisthenics Academy. Copyright © 2015**

## **Disclaimer**

The information in this book is not designed to take the place of professional medical advice. The information in this book has been provided for educational and entertainment purposes only.

This book has been compiled from sources deemed reliable and it is accurate to the best of the Author's knowledge; however, the Author cannot guarantee its accuracy or validity and cannot be held liable for any errors or omissions. Changes are periodically made to this book. You must consult with your doctor or get professional medical advice before using any of the suggested remedies, techniques, or information in this book.

Upon using the information contained in this book, you agree to hold harmless the Author from and against any damages, costs, and expenses, including any potential legal fees resulting from the application of any of the information provided in this guide. This disclaimer applies to any damages or injury caused by the use and application, whether directly or indirectly, of any advice or information presented, whether for breach of contract, tort, negligence, personal injury, criminal intent, or under any other cause of action.

You agree to accept all risks of using the information presented in this book. You are advised to consult a medical professional in order to ensure you are both able and healthy enough to use the methods presented in this book.

# Table of Contents

---

Preface.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Preface.....	2
Chapter 1 - So What Is Calisthenics, Really?.....	6
Calisthenics and Its Effects on You!.....	7
Why Is Calisthenics Important?.....	7
How Is Calisthenics Different?.....	8
Chapter 2 - Diet and Nutrition.....	12
Chapter 3 - Introduction to Progression.....	16
What is Progression? .....	16
Progressive Resistance.....	17
Methods of Progressing in Bodyweight Exercises .....	18
Deconstruction .....	19
Troubleshooting Progression .....	23
Where Should I Start? .....	24
When Should I Progress? .....	25
Chapter 4 - Get Ready to Build Inhuman Strength .....	27
Principles of Calisthenics.....	27
Rest and Recovery .....	29
Warm-up, Mobility, and Stretches .....	29
Warming Up.....	29
Mobility .....	30
Stretches.....	35
Movements over Muscles.....	43
Picking the Movements.....	44

The Foundation.....	45
<b>Chapter 5 - Inhuman Strength? There is a road to that.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Progressions .....	46
Pushing Exercises.....	47
Horizontal Pushing: One-Arm Push-up Progression .....	47
Vertical Pushing.....	79
Pulling Exercises .....	93
Horizontal Pulling: Row Progressions.....	93
Vertical Pulling—One-Arm Pull-Up.....	104
Leg Work .....	116
Pistol Squat Progressions .....	116
How to Build Leg Muscle with Squats: The Fastest Way to Get Huge Legs.....	130
Some Other Variations on the Squat.....	130
Core Work .....	131
Bridges.....	142
Bodyline Work (Optional) .....	149
<b>Chapter 6 - Building Your Greek God Physique Routine.....</b>	<b>153</b>
You Need a Plan.....	153
Rigid Routines versus Flexible Routines.....	154
Full-Body and Split-Routine Templates .....	154
Setting up Your Fitness Goal.....	155
Sets, Reps, and Hold Times.....	157
How to Build Strength.....	158
How to Gain Muscle Size (a.k.a. Hypertrophy) .....	159
How to Build (Muscular) Endurance.....	160
How to Train for Losing Body Fat .....	160
Components of Your Workout Routine .....	162
Warm-Up and Mobility: .....	162

Skill Work.....	162
Strength Work .....	163
Conditioning (Optional).....	163
Stretches.....	165
Workout Format Summary .....	166
Building Your Routine .....	167
What Is Your Goal? .....	167
Pick sets, reps, and schedule goal .....	167
Pick a Template.....	167
You Are Ready to Rock!.....	167
<b>Chapter 7—Training Programs.....</b>	<b>168</b>
1. Basic Routine.....	168
2. Minimalistic Routine.....	169
3. Fat Burner Routine .....	170
4. The 10-Minute Workout.....	171
5. Time to Get Ripped .....	172
<b>Chapter 9 - Final Thoughts .....</b>	<b>173</b>
Embrace Life .....	173

---

---

## Preface

---

### Hi, Human Strength Athlete!

I am so excited you are here and to join me on a journey of explosive strength and power.

You might be just starting out. You might be a veteran athlete looking to take your fitness to the next level. Whatever brought you to calisthenics training, I am excited for you, because what you are about to learn can change how you think about fitness, how you train, and most importantly, how you think about your entire life.

Not that long ago, I was in the same spot many of you are. For years, I weight-trained. I felt strong, and I looked big. But one day I was challenged by a friend to do a back lever, and I couldn't even get myself in the right position. Really? I didn't have the strength for that? A few years later, I suffered a nasty shoulder injury. I needed to find a way to recover from my injury while still training to gain strength. That was when I truly discovered calisthenics, the lost art of naturally gaining strength using only body weight, and the most effective training on.

I started watching street workouts and gymnastics and began following everybody who was doing this type of training. I saw people performing iron crosses, human flags, and one-arm push-ups and pull-ups. I was hooked.



## **I Wanted It So Badly**

This is what drew me to calisthenics in the first place. I wanted this kind of strength. I wanted this lean gymnast physique, this skill, strength, flexibility, and control. And I was even more amazed that it could all be achieved without buying a gym membership, touching a single weight, or taking supplements.

For years I was dedicated to weight lifting. I looked big, and I felt strong, but I realized that I couldn't do simple gymnastic movements because I lacked mobility and flexibility—I wasn't even able to hold my body in the air.

## **Develop Strength for Life**

I quickly learned how powerful this type of training is. It not only enables incredible strength gains, but also enables natural fat loss and creates that incredibly sexy, lean physique you've always dreamed of. It builds strength for life, protects your joints, conditions your nervous system, and enables you to develop functional fitness while working your flexibility, mobility, and body control.

This type of training is called calisthenics. Over 10 years ago, I got totally obsessed with it and began a journey not only to achieve this kind of strength, but also to help as many people as possible do the same.

I had just one problem: I had no idea how to get there.

It took years. I consumed all the information there was on calisthenics; I watched videos, followed trainers, and experimented. I trained harder than I ever had before.

But I struggled to reach my goals of doing stunts like the human flag, planche, and one-arm pushups and pull-ups. Videos and trainers who specialize in bodybuilding, not calisthenics, simply did not provide enough guidance to master such challenging stunts. I struggled without guidance to create an effective program for myself and to troubleshoot errors in my form. After a number of years, I am proud to say that I can finally accomplish all these stunts with ease. Now I am ready to share that knowledge with you.

## Progressive Calisthenics: Your Gateway to Inhuman Strength

Well-structured progressive calisthenics can give you insane strength gains, muscle growth, and fat loss while protecting your joints and conditioning your body—naturally.

Soon, calisthenics became so much more than just a training program for me. It became a way of life. I will teach you the rules and lessons I have learned over the years. You will learn how to set your own goals and how to work out, but there is just one thing I want you to keep in mind: we are each a work in progress. Be in the moment. There is no competition. Train hard, move, eat healthy food, and love life! Go get it!

### What Will You Learn from This Book?

- Learn the secret principles of **progression** that guarantee **incredible gains in strength and mass, improvement of skills, and increased fat loss** just by using your own bodyweight.
- Build an **amazing physique** while naturally conditioning your body into strength for life.
- Break free from any constraints. Workout **anywhere, anytime!** No Gym Needed.
- Get a proven step-by-step system for **mastering skills previously thought to be impossible** like the human flag, the planche, or a one armed pull-up.
- Learn how to create your own workouts to fit your needs and schedule.

### What is in the book?

This book includes over 170 exercises organised into progressive exercises for a number of fundamental movements. It will show you how to create a routine for your particular goal, how to adjust your nutrition intake, where to start, how to progress and how to troubleshoot if you find yourself plateauing.

- **Over 170 detailed exercises** organized into progressions with over 20 steps each
- Downloadable workout schedule, including detailed guidance on warm up, skills work, strength work and conditioning
- **Downloadable poster with all the progressions** for your wall
- Mental principles, philosophy and attitude to set you up for success
- **7 different workout routines** for your goal or lifestyle (strength, fat loss, mass, minimalistic lifestyle etc.)
- 3 hardly known secrets to calisthenics which will help you to achieve any skill level
- **All your questions** answered and everything you need in one place to get you started right away, regardless of your previous experience or fitness level.

I would love to hear your thoughts and feedback. You can reach me any time at [Jeffcowancc@gmail.com](mailto:Jeffcowancc@gmail.com)

Thank you—and *go get it!*

Jeff and BWTA Team



Thanks a lot for all the support. We will see you atop the bars! Stay Strong

*Jeff Cowan*

# Chapter 1 - So What Is Calisthenics, Really?

---

The Spartans were known for being the world's toughest and fiercest warriors. They brought fear to their enemy's eyes, as depicted in the film '300.' We forget these men didn't have gyms, steroids, weights, protein bars, or many of the other simple conveniences associated with modern-day gym culture.

Despite the lack of facilities, they had the ability to control their own bodies, to unleash power, to become the ultimate symbol of strength, to be unchallenged.

Do you know what their secret was?

They used their body's potential to build a better, stronger body day-by-day, month-by-month, for years. How did they do it?

They used calisthenics.

And they were not the only ones. Throughout previous centuries, calisthenics was used by Persians, Spartans, and Chinese warriors and monks. It is only recently that the raw versatility of your body has been displaced by gym memberships. Gyms, and all their equipment, only became accessible in the 1970s and 1980s. You can read more about the history of calisthenics [here](#).

## So what is Calisthenics?

Calisthenics is all about lifting your own body weight and it's one of the oldest forms of strength training. This type of exercise is also known as bodyweight strength training. Somewhat forgotten, it is now making a comeback in mainstream fitness, mostly because of its natural and minimalist approach.

In a world with millions of different workouts, contradictory studies, and information overload, being able to refer to just a few raw, natural principles and get incredible results is attractive.

Despite all the benefits of these routines and efforts to popularize it, calisthenics is still one of the most underappreciated strength training tools out there. The biggest force behind this, in my personal opinion, is the fitness industry's reliance on pushing new fads like selling supplements and the technique of making you feel bad about your body in order to sell personal training. It's also a consequence of the fact that we fail to appreciate the potential of our bodies, and getting stuck in the mindset that in order to increase strength, we need to lift heavy weights. This is something we have been conditioned to believe.

There are a number of different things hiding behind the definition of the word calisthenics. Just have a look at different definitions I have found.

But even a quick look at the meaning of *calisthenics* shows that our predecessors knew better. The word *calisthenics* comes from the Greek words "kalli," meaning "beautiful," and "sthenos," meaning "strength."

Calisthenics, in its basic form, has been kept alive through exercises given to weaklings and children or used as a warm-up before taking part in other physical activities. However, new-school calisthenics is emerging in a variety of places and taking interesting new forms, and you can see it being strongly exercised in pole dancing, gymnastics, martial arts, and street workouts.

## Calisthenics and Its Effects on You!

Generally speaking, calisthenics is a very effective way to develop raw strength, as it focuses on conditioning the entire body, supporting the nervous system, and developing balance, coordination, and muscular strength. Also, body-weight workouts regulate body-fat levels, support the back muscles (which helps to avoid major injury), and improves athletic ability. The physique of a bodyweight trainer is truly special; bodyweight enthusiasts develop a look that is fiercely conditioned and portrays not just physical strength, but a powerful inner strength as well.

Calisthenics, along with a proper progression, can get you places you haven't even imagined. And no matter what your goal is, whether it's gaining muscle mass or losing fat, it's all possible with calisthenics. But you need to keep the progressions going. By progression, I mean progressive resistance and volume. But I am getting ahead of myself here. Let's rewind for a second.

## Why Is Calisthenics Important?

*"If you cannot move your body and control it . . . then what business do you have moving other objects?"*

### I do Portal

I'm a personal trainer. I have an interest in all things related to fitness and the way the industry is going. I surf the web, watch the infomercials on TV, browse fitness magazines, and try to make sense of what I see and read, beyond all the hype and ridiculous sales pitches.

To the untrained eye, it looks like you'll never get fit and will never look good unless you hand in your hard-earned cash in exchange for a gym membership, a fancy DVD, or an over-priced eBook.

But the truth is, you *can* get fit. You can put on muscle without ever touching a dumbbell. You can have a strong core without a stability ball, and you can develop functional fitness without an overpriced suspension training system.

I'm not a purist; I don't want to advocate the superiority of any training method. I use weights at times, especially Kettlebells and sandbags, but bodyweight training is seldomly done correctly. It's seen as something you do when you start training, something that does not require any equipment and therefore is suitable for boot-camp-style sessions, as something you need to move away from when you start progressing.

Here's the thing, though: there are almost infinite variations of common bodyweight exercises, and you can string them together and progress through them to keep your training fresh and varied, to constantly discover new ways in which your body can move, and to keep improving

without resorting to the same repetitive isolation exercises that only require increasing the weight on a barbell.

## How Is Calisthenics Different?

You already know calisthenics is nothing new to this society. It originated thousands of years ago in ancient Greece and has been used in athletics, the military, and working out without equipment. But there are a few unique aspects to calisthenics.

Calisthenics engages multiple muscle groups at the same time, and bodyweight skills require flexibility, mobility, and balance.

## Benefits of Calisthenics

There are several very good reasons why you might consider training primarily, if not exclusively, with calisthenics. Below are a few reasons I and tons of others all over the world started training through calisthenics.

**Anytime, anywhere:** The benefit of calisthenics we hear about most is that you can perform workouts with practically no equipment compared to typical weight-training (note that you do need some equipment to perform basic pulling exercises, like pull-up bars, etc.). You don't have to buy high-end equipment or join a costly gym. The workouts are so simple and require so little space that anyone—and I mean *anyone*—can do them anytime and anywhere. If you move, you don't have to look for a new gym or move a huge load of machines and weights with you. You can continue this type of training until your last breath.

**Improves flexibility and balance:** More important, becoming proficient at body-weight exercises is all about your power-to-weight ratio. Not only does an optimum power-to-weight ratio translate well to most physical activities and sports, but also leads to a certain body type that is driven by efficiency. Think here of the body of a gymnast: strong and muscular, yet lithe and agile. Generally speaking, bodyweight exercises develop far greater flexibility and balance than weight training does.

**Minimum risk to your joints:** Compared to weightlifting, calisthenics is easy on your joints. Think about it: which has the potential to hurt more and cause an injury, lifting a block of iron that weighs 100 kg, or lifting just your bodyweight? Yes, you are right. This is a very big concern. Your joints are crucial, as important to you as milk in your tea. What good is a person's strength if he can't walk a mile without his joints aching?

**Incredible gains in strength and endurance:** Calisthenics provides an opportunity to develop strength and endurance with the help of different exercises and their variations. For example, if strength gains are what you are looking for, then you can perform exercises with less repetitions and more resistance, whereas for endurance you can increase the number of repetitions without any additional resistance.

**Barely any expense required:** The truly awesome benefit of calisthenics training is the fact that it costs almost nothing. Nowadays, everything is centered on weight-loss pills, going to the gym,

and using all sorts of crazy machines to give you that one extra edge in losing fat and building muscle mass along with strength, which costs an arm and a leg at times. Calisthenics exercises cost next to nothing, and to your surprise, yield better results. You can get the body of your dreams without going bankrupt. So let's not make any excuses now. Calisthenics is the solution to all of your problems.

**Simplicity:** No fancy equipment, no machines, and everyone knows the basics. There are either push or pull movements and then legs, and core movements. It can't get any simpler than that. And if you keep your routine simple, you can really embrace a minimalistic approach to fitness.

**Extremely varied:** The positions, angles and ideas to which a calisthenics exercise or routine can be performed are virtually limitless. As you progress through them and develop, your training keeps changing and evolving; always keeping things new and fresh so you don't run the risk of hitting a plateau.

**Good for all your fitness goals:** Most of your aims can be achieved by using just your bodyweight, whether it is for losing weight, putting on muscle, preserving quality of movement and aging gracefully, developing cardiovascular fitness, or building a rock-solid foundation for a variety of sports. If you have a fitness goal, trust me: calisthenics is your answer.

**Strengthens the whole body:** Most calisthenic exercises engage more than one muscle group. Take classic push-ups, for example. They target your chest or the triceps, depending on the push-up variation, yet to perform a proper push-up you have to brace the whole body, including the quads, the glutes, and the core. What's more, these muscles have to work in harmony, which brings us to the next benefit of calisthenics: coordination. Without the cooperation of different body parts to achieve the proper order and rhythm of movements, you wouldn't be able to perform a single burpee, jump a rope, or do a single pull-up on the bar.

Calisthenics also develops flexibility. Most bodyweight exercises involve fully extended movements, which build strength without costing flexibility. The wider the range-of-movement in an exercise, the greater your gains in flexibility.

**Develops endurance:** If calisthenic exercises are performed properly in the suggested number of reps and sets, they can really boost your body's endurance. Especially great for the muscles' endurance are bodyweight exercises which require holding a position for a certain amount of time. Great examples are the plank, in different variations, and the v-sit.

**Develops straight-arm strength:** You might have heard about the phenomenon called straight-arm strength. It is a term taken from gymnastics, and you have probably seen athletes using it to perform skills like the iron cross, plank, or crucifix.

**Develops real functional strength:** Practicing bodyweight training will help you develop strength that is functional in real life. Functional strength is the ability to move your body in space. Bar athletics is the ultimate test of functional strength. It's totally unforgiving. I know a lot of people who are huge and pull huge amounts of iron in the gym, but they can't do a single muscle-up.

**Develops hand strength:** This is a unique aspect of calisthenics. Your hands will be involved in every single movement in calisthenics. I trained with weights for years, and the last thing I wanted was to fatigue my hands and forearms before I hit those specific muscle groups. In calisthenics, your hands and forearms are extensions of your grip. They are very important, and you will quickly learn that you can have the strongest biceps in the world, but if your hands and forearms are not strong enough to transfer the strength, they are useless. You can always add exercises to develop additional grip strength, but you should develop it naturally as you train and progress.

## Disadvantages of Calisthenics

**Leg work is limited:** Let's face it. A pistol squat is pretty easy, if you have been training for a reasonable amount of time. I was able to do 15 reps per leg the first time I tried it. Paul Wade writes in *Convict Conditioning* that there is no need to increase intensity for leg work past the pistol level. But in my experience, excessive training at this intensity level can lead to annoying joint pain. So what's the solution? There are bodyweight leg exercises which *do* go beyond a pistol squat. Although they are limited, if performed correctly, they'll turn your legs into tree trunks. We explore that in detail later on in the book.

**No dynamic movement for lower back:** The biggest problem for anyone who practices bodyweight training is that there is no way to train your lower back using your own body weight. To make your lower back stronger and healthier, you need to lift heavy stuff off the floor. Now, some of you might say bridges do the job. But bridges, even stand-to-stand bridges, are not the same.

Those who tried both deadlifts and bridging will tell you the difference right away. A bridge is a mobility and flexibility exercise and can in no way match the level of resistance that deadlifts provide. But this doesn't make bridge a completely useless exercise. It is a great exercise for building lower-back and gluteal strength. However, adding a dynamic strength-building exercise for those muscles will be a huge step forward. The only problem is you can't do it with your bodyweight. Despite the fact that weights are mandatory for this type of training, you have plenty of options from which to choose.

## Skill work

Skill work is a unique aspect of calisthenics which deserves its own paragraph.

Now, consider this situation; often people train in a way that builds a lot of strength, but no skill at all. The problem is strength without skill is barely applicable in real life.

When I was lifting weights I felt really strong. I could squat over 200 kg, but when a friend challenged me to do a one-arm pushup I failed miserably. I was definitely strong enough, but I lacked skill. In bodyweight training, unlike any other kinds of training, there are two basic components: skill and strength.

What is the difference? Exercises that do not require much strength, but require a lot of time and patience (and very often appropriate flexibility, mobility, and balance) to achieve correctly,

come under skill work. Exercises that take more strength than skill to perform are strength work. As one's individual skill, strength, and work capacity improve, exercises that may have been previously classified as strength work may become skill work.

Take, for example, a handstand. The only strength component to a handstand is holding yourself up. But all the muscles of your whole body—especially in your core—must work in unison to keep you balanced. As a beginner, you'll focus a lot on strength, but once you have built enough strength, handstands, along with planks and front levers, will become all about skills like balance. Thus, they become skill work.

I see a lot of people not even considering skill work until they have enough strength. It's a mistake.. Skill work will play a huge role in developing proper strength. It should be included in every session. Ideally, you want to work on your skills *while* developing strength. You might want to practice skill exercises as a warm-up to save you time, but in every single training session you should have a skill component. Because of the way strength work becomes skill work over time, it's important to reassess the exercises you've chosen for each component as your training progresses. You should be taking a hard look at whether a given exercise counts as skill work or strength work regularly—about every 6 to 8 weeks.

## Chapter 2 - Diet and Nutrition

---

### Eat Healthy: Enough Said!

Now, as calisthenics is a minimalistic approach, our approach to diet and nutrition needs to reflect that, too.

The most common misconception among beginning athletes is confusing healthy eating with “dieting.” Eating healthy does not mean that you have to go on some kind of crash diet. Healthy eating means making changes in your diet in a way you can enjoy and sustain for the rest of your life. It is more satisfying and will get you to a healthy weight help you *stay* there. Dieting won’t.

Most people fail to lead a healthy lifestyle because, as soon as they learn the benefits of eating a healthy diet, they tend to change their whole eating pattern at once. Such a drastic change is not acceptable to our bodies. That’s not the way to go.

### Why You MUST Eat Healthy

I don’t think I need to convince you that you need to eat well. But I want to tell you from personal experience: as soon as you do, your life will change. Your energy level, your mindset, your outlook on life. If you want to truly live life to the fullest, you must take care of your body. There’s no other way. Moving and nutrition foundational to our quality of life. When you deprive your body of any of these, you are slowly killing it.

Most people understand this; the confusing part is knowing what “eating healthy” means! Below are some basic rules of lean, mean calisthenic eating.

### The Foundation

If you are chasing aesthetic goals, nutrition should be your primary concern. People struggle with two common problems: how to gain muscle and how to lose fat. We will address both, but first you need to have a good foundation for your new nutrition plan. These rules apply regardless what you are trying to achieve.

Here are some of the basic things to keep in mind:

#### **Limit sugar and processed foods**

A lot of processed foods contain saturated fats, trans fats, and a large amount of sodium and sugar. This is the main reason why processed foods are a huge hindrance to your goals. Eating foods with saturated fats and trans fats increases the risk of Type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease. They’re also low in vitamins and minerals. Eating too much of them is not going to benefit you in any way.

#### **Eat big to get big**

In order to gain weight, you need to eat surplus calories. Generally speaking, 3500 calories equals one pound of weight gain. However, you should always be aware of what kind of weight

you are gaining: mostly muscle or mostly fat. Body fat can be measured using a few different methods, most common of which is the [skin-fold test, using a caliper](#). If you are gaining too much fat, you need to make some adjustments in your diet. We will discuss this later in this chapter.

### **Eat at regular intervals**

Experts say it's better to eat smaller, more frequent meals rather than two or three big meals a day. This keeps the metabolism running at top speed, so you'll burn more body fat. Also, the body can't absorb huge amount of nutrients at once, so if we eat huge meals, most of the nutrients won't get absorbed and will go waste or fat. I eat every three hours—is there anything better about dieting? Love it.

### **A gram of protein for every pound**

Although the recommended protein intake varies between 1 and 1.5 grams per pound depending upon your activity level, it is generally recommended to take 1 gram of protein per pound of your body weight. Protein helps to build muscle and the more muscle mass you have, the more fat you burn. So, no matter what your goals are, you should always keep your protein intake at optimum levels.

### **Reduce carb intake**

It is not always fat that causes you to gain fat—carbs are a huge culprit in fat gain. Excess carbohydrates you eat get stored as glycogen, which is then stored as fat when glycogen needs are met. High-carb diets can make you gain weight very fast, but most of that weight is usually fat. Keep your carb intake in check. Personally, I recommend avoiding carbs all together. The only time I eat carbs is after a workout.

### **Avoid liquid calories**

Do not drink calories. Beverages don't make us feel full, so we often take them for granted and don't notice how many calories we're drinking. But calories are calories. It doesn't matter where they come from; if you take in too many, you'll end up out of shape.

### **Go raw as much as you can**

At this stage in my own training, I'm not chasing any particular goals, so every single one of my meals consists of veggies and white meat, and I will usually mix up some healthy fats in between. Eating as much raw food as possible will not only help you build strength, but also make you feel much better.

## **Protein Intake Rules**

There is a lot of talk about protein in fitness, and that's fitting—protein is extremely important and vital to health. And if you want to gain strength and muscle mass, there are a few simple things you should know.

Proteins are large molecules made up of amino acids that play critical roles in the healthy functioning of our bodies. Protein is in every cell of our bodies and without sufficient amino acids,

we cannot survive. In fact, at least 20% of our body weight is protein. Each gram of protein provides 4 calories of energy as a general rule of thumb. As we discussed earlier, it is recommended that you consume a gram of protein for every pound of body weight.

### **When should you consume protein?**

Our bodies respond to protein in a similar manner regardless of when we eat it. Still, it is a good idea to consume ample protein right after your workout session. This encourages a quick post-workout recovery.

We all know that muscle tissue breaks down during a workout, and your muscles actually grow while you are resting. But if you don't refuel during your recovery properly, your muscles won't have the building blocks they need for growth. To ensure a proper recovery, you should consume protein within an hour post workout. Get that chicken breast in.

## **Tracking Your Intake**

This is a bit more advanced, but if you are serious about achieving your goals, especially your body image goals, you should definitely track your intake. Research clearly shows that having a food diary can really help you achieve your goals.

Get a notebook, and record everything you eat. Documenting at least a complete week of your eating habits will help you get a clear picture of what you're regularly consuming. For many people, it is an act of self-discovery that reveals why they're not getting the gains they want or expect from their workouts. Most people vastly underestimate the number of calories, especially empty calories, that they consume. That can counteract the results of even the best workout plan. The only way to get the body you want is to know what you're eating, so you know when it needs to change.

### **What to track?**

Nutrients are substances we need in order to grow and for our body to function properly. Even more important than tracking calories is tracking how much of each nutrient you are getting.

There are three macronutrients, or "macros:"

**Carbohydrates.** Carbohydrates are the main source of fuel for our bodies. They provide immediate energy to the muscles, central nervous system, brain, and all other parts of the body. Carbs contain 4 calories per gram and can be stored in the liver and the muscle cells as glycogen for future use.

**Protein.** This is the body's building block. Containing same 4 calories per gram as carbs, protein is required for growth, tissue repair, immune function, production of hormones and enzymes, and also for providing energy when carbs are not available. Protein should not be used as a primary energy source for your body.

**Fat.** Fats contain 7 calories per gram and have a bad reputation for causing weight gain. But some fats are essential for normal growth and development, absorption of certain vitamins,

cushioning the organs, maintaining cell membranes, and providing taste, consistency, and stability to food.

There is no magic number for the ratio of macros in your diet, as everyone is different, and your body will respond to the macros in its own way. That said, 40/40/20 is a ratio that seems to work well in general—40% of your calories should come from carbs, 40% from protein, and the remaining 20% from fats.

These numbers change depending on your goals. For example, if you want to gain muscle, it is suggested that you increase your protein intake, and if you are trying to lose fat, you should decrease carb and fat consumption and increase your protein intake. You can read food labels to find out the macronutrient contents of the foods you consume. There are also several mobile apps available that help you learn about and log your intake; some of the most popular are [MyFitnessPal](#), [Lose It!](#), [FitDay](#), and [My Plate](#), most of which have both desktop websites and smartphone apps.

## Chapter 3 - Introduction to Progression

---

You already know the advantages of bodyweight strength training and the rule of progressive resistance, but there is something that makes calisthenics extremely effective. It is its progressive structure.

Our body is extremely adaptable—if you do something for long enough, it will cease to benefit you. No, the work did not get easier. You got stronger. Your body got used to it, and what seemed impossible at first isn't even difficult anymore.

To keep growing, you need to challenge your body continuously. This is what happens when you lift weights. When a weight gets easier for you to lift, you add more weight, and this forces your body to keep growing. But in calisthenics, you lift your own body. Weight in pure calisthenics is always fixed. So what do you do when an exercise becomes too easy? You progress to a more difficult variation. Once regular push-ups become easy, you work on close-grip push-ups. Once close-grip push-ups become easy, work on handstand push-ups, and so on. The trick is to never let yourself do the easy stuff. Always strive for the most difficult variation you can manage. This is what we call a progression.

### What is Progression?

A progression is a series of exercises for the same muscle group in which each exercise is slightly harder than the previous one. You start with the easiest exercise and slowly build up to the most difficult. To progress, you will have to work on an exercise until you find it very easy to do, then move on to the next, more difficult exercise. Then you work on the second exercise to "unlock" the third exercise, and so it goes.

For instance, if you can't do push-ups, you start off with push-ups against a wall—vertical push-ups. Then when you are capable of those, you do them on a raised surface like a desk—*incline push-ups*. Once you're capable of those, you can move to the regular push-ups. The series *vertical push-up > incline push-up > regular push-up* is the progression we followed.

This can be confusing, but don't worry. Most of the work has been done for you already.

Let's have a look at the example of the one-arm push-up progression.

In human strength? There are steps for that.

And for one-arm push-ups, there are 17 of them.

The road to the one-arm push-up will look like this:

Pushup	
1	Wall push-ups
2	Incline push-ups
3	Kneeling push-ups
4	Half-Way push-ups
5	Normal push-ups
6	Elbows-in push-ups
7	Diamond push-ups
8	Widegrip
9	Decline push-ups
10	Decline diamond push-ups
11	Uneven push-ups
12	Wall one-arm
13	Incline one-arm
14	Straddle one-arm push-ups
15	One-half one-arm push-ups
16	One-arm pushups
17	Decline one-arm push-ups

Now, notice how with every single step the exercise is getting harder and harder. That's what you want. An appropriate number of sets and reps needs to be done at each level before progressing to the next.

## Progressive Resistance

Progressive resistance is the secret weapon in your arsenal, that ace up your sleeve, the ultimate thing that makes any ordinary human extraordinary. This simple rule of gradual increase of resistance takes a lot of different forms in calisthenics. What we discussed above is moving from a simple exercise to a more difficult one. But behind that, there are specific ways of progressing with bodyweight exercises. Let's have a look at them.

## Methods of Progressing in Bodyweight Exercises

Aside from decreasing leverage (by decreasing incline and eventually working on a decline) there are several other methods of progressing. Let's discuss them below:

### Increasing range of motion

This is one very effective method of progression. In this method, you build up to a complete exercise by starting it with a limited range-of-motion. Let's take the example of *handstand push-ups*. If you can't do a full handstand push-up, you can decrease its range-of-motion by stacking some books under your head to support the weight of your body after you lower it only the first few inches toward the ground. Then, when you start to get stronger, you can increase the range-of-motion by removing the books one at a time. Every time you remove a book, you have to support your own weight deeper into the push-up. Once you've mastered the handstand push-up, you can use this method to *increase* the difficulty and range-of-motion of the exercise as well. Just give it a try. Wouldn't it make the exercise tougher if you had books under your hands? This method works well with pushing exercises but is pretty hard to apply to pulling exercises.

### Adding weight

This is another very effective way to progress from one step to the next. In this method, you add some additional weight to an exercise to close the gap in difficulty between it and the next step in the progression. For example, if planks have become too easy for you, you can increase the difficulty by doing it with extra weight on your back.

### Changing position of body in space

In this method, you change the position of your body to make the exercise easier for you and then perform it. As you slowly gain strength, you move it's regular form. For example, If you can't do a regular push-up, try doing it against a wall to build up your strength, then move to an elevated surface. Once the exercise becomes easy for you, move to a more difficult position, and down the line you'll find yourself performing regular push-ups with ease.

### Combining difficult and easy exercises

In this method you combine an easy exercise with a difficult exercise and then perform them together. Plank push-ups are an excellent example.

Watch this video from Ido's Portal



*“How to use this? Negative and bent-arm parts of the movement will always be stronger than positive and straight-arm parts. So while leaving positive and straight-arm portions of the movement as is, you can easily make negative and bent-arm portions harder. Just like in the video above. Or if you train with partner, you can try additionally increase difficulty of the negative part with added weight, while removing it from the positive part” – roughstrenght.com*

This method is amazing. Let me tell you this, I have tried this myself and have seen results. If you do this, and the results are guaranteed.

### **Combining exercises into more complex moves**

Adding weight or increasing range of motion are not the only methods in your arsenal. Try combining exercises. For example, if you became proficient in muscle-ups and front levers, you can combine them into a muscle-up to front lever sequence and perform them like one exercise. Here's the freedom. No boundaries.

### **Bend the rules and have fun**

After all this, there comes a time when you want to know if you have to strictly follow these rules. Nope. Bending the rules has always been fun, and what good is it to do something if you're not having fun with it? With that, let's move on to the next topic, where we will discuss how you can bend the rules and still make significant gains.

## **Deconstruction**

This is an extremely useful skill to have, although you might have trouble doing it as a beginner. I want you to be aware you *can* do it, as it might come extremely handy when you are progressing and will have to troubleshoot your progressions.

Deconstruction means breaking down a skill to its core components. It is probably the best method to break down progressions into smaller sections and explore it from the bottom to the top. This could be also used to fix any problems you might have in going through the progressions.

Now, what you see in the picture below is a copy of a great deconstruction form from an incredible website, [Beast Skills](#), which I want to acknowledge here. I strongly suggest you go on their site and get through their tutorial on the front lever and more, as it's just a killer.

**As you go through the tutorial, I want you to note a few things:**

Let's use the example of a front lever. You want to look at it and see what kind of elements are being involved in performing this skill. You can see the mid-section is extremely strong here, the head is facing forward looking at the feet, arms are straight at the very specific angle, toes are pointed to the front.



Hands



The palms of the hands should be facing downwards trying to push during the skill. This will properly engage the muscles in the upper body. It also helps to squeeze the rings or bar with your hands in order to generate more tension in the upper body and subsequently create a stronger lever. Also take note in the top picture that my hands are directly above my hips. This will occur naturally as the body strives to balance in the position.

### Arms



Keep them close by your side, shoulder-width apart. On the bar, this is easily accomplished by simply setting your hands at the correct width. On the rings, you must be aware of keeping your arms in close by your sides. In both cases, you do not want to think of squeezing the arms inwards so much as flexing the entire upper body and keeping the arms glued to the side of the body. This is very similar to the back lever. If they float away from your torso, you'll have a much harder time keeping tension.

### Shoulders + Upper Torso

Flex the back (latissimus dorsi) and the chest, and keep your shoulders in a relatively natural position. There's no need to retract your shoulder blades or push your shoulders forward unnaturally. As was previously described, you'll want to actively push downwards with your hands, which will generate the correct tension in the upper body.

## Midsection/Hips/Legs



Keep the midsection tight, and squeeze the butt and legs. Make sure that the front of the body is in line. Where you will often encounter difficulty with the skill is keeping the hips extended. Do not bend at the middle, as it's not proper form for the front lever (seen below).

Pointing your toes and thinking of stretching out your body will help to keep your body in line, much as it is for the handstand. When in doubt, take a picture or have someone spot your form.



You can also watch your feet from this position, to make sure your body is not only in line, but parallel to the ground.

## Troubleshooting Progression

Progressions aren't written in stone. If you find it difficult to progress from one step to the next:

### **Break it down into more steps.**

The point is to bring down the difficulty enough for you to perform the next exercise and proceed. If you find it difficult to do even after breaking it down once, then break it down again. Break it down as many times as you need, and, of course, pay attention to your weak areas.

### **Practice with weights**

If you're unable to move to the next level of progression, adding some extra weight is always an option. And you don't even have to purchase plates or some additional weights for that. Many a times a good-old backpack works fine, as do sandbags, kettlebells, or whatever else you have.

### **Experiment. Ask yourself, what will be effective?**

No one knows you better than you yourself. For better or for worse you know what is good for you and you are the only one who can judge the best if anything is working for or not. If you feel and data proves that what you are doing brings no results, then search for other way. It may be

that what you may need is volume instead of intensity, or intensity instead of volume. Whatever it may be, figure it out and make it a part of your progression.

Of course, the next problem is when you should start progression—how do you figure out that it's time to jump to the next level? Here, we will discuss when to move to the next step.

## Deconstruction

As we have already discussed in the beginning of the deconstruction paragraph, we can use deconstruction to troubleshoot progressions. Go step by step. What is involved in performing this particular skill? What are you doing right, and what are you doing wrong?

## Where Should I Start?

Along with this book, you are given a chart with number of progressions to follow.

CALISTHENICS - THE MOST EFFECTIVE BODYWEIGHT STRENGTH TRAINING ON EARTH																													
Beginner Workout Routine: Your Road To Inhuman strength																													
1. WARMUP		3. PUSHING				4. PULLING				5. LEG WORK				6. CORE WORK		7. CONDITIONING		8. STRETCHES											
Warmup + Mobility		Horizontal		Vertical		Horizontal		Vertical		Pistol Squat		Leg Raises		Bridges		Bodyline Work		EXAMPLES											
Pushup		R & S		Handstand		R & S		Horizontal Row/Front Lend		R & S		Pullup		R & S		Plank Squat		R & S		Bridges		R & S		Bodyline Work		R & S		EXAMPLES	
Jumping Jacks		1. Wall Pushups		1. Incline Pike Pushup		1. Vertical Pulls		1. Vertical Pulls		1. Shoulderstand Squat		1. Knee tucks		1. Short Bridges		Hollow		Sprints		Pectorals stretch									
Lunges		2. Incline Pushup		2. Incline Pike Diamond Pushup		2. Horizontal Pulls (Legs Bent)		2. Horizontal Pulls (Legs Bent)		2. Assisted Squat		2. Flat Knee Raises		2. Straight Bridges		Arch		Jump Rope		Chest Stretch									
Hoggers		3. Kneeling Pushup		3. Pike Pushup		3. Pike Pushup		3. Horizontal Pulls		3. Half Squat		3. Flat Bent Leg Raises		3. Angled Bridges		Park		Jumping Jacks		Cobras and Cat Stretch									
Jumping Stairs		4. 1/2 Pushup		4. Pike Pushup Diamond		4. Horizontal Pulls (One Arm Extended)		4. Horizontal Pulls (One Arm Extended)		4. Deep Squat		4. Flat Straight Leg Raises		4. Hebe Bridges		Reverse Plank		Burpees		Pecs and rotator cuffs stretch									
Run		5. Full Pushup		5. Decline Pike Pushup		5. Horizontal Pulls (Elevated)		5. Chin Over the Bar Hold		4. Close Squat		5. Forearm Knee Raises		5. Half Bridges		Six Pack		Jumping Lunges		Wrist Stretch									
Sprints		6. Elbows in Pushup		6. Decline Pike Diamond Pushup		6. Horizontal Pulls (Forward, Extended)		6. Negative Chinup		5. Bulgarian Split Squats		6. Hanging Bent Knee Raises		6. Full Bridges				Bostards		Quad stretch									
Scapula Pushup		7. Diamond Pushup		7. Decline Pike Pushup Shoulder Taps		7. Tuck Knees Front Lever Rows		6. Negative Chinup (25)		6. Beginner Shrimp Squat		7. Forearm Straight Leg Raises		7. Wall Walking Down				Hamstring stretch											
OR just use easier version of the exercise you are currently working on		8. Wide Grip Pushup		8. Wall Assisted Handstand		9. Flat Back Front Lever		7. Jackknife Pullup		7. Single Leg Box Squats		8. Hanging Bent Leg Raises		8. Wall Walking Up				Adductors Stretches											
2. SKILL WORK		9. Decline Pushup		9. Free Handstand		8. One knee tucked rows		8. Assisted Pullup		8. Box Squat		9. Hanging Straight Leg Raises		9. Coiling Bridges															
Handstand practice		10. Decline Diamond Pushup		10. Wall Assisted Handstand		9. Scuddle Front Rows		9. Bent Arm (90 Degree) hold		9. Uneven Squat		10. Hanging Bent Leg V Raises		10. Stand to Stand Bridge															
Levers Practice		11. Uneven Pushup		11. Handstand Holes/Straps		10. Front Lever Row		10. Negative Pullup		10. 1/2 Chin Leg Squat		11. Hanging straight leg V Raises																	
		12. Uneven Leaver Pushup		12. Handstand Shuffle		11. Front Leaver Pulls		11. Half Pullup		11. Assisted One Leg Squat		12. Hanging toes to the bar																	
		13. Handstand Straddle hold		13. Handstand Straddle hold		11. One Arm Front Lever		12. Full Up		12. Balance Assisted One Leg Squats		13. Hanging V-neck windshield wipers																	
		14. Incline One Arm Pushup		14. Handstand Straddle Shoulder Taps				13. Close Grip Pullup		13. Weighted One Leg Squat		14. One Arm Hanging V-neck Windshield Wipers																	
		15. 1/2 Handstand Pushup		15. 1/2 Handstand Pushup				14. Wide grip Pullup		14. PISTOL SQUAT																			
		16. 1/2 One Arm Pushup		16. Handstand Pushup		Progress to ice cream maker		15. Uneven Pullup		15. Renegade pistols																			
		17. One Arm Pushup		17. Handstand Diamond Pushup				16. Assisted One Arm Pullup Negative		16. Intermed ato shrimp/ Superman squats																			
		18. Decline One Arm Pushup		18. Uneven Handstand				16. Assisted One Arm Pullup		16. Advanced shrimp w knee hold																			
				19. 1/2 One Arm Handstand Pushup				17. 1/2 One Arm Pullup		17. Advanced Shrimp w knee hold																			
				20. One Arm Handstand Pushup				18. One Arm Pullup		18. The Elevated Shrimp																			
								Progress to → Back lever																					

YOUR WORKOUT ROUTINE STRUCTURE		
1. Warmup + Mobility (5-10min)	- start with a quick warmup and mobility exercise	
2. Skill Work (10min)	- choose the skill you are working towards eg Handstand work, support practice, holds etc.	
3. Strength Work (40 min)	- Pick appropriate exercise from all the sections (Pushing, Pulling, Legs and Core). Perform # of sets and reps according to your goal, otherwise stay with a basic routine of 3 sets *6-10 reps, 3 min rest in between sets. Progress when easily can do 3*10.	
4. Conditioning 5-10 minutes	- optional	
5. Static Stretches (5min)	+Cool Down	

REPS AND SETS CHEAT SHEET (R&S)		
	Sets & Reps	Rest Times
<b>Strength</b>	3*6-10	1-2 min
<b>Mass (hypertrophy)</b>	3-6*8-12 reps	0.5-2 min
<b>Endurance</b>	5*12+	0.5-2 min

Perform a workout at least 3 times a week. In double, refer to the instructions in the book. Fill # of R&S you are performing next to each exercise. This is just 4% of your day! Never miss a workout!

So at which step of these progressions should you start? The good-old Convict Conditioning was always suggesting that you should, no matter what, start at the step 1.

If you as a beginner it does make sense. If you are more advanced, it also makes some sense, as these basic exercises condition your nervous system. Ultimately, the choice is up to you.

Personally, I feel that if you have already been training, you will want to start at the lowest level which challenges you.

See at which level you can easily do 3 sets of 8 reps, then back up one step to a previous level. This is where you should start. For example if you can do 3 sets of 8 reps of full push-ups, go back one step in the push-up progression and start there. Start with 3 sets of 3 half push-ups, then next session do 3 sets of 4, then 3 sets of 5. Once you build to 3 sets of 8 you can move on to the next step.

Never progress quicker than adding one repetition per workout. It is crucial you do not attempt to progress faster than this, but rather, stick to micro-increments of one extra repetition with each session. This not only allows for a smooth, constant progression, but it also gives the connective tissue in your joints time to adapt to the stresses placed on it, and reduces the risk of injury.

## When Should I Progress?

One simple rule: you should move ahead when you've mastered the current skill and feel you can perform it completely. Unfortunately, this rule often gets very blurry. If you are a beginner, stick with recommended reps and sets. That might be enough or not enough to progress. Sometimes you will have to troubleshoot or use micro progressions to get you to the next step (refer back to troubleshooting progressions).

But as you get more advanced, and you will get a feel for your body and movements you will be able to tell when it's the right time to progress. The one thing you should always remember is that you must not rush a progression. The most important thing is that you feel comfortable with the current step.

The leveling of those exercises outlined in our progressions is approximate and will vary from person-to-person. Once you are comfortable doing an exercise of one type at a given level of reps, you use it as your foundational strength training exercise of that type. In the meantime, you can try working on a higher level exercise even if you are not able to do it properly. Eventually, with consistency, you should be able to do the exercise, and then once you get comfortable with it, make it your new foundational strength training exercise.

For example, for upper body pulling strength, you could start out with the Australian pull-up, a beginner step in the pull-up progression also called an inverted row. You would use it for training volume; since it is challenging but doable for multiple reps; use it to build up your pulling strength. In the meantime, keep trying to achieve a full chin-up and pull-up.

Eventually, you will be able to do chin-ups, and sooner or later pull-ups, for multiple reps. At that point, you can start phasing out Australian pull-ups and focus your pulling training on pull-ups and chin-ups. Eventually, pull-ups will become your foundational strength training exercise. At that point you can start working on muscle-ups and levers. It's an ongoing series of progressions; you don't need to do all of the exercises you are capable of doing all the time, just the ones that are at the level of relative difficulty you are aiming for with respect to a given muscle group.

Now you have the basic knowledge on attaining any skill and progressing in calisthenics. Use this knowledge wisely.

## Chapter 4 - Get Ready to Build Inhuman Strength

---

In this chapter, we will explore a number of rules and principles you need to understand before going out there and killing it.

### Principles of Calisthenics

If somebody ever tells you there are secrets to getting started with calisthenics, you can laugh right in their face. There are none. It took me years to stop searching for a secret source and focus on what was most important: training. There is just you, your body, and your mind. But calisthenics needs to be approached a bit differently from an ordinary training routine. It is much more than that. It's a philosophy and it's a lifestyle. You can ask any bodyweight strength athlete and they will tell you the same thing.

The 3 principles below are applicable to any other fitness routine, but are even more important in calisthenics. **Keep them in mind and I promise you will succeed.**

#### Principle #1: Be Patient and Consistent

It sounds like a no-brainer, but you will hear me talking about it a lot. Why? Because failing to live by this principle is the number-one killer for those taking up calisthenics.

I don't know about you, but if I don't see results within a few weeks I am freaking out. I troubleshoot things, I change my diet, and I go a little nuts. My attention span is very short, and I have no patience whatsoever. I've had to learn to overcome this in my training. It is so strange that we as humans want everything good to happen very quickly despite knowing that achieving something worthwhile requires giving it your all for a significant amount of time. Nothing good happens overnight. Patience and consistency are critical factors for success. No great physique or super human strength were ever built in 4 weeks.

What I want you to understand, though, is that this is even truer in calisthenics. The reason your strength gains are so significant and stay with you for life is that building them takes time. You do that by slowly conditioning your body into it. Your nervous system needs time to adjust. So right here, right now, I want you to set yourself on a journey of a lifetime.

Keep an eye on the prize, and set short-term goals to keep you going. But focus on the process, on being present, on keeping the training every single day, on developing your body awareness, on training your skill. Yes, you can gain some decent amount of muscle in a short period of time with the right tools and regimen, but do not expect to see results overnight. Remember, it's not a routine, it's a lifestyle. Go slow, but be consistent. Your nervous system will be slowly getting acclimated to different movements and getting stronger.

#### Principle #2: No cheating. Focus on the full range of motion and proper form.

This one is a killer. I see so many people doing half push-ups and saying that push-ups are not sufficient to build your chest muscles. Whaaaat? Most of the people I see doing calisthenics are simply doing it wrong. Now, I know it sounds basic, but it can literally mean the difference

between your success and failure. Performing all your repetitions in a controlled way with a full range of motion, taking it all the way down and all the way up, is critical to your success. First you train for quality, and when you get your form perfect, you can move on. It's hard, especially when you are just getting started with calisthenics, so keep that in mind. A pull-up that does not start from a deadhang and finish above the bar is only a half pull-up.

### **Principle #3: Push yourself with progressive resistance**

This is the most important rule of all, especially when you are just getting started with calisthenics. And although it's so obvious in weight training when you just add weight, it must be rigorously applied to calisthenics.

There is a simple rule in getting better. You constantly need to go further, you need to push yourself, you need to go beyond whatever you have right now. And this is a mindset thing. Like in personal development, to grow you need to keep on getting out of your comfort zone; the same applies with fitness. I don't want any of you not progressing. I don't care what level you are, how good or how bad you are. Every single day I want you to do a little bit more. If you are not growing you're dying, and in calisthenics like in any other fitness regimen you must challenge yourself every single time. In BWTA, we do not accept people who just keep the same regimen. If you are not doing more reps, completing more sets, learning harder exercises, or having shorter rest periods, you won't get stronger and your body composition will not change for the better! Period. Progressive calisthenics gives you the tools and structure to progress, so use them wisely. Keep these in mind, eat right, and you will see results!

### **Principle #4: Recognize your weaknesses**

This is very powerful thing I have learned in CrossFit. You are only as strong as your biggest weakness. You must recognize them and, instead of avoiding them, really embrace improvements. We all have things we are good at and things we are bad at. It is just a part of life. Recognize what you're bad at and spend some time improving. That can make you progress way faster than any workout routine.

### **Principle #5: Master your body and your mind**

Calisthenics is really not about how much you can lift, but whether you can move and control your own body. Along with control of the body comes control of the mind. You will see coaches like Al Kavadlo and Hank Medrano talking a lot about exercise being like a meditation. Treat it like that. Try to be present, control your thoughts, and focus on breath and on your movement. I promise you, it will improve every single area of your life.

### **Principle #6: Break the rules and play**

We are truly at our best when we are in a flow—when work is fun, when we can play. Embrace it! Your workouts shouldn't be something you force yourself to do. They should be pure fun, a space where you are trying new skills, where you are present in the moment and improving. The best routines are those which bring you joy. If you are not having fun with your routine, change it.

I love the feeling of getting out there, throwing my rings over the tree and just hanging out. Life is an incredible adventure, and that is how we should treat it.

Beware of dogmatic fitness approaches and people telling you to do this and that. Learn the rules, and then break them and find what is right for you—your own unique personal expression of who you are and how you do things.

Later on, I will teach you how to troubleshoot progressions, how to deconstruct the movements and how to overcome plateaus. But for now, all you need to do is get in the right mindset and set yourself up for success!

## Rest and Recovery

As you probably already know, your body is getting stronger not when you train, but when you rest. Hence rest and recovery are an important part of every training routine. Your training routine must be designed in a way that allows your body to rest and recover. How do you do this?

There are a few elements you need to take care of: rest periods, proper nutrition and sleep. It is that simple and that hard.

We already discussed nutrition. I cannot stress enough the importance of sleep. There is strong scientific evidence showing sleep to be the most important time for the body to recover and heal. And you must do whatever you can to protect this critical time from distraction. Over the years I have learned the power of darkening my room, moving away from any mobile devices, getting to bed early and at the same time every night, and using meditation to calm my mind.

## Warm-up, Mobility, and Stretches

These will have a tremendous impact on your performance as you move along. As we said before, calisthenics is unique in that it requires the whole body to work together, and a lot of movements will depend on your flexibility, mobility, and balance. A warm-up is a no brainer; you must warm up before every single workout. But it is recommended that you incorporate mobility and stretches as much as possible especially at the beginning of your journey.

### Warming Up

The benefits of a warm-up are endless. People often think warm-ups are not as important as heavy sets. They are mistaken. I know because I've been there. Many times I skipped a warm-up and ended up with a pulled muscle. Since my shoulder injury, which put me out of training for months, I never skip a warm-up. I suggest you don't either.

Just look at all those benefits:

**Prevents injury.** This is a big one. Warm-ups help prevent muscle pulls and sprains. In addition to preventing injury, warm-ups also help to reduce joint pain after a workout because they increase your range of motion. Injuries inflicted during workouts can be so intense they may prevent you from working out for days at a time, so warming up actually saves you time in the long run.

**Increases Flexibility.** Warming up helps to increase your flexibility, which will enable you to stretch further and push yourself harder during your workout. Note how important it is for calisthenics movements.

Warm-ups lubricate your joints, improving your mobility, which gives you a great range-of-motion during your work out. But one should always be careful of stretching before warming up as it may lead to muscular rips and tears (done that too). The stretching should happen either during the workout, or during the cool down, but never before the warm-up, unless it is at the end of your warm-up once you have already gotten your muscles warm.

**Improves performance.** Cold muscle may make it difficult for you to perform exercises as well as you normally can. Warming up improves muscle control and helps you to align your mind and body. Warm muscles are also able to generate more force than cold ones, which will help you to bring more intensity to your workouts. You will notice that when you start your training, simple exercises feel hard, but as soon as you are warmed up, you can do more and more of them. Way to go!

**Promotes circulation.** Your muscles need an optimal supply of oxygen for your workouts to be fully effective. When you warm up, your blood flow gradually increases and supplies your muscles with oxygen. Without a warm-up, your muscles won't have the oxygen they need, and your workout will be inefficient. Warm-ups also help ensure your muscles absorb the fluid they need and keep your blood pressure consistent throughout the workout.

**Prepares you mentally.** As important as it is for you to be physically prepared for your workouts, it is equally important for you to be mentally prepared. It requires a lot of discipline to push through the pain and keep going even when you don't feel like it. If you are not mentally prepared for a workout, you won't be able to push yourself as far as is necessary to see the physical changes you want. It is the warm up that gets you into the proper mindset so you perform each exercise efficiently rather than just performing movements.

Ok. I hope I do not need to convince you any more. It's really pretty straightforward: you cannot miss a warm-up, ever. My worst injuries happened when I ignored that simple rule.

## Mobility

Mobility is defined as the ability to move into positions under the muscles' own power. After you warm-up, it's recommended that you engage in some mobility work. Especially in calisthenics, it is extremely important to have the required level of mobility for a variety of movements.

Without that, you are putting yourself at risk of injury and hindering your progress. All those moving parts in calisthenics need to be at work, so if possible, incorporate mobility work into your workout.

If you are just starting out, you really should be spending some time on mobility, though as you progress and advance you will have to spend less and less time on it. It is definitely worth the investment.

Note that for some mobility exercises you might need a foam roller, which I highly recommend you get. It can be as cheap as \$10 from your local sports store.

What are good mobility exercises? There are plenty, but with limited time you really want to focus on the most important ones.

## **1. Scapula**

The scapula plays an extremely important part in all calisthenics exercises, so taking care of it is important. Some good mobility exercise are:

### **Scapula push-up**

This is a great chest exercise to mobilize your scapula. Start with a normal push-up position. But instead of bending your elbows to lower the chest, keep them straight and squeeze your scapulae together. Below you have a member of CrossFit Invictus demonstrating this.



You can use the same technique to modify a dip to a scapula dip. Foam rolling can also be very effective.

## 2. Shoulder dislocates

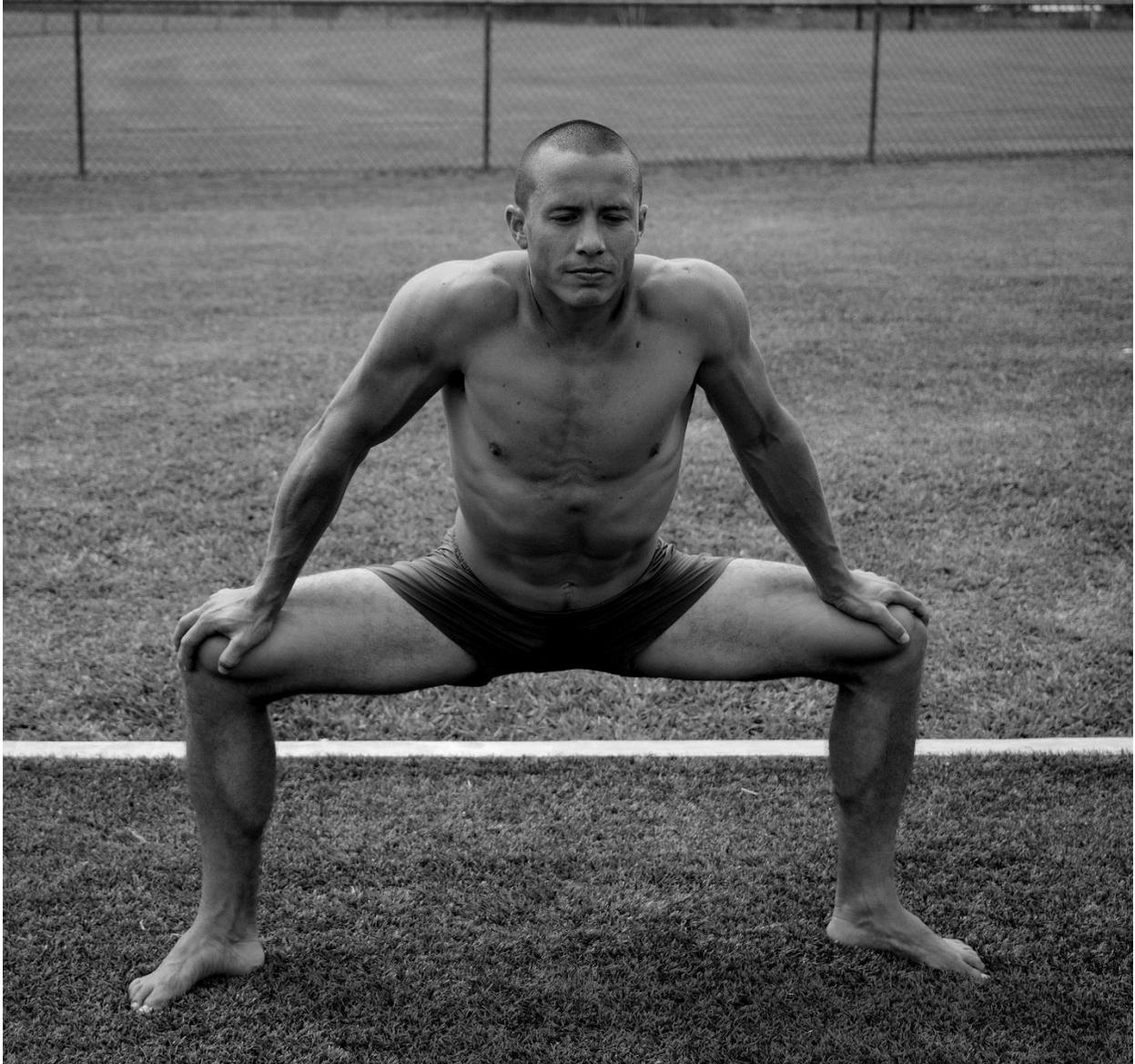
These are a great way to loosen up your shoulders if they are tight. Simply stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and hold a bar in the front of you with an overhand grip. Start with as wide of a grip as you can manage. From there, move bar up over the head in a large, arching movement. Keep your elbows straight. You should perform 2 sets of 10 repetitions.



### 3. Deep Squat

Deep squats are a very effective exercise and can help sort out all your lower-body mobility problems. Simply place your feet shoulder-width apart, toes slightly out and bend your knees, push hips back and squat down as far as you can. Below is Craig Liebenson performing a deep squat with a really good form.

Do it whenever you have time or to rest after your workout. It will do magic.



#### 4. Foam Rolling

As I mentioned earlier, a foam roller can be an effective tool for your mobility exercises, and there is a lot you can do with it. Back rolling, armpit rolling, tights rolling—I am not going to get much in detail here, but here you have a [whole number of foam rolling exercises from bodybuilding.com](#)

In the [video below](#) I walk you through a number of foam rolling exercises, just follow with me.



## Stretches

Flexibility is a very important aspect of calisthenics; it's your body's ability to move unhindered in any position. I believe a lot of people starting with calisthenics neglect that area, which prevents them from progressing quickly.

Most of us don't spend enough time working on our flexibility. I will cover just a few basic exercises here, but I strongly suggest you look further into both mobility and flexibility. One of the best books I found on the topic is *Relax to Stretch*, straight from the master Pavel Tsatsouline.

At the beginning, you want to add stretching after every single workout, but if you find any areas that are particularly tight, I suggest you spend some extra time addressing them specifically.

When I started, I used to dedicate one of my days off to an hour of stretching, and it did magic for me.

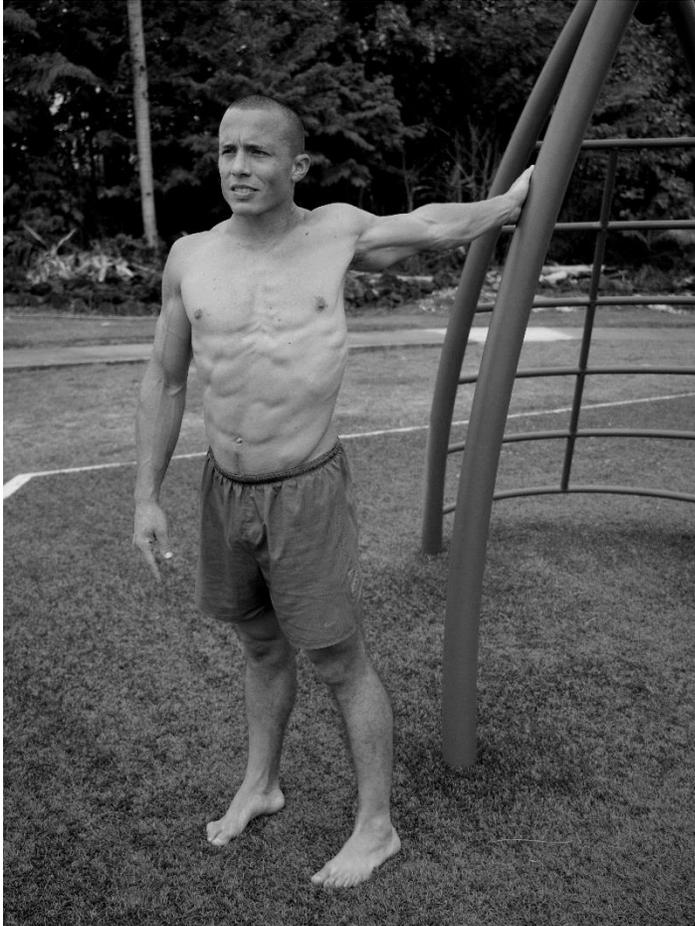
One important note, if you start stretching without your body being warmed up, you can easily hurt yourself. Also, if you are stretching too hard or too often, you might feel stiff afterward. You should stretch until you feel uncomfortable, but you should not feel any pain.

Once you become flexible, you need to keep an ongoing schedule of stretching to maintain the flexibility. It takes far less time than developing it, but just keep that in mind.

**Here are some great stretches to incorporate into your routine**

### Chest stretch

Stand in a doorway or next to a wall and slightly bend the arm being stretched, placing the forearm flat against the wall or a doorframe. Step forward and rotate your body away from your outstretched arm. Try to turn away as far as possible, but be cautious on how far you turn. Hold for between 10 and 30 seconds.



### **Cobra and cat stretch**

The Cobra Pose is a classic lower back stretch and often needs to be worked up to a full stretch. This stretch is done by laying facedown on the floor and bringing the hands below the shoulders, or slightly in front. While inhaling, slowly push away from the floor while the pelvis remains pressed to the floor.

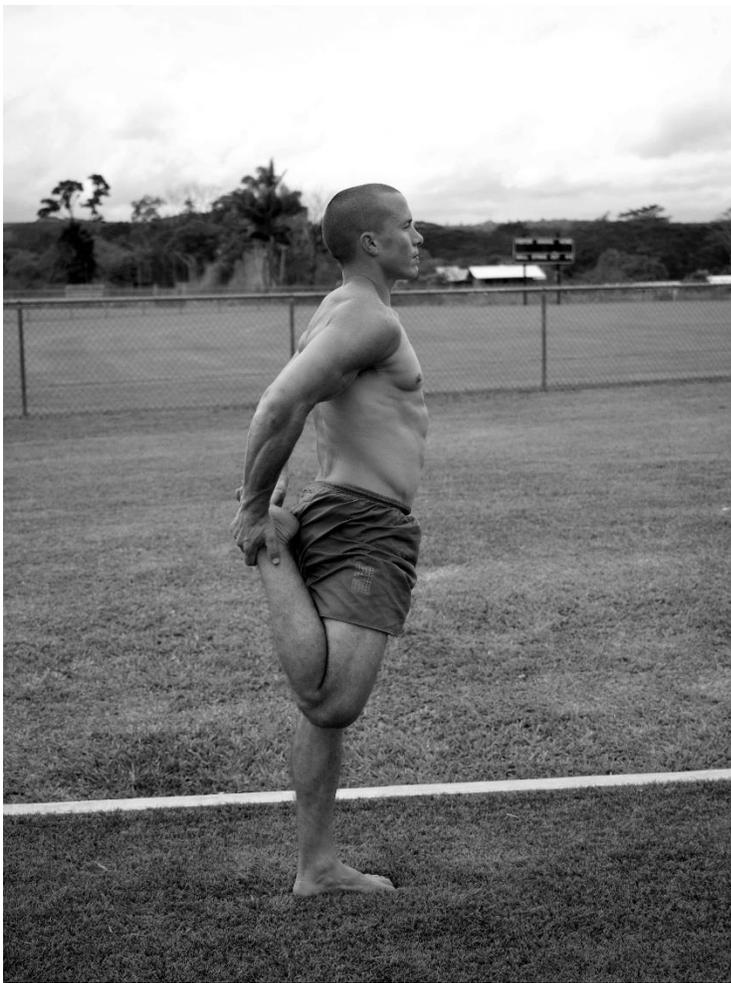
In comparison, the Cat Stretch is a great stretch for the spine and paraspinal muscles. Cat stretch is done on all fours with your limbs placed shoulder width apart. While breathing in, arch your back high above you and straighten your arms, tucking in your bottom, like an angry cat.

While exhaling, let the natural curvature of your lower back return, and emphasize this pose by keeping your shoulders back and your rear end poised upwards, while your belly button points to the floor.



### Quad stretch

Quads are very big, compound muscles and you need to make sure you take care of them appropriately. Here's one stretch that will help you do that. Stand on one leg and bend the other knee to bring your heel up to touch your bum. Hold on to this ankle with your hand. If you need help to balance, keep your knees together and push your hips forward. You can use a wall for extra stability. Hold for 10–30 seconds.



### **Wrist flexor stretch**

Stand facing a wall with your arms outstretched and palms facing up. Place your fingers on the wall, pointing downward. Slowly try to place your whole hand flat on the wall by extending the wrist. Hold for between 10 and 30 seconds.



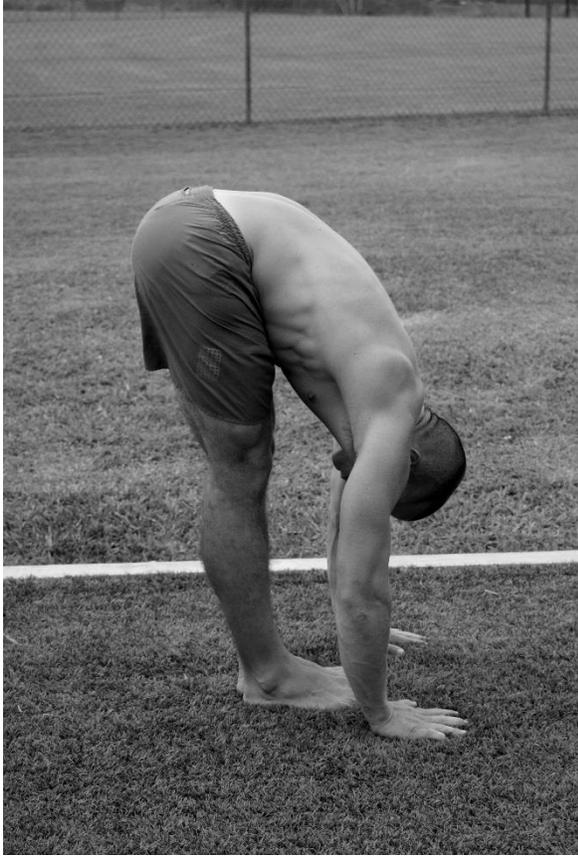
### **Short abductor stretch**

Sit on the floor and bend your knees, keeping your feet together. Bring your feet together so the soles of your feet touch each other. Now, put your hands on your ankles and gently push down on your knees with your elbows. Hold 10–30 seconds



### Hamstring stretch

Stand with one leg in the front of the other with your heel pressing to the floor and toes up. Now bend your other leg and put all of your weight on the bent knee. Stick your bum out. You should feel the stretch in your hamstring.



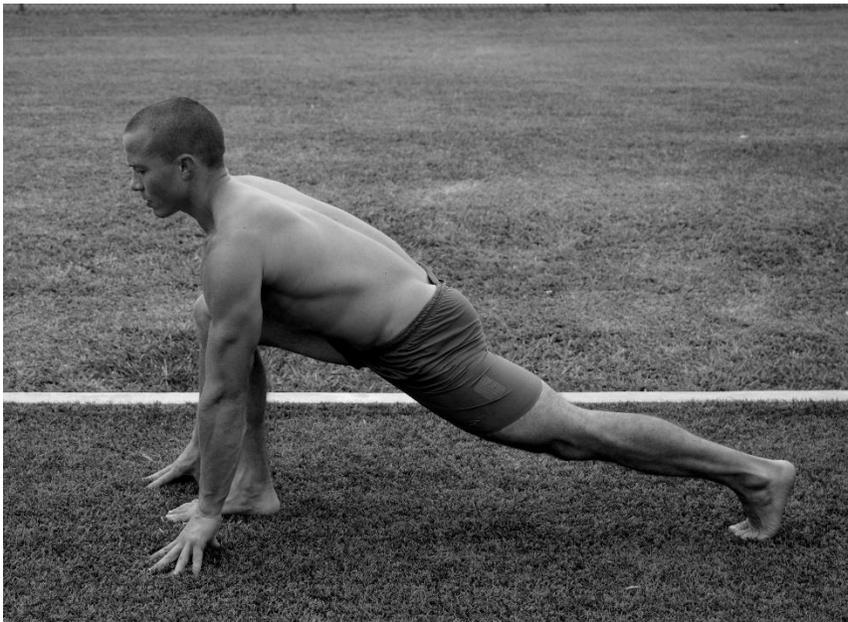
### **Long adductor stretch**

Sit down on the floor and spread your legs as far apart as possible. You must keep your knees straight. While keeping your back straight, lean forward as much as you can. Hold or repeat in a pulsing movement. Again, 10–30 seconds.



### Hip flexor stretch

This is a great hip flexor stretch. Kneel down with one knee on the floor and the other leg bent in front of you. Push your hips forward and keep your back straight. Hold for 10–30 seconds.



## Glute stretch

The variation you see below is probably the most effective ones I have encountered. Glutes are the most powerful muscles in the body, so it is important that you take care of them. All you need to do is to press your bum against the wall with both legs bent and your feet against the wall. Now, tuck one of your legs, placing the outside of your foot by the knee of the bent leg. Hold it for 15 seconds.



## Movements over Muscles

Weight training focuses on targeting a specific group of muscles.

With calisthenics, you really want to focus on performing movements instead of over-complicating things by concerning yourself with particular muscles.

Training movements are more natural, but also more effective, as the focus is on *all* the muscles involved in that movement instead of on any single muscle. There are only a few basic types of movements: pulling movements, pushing movements, and one or two others. It's a very natural thing. If you want to describe a deadlift to someone, you say "pull something up from the floor," and they instantly know what you mean.

Additionally, a lot of people's goals are movement-based (e.g. muscle-up, plank, human flag).

Instead of trying to work on the individual muscles involved in that activity, why not just work the movement itself?

Focusing on movements also helps to maintain even proportions, bringing about symmetry to your training and helping you to develop an aesthetically pleasing body. It also prevents injury caused by asymmetrical muscle growth. Specific training of any single muscle or isolation exercises is advised only in the case of a plateau, which might be exposing your weaknesses or a lack of size in a specific muscle. But if you are following calisthenics progressions correctly, that should never happen in the first place.

As important as it is to focus your training around movements, it is also very important to keep in mind the importance of mobility and flexibility in any kind of movement. Let's discuss that now.

### **Master just a few movements**

Focus and consistency are the two most important factors that lead you toward mastering movements. Focus on just a few movements and become extremely good at them. These are your base; if you can master those, the rest will come easily. There is no better way to get results. Just stick to it and you will end up burning fat, building muscle, and maximizing your physical performance at every single aspect.

## **Picking the Movements**

As important as it is to focus on a few movements, it's even more important to pick the right ones.

I use two methods to make my selections. The first is the push-pull system. This is what I would recommend for beginners, as it's easy to follow.

Any exercise where the center of mass of the body is moving **towards** the hands is a pulling exercise. Any exercise where the center of mass of the body is moving **away** from the hands is a **pushing** exercise.

To that, we add leg work and core work. We won't think about muscles separately. Instead, we'll think about our primal movements, natural movement patterns that work multiple muscles at once. This will help you develop functional strength. With the help of these four movements, you can build a world-class training program and achieve the body and strength you've always wanted.

We are going to divide pushing and pulling movements into two categories, namely horizontal and vertical. Leg work and core work will incorporate totally different exercise patterns. That's because a lot of the exercises in the pushing and pulling movements will be working your legs and core along with your upper body. While you will be practicing your horizontal rows, your core will be getting stronger and stronger.

# The Foundation

Welcome to The Foundation—**fundamental movements** you'll need to learn to move to more advanced things like crow stands, double elbow levers, dragon flies, and abdominal rollouts.

Here they are.

## 1. Pushing Exercises

Vertical: Handstand push-ups

Horizontal: One-arm push-ups

## 2. Pulling Exercises

Vertical: Pull-ups

Horizontal: Horizontal rows

## 3. Leg work

Squats

## 5. Core Work

Leg Raises

Bridges (optional)

In the following chapters, you will learn everything you will ever need to know about these movements, including:

- The benefits
- How to perform them with perfect form
- The exact steps that will allow you to progress from a total beginner to an inhuman strength athlete
- Tips and tricks on getting the movements right

Let's do it!

## Chapter 5 - Inhuman Strength? There is a road to that

---

### Progressions

So you know what the rules are, what progressions are, and how to use them. Now, let's get down to the real work. In this chapter, we'll go through a progression for each of the 8 fundamental movements.

1. Push-ups
2. Handstands
3. Pull-ups
4. Horizontal rows
5. Leg raises
6. Bridges
7. Bodyline work

The exercises in the programs below are derived from standard gymnastic progressions which have been fine-tuned and extensively tested.

We have also put all of these progressions into a poster which you can download and print. You can also get your poster printed by [CLICKING HERE](#). (If you need help with the download, email me at: [jeffcowancc@gmail.com](mailto:jeffcowancc@gmail.com))

## CALISTHENICS - THE MOST EFFECTIVE BODYWEIGHT STRENGTH TRAINING ON EARTH

### Beginner workout routine: Your road to inhuman strength

1. WARMUP		3. PUSHING		4. PULLING		5. LEG WORK		6. CORE WORK		7. CONDITIONING		8. STRETCHES	
Warmup + Mobility		Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical	EXAMPLES	
Jumping Jacks	Wall pushups	Isometric plank pushup	Vertical Pulls	Inverted rows knee bent	Wall Pullups	Shoulderstand Squat	Knee tucks	Short Bridges	Heeler	Sprints	Patrols station		
Lunges	Isometric Pushup	Isometric Pike diamond pushup	Inverted rows one leg extended	Horizontal Pulls with legs bent	Horizontal Pulls with legs bent	Supported Squat	Flat knee sprints	Straight Bridges	Arch	Jump Rope	Chest Stretch		
Huggers	Knocking Pushup	Pike pushup	Inverted rows one leg straight	Horizontal Pulls	Horizontal Pulls	Half Squat	Flat foot leg raises	Angled Bridges	Plank	Jumping Jacks	Coin and Cat Stretch		
Jumping Scares	Half Way Pushup	Pike pushup diamond	Inverted rows one leg extended	Dead hang 1 min	Dead hang 1 min	Full Squat	Flat Foot Raises	Head bridges	Reverse Plank	Burpees	Pics and rubber cuffs stretch		
Run	Normal Pushup	Decline pike pushup	Inverted rows legs extended one leg extended	Chin over the bar rest	Chin over the bar rest	Chin Squat	Flat straight leg raising	Half bridges	Side Plank	Jumping Lunges	Wrist stretch		
Sprints	Elbow 1 pushups	Decline pike diamond pushup	Inverted rows legs extended one leg extended	Negative Chin up	Negative Chin up	Bulgarian split Squat	Hanging bent knee raises	Full Bridges		Blasters	Quad stretch		
Scapula Pullups	Diamond Pushups	Decline Pike Pushup	Tuck knees front lever	Negative Chin up 25	Negative Chin up 25	Beginner Shrimp Squat	Forearm straight leg raises	Wall Walking, Stair		Hamstring stretch			
Oh easier version than what you currently perform	Wrist Grip	Wall assisted hand stand	Flat back front lever	Jackknif pullup / one assisted	Jackknif pullup / one assisted	Box Squat coach call	Hanging leg raises	Wall walking up		Rotator's Stretch			
	Decline Pushup w/ feet pushup	Free hand stand	One lock knee one leg extended one leg up	Assisted Pullup leg in back	Assisted Pullup leg in back	Single leg box squat - chin front hand	Hanging straight leg raises	Climbing bridge					
	Decline diamond pushup	Shoulder Stand/Handstand	Straddle legs front row	Best Arm (60 degree) hold	Best Arm (60 degree) hold	Box sq w/ hanging on a side	Hanging bent leg V raises	Stand to stand bridge					
Handstand practice	Unseen Pushups	Handstand Hold	Front lever raise	Negative pullup	Negative pullup	Unseen Squat	Hanging straight leg V raises						
Leaves Practice	Unseen lever pushup	Handstand shrugs	Front lever pull	Half Pullup	Half Pullup	1/2 One legged squat	Hanging toes to the bar						
	Wall one arm pushup	Handstand - balance from left to right steps	Hanging V raise w/ handfield when	Pull Up	Pull Up	Assisted one legged squat							
	Isometric one arm	Handstand stretch to the wall straddle hold	One arm hanging knee raises	Close grip Pullup	Close grip Pullup	Balance assisted one legged squats							
	Straddle One Arm Push-Ups	Handstand with stomach to the wall maintain one arm top	Progress to	Wide grip Pullup	Wide grip Pullup	Weighted one leg squat							
	1/2 one arm pushup	Switch back to the wall straddle hold	The horizontal front lever position just up to the strap	Unseen pullup	Unseen pullup	Pistol							
	One arm pushups	Half handstand pushup	Ice cream maker	Assisted 1 arm Pullup	Assisted 1 arm Pullup	Handstand pikes							
	Decline one arm pushup	Handstand Pushup	One arm front lever	Assisted 1 arm Pullup Negative	Assisted 1 arm Pullup Negative	Intermediate shrimps/ Superman squat							
		Wall handstand diamond pushup	Ice cream maker	1/2 One arm pullup	1/2 One arm pullup	Advanced shrims							
		Unseen handstand	Ice cream maker	One Arm Pullup	One Arm Pullup	More advanced shrims							
		Lever Handstand		Next -> back lever	Next -> back lever	The Heaviest Shrims							
		One arm 1/2 handstand pushup		Advanced shrims	Advanced shrims	Advanced shrims							
		One arm handstand pushup		More advanced shrims	More advanced shrims	More advanced shrims							
		Lever handstand		The Heaviest Shrims	The Heaviest Shrims	The Heaviest Shrims							
		One arm handstand pushup											

#### YOUR DAILY WORKOUT ROUTINE STRUCTURE

Warmup + Mobility (5min)- start with a quick warmup and mobility exercises

Skill Work (10min) choose the skill you are working towards eg Handstand work, support practice

Straight Work (40 min) - Pick appropriate exercise from all the sections (Pushing, Pulling, Legs and Core). Perform # of sets and reps according to your goal, otherwise stay with a basic routine (3 sets 10-15 reps, 1 min rest in between sets. Progress when easily can do 3\*10, P

Conditioning 5-10 minutes - optional

Static Stretches (5min) cool down

You are a rockstar!

#### REPS AND SETS CHEAT SHEET (R&S)

	Sets & Reps	Rest Times
<b>Strength</b>	3*5-10	1-2 min
<b>Mass (Hypertrophy)</b>	3-6*6-12 reps	0.5-2 min
<b>Endurance</b>	5*12+	0.5-2 min

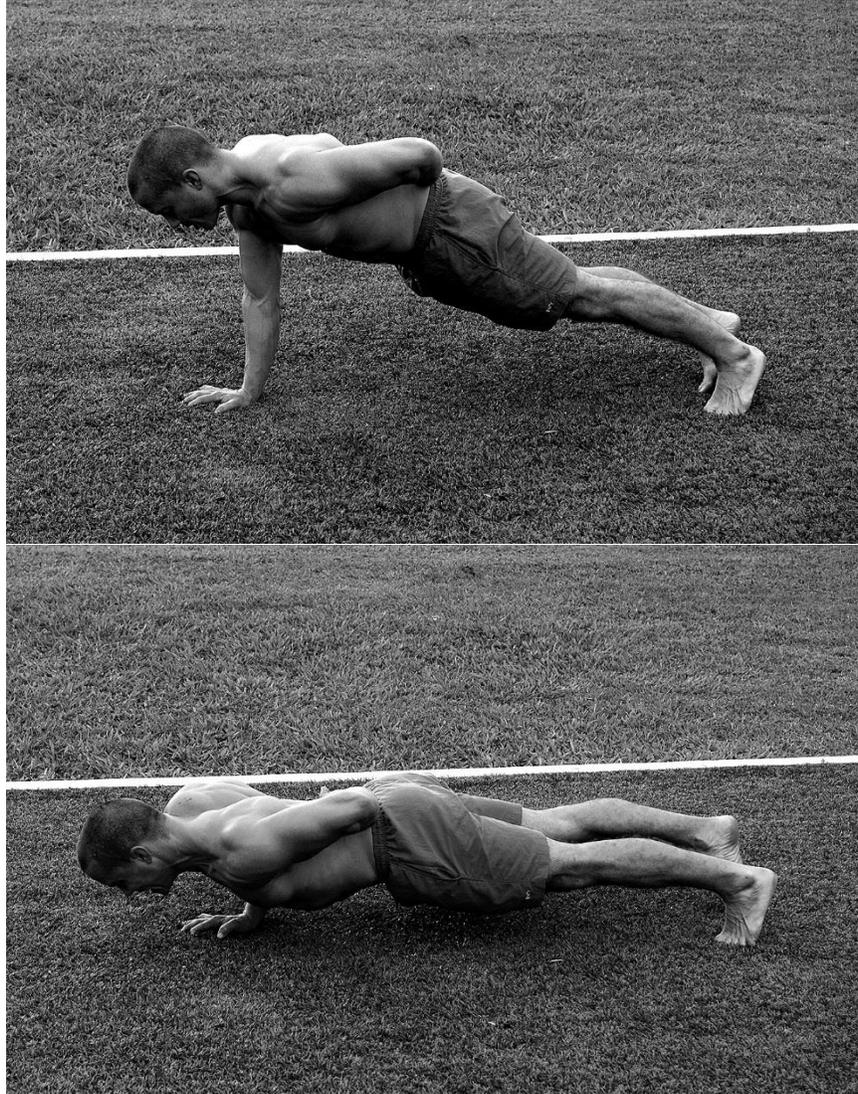
**IT NEVER GETS EASIER, YOU JUST GET STRONGER. CONQUER**

## Pushing Exercises

### Horizontal Pushing: One-Arm Push-up Progression

One-arm push-ups get a lot of attention when the talk is about pushing movements. Many claim they can perform perfect one-arm push-ups, but it is rarely witnessed, mainly because it is a complex skill and takes a lot of time to perfect. It is very easy to lose sight of the ultimate goal and get trapped by purported shortcuts. Perfection has a different definition to different people. When I see people doing one-arm push-ups, I look for different things. To me a perfect one-arm push-up is one in which:

- Shoulders are parallel to the ground
- Feet are not wider than shoulder width
- Body is straight when viewed from the side
- Twisting in the body is minimal
- At the lowest position, there are no more than 10 cm between the chest and the floor



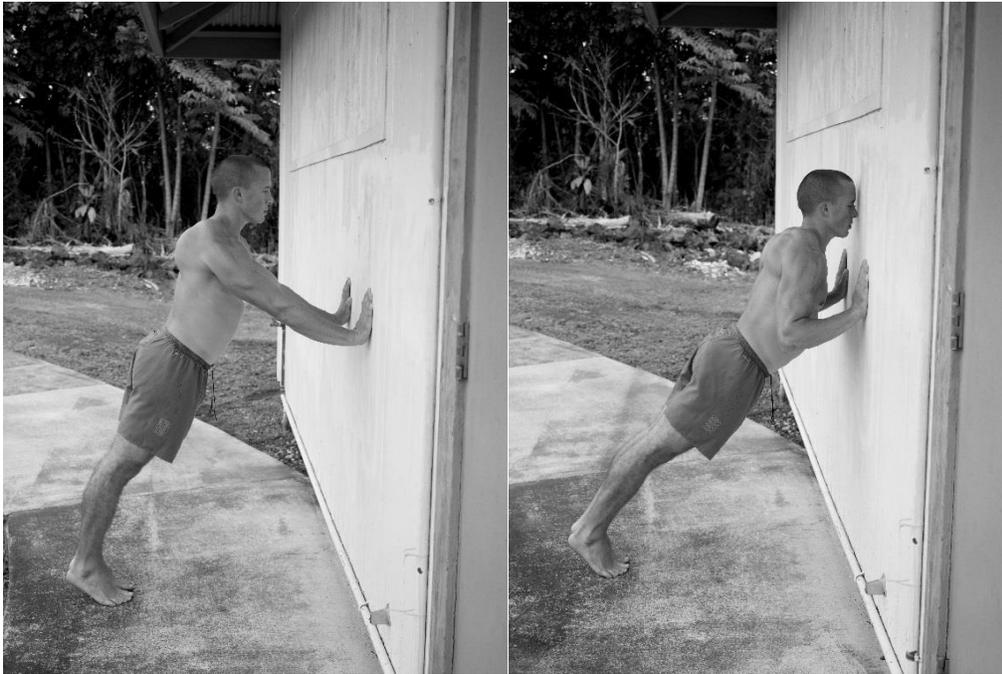
If any of the above constraints are not met, it is not a perfect one-arm push-up. Am I the only one who judges on these points? Absolutely not. Ask any of the experts, and they'll tell you the same story. Now, I know this sets the bar high. That is why very few people are able to do it. But just think about it—if, one day, you're able to do it correctly, then you'll be among those prestigious few. Imagine the pride you'll have in that achievement!

Of course, just thinking about it won't get you there. To achieve such inhuman strength, you'll need a rock-solid plan and ways to improve incrementally. Here's a progression plan for you to follow and get to do that perfect one-arm push-up. Just remember: one skill at a time, and only when you're good at that particular skill should you move on to a tougher one.

Let's now discuss the proper form of the above exercises and how to do them correctly.

## Wall Push-ups

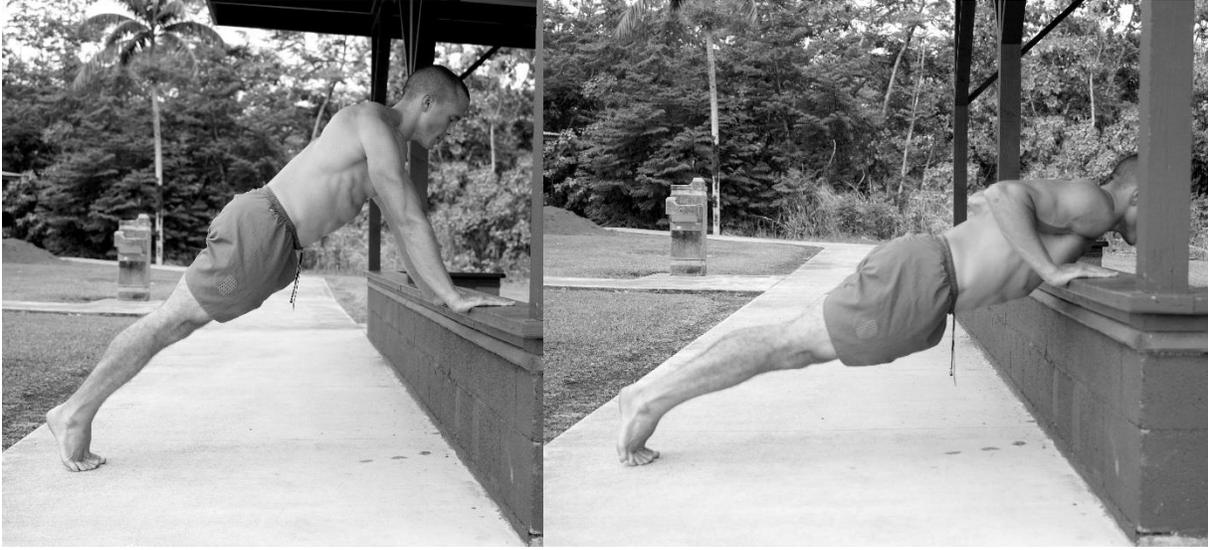
This is the least difficult variation. Start by standing, with feet together, about 1 to 2 feet from a wall. Place your hands flat on the wall at the level of your shoulder and a little more than shoulder-width apart. Bend your arms at the elbows to lower your body towards the wall until your head touches the wall. Do not flare your elbows too much, or it will put stress on your shoulders and may cause injury. Push your body back up by straightening your arms. Remember to keep abs and glutes tight throughout.



## Incline Push-ups

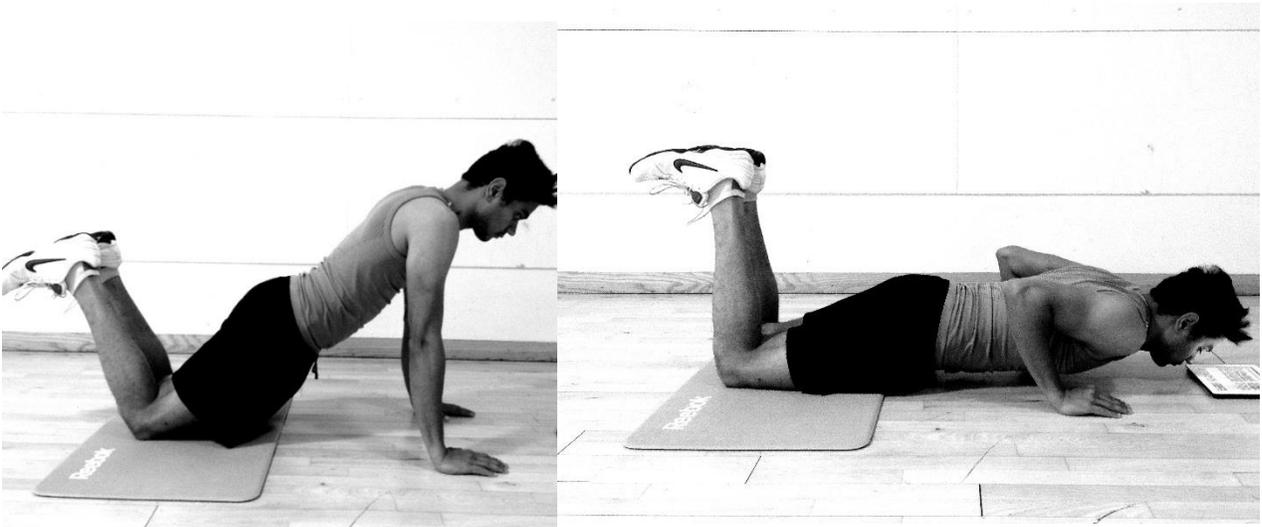
Once you have mastered the wall push-up, move on to the incline push-up. Put your hands on a bench, couch, or chair that is a couple of feet off the ground. With feet together and body straight, lower yourself to the bench and push back up.

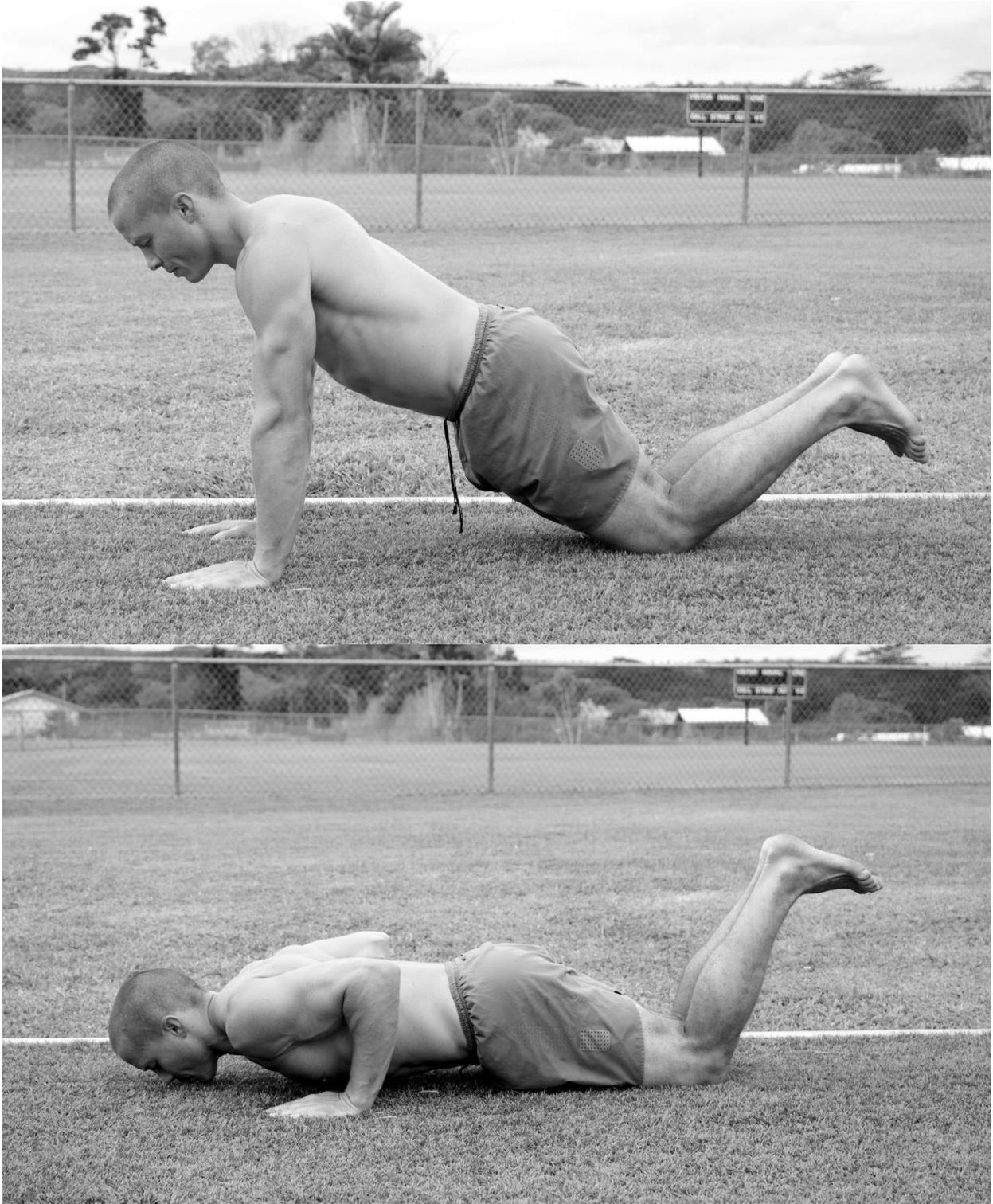
You can start with a higher angle and work your way down to a lower angle as you gain strength. (Pic credit Diane from <http://thefitnessedgeofhv.com/>)



## Kneeling Push-ups

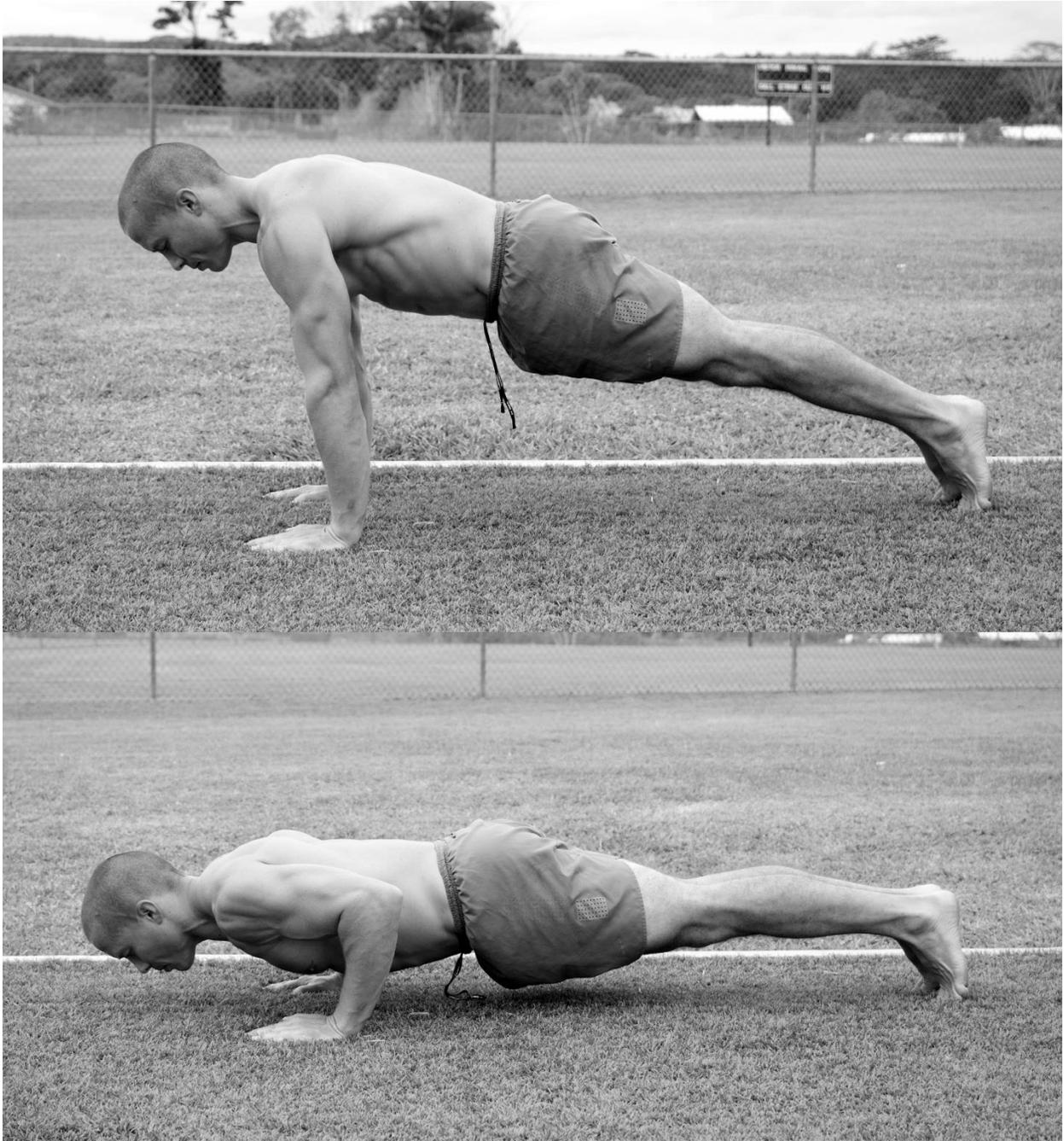
This exercise is just like a regular push-up, but with your weight supported on your knees instead of your toes. Keep your body straight and your abs and glutes tight.





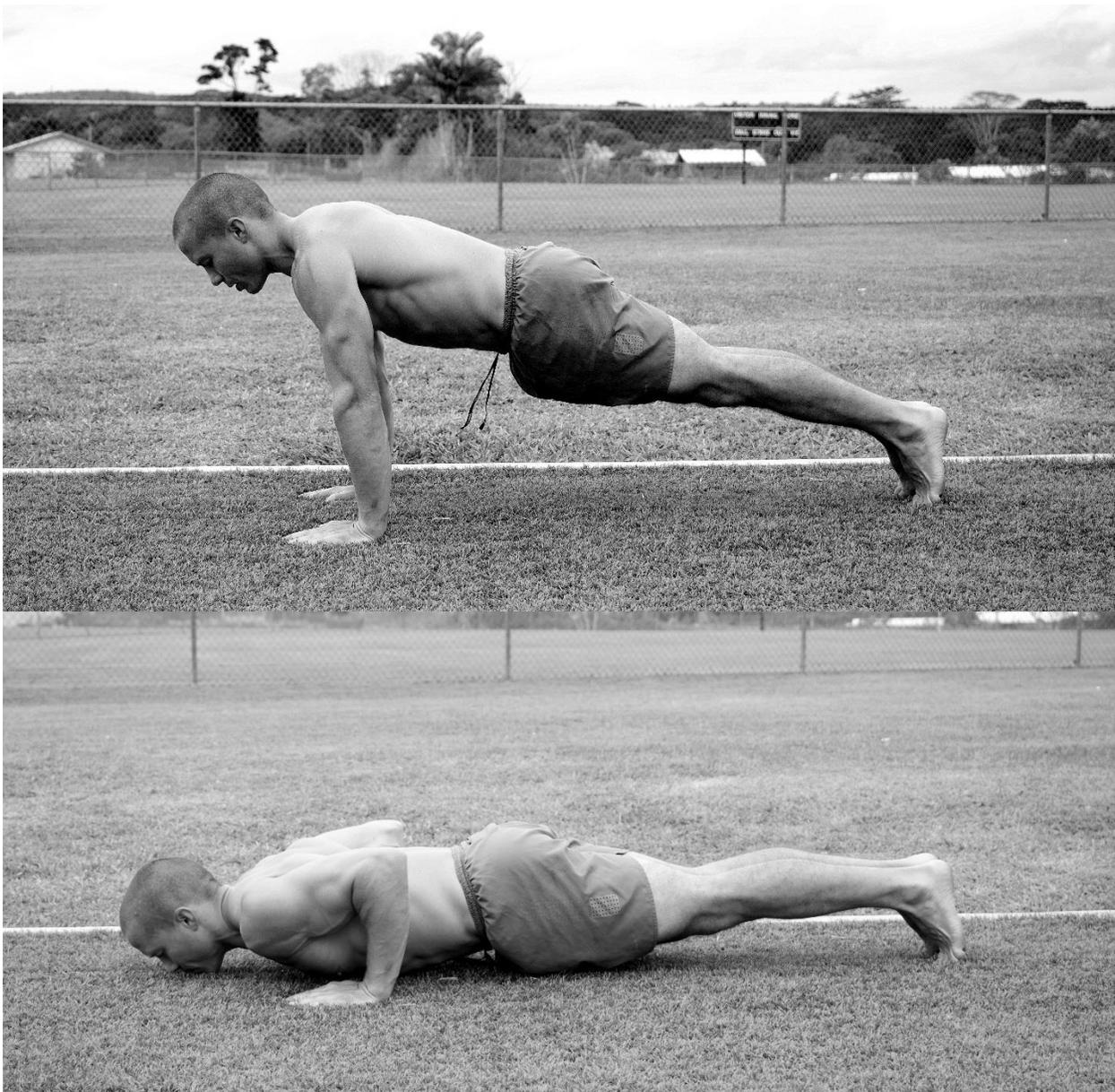
## Half Push-ups

This one is closer to an actual push-up. Perform it in exactly the same way as you would a regular push-up, but go only halfway down before returning to the starting position.



## Push-ups

This is the push-up you see in movies and probably had to do at some point in school. Use the proper form described above: feet together, hands under the shoulder line and slightly more than body-width apart, and straight line throughout the body. Lower your body until your chest touches the ground and then push to straighten the arms until almost completely straight (but not locked). Repeat.



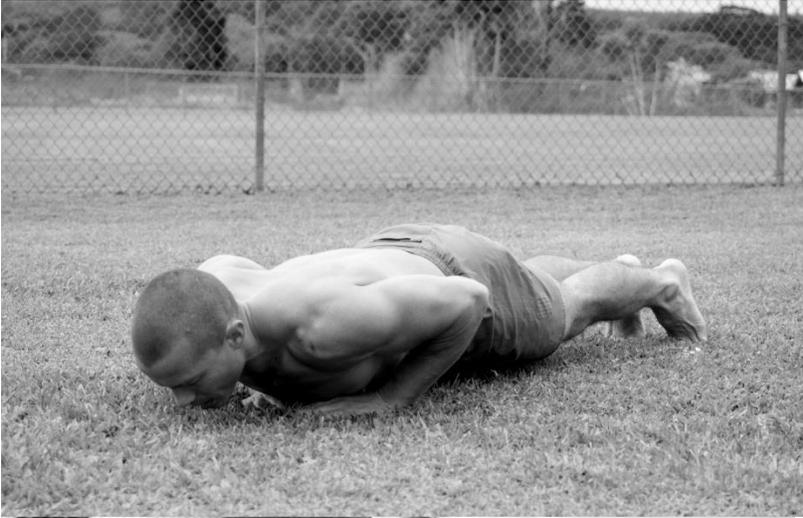
## Elbow-In Push-ups

Keep your elbows inside the boundary of your wrists through the entire push-up action. Take the normal push-up position, (keep your feet together, hands shoulder width apart) and lower your chest to the ground, then push back up. Your elbows should form a 90-degree angle at the bottom position of the push-up (as shown below).



## Diamond Push-ups

Move your hands close together under your chest so the index fingers and thumbs almost touch, forming a diamond shape. Bend your elbows to lower your body toward the ground. Keep your triceps close to your trunk as you maintain a rigid torso. Push up to return to the starting position. A complete set consists of 8 to 12 repetitions of this exercise— more if you are training for endurance.



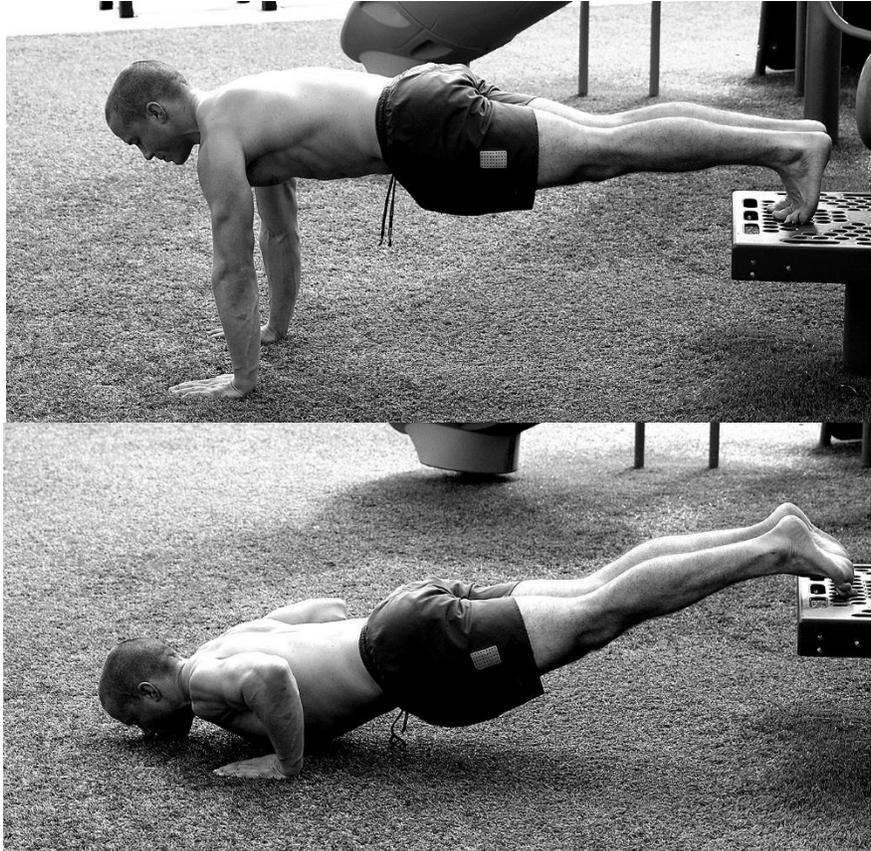
## Wide-grip Push-ups

Kneel down on the floor and place your hands on the floor in front of you, slightly wider than shoulder-width apart. Now take your knees off the floor and step back with your feet until your legs are outstretched and your toes are on the floor. Keeping your body straight, slowly lower your body as low as possible. Pause, and then slowly go back to the starting position.



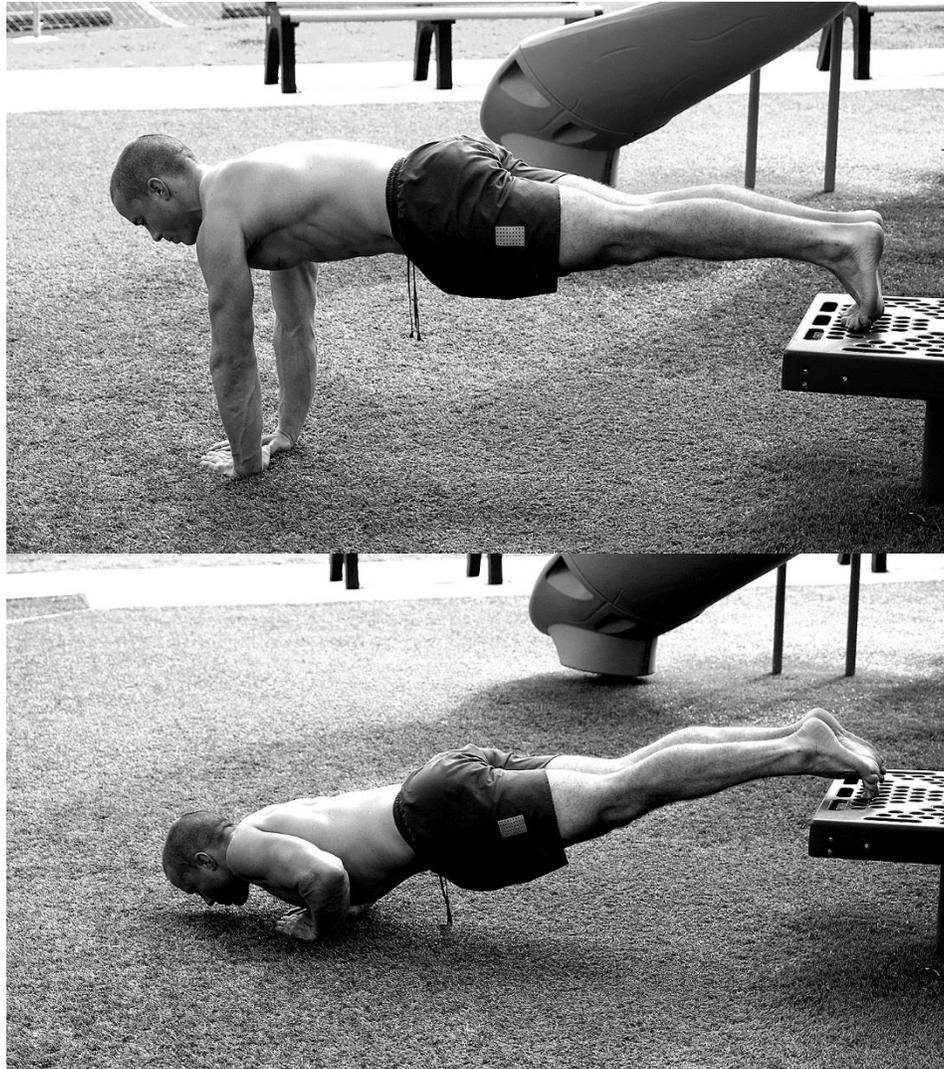
## Decline Push-ups

Now that you've mastered the regular push-up, it is now time to move on to something really difficult: decline push-ups. As the name suggests, instead of having your hands on the bench, chair or couch, you'll put your feet on it. Place your feet on a sturdy object a foot or two off the ground. The higher the object, the more difficult the push-up. Keeping your feet together, your hands shoulder-width apart, and your body straight, lower your body as far as possible and push yourself back up.



## Decline Diamond Push-ups

As the name suggests, it is a mix of diamond and decline push-ups. Put your feet above the ground as described in the decline push-ups. Keep your hands in the diamond push-ups position. And now you're good to go.



## Uneven Push-ups:

Find an object that is 8 to 12 inches off the ground. Assume the push-up position with one hand on the object and the other hand on the ground. Your hands should be about 12 inches apart. Keep your feet together. Tilt your head up, maintaining a straight-ahead gaze and tightening your abdominal muscles. Breathe in through your mouth as you lower your body. Breathe out on your way back up. When you reach the point of muscle fatigue, bring your rear end up into the air and bend your knees slightly to rest. Straighten back out to resume the pushups. Switch sides by placing your other hand on the object. Follow along below for a demonstration.



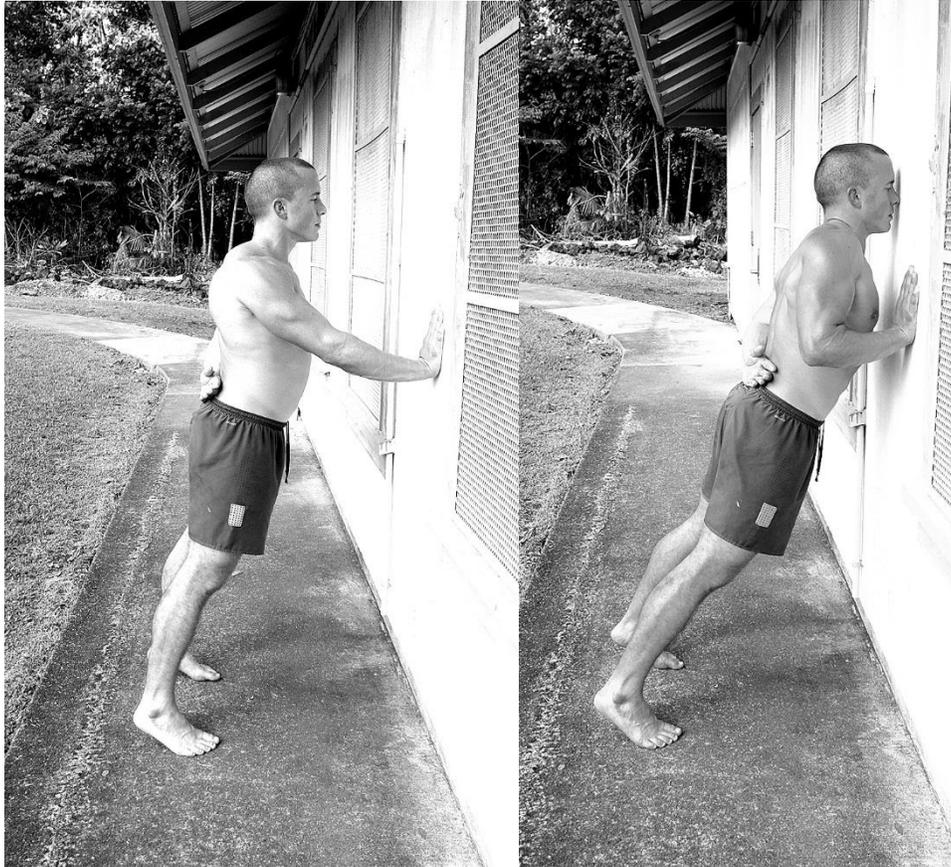
## Uneven Lever Push-ups

You can add this step or skip depending on how you are feeling about progressing to the next step. Here is what it looks like:



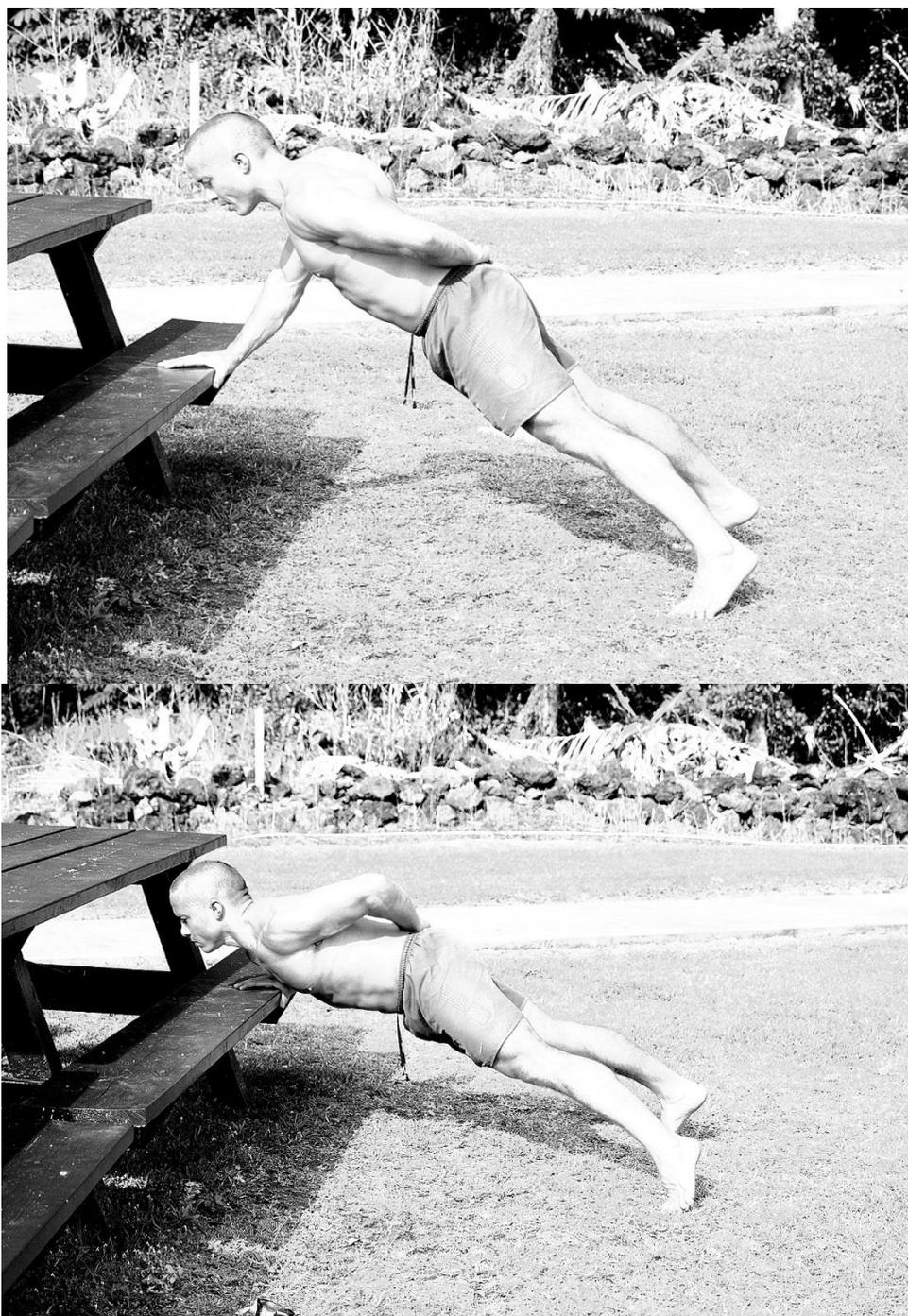
## One-Arm Wall Push-Ups

These are just like the one-arm push-ups, but instead of performing them on the floor, you perform them against the wall. Keep your legs shoulder-width apart and shoulders parallel to the wall. With one hand against the wall, perform the push-up.



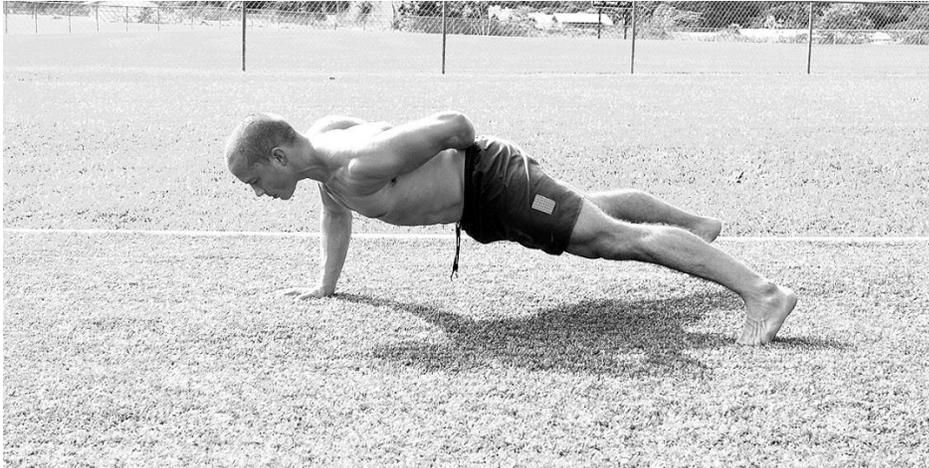
## One-Arm Incline Push-Ups

This is a little tougher than the one-arm wall push-ups. Nothing changes in this, except that this time perform it on an incline by using a raised object like a bench rather than against the wall. You place your arm on an incline and perform the movement. Go as deep as you can that's the key.



## Straddle One-Arm Push-Ups

This is exactly what it sounds like. Your first go at one arm push-up, but with the support of your legs.



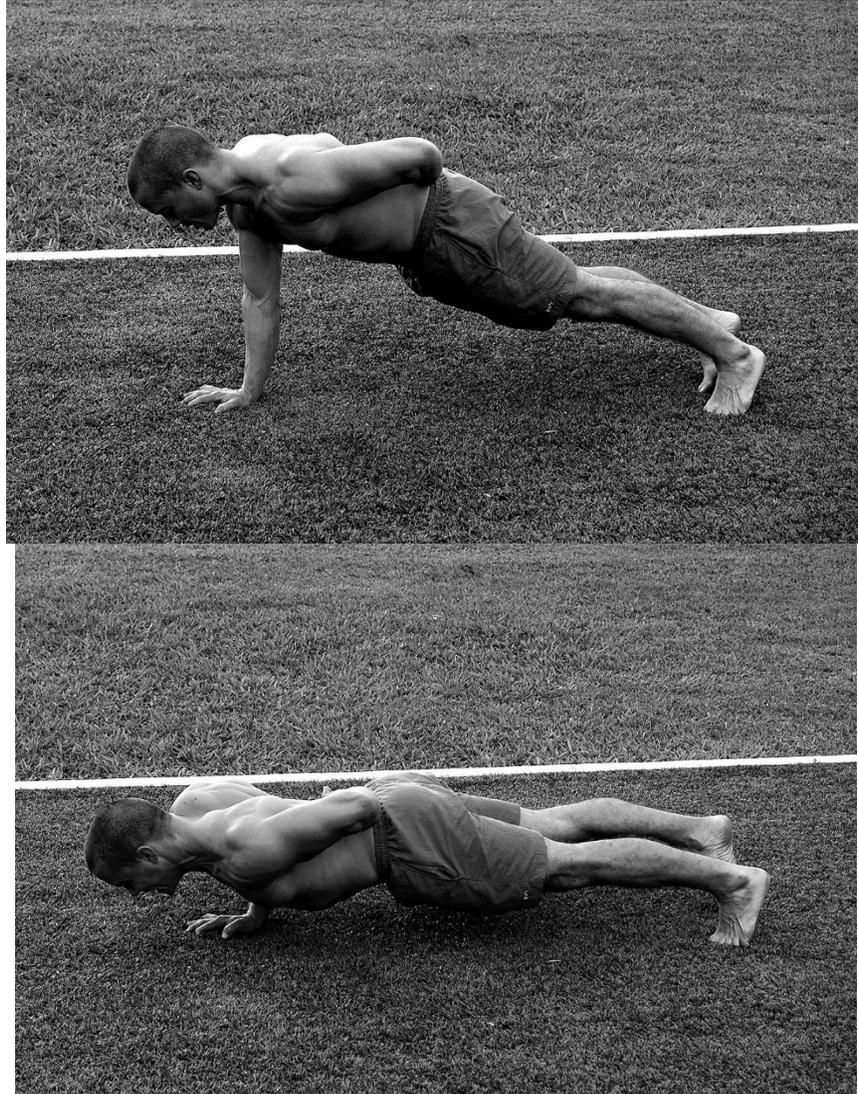
## Half One-Arm Push-Ups

Now you the have strength to partially perform the movement you've been pursuing. Half one-arm push-ups are nothing but one-arm push-ups where you lower your body only halfway down, but the difference between this and straddle is that your legs are all together which makes it way harder.



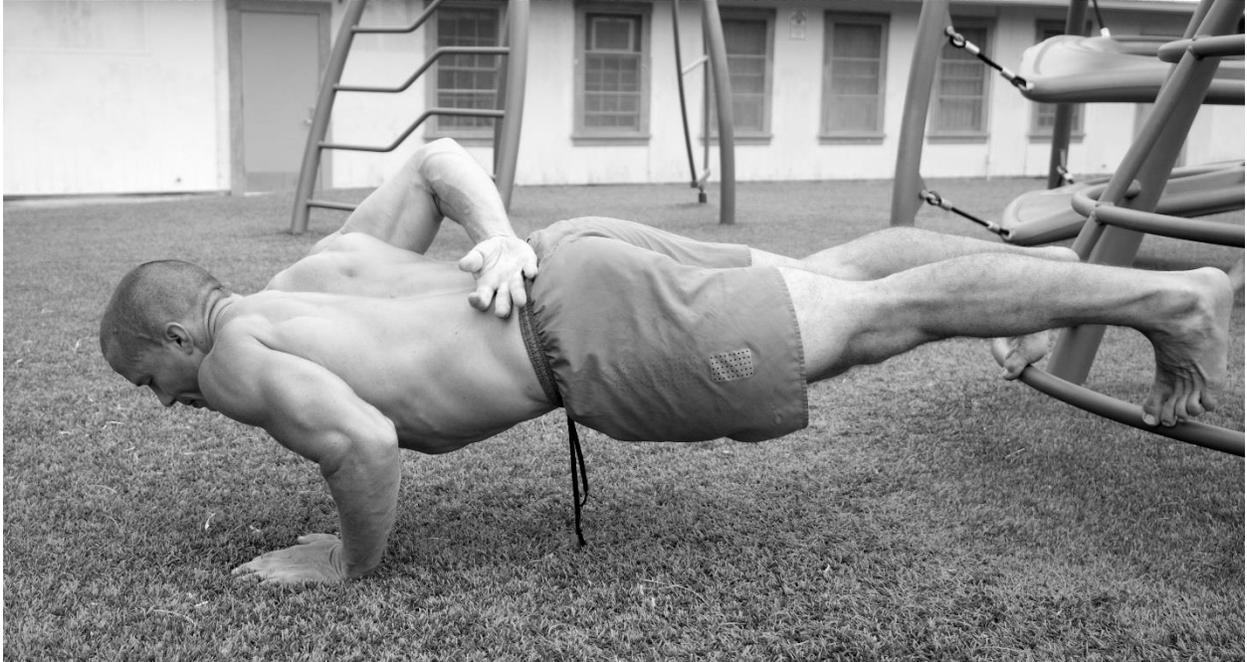
## One-Arm Push-Ups

This is the push-up you have worked so hard to get to. This variation should have your feet touching and this time you will lower your body all the way down for a complete one-arm push-up. You should be able to complete 3 sets of 8 of these once you reach this point.



## Decline One-Arm Push-Ups

Again, we level up the difficulty of this new movement by adding a decline. Put your feet on a sturdy object to raise them off of the ground. The higher your feet, the harder the movement—and the greater your growth.



## Vertical Pushing (Handstand Push-Up)

Handstand push-ups are among the most challenging exercises out there. These are the best for building bigger, wider, and stronger shoulders. They're usually performed with a spotter or the help of a wall, but once you've built up enough strength, balance, and coordination, you can do it

without any assistance or support. Apart from your deltoids, handstand push-ups work your upper chest, upper back and deltoids, and triceps as well. But all of those strength gains won't come easily—this is a very difficult movement to perform. Some people struggle with the strength factor, while others struggle to achieve required balance. Here, I've broken it down into simple progression steps so it is easy for you to get there and nail those handstand push-ups.

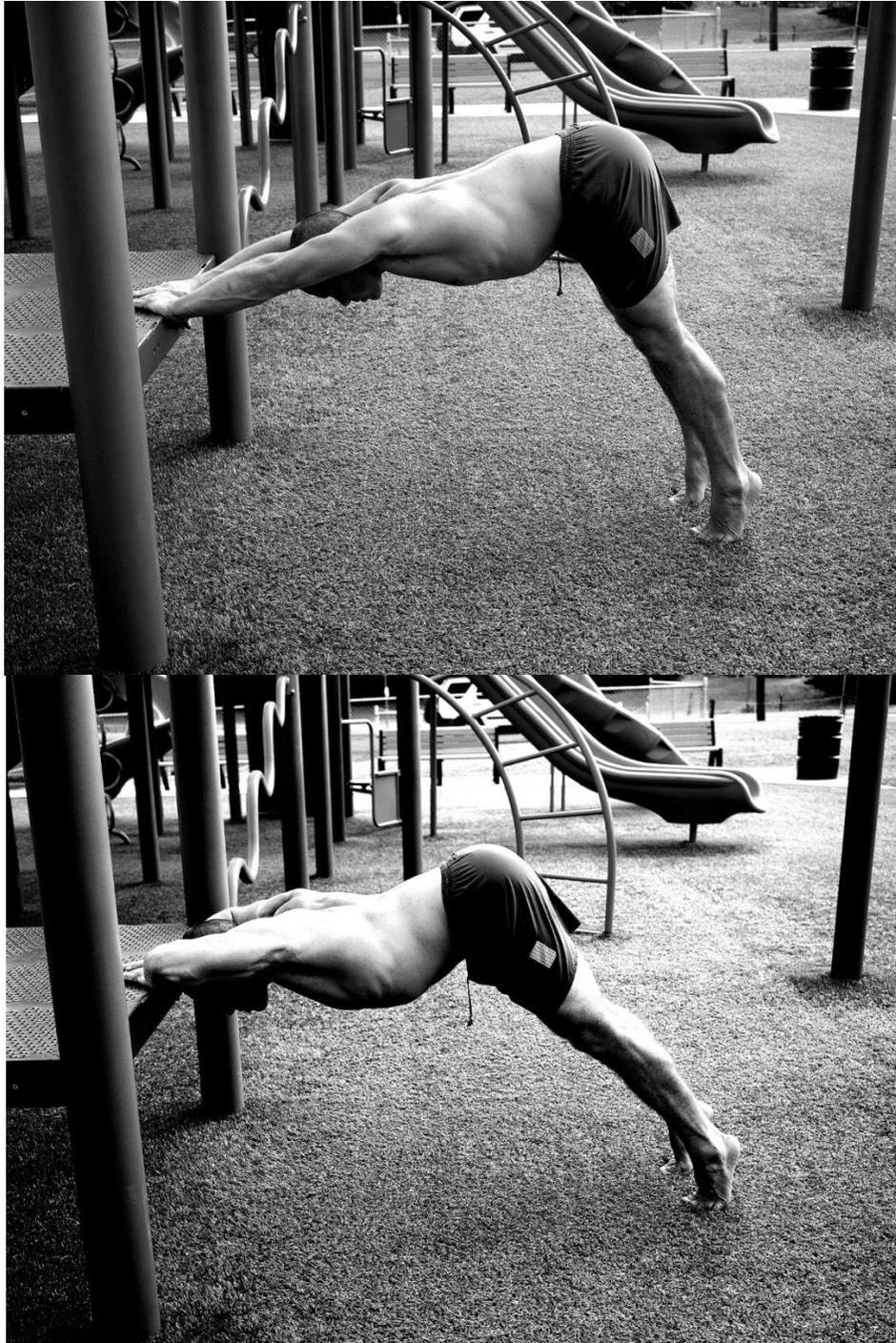
## Incline Pike Push-Ups

Bend at the waist to set your hands on an elevating object a little more than shoulder-width apart. Spread your fingers wide for stability. Come up on your toes to push your hips up and put some of your body weight on your hands. Now, lower yourself forward toward the edge of the elevated object. Touch your head lightly to the edge and then return to your initial position.



## Incline Pike Diamond Push-Ups

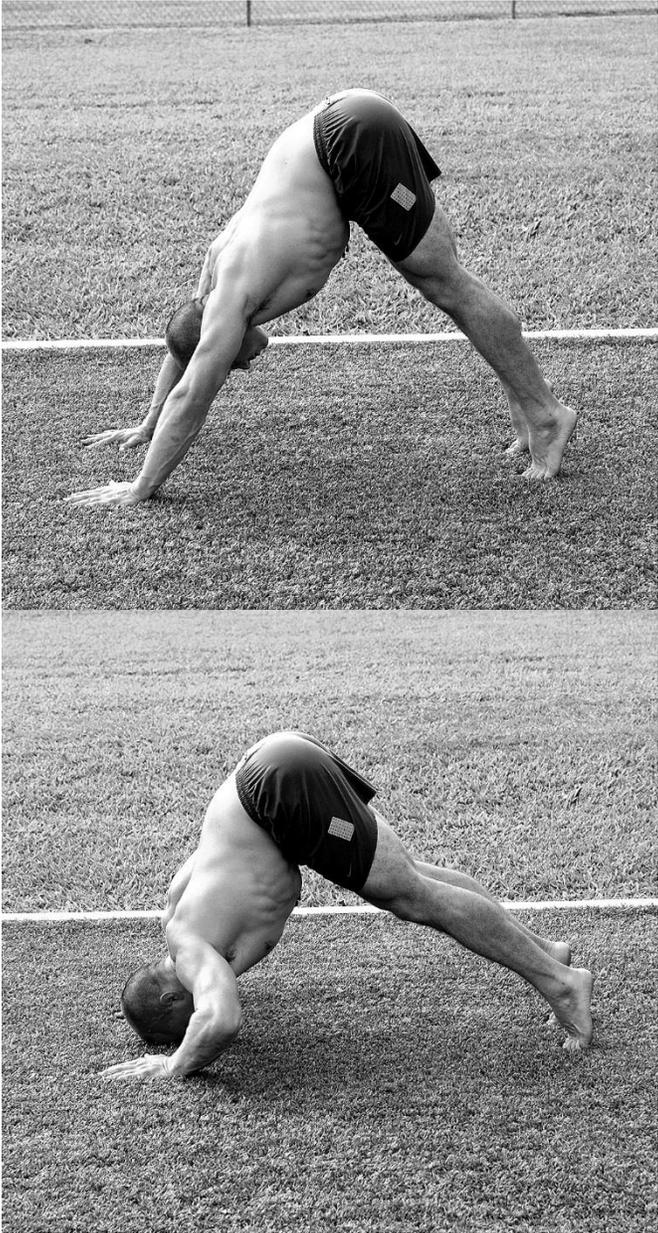
This is just a mix of diamond push-ups and pike push-ups, but it is much harder than the previous moves. Position your hands as you would to perform a diamond push-up—close together, with the index fingers and thumbs of each hand nearly touching the other to form a diamond shape. Then, take the stance I described for a pike push-up—up on your toes to put your weight on your hands and shoulders. Lower yourself forward and down, then press back up.



## Pike Push-Ups

Now, to step the difficulty up again, we're going to increase the amount of bodyweight you're pressing by removing the upper-body elevation. Bending from the waist, set your hands on the ground a little more than shoulder-width apart, spreading your fingers wide for stability. Come

up on your toes to push your hips away from the ground Lower yourself down until your forehead lightly touches the ground, and then press back up to your initial position.



## Pike Diamond Push-Ups

Perform these exactly like the regular pike push-up, but bring your hands together in the diamond formation. Remember to keep your back straight throughout the entire motion.



## Decline Pike Push-Ups

Place your feet on an elevated object and perform pike push-ups. This takes the range of motion of a usual pike push-up to a whole new level.



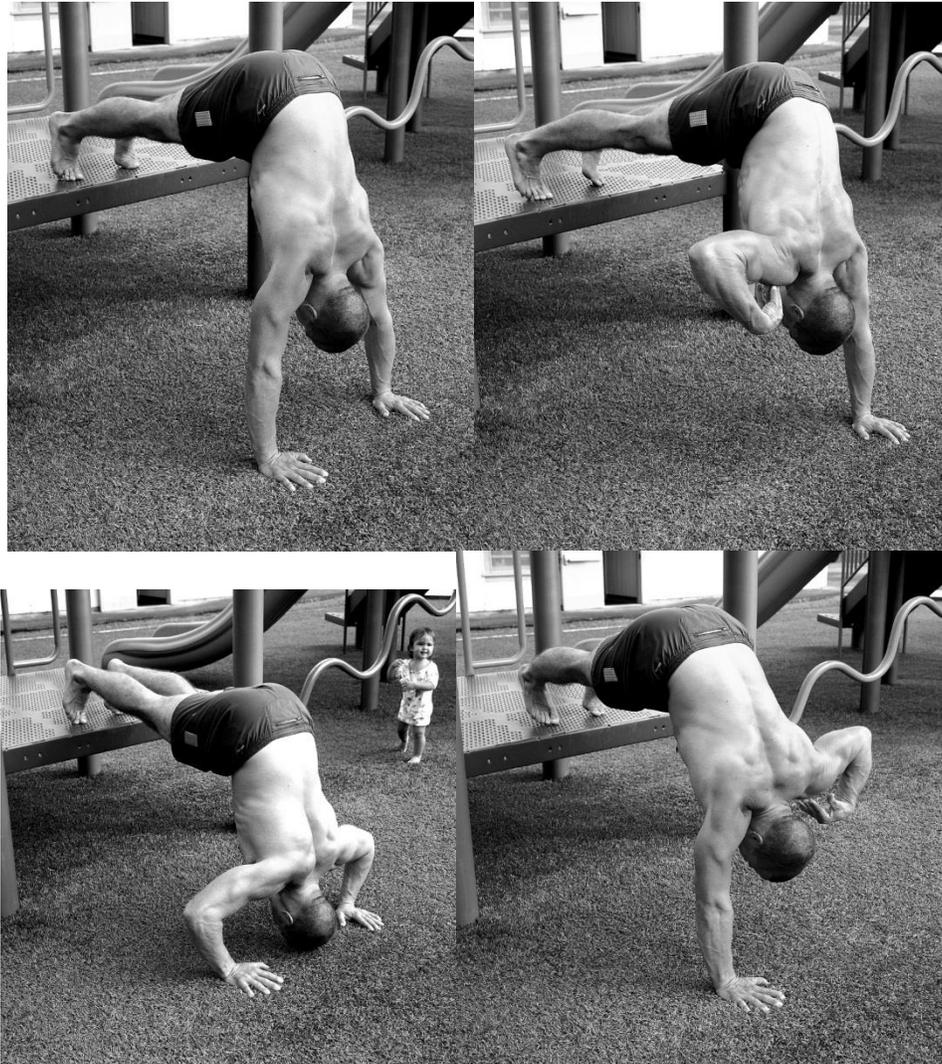
## Decline Pike Diamond Push-Ups

Perform decline pike push-ups with your hands set in the diamond formation.



## Decline Pike Push-Ups with Shoulder Taps

This is the same as the decline pike push-up with a little variation. Every time you perform a rep, lift one hand off of the ground and tap your shoulder. Tapping your shoulders engages your core muscle and builds core strength, which is very crucial while performing a handstand.



See the video below for detailed Instructions. [Click HERE to access it!](#)

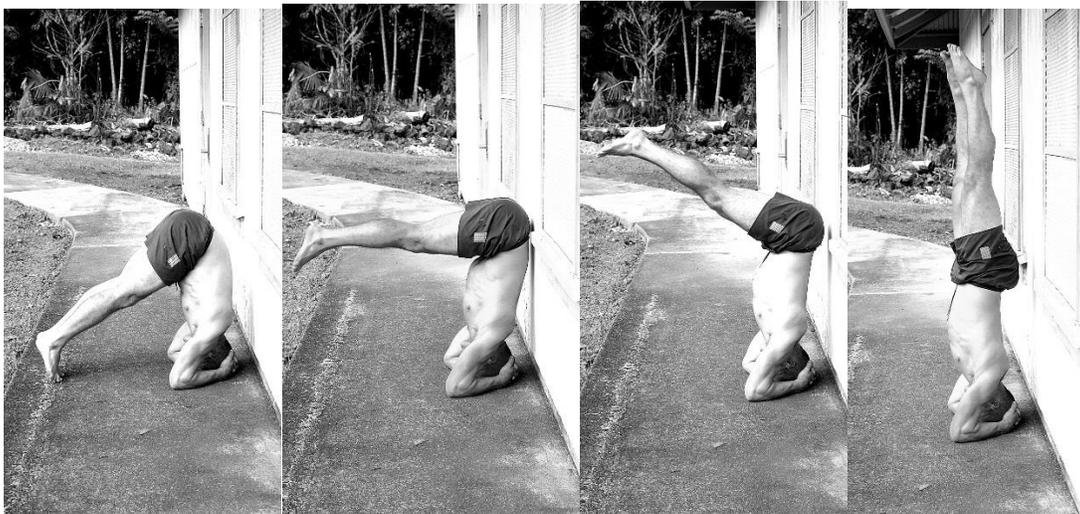


## Wall-Assisted Headstand

Before moving to handstands, I suggest you first practice your headstand. This will make sure your shoulders are strong enough to do the job and help you develop your balance. To start, bend at the waist to place your head and forearms on the ground. Now, many beginners are tempted to get vertical by kicking their legs up off the floor. That's the last thing you want to do. It's lazy, uncontrolled, and likely to get you injured. Instead, **slowly** walk your feet toward your head—get as close as your flexibility will allow. Then, use your core to pull your legs up over your hips. This can be a skill exercise preparing you well for a variety of handstands. Here is what it looks like:



As you get better at this and your balance and core strength improve, try to keep your legs straight as you lift them. This will force your core to work harder and prepare it for the next steps.



## Free Headstand

Follow the formula above—but this time, try it without the wall.

Here is a video with detailed instructions. [CLICK HERE FOR ACCESS](#)





## Wall-Assisted Handstand

Place your palms on the ground shoulder-width apart and take the pike position, which you learned for basic pike push-ups, to begin your handstand. Spread your fingers wide for better balance. Slowly bring one leg up to touch the wall, then straighten it upward. Bring up the other leg, keeping your core tight, and straighten it upward as well. Try to hold this position as long as possible. Note, again, that you want to avoid kicking; try for a slow, controlled movement driven by your abs. There you have it. Now practice it, and make it perfect.



## Handstand Hold against the Wall, with Shrugs

Once you've gotten comfortable with the wall-assisted handstand, increase the difficulty by adding shoulder shrugs. Hold your handstand position while raising and lowering your body by shrugging your shoulders. This will help you build shoulder strength while working on your handstand skills.



Here is the video with the detail instructions. [CLICK HERE FOR ACCESS](#)



## Handstand Shuffle

This is a simple variation on the wall-assisted handstand. Instead of just holding yourself in a stationary position, try to move or shuffle sideways. You may see it as walking sideways on your hands.

Here is the video with the detail instructions. [CLICK HERE FOR ACCESS.](#)



## Handstand Straddle Hold

To perform this exercise, start with a handstand, but instead of holding your legs straight above your body, spread them sideways and take the straddle position. Hold the position as long as you can. This will build great strength and stability and will be a huge step in the progression towards handstand push-ups.



## Handstand Straddle with Shoulder Taps

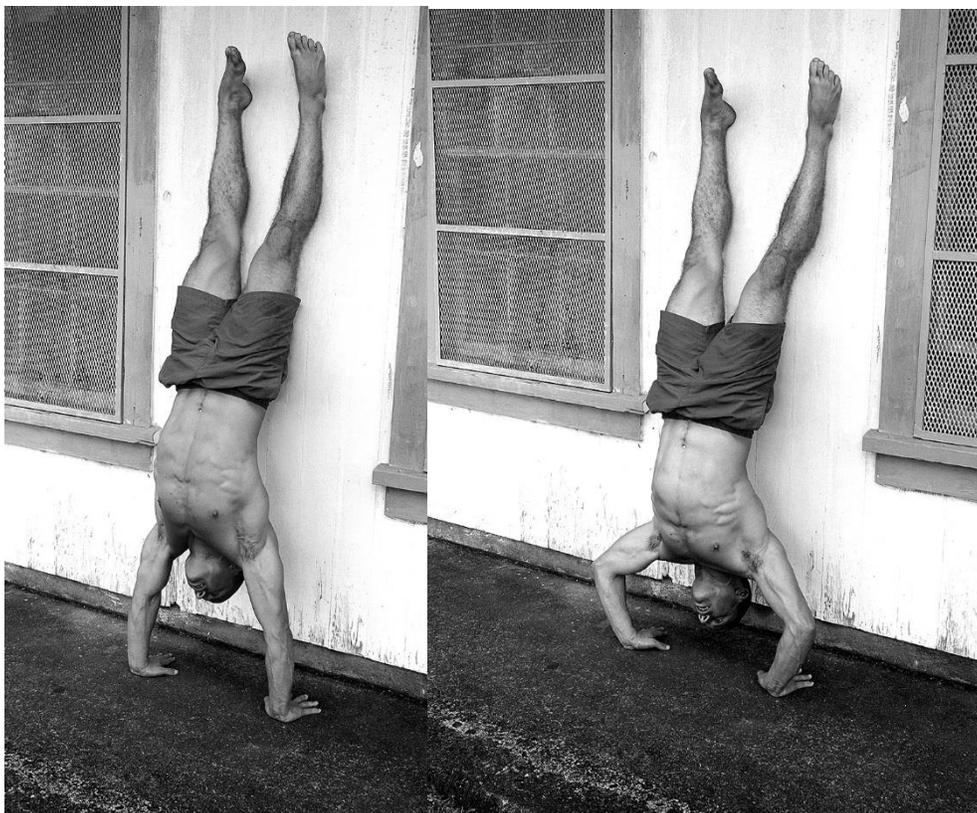
Take the handstand straddle position. Shift your weight carefully to center over one hand, freeing the other enough that you can lift it off of the ground and tap the opposite shoulder before setting it back down. Shift your weight the other direction and repeat with the other hand.

Here is a video with detailed INSTRUCTIONS. [CLICK HERE FOR ACCESS.](#)



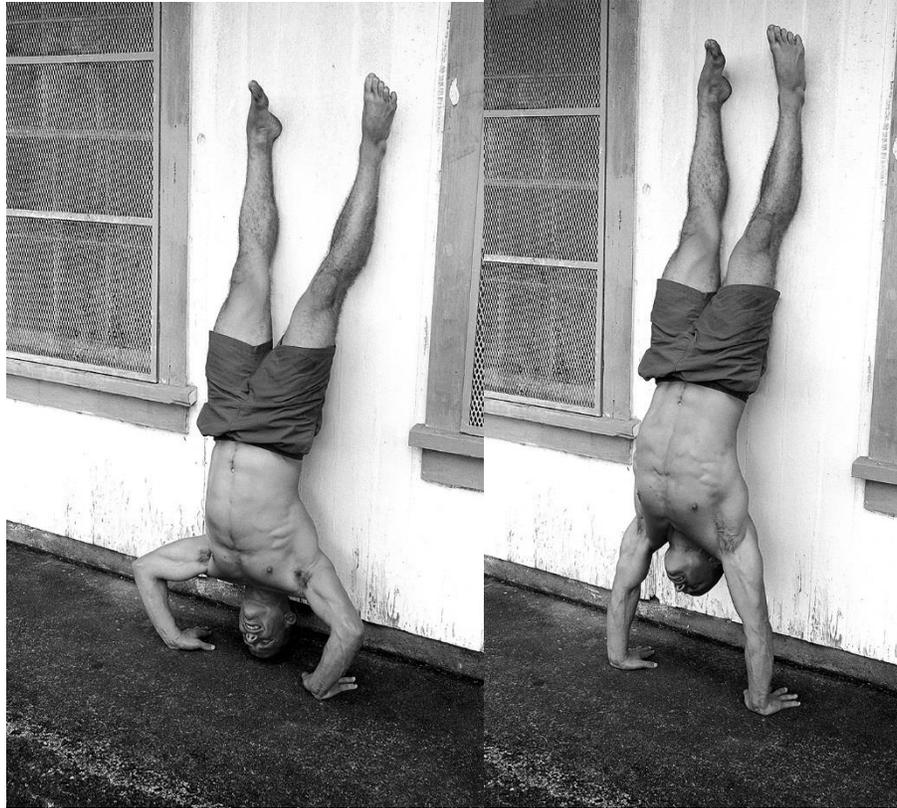
## Half Handstand Push-Ups

Perform a handstand with your hands slightly wider than shoulder width. Now, bend your elbows to lower your body down—but for now, only go half-way to the ground. This is half handstand push-up.



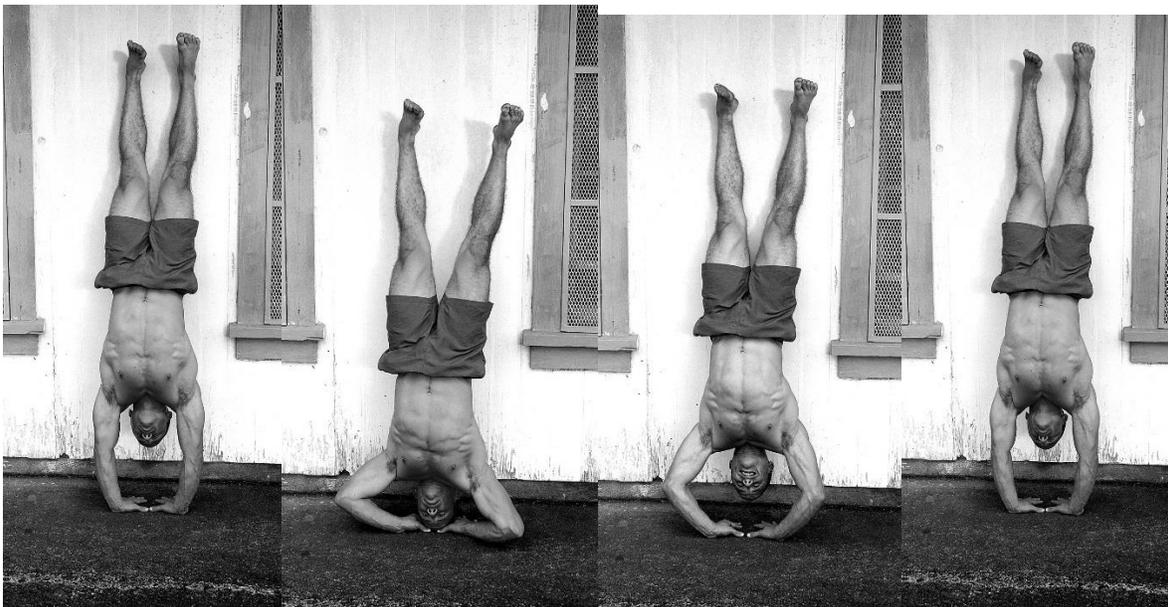
## Handstand Push-Ups

These are great for building muscle in your shoulders, but they also work your abs, upper back, and chest. From the handstand position, lower your body toward the ground the same way you did in the last exercise, but this time with the full range-of-motion. Try to touch your head lightly to the ground before pressing back up into the handstand.



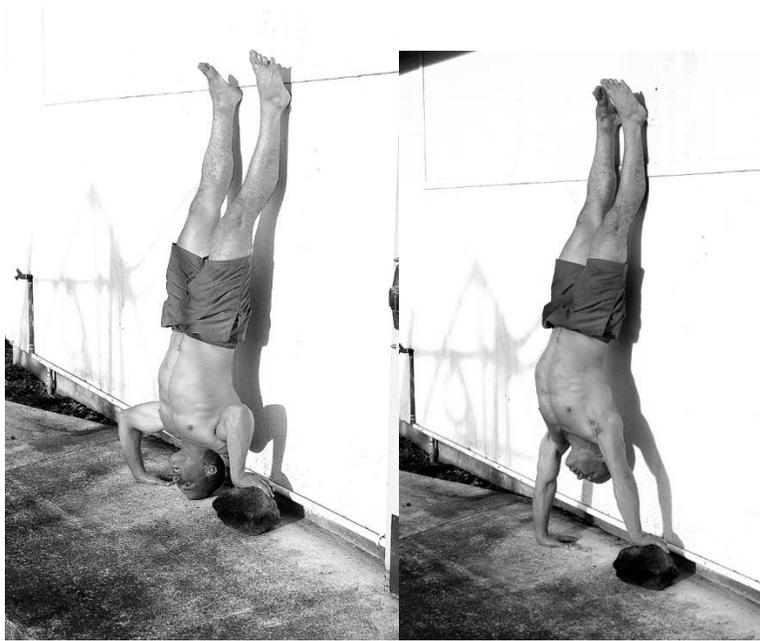
## Wall Handstand Diamond Push-Ups

Perform a handstand against a wall with your hands in the diamond formation. Lower yourself down, touch your head to the ground, and push back up.



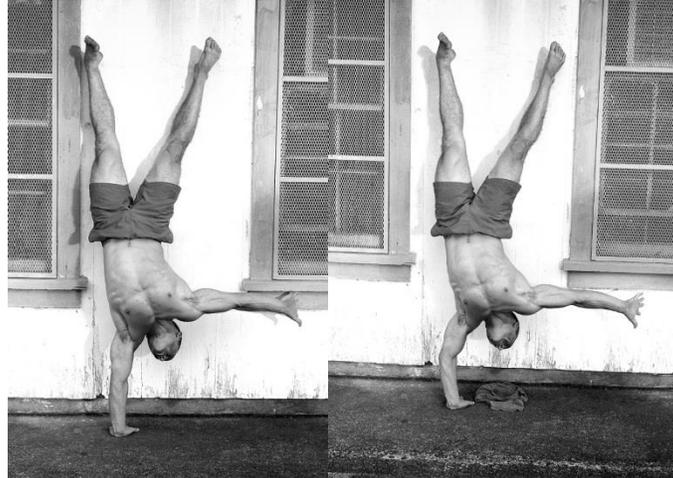
## Uneven Handstand Push-Ups

Recall how you performed uneven pushups; now you're going to apply the uneven form to handstand push-ups. Take the handstand position, then set one hand on some small, sturdy elevating object, like a box or a kettlebell. Perform your handstand push-ups from this position. These will be a great tool for building toward one-arm handstand push-ups.



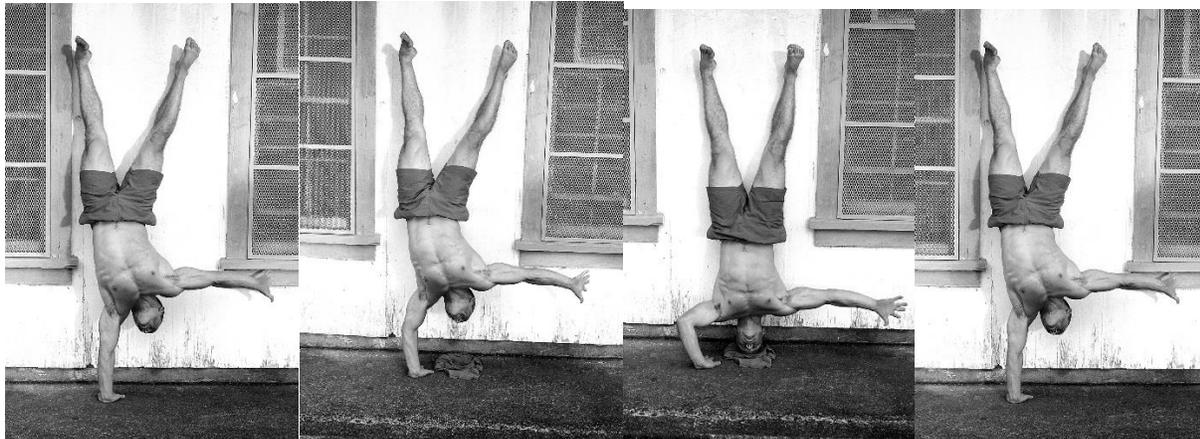
## Half One-Arm Handstand Push-Ups

Perform a handstand, and slowly remove your one hand from the ground. What you are now doing is a one-arm handstand. Once you feel strong and stable in this position, lower yourself half-way to where your head would touch the ground, then push back up into the handstand position.



## One-Arm Handstand Push-Ups

Perform the previous exercise, but this time lower yourself until your head touches the ground before pressing back up.



## Pulling Exercises

### Horizontal Pulling: Row Progressions

Front lever rows are very common among gymnasts. Usually performed with the help of rings, these can also be performed with a pull-up bar and are very beneficial if you are looking to work the muscles of your back, core and arms. Experts say the degree of difficulty this exercise provides could be put in between a human flag and a full plank. I've made this progression plan for you which will take some time and patience, but will surely get you to your destination. All you have to do is practice every step properly and consistently, and when you feel you can move to the next step, make the hop, and start practicing it. Never give up, and remember there is always some room for improvement.

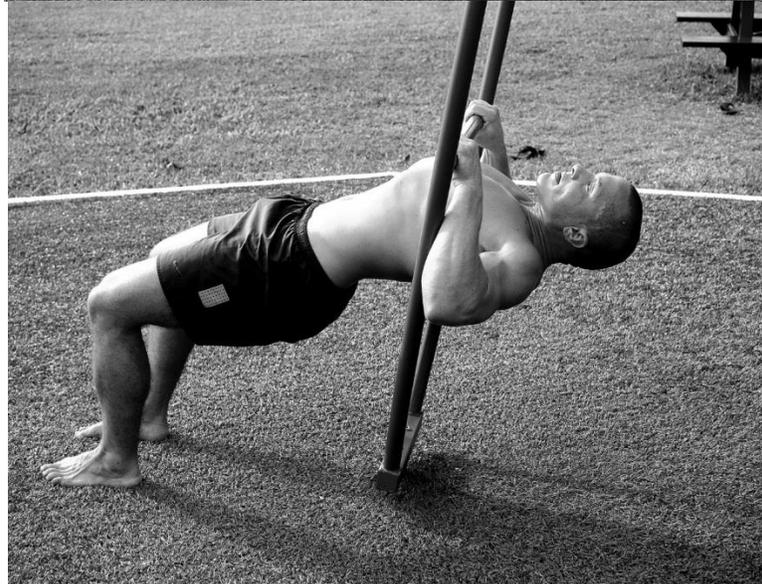
## Vertical Pulls

Place your feet on both sides of a vertical structure, grab hold of the structure on each side, and lean back. Keep your elbows close to your body as you pull, and squeeze your shoulders together on top of the movement. The closer your feet are to the object (or the further they are past it), the harder the exercise. You should breathe in as you lower yourself, and breathe out as you pull.



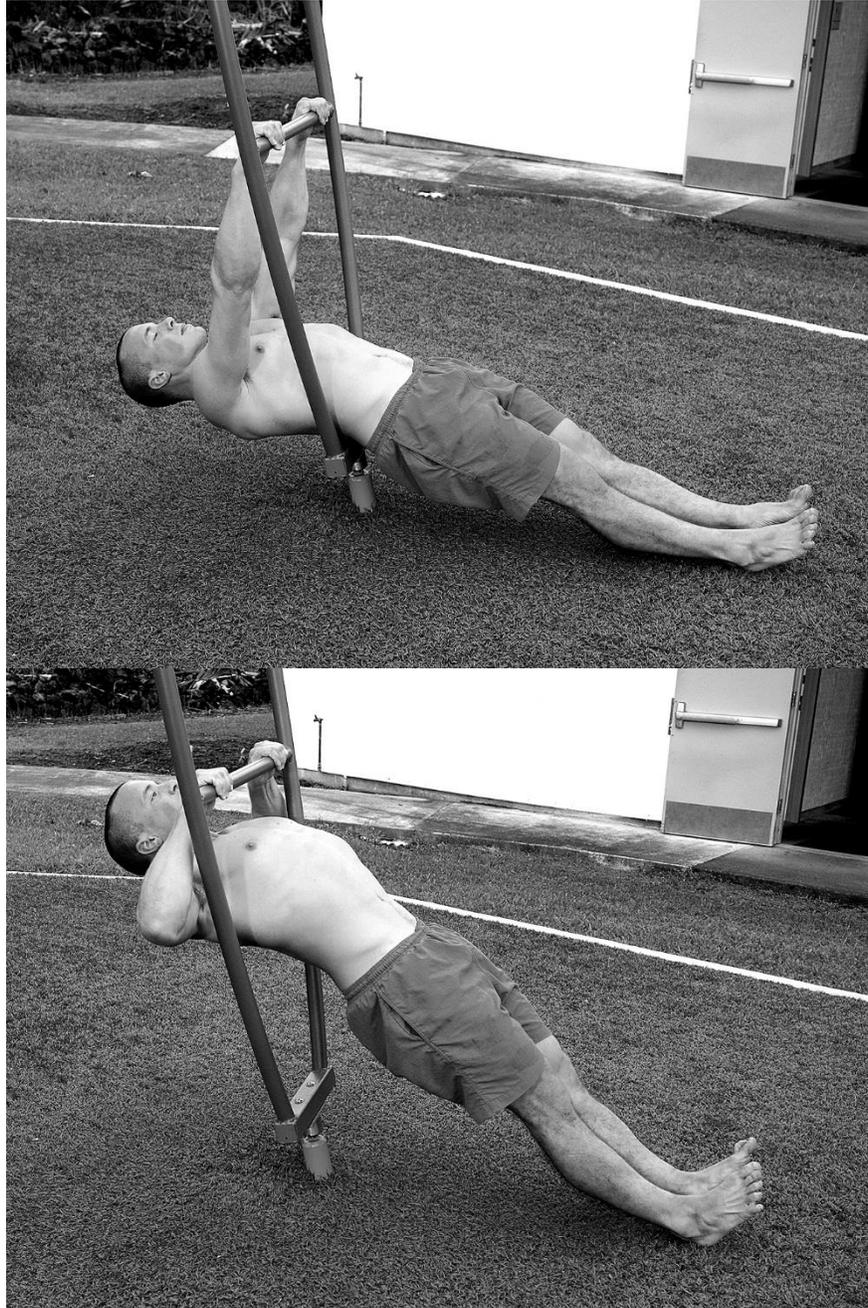
## Horizontal Pulls with Legs Bent

Perform these on a low horizontal bar, with bent legs and feet resting on the floor. Lower yourself slowly over 3 seconds. Squeeze your shoulder blades together as you reach the top of the movement to engage your rhomboids.



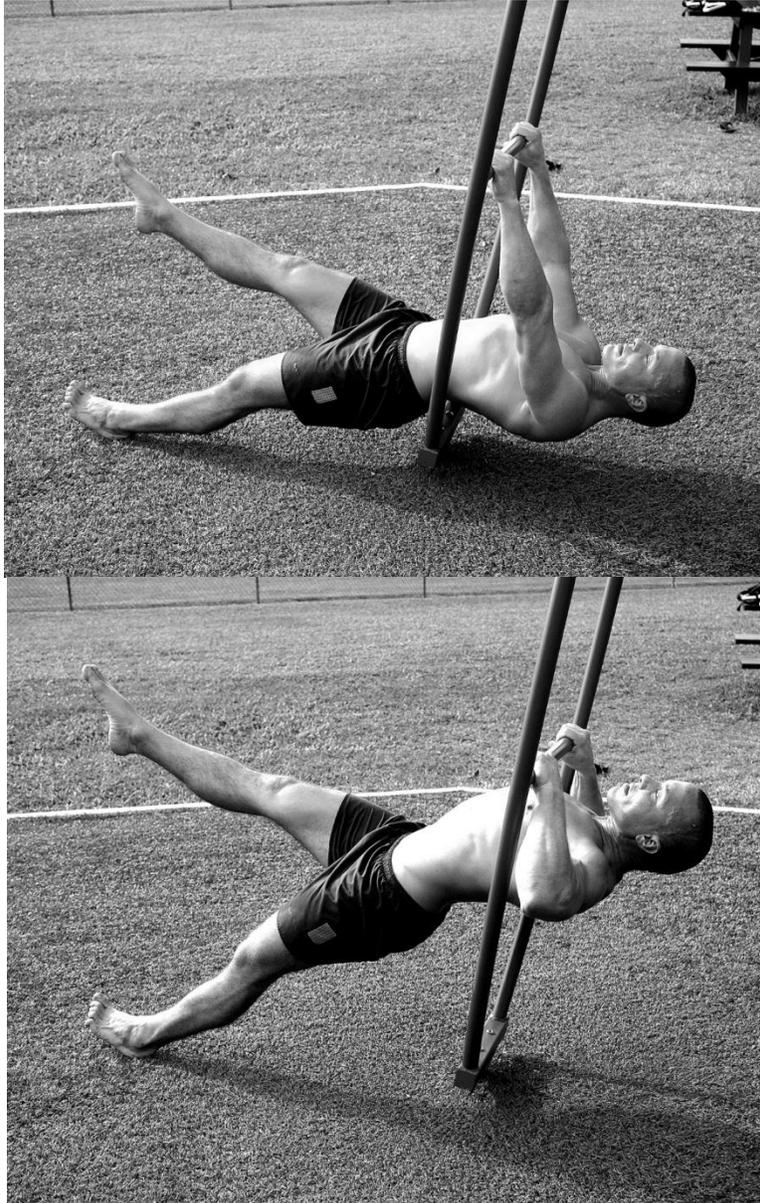
## Horizontal Pulls with Legs Straight

Perform these on a low horizontal bar, with straight legs and feet resting on the floor.



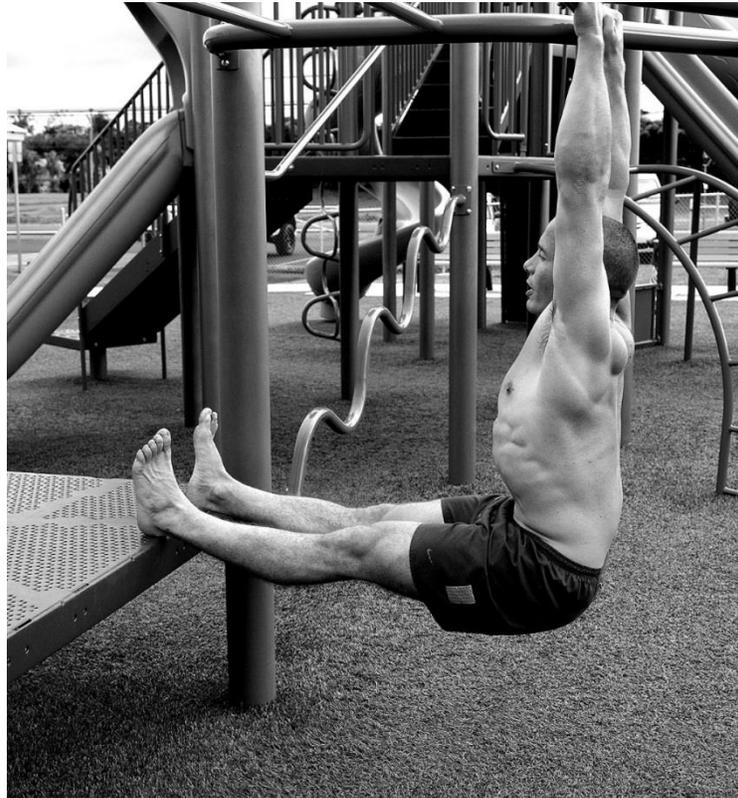
## Horizontal Pulls with One Leg Extended

Perform the straight-legged inverted rows with one leg extended.



## Horizontal Pulls with Legs Elevated

Performed by putting your legs on an elevated surface.





## Horizontal Pulls with Legs Elevated and One Leg Extended

This is a mixture of the above two exercises. Performed by placing your legs on an elevated surface with one leg extended.

## Tucked-Knees Front Lever Rows

While suspended from a pull-up bar, bring your knees under the bar and try to keep your upper body parallel to the floor. Then pull with your arms, bringing your chest towards the bar. You may have trouble just holding this position at first, so I recommend getting yourself upside-down any way you can and adjusting yourself into the position from there. The picture below shows the position I would begin with before turning slowly into the tuck lever position.



## Tuck Lever Hold

After working the negative motion through the tuck lever, you'll eventually find that you can slow down the skill and stop it at certain points. When you can stop the skill with your hips and shoulders in a horizontal line, then begin working the hold for longer and longer periods. As I mentioned when we used front levers to discuss breaking down a progression, I like to look down at my feet to determine when my body has hit the correct position.

A good way to measure progression at this stage is to count to yourself and try to beat your previous times.



## Tuck Lever Hold Pull Up

In the same position as you are, try to pull yourself up as much as you can. Practice that a few times.

## Flat-Back Front Lever Hold

Now, following the same cues, start lowering your knees until your back is flat. Hold this position as long as you can.



## Row with One Tucked Knee, One Leg Extended

Perform in a similar manner as the tucked-knees front lever rows but with one leg extended.



## Straddle leg Front rows

Spread your feet wide apart and then perform this exercise. The further apart your feet are (the wider your straddle), the easier this variation becomes.



## Front Lever Rows with Bands

Now use resistance bands to support some of your lower body weight. It will loan you some stability while you develop the strength and control to support your own weight fully.



## Front Lever

By now you should be able to perform a full front lever



## Front Lever Pulls

Starting from the tuck lever position, keeping both legs together, gradually extend them out at the hips and knees until they are completely straight. Your entire body will form one straight line parallel to the ground. Pull down from the hands and the lats, and then pull up as you would be doing a pullup.

## One-Arm Front Lever

Performed similar to the front lever but with only one arm holding the bar.

## Vertical Pulling—One-Arm Pull-Up

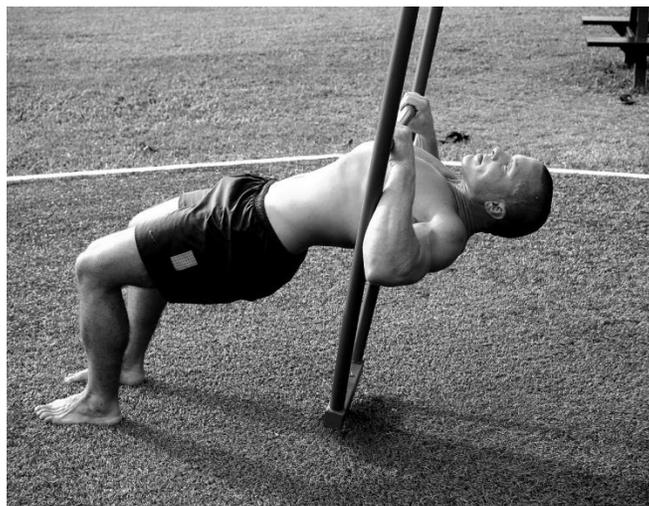
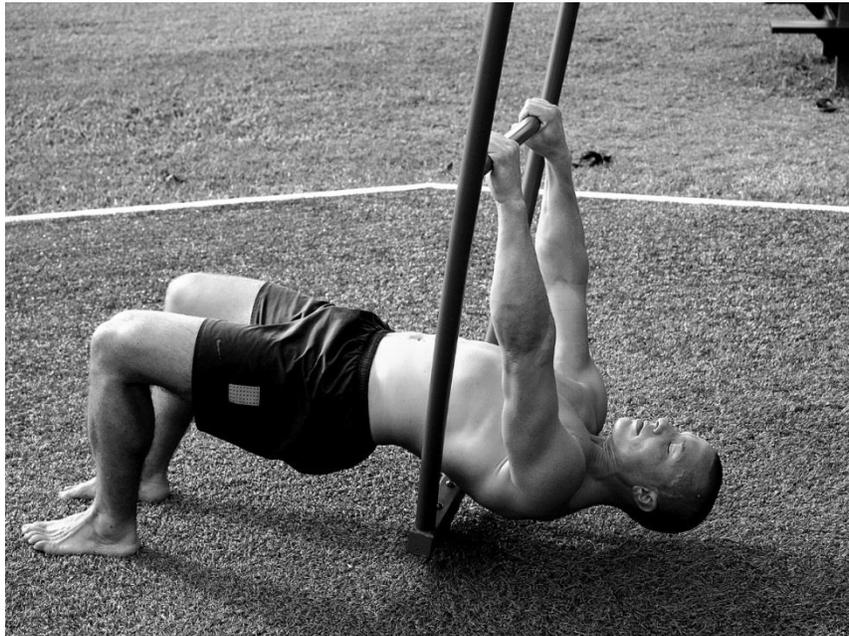
I once believed that a one arm pull-up was impossible. Then I started bodyweight training, and I came across videos of other athletes pulling them off with ease. That completely changed my perception of bodyweight training—and life as well. It turned me into a believer. It made me realize that with calisthenics everything is possible. A one-arm pull-up is incredibly difficult, but I guarantee if you follow this progression plan properly, you will see improvement, and in a matter of time you'll be able to do one arm pull-ups yourself.

## Vertical Pulls

Place your feet on both sides of a vertical structure, grab hold of the structure on each side, and lean back. Keep your elbows close to your body as you pull, and squeeze your shoulders together on top of the movement. The closer your feet are to the object (or the further they are past it), the harder the exercise. You should breathe in as you lower yourself, and breathe out as you pull.

## Horizontal Pulls with Legs Bent

Performed on a low horizontal bar, with bent legs and feet resting on the floor. Lower yourself slowly over 3 seconds. Squeeze your shoulder blades together as you reach the top of the movement to engage your rhomboids.



## Horizontal Pulls

Performed on a low horizontal bar, with straight legs and feet resting on the floor.



## Dead Hang

The dead hang is a simple exercise that involves hanging from an overhead bar and is a great way to introduce you to bodyweight training and developing the fundamental grip strength. Grip an overhead bar or ring and hang with feet suspended from the floor and arms extended.



## Chin over Bar Hold

Jump and hold the bar with your chin above the bar. Hold this position for as long as possible.



## Negative Chin-up

Jump up in the chin-up position with your chin above the bar, then slowly lower yourself down to the count of 5 seconds.



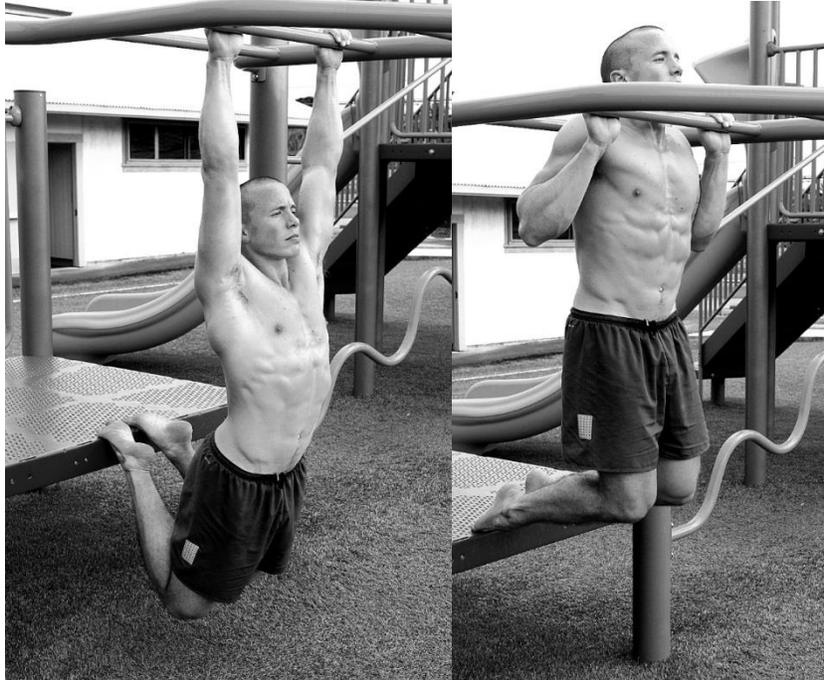
## Jackknife Pull-Up

Place a high object under and in front of your pull-up bar (a sturdy chair or—even better—a table). Placement is the key for jackknife pull-ups to be effective; ideally, the table or chair should be high enough for your legs to rest on it at no more than a 90-degree angle to your torso when your arms are fully extended. Push with your heels into the chair or table and straighten your abdomen while bringing your chin to the bar.



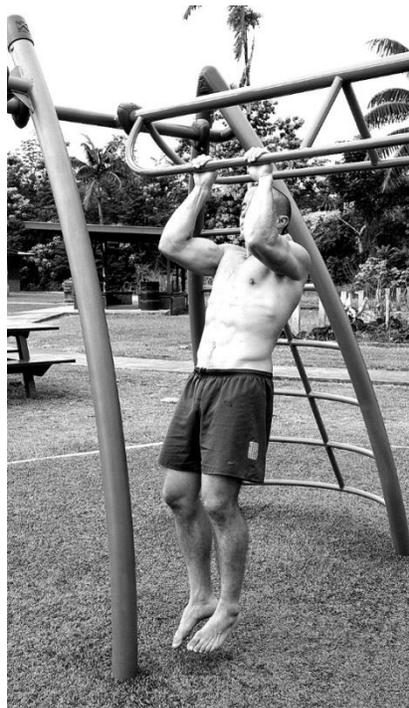
## Assisted Pull-Up

This is another assisted variation, but should provide much less support. You can use a table or chair again, but a resistance band would be best here. You should have some support, but most of the force should come from your arms. The key here is you control how much help you get from your assisting leg. Try to reduce this assistance over time. You can do this by slowly cutting back how much contact your feet have with the assisting surface—try to work down to having only your toes on the table or chair.



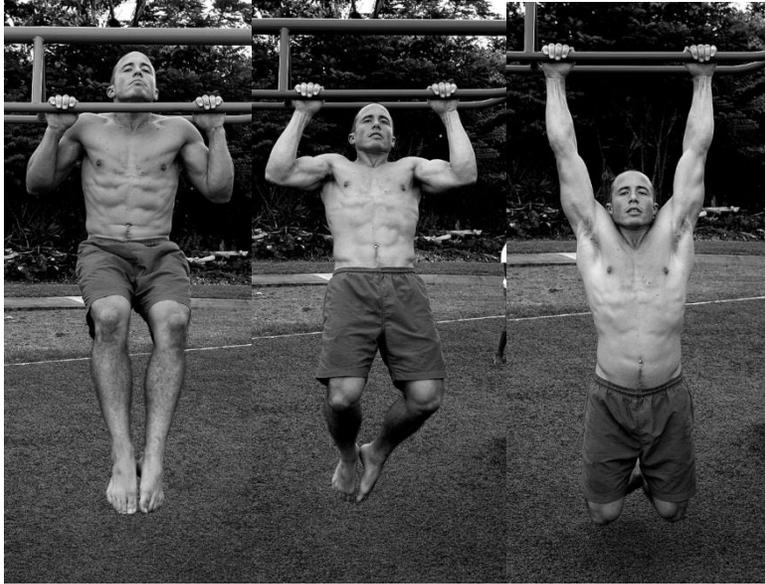
## Bent-Arm Hold

As with a dead hang, the goal of this exercise is to hold your position. But this time, hold with your arms bent at right angles.



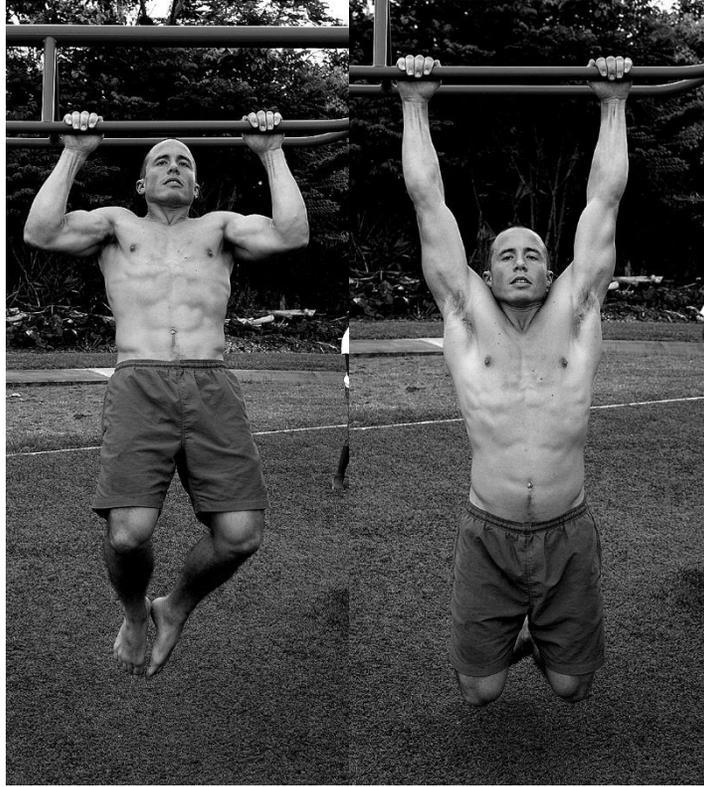
## Negative Pull-Up

Jump up in the pull-up position with your chin above the bar, then slowly lower yourself down to the count of 5 seconds. Note that the grip is the reverse of the chin-up grip.



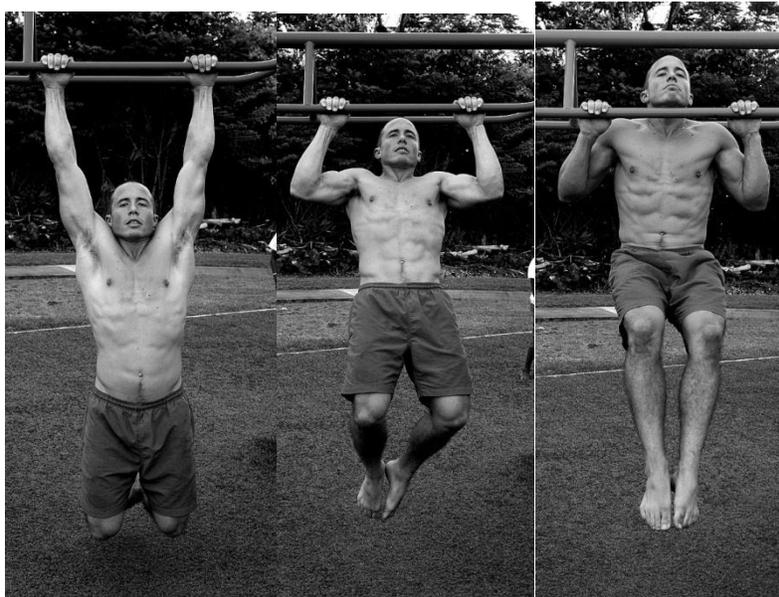
## Half Pull-Up

Start in mid-range, and pull yourself up through half the range of motion, until your chin clears the bar. Then lower yourself back to mid-range (elbows bent at 90 degrees).



## Pull-Up

From a dead hang, pull yourself up until your chin clears the bar.



## Close-Grip Pull-Up

Same as a pull-up, but with your hands close together. This variation places added emphasis on your biceps.



## Wide-Grip Pull-Up

Same as a pull-up, but with your hands farther than shoulder-width apart. This variation places added emphasis on your latissimus dorsi.

## Uneven One-Arm Pull-Up

Loop a towel over your pull-up bar. Grip the bar with one hand and the towel with the other, and do your pull-ups from this position. The lower your grip is on the towel, the less the arm holding it will actually provide. Also, try to modify your grip on the towel to reduce the assistance (hold with only 2 fingers for instance). The photo below shows another way to achieve this variation— one arm holds the bar, and the other arm holds the first arm.



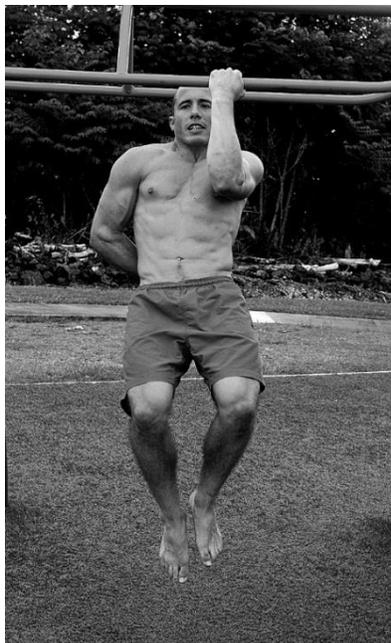
## Towel-Assisted One-Arm Negative Pull-Up and Pull-Up

It is highly recommended that you start with negatives. Let go of the towel once your chin clears the bar, and lower yourself over a count of 5 seconds.



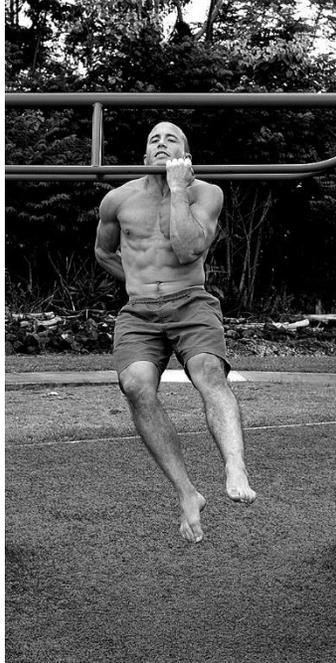
## Half One-Arm Pull-Up

Start in mid-range, and pull yourself up through half the range of motion, until your chin clears the bar. Then lower yourself back to mid-range (elbows bent at 90 degrees).



## One-Arm Pull-Up

From a dead hang, pull yourself up through the whole range of motion.



## Leg Work

The biggest mistake I see the people making is they don't train their legs. Everybody likes a proportionate body. Neglecting legs in your training could be a blunder. Leg training is also a smart step toward overall weight management (gaining or losing), as legs comprise a huge percentage of your body weight. Plus, let's be honest—toned legs are just attractive. It is crucially important that legs be trained as hard as the rest of your body. Some people even have separate days for training legs.

The greatest tool in your leg-training arsenal is the squat. This is a classic for a reason—it works. Let's discuss it in detail.

## Pistol Squat Progressions

Pistol squats are a great way to train your lower body without weights. It not only helps you gain strength in your legs, but also improves speed and balance. It works all the same muscles as a normal squat, but the emphasis is on one leg at a time. Performing pistols increase the resistance on the hamstrings, quads, calves, and glutes and engages much of your core to maintain balance. These can be performed with or without weights, but keep in mind that you *should not* try to perform pistol squats with the same amount of weight as you use for traditional squats. The following progression has been designed such that a person who has never done squats will be able to do pistols and weighted shrimps with time.

You may find the first few exercises quite easy, but they are important to help you develop balance and mobility, so progress through them slowly. In between the major steps are exercises

that will help you with skill development. Not all the exercises are tough, but all are quite necessary to get you to a place where you can perform pistols very easily.

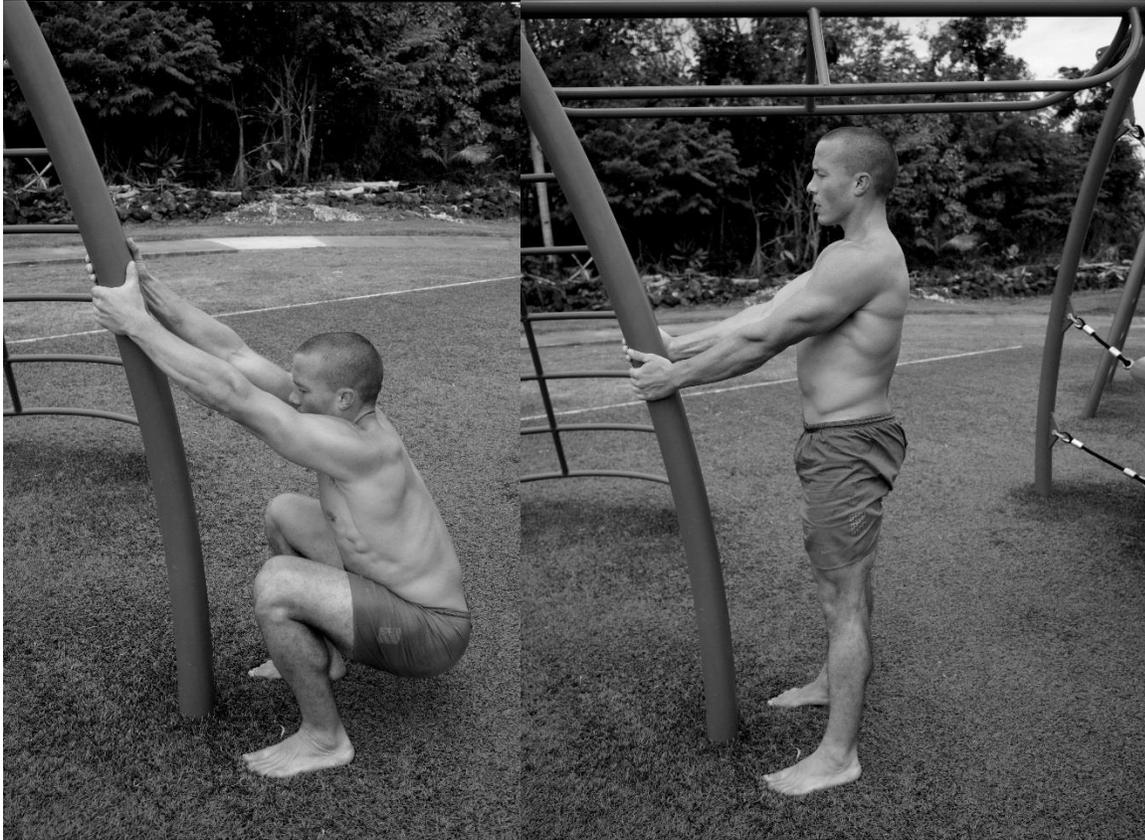
## Shoulder Stand

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor at hip width, resting your arms along the sides of your body with your palms down. As you exhale, push your palms down, draw your bent knees in and up, and then straighten your legs as you raise your hips to a comfortable angle of 45 to 75 degrees. Bend your elbows and bring your hands to the back of your pelvis and then slide your hands up to your lower back. Make sure your legs are straight but your knees aren't locked and your feet are directly above your head. Press your elbows and the backs of your upper arms on the floor for support. Relax your neck.

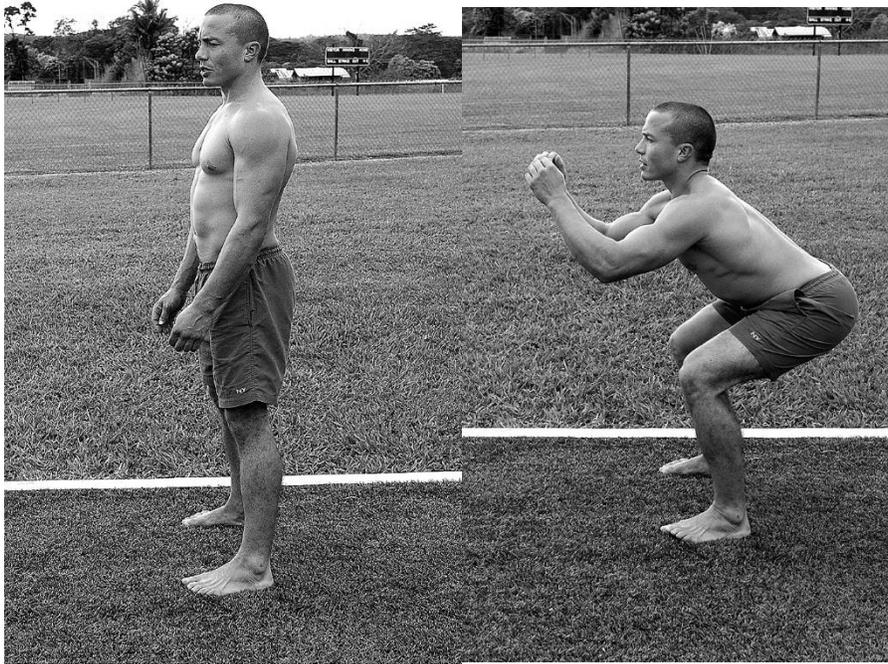


## Assisted Squat

Rest your hands on an object for support, like the back of a chair in front of you (no wheels). Lower yourself until your thighs are parallel with the floor, then come back up, using the chair for support as necessary.

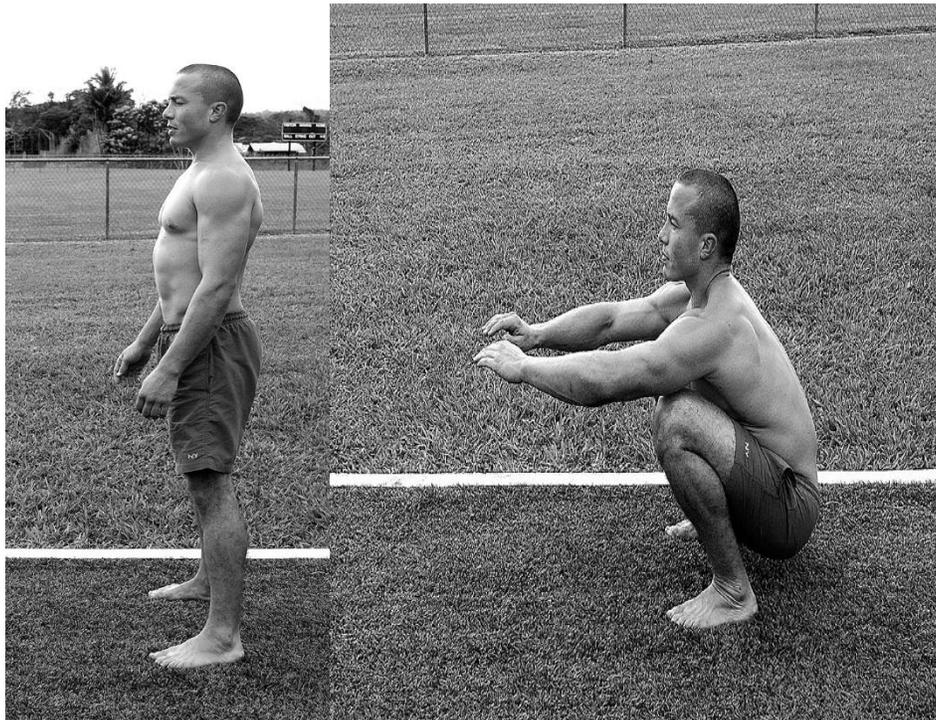


## Half Squats

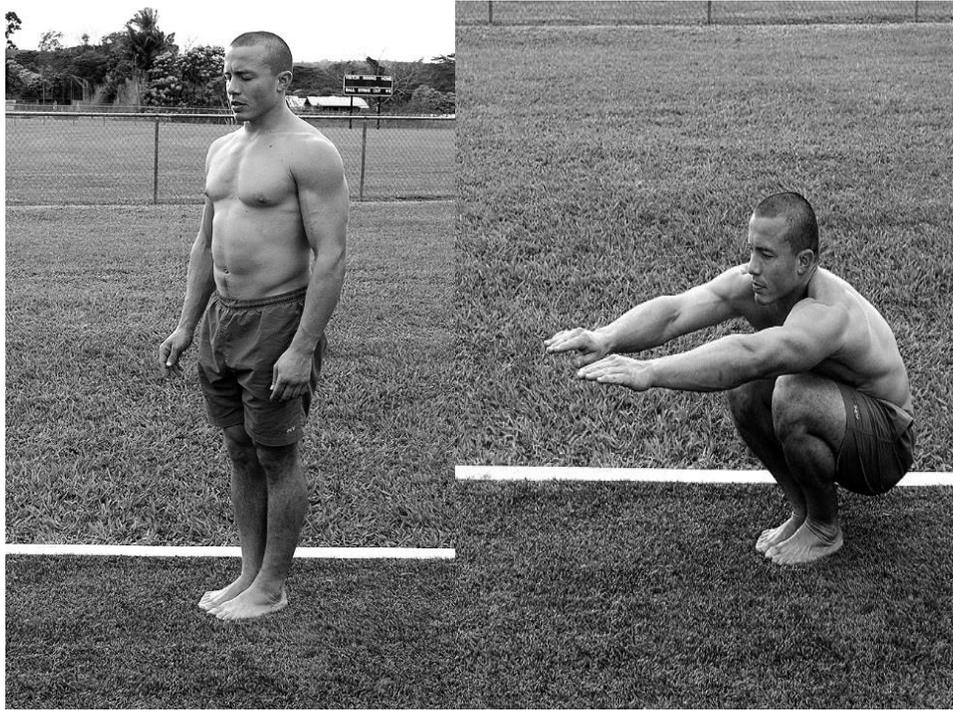


## Deep Squats

Same as above, but squat through the full range of motion.

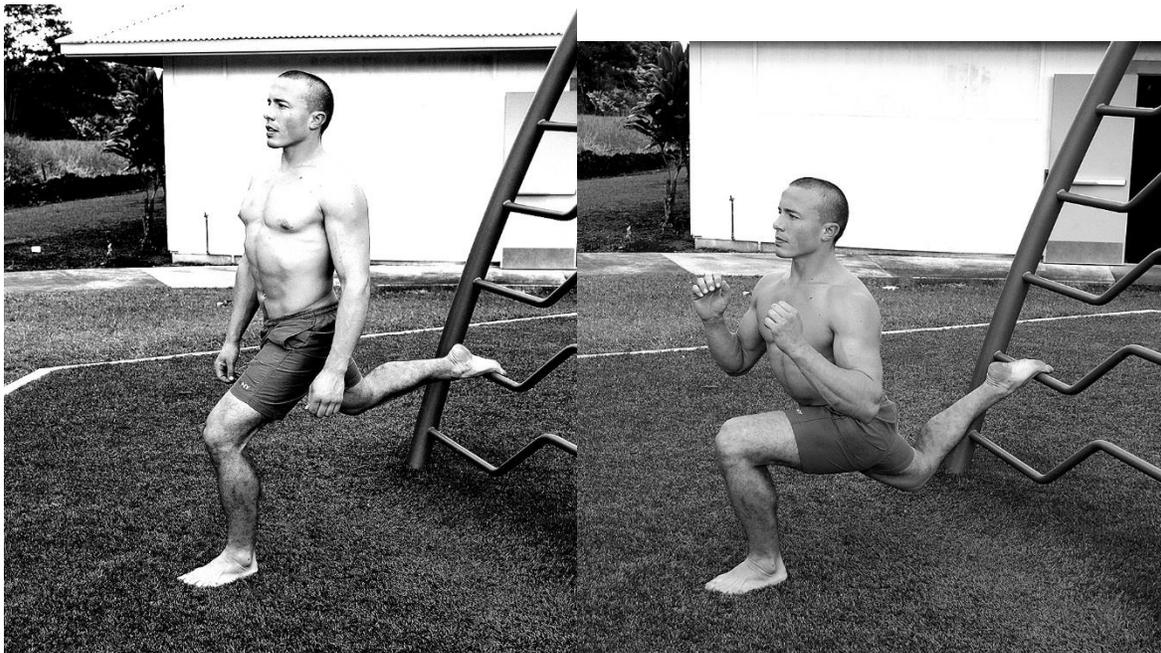


## Close Squats



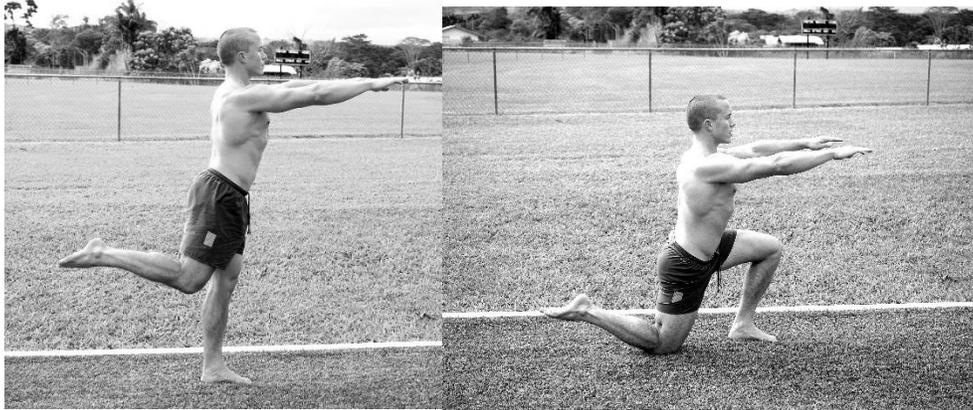
## Bulgarian Split Squats

Rest the top of one foot on an elevated platform behind you with the sole pointing up. Keep your weight over your front leg as you lower yourself into the squat and press back up.



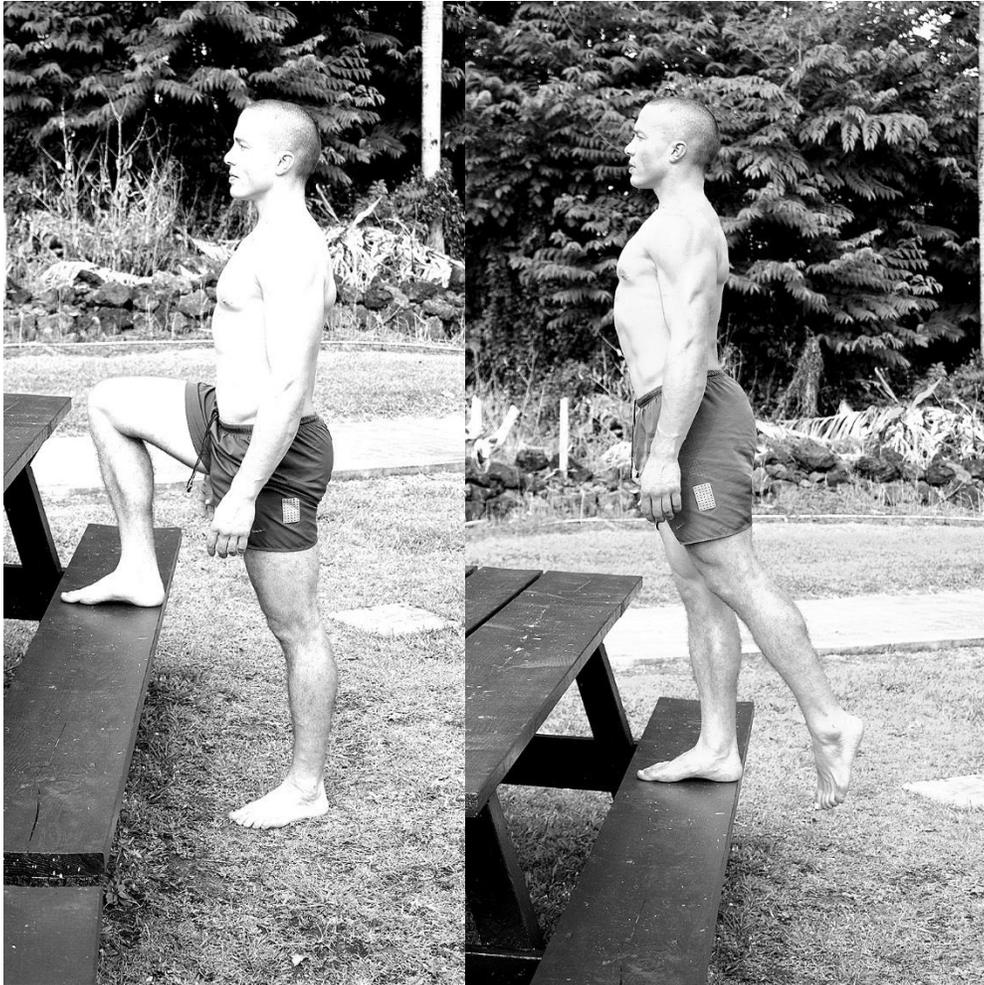
## Beginner Shrimp Squats

Stand with one foot on the ground and the other leg bent at a 90-degree angle. Lower yourself until the knee and toes of the bent leg touch the floor at the same time. This must be a slow, controlled movement. Then come back up, trying to lift your knee and toes at the same time.



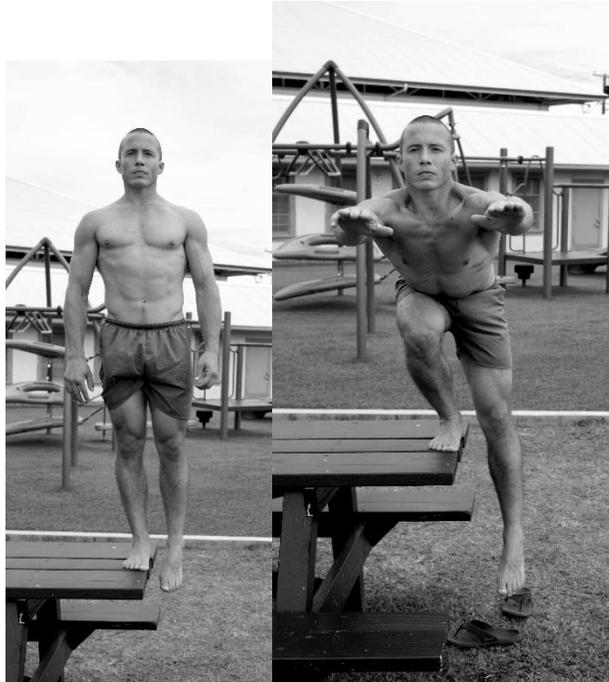
## Single-Leg Box Squat

This is more of about skill work more than anything else. If you are struggling with balance, this exercise will help you.

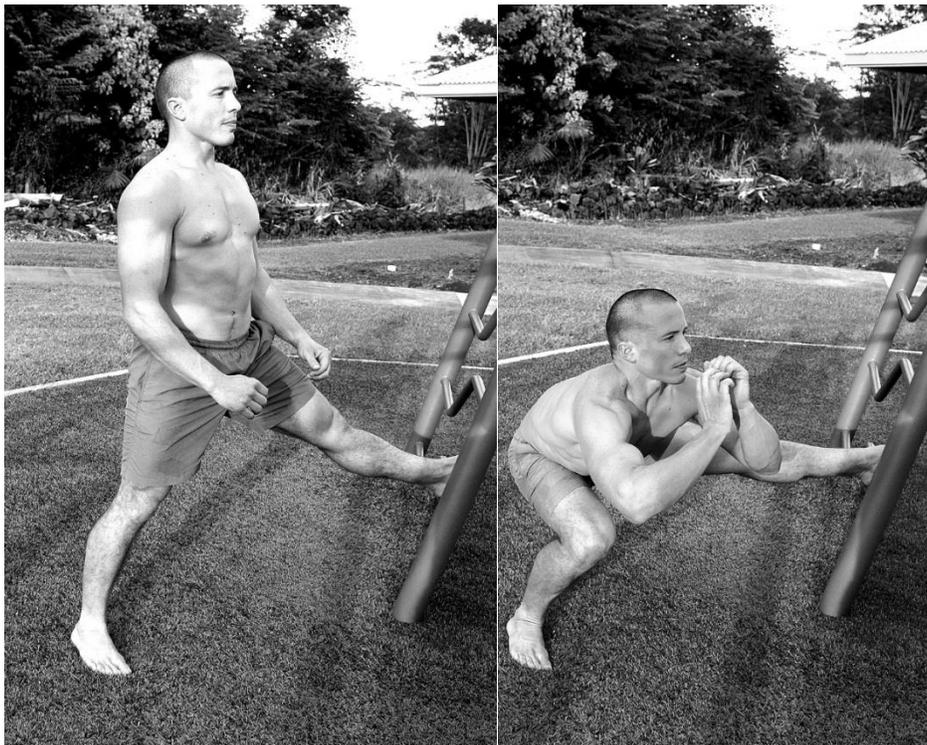


## Box Squat Hanging on a Side

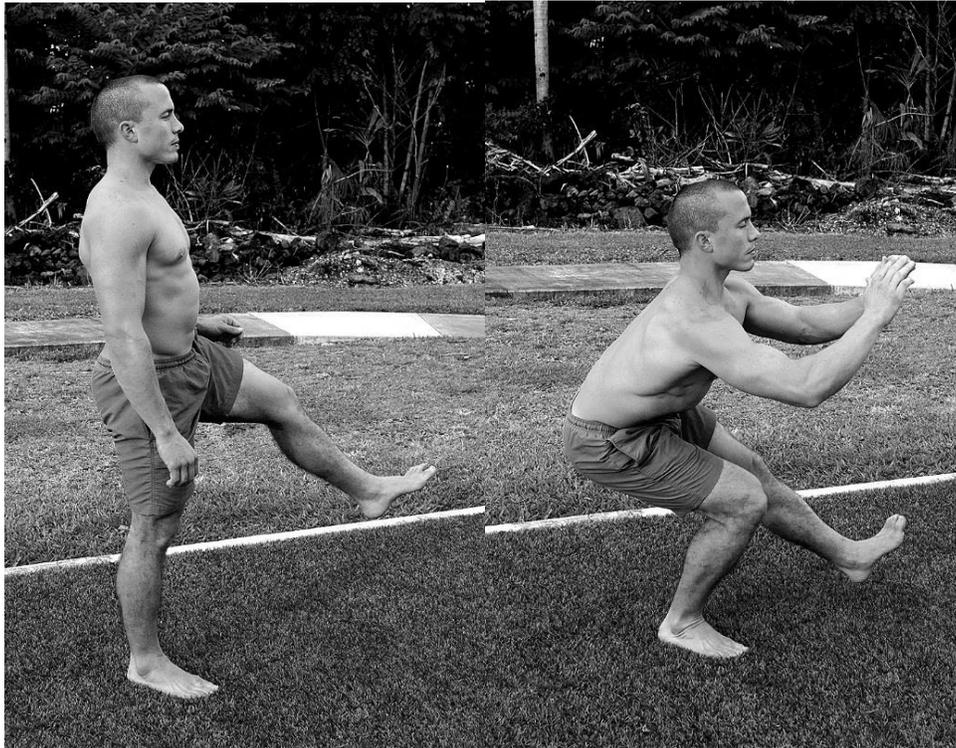
You can advance this exercise by actually stepping on the box and doing a one legged squat with your leg hanging on the side.



## Uneven Squat

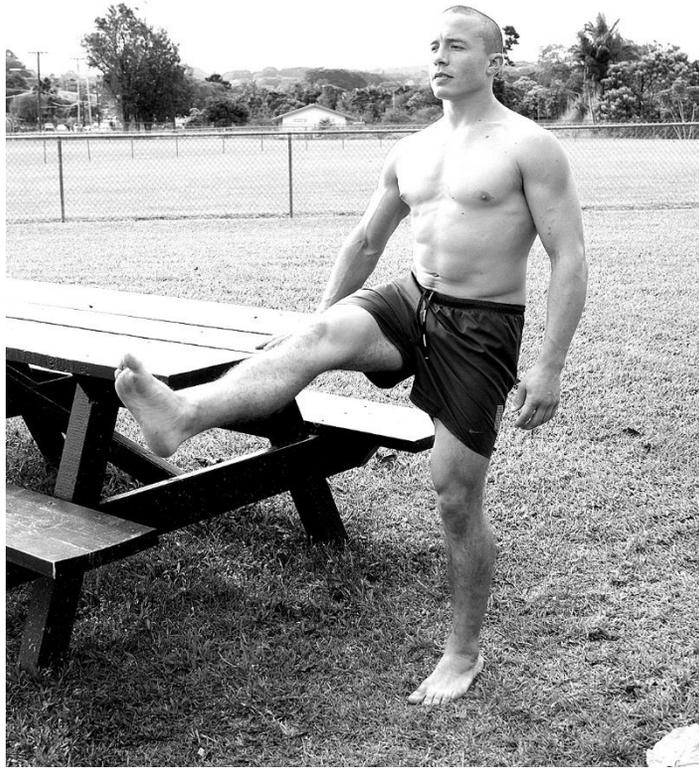


## Half One-Leg Squat



## Assisted One-Legged Squats

With a bench or a chair next to you for support, extend one leg straight in front of you and lower yourself all the way down until your butt touches your heel. However the heel must remain on the floor. Help yourself back up by pushing on the chair.



## Balance-Assisted One-Legged Squats



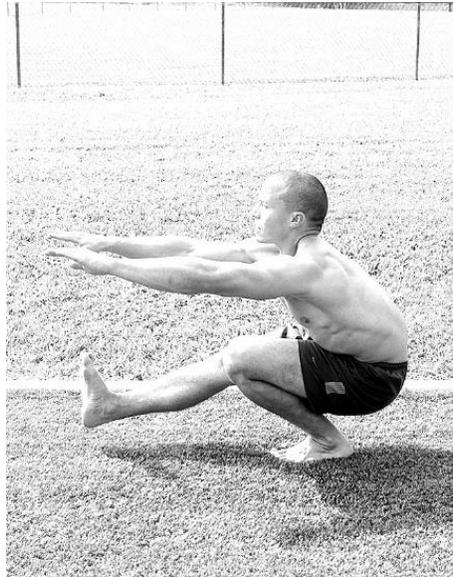
## Weighted One-Legged Squats

This one is a bit different. It may seem that these should be tougher than simple pistol squats. This is somewhat counter-intuitive, but weighted one-legged squats are actually easier than the standard variety, as the object you hold in front of you acts as a counter-weight. You can use dumbbells if you have some, but any heavy object will do—grab a dictionary, a jug of water, whatever you have. Start with a 5 kg weight and move down in weight progressively in 1 kg increments until you can do unassisted pistols.



## Pistol Squats

Same as above, but without any counterweight.



## Renegade Pistols

Lower yourself on one leg, then switch legs at the bottom (by bringing the extended leg back next to the other one into a full squat position and then extending the other leg) before coming back up.



Here is the video with detailed instructions. [ACCESS IT BY CLICKING HERE](#)



## Intermediate Shrimps

Same as shrimp squats, but your bent leg must come off the floor before you come back up. This variation shifts the emphasis of the exercise to your quadriceps.



## Advanced Shrimps

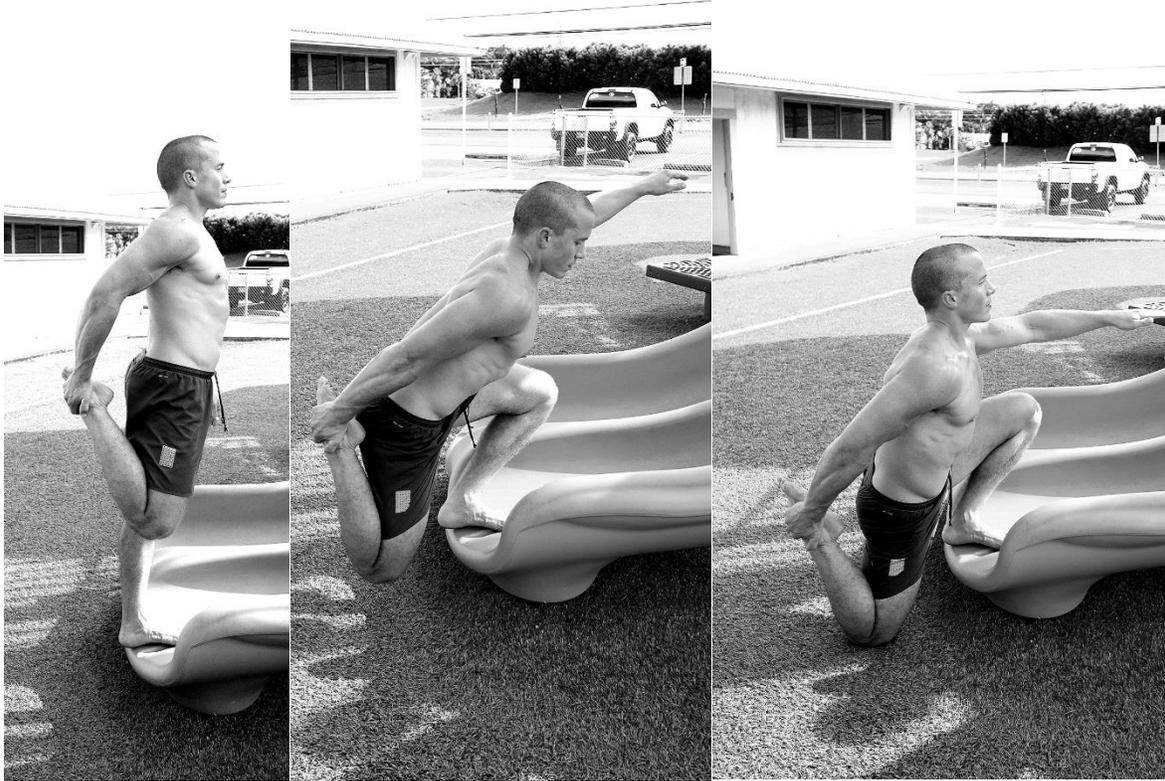
Hold your the foot of your bent leg in your hand throughout the exercise. Your knee must touch the floor in a controlled manner.



## Advanced Shrimp with Knee Hold



## The Elevated Shrimp



## How to Build Leg Muscle with Squats: The Fastest Way to Get Huge Legs

If shape and muscle tone are what you are after, add volume to your squat routine—the fastest gains in leg size I experienced were a result of adding volume.

If your goal is leg size, however, you'll have to step it up. You can develop tremendous strength, endurance, and agility with any squat variation, but while your legs won't be toothpicks anymore, they won't be huge by any means. Barbell squats are your best bet for developing bulk in the legs.

## Some Other Variations on the Squat

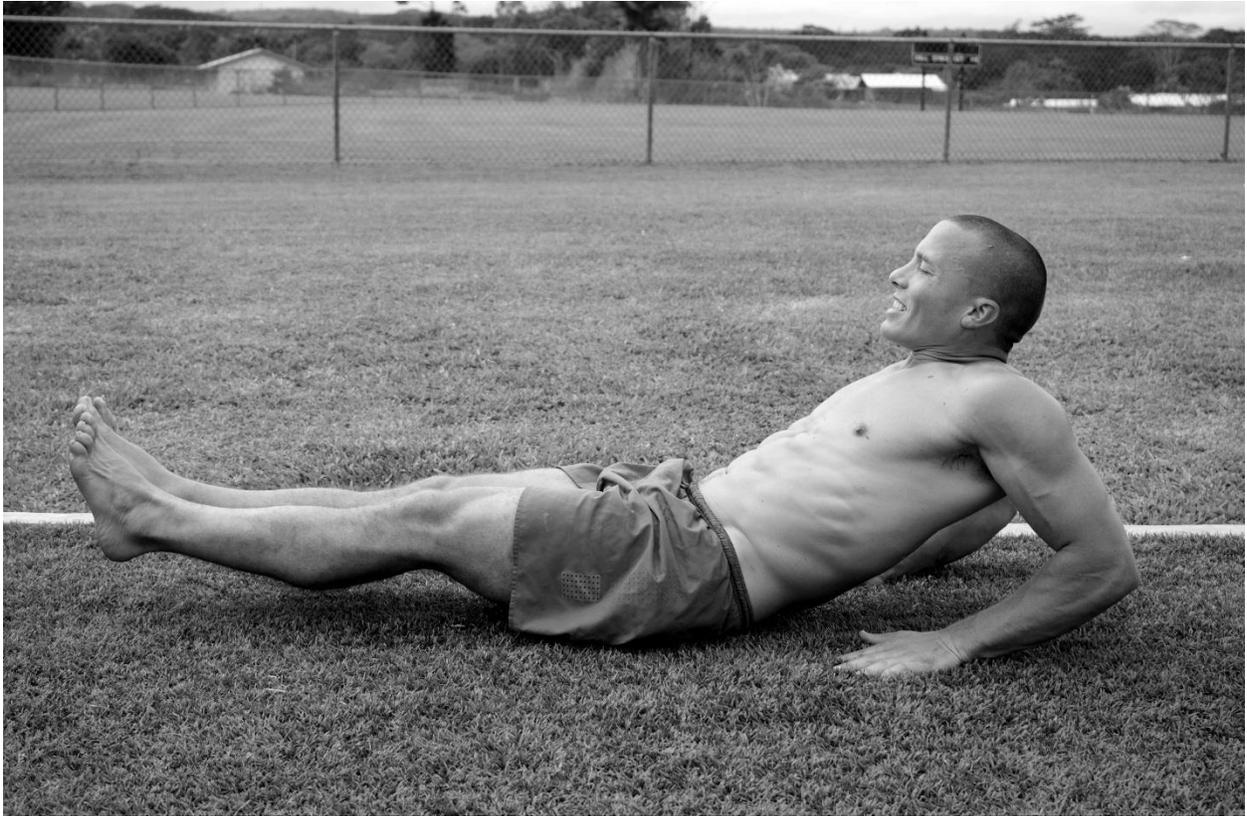
If your legs really need work and you want faster gains, I would consider the barbell. But a classic squat with a barbell on your back isn't the only option. There are front squats, hack squats, kettle-bell double front squats, weighted pistols, plyometric squats and many more. Adding some weight will help, and even just using kettlebells can take you to amazing places.

## Core Work

### Hanging Leg Raises

Hanging leg raises are, without a doubt, one of the best exercises for your abdominals. This move engages your core better than any number of crunches, planks, and leg raises. Your core plays an important role in maintaining your stability, as well as flexibility, and the hanging leg raise gives you full control over your core once mastered. Here is a progression plan for you to start from scratch and build your strength good enough to be able to do this exercise.

### Knee Tucks



## Flat Knee Raises

Lying on your back on the floor, bring your knees up while keeping your legs bent at a 90-degree angle. It is very important that you keep breathing during the exercise, as it really helps the muscles to contract and gives you a little extra burn. Your hands should be at your sides, resting on the floor.



## Flat Bent Leg Raises

Lying on the floor, bring your legs vertical, but keep a slight bend at the knee. Then return without touching the floor. Keep your hands in the same position as in the flat knee raises. Try to go as close to the floor as possible without touching it



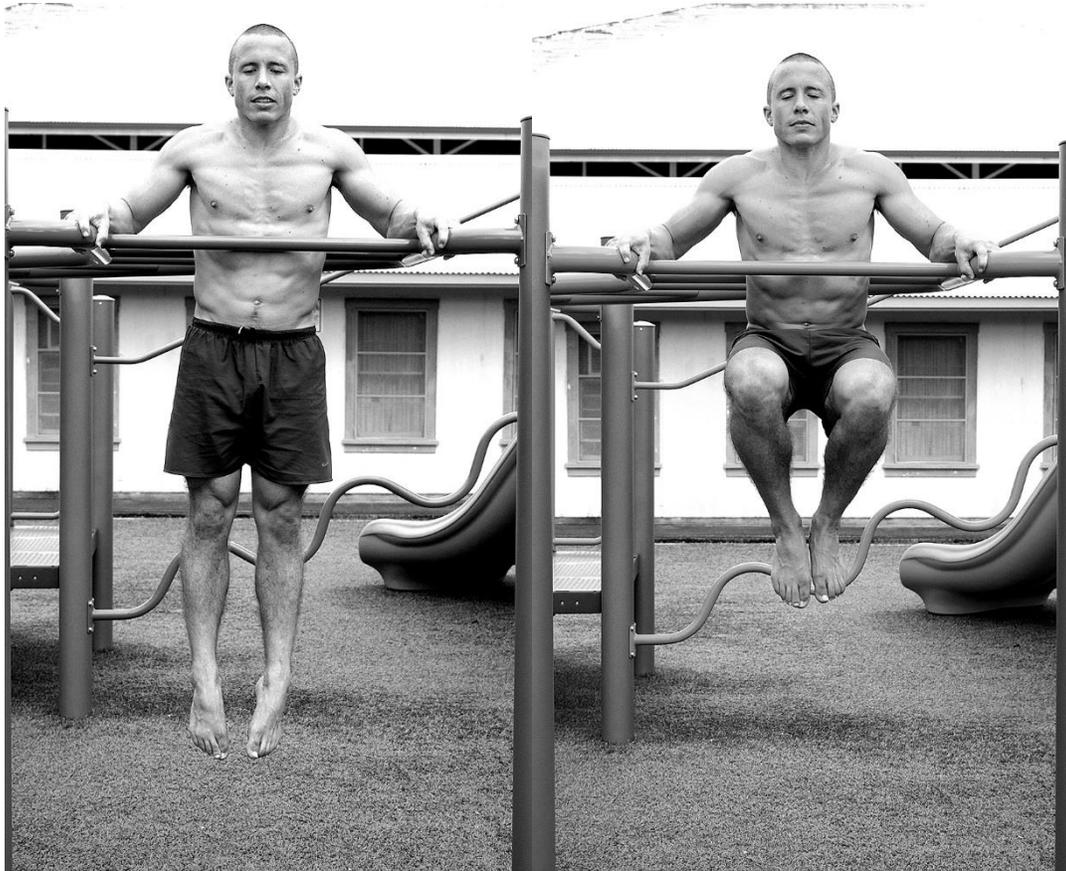
## Flat Straight Leg Raises

Lying on the floor, bring your legs vertical, keeping them straight at all times, then return without touching the floor. Hand position similar to the above two exercises. Try to go as close to the floor as possible without touching it.



## Forearm Knee Raises

With your arms resting on the back of 2 chairs (no wheels) or on parallel bars, raise your legs straight till they are parallel with the floor, then lower them back to a straight hanging position.



## Hanging Bent Knee Raises

Hang from a pull-up bar and raise your knees till they are parallel with the floor, and then return your legs to a hanging position.



## Forearm Straight Leg Raises

With forearms braced on the bars (or chairs, tables, or whatever you're using), lift your legs, keeping your legs straight this time.



## Hanging Bent Leg Raises

While hanging below the bar, try to bring your legs up to the level of your core. Do not worry if they are still bent.

## Straight Leg Raises

Now try the same exercise with legs fully straight.



## Hanging Bent Leg V Raises

Keeping a 45-degree bend in your legs throughout the motion, raise them till your feet are level with your head or higher. Keep your arms straight throughout the exercise.



## Hanging Straight Leg V Raises

Hanging from a pull up bar, keep your legs straight as you raise them until they touch the bar, then lower them slowly, keeping the movement under control.



## Hanging straight legs, toes to the bar



## Hanging V-raise windshield wipers



## One arm Hanging V-raise windshield wipers



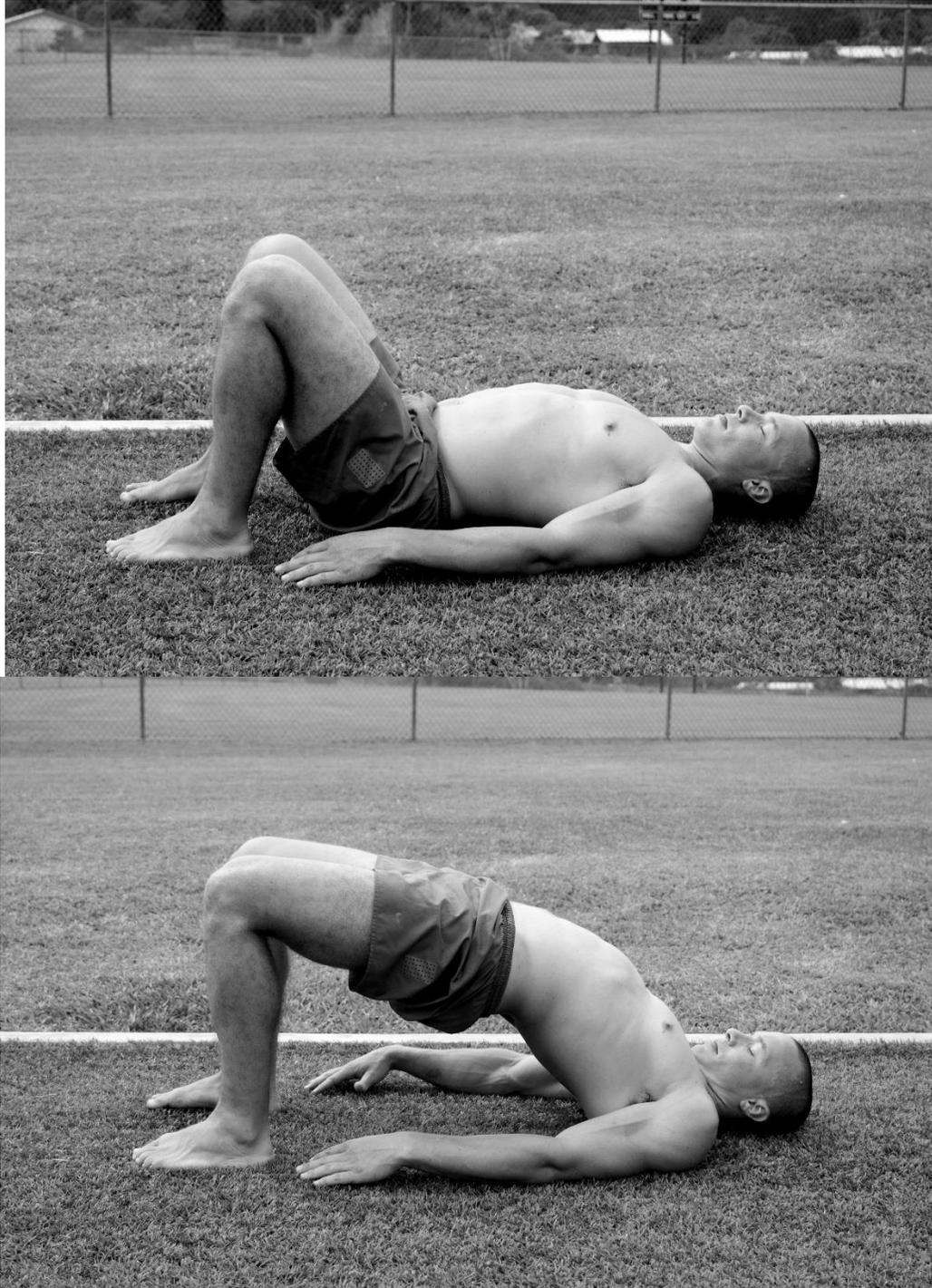
## Bridges

Most people think bridges are for beginners and aren't of much good to the rest of us. I used to think the same, but I quickly learned my mistake. As I dug deeper, I discovered tons of variations on the bridge, and my opinion changed completely.

This is a great all-around workout for your core. Bridges hit your core from every angle you can imagine. Upper abdominals or lower, middle abdominals or obliques. Do this exercise and build the core of a Greek God.

## Short Bridges

Start by lying on your back with your palms on the ground by your side. Focus on driving your torso off the floor, making an angle of 30 degrees between your body and the floor with your shoulders and feet evenly planted.



## Straight Bridges

Sit upright with your legs together straight out in front of your body. Put your palms on the floor and, using your core, bring your body up to about a 30-degree angle with the floor. Hold the position.



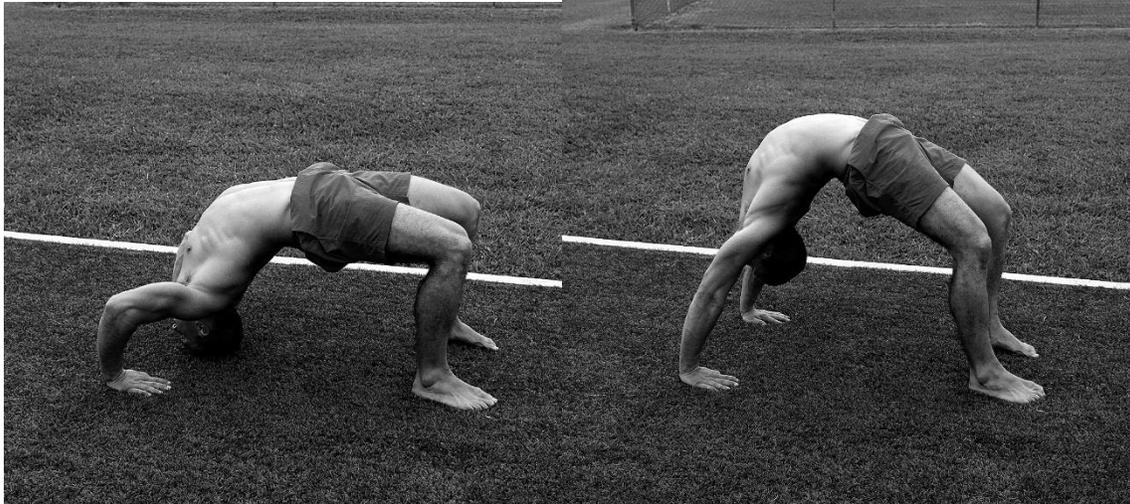
## Angled Bridges

Place your feet on the floor and stretch back so your head and hands are balancing on a raised surface. Push your arms to rise up onto the balls of your feet and bring your head a little way off of the raised surface.



## Head bridges

Get into the same starting position as the above exercise, but this time, ditch the raised surface. Instead, place your head, hands and feet on the same level. Extend your arms to push your weight onto the balls of your feet and raise your head off of the floor.



## Half Bridges

An exercise ball is required for this exercise. Place your back on the exercise ball, and set your hands and feet on the floor as with the other bridge maneuvers. Don't start with your head on the floor, this time. Using your core, try to lift your back off the exercise ball while rising onto the balls of your feet.

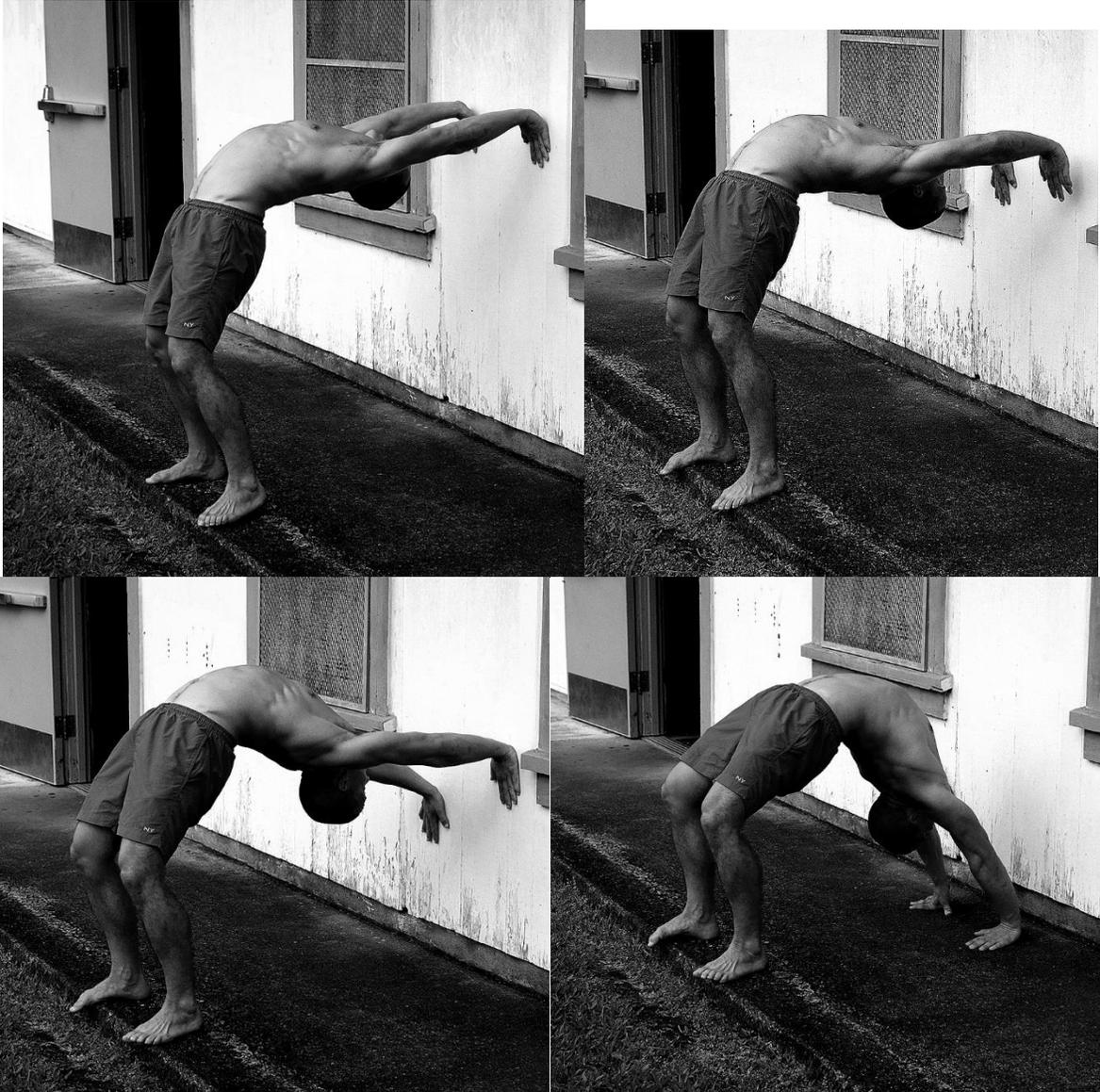
## Full Bridges

Lie on the ground with your feet firmly planted and your hands placed just above your shoulders. Now lift your torso up in the air until your back is arched.



## Wall Walking Down

Stand upright, with your back facing a wall. Place your hands placed on the wall behind you and try to make a bridge between the wall and the floor. Slowly walk your hands down the wall to take bend deeper, until you reach the floor.



## Wall Walking Up

Start from the ending position of the previous exercise, and slowly walk your hands back up until you are standing upright.

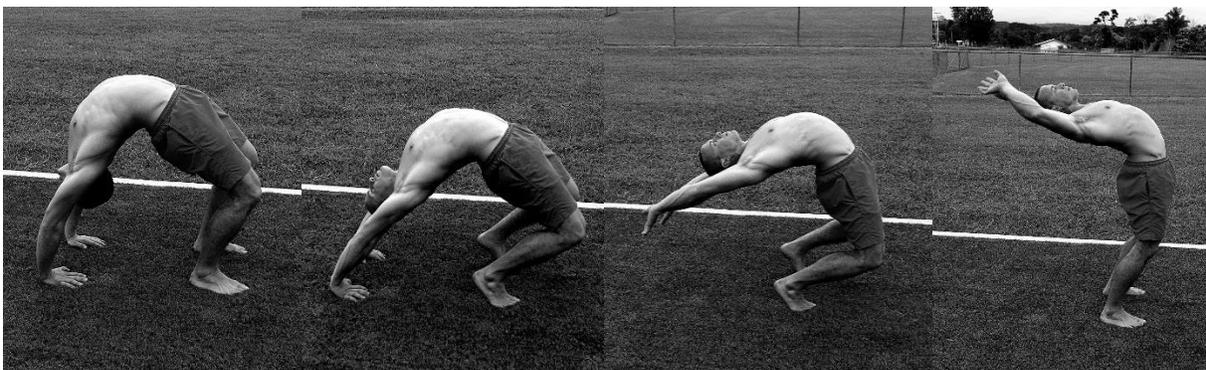


## Closing Bridge

The goal here is to achieve the same motion as in the above exercise; this time, you'll do it without the help of the wall. Stand upright and start leaning back while bending your legs slowly. When you begin to come off balance, extend your arms to put your hands on the floor, making a bridge with your body.

## Stand-to-Stand Bridge

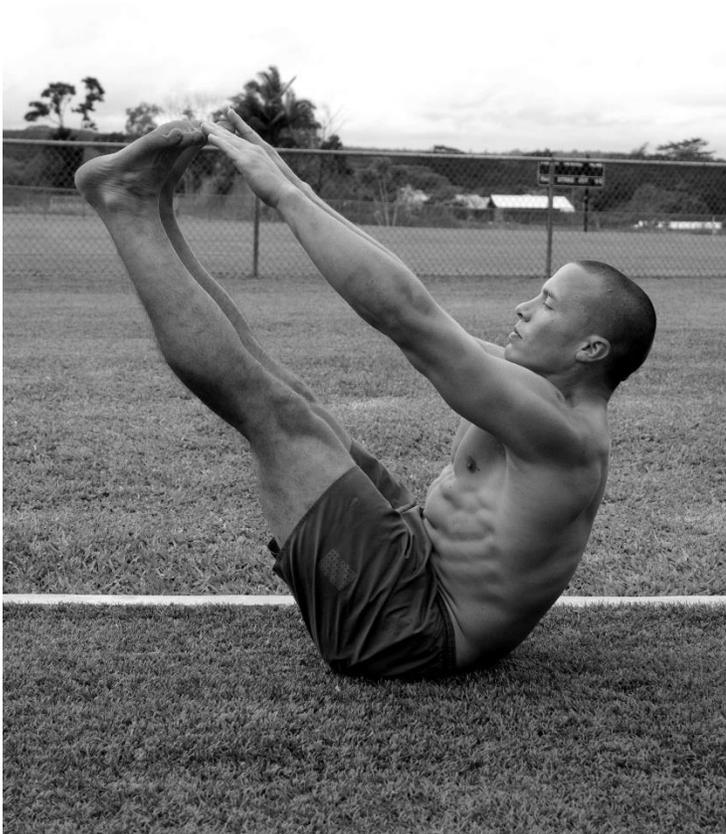
Starting upright and in one clean movement, lean back and place your palms on the floor to make the bridge. Again in a clean, controlled movement, engage your core to bring yourself back to an upright standing position.



## Bodyline Work (Optional)

Bodyline work includes isometric holds that get your muscles warmed up and ready for the movements you may use in your workouts. It is included in your schedule under the core work section. You can take it or leave it. You can also alternate between bodyline work and bridges, or you can use it as a part of your warm-up routine. If you are busy, you can drop this part, but I recommend incorporating them. Hold each of the positions mentioned below for 10 to 60 seconds.

### Hollow



Arch



Plank



Reverse Plank



Side Plank



## Chapter 6 - Building Your Greek God Physique Routine

---

We have discussed all you need to start your calisthenics program and get growing, from the basics to the toughest levels of progression. These exercises are so effective and versatile that you can't get into great shape with those alone. Now that you know how to do them, it's time to start putting them together in a program you can follow.

### You Need a Plan

Nothing works without a working plan. Though you should remain flexible enough to make some alterations along the way, experts know that a strong plan is absolutely mandatory to achieve the physique of your dreams. It took me over a year to be able to perform plank or back lever. It is very easy to lose sight of your goals and to get bored when you don't see immediate results, but if you only stick with a program for a few weeks, you will never see results regardless of which routine you are following—so this is where your inner strength is really tested. If you don't give up, and if you keep your eyes fixed on your prize, then you'll surely get the results you've always wanted. This is a big part of the reason I give progressions with so many steps—so you always have a next step to take, and so that you can always see the many ways you are moving forward. To succeed, you need to start with the right mindset, decide on the right plan, and then focus on the process.

### A perfect program?

Over the years, I have developed a plan that brought me incredible results—but my plan may not be the best plan for you. Our bodies respond differently to different workout routines, so there is no single workout that works for everyone. In pursuit of your best self, you'll learn many things you can use to determine what works best for you. Every single person has unique genetics, and these determine many factors that influence your training, including mobility, starting strength, and how well your body recovers, adapts, and deals with stress. But there *are* programs that have been proven to be great places for anyone to start. In this chapter I want to teach you what your calisthenics routine should consist of. I want you to learn how it is put together, how you can modify your sets, reps, and rest times toward an appropriate goal, and what you can skip and what you cannot.

Why? The main goal for this book is to take somebody with no knowledge and no experience in calisthenics and teach the process that will enable you to outperform the master. Even if you are a beginner, I want you to understand all the moving parts so that as you become more and more advanced; you can modify these programs, create your own routines, and express yourself through your own style.

Before we jump into the nitty gritty, here are a few things to remember:

### This Is Your Life

I am not going to give you magic one-month or 8-week workout program. This is your ongoing lifestyle which will make you look amazing, feel amazing, and be strong for life.

## You Are Your Own Fitness Coach

You need to take responsibility for your own journey. That means you have to be your own savior, your own hero. You need to figure out what works best for you, and this will take some trial and error and require experimentation over time. If you are interested in personal coaching, though, drop me a line!

## Keep It Simple

I have tried and tested so many different workout plans, with so many options and combinations, and I have noticed one thing: the more complex the routine, the less likely I was to follow it. Keep it as simple as possible (this is also a main rule for calisthenics show).

## Rigid Routines versus Flexible Routines

Some people thrive when they have a lot of freedom and control over their daily routine, while others prefer a consistent routine they don't have to think too much about. Beginners usually prefer rigid routines so they don't get bogged down with a lot of minute decisions. But once you start learning and get a little better acquainted with the exercises and workouts, you'll likely feel the urge to try different things, mix things up, and be more flexible with your workout. Run with it! Find the style that works for you.

## Full-Body and Split-Routine Templates

I get a lot of questions about this, and it is definitely an important topic to cover. Should you be doing full body workouts, or is it more beneficial to do split routines, where you work specific parts of the body on separate days?

Both methods have advantages and disadvantages. I always recommend full-body routines for beginners, as you get to move all the compound muscles, and the frequency of stimulation is greater. There is also simply less confusion where you are just performing the same routine every time. But you may find that some areas of your body lag behind others in development—splits allow you to focus on your weaker areas to bring them up to speed. Splits also allow more time for recovery between workouts of a specific area, which lets you go heavier on each area every time you work out (good if you are working on those leg muscles, for example). The downside of splits, though, is that sometimes there is just not enough frequency to stimulate all the right muscles, and the progress might be slower. This is especially true for beginners, who need more frequent stimulation to progress faster.

Split routines are not generally a good approach for the beginner. They can, however, prove very useful for the intermediate athlete. You should use splits when:

- You are at the intermediate level and want to maximize your strength gains
- You hit a plateau and you need to add variety to the workout
- You are going higher volume

- You are not able to do a whole-body routine every workout

Commonly, split routines consist of either a 2-day split or a 3-day split, but for calisthenics, I would stick with a 2-day split.

Examples of a two day split could be:

**Day 1:** (PUSH +Legs): Handstands, Push-Ups, Legs

**Day 2:** (PULL+Core): Pull-ups, Horizontal pulls, Bridges, Leg raises

So what is better? There is no hard-and-fast answer. It really depends on your circumstances.

## Setting up Your Fitness Goal

Every great strategy plan starts with a goal. In order to do something, or get something in life, you have to set goals, make solid plans around it and successfully execute the plan. Similarly, to be fit you need to master a lot of things. But first and foremost, you need to be mentally prepared. You need to know what you want and be prepared to be consistent with your goals. Once you are prepared mentally, you just need to figure out the right path for how you can reach your goal and walk on it. The goals may vary from person to person and so will the plan.

Determining goals is straightforward, you generally want strength, size, fat loss, endurance, specific skills, or a combination of these.

A note on strength - strength will help with literally *every* category you're trying to improve in. That means if you have combined goals, it is always good to go for strength first.

So for example, if your goal is to get stronger then you could put that you are intending to train 5 days a week, and if you want to get better at handstands you would put additional 30 minutes of handstand practice every day depending on the time available.

Remember that there is no correct answer and goals will vary from a person to person and your fitness history as well as a lot of factors out of your control like genetics, and injuries.

## Your Goals Should Be SMART

I am sure you have heard about this. It's not enough to just set goals. Your goals need to be SMART. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely.

Setting SMART goals brings structure and traceability into your program. It helps you create a clear path towards your objective that will also tell you about the attainability of your objective. Let's be more descriptive about it and discuss in detail what setting a SMART goal is actually about.

“S” in the SMART stands for “Specific.” This deals with the questions like Why? When? What? How? When you set a goal, describe the details. And the more specific your description is, the more solid your plan will be.

“M” stands for “Measurable.” You have to identify what exactly it is you will have when you’ve reached your goal. How will you feel? What will you see? What body fat percentage you see, what skill or level of strength will you have attained? You should be very clear about these. For example, “eating only one cheat meal a week” is a measurable goal, but “feeling happier” is not.

“A” is for “Attainable.” Set goals that you are capable of achieving. There are a lot of factors involved in achieving a goal, like strength, time, money, and so on. If you can’t achieve your goal because of the lack of any of these, you’ll be discouraged and be more likely to give up, know your reach, and set goals that are attainable.

“R” stands for “Relevant.” Choose goals that you truly want to achieve—goals that will contribute something meaningful to your life. Before setting a goal, you should ask yourself: why do I want this? What will it bring you that will enrich your life and make you happier?

“T” stands for “Timely.” Deadlines get everyone moving. Set deadlines for yourself, and go after them. This will keep you focused. But don’t forget to make this deadline attainable! Realistic deadlines should have a little flexibility so you can adjust to your individual experience; if you don’t enjoy the journey, there is no way you can be consistent about it. And nothing good was ever achieved without consistency.

Meeting these criteria will make your goals that much more effective. Instead of setting a goal like “get lean,” set a more constructive one, such as “by February 30th, I want to have a body-fat percentage under 12 percent.” This way you have something to work towards that you can quantify and measure—and once you’ve achieved it, you’ll know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you’ve succeeded!

## Create Goals, but Focus on the Process

Small, SMART goals are a great motivation for daily work, but to help you establish long-term habits, it’s helpful to also have big, long-term goals, and these can be a little more free-form. Establishing life-long goals helps you to see your everyday exertions as part of a bigger journey. An example of a good lifelong goal might be:

Increase strength, reduce body fat % and progress to more and more advanced calisthenic movements.

This is how my goal would sound. It is not very concrete is it? There is a reason for that.

Here is what Frank Medrano says about his goal:

*My fitness goals are to continue my physical fitness progression to extreme levels. My body is capable of so much more and I want to keep tapping into that inner strength. I want to set an example, motivate and inspire anyone interested in inquiring in super wellness in having a VEGAN diet and mastering their own body weight to high levels.*

And Danny Kavadlo says:

*I don't believe in setting timelines for goals. I would like to get better at all my skills. It's a journey for me, not a destination.*

You should set small goals, but also understand that they are part of the larger journey. When you keep training and focusing on a process, on a goal of becoming better than yesterday, of being a better version of yourself every day, a better *human being*, you put yourself in a mindset that will constantly push you to grow. You will see it a lot in the calisthenics community—moving is like breathing for us. It's like meditation. It's a life-long journey of realizing our physical potential.

**Focus on the process.** Process means you have a process you follow, a routine you will perform every week. If you can do that, you can be sure you are getting closer to your goal. From time-to-time, you might want to check where you are on the way and troubleshoot problems if there are any. But again, progress is the only thing you should keep in mind. If you are progressing, you are on the right track.

**Example of the process goal:** Train 4 times a week, depending on available time. Include equal amounts of pushing, pulling, leg, and core exercises.

## Focus and Stick with It!

There is a lot of variety in bodyweight fitness, so you won't be able to do everything at a same time. Hence it is important to focus. There is a lot of carryover between similar goals and exercises. If you are after a particular skill, just pick 3 to 5 exercises, and start working on those. If you are a beginner, we suggest you simply follow a basic routine we have set up for you (which I will discuss below).

## Sets, Reps, and Hold Times

There's no right or wrong sets and reps scheme. There's only what works best for you and for your specific needs and goals. You can make progress with almost any program, provided you work hard. Still, some programs are better suited to specific goals than others.

In this section, you'll learn how to establish sets, reps, and hold times according to your goal. In our routine, you will notice each exercise has been matched with a number of sets, reps, and hold times. These numbers can be used to a great effect, but it's important you know why those particular numbers have been chosen and how to modify them to suit your particular goal.

The number of repetitions you do of an exercise or the amount of the time your muscles are under tension will dictate how your body responds to and adapts to the demands placed upon it. This gives rise to a simple rule: for the body to get stronger, you have to increase the resistance over time.

Below, we go deep into working towards your particular goal—strength, muscle mass, endurance, or weight loss—indicating the right number of sets and reps, and laying out the basics of what you will need to do to achieve your goals.

Hold time progresses differently from sets and reps, as it's hard to quantify exactly how hard someone is contracting their muscles, but there are a few rules to follow. Not all the movements are done on sets-and-reps basis. For example, with movements like the lever, your goal is to hold position for a cumulative amount of time. You will do as many individual "sets," which in this case are sustained holds, as it takes you to rack up that amount of time. If you can only hold the position for ten seconds at a time before losing control, you'll need to do three sets to get to the 30-second goal.

This is a good way to enable your body to become accustomed to this exercise before progressing. But of course, there are some movements that are far too difficult to hold for 30 seconds. The planche, for example, takes massive amounts of strength—the world record for the planche is just over 20 seconds.

In the following paragraphs, we'll discuss the details and how-to's of the exercises that are the best starting point for each of the goals mentioned above: strength, muscle mass, endurance, and weight loss.

Let's discuss strength first—it's usually the very first thing people tell me they want to gain.

## How to Build Strength

Strength is a skill, and believe it or not, no matter how strong you are, you'll always want to get stronger. So how should you train for strength? The main rule here is to train as often as possible, while staying as fresh as possible. There are many approaches, but a few things in pure strength training stay the same. Follow these rules to build strength.

**Sets:** Do about 3 to 5 sets of each exercise. A general rule of thumb for gaining strength is that you want to perform only a few sets, as the movements you perform will be so challenging that they will put a lot of stress on the body, and you simply will not be able to do more than a few sets without exhausting yourself. A good starting point is to perform 3 sets of each exercise.

**Reps:** Shoot for 3 to 8 repetitions of a heavy exercise, with as much rest as you need in between sets to recover your muscles and get back to your full potential. You then aim to increase the amount of resistance between one workout and the next. Once you can do 8 to 12 reps in one set, it's time to pick a harder progression of the movement (e.g., once you can do eight to twelve push-ups, move on to diamond push-ups) or add more weight. Just keep up the progressive resistance.

**Rest Periods:** Take a lot of rest between exercises and sets. For strength, you may rest as long as you need, usually 2 to 3 minutes, sometimes even longer. If you're also trying to achieve hypertrophy (the muscular process that increases muscle size—more on this below), keep the rest times down to 1 to 2 minutes.

**Focus:** Your focus should be on big, compound exercises.

**Diet and Lifestyle:** You must get at least 1 g of protein per pound of body weight to ensure proper muscle recovery, and you must get at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night. Remember,

your body doesn't grow when you're working out; it grows when you rest. Let your body recover from the grueling workout you just performed.

Note: Strength training does cause hypertrophy, but it will not cause maximum hypertrophy.

## How to Gain Muscle Size (a.k.a. Hypertrophy)

Yes, you can build muscle with bodyweight training. However, there are a few things you should know. Weight training (kettlebells, sand bags can do the work too) is slightly superior to bodyweight training for hypertrophy, because it's easier to incrementally increase resistance. If hypertrophy is your only goal, weighted training would be your best bet. But you *can* build big muscle mass with bodyweight training, and unlike with extreme weight training, it will look natural, and you will be more likely to avoid potential lifelong injuries.

**Where to Start:** Choose a progression that you can do for 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps of each exercise.

**Sets and Reps:** You want to go after high-volume, multiple-set programs (6 to 12 reps, 3 to 6 sets). This has been shown to create greater hypertrophy for two important reasons. The higher workload is more effective at creating micro-trauma, tiny muscle tears that stimulate increased protein synthesis, and therefore muscle growth. High-volume, multiple-set programs are also more effective at increasing the body's production of testosterone and growth hormone (Kraemer et al, 1991; Kraemer et al 1990). Those elements are all you need to cause hypertrophy.

**Rest Periods:** The rest time between sets should be between 30 to 90 seconds, and nothing more than that.

**Diet and Lifestyle:** First and foremost, read the diet section above. Diet is 80 percent of what it takes to achieve your aesthetics goals. To gain muscle, you'll need to put on weight, so you must eat more calories than you burn every day. If your calorie intake is less than or equal to what you are burning, then you'll either lose or maintain weight. Your body can't build muscle from nothing. It needs enough calories to fuel your motion, plus some extra to convert to muscle mass.

### A Special Note: Periodization

Now, there's one thing you should be aware of. High volume and multiple sets might pack on muscle quickly, but you shouldn't *ONLY* train this way. Training this way exclusively will get you stuck in "general adaptation syndrome," which means your body will adapt to the program very quickly and you'll run into a massive plateau. An effective, scientifically-proven way to pack on muscle quickly is to use a periodized routine that emphasizes high volume and multiple sets—that is, a plan that intersperses hypertrophy workouts with regular strength-focused workouts. The periodic variation lets you beat your body's adaptive tendencies by changing the number of sets and reps of the program, boosting muscle growth. Sets and reps can be varied per exercise, per workout, or per week.

For example, a solid routine using periodization on a per-workout basis could be a 2-to-1 hypertrophy/strength rotation. This means that you do 2 hypertrophy workouts (8 to 12 reps, 6 sets) for every 1 strength workout (4 to 6 reps, 3 sets). I've learned that slotting in a strength day helps me lift more on my hypertrophy days.

## How quickly can you gain muscle?

The amount of muscle a person can gain in 12 weeks varies greatly according to their level of training experience. For this question, I'm going to presume the person is a beginner.

As a new weight trainer, the immediate change they will notice is an increase in strength. Hypertrophy won't be very noticeable until about the 6th to 10th week.

I have seen people put on 10kg of muscle in 12 weeks ... but they were previously-trained individuals who were coming back to training after a long time off.

## How to Build (Muscular) Endurance

**Sets:** Here you should try and do as many sets as is realistically possible. Anywhere from 5 to 10 sets is good. You can also use a technique called Greasing the Groove, which is great for improving specific movements. While many people believe that strength mostly has to do with the size of your muscles, the theory behind Greasing the Groove is that strength is a skill that improves when it is practiced. According to this theory, the key is not to train to the point of failure, but to practice the skill the maximum possible number of times without hitting failure.

Take for example, if currently you can do 20 push-ups with a proper form, then according to the Greasing the Groove method, you should do fewer than 20 push-ups at once, but do them more frequently in a day and the week. In this way, you trick your nervous system into becoming more proficient at this movement, and over time the movement becomes easier and easier for you—without ever having trained to failure.

**Reps:** These repetition ranges are fairly arbitrary, and there's a lot of overlap. Three sets of 3 to 8 repetitions will also cover muscular growth, and 3 sets of 12 or more repetitions will also cover some muscular endurance.

## How to Train for Losing Body Fat

Just to be clear, if you want to lose weight, what you really want is to lose fat *and* gain strength at the same time—always. Strength training with proper diet and cardio burns fat faster than cardio and diet alone. Strength training gets your heart pumping, which results in the burning of fat. Strength training creates an effect on your body called EPOC (Excess Post-Oxygen Consumption)—which just means that even after your workout, your body keeps burning fat and calories for a long period of time. When it comes to fat loss, most people embark on a program of cardio and dieting. Strength training is just an afterthought. This is a terrible approach. The first thing that cardio does is shrink you down—muscle as well as fat. You end up skinny and soft. Bodybuilders, however, want to retain or even build muscle while burning off fat. Why? A larger engine burns more fuel. Larger muscles burn more calories and more fat, ensuring faster and more effective weight loss on the long term.

So, take the following into consideration:

- Use a metabolic resistance training circuit—proven to elevate metabolism for 48 hours or more after completing the workout.

- High-intensity 60-second work periods burn the sugar stored in your muscles, which shifts your body into a turbocharged fat-burning state during rest periods and in the hours and days between workouts.
- The short, incomplete 15-second rest periods give you just enough time to recover and transition to the next exercise, which maximizes key fat-burning hormones and keeps your heart rate elevated.

**How often:** 3 times a week, with 48 hours between workouts. During workouts, focus on 60-second bursts of work at high intensity.

**Rest:** 15 seconds of rest between exercises, and no more than that.

Each circuit should be 10 minutes in duration, and you should perform 3 sets of circuits. If you're short on time, perform 2 circuits for 10 to 20 minutes. You can customize according to your abilities, especially if you are just starting out.

You will follow a normal progression as shown below, but at high intensity and with as many reps as possible in the given time protocol. These reps need to be quality reps, though, and you need to perform them with perfect technique.

If it's an isometric exercise, simply hold the position for as long as you can. If you need to rest, pause at any point and resume when you're ready. This is called rest-pause training. It allows you to use short, 5-to-20-second rest periods to do more overall reps, over multiple sets, with harder exercise variations than you could accomplish with a single set. This leads to great strength and muscle gains.

Always remember to perform an equal number of reps and sets on each side for unilateral exercises.

I recommend that you should perform at least 10 total reps (5 on each side) within 60 seconds. If you are getting less than 10 reps, step back to an easier level in the progression. Add in conditioning/cardio exercises for enhanced fat loss. Also, you can add circuit sprints, jump ropes, jumping squats, etc. It will keep your heart pumping and your body will burn fat like a furnace.

We have a fat-burning program at the end of the next chapter.

Reps and Sets Cheat Sheet (R&S)		
	Sets and Reps	Rest Times
Strength	3*6-10	1-2min
Mass (hypertrophy)	3-6*6-12reps	0.5-2 min
Endurance	5*12+	0.5-2 min

## Components of Your Workout Routine

Regardless of your specific goals, every workout should have the same components. We'll show you how to tailor it to you in a moment, but first, here's the blueprint of a routine:

- Warm-up and mobility work
- Skill Work
- Strength Work
- Conditioning (optional)
- Stretches

### Warm-Up and Mobility:

It is suggested to start your warm-up with some kind of cardiovascular activity. This gets your muscles warm and ready for the dynamic stretches. How long you will need to spend on this stage to get results will vary, but usually 5 minutes is more than enough. You can pick and choose your favorite exercises, and we will give you plenty of options. The simplest warm-up is good old-fashioned running, but you can also use static like arm circles, sprints, or jumping rope, just to name a few. All you need to do is to make sure you are addressing all the muscles—you want a full-body warm-up. Use whichever method you like, as long as you feel physically and mentally ready for the workout when you're through.

#### Example Warmup

Perform 10 reps of each exercise mentioned below for 1 to 2 rounds.

- **Run and Sprints** (Simply jog around at 70 percent of your maximum speed for 1 minute)
- **Jump Rope**
- **Lunges/Jumping Lunges**
- **Squats/Jump Squats**

Add any of the stretching and mobility exercises from the chapter 4.

### Skill Work

This part of the program works on improving your skills, like balance and stability, to get you ready to tackle the more challenging steps of your chosen progressions. Just like an artist who needs to rehearse every day, you are an artist carving up your body, so you need to practice your skill every day, as well. We have already discussed skill work in the previous chapters, so I won't go into detail here. Just put aside 10 to 15 minutes of time for skill every day.

Set the timer as you start to performing your movements and stop when the timer stops. Note that at the beginning, when you are just starting to follow the routine, there will be little skill work required, but as you progress, skill work will become more and more important and you will need to put aside more time to practice it. That might include holding your handstand, trying to get into a tuck front row position, and so on.

## Strength Work

Your workouts should be relatively short, but very intense. If you're doing longer workouts, you're probably compromising your intensity. Now, the optimal amount of time will vary by person, but a rule of thumb is to aim for around 40-45 minutes.

As I've said, in calisthenics we focus on movements rather than individual muscles. In that spirit, I have designed a regimen that will cover all the movements, including leg and core work.

So, let's get into it.

Though I've started it with the pushing movements, you're free to go in whatever order you like;

- **Pushing Exercise:** Perform your push-ups and handstand exercises and slowly try to move up the progression to the more difficult exercises.
- **Pulling Exercises:** Perform your pull-ups and rows and try to move to the more difficult exercises in the progression.
- **Leg Work:** Start your leg work with the pistol squat progression. If your goal is to gain mass, you can also do conventional squats and their variations using weights.
- **Core Work:** Perform bridges and planks, and move up the progression.

Perform your exercises in a controlled manner. This means 1 second down (controlled descent), no pause at the bottom, explode up, and no pause at the top.

## Conditioning (Optional)

Conditioning isn't always considered a requirement, but many well-respected experts in the calisthenics world (like Frank Medrano) highly recommend it.

### What is conditioning?

Conditioning is exercising with the goal of increasing your cardiovascular system's performance. It is like strength training for the heart.

### Why do conditioning?

By doing full body, functional exercises at high intensity, short duration (1-2 minutes—think of a 100 m sprint) you will reap the benefits not only in terms of muscular endurance, but also in your lung capacity, heart health, and ability to work faster and harder in a shorter amount of time. Conditioning also teaches you how to keep going when your body is tired. And that is a

powerful helping hand in increasing your strength capacity. Conditioning is extremely important. It can literally be the difference between winning and losing.

Being fit and conditioned will make your workout easier and enable you to push hard for longer, which will lead to better results. Some conditioning exercises also use a number of muscle groups you use in your normal workout.

### **Metabolic Training**

Metabolic training, which is based on about the concepts we've discussed, and it is the best combination, in my opinion, of all the benefits of strength, anaerobic, and aerobic training. Metabolic training is the combination of strength training and aerobic, cardio exercises. The point of this type of workout is to create a massive metabolic disturbance to cause what is known as Excess Post Exercise Oxygen Consumption, or EPOC, which reflects an elevated metabolic rate that lasts up to 48 hours. When you cause EPOC, you burn calories both during and after a workout.

Note: this would not happen with a long, slow, 45-minute jog. To get EPOC, you need intensity and density. That combination is the holy grail of fat loss. In this type of training you alternate between periods of intense work and active recovery. Short burst workouts at 70 percent of your maximum heart rate or higher will boost your metabolism, burn more fat at rest, and earn you the muscular physique.

There are two basic types of metabolic training:

#### **MTR (Metabolic Resistance Training) – Burn Fat and Build Muscles**

MTR describes various combinations of intense, efficient cardiovascular and muscular training. MRT can involve supersets, circuits, speed, low-rest, and compound movements; it almost always packs a double-punch of aerobic and anaerobic work, breaking down barriers between traditional weight training and cardio. This type of training enables you to burn fat and build muscle at the same time.

The basis of MTR is intensity. This is best achieved by employing a high number of repetitions (15 to 20 reps per set) with minimal rest between sets. The key to optimizing results is to train at maximum or near-maximum levels of effort. If you aren't sufficiently pushing yourself to complete each set, the metabolic effect and your results will suffer. MTR also focuses on big compound exercises.

This type of training will replace your strength training if you are after fat loss and muscle tone. And it is a great combination of strength and aerobic exercises. See The Getting Ripped Routine.

#### **Metabolic Conditioning - HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training)**

High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) is a form of exercise in which you alternate between very intense anaerobic periods and more relaxed recovery periods for a shorter, more efficient workout. For example, sprinting for 30 seconds and then walking for 60 seconds is high intensity

interval training. HIIT can be used both anaerobically (in the gym with weights) and aerobically with cardio.

### **5-10 minute finishers**

Short finishers of HIIT have been shown to be far more effective than any long cardio session. Ideally, you want to separate strength and conditioning into two separate sessions, follow up your strength workout with ten or twenty minutes of conditioning. If you are a beginner, start with 5 minutes. I have been working that way for years with great results. One thing you just need to remember is balance. You do not want to overdo your conditioning sessions, as it might hurt your strength gains.

For the ten-minute conditioning finisher, you could jump rope, sprint, do burpees, etc. These exercises will have a very minimal effect on your recovery ability and are very joint friendly

**Here are a number of exercises I would use for conditioning work:**

Sprints

Skater Jumps

Skier Swings

Jumping Squats

Jumping Lunges

Jump Rope Workouts

Burpees

Bastards

As I said, use these wisely—overdoing it might hurt your training. Focus on short, high-intensity intervals

### **Stretches**

Finally, cool down your muscles after your rigorous workout with some well-rounded stretches. We've already discussed the importance of stretching, so I won't go into the details again here.

Now that we have discussed all the goal-specific workouts, let's talk about building a routine that will help you start your regimen if you're an ultimate beginner.

So just to recap, your workout structure looks like this:

## Workout Format Summary

EXERCISE	SETS/REPS/TIME
Warm-up and Mobility	5 min
Push-up Variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Handstand Variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Pull-up Variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Horizontal Rows Variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Leg Raises Variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Bridges Variation	3 sets of between 4 and 8 repetitions; Rest between one and 2 min between sets
Plank	One plank variation; hold between 30s and 60s
Conditioning (optional) Static stretching	5 min

## Building Your Routine

So if you want to build your own routine, there are a couple of things you must decide.

### What Is Your Goal?

General fitness? Strength? Muscle Mass? Skill? Increased mobility and flexibility?

Keep it very simple at the beginning. And most importantly write it down on your poster sheet you use with all the progressions. This really helps to put your mind into it and tell your consciousness what is going to happen. Your next steps will involve laying out a process which will get you there.

### Pick sets, reps, and schedule goal

Based on your goal, pick the appropriate number of sets, reps and hold times. Decide on a weekly workout schedule, too—how many times a week will you work out? Three times a week is the recommended amount. Remember to allow for enough recovery time. Ideally 24 to 48 hours.

### Pick a Template.

Full Body or Split Body Routine?

### You Are Ready to Rock!

# Chapter 7—Training Programs

Now you know all the exercises involved, and you know how to create your own routine. Next, I want to give you a cheat sheet of a few routines based on exercises and progressions we just explored. We have a number of routines to fit your particular goals or lifestyle.

In this chapter, you will find workouts for just about every goal, whether it's a rapid fat loss, muscle mass, endurance or strength.

## 1. Basic Routine

This is a simple yet extremely effective routine for you to follow to start building inhuman strength. The program has been used successfully by people from all walks of life and has received constant praise throughout their development.

We have created a poster with all the progressions to follow. If you have any trouble accessing it, email [jeffcowancc@gmail.com](mailto:jeffcowancc@gmail.com)

**CALISTHENICS - THE MOST EFFECTIVE BODYWEIGHT STRENGTH TRAINING ON EARTH**  
 Beginner workout routine: Your road to inhuman strength

1. WARMUP		3. PUSHING				4. PULLING				5. LEG WORK				6. CORE WORK				7. CONDITIONING		8. STRETCHES	
Warmup + Mobility		Horizontal		Vertical		Horizontal		Vertical		Pistol Squat		Leg Raises		Bridges		Bodyline Work		EXAMPLIS			
		R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S	R & S		
Jumping Jacks	Wall pushups	Incline jk pushup	Vertical Pulls	Wall Pullups	Shoulderstand Squat	Knee Tucks	Great Bridges	Notow	Sprints	Picture's stretch											
Lunges	Incline Pushup	Incline Pike diamond pushup	Inverted toes legs bent	Horizontal Pulls with legs bent	Supported Squat	Fast knee raises	Straight Bridges	Arch	Jump Rope	Chest Stretch											
Hoppers	Kneeling Pushup	Pike Pushup	Inverted toes legs straight	Horizontal Pulls	Half Squat	Full bent leg raises	Angled bridges	Plank	Jumping Jacks	Cobra and Cat Stretch											
Jumping Squats	Half Way Pushup	Pike pushup diamond	Inverted toes one leg extended	Dead Hang 1 min	Full Squat	Full Frog Raises	Head bridges	Reverse Plank	Burpees	Fore and Aft calf's stretch											
Run	Normal Pushup	Decline pike pushups	Inverted toes legs elevated	Chin over the bar hold	Over Squat	Full straight leg raising	Half Bridges	Side Plank	Jumping Lunges	Wrist Stretch											
Sprints	Elbow in pushups	Decline pike diamond pushup	Inverted toes legs elevated one leg extended	Negative Chinup	Bulgarian split Squat	Hanging bent knee raises	Full Bridges		Bastards	Quad stretch											
Scapula Pulses	Diamond Pushups	Decline Pike Pushup shoulder free	High Kneep front lower toes	Negative Chinup 25	Bogghier Strpm Squat	Forward straight leg raises	Wall Walking down			Hamstring stretch											
OR easier version than what you currently perform	Wide Grip	Wall assisted hand stand	Wall back front lever	Jerklike pullup / box assisted	Box Squat coach call	Hanging frog raises	Wall walking up			Abductors Stretch											
	Decline Pushups/ wall pushups	Free hand stand	One back knee one leg extended lower single leg	Assisted Pullup leg or ankle	Single legs box squat - down from bottom	Hanging straight leg raises	Closing bridge														
	Decline diamond pushup	Shoulder Stand Handstand	Shuttle legs front rows	Bent Arm 90 degree hold	Box squat hanging on a side	Hanging bent leg V raises	Stand to stand bridge														
	Handstand practice	Uneven Pushups	Front lower toes	Negative pullup	Uneven Squat	Hanging straight leg V raises															
	Levera Practice	Uneven lever pushup	Front lower pulls	Half Pullup	1/2 one legged squat	Hanging toes to the bar															
		Handstand - balance from left to right shuffle	Hanging V raise straight up	Full Up	Assisted one legged squat																
		Wall one arm push	One arm hanging knee raises	Close grip Pullup	Balance assisted one legged squats																
		Shoulder One Arm Push Ups	Progress to	Wide grip Pullup	Weighted one leg squat																
		1/2 one arm pushup	The horizontal front lever position pull-up to the rings	Uneven pullup	PISTOL																
		One arm pushups	Ice cream maker	Assisted 1 arm Pullup Negative	Ringsque pistols																
		Decline one arm pushup	One-arm front lever	1/2 One Arm pullup	Immediate strips/ Superman squat																
			Ice cream maker	One Arm Pullup	Advanced strips																
				Next -> Back lever	More advanced strip																
					The Elevated Strip																
					Advanced strips																
					More advanced strip																
					The Elevated Strip																

**YOUR DAILY WORKOUT ROUTINE STRUCTURE**  
 Warmup + Mobility (5min) - start with a quick warmup and mobility exercises.  
 Skill Work (10min) - choose the skill you are working towards eg Handstand work, support practice.  
 Strength Work (40 min) - Pick appropriate exercise from all the sections (Pushing, Pulling, Legs and Core). Perform # of sets and reps according to your goal, otherwise stay with a basic routine for 3 sets 7-10 reps, 1 min rest in between sets. Progress when easily can do 3\*10, 7  
 Conditioning 5-10 minutes - optional  
 Static Stretches (5min) cool down  
 You are a rockstar!

**REPS AND SETS CHEAT SHEET (R&S)**

	Sets & Reps	Rest Times
<b>Strength</b>	3*6-10	1-2 min
<b>Mass (hypertrophy)</b>	3-6*8-12 reps	0.5-2 min
<b>Endurance</b>	5*12+	0.5-2 min

**BODYWEIGHT TRAINING ARENA .COM**

**IT NEVER GETS EASIER, YOU JUST GET STRONGER. CONQUER**

ROYAL OLYMPIANS  
REPRESENT BY JEFF COWANCC

The program requires minimal equipment and can be easily followed at home, in a park, or in a gym. It is both simple and straightforward in its approach.

This is an hour-long workout which should be performed 3 times a week.

## Your Daily Workout Routine Structure

1. Warmup and Mobility (5min)—start with a quick warmup and mobility exercises. If you are short on time, you can use first 1 to 2 sets of an easier exercise variation as a warmup.
  2. Skill Work (10min)—choose the skill you are working toward.
  3. Strength Work (40 min)— perform a number of sets and reps according to your goal.
    - Pulling
    - Pushing
    - Legs
    - Core work
  4. Conditioning (optional)
  5. Static Stretches (5min) + Cool Down
- DONE! :)

Reps and Sets Cheat Sheet (R&S)		
	Sets and Reps	Rest Times
Strength	3*6-10	1-2min between sets
Mass (hypertrophy)	3-6*6-12reps	Rest as much as you need it. 0.5-2 min
Endurance	5*12+	Rest as little as you need.0.5-2 min

Progress when you can easily do 3 sets.

## 2. Minimalistic Routine

This workout is for somebody who has very little time for exercise. It incorporates fewer movements and fewer workouts per week.

Now, if you have a very limited time (and I know many of you do, as you work, have kids, and travel), but you want to keep building, there are ways to minimize the time you spend working out. The same rules apply—you just need to keep on moving.

My advice is to be very clear when you set your goal. Are there any particular skills you want to develop? What are you really after here?

This is a total body workout. You will still burn fat, build muscle, and boost metabolism. Ideally you should try to do it 3 times per week, but it can be performed 1 or 2 times to great effect, fitting it into your schedule around your commitments. If you schedule it only 1 to 2 times per week, make sure you have a whole hour blocked out. Another way to minimize the time commitment is to simply do shorter workouts, that focus just on strength work.

## Here is what I would suggest

- Drop the bridges and planks and focus on 6 basic exercises
- For a warm-up, use first 1 or 2 sets of an easier variation for each exercise
- Alternate between exercises in each of the 3 types of movement on the chart during each workout. Always pick one pushing exercise and one pulling exercise, and then alternate days doing legs and core.
- For strength, perform as many sets of 3 to 8 reps for each exercise as you can in a 30-minute window, resting only as much as you absolutely need. Make sure the exercises are hard enough that it is a challenge to complete the number of reps you're shooting for.

Reps and Sets Cheat Sheet (R&S)		
	Sets and Reps	Rest Times
Strength	3*6-10	1-2min between sets
Mass (hypertrophy)	3-6*6-12reps	Rest as much as you need it. 0.5-2 min
Endurance	5*12+	Rest as little as you need.0.5-2 min

## 3. Fat Burner Routine

I know, from my conversations with clients, that a lot of you want to lose body fat. This routine will be great for anybody who has a lot of body fat to lose or who is looking for a jump-start to get back in shape.

This is a High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) workout.

If you are a beginner, it is recommended to only try HIIT if you can do a session of cardio for 20-30 minutes at 70 to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. If that's beyond your current ability, you can still try interval training, but do it at lower exercise intensity. Beginners should always wear a heart rate monitor.

**NOTE:** Interval training should begin with a 3-to-5-minute minute warmup and end with a 3-to-5-minute cool down to prevent dizziness or nausea.

This workout is structured so that it gives you 60 seconds of high-intensity work periods. As we discussed before, this pattern burns off the sugar stored in your muscles and puts your body into a fat-burning mode during the rest periods and way after you finish your workout. You have 15-second, incomplete rest periods, just enough to recover and get back to the next exercise.

A quick recap: what this does is maximize your level of hormones responsible for fat burning and keeps your heart rate elevated, improving your cardio conditioning. This can boost your metabolism for up to 48 hours after the workout. How awesome is that.

## Let's get going

Perform this whole-body workout 3 times a week. Ideally, you should have 48 hours of rest in between. Alternate between 60 seconds of work and 15 seconds of rest for each exercise in the circuit. Each circuit is 10 minutes in duration and ideally you should perform 3 circuits. If you are short on time, you can cut it down to 1 or 2 circuits.

## Important notes

Perform as many quality reps as you can with perfect technique. If it's an isometric exercise, simply hold the position. If you need rest, simply pause at any time during the workout, but try to push yourself as much as you can. Switch sides for all unilateral exercises.

## Which variation should I do?

You should be able to perform at least 10 total reps in each 60 seconds. If you are consistently getting fewer than 10 reps, go back to an easier variation of progression. If you are getting more than 10 reps, move to a harder one.

## Drop Set technique

You can also apply this technique for some additional burn. To do drop sets, start with the hardest exercise variation you can handle for a given movement, and do it for the first 30 seconds. Then immediately drop to a slightly easier exercise variation for the final 30 seconds.

## 4. The 10-Minute Workout

It is recommended you find 30 to 60 minutes to perform your routine at least 3 times a week. There are days, though, when you will be so busy even that might be hard. For those days, we have a 10-minute workout. Recent studies show that one 10-minute workout had the same post-workout metabolic boost as a 30-minute one—though, during the workout, the 30-minute plan burned more calories. The important thing is for you to keep on moving, whether its 10 minutes or 60 minutes. Never skip the workout because you do not have enough time. important to build a habit of moving, so no excuses.

Now, the key here is intensity. These 10 minutes should be the hardest 10 minutes you have ever done. You want to push yourself to the limits and take almost no rest.

Here's how it goes.

Alternate between 50 seconds of hard work and 10 seconds of rest.

Look at the Fat Burner Routine. You are following the same scheme – but for 10 minutes, with increased the intensity.

You have 10 minutes, so we have 10 different exercises you can perform. As usual, we pick a pushing variation (2min), a pulling variation (2 min), a legs variation (2min), and a core variation (2min). With two minutes left, you can add additional pushing or pulling or use this time to stretch. If you push yourself enough, you should be sweating like crazy.

You need to pick exercises that are hard enough for you. Within 50 seconds you should be able to perform 10 total reps. If you are getting less than that, move to a simpler one. If you are getting more, move to a harder one. It's that easy.

## 5. Time to Get Ripped

Sometimes when I notice I've put on a bit of weight or I feel like I need to get back in shape, I use this routine combined with a very strict diet—remember that in terms of getting ripped, diet will be 80% of your success.

The goal of this routine is to really torch the fat and still maintain muscle mass.

**Part 1.** The secret is getting your whole body working using 40 minutes of strength training with harder exercises, lower reps, and longer rest periods. Select variations which make it a challenge to complete 3-6 reps. You want as many sets as possible of 3 to 6 reps each within the 10-minute time frame. Shoot for heavy pushing, heavy pulling, and heavy legs.

**Part 2.** Finish with an intense 20 minutes of metabolic resistance circuit training. Again perform 50 sec of work with 10 second rest. Perform 4 total circuits in 20 minutes.

Use variations of exercises which are much easier—you should be able to get up to 20 reps in 50 seconds.

Again, you pick pushing variations, pulling variations, and leg variations.

In a longer workout, I would tell you not to mix those two together, but it's ok for a short period of time when you are after a very specific goal.

## Chapter 9 - Final Thoughts

---

Ultimately, there is a great deal to be gained from bodyweight training. It is not a simple quick fix for a bikini body or putting on muscle. It's a lifetime pursuit and exploration of the ways your body moves and functions. So much more than a fitness regimen, it is a system and a practice that emphasizes mobility, strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination. It promotes movement and encompasses elements of various sports ranging from gymnastics to acrobatics and strength training.

I have tried, in this book, to provide a foundation for anybody who wants to join us on a journey to develop inhuman, amazing strength for life.

### Embrace Life

I see calisthenics as a way of living. Living without any constraints, aligned with our natural potential expressed through movement of our bodies, free of complicated systems and routines, but full of play, purpose, and constant pursuit of our own greatness.

If there is just one thing you get out of this book, I want it to be unlimited belief in yourself—belief that no matter where are you in life, how stressful it is, how weak you feel, or how overweight you are, you can achieve whatever you want if you work with consistency and patience. You will fail along the way. You will have ups and downs, and you will have to learn the hard way. Embrace it, and know that if you are moving forward, you are on the right track. And we as a family of inhuman strength athletes will be here to help you along the way.

So however you are feeling today, defy the odds. Get up and move. I promise you will be proud of yourself.