

# Summer Workouts

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**Summer is here and, for most people that means sun, sand and a bit too much good food and drink. It also means holidays and time away from the gym – but this is no excuse to turn into a pudding.**

This issue we'll look at some ways to train anywhere, anytime, without equipment. Most people should be familiar with the basics of bodyweight conditioning such as running, pushups, situps and chinups so I won't go over those again.

## Strength without weights

While cardio fitness and muscular endurance are relatively easy to train for without a gym, it takes a bit more creativity and some specialised exercises to improve your strength without weight training.

The main way to make bodyweight exercises more difficult and transform them into feats of strength is to make your leverage worse so that you are working against a bigger percentage of your own weight. Thus, pushups become hand-stand pushups or one-arm pushups, squats are done on one leg and a variety of gymnastic drills are employed to work the abs.

Here are a few tougher bodyweight drills to add to your routine.

## The one-legged squat

Bodyweight squats are easy. Bodyweight squats on one leg are not! The one-legged squat, or pistol, requires a high degree of leg strength, balance and

posterior chain flexibility. It's a great exercise for soldiers.

The pistol is a butt-to-ankle squat with the free leg held out in front of the body. To start, simply lift one leg off the ground and hold it out in front of you. Breathe in and reach forward with the arms while you push your hips back and down. Descend slowly into the bottom position and then drive out with the working leg.

Try a few and, once you've finished falling over, apply the following techniques to improve your chances:

- Practice in bare feet – runners are bad news.
- To improve your balance, brace your abs and glutes hard the whole time. If you are still having trouble, you may need to hold on to a chair or pole for stability.
- Practice doing the squats onto a box or set of steps. Once you can do five reps, touch and go at a certain height, lower the step.
- Stretch your glutes, hamstrings, lower back and

calves – if you are tight you'll fall over backwards. If you really can't get down deep, use a 2cm block under the heel, but try to wean yourself off this ASAP.

Five reps each leg is a good start, 10–15 reps is good and more than 20 is bad-ass.

## One-arm pushups

Once again, by changing the proportion of your bodyweight lifted you can make an easy exercise into a feat of strength. Even guys who can do 50, 70 or 100 pushups often fail at their first one-arm pushup.

Just like the pistol, the one-arm pushup requires strength and coordination. The main difficulty is in maintaining core tension so that you don't collapse at the bottom of the movement.

Here are some tips so that you don't wreck your dental work trying this humbling exercise:

- Spread the feet to double shoulder-width apart and balance on the toes.
- Place the working hand directly under the shoulder and keep the elbow close to the body the whole time. Actively grip the ground with the fingers to generate tension.
- Breathe in, brace the glutes and abs – total body tension is the key to success here.
- As you descend into the pushup, you may need to turn your body away from

the working hand slightly to maintain balance, just don't go too far and allow the hips to sag.

- In the beginning, it is acceptable to spot yourself with the free hand.

## L-sit chin-up

This chin-up variation will have your back begging for mercy and your abs flying the white flag of surrender.

Hang from a chin-up bar with an over- or under-hand grip and then bring your legs up in front of you until your body forms an "L" shape with the toes pointed. From here, start performing chin-ups. Make sure each rep is chin-over-the-bar to a full hang.

If you struggle to do even one rep you may need to practice hanging leg raises for a while.

Enjoy the pain!

## Bodyweight strength program

The simplest way to work on these new exercises is to do a couple of sets of each exercise morning and night. Frequent practice will lead to rapid gains in skill and strength and you won't even have to break a sweat.

Once every two to three days include a longer session with some higher rep sets of regular bodyweight exercises and perhaps some interval running and, by the time the holidays are over, you'll be in pretty good shape while everyone else has gotten soft and lazy.

