

Pull Ups

Do it Right!
Exercises you Should Do

Progression: To progress to performing a full pull up try doing them with assistance using a chair or an assisted pull up machine. **Form:** **DO NOT LET MOMENTUM DRIVE THE MOTION.** Reach your arms overhead with your palms facing away from you and grasp the handles firmly with a full grip position (thumbs wrapped around the handles). Gently cross one leg over the other to stabilize your lower extremity and then stiffen ("brace") your abdominal muscles to stabilize your spine (if unassisted). Depress and retract your scapulae (pull shoulders back and down) and attempt to hold this position throughout the exercise. Slowly pull your body upwards by flexing (bending) your elbows and pulling your elbows down to your sides. Attempt to pull in a motion that drives your elbows directly down towards the floor, while keeping them positioned in the 3 and 9 o'clock position (aligned with the sides of the trunk). Attempt to keep your body aligned vertically to the floor and avoid swinging your body during your upward pull. Continue pulling upward until your chin is level with the bar or your hands. Pause momentarily then slowly return to your starting position by allowing your arms to extend back overhead until your arms are fully extended. Continue to maintain your shoulder and wrist position, and the vertical alignment of your trunk. Repeat the movement. **Exercise Variation:** The intensity of this exercise can be increased with resistance that can be added by wearing a weight belt to which weights are connected. Using a narrow, pronated (palms forward) grip shifts some of the load from your lats (mid-back muscles) into the muscles of the upper back. You can alter grips as well for variation. Palms facing you is consider a chin up and works the biceps to a great degree.



Pull Ups is an advanced foundational exercise and test of muscular ability. The ability to do a few in men and one or two in women is a sign of very good muscular ability in my opinion. It is a staple of my own exercise program and all my athletic training programs. Performing the pull-up involves moving the entirety of your own bodyweight up against gravity, it takes incredible upper-body strength and trunk stability. It has long been used to assess overall upper-body muscular ability as it is a “pulling” motion, one of the five essential movement patterns described in the ACE Integrated Fitness Training® (ACE IFT®) model. By mastering the pull-up along with the bend and lift, single-leg, pushing and rotating movements, we are better equipped to move effectively and efficiently in our daily lives. It is also a compound exercise since it involves a large number of big and small muscles, most notably your latissimus dorsi (lats) and biceps. In addition to working multiple muscles at the same time, the pull-up is also a multi-joint movement, an exercise that causes more than one joint to move. According to ACE Fitness when performing a proper pull-up, it is important to “pack the shoulders” or set the shoulder blades (scapula) in the correct and most powerful position to ensure that the right muscles are doing the work. Grasp that bar and, before beginning the pull-up motion, maintain straight arms and pull the shoulder blades down the back and together (as if putting the scapula in your back pocket while pinching them together). Maintain this position of the shoulder blades as you engage the back and arms to pull yourself upward. It would also be good to incorporate the row and pulldown machines and/or the Suspension Row for muscular balance and to improve pull ability..