

Men's Fitness
GUIDE

WORKOUT MANUAL

Your complete guide to building muscle and burning fat



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For all abilities
 Healthy diet advice

ISSUE 30

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WORKOUT MANUAL



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Kelsey Shop: shop.kelsey.co.uk/subscription/MEG

Back Issues: 01959 543747

DISTRIBUTION IN GREAT BRITAIN

Seymour Distribution Limited
2 East Poultry Avenue
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www.seymour.co.uk

DISTRIBUTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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The way you eat is as important as the way you train when you're trying to improve your fitness, so here are the guidelines to follow in the kitchen



Welcome



Welcome to the latest *Men's Fitness Workout Manual*, our all-new collection of training plans and advice from the pages of the UK's leading fitness magazine.

Whatever your exercise goals, you'll find plenty in the following pages to help you achieve them. In the opening chapter, we've compiled an abundance of useful info to help you get the most out of the workouts that follow, ranging from simple tips for the first-time trainee to advanced upgrades for the veteran gym-goer. Then it's

straight into the workouts, with a collection of simple but extremely effective fat-loss and strength-building sessions. You'll see that each workout can be performed using just one piece of gym kit in half an hour or less, making them the ideal way to add workout routines to your busy schedule. At the end of the workouts

section, you'll also find a series of moves to help strengthen your core and protect your posture - important to futureproof your body and ensure you stay fit for life.

Rounding off the guide is a chapter on food and nutrition - it contains easy-to-follow eating advice that will help you fuel your training, as well as a simple yet extensive guide to supplements.

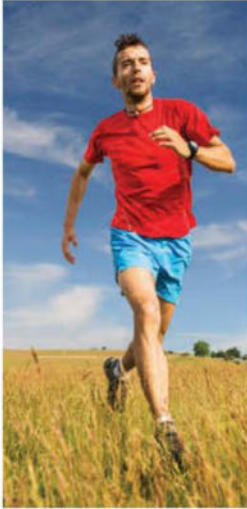
So, whether you're looking to build muscle, burn fat or simply futureproof your body so that you can enjoy a happier and healthier life from today, your new and improved training journey starts here.

Ben Ince, Guide editor

"We've compiled an abundance of useful info, from simple tips for the first-time trainee to advanced upgrades for the veteran gym-goer"

The truth about training

The no-nonsense facts behind the most common fitness myths



1 'THE MORE YOU TRAIN, THE BETTER THE RESULTS'

Yes, you need to train hard and regularly, but doing too much too often is going to be counterproductive. If you're new to working out, start with three sessions a week, to give your muscles time to

recover - and grow - before training them again. Too little rest between sessions can result in overtraining, when you feel tired, fatigued and demotivated. You're also more likely to suffer from injury.

2 'YOU CAN TURN FAT INTO MUSCLE'

Fat and muscle are two totally different types of tissue, so it's impossible for one to turn into the other. Muscle is active tissue that burns calories, while fat tissues store excess energy. When you train hard, it's possible to burn fat and build muscle at the same time, giving the appearance that one has turned into the other, but this isn't actually the case.

3 'MACHINES ARE BETTER THAN FREE WEIGHTS'

Resistance machines have their place in a gym: they are a great way for beginners to learn movement patterns without the risk of danger, and they allow experienced trainees to isolate specific muscles to lift heavier weights. But because the movement pattern is so restricted, they're no good at working the stabilising muscles that are so important in staying injury-free. Free weights, such as dumbbells and barbells, require more skill to use, recruit these smaller stabilising muscles and allow you to move through a greater range of motion to work your muscles to their full extent.

4 'CARDIO TRAINING IS BEST FOR FAT LOSS'

It is true that high-intensity cardio, which includes things like sprints and hill runs, is great for fat loss. However, long and slow steady-state sessions, while good for aerobic conditioning and heart health, aren't very efficient for burning fat. This is because long sessions increase the level of the stress hormone cortisol in your body, which actually encourages it to store more fat. If you're looking to lose weight and tone up, weight training is more effective than cardio for burning fat as well as building muscle, and should therefore form the core of your training programme.

"Weight training is more effective than cardio for burning fat as well as building muscle, and should therefore form the core of your training programme"

5 'DOING SIT-UPS WILL BURN BELLY FAT'

You can't lose fat from a specific part of your body. No matter how many crunches or similar abs exercises you do, they won't shift

your belly. More often than not, the fat on your stomach is the last to go, so you need a thorough, well-structured training and nutrition plan to chip away constantly at your body fat percentage.

6 'WEIGHT TRAINING MAKES YOU TOO BULKY'

Putting on serious amounts of lean muscle mass takes time, and only then if you have a progressive training plan and eat the right

foods at the right time. No one has ever woken up after a great chest and arms workout to discover that none of their T-shirts fit, so don't panic - you're not going to suddenly look too bulky.



SAFETY FIRST

Reduce your injury risk at the gym with this trio of simple tips

1 IF YOU FEEL PAIN AT ANY TIME DURING YOUR WORKOUT, STOP IMMEDIATELY

Yes, it's difficult mentally to stop midway through a workout, but listen to your body. Don't be tempted to work through the pain or you could make a small problem significantly worse.

2 MAINTAIN PERFECT FORM FOR EVERY REPETITION, OR REP, OF EVERY EXERCISE

Each exercise in this book comes with detailed notes on form and most gyms have qualified fitness professionals on hand who will be happy to help if you're unsure about an exercise.

3 PICK A WEIGHT YOU CAN MANAGE EASILY THE FIRST TIME YOU DO ANY LIFT

This allows you to concentrate on perfecting the form - you can increase the weight over time. Leave your ego at the door - choosing a weight that's too heavy is the fastest way to cut your training short through injury.

MASTER THE GYM

Gyms can seem unfriendly and intimidating places if you're not used to them, but increase your comfort level and you'll find everything much easier. Here's how it's done



LEARN TO WORK IN

This is gym code for “sharing the equipment”. Generally, the wrong thing to do is shuffle around the equipment looking as though you want it but not saying anything. If someone is using the kit you need and it's the only station in the gym, wait until they've finished their set - don't talk to them while they're squatting - and then politely ask if you can work in (use the equipment while they're resting). Most people will be fine with it. And it goes without saying that if someone asks, you should share your kit with them, too.

BRAINSTORM YOUR BACK-UPS

Before you hit the gym, think about what you'll do if the kit you need is unavailable. As you get more comfortable with working out, you'll be able to figure this out on the go, but in the early stages it's best to plan ahead and work out alternatives for a worst-case scenario.

GET A SPOTTER

To make the most of your sessions, you'll occasionally need a spotter - someone to make sure you're safe under the weight and help you out with your last few reps, if needed. Most gym-goers will be more than happy to oblige if you ask politely. Communication with your spotter is key, though. Let them know how many reps you're aiming for, when they should touch the weights (ideally as little as possible) and how much help they should give you. And always be prepared to return the favour.

LEAVE IT AS YOU'D LIKE TO FIND IT

This may sound obvious, but you should always return any equipment to its place after using it - if you're strong enough to lift it, then you're strong enough to put it back - and always wipe your sweat off machines, mats and benches.



A man in a black tank top and white shorts is in a gym, holding a large red medicine ball. He is looking intently at the ball. The background shows gym equipment like treadmills and other people working out.

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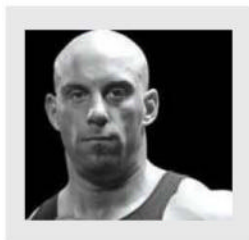
Expert advice

*Make sure you get the most out of your training
with top tips from our panel of elite coaches*

The more you know about training, the better your progress will be. And with the benefit of our trainers' experience and knowledge – including simple tips for first-time trainees and advanced upgrades for the veteran gym-goers – you'll get stronger, leaner and fitter in next to no time.

Q Can I get fitter and look better at the same time?

Building an impressive physique and improving your sporting performance aren't the same thing - but they needn't be mutually exclusive



THE COACH

Christian Thibaudeau is a world-renowned strength coach and author who has competed as an Olympic lifter and a bodybuilder

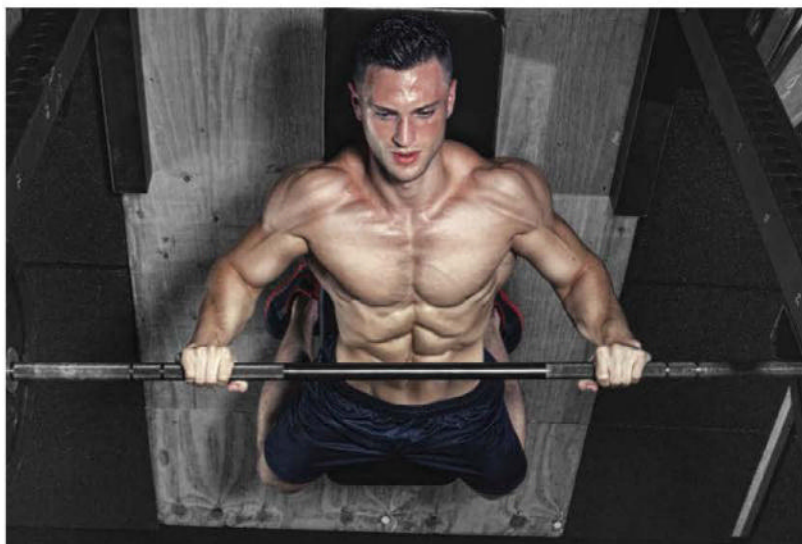
First, let's make one thing clear. It is definitely possible to build a muscular, lean body while making strength, speed and power gains. In fact, I would say that training like an athlete and turning yourself into a performance machine is actually the best way to get an aesthetically pleasing body - you just need to choose the right performance-boosting exercises and tweak the loading parameters

in order to optimise your body composition.

Lift off

If you want to build muscle, forget bodybuilding-style isolation exercises, such as dumbbell curls, and instead focus on compound lifts, such as bench presses, squats and deadlifts. Sprinters and rugby players perform these moves in sets of one to three reps, using as much weight as possible. This is optimum for building maximum strength, but if you want to get stronger and add functional muscle, you need to lower the weight slightly and aim for four to six reps per set.

I recommend focusing on one compound exercise per workout. Aim to complete five sets of four to six reps of that lift, paired in a superset with an exercise that works antagonistic, opposing muscle groups - so push presses with chin-ups



or bench presses with barbell rows. Rest for 20-30 seconds between the first and second exercise, then for two minutes after the second exercise to complete one superset. Once you have finished all five, reduce the weight of the main compound lift by 30% and complete 30 reps of it in as few sets and as little time as possible, for an extra muscle-building boost.

Walk this way

A lot of guys lift weights to pump their muscles up, and then do steady-state cardio, such as jogging or cycling, on the side. This is not an efficient way to build a great-looking body. To get lean while maintaining muscle mass, ditch the treadmill and focus on strongman-inspired metabolic conditioning exercises, such as sled drags, farmer's walks, walking lunges or prowler pushes. These don't just work all your major muscle groups - they also develop stabilising muscles and improve your posture, ensuring you look good both when in motion and when stationary.

If you want to get as lean as possible, do these exercises using a 1:1 ratio, so you work

for one minute then rest for one minute. This will make your metabolism work harder and burn more calories. Try adding five rounds of one of these strongman exercises as a finisher to each of your compound lift workouts, to improve your strength gains, too. I had a client who added 30kg to his deadlift in a month - without doing any deadlifting - because heavy carrying had improved his grip strength and reinforced his glutes and lower back.

If you've got time, I would also add two weekly sprint sessions. As well as making you faster and more explosive, they'll get you super ripped, without sacrificing muscle mass or negatively impacting your strength gains - which steady-state running can do. Warm up, then perform six rounds of 60m sprints with 60 seconds' rest between each, then do two 200m sprints to finish. It'll be tough, but if you can manage a combined six sessions per week, you will make huge strength, power and speed gains - and have a fantastic physique to show for it.

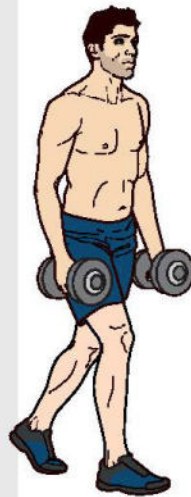
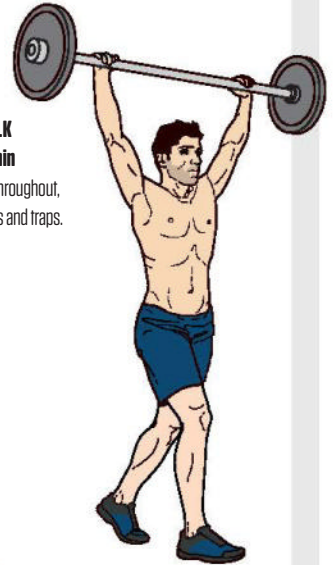
STRONG TO THE FINISH

Add one of these moves as a finisher to each of your weekly workouts, to improve your conditioning and get ripped

OVERHEAD BARBELL WALK

SETS 5 TIME 1 min REST 1 min

Keep your arms locked out throughout, to build seriously strong delts and traps.



DUMBBELL FARMER'S WALK

SETS 5 TIME 1 min REST 1 min

This move will engage your core, develop impressive grip and build big forearms.

DUMBBELL WALKING LUNGE

SETS 5 TIME 1 min REST 1 min

Take long steps and lower your back knee close to the ground, to place a greater emphasis on your quads.



Q Will a lack of mobility hamper my muscle gains?

Look after your muscles and they'll reward you with unprecedented growth



THE COACH

Dave Hembrough is a UKSCA accredited strength & conditioning coach and qualified sports therapist, who has worked with professional athletes in a variety of sports.

Do you lift weights or play sports regularly? Then there's a good chance you're repeating the same movement patterns a lot. The key to getting stronger, building more muscle and staying injury-free is to look after the muscles that perform these movements. If you don't, they'll tighten over time, restricting the range

of motion through your joints, especially your ankles, hips, back and shoulders.

Mobility is defined as the ability to apply strength through a functional range of motion. If your range of motion is compromised, it will hamper force production and stop you from working out to your full capacity. For example, if you



overwork your chest with too much bench pressing, your pectoral muscles will shorten and tighten, reducing your range of motion through your shoulders. The resulting restriction on the amount of force you can put through your shoulder will limit how heavy you'll be able to lift.

Pause for thought

The main thing you can do to avoid these problems is warm up properly. A lot of guys do a couple of light sets, then jump straight in with heavy weights. But you're better off breaking each exercise down into stages and pausing briefly between each one, to give your body a chance to adapt to the different muscle lengths and tensions it requires.

If you're benching, pause for a couple of seconds at the bottom of the movement, really draw the bar into your chest and squeeze your scapula back and down. With

the deadlift, pause and create some tension in the bottom position by pushing your feet into the floor and gripping the bar, without actually lifting it off the floor. For squatting, sit into a deep bodyweight squat for three to five seconds, then stand up explosively. Aim for five sets of five reps for each move.

All filler, no killer

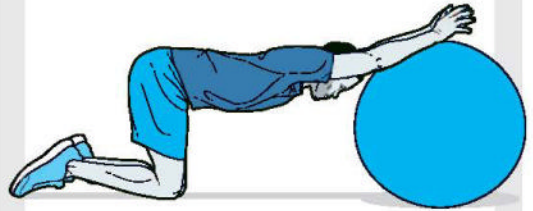
Another useful tool is adding filler exercises to rest periods during your main workouts. These are usually stretches that work the opposing muscle groups to the ones being targeted by the lift (see the box, right).

It may seem like a hassle, but adding these to your sessions will help you train more frequently and with greater intensity and consistency, because your joints won't be restricted and you'll be less prone to injury. All of which means greater strength and muscle gains across the board.

“If you overwork your chest, your pectoral muscles will shorten and tighten”

FILL THE GAPS

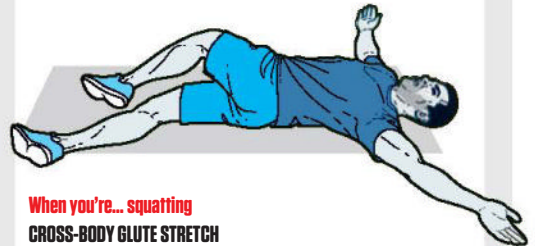
These filler stretches will enhance your ability to build strength and muscle



When you're... bench pressing

KNEELING LAT STRETCH ON A GYM BALL

Hold this stretch for 40-60 seconds between sets, pushing down through your shoulders to open your chest out.



When you're... squatting

CROSS-BODY GLUTE STRETCH

Hold this stretch for 30-40 seconds on either side between sets, making sure you can feel the stretch across your torso.



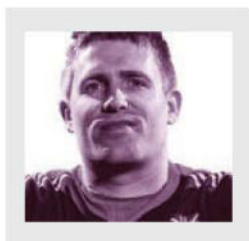
When you're... deadlifting

ANTERIOR PELVIS LUNGE

Perform this stretch for 30-40 seconds on each side between sets, extending forwards through your hips.

Q Can I get stronger by training less?

Focus on quality rather than quantity at the gym, to get better results and avoid injury



THE COACH

Brendan Chaplin is a strength and conditioning coach with a background in MMA and rugby, and is the founder and MD of S&C Education

A lot of people assume the more work they put in at the gym, and the longer and harder they push themselves, the better their results will be. It seems logical. But if you want to maximise your gains, the key is to focus on the quality of the work rather than the quantity.

Your body is capable of making only tiny, marginal adaptations and improvements at

any one time. Once you have given it enough stimulus to make these changes, any additional work you do after that point won't be making you any better. If anything, it'll hamper your progress because you'll need longer to recover afterwards and won't feel as fresh when you start your next session. Ideally, you want to do the smallest amount of work required to stimulate growth in every workout and then immediately call it a day - in other words, the minimum dose stimulates maximum marginal gains.

How much work you need to do is relative to your current fitness levels. For example, a relatively new gym-goer who wants to get stronger might read about a squat workout of ten sets of five reps and try it in his next session. In theory, it's a sensible protocol for building strength, but if he's only ever attempted three sets



of five in his previous workouts, he would be wasting time. The fourth set would push him past his previous limit and force adaptation, but subsequent sets would just add more stress to his system and increase the likelihood of injury.

As a general rule, regardless of your training experience, aim to only increase the volume of any particular exercise by one set or one to two reps from workout to workout.

Warm to the task

Another benefit of streamlining your main workout is it will free up more time for a thorough warm-up, which can help make your sessions even more productive. If you think five minutes on the treadmill followed by some static stretching is the best way to start a workout, think again.

A quality warm-up should follow a RAMP protocol: raising your pulse, activating relevant muscle groups, mobilising your joints and movement patterns, and focusing on potentiation, which means using power-based exercises to prime the body. The

treadmill approach will raise your heart rate and activate some muscles, but by missing out the other stages, you'll be hampering your performance.

Warming up correctly will guarantee the right muscles are firing at the correct times during your workout. A RAMP-style lower-body warm-up (like the one in the box, right) will ensure your glutes, quads, hamstrings and calves are all firing when you squat. A minimal or poorly constructed warm-up that results in these muscles failing to fire puts pressure on your lower back. A proper warm-up will let you make marginal adaptations in as many muscles as possible, as well as improving your metabolic response, all of which allows you to maximise your strength and fat loss gains.

Quality is key

So, the next time you see some guy straining and sweating his way through his eighth set of 12, don't be tempted to emulate him. Focus on an effective warm-up and making small additions to your previous workouts. That's how you win at the gym.

RAMP UP YOUR GAINS

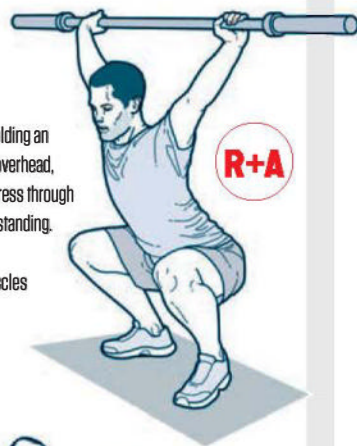
Add these exercises to your warm-up on lower-body workout days, to get the most out of your session

OVERHEAD SQUAT

REPS 5

Sink into a deep squat holding an empty barbell or a stick overhead, keeping your chest up. Press through your heels and return to standing.

- ◆ Raises your heart rate
- ◆ Activates your leg muscles



SIDE LYING ROTATION

REPS 10 each side

Lie on your side with your knees bent together and arms extended in front of you with palms facing. Rotate your torso and bring your top arm across your body, then touch the floor with the back of your hand on the opposite side.

- ◆ Improves mobility through your thoracic spine



BOX JUMP

REPS 5

Jump explosively onto a small box using your arms to generate momentum, then step down one foot at a time.

- ◆ Encourages potentiation

Q How do I train to make myself injury-proof?

Strengthening your connective tissue is the key to avoiding injury



THE COACH

Steve Maxwell is an elite strength and conditioning coach, the founder of Maxwell SC and the first American to receive a black belt in Brazilian jiu jitsu

Does gym training help you stay free of sports injuries? It's unlikely.

A high percentage of such injuries are the result of awkward collisions, falls and impacts. Gym training will make you stronger, but it won't protect you against these injuries because you are always moving through safe, specific movement patterns. All the calf raises in the world won't help you when you roll your

ankle playing football. I'm 52 years old and have been training and competing in grappling-based sports - including wrestling, judo and Brazilian jiu jitsu - for more than 30 years, all of which place considerable strain on your joints. Most of the guys I began training with have had hip and knee replacement operations and are in pretty bad shape, but I can still train and move like a 30-year-old. The



reason? I've spent years training my connective tissue (the ligaments, tendons and fascia) that surround my ankle, knee, hip, elbow and wrist joints.

Connective Issues

I first came across connective tissue training through the Russian concept of "poisonous exercises" (see box, right), which place your joints in unnatural, stressful positions and force them to adapt to those positions without actually injuring them. This works like a vaccination that introduces a small amount of a disease into your body, so that it can adapt and create antibodies.

The key is to build your connective tissue's tolerance to these positions very slowly, because too much strain too soon will lead to injury. If you imagine a pain scale where one feels fine and ten is absolute agony, you should always stop immediately when your

discomfort level reaches four. Over time, your capacity to push these biomechanically bad positions further and hold them for longer will increase as your connective tissue adapts to them, significantly reducing the risk of injury when your joints are forced into these positions unexpectedly.

As well as adapting your connective tissue, poisonous exercises will also recondition your nervous system so it doesn't perceive these unnatural positions as a threat. This is particularly important, because a lot of muscular injuries are the direct result of an overactive stretch reflex, whereby your body involuntarily contracts muscles if they are placed in an unfamiliar position.

It's impossible to fully injury-proof your body, but training your connective tissue will significantly reduce the risk, and keep your joints functioning healthily into later life.

"Poisonous exercises force your joints to adapt to unnatural positions"

WHAT'S YOUR POISON?

Maxwell's poisonous exercises are the remedy for injury. Do this mini-workout as a twice-weekly warm-up drill, never going beyond a discomfort level of four out of ten

1 LATERAL ANKLE ROLL

Works your... ankles and knees

Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Slowly roll onto the outside edge of your right foot and the inside edge of your left. Then roll the other way to complete one rep.

The progression

"Once you get comfortable in these positions, perform a quarter squat, then a half squat, between rolls," says Maxwell.



2 AIKIDO PRESS-UP

Works your... wrists and elbows

Adopt a press-up position but with your knees on the floor and the back of your left hand on the floor, with

the pit of your elbow facing forwards and the point facing backwards. Keeping your right hand in the regular press-up position, perform a press-up under control. Swap hands and repeat to complete one rep.

The progression

"Do it with your knees off the floor in a standard press-up position, then with both hands in the palms-up position at the same time."

3 Squat to knee touch

Works your... knees and hips

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and lower into a deep squat, placing the palms of your hands on the floor in front of you for balance. Turn your feet outwards to a 45° angle. Load most of your weight onto your right foot, then slowly lower your left leg, opening your hip out so your left knee and inside ankle bone are touching the floor. Slowly return to the start position, swap your weight onto your left foot and repeat with your right leg.

The progression

"Do it without using your hands to support you."





Fat loss workouts

Blast flab and build strength with these simple one-kit workouts

Training sessions don't have to be lengthy and complicated to be effective. For optimum fat loss, you can simply grab a single bit of equipment and do one of these quickfire routines. Every workout in this chapter is a "complex" – a workout format that's ironically very straightforward. You just pick up a piece of kit and don't let go until you've performed every rep of every exercise, which is great for ramping up your metabolism to burn more calories, not to mention building an iron grip.

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TERMINOLOGY DECODED

REPS

An abbreviation of repetitions. One rep is the completion of a given exercise from start to finish through a full range of motion.

SETS

A given number of reps of a single exercise performed consecutively without rest.

REST

The time you take between exercises and/or sets, during which your muscles and lungs are given the chance to recover.

Double dumbbells

Recapture your six-pack with this simple six-move dumbbell complex



THE COACH

Shivam Patel

THE PLAN

“Repeat this workout two to three times a week and use this plan to ensure progression,” says Patel.

Complexes are simple: grab a piece of kit and don't let go until you've torched hundreds of calories. With this dumbbell complex, you do each exercise for the required number of reps (see the table below), then move onto the next move without putting the dumbbells down - so choose your weight wisely. Only rest after you finish all six exercises. Add this complex to the end of your workout for a fat-blasting finisher or on its own as a quick 15-minute session.

“The key to fat loss is building and preserving

as much muscle as possible,” says Patel. “That's because muscle tissue contributes to a higher resting metabolism, meaning you'll burn more fat at rest. Complexes are ideal because you stimulate multiple muscles and different energy systems at once, help release fat-burning hormones and create an oxygen deficit, which increases the after-burn effect of your workout, so that you keep burning fat for hours.”

Now grab a pair of dumbbells and make sure you've got a good grip - you'll need it.

WEEK 1

SETS **2** REPS **8** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 2

SETS **3** REPS **8** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 3

SETS **3** REPS **10** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 4

SETS **3** REPS **10** REST **60 sec**

1 SIDE LUNGE

Take a big step to one side and, keeping your chest up, lower into a side lunge, so the dumbbells are on either side of your leading leg. Drive back up to the start and continue into a lunge on the other side.

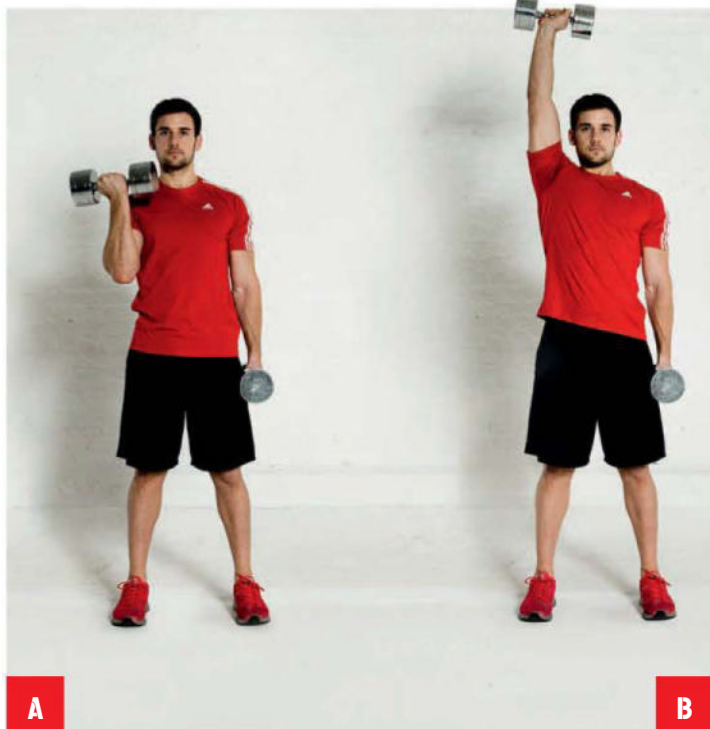
“Keep your abs tight throughout the move to keep your back straight and torso tall,” says Patel.



2 UNILATERAL CURL AND PRESS

Curl one dumbbell to chest height, then press it overhead before lowering. Repeat on the other side.

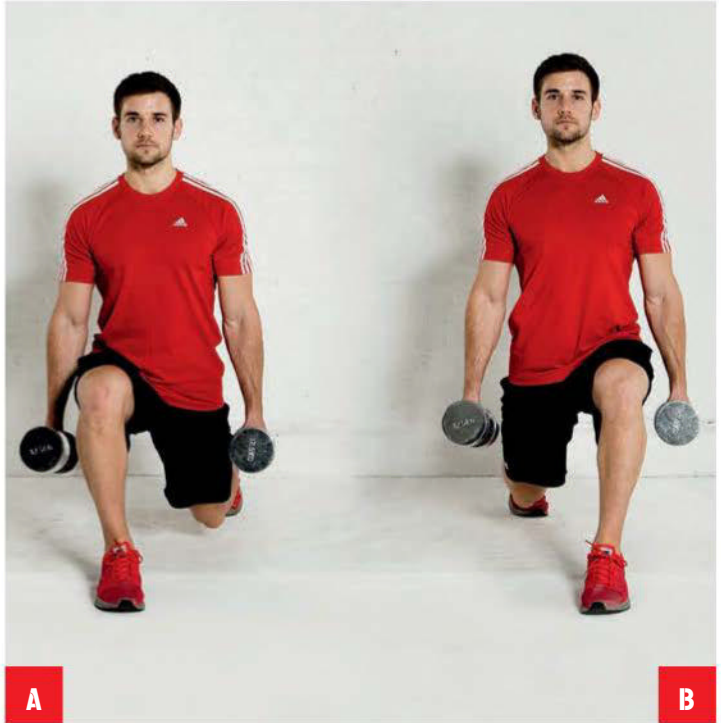
“Think of this more like a clean than a curl,” says Patel. “Hinge forwards at the hips and drive them forwards, to generate power to lift the weight.”



3 FORWARD LUNGE

Take a big step forwards into a lunge, keeping your knee in line with your toes. Do likewise on your other side.

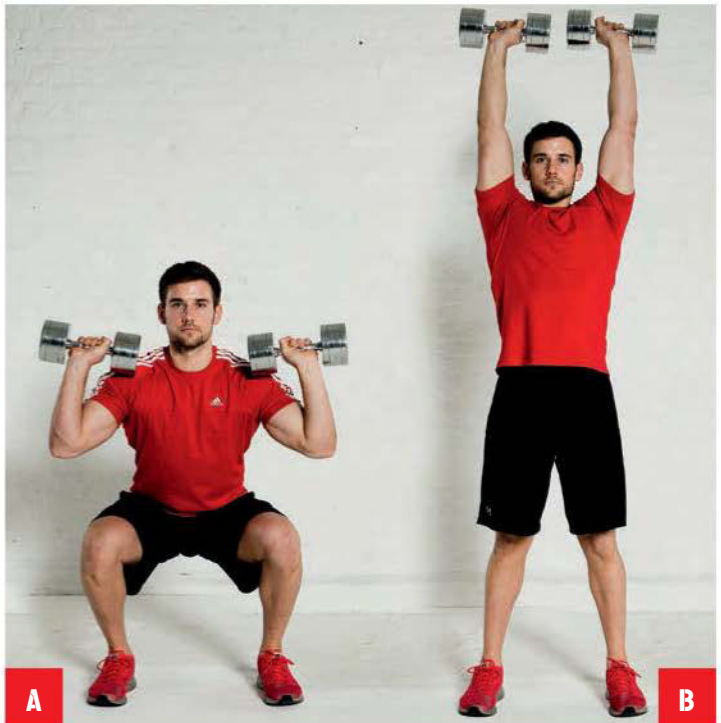
“Take a big step to load your glutes and hamstrings, or a shorter step to work your quads harder.”



4 THRUSTER

Bring the dumbbells up to shoulder height, with palms facing forwards and elbows high. Lower into a squat, then drive up powerfully, continuing to press the weights overhead.

“Use your breathing to help keep your core strong. Inhale on the way down to fill your chest and only exhale at the top of the move.”



5 BENT-OVER ROW

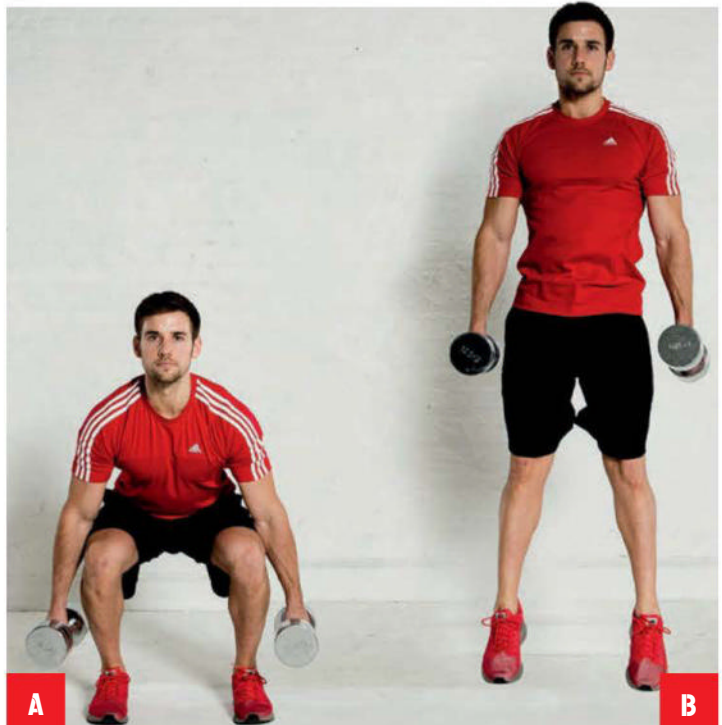
Bend forwards - hinging at the hips, not the waist - and row the dumbbells up towards your armpits.

“Don’t break the alignment of your neck by looking up. Keep your chin tucked in and eyes on the floor.”

**6 JUMP SQUAT**

Holding the weights by your sides, lower into a quarter squat, then drive up powerfully and jump, bending your knees for a soft landing. After completing these reps and sets, now you can let go of the dumbbells.

“Don’t rush – cushion each landing, rest at the bottom and generate power from the quarter squat position.”



Single dumbbell

Grab a dumbbell to build core strength and impressive abs in six moves



THE COACH

Alex Gildea

THE PLAN

“Holding the dumbbell in your right hand, do all the reps of all six exercises before restarting with the weight in your left hand,” says Gildea.

To strengthen your ab muscles, you need to create instability that they resist. Then, to reveal them, you need to burn more calories than you consume to strip away the fat. This workout does both.

Created by trainer Gildea, it uses unilateral exercises. Why? “When you move with just one

side of your body - which you do with every step - your core activates, stabilising your spine and pelvis and transferring power across your body,” he says. Doing the moves as a complex - completing them without putting down the weight - also keeps the intensity high enough to melt fat.

WEEK 1

SETS 3 REPS 5 each side REST 60 sec

WEEK 2

SETS 3 REPS 5 each side REST 45 sec

WEEK 3

SETS 4 REPS 5 each side REST 30 sec

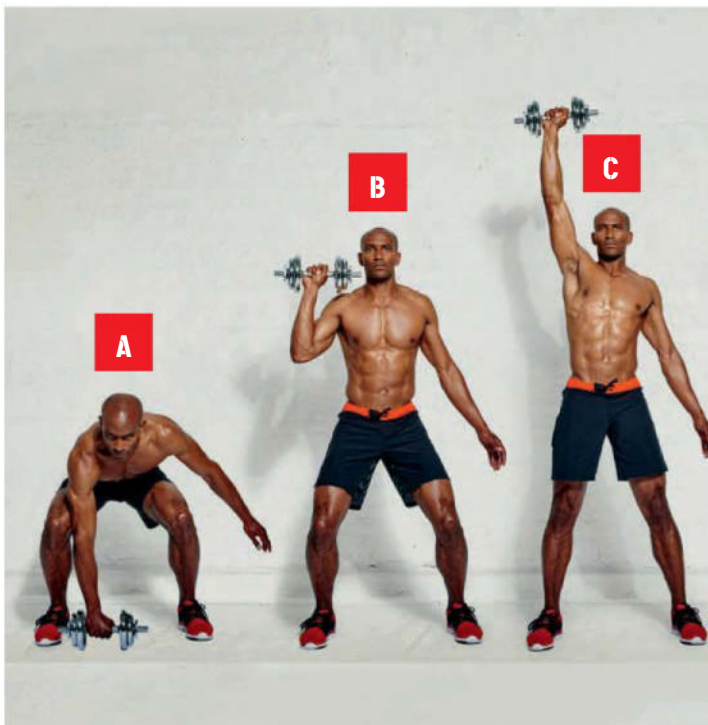
WEEK 4

SETS 5 REPS 5 each side REST 15 sec

1 CLEAN AND PRESS

Choose which arm will take the punishment first. Keep the weight in this hand for all six exercises before you switch. Grab the dumbbell with legs bent and eyes forward. Drive up and pull the weight from the floor to chest height, then drop under it to “catch” it at shoulder height. Straighten your legs to stand and press the weight overhead.

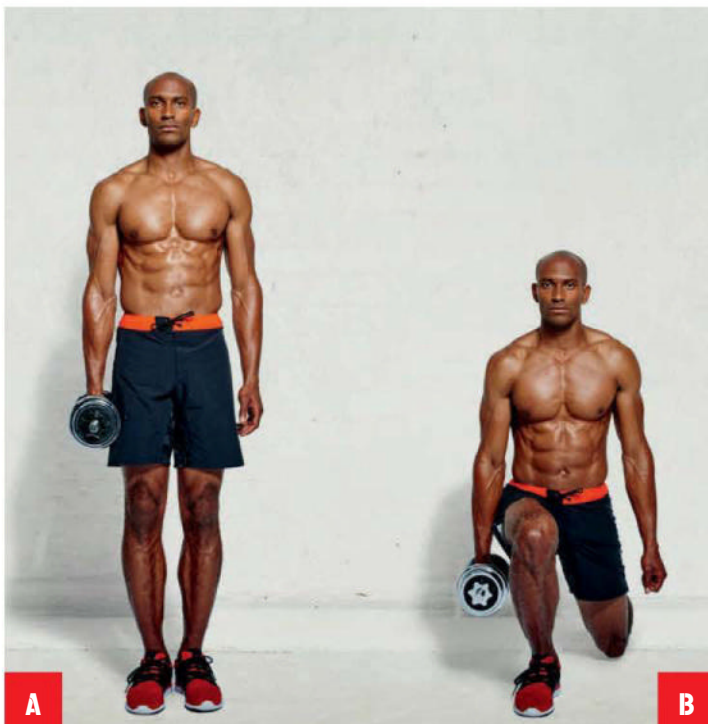
“Exhale during the clean, inhale, then exhale again on the press to brace your core,” says Gildea.



2 REVERSE LUNGE

With the weight in the “catch” position at shoulder height, take a big step backwards with one foot. Brace your core to keep your balance and keep your torso upright, then lower until your knee is just off the floor. Drive back up to the start. Alternate legs.

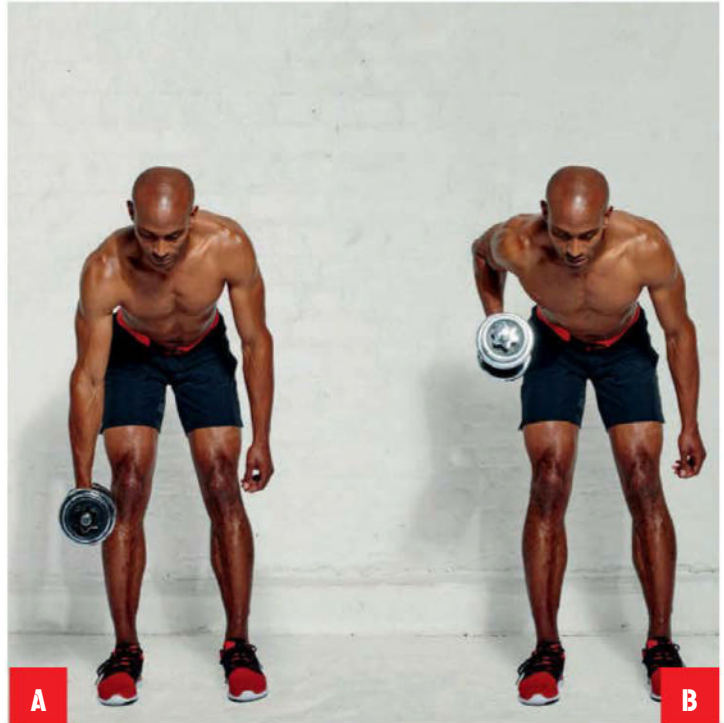
“This is a great stretch for hip flexors. Engage your core first, then move, to stop your pelvis rotating.”



3 BENT-OVER ROW

With a slight bend in your legs, hinge forwards at your hips until your back is almost parallel with the floor. Keeping your core tight, to keep your pelvis level, row the weight up to your armpit so you feel a squeeze in your upper back. Lower to the start.

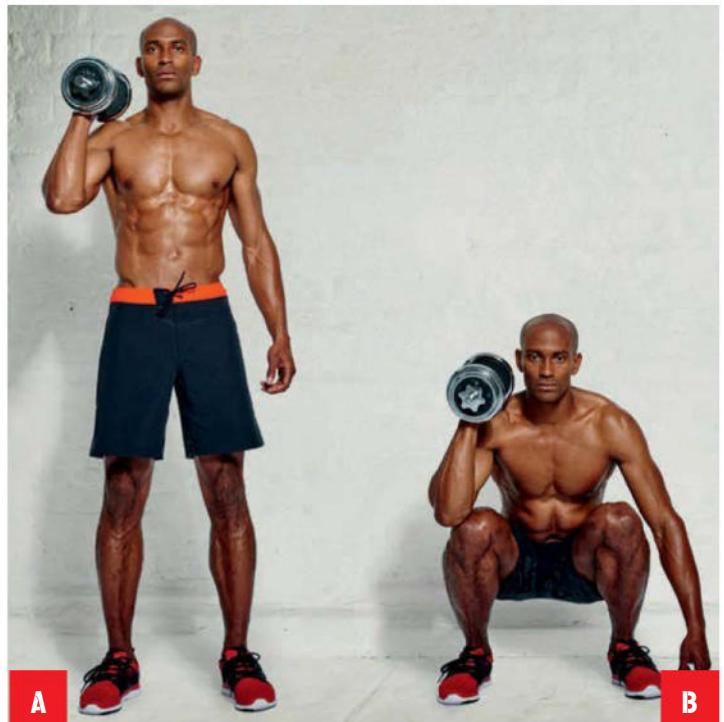
“Push your hips back to straighten your back and engage your core – it should feel like you’re wearing a tight belt.”



4 FRONT SQUAT

With the dumbbell at shoulder height, keep your core tight and bend your legs to lower into a squat with your chest up. Keep your knees wide and drive your hips forwards, to generate power as you stand.

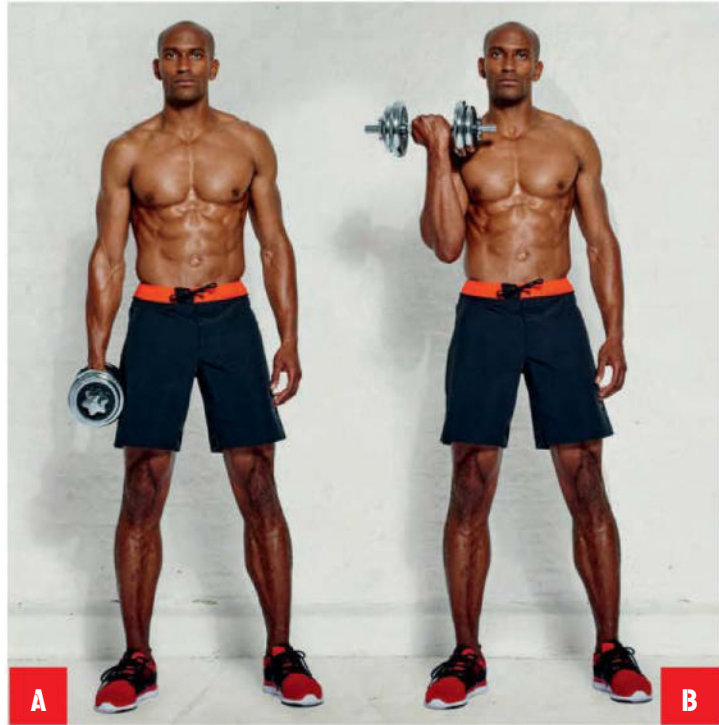
“Squeeze your free hand into a tight fist, to increase tension in your body to keep your torso strong.”



5 CURL AND PRESS

Keeping your elbow tight to your side, curl the dumbbell from your hip to your shoulder, then press it overhead until your arm is completely straight. Reverse the move back to the start.

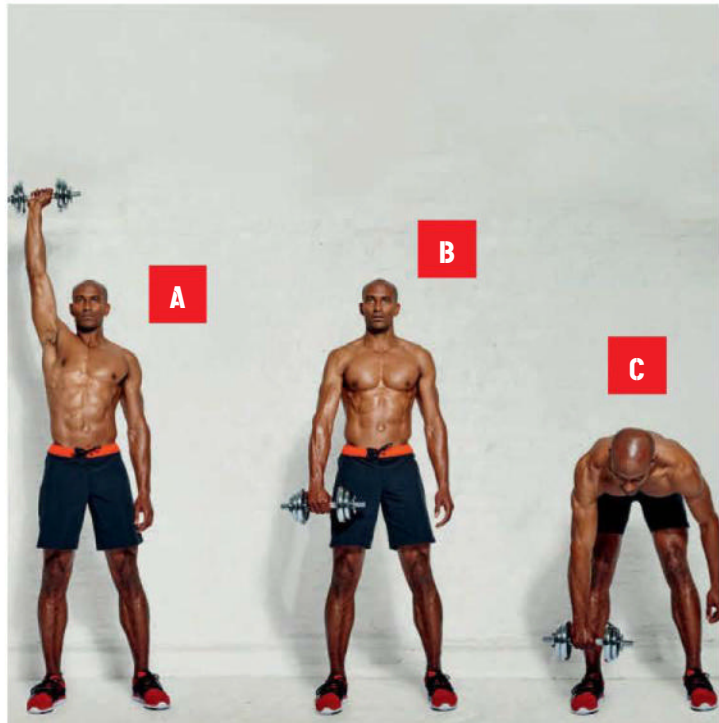
“Contract your glutes and core, to stop your back hyperextending during the press.”



6 ROMANIAN DEADLIFT

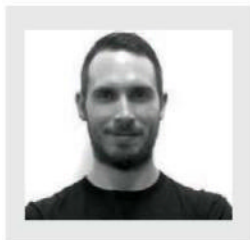
With the weight in front of your thigh and a slight bend in your knees, lower the dumbbell down your leg until you feel a stretch in your hamstrings. Drive your hips forwards to return to the start. Switch the weight to your other hand and repeat all the exercises.

“Progress to doing this on one leg. Contract the glute on your free leg to improve balance and allow a deeper stretch on the working hamstrings.”



Barbell

Combine these five full-body lifts into a super fat-fighting complex



THE COACH

Steve Kowalenko
of W10 Performance,
a former army PTI.

THE PLAN

“Do this two or three times a week for four weeks using the same weight plan,” says Kowalenko. “Before you start, do an AMRAP test to see how many rounds you can do in ten minutes, then try again after four weeks. You should’ve smashed your initial max, as well as shedding plenty of fat.”

This complex unites five classic compound lifts to devastating fat-fighting effect. Grab a bar, do each exercise for the required number of reps (see the table, below), then move on to the next without setting the weight down. Only rest after you finish all five moves. Do this as a finisher to a strength session, or as a standalone quickfire workout.

“Barbell complexes are an effective tool to build muscle and at the

same time fire up your metabolism to torch body fat,” says Kowalenko. “They’re fun, quick and elevate your metabolism for longer than traditional cardio. Also, while traditional cardio can increase your levels of cortisol, the stress hormone responsible for fat storage, this complex will release anabolic hormones that will outweigh its negative effects and help you maintain muscle mass.”

WEEK 1

SETS **2** REPS **8** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 2

SETS **3** REPS **8** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 3

SETS **3** REPS **10** REST **90 sec**

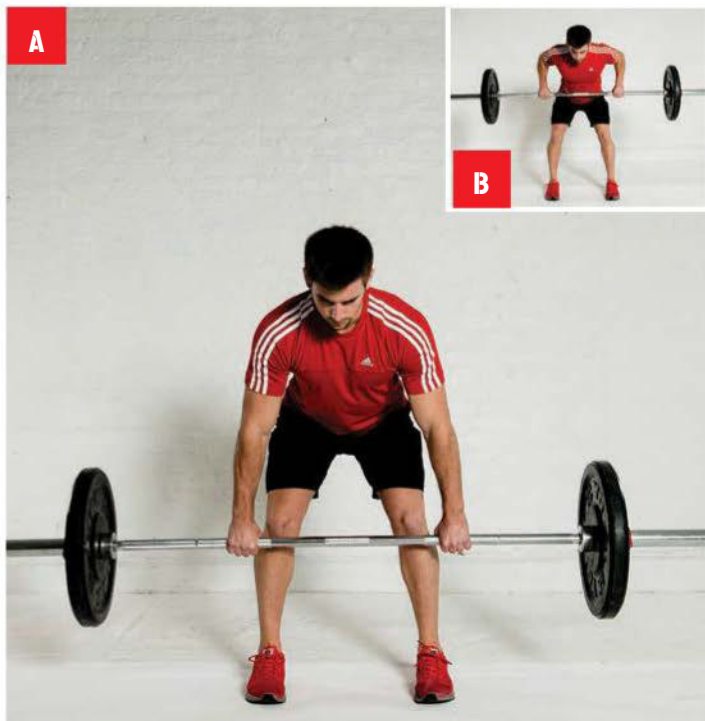
WEEK 4

SETS **3** REPS **10** REST **60 sec**

1 BENT-OVER ROW

Hold the bar with an overhand grip, hands shoulder-width apart. Keep your core engaged and hinge forwards at your hips, keeping your back flat. Pull the bar up to your sternum, then lower.

“Pull your elbows towards the ceiling rather than just pulling with your hands, to recruit your upper back,” says Kowalenko.

**2 HANG POWER CLEAN**

Allow the bar to hang with straight arms, so it's just above your knees. Straighten up and snap your hips forwards, to help you lift the bar high and catch it on the top of your chest, with your elbows as high as you can get them.

“At the start, push your bum back so your hamstrings and glutes are fully engaged. Don't bend your knees.”



3 FRONT SQUAT

With the bar resting on the top of your chest and elbows high, squat until your thighs are at least parallel to the floor. Make sure your knees stay wide apart and heels remain in contact with the ground. Drive back up.

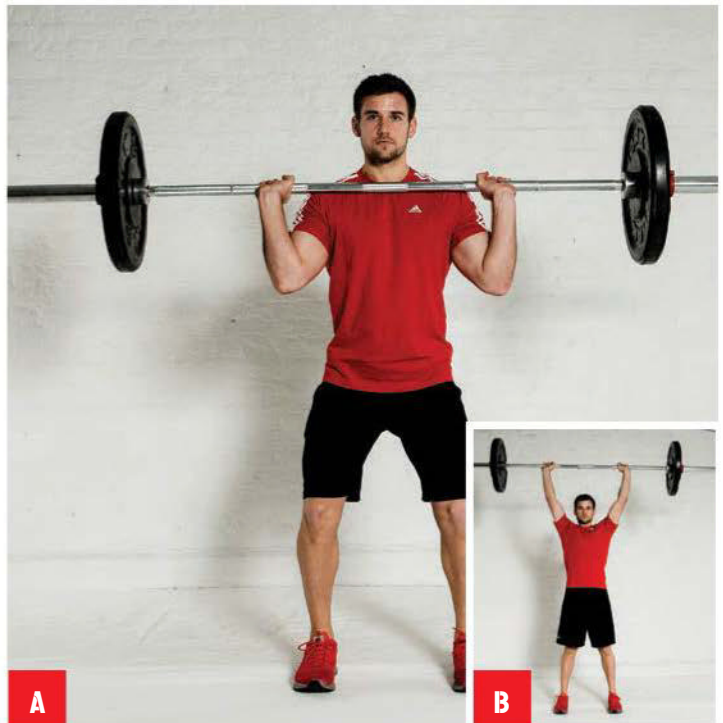
“Squat straight down. If your hips go backwards, it will cause you to lean forwards and strain your back.”



4 PUSH PRESS

Get a good grip on the bar again. Drop into a quarter squat and, as you drive back up, use the momentum to press the bar overhead. Keep your core and glutes tight, so your back doesn't curve under the weight.

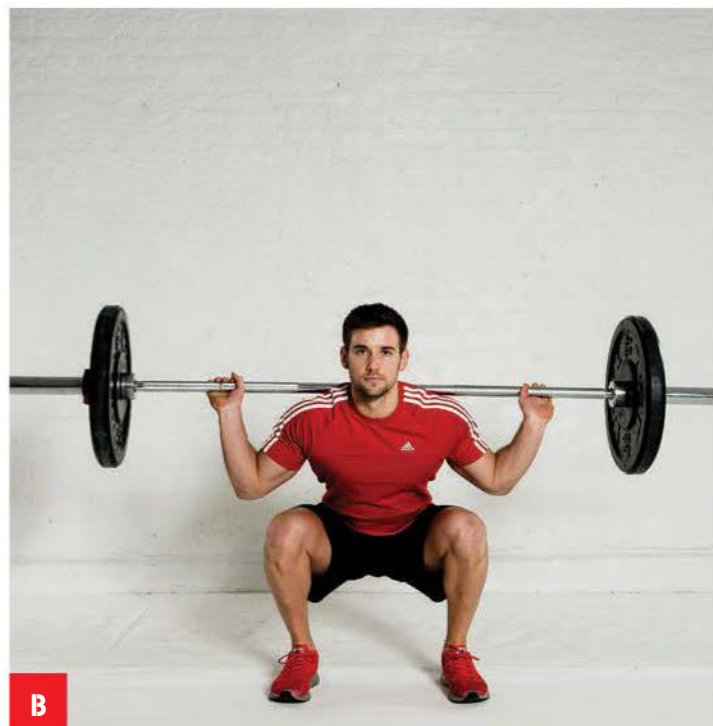
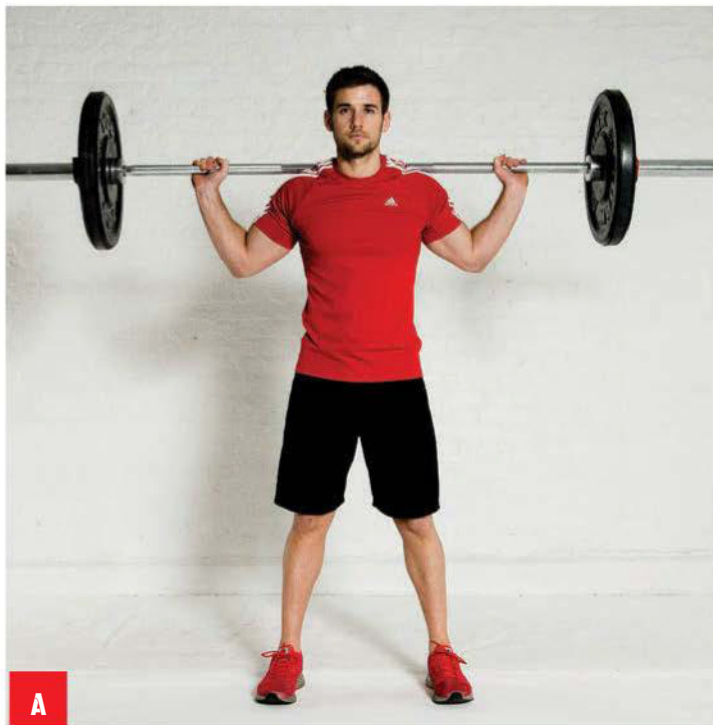
“Your head travels around the bar, not the other way around. Pull your head back as you press directly upwards.”



5 BACK SQUAT

Lower the bar onto your shoulders behind your head. Keep your chest up and lower into a squat, keeping your weight on your heels. Drive back up. Once you've finished all your reps, you can set the bar down.

“Don't rely on your quads. Activate your glutes by keeping your heels on the floor and your knees wide.”



Landmine barbell

Cut fat down to size with this landmine barbell complex



THE COACH

Mishal Dasani of Own Your Fitness.

THE PLAN

“Instead of reps, doing each exercise for time will help you focus on good form,” says Dasani. “Only add weight plates to the bar if your form is good and you find it too easy.”

Deliver a knockout payload to your belly fat with this six-move barbell complex based around a move known as the landmine. Angle a barbell into a suitable corner of your gym or a weight plate on the floor, take a deep breath and execute all these moves back to back, to build a lean physique in minutes.

“Training with a complex allows you to use your whole body during a short,

intense workout,” says Dasani. “The result will be increased lactate output (the thing that makes your muscles burn) and your body being flooded with growth hormone.”

This lethal combination is the perfect weapon for rapid fat loss and improved muscle growth. Use Dasani’s four-week plan to plot your fat-burning assault. Fire in the hole!

WEEK 1

SETS **3** TIME **30 sec** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 2

SETS **3** TIME **30 sec** REST **60 sec**

WEEK 3

SETS **3** TIME **30 sec** REST **90 sec**

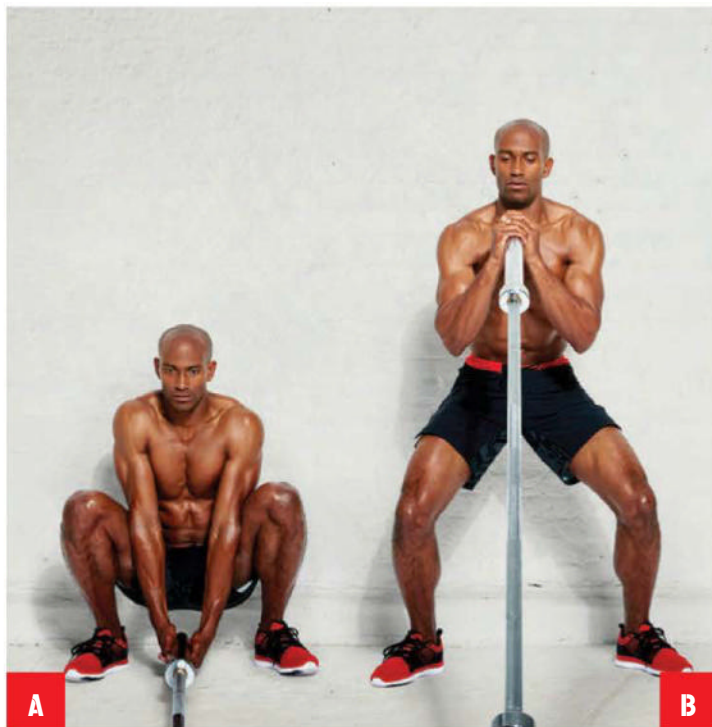
WEEK 4

SETS **3** TIME **30 sec** REST **60 sec**

1 POWER CLEAN

Angle a barbell into a heavy weight plate on the floor. Squat and grasp the bar with both hands. Drive up powerfully, pulling the bar up quickly. As the bar passes chest height, drop under it and catch it with your elbows tucked into your body.

“Keep looking forwards, to keep your chest up and back straight,” says Dasani.



2 FRONT SQUAT

After the final power clean rep, keep holding the bar in front of your chest and sink into a deep squat, keeping your knees wide apart and chest up. Press down through your heels and drive your hips forwards to stand tall.

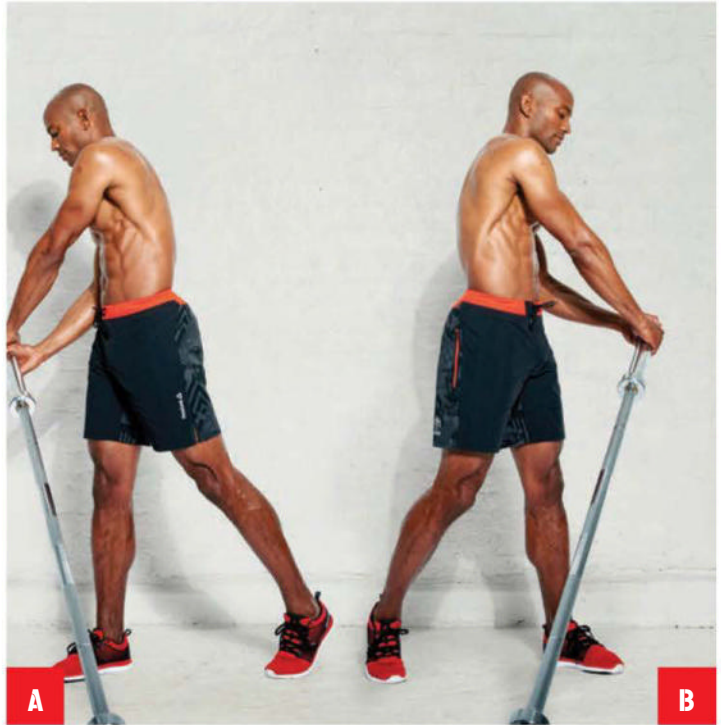
“Sit back on your hips to engage your hamstrings and glutes.”



3 ROTATION

Hold the bar with both hands and keep your arms straight as you rotate the bar from one side to the other in a big arc, keeping your core tight throughout. Pivot your knees to follow the direction of the bar. Alternate sides.

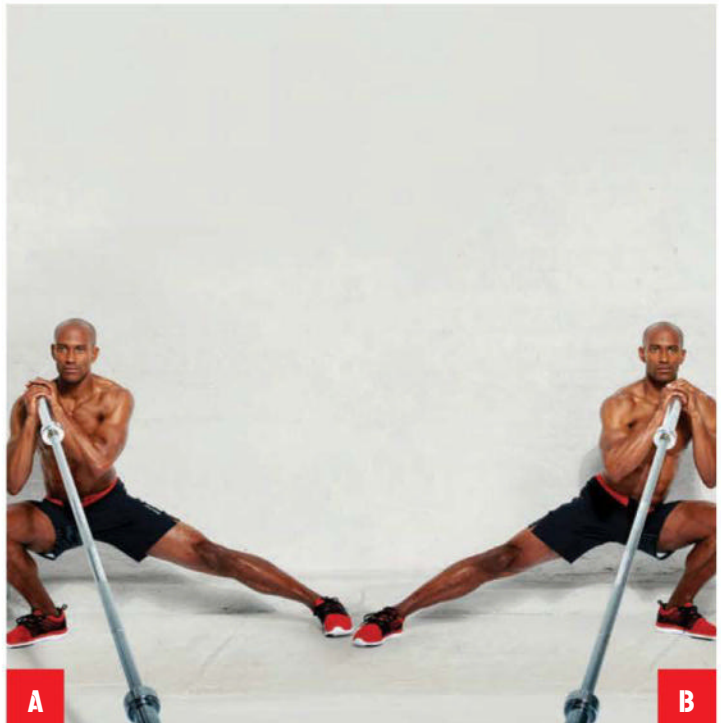
“Keep your arms and shoulders locked to focus the movement on your core.”



4 LATERAL LUNGE

Hold the bar in front of your chest and take a big step to one side, so your feet are double shoulder-width apart. Keeping your chest up, bend your right knee to lower into a deep side lunge, then repeat on your left side. Alternate sides.

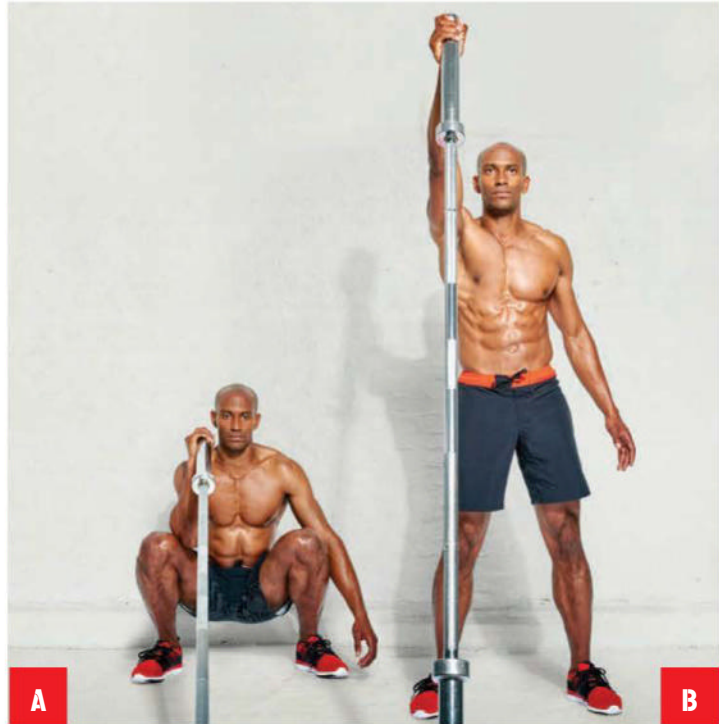
“Point your toe diagonally, so your knee tracks over your toes.”



5 ONE-ARM THRUSTER

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and hold the bar with one hand at shoulder height. Lower into a squat, drive back up to stand and use the momentum to press the bar overhead. Swap sides halfway through the timed set.

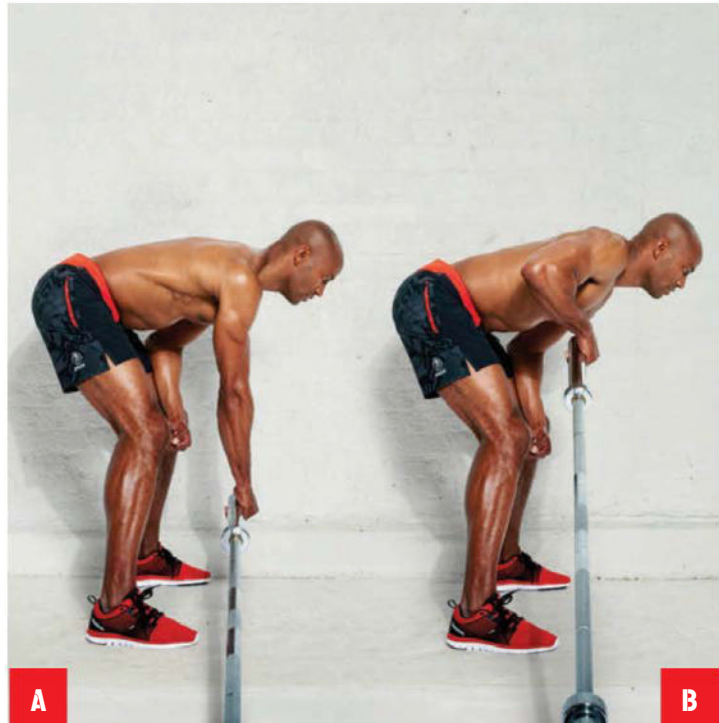
“Keep your core engaged to transfer power from your lower to upper body.”



6 MEADOWS ROW

Turn side-on to the bar and bend forwards, hingeing at the hips. Grasp the bar with one hand, using an overhand grip, and lean on your knee with your other arm for support. Row the bar to your armpit. Swap sides halfway through the timed set.

“Retract both shoulder blades throughout, to keep your back flat.”



Weight plate

Serve up a fat-burning workout with nothing but a weight plate



THE COACH

Steve Kowalenko

THE PLAN

“Repeat this workout two or three times a week, aiming to use a weight you can complete the whole complex with, so you don’t have to put it down,” says Kowalenko. “As well as burning fat, it will improve your grip strength.”

Got a lot on your plate? Then use it - a weight plate, that is. You don’t need to spend hours on a treadmill to burn off belly fat efficiently. Training at a high intensity using weights and short rest periods is vastly more effective.

“All you need is a weight plate and a mere 15 minutes,” says Kowalenko, who created this minimalist complex workout. Simply pick up a weight plate, perform all six moves back to

back without setting it down until the last rep, then rest. Use the table below as a four-week plan, adding it to the end of one of your current sessions as a fat-burning finisher.

“Unlike simple cardio, you’ll be using most of your body’s muscle mass with these exercises, so you will create a greater afterburn effect and keep torching fat long after you’ve finished,” says Kowalenko.

WEEK 1

SETS **3** REPS **6** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 2

SETS **3** REPS **8** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 3

SETS **3** REPS **10** REST **60 sec**

WEEK 4

SETS **4** REPS **10** REST **60 sec**

1 TRUCK DRIVER

Hold a weight plate at chest height with both arms outstretched. Rotate the plate as far as you can to the left, as if turning a steering wheel, then to the right to complete one rep.

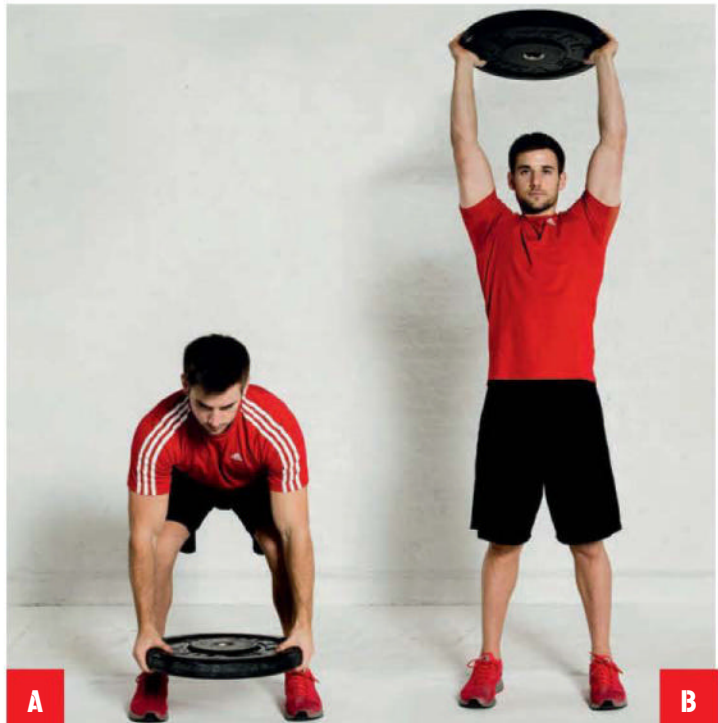
“Use your core strength to keep your chest up, taking pressure off your lower back,” says Kowalenko.



2 CLEAN AND PRESS

Bend your legs and bring the plate to shin height. Keeping your chest up and back straight, drive up and bring the plate up to press it overhead.

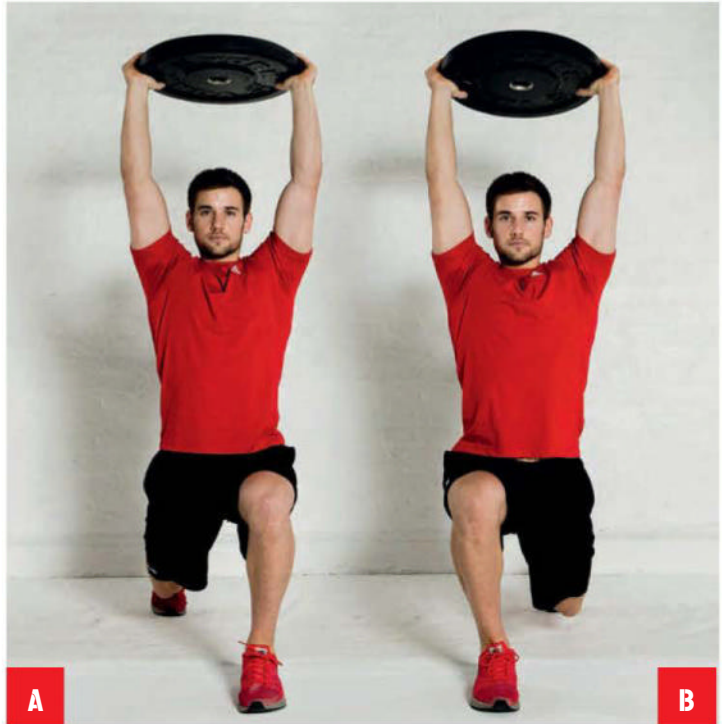
“Make sure you press fully overhead by bringing your biceps level with your ears.”



3 OVERHEAD LUNGE

With the plate held overhead, take a big step forwards, keeping your knee in line with your foot. Lower until your back knee is just off the floor, then drive back to standing and repeat on with the other leg to complete one rep.

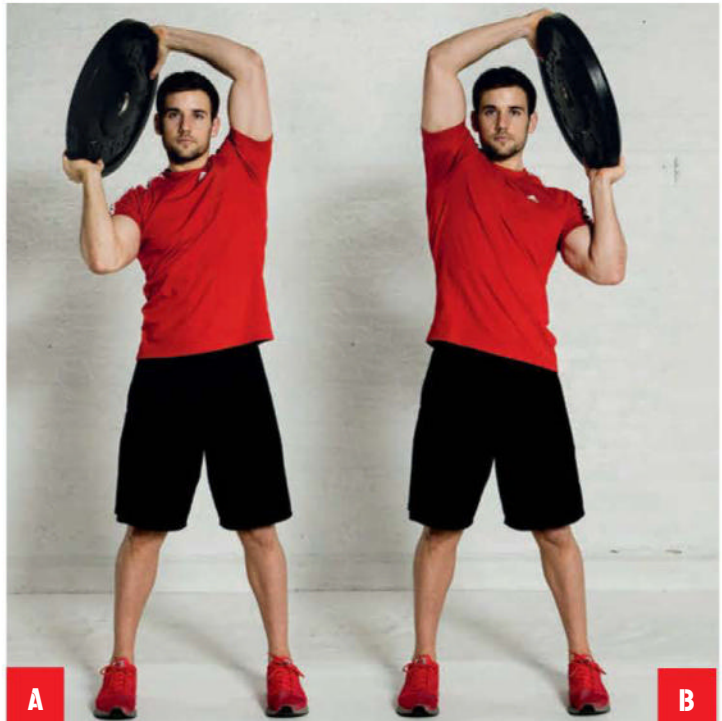
“Actively press the plate towards the ceiling, so your upper back muscles help keep the weight stable.”



4 AROUND THE WORLD

From standing, hold the plate at head height. Keeping your core tight and head still, circle it around your head in one direction, then go back in the other direction to return to the start and complete one rep.

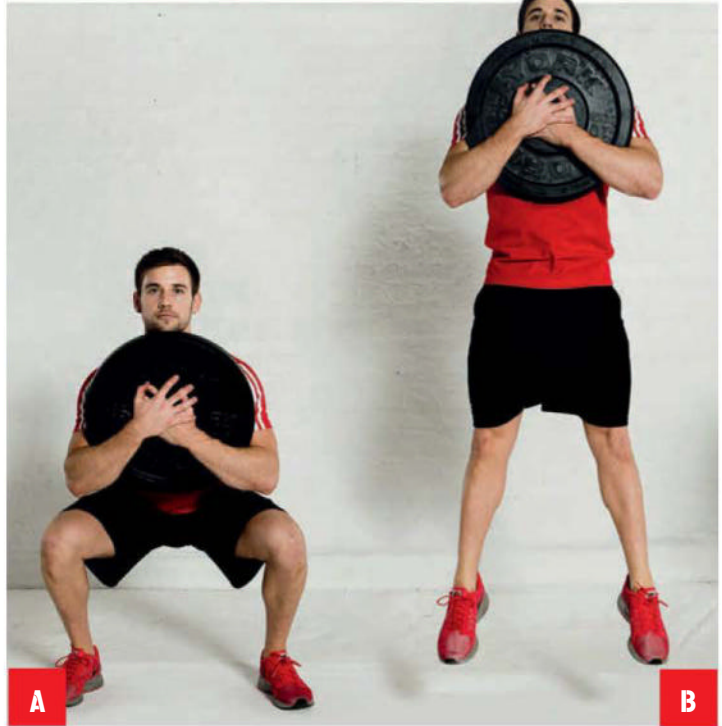
“Keep the movement slow and strict, to challenge your core.”



5 JUMP SQUAT

Hold the plate to your chest. Lower into a squat, then drive up through your heels powerfully, so that you leave the ground. Bend your legs to soften your landing and continue straight into the next rep.

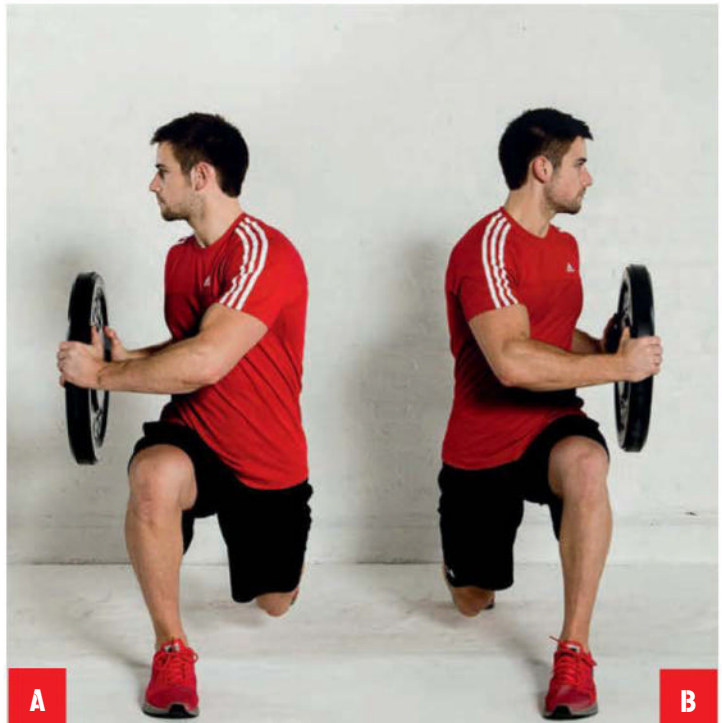
“Lower slowly, but explode up fast to get maximum height with each rep.”



6 LUNGE WITH ROTATION

Hold the plate in front of your chest with your arms bent. Take a big step forwards with one leg. As you lower your back knee, rotate your torso to the same side as your leading leg. Reverse the move to the start and repeat on the other leg to complete one rep.

“Squeeze your glutes to stabilise your body before rotating, so you don’t twist your knee.”



Double kettlebells

Shred belly fat and build core strength with this two-kettlebell complex



THE COACH

Dan Lawrence, fitness coach for British middleweight boxer George Groves.

THE PLAN

“Do this complex three times a week,” says Lawrence. “Start with a weight that allows you to do all the moves with good form. If you chase new PBs with each move, you will have to rest and miss the objective of this workout.”

Higher, lower. Higher, lower. No, we’re not watching reruns of Bruce Forsyth’s *Play Your Cards Right* (that was Sunday). We’re talking about the merits of alternating between upper- and lower-body exercises for shifting fat, known as peripheral heart action (PHA).

This six-move double-kettlebell complex uses PHA, enabling you to perform at a sky-high intensity for longer, because your upper-body muscles can recover while the lower ones are working

and vice-versa. As a result, you burn a shed load more calories than if you were hammering one exercise relentlessly.

“The main focus of this routine is to torch fat,” says Lawrence. “But the secondary benefits are huge. Because you’re juggling two awkward kettlebells without resting between moves, you’ll boost your grip, core and functional strength.” Do all six moves back to back, using the table below for your four-week fat-loss plan.

WEEK 1

SETS **4** REPS **8** REST **2 min**

WEEK 2

SETS **4** REPS **10** REST **2 min**

WEEK 3

SETS **5** REPS **8** REST **90 sec**

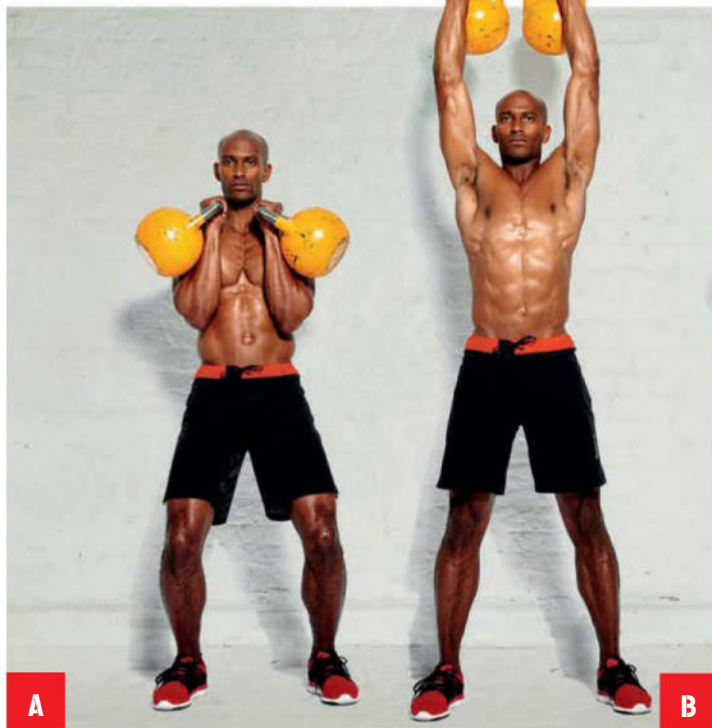
WEEK 4

SETS **5** REPS **10** REST **90 sec**

1 PUSH PRESS

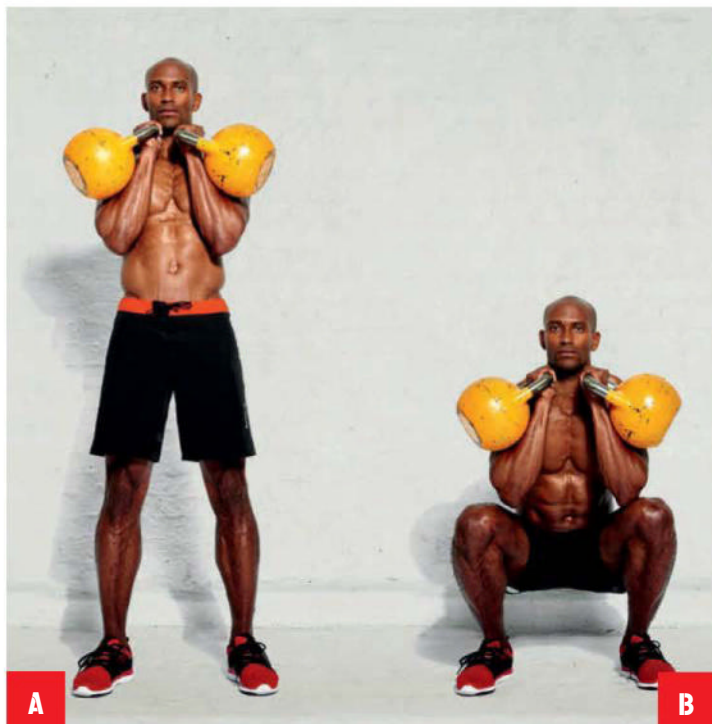
Hold the kettlebells at shoulder height with the bell resting on the top of your forearm. Lower into a quarter squat and drive up powerfully, using the momentum to press the weights overhead.

“When extending overhead, squeeze your glutes hard to lock your body out,” says Lawrence.

**2 SQUAT**

Hold the kettlebells in the rack position with your hands and elbows close together, and core strong to keep your chest up. Push your hips back to lower into a deep squat, keeping your knees wide apart, then drive your hips forwards as you stand.

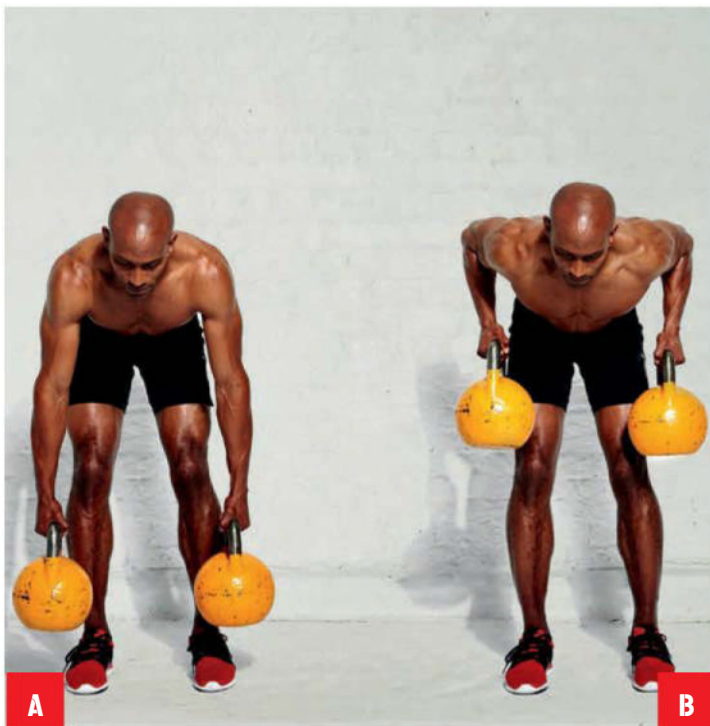
“Focus on screwing the heel, ball and little toe of each foot into the floor for a stable base.”



3 BENT-OVER ROW

Keep your knees slightly bent and hinge forwards from your hips, until your torso is almost parallel with the floor. Pull your shoulder blades back, then draw the weights straight up either side of your body.

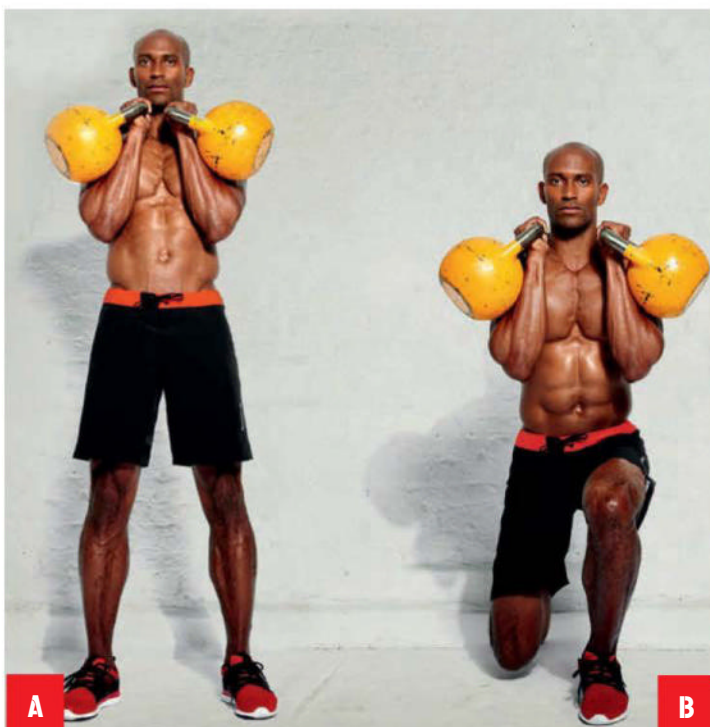
“Draw the kettlebell level with your belly button, not your sternum, to target all your back muscles.”



4 LUNGE

With the kettlebells racked, take a big step forwards, keeping your front knee in line with your toes. Keep your body upright as you lower your back knee towards the floor, then powerfully drive back up to return to the start. Alternate sides for all reps.

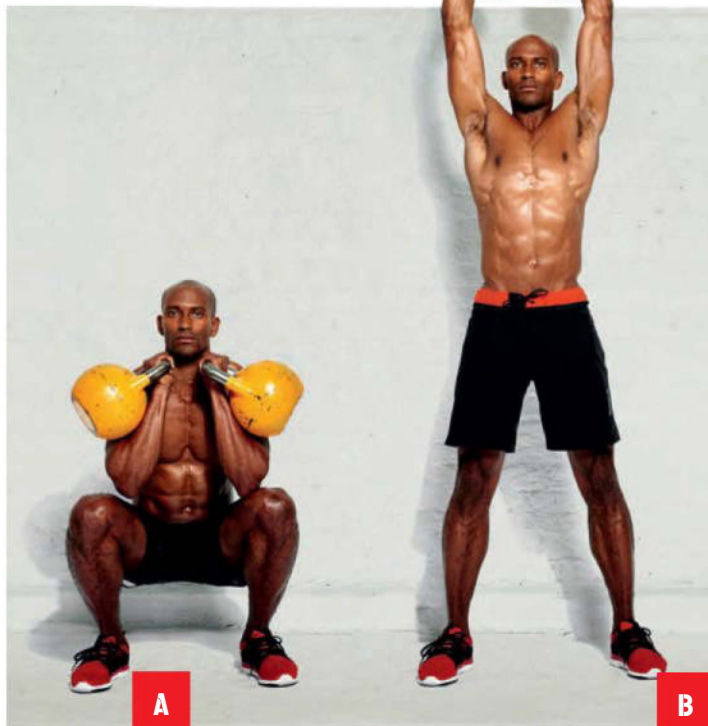
“Focus on landing with each foot first, then push your hips forwards to engage your glutes before lowering into a lunge.”



5 THRUSTER

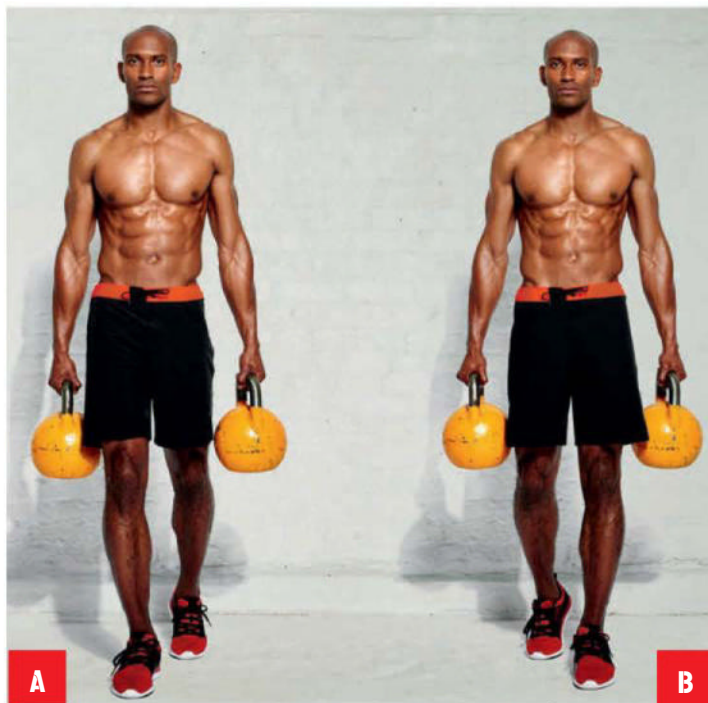
Again, with the kettlebells racked, lower into a full squat, then drive up, pushing your hips forwards powerfully and continue to press the weights straight overhead.

“Your legs will keep going long after your shoulders fatigue, so make the most of the momentum from the leg drive.”

**6 FARMER'S WALK**

By now, your grip will be screaming, but hang on! Hold the kettlebells by your sides with straight arms, keep your body tall and chest up, and walk forwards. One metre in distance counts for one rep. Pick a finish line and release the weights when you pass it.

“Your lats are powerful stabilisers for your lumbar spine, so pin your shoulders back to keep you upright.”



Single kettlebell

Can't seem to get rid of your belly-fat demons? This 11-minute finisher is all the exercise you need



THE COACH

Natalie Morley is a Fitness First trainer.

THE PLAN

“Repeat this workout two to three times a week, starting with a light kettlebell to perfect the form, then increasing the weight in weeks three and four as you get more competent,” says Morley.

Kettlebells are a fat-fighting godsend on their own, but combined with complexes - where you perform moves back to back without resting or setting the weight down - they create an unbeatable quick-fire workout combo.

“If you're limited for time, equipment and space, this complex guarantees a high-

intensity session that burns fat and develops strength,” says Morley. “Each move in this complex flows into the next, allowing for quick transitions and progression of movement patterns. This means you'll develop functional strength and increased mobility at the same time as melting away belly fat.”

WEEK 1

SETS **3** REPS **8** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 2

SETS **4** REPS **10** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 3

SETS **4** REPS **8** REST **90 sec**

WEEK 4

SETS **4** REPS **8** REST **60 sec**

1 SUMO DEADLIFT

Hold the kettlebell with both hands and stand with your feet double shoulder-width apart. Squat, keeping your chest up and back straight, until your thighs are at least horizontal. Then drive back up.

“Protect your lower back by keeping your legs wide, which also targets your inner thighs, glutes and hamstrings,” says Morley.

**2 TWO-ARM SWING**

From standing, push the bell off your body to start the swing. Lower the bell, hinging at the hips by pushing your glutes back, but keep your chest up. When you feel a stretch in your hamstrings, drive your hips forwards, bringing the bell to head height.

“Keep your head and neck neutral by letting your eyeline move up and down in time with the movement of your chest.”



3 SNATCH

Take one hand off the bell and bring it to your side. Continue to swing the bell in a similar way to the two-arm swing, but with more power to bring it higher. Once past eye level, pull your elbow up and back, punching up with your hand to catch the bell with a straight arm so it rests on top of your forearm. Complete all the reps on one arm, then switch.

“Don’t grip too tight with the swing. Allow the bell to rotate easily so it doesn’t smash into your forearm.”



4 GOBLET SQUAT

Hold a bell upside down, with your palms close together and elbows tucked in. Keeping your back straight and chest up, lower into a deep squat. Drive through your heels to stand.

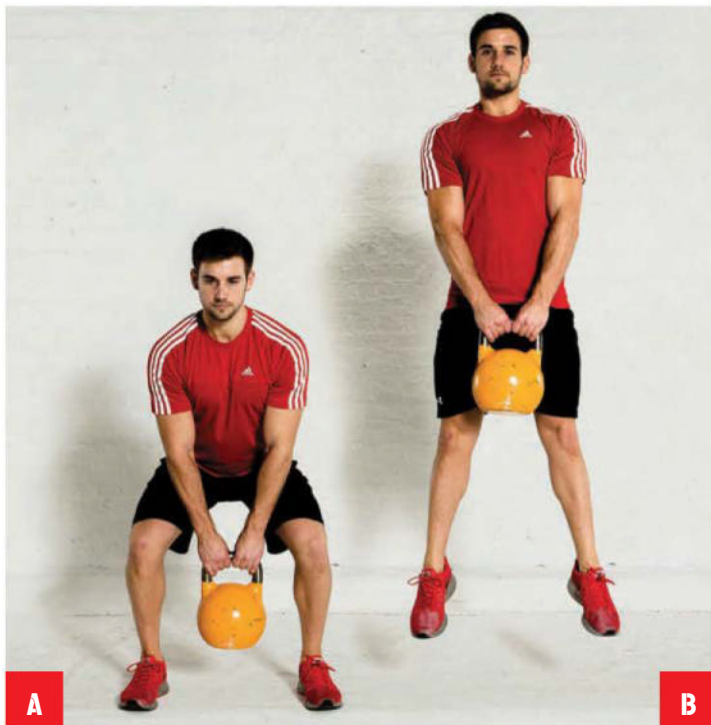
“Lead with your chest out of the bottom of the squat, to ensure you don’t hunch your back.”



5 JUMP SQUAT

Grab the bell by the handles again, holding it between your legs with straight arms. Lower into a squat, keeping your chest up, then drive up explosively. Bend your knees to cushion your landing and continue into the next rep.

“Make your landing as light as possible and slow down the lowering part of the move to work your hamstrings.”

**6 CLEAN AND PRESS**

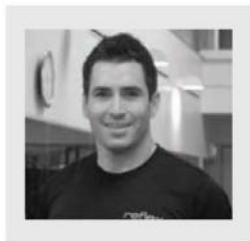
Swing the bell in a similar way to the snatch, but this time, as it passes eye level, draw your elbow into your body, bend your legs and catch the weight so it rests on the top of your forearm at shoulder height. Now drive up to stand and punch the bell overhead. Complete all the reps on one arm, then switch.

“Keep your thumbs pointed backwards as you press overhead, so you don’t externally rotate your shoulders.”



Core strength

Forget the cable machines - for a full-body workout that hits your muscles from every angle, all you need is a towel and a chair



THE COACH

Chris Burgess is a strength and conditioning coach, and the owner of Lift The Bar.

THE PLAN

Yes, there's probably an infomercial-branded device somewhere that lets you do the workout shown on these pages for three easy payments of \$79.99. No, you don't need it.

"A towel and chair are all you need to put together a workout that challenges your body from angles it isn't used to," says Burgess. "It'll let you move through unusual ranges of motion with very little impact, increasing core stability and body control."

Bonus: you will probably end up with a cleaner floor, too.

THE WORKOUT

Do this plan as a circuit twice a week, performing the recommended reps for each move and then moving straight to the next one. Rest for one minute and repeat a total of three times. Increase the reps if you can.

"Using a towel will let you move through unusual ranges of motion with very little impact, increasing core stability and body control"

1 SLIDING PIKE

This is a core-tester and party trick in one. Start with your feet on the towel in a press-up position. Then, keeping your legs straight, bring your feet towards your hands and your hips up in the air.

REPS 6



2 SLIDING SQUAT THRUST

Start in the top press-up position with both feet on the towel, then crunch your knees in towards your chest. Pause and push them back out again. Focus on control, not speed.

REPS 12



3 EXPLOSIVE PRESS-UP

Prime your muscles with an explosive movement and they'll be charged up for what's to come. Drop into the bottom of a press-up, then explode out of the top, taking your hands off the floor. Add a clap if you want, but it's not necessary – especially on a hardwood floor.

REPS 6



4 ARCHER PRESS-UP

Start with one hand on the towel in the top press-up position. As you lower yourself towards the floor, slide your towel-hand out - keeping your arm straight - so you're taking most of your weight on your bent arm. Finish your reps on one side, then switch to the other.

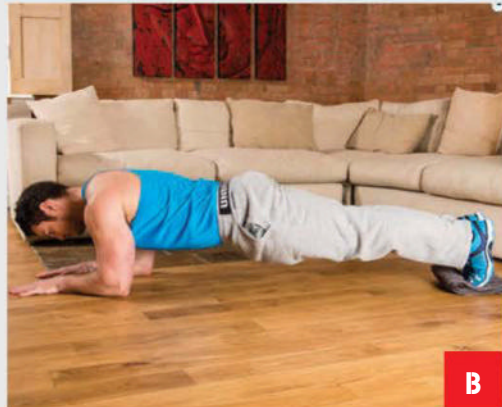
REPS 3 each side



5 BODYSAW

Think of it as a super-plank. With your feet on the towel and your forearms propped on the floor, slide yourself backwards as far as is comfortable, then use your arms and core strength to pull yourself back in. Pause, repeat and wince.

REPS 12



6 DECLINE PRESS-UP

Get into the top press-up position with your feet on the chair, keeping your elbows in to minimise rotator cuff strain. Lower until your chest is a fist's width from the floor, then press up. Increasing the angle will get you more resistance with fewer reps.

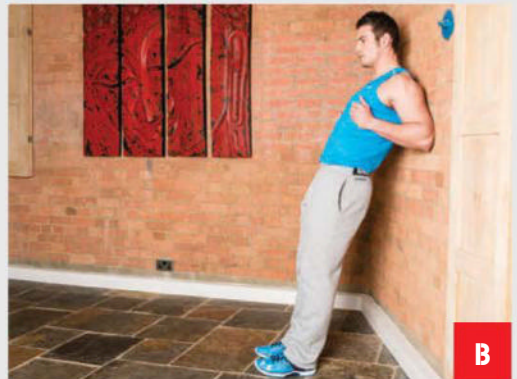
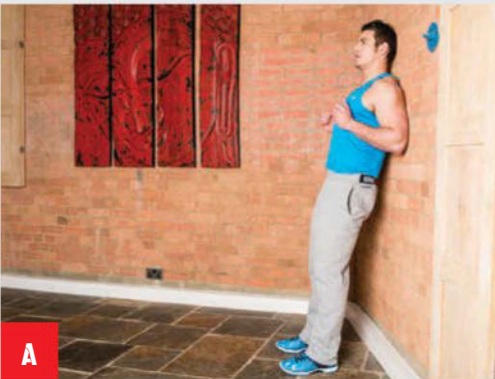
REPS 15-20



7 BATWING

Think this looks easy? It isn't. Stand against a wall with your arms bent, then push your elbows back to activate your scapulas and move yourself away from the wall. Hold at the top for two seconds and then lower, increasing the angle if it's too easy. For maximum back activation, try it lying on the floor.

REPS 6

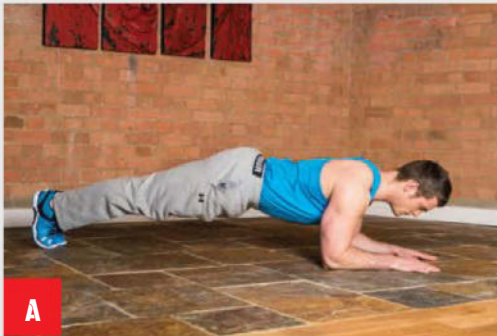


8 SKULLCRUSHER

Don't worry - it's just a name. Grip the edge of your chair with both hands, then lower your head towards the floor, bending at the hips slightly to reduce the strain. Pause at the bottom, then use your triceps to push back up.

REPS **8****9 WALKING PLANK**

Start in a plank position with your forearms on the floor and body straight, then “walk” one hand at a time up into a press-up position. Reverse the move to return to the start.

REPS **10**



Nutrition 101

Follow these simple guidelines that will help you eat better, train harder, store less body fat and build more muscle

1 STICK TO WHOLEFOODS

Nothing will hamper your progress more than over-indulging in processed foods. Regularly eating the refined carbs and sugars that form the basis of most processed snacks, baked goods and fast foods will sap your energy levels and cause fat-storing blood sugar spikes, making it far harder to lose weight or perform at an optimum level. To make matters worse, these foods typically contain high levels of man-made trans fats, which will make you feel even more lethargic and boost your levels of “bad” LDL cholesterol.

For a healthier alternative, swap processed foods for more naturally indulgent wholefood alternatives. For example, you can trade crisps for nuts, chocolate spread for peanut butter and breakfast cereal for porridge oats, all of which have additional nutritional benefits.

2 EAT MORE VEG THAN FRUIT

All fruits and veg contain health-enhancing nutrients. But while the five-a-day mantra is good at encouraging people to eat more fresh produce in general, if you want to get the most out of your training and support your fat-burning and muscle-building efforts, you need to be a lot more specific about your intake.

For a start, try to have as much veg as possible while cutting back on fruit. Fruit is high in fructose, a type of sugar that plays havoc with blood sugar levels, making you far more likely to store fat. Vegetables, on the other hand, contain no fructose but are just as nutrient dense, making them a far better dietary staple. Green vegetables in particular are a great choice - they're an excellent source of slow-release carbs, unlike starchy root vegetables, such as potatoes, which can also negatively affect your blood sugar levels.

Eat as many servings of green vegetables as possible each day and limit your fruit intake to one to two servings, ideally from low-sugar sources, such as blueberries or strawberries.

3 UP YOUR PROTEIN INTAKE

Protein plays a crucial role in building muscle, but it's easy to underestimate just how much you need to maximise its benefits. Estimates vary from 1-4g per kilo of bodyweight per day, but most nutritionists agree that 2g is the minimum. If you want to keep things simple, aim to eat a 20-25g serving of protein - good sources of which include meat, fish, dairy, eggs, pulses and tofu - with every meal including breakfast, adding an extra post-workout serving on training days.

Sooner or later, someone will probably raise an eyebrow at the amount of protein you're ingesting. They may even tell you it's bad for your health. But the only studies that have suggested protein can cause kidney problems were carried out on people with pre-existing kidney problems. In addition to aiding your muscle-building efforts, protein-rich foods also tend to be very filling, so you avoid the urge to pig out between meals.

4 CHOOSE THE RIGHT FATS

“Eating fatty foods makes you fat” may sound like a logical assumption, but it’s a bit more complicated than that. It is true that at nine calories per gram, fat is more calorific than carbohydrate or protein (which contain four each), but the reality is that certain fats are a crucial part of your diet. The mono- and polyunsaturated fats that occur naturally in foods such as oily fish, nuts, seeds, olives and coconut oil, for example, play key roles in boosting metabolism, improving hormone synthesis and increasing “good” HDL cholesterol.

Don’t be fooled by “low-fat” options, either. Most have been highly processed to remove the fat, and tend to be packed with salt and sugar to enhance their flavour. Instead, focus your energies on avoiding processed junk foods, high in unhealthy man-made trans fats, and enjoy daily servings of healthy, naturally occurring fat sources.

5 DON'T JUST COUNT CALORIES

It’s easy to fall into the trap of focusing on the quantity of calories you’re consuming, especially if you’re trying to lose weight. But the quality of the food you’re eating is far more important, because calories alone don’t provide a reliable indication of the effect a food can have on your metabolism. For example, drinking a can of blood sugar-spiking fizzy pop is far more damaging to your fat-loss efforts than eating two protein-rich poached eggs, even though both contain a similar number of calories. It’s also easy to use calorie counting as an excuse to justify poor food choices - a “healthy option” packet of crisps may contain fewer than 100 calories, but it’s likely to be full of trans-fats and other nasties. Instead of getting hung up on how many calories every item of food contains, concentrate on eating plenty of wholefoods, vegetables, meats and fish.

6 LOSE THE BOOZE

It may sound obvious, but cutting your alcohol intake will have a huge impact on your attempts to build fat and burn muscle. As well as providing hundreds of nutritionally empty calories, regular boozing stimulates your appetite when you’re at your weakest - let’s face it, would you find a doner kebab appealing otherwise? You’re also far less likely to want to train or eat healthily when hungover.

If you must indulge, opt for red wine, which has been found to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and enhance muscle endurance thanks to its resveratrol content. Stick to two glasses, after which the negatives outweigh the positives.

“Don’t be fooled by ‘low-fat’ options. Most have been highly processed to remove the fat, and tend to be packed with salt and sugar”



A-Z of supplements

Everything you need to know about nutritional supplements

Let's get one thing straight - despite what anyone says, you don't have to take supplements to build muscle or lose weight, provided you're eating a wholefood-based diet that's high in protein and contains plenty of vegetables. But what supplements will do is allow you to maximise the gains you make at the gym, helping you get stronger, faster and - crucially - recover quicker. Here's our guide to some of the key supplements.

ARGININE

This non-essential amino acid is produced naturally in the body and improves performance by increasing nitric oxide production. Nitric

oxide is a powerful vasodilator, which means it widens your blood vessels, increasing blood flow to the muscles and enabling better delivery of nutrients and oxygen to promote muscle recovery and growth during weights sessions. These effects are most beneficial for beginners.

BETA-ALANINE

This amino acid is great for improving your levels of focus and concentration during workouts or sports that require repeated sprints or bursts of power. It also increases concentration of the dipeptide carnosine in muscle, which allows you to perform more reps during intense weightlifting sessions.

Make sure you stick to the label guidelines for dosage and take it on training days roughly 30 minutes before your workout.

BCAAS

Branched-chain amino acids, or BCAAs, are made up of three essential amino acids: leucine, isoleucine and valine. Leucine activates the complex compound mTOR, which is responsible for elevating muscle protein synthesis and subsequently muscle growth. Leucine also increases insulin production, which will help to shuttle those all-important muscle-building proteins to your cells post-workout. Valine combats another amino acid

called tryptophan that's associated with muscle fatigue, which you definitely don't want. It reduces the uptake of tryptophan across the blood-brain barrier, which helps to keep you lifting harder and longer.

Look for a BCAA product with a high leucine content, ideally on a 4-1-1 or at least 2-1-1 ratio, to maximise its benefits. Aim to take 10,000mg per day on training days, half directly before and half immediately after your session.

CAFFEINE

Commonly consumed in coffee and tea, this powerful stimulant affects the central and peripheral nervous system, increasing the level of hormone-like endorphins in the brain, which reduce the perception of pain and fatigue, and help to increase alertness and concentration. Caffeine has also been found to increase muscle-fibre recruitment, to enhance performance during anaerobic

“Casein, which is found in cow's milk, is a slow-release protein, so you get more of a 'drip-feed' effect into your bloodstream over a longer period”



exercises, although previous claims about its effectiveness as a fat-burner have been disproved.

Caffeine supplements come in pill or capsule form, and should be taken 30-60 minutes before exercise. Always take it in accordance with package instructions.

CALCIUM

This element plays a crucial role in metabolism, cell division, and building and maintaining strong bones. However, your body needs vitamin D to be able to fully absorb and utilise it, so it's worth taking it after

eating vitamin D-rich foods, such as salmon, tuna or milk, or opting for a supplement that combines calcium and vitamin D.

CASEIN

Casein is a form of protein commonly found in dairy products - it makes up around 80% of cows' milk, for example. It's a slow-release protein because it takes longer for your body to digest it, so you get more of a "drip-feed" effect of protein into your bloodstream over a longer period. This makes it unsuitable for taking immediately after your workout, when you need an

instant hit, but ideal for consuming before bed. Take it in a shake with water before turning in for the night. This means your muscles will receive quality protein while you sleep, which is when they are repaired and rebuilt.

CLA

A naturally occurring fatty acid, conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) diverts calories away from fat storage and into muscle tissue, reducing body fat and increasing the amount of fat used for energy. It's also a non-stimulant-based supplement, making it ideal for those who

want to avoid other fat burners containing either thermogenics or caffeine.

CREATINE

Your body metabolises creatine into ATP, which is used for every initial muscle movement. It's therefore vital to have adequate supplies during heavy, high-intensity workouts, to deliver the required energy to your muscles. In other words, creatine is like a backup generator for your muscles that helps you to lift harder for longer.

Take 2-10g in your post-workout shake, to replenish lost stores,

or split your dose and have half before your workout and half afterwards. And make sure you drink plenty of water: creatine is hygroscopic, so it will suck water into your muscles and can leave you dehydrated.

ENERGY BARS AND GELS

These usually consist of maltodextrin - a carbohydrate derived from starch - and simple sugars, such as fructose and glucose. Gels may also contain caffeine and electrolytes, such as sodium and potassium. Both are designed to offer a convenient way of consuming carbs during endurance-based exercise lasting longer than an hour, after which your body's stores of glycogen will have been depleted.

Aim to ingest one to two bars or gels - each containing between 30g and 60g of sugar - per subsequent hour of exercise after you pass the 60-minute mark.

GLUCOSAMINE

One of the major components of cartilage, glucosamine is an amino sugar that helps to cushion and absorb shock through our joints. As you age,

your cartilage loses its elasticity and becomes less effective at protecting your joints, which can lead to injury. Glucosamine capsules and tablets - which tend to be made from lobster, crab and shrimp shells - combat this deterioration by stimulating the cartilage cells to produce proteoglycans, which help to restore joint function and mobility. Aim for three daily doses of 500mg.

GLUTAMINE

This amino acid should already be present in your body. However, if you have problems with your digestion or are training hard, a supplement can be helpful to strengthen the lining of your gut and help protein synthesis.

You have several options on how you take it, depending on your goals. Take 10g in water on an empty stomach before breakfast, to aid in gut healing and function, or 10g post-workout to replenish your stores. If you're on a low-carb diet, take 30g after your workout.

GREEN TEA

This tea - which originates from China and is produced using the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant

- is one of the best natural fat burners around. Green tea is also packed full of antioxidants and has been linked to the prevention of everything from heart disease to Alzheimer's. To reap the huge variety of health benefits, drink it on a daily basis in place of your regular cup of tea or soft drink.

LEUCINE

As the most anabolic - or muscle-building - amino acid, leucine can independently stimulate insulin secretion and muscle protein synthesis, enhancing the muscle-building process. At 11%, whey protein is high in leucine content, which is one reason it's so effective as a post-workout elixir. A 5g dose after training and between meals can increase the anabolic effect of food, especially when consuming protein sources that are low in leucine and which therefore might not stimulate maximum muscle protein synthesis on their own.

L-CARNITINE

This compound, primarily found in red meat, plays many roles in the body,

specifically in helping to use fat stores as fuel. Carn-Enhanced is a convenient liquid form that also contains vitamins B5 and B12, to increase your fat-burning potential and improve energy levels. Aim to take 500mg per day.

MULTIVITAMINS

A high-quality multivitamin can go a long way, and if you have to choose only one supplement it would make sense to go for this one, as it will ensure you're getting the widest variety of vitamins and minerals possible. Of course, a multivitamin won't supply the same amount of individual minerals as products dedicated to these nutrients, but if your budget is tight, it's a great safety net when it comes to overall health and wellbeing. Take two capsules a day, one with breakfast and one with lunch.

OMEGA 3S

These essential fatty acids offer numerous health benefits. They have a profound impact on your overall wellbeing by improving cardiovascular health, speeding up the detoxification of harmful substances and providing potent

anti-inflammatory reactions, helping you recover faster after a tough workout. Omega 3s are also anabolic (muscle-building), partly due to their influence on the mTOR pathway that produces muscle growth, but also because they improve insulin sensitivity, which furthers anabolic potential and your ability to burn fat. Aim to take 10g per day with breakfast.

PROBIOTICS

Probiotics are live “healthy” bacteria that live in our gut. They play a crucial role in maintaining optimum digestion, immunity and intestinal health by crowding out disease-causing bacteria and restoring the balance of intestinal flora. While you can buy probiotics in capsule form, a more economical alternative is to consume them via live yogurt drinks. A typical 125g yogurt provides 4 billion bacteria. Aim to consume one yogurt a day.

VITAMIN C

One of the most well-known nutritional supplements, vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin that occurs

naturally in fruit and vegetables. It plays a key role in a variety of bodily functions, including the formation of connective tissue, the production of hormones, such as adrenaline, and the formation of red blood cells. Vitamin C is also a powerful antioxidant, helping to protect against cell damage, enhancing post-workout recovery, and protecting against injury and illness.

Daily doses of less than 1,000mg may be beneficial during periods of stress or intense training, but higher doses than this may hinder rather than help your performance, by blunting the muscles’ ability to adapt to exercise.

VITAMIN D

This vitamin is produced by the body when the skin comes into contact with sunlight. A lack of regular, strong sunlight in the UK means most Britons are severely lacking in this crucial vitamin that supports bone health and a strong immune system. Many studies also suggest that vitamin D may decrease risk for many diseases and conditions,



including certain types of cancer, multiple sclerosis and hypertension, as well as aid in weight loss and even improve longevity. Aim to take at least 1,000mg per day.

WHEY PROTEIN

Whey protein is made from cow’s milk and comes in different forms, such as isolate, concentrate and hydrolysate. Whey is rapidly and easily absorbed, making it ideal to take during the critical post-workout window when your body is primed for muscle synthesis. It can also lower hunger levels, owing to its influence on the hormone ghrelin.

Take whey protein within ten minutes of your workout, to take advantage of the temporary rise in protein synthesis. If

you are vegan or dairy intolerant, alternatives are available. Just try to avoid sugar-packed versions. Aim to take 25g blended with 200ml water immediately after training sessions.

ZMA

ZMA combines zinc, magnesium and aspartate, as well as vitamin B6. The first two play key roles in performance, enhancing cell growth and testosterone production, and improving energy production while reducing levels of lactic acid and the perception of fatigue. Taking ZMA will help to correct common deficiencies in both zinc and magnesium, although its effectiveness is less conclusive for those who are not deficient.

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