

## Upper Body Strength Program

### 1. Barbell Bench Press

Equipment: Flat bench and barbell

Primary mover: Pectoralis Major, anterior deltoid, and triceps brachii.

- Select appropriate barbell. I recommend for girls to start with a 20-30lbs and boys 30-40 lbs. Lie down on the flat bench. Using a pronated grip (overhand grip) that is wider than shoulder width, begin with the barbell straight up with elbows unlocked. This will be your starting position.
- As you breathe in, come down slowly, feel the barbell descending towards the middle of your chest. Stop when your upper arm forms a 90 degree angle with your forearm. The bar will not touch your chest.
- After a second pause, bring the barbell back to the starting position as you breathe out and push the barbell using your chest muscles. Hold for a second and then start coming down slowly again.

Video: <https://youtu.be/hLIN7hCFiOs>

### 2. Machine Lat Pulldown

Equipment: Either a machine or cable with flat long bar

Primary mover: Latissimus Dorsi

- Sit down on a pull-down machine with a wide bar attached to the top pulley. Make sure that you adjust the knee pad of the machine to fit your height. These pads will prevent your body from being raised by the resistance attached to the bar.
- Grab the bar with the palms facing forward using the prescribed grip (overhand grip). Note on grips: For a wide grip, your hands need to be spaced out at a distance wider than shoulder width. For a medium grip, your hands need to be spaced out at a distance equal to your shoulder width and for a close grip at a distance smaller than your shoulder width. The wider the grip the harder it gets, but also the more you develop the lats muscles.
- As you have both arms extended in front of you holding the bar at the chosen grip width, bring your torso back around 30 degrees or so while creating a curvature on your lower back and sticking your chest out. This is your starting position.
- As you breathe out, bring the bar down until it touches your upper chest by drawing the shoulders and the upper arms down and back. Tip: Concentrate on squeezing the back muscles once you reach the full contracted position. The upper torso should remain stationary and only the arms should move. The forearms should do no other work except for holding the bar; therefore do not try to pull down the bar using the forearms.
- After a second at the contracted position squeezing your shoulder blades together, slowly raise the bar back to the starting position when your arms are fully extended and the lats are fully stretched. Inhale during this portion of the movement. For

advanced lifters, instead of fully stretching the lats when returning to the start position, hold the shoulders back when extending the arms. This will maximize the contraction and the workload.

- Video: <https://youtu.be/Ua0uexZxVwE>

### **3. Machine Row**

Equipment: Cable row with a narrow bar or machine row

Primary mover: Latissimus dorsi, teres major and minor, rhomboids, trapezius, and infraspinatus

- For this exercise you will need access to a low pulley row machine with a V-bar. Note: The V-bar will enable you to have a neutral grip where the palms of your hands face each other. To get into the starting position, first sit down on the machine and place your feet on the front platform or crossbar provided making sure that your knees are slightly bent and not locked.
- Lean over as you keep the natural alignment of your back and grab the V-bar handles.
- With your arms extended pull back until your torso is at a 90-degree angle from your legs. Your back should be slightly arched and your chest should be sticking out. You should be feeling a nice stretch on your lats as you hold the bar in front of you. This is the starting position of the exercise.
- Keeping the torso stationary, pull the handles back towards your torso while keeping the arms close to it until you touch the abdominals towards the upper rib cage. Breathe out as you perform that movement. At that point you should be squeezing your back muscles hard. Hold that contraction for a second and slowly go back to the original position while breathing in. For advanced lifters, instead of fully stretching the middle back when returning to the start position, hold the shoulders back when extending the arms. This will maximize the contraction and the workload.
- Video: <https://youtu.be/MsBIN35b76o>

### **4. Seated Dumbbell Biceps Curl**

Equipment: Bench and dumbbells

Primary mover: Biceps Brachii, Brachialis and Brachioradialis.

- Sit on a flat bench with a dumbbell in each hand being held at arm's length. The elbows should be close to the torso.
- Rotate the palms of the hands so that they are facing your torso. This will be your starting position.
- While holding the upper arm stationary, maintain the elbows next to your waist. Begin by bringing your forearm on a direct line with your shoulder performing an arm curl. Make sure that you contract the biceps as you breathe out and make sure that only the forearms move. Continue the movement until your biceps are fully contracted and the dumbbells stop in front of the shoulders. Hold the contracted position for a second as you squeeze the biceps.

- Slowly begin to bring the dumbbells back to the starting position as you breathe in. For advanced lifters, not extending the arms all the way down will maximize the biceps contraction.
- Video: [https://youtu.be/PEJH5\\_ildgs](https://youtu.be/PEJH5_ildgs)

## **5. Cable Triceps Push Down with Flat Bar**

Equipment: Cable machine and straight bar

Primary mover: Triceps brachii

- Attach a straight or angled bar to a high pulley and grab with an overhand grip (palms facing down) at shoulder width.
- Stand upright with the torso straight and a very small inclination forward, bring the upper arms close to your body and perpendicular to the floor. The forearms should be pointing up towards the pulley as you hold the bar. Hold elbows next to the waist and slightly forward for support. This is your starting position.
- Using the triceps, bring the bar down until it touches the front of your thighs and the arms are fully extended perpendicular to the floor. The upper arms should always remain stationary next to your torso and only the forearms should move. Exhale as you perform this movement.
- After a second hold at the contracted position, bring the bar slowly up until the forearm and elbow forms a 90 degree angle. This is the end of the movement. Breathe in as you perform this step.
- Video: <https://youtu.be/SOliN50XvYk>

## **6. Lower Back Hyperextension**

Equipment: 45 degree bench or lower back bench

Primary mover : Erector Spinae

- Lie face down on a hyperextension bench, tucking your ankles securely under the footpads.
- Adjust the upper pad if possible so your upper thighs lie flat across the wide pad, leaving enough room for you to bend at the waist without any restriction. For beginners, set the bench at hip height.
- With your body straight, cross your arms in front of you (my preference) or behind your head. This will be your starting position. Tip: You can also hold a weight plate for extra resistance in front of you under your crossed arms.
- Start bending forward slowly at the waist until your torso is parallel to the floor. Inhale as you perform this movement. Tip: Never round the back as you perform this exercise.
- Slowly raise your torso back to the initial position as you exhale. Squeeze your glutes together as you raise the upper body. Stop once you feel your back in a straight line

with the hip. Tip: Avoid the temptation to arch your back past a straight line. Also, do not swing the torso at any time in order to protect the back from injury.

- Video: <https://youtu.be/JNfHIZHrdK4>

## **7. Decline Bench Abdominal**

Equipment: Declined bench and/or weight (medicine ball, plate, dumbbell)

Muscle: Rectus abdominis

- Secure your legs at the end of the decline bench and lie down.
- For beginners, cross arms in front of chest. For intermediate level, place hands on the back of the head, but do not interlace your fingers. For advanced level, hold a weight in front of chest or with your arms straight up.
- Begin on the top, and start descending your back towards the bench. For beginners, the back should go all the way down until touching the bench. Pause for a second and bring the upper body up to the starting position.
- For intermediate and advanced level, start at the same point. When descending the back, stop when the hips and back forms a straight line. The middle and upper back will not touch the bench.
- Pause for a second, exhale, and push aiming upward versus forward. Maintain a straight back. Do not allow the back to round.
- Tip: Focus on slow, controlled movement - don't cheat yourself by using momentum.
- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76jPjdN1B-k>

## **8. Russian Twist**

Equipment: Decline bench or flat on the floor (medicine ball, plate, dumbbell for advanced lifters)

Muscle: Obliques, rectus abdominis and erector spinae

- Lie down on the floor placing your feet either under something that will not move or by having a partner hold them. Your legs should be bent at the knees. For more advanced, use a decline bench and weights.
- Elevate your upper body so that it creates an imaginary V-shape with your thighs. Your arms should be fully extended in front of you perpendicular to your torso and with the hands clasped. This is the starting position.
- Twist your torso from one side to the other. Your chest will be centered and your head forward. Twist from the neck to the waist.
- Be careful not to twist too much. Your arms will not pass beyond the shoulder line. As you get more advanced, you can hold a weight with both arms for resistance or use a decline bench.
- Video: <https://youtu.be/GY3n4nyxQmk>