

Intro to Fitness

Version 3

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Intro to Fitness

New to fitness? Our Intro to Fitness Sessions are small group sessions tailored for beginners. We'll cover warm-up and cardio guidelines, six weight training exercises, and five key stretches.

Each session will take 50-60 minutes, with a maximum of six participants per session. Participants must wear fitness attire and footwear.

Register for a session in [Seneca Recreation](#) portal under Programs or just drop in for scheduled session.

EXERCISE GUIDELINES

WARM-UP

Guidelines

- Do at least 5 minutes of light cardio exercise that will result in a light sweat (walking or a light jogging on the treadmill, bike, elliptical, skipping, jumping jacks etc.) prior to starting your workout.

WEIGHTS

Guidelines

- 8-12 reps per set, 3 sets per exercise, rest 1-2 minutes between sets
- Aim to do muscle strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least twice a week.
- Do not train the same workout or train the same muscles on consecutive days.

Weights

Body Weight Squats



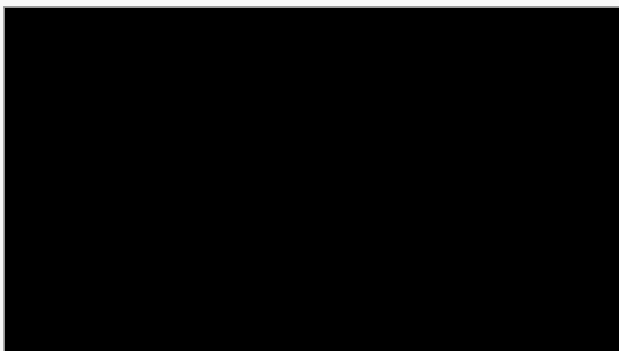
- Stand with the feet wider than shoulder-width apart, angled out slightly, and weight evenly distributed across the foot.
- Brace your abdominal muscles to stabilize your spine, and lower into the squat by bending at the hips and knees at the same time.
- Lower the body until the crease of your hips is lower than the top of your knee or until your thighs are parallel or almost parallel to the floor.
- Push through your entire foot and come back to the starting position. (American Council on Exercise, n.d.; canfitpro, 2022; canfitpro, 2022a)

Tips:

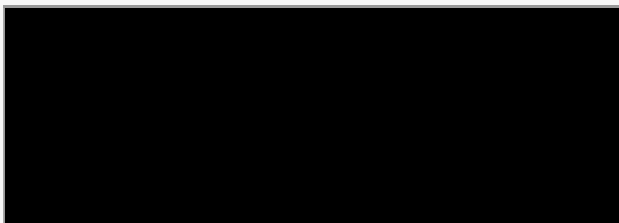
Elevated heels can increase your range of motion. Place weight plates underneath the heels to achieve this.

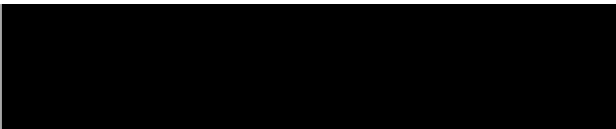
Keep your eyes forward during the entire movement to help enable correct alignment.

Leg Press - Option 1



Leg Press - Option 2



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- Sit on the machine and place your feet on the platform, hip-width apart, with the knees bent at a 90-degree angle.
 - Release the safety lock on the machine (Leg Press-Option 2 only) and hold the handle supports.
 - Brace your abdominal muscles to stabilize your spine.
 - Extend your legs to push the platform away from you in a controlled manner, but do not lock out your knees.
 - Return to the starting position slowly and under control.
 - Your glutes should remain on the seat throughout the movement.
 - Activate the safety lock when you have completed your set (Leg Press-Option 2 only). (American Council on Exercise, n.d.; canfitpro, 2022)

Tips:

For increased range of motion, you can lower the platform to the point just before the glutes lift off the seat, but beyond that risks injury to the spine.

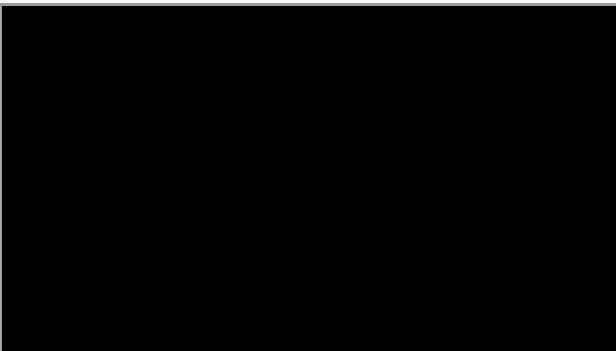
Push with the entire foot and not the toes.

Variation:

You can perform the leg press one leg at a time to help address any strength imbalances between them.

Spreading the feet wider on the platform and angling them out will work the inner thighs, while placing your feet higher on the platform will emphasize your glutes.

Leg Curl

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- Sit on the machine and adjust the moving arm so that it is placed underneath your ankles, with the lap pad above your knees.
 - In a smooth motion, contract your hamstrings, pulling your ankles back towards your

glutes.

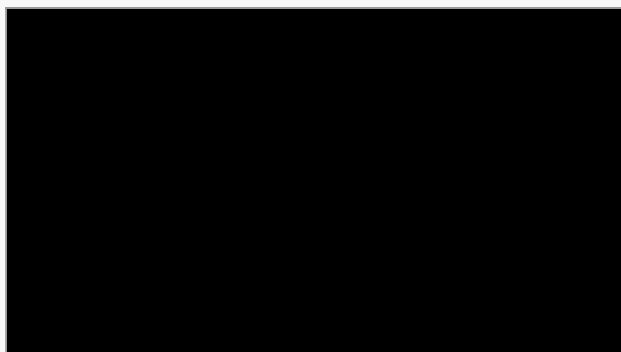
- Return the arm under control to the start position.

Tips:

Keep your back stable and against the seat throughout the movement.

Focus on controlling the movement-not the weight.

Lat Pull Down



- Grab the bar with your palms facing away grip that is wider than shoulder-width apart.
- Sit down on the seat with thighs securely under the pad.
- Lean back slightly, keeping an upright position and chest slightly up.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles to stabilize your spine and prevent any arching of your lower back during the exercise.
- While your arms are extended overhead, pull your shoulders back and down. Try to keep this position as you perform the exercise.
- Slowly exhale and start the pull down by depressing (lower) your shoulder blades, and then pulling the bar towards your upper or mid chest.
- Pull in a motion that guides your elbows towards the floor and bringing towards the sides of your torso. Avoid leaning back more during the pull.
- Pause momentarily at the bottom of the pull, then slowly return to your starting position by straightening your arms. (American Council on Exercise, n.d.; canfitpro, 2022c)

Tips:

Keep your chest up and pull the bar towards it.

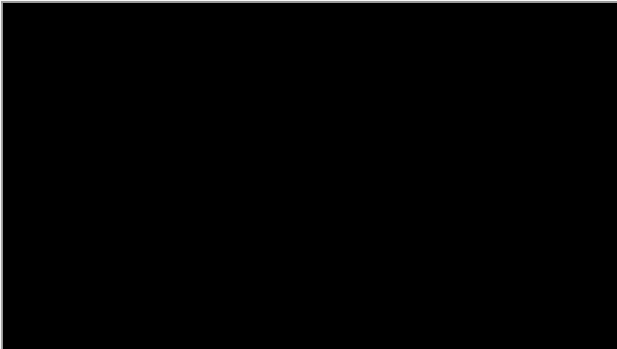
Push your shoulders down towards the floor to avoid the shoulders elevating.

Variations:

Different grips will emphasize different muscles: try a wider grip to work the lats even more

or utilize a narrower supinated (underhand) grip to work the biceps as well.

Dumbbell Chest Press



- Lie on your back on a flat bench, holding the dumbbells above your chest with a firm/closed grip (palms facing forward) and with the elbows fully extended.
- Keep your feet on the floor, glutes, shoulder blades, and head in contact with the bench. Keep a natural arch in the back.
- Maintain a neutral wrist position (avoid flexion/extension at the wrist joint).
- Lower the dumbbells towards the mid-chest in a controlled manner, while keeping the elbows close to the torso, and stacked under the wrist.
- Drive the dumbbells back up by straightening the arms, focusing on the contraction of the pectorals. (American Council on Exercise, n.d.; canfitpro, 2022b)

Tips:

Squeeze your upper back as you lower the dumbbells to avoid discomfort in the shoulder.

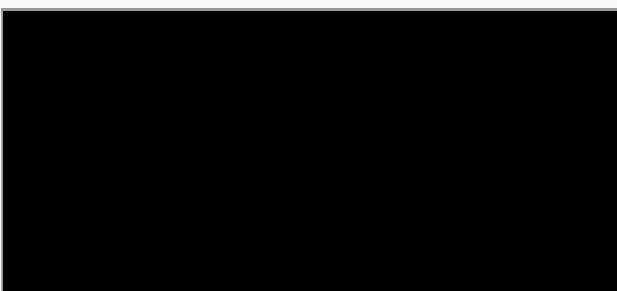
Maintain all points of contact with the bench and floor.


When using heavier weights, always have a spotter. This helps with both the initial set up as well as muscle failure during the movement.

Variations:

Different bench angles will place greater emphasis on distinct parts of the pectorals. An inclined bench angle targets the upper pectorals more effectively, while a declined bench angle will target the lower pectorals.

Plank



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- Lie face down on a mat or the floor with your elbows close to your sides and right under your shoulders, palms down and hands facing forward.
 - Keep your feet hip-width apart and toes pointing down.
 - Contract your core and abdominal muscles.
 - Engage your core and leg muscles to raise your body off the floor, keeping your forearms and toes on the floor.
 - Avoid any arching/sagging in your lower back.
 - Avoid pushing your hips up or bending your knees.
 - Avoid shrugging your shoulders and keep your shoulders right above your elbows.
 - Hold this plank position for at least 10 seconds to begin, and gradually increase your time as your core increases in strength. (American Council on Exercise, n.d.; canfitpro, 2016)

Tips:

Ensure that your elbows are right under your shoulders to keep correct alignment and avoid stressing the shoulders.

Keep your torso and legs stiff to maintain alignment.

Remember to keep breathing during the exercise, rather than holding in your breath.

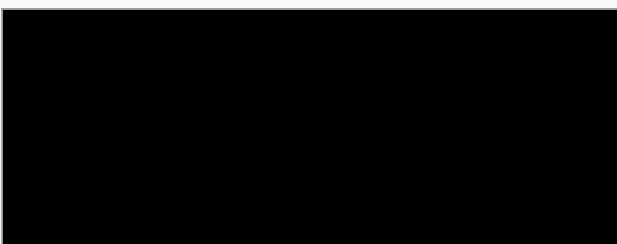
Variations:


Support the lower body on the knees, rather than the toes, to make the exercise easier.

Stretches

Guidelines

- It is recommended to stretch the major muscle groups after your workout.
- Ease into the stretch and hold for about 30 seconds to the point of mild tension, not pain.

Standing Quad Stretch

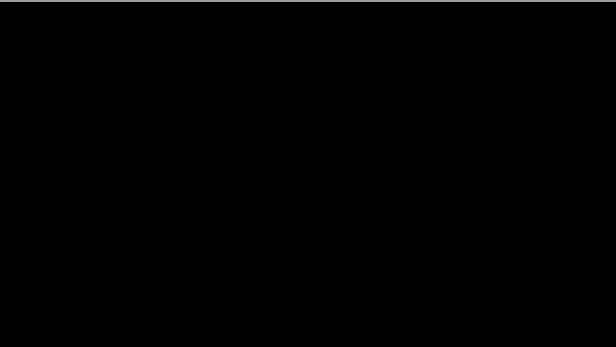
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- In a standing position, bend your left knee and pull your left heel towards your left buttock.
 - Grasp the top of your left ankle with your left hand.
 - Push the left knee down and keep it in line with the right knee.
 - Gently pull on the ankle until you feel slight tension in the front of the left thigh.
 - Keep your hips in neutral position and facing straight ahead while standing tall.
 - If required, hold on to a wall or to something secure for balance.
 - Repeat on the other side. (canfitpro, 2016)

Tips:

Keep your spine neutral.

Exhale as you go into the stretch and continue to breathe comfortably as you hold.

Chest Reach Back & Turn Stretch

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- Stand next to a wall or door frame.
 - Raise one arm parallel to the ground and reach behind you to hold on to the frame or wall.
 - Turn your head and body away from the wall or door frame until you feel slight tension in your chest muscles.
 - Repeat on the other side. (canfitpro, 2016)

Tips:

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and keep an upright posture.

Exhale as you move into the stretch and breathe naturally as you hold.

Variation:

Lower or raise the arm to stretch distinct parts of the chest muscles.

Leg Up Hamstring Stretch



- While standing, lift your right leg and place your heel on a bench keeping a slight bend in the knee.
- Bend forward at the hips until you feel slight tension in the back of the upper thigh.
- Place your hands on your hips or on the bench if you can comfortably reach it while maintaining a neutral spine.
- Repeat on the other side. (canfitpro, 2016)

Tips:

Keep your feet shoulder width apart and spine neutral.

Keep both hips facing forward.

Exhale as you move into the stretch and breathe naturally as you hold

Back Spinal Flexion/ Cat Stretch



- Kneel on floor with your hands directly under your shoulders and knees directly under your hips.
- Gently tighten your abdominal muscles to avoid any sagging or arching in your lower back.
- Gently exhale and contract your abdominal muscles, pushing your spine up towards the ceiling, allowing your head to fall towards your chest.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds. (American Council on Exercise, n.d.; canfitpro, 2016)

Tips:

Exhale as you move into the stretch and breathe naturally as you hold.

Rectus Abdominis/ Cobra Stretch

- Kneel on floor with your hands directly under your shoulders and knees directly under your hips.
- Gently tighten your abdominal muscles to avoid any sagging or arching in your lower back.
- Gently exhale and contract your abdominal muscles, pushing your spine up towards the ceiling, allowing your head to fall towards your chest.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds. (American Council on Exercise, n.d.; canfitpro, 2016)

Tips:

Exhale as you move into the stretch and breathe naturally as you hold.

CARDIO**Guidelines**

- Try to get at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity a week. Aim for 15-30 minutes of cardio most days of the week.
- Some examples include walking, jogging, swimming, skipping, biking, fitness classes, and dance classes etc.

MONITORING AEROBIC TRAINING INTENSITY

- The Talk Test and Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) are simple, and reliable ways to gauge your exercise intensity. Aim for a perceived exertion of 6-8 on the RPE scale.

Training Intensity	Rate of Perceived Exertion(1-10)	Talk Test
Very Light	0-1	Normal
Light	2	Easy to talk
Moderate	3-6	Can speak in short sentences
Vigorous	7-8	Can speak 1-2 words only
Near Maximal to Maximal	≥9	Cannot talk

RPE & Talk Test Reference:

Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (2013, 2019). Training for Health & Performance. Section 5. CSEPT-PATH Physical Activity Training for Health. (2nd Cdn ed., p. 13). Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology.

Exercise & Stretch References:

American Council on Exercise. (n.d.) Exercise database and library.

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canfitpro. (2022b, April 27). Dumbbell bench press [Video]. YouTube.

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canfitpro. (2016). Foundations of professional personal training (2nd Cdn. ed.). Human Kinetics. (Note: Adapted from pp. 337, 339, 342, 341, & 343)

canfitpro. (2023). Foundations of professional personal training (3rd Cdn. ed.). Human Kinetics. (Note: Adapted from p. 266)

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RPE & Talk Test Reference:

Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. (2019). Physical activity training for health. (2nd Cdn. ed.). (Note: Adapted from p. 13)