

BEGINNING
CALISTHENICS
STRENGTH



A 28- DAY MOMENTUM LAUNCH PAD

MATT SCHIFFERLE

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Building momentum with a new training program is often the most difficult challenge when you are a beginner in any fitness endeavor. The uphill battle can be especially steep when you feel like you're starting over after a long break, or when you have hit rock bottom. Even if you do build some momentum, it's often not enough to keep you going in the long term. Even minor life challenges can cause you to lose all of your momentum and come to a dead stop.

Thankfully, calisthenics helps you overcome many obstacles and barriers that slow you down. Its simplicity and efficiency make it easy to quickly get moving without depending on a gym membership or setting up costly equipment in your home. Calisthenics exercises are also time and energy-efficient to practice. You don't need many different exercises to get an effective workout which makes it easier to get your training in even when life gets hectic.

However, just because bodyweight training is simple and efficient doesn't mean you can start doing endless push-ups and get results without a well-designed plan. Many beginners start their fitness journey with calisthenics, yet most of them crash and burn within the first several weeks because they lack a balanced plan. All of the hard work and determination in the world will only cause you to hit a wall at a higher rate of speed if you don't start off with a proper plan.

That's why I've designed this comprehensive 28-day calisthenics launch pad. This program is designed for beginners and folks starting off on their fitness journey and want to ensure they can produce momentum beyond the first several weeks. This plan is also ideal for those returning to physical training after taking time off.

How to get the most out of this plan:

Unlike many fitness challenges that promise to push you to the limits of your mind, body, and lifestyle, this challenge is about helping you grow beyond the challenge. Starting off in a dead sprint may seem promising, but it quickly leads to burnout before the challenge ends. Even those who endure to the end of such challenges often lose momentum and quit shortly after the challenge is over. It's good to push your limits occasionally, but what good is it to achieve a result you lose soon afterward?

This challenge is different because it's not intended to smash, bash, and thrash you into a slightly more fit messy pile of burned out exhaustion. Instead, it's designed to help you gradually build momentum to take flight and forever soar to new heights.

Fitness is a long game. The ultimate results you want to achieve will be had, and maintained, beyond the first several weeks of training. You can certainly accomplish worthwhile results in 28 days, but the real substantial benefits will be found beyond any short-term challenge. You can certainly achieve high-level results, but only if you can maintain your momentum beyond those first turbulent weeks.

This challenge will place a very heavy emphasis on the quality of your technique and physical control. So while many of the technical details I mention in this plan may seem trivial at first, pay very close attention to how you apply them. They will make a very substantial difference in the long run. These details are also overlooked and even avoided by many beginners, which is why plateaus and injuries can be so prevalent for those starting out.

This challenge is broken up into seven 4-day segments. The first two days introduce you to an exercise with a couple of technical points to focus on. Your goal with each of these days is to practice that single exercise while focusing on those technical details. You're not trying to work out, but rather practice the technique to make it as perfect as you can. You're welcome to practice the technique as much as you like in a single bout or even throughout the day if you like. Everyone comes to this program with different levels of ability so listen to your body and practice the technique as you like.

The other two days in the segment are your actual workout days where you will apply the techniques you just learned. These workouts should feel like more of a physical challenge, but start off slow. The volume and intensity of these workouts will increase over the 28-day challenge to get you up to speed.

If you find yourself getting distracted or life gets in the way during the challenge, simply resume the challenge on the four day segment you left off with. You don't need to start the entire challenge from day one.

Also, feel free to add in rest days or spend more time practicing the techniques in a given segment. This plan is laid out in a 28-day format but you're more than welcome to extend the challenge to give yourself more recovery or continue with a portion of the plan if you're enjoying it.

Remember that calisthenics training is supposed to make you feel good. While some degree of fatigue and muscle soreness is to be expected, especially while experiencing new exercise, listen to your body. Make adjustments if you are experiencing persistent fatigue or muscle soreness. The purpose of this challenge is to guide you forward not to force you through a trial by fire.

Welcome to the Capra 28 day calisthenics challenge. Let's begin.

- Coach, Matt Schifferle



Day 1-4

Day 1 Push-up technique

The first day is about dialing in your push-up. You will practice them on an elevated surface like a kitchen counter or the back of a sturdy piece of furniture.

Your goal is to practice having your hands shoulder width apart with your elbows close to your sides. Keeping your arms tight to your torso relieves the stress in your wrists, elbows, and shoulders while placing more work on your muscles.



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)

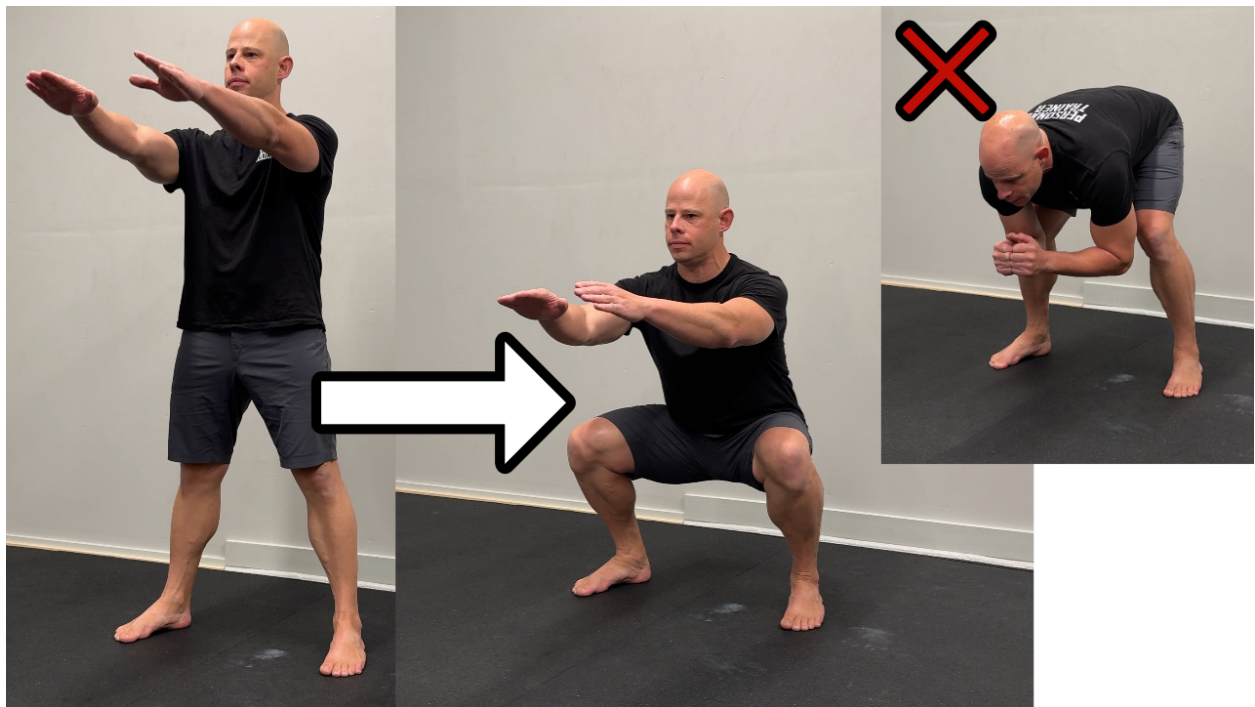


Day 2 Squat technique

The second day is practicing your squat with your feet a little wider than shoulder width, and your hands out in front. The goal is to feel like you are tracking your

knees directly over your toes while letting your upper body slightly angle forward at roughly the same degree as your shins.

This classic squat technique is a great fundamental technique for practicing proper form and tension control. Do your best to maintain tension in your quads and glutes as you hold the bottom position for 2-3 seconds on each rep.



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



On day three and four, you will practice both of these exercises together to reinforce those technical details. The goal here is to practice the technique, not necessarily to blast your muscles until you can hardly move. So practice as many repetitions as you can, until you feel a light burn in the muscle for roughly 2 to 3 minutes for each exercise.

Day 3 Workout

Push-ups practice 2-3 minutes

Squat practice 2-3 minutes

Day 4 Repeat workout

Push-ups practice 2-3 minutes

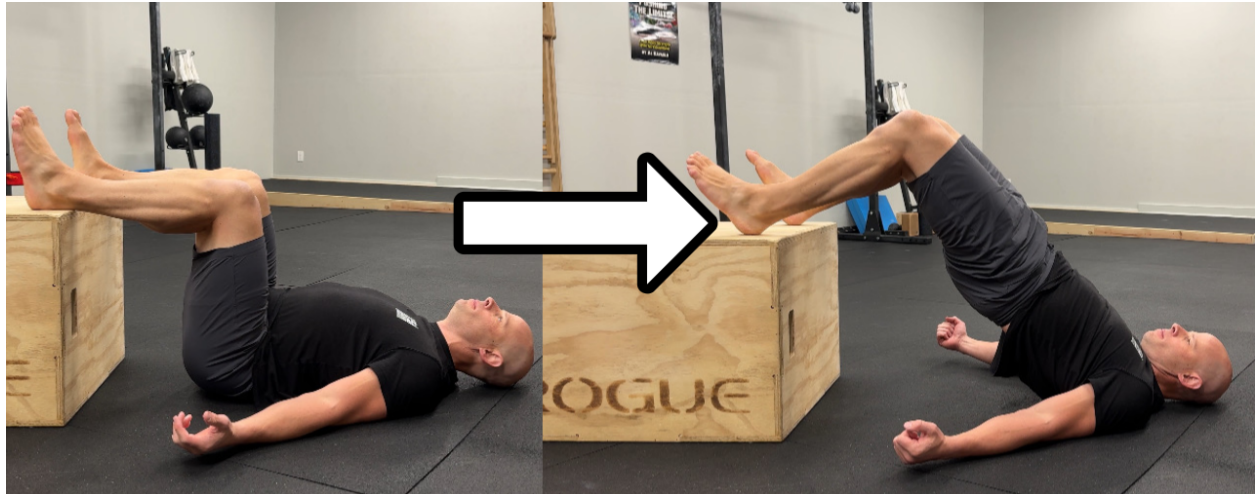
Squat practice 2-3 minutes

Days 5-8

Day 5 Hip bridge technique

On day five you're going to introduce hip bridges into your routine. These are a great exercise for your glutes and hamstrings and do wonders for your lower back. You'll practice these with your feet up on an elevated surface like a sturdy chair or weight bench.

Your goal with this exercise is to feel like you are pulling your heels back closer to your hips while maintaining constant tension in your glutes. Maintaining tension throughout the back of your legs and hips does wonders for the strength of your lower body, but also fortifies your lower back.



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 6 Seated twist technique

The second day of the segment will introduce the seated twist. This basic mobility exercise is a great way to gently stretch and strengthen your lateral chain. It relieves stress in your lower back, hips, and helps to stabilize your shoulders.

Be sure to use your back muscles to push your hand into the floor which will also help you sit more upright and slightly stretch your hamstring.



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 7 Workout A

Push-up practice 1-2 minutes
Hip bridge practice 1-2 minutes

Day 8 Workout B

Squat practice 1-2 minutes
Seated twist holding 20s/side

Days 9-12

Day 9 Cat-cow technique

Day nine is about implementing another fundamental exercise to help you learn to control a pelvic tilt. Controlling the pelvic tilt is essential for core stability and proper abdominal engagement to enhance the safety and effectiveness of all of your abdominal exercises.

Your goal is to practice the classic cat cow exercise from yoga while pivoting your pelvis forward and back attempting to contract your abdominal as hard as possible in the “cat” position.



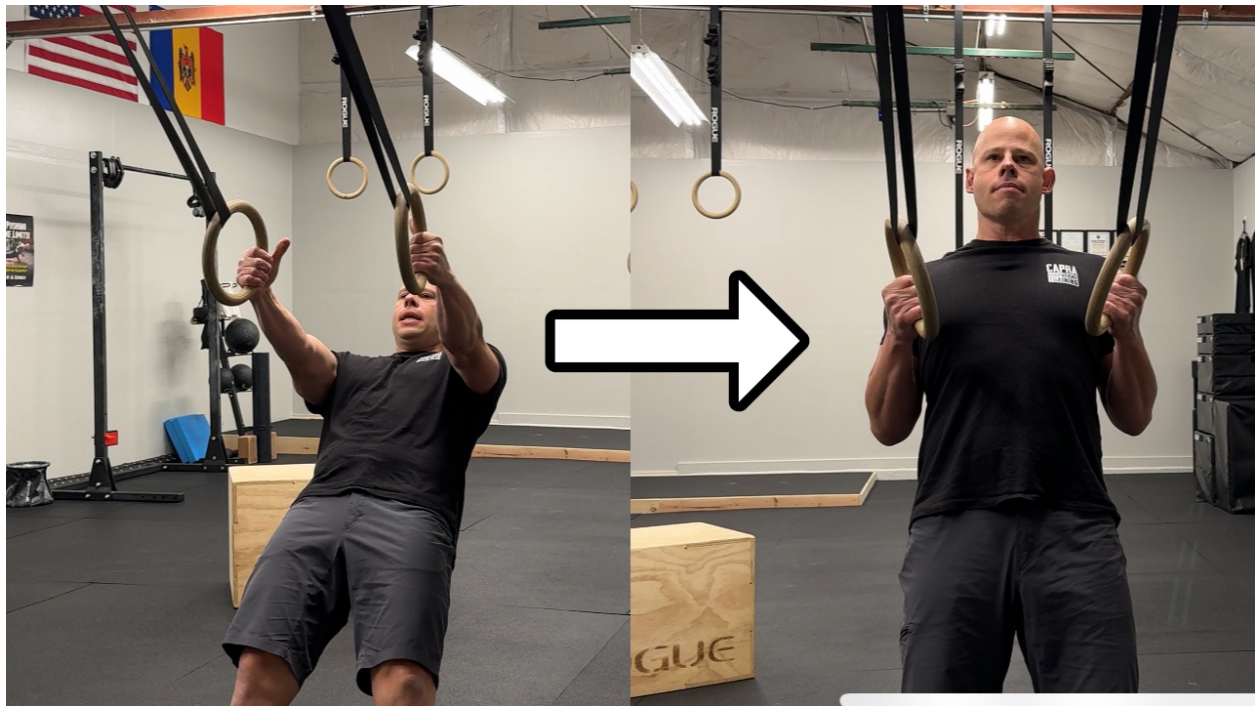
[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 10 Strap row technique

Bodyweight rows are one of the few exercises that requires a bit of equipment in this challenge. If you don't have any rings or suspension straps, you may be able to find some at a local gym or even make your own with a length of rope and two handles as I explain in [this video](#).

Your goal with the suspension row is to mirror the same motion as your push-ups, where your hands and elbows are tight to your sides with your body perfectly straight. It helps to think about pressing your arms into your side, sort of like you're squeezing a lemon in your armpits as you pull.



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 11 Workout A

Push-up practice 1-2 minutes
Hip bridge practice 1-2 minutes
Seated Twist 20s/side

Day 12 Workout B

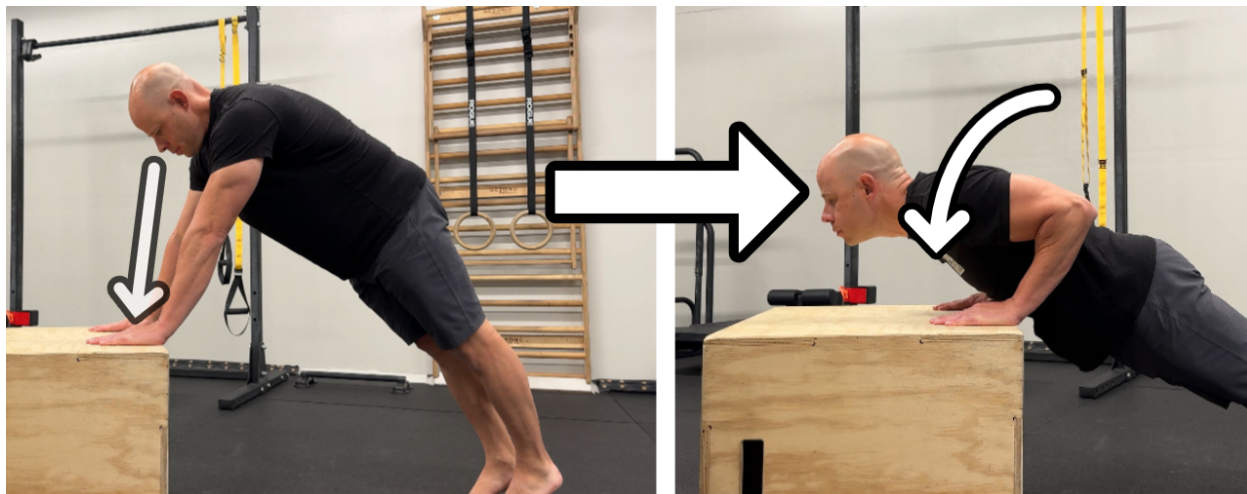
Row practice 1-2 minutes
Squat practice 1-2 minutes
Cat-cow practice 30s

Days 13-16

This segment is roughly halfway through the challenge and now you are going to build up and improve the techniques you have utilized so far. This type of technical progression is at the heart of calisthenics training progress. The real long-term results you want won't come from endless blood-sweat-and-tears sufferfest workouts. You also won't achieve much by adding countless exercises and variations into your program. Instead, your success will come from ceaselessly improving your technical proficiency in the basic exercises so you improve how well you train in every workout.

Day 13 Push-ups w/ forward motion

It's important to learn how to slightly come forward in the bottom of a push-up position, so your hands end up at the bottom of your chest line. Rock back on your toes slightly, so the top of your chin is between your hands in the top position. This subtle rocking motion helps to enhance muscle engagement while reducing stress on your joints to make the push-up more effective.



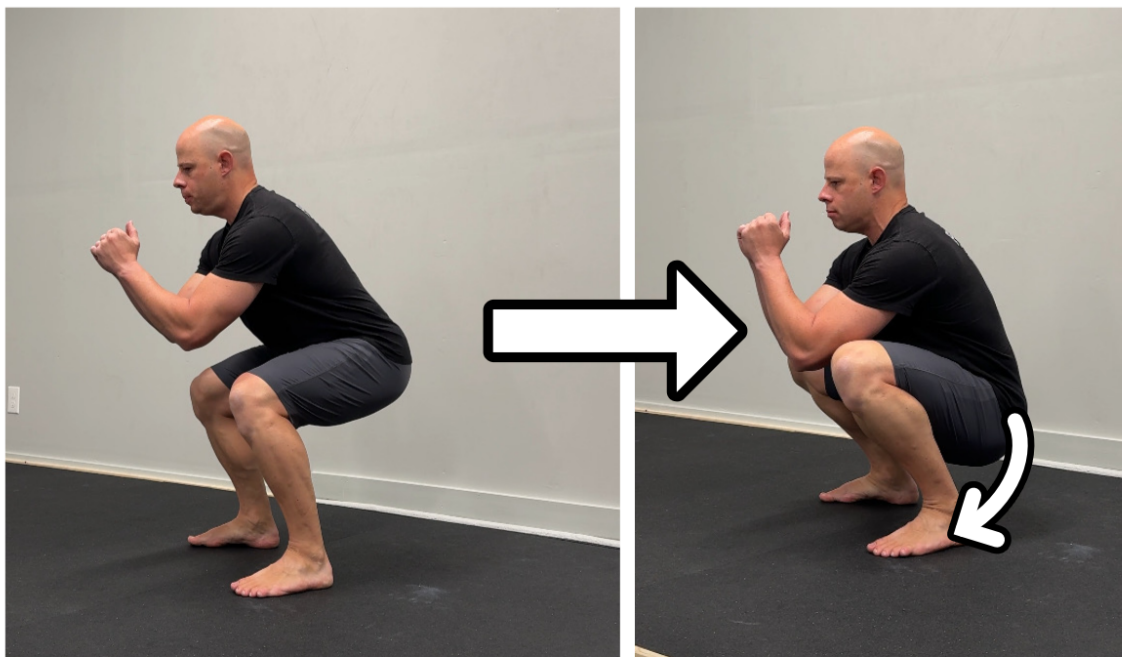
[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 14 Squats with pulling for depth

Now that you're comfortable tracking your knees over your toes in a basic squat, it's time to start working on "pulling" yourself into a deeper position. This pulling action helps to engage your hip flexors, calves, and hamstrings to a higher degree as you descend into a deeper squat to improve strength and mobility.

It helps to think of pulling your hips closer to the back of your heels as you descend. Don't worry if you can't squat very deep at first. This is partially a mobility movement as well as a strength movement and the range will come with time. As before, do your best, not to lean forward too much and try to keep your torso at the same angle as your shins.



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



These practice days will start to utilize a bit more of a standard strength workout format where you will practice two sets for each exercise for repetitions. Don't worry too much about getting as many repetitions as you can or maxing yourself out. You're just practicing the technique in a more classic strength training format to get your body used to the stress of training.

You're welcome to practice each exercise individually or combine all three exercises in a circuit. Rest as needed between sets so you don't feel too fatigued from one exercise to the other.

Day 15 Workout A

Push-ups for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Hip bridge for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Seated Twist 30s/side for 2 sets

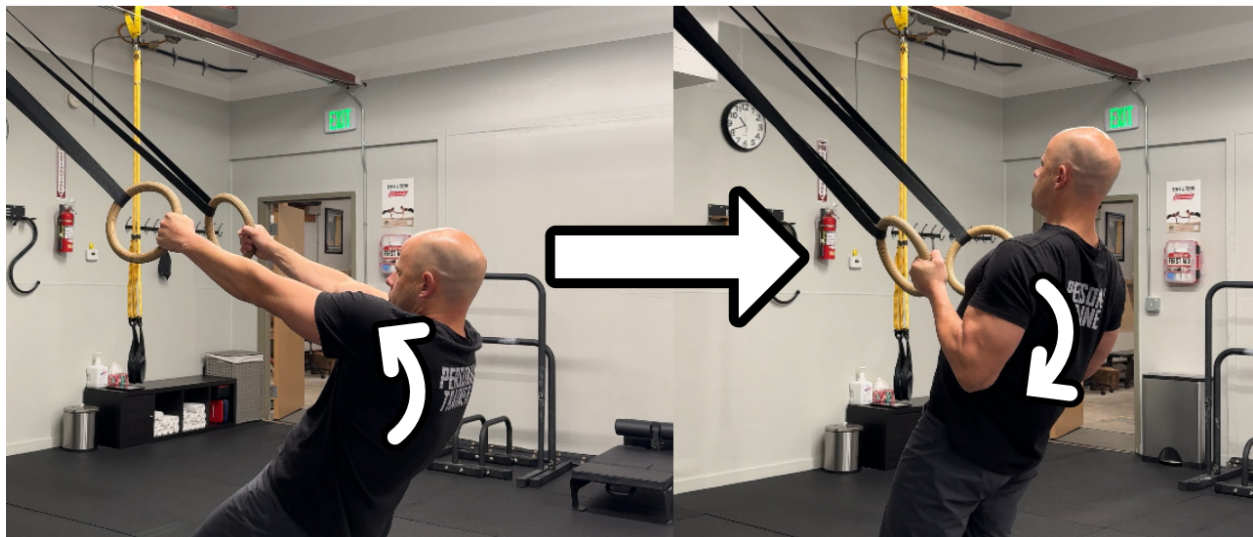
Day 16 Workout B

Row for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Squat for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Cat-cow practice 2 sets of 30s

Days 17-20

Day 17 Row with shoulder motion and lowering hands

Today you will be practicing the bodyweight row with two technical considerations. The first of which is to let your shoulders come forward at the bottom position of each repetition and then pull your shoulders down and back as you pull yourself up. The second consideration is to move your hands slightly downward, so they finish at the bottom of your chest. Once again, this technique should mirror the same movement pattern as your push-ups. It's a helpful way to ensure you work your entire back without putting stress into your neck. As always try to maintain tension in your muscles throughout the full range of motion without releasing that tension and relaxing at the bottom position.



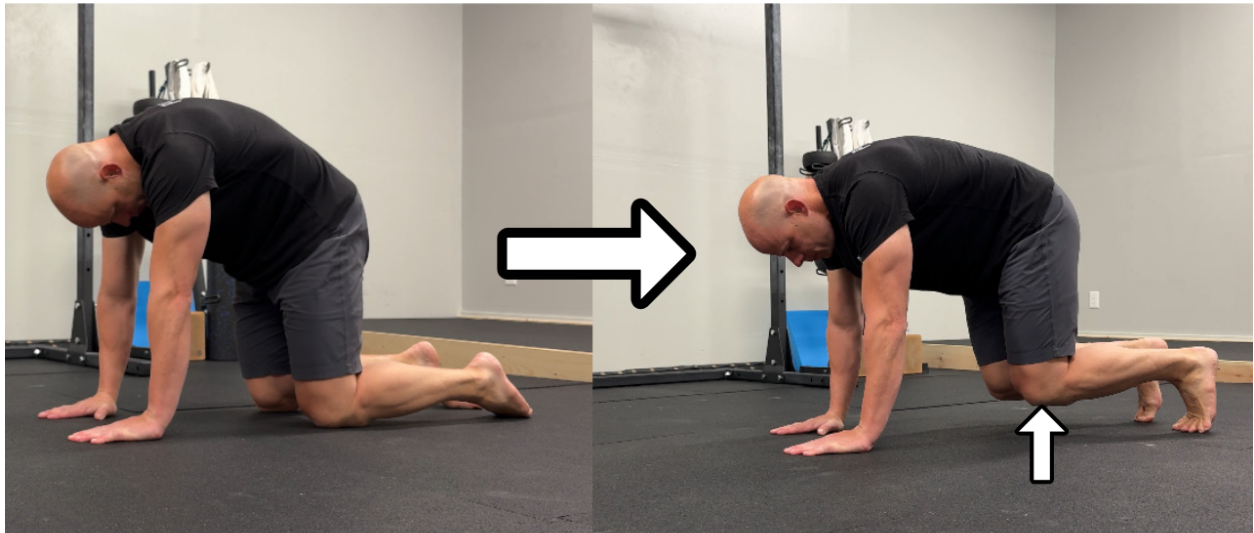
[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 18 Bear plank

Now that you can use your abs to create a posterior pelvic tilt in “cat”, you’re going to implement that tilt in a bear plank. This involves holding the cat portion of the cat-cow and then picking your knees about 1 inch off the floor to add resistance. Do your best to squeeze the floor together between your hands and

your feet to maximize stability.



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 19 Workout A

Push-ups for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Hip bridge for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Seated Twist 30s/side for 2 sets

Day 20 Workout B

Row for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Squat for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Bear plank hold for 2 sets of 20s

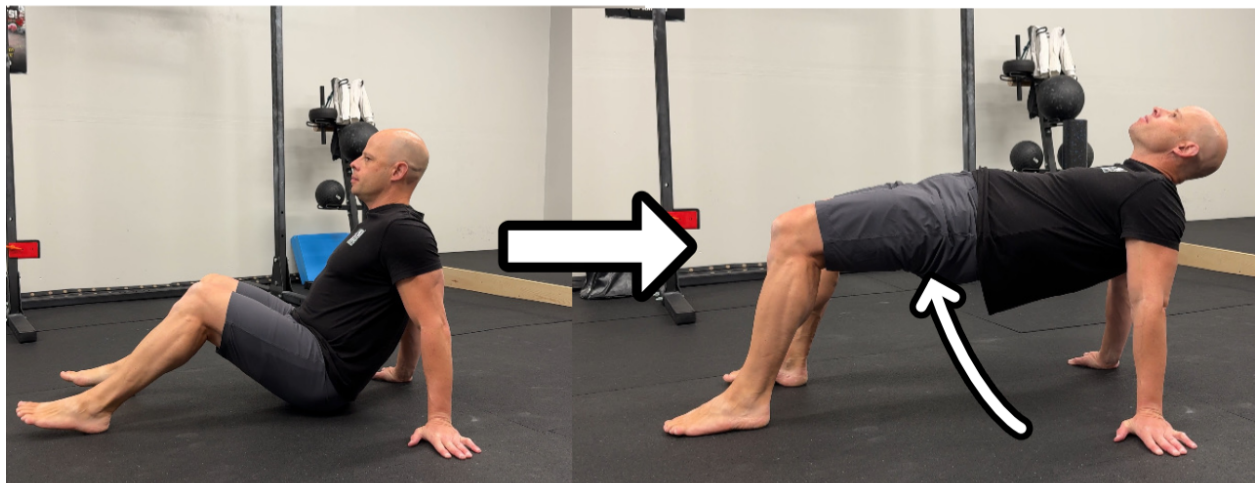
Days 21-24

Day 21 Table bridge

The table bridge is the next progression from the line hip bridge as it requires more back stability and shoulder mobility. Your goal is to fully “pack” your shoulders down and back during the exercise so that your chest, hips, and knees are at the same level in the top position. It should look as if you are turning yourself into a table.

As with the squats, this is one part strength exercise, and one part mobility exercise. So don't feel like you have to force yourself into a big range of motion. Just use whatever range you naturally have and work on increasing your mobility over time.

The most important thing is to drive yourself up with your glutes and hamstrings. You shouldn't feel this in your lower back, so be sure to maintain some tension in your abdominals for support as well.



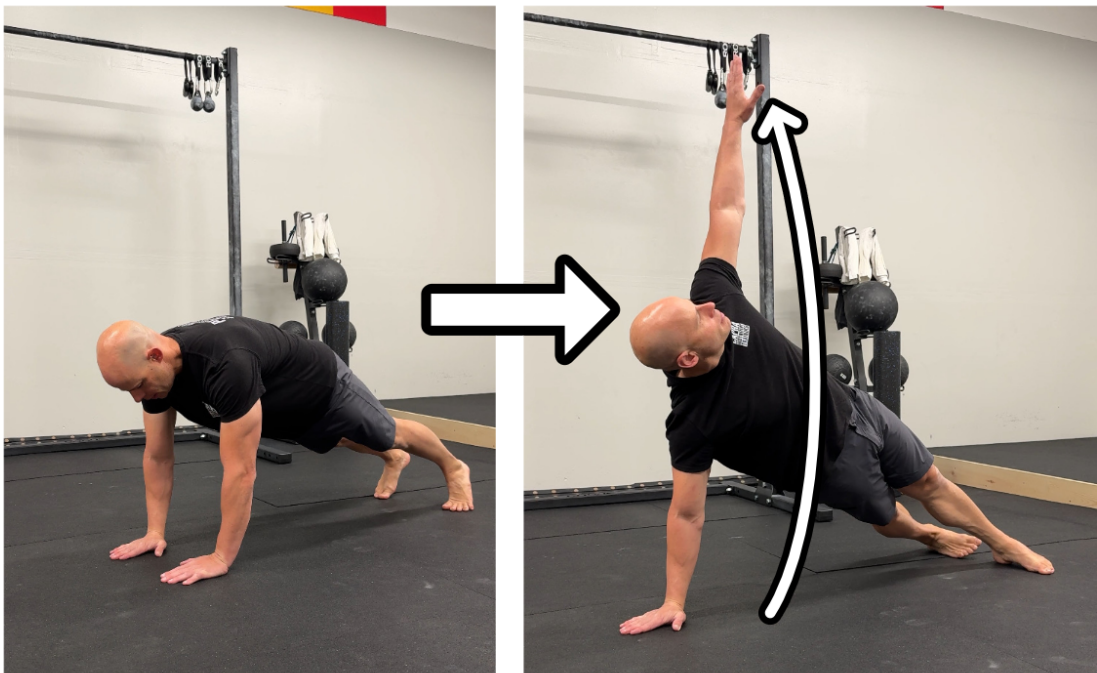
[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 22 T-planks

The T-plank is the next lateral chain exercise in the challenge. It's not necessarily a progression from your seated twist, which is more of a mobility exercise, but levels up the hip and shoulder stability along your lateral chain.

Your objective is to pull your shoulder blades back and keep your body in a straight line with your feet shoulder width apart in the top position. Your top hand should be directly above your bottom hand to form a straight vertical line. Don't try to reach back behind you as that will compromise your shoulders, stability, and alignment



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of this exercise.](#)



Day 23 Workout A

Push-ups for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Table bridge for 2 sets 6-12 reps
Alternating T-plank for 20 reps

Day 24 Workout B

Row for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Squat for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Bear plank hold for 2 sets of 30s

Days 25-28

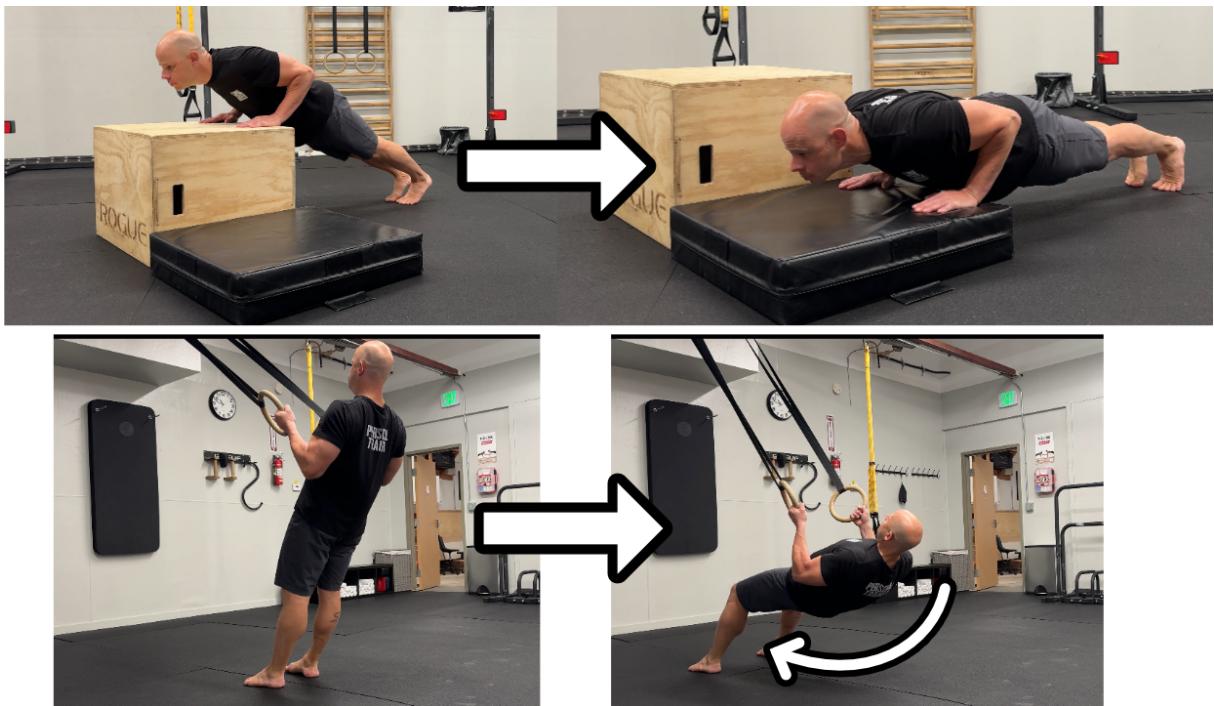
This is the final segment of the challenge and unlike other challenges where you are striving to cross the finish line. You should feel like you are building a substantial amount of momentum and want to continue taking these exercises to the next level.

Your objective over the next four days is to add more resistance to the exercise to make it feel like you are starting to work the muscle much harder, which is why you have a reduced number of repetitions.

Day 25 Harder push-ups and bodyweight rows

The goal for this day is to enhance your push-ups and rows, with more resistance through adjusting your angle to gravity. If you've been doing push-ups on an elevated surface, move your hands down to a lower surface or even on the floor. If you've had your hands on the floor, consider elevating your feet slightly on a 6 inch box or a step.

Adding resistance will naturally make your muscles work harder, but the goal here is to continue working on your technique. It's natural for your technique to erode under heavier resistance as your body seeks the path of least resistance. Do your best to fight that erosion and do the best you can. The true nature of progression isn't to work with more resistance; it's to keep a strong technique despite the influence of that resistance.

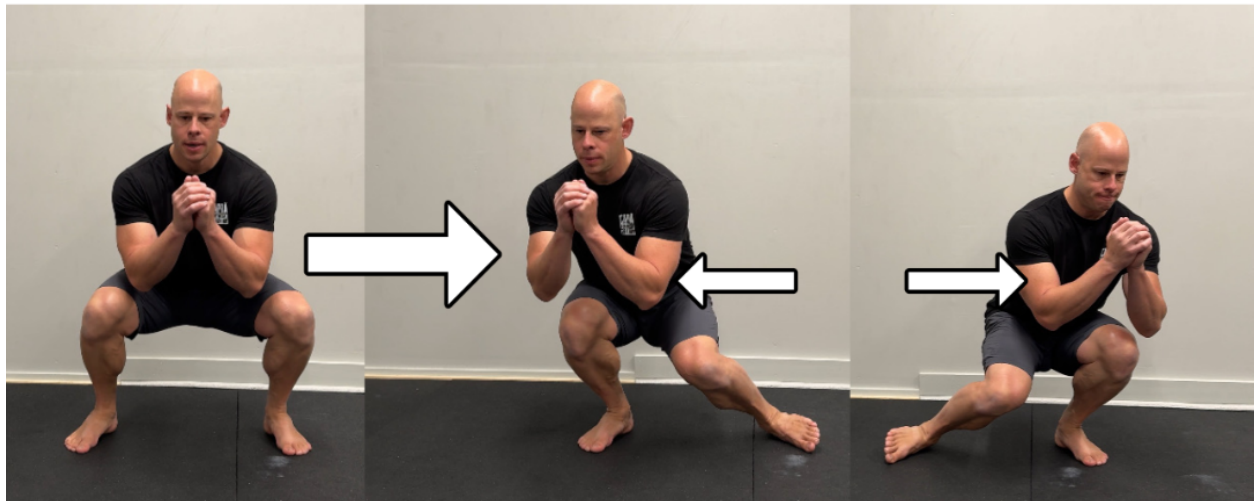


[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of these exercises.](#)

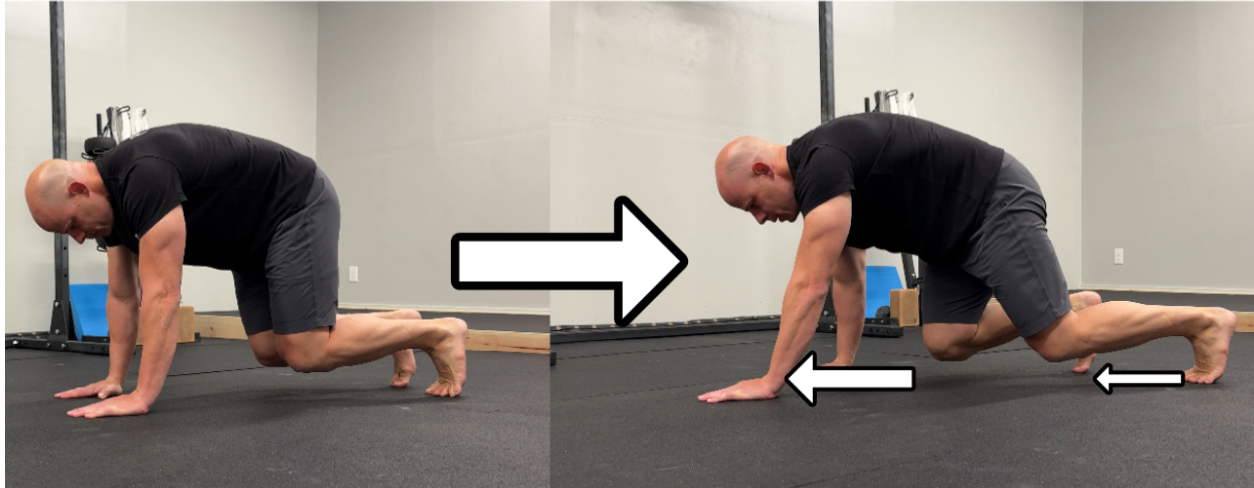


Day 26 Shifting squats and bear crawl

Today's goal is to add more resistance to your leg muscles by shifting your weight from one leg to the other in a deep squat position. This “shifting squat” will improve your hip control and stability while also increasing strength. It's important to make sure your knee continues to track straight over your toes without falling to the outside as your body weight shifts.



The second exercise is to turn your bear plank into a bear crawl. Your goal is to maintain as much tension in your abdominals as possible while also creating the stability and control necessary to crawl forward by picking up one hand and the opposite foot at a time.



[Click or scan here for a more in-depth video of these exercises.](#)



Day 27 Workout A

Push-ups for 2 sets 6-12 reps
Table bridge for 2 sets 6-12 reps
Alternating T-plank for 20 reps

Day 28 Workout B

Row for 2 sets 8-20 reps
Shifting squat for 2 sets 20 reps
Bear crawl for 30-45s

Yay you've completed the challenge! Now what do you do?

This training program is intended to be a launchpad toward years of productive and rewarding training. Where do you go from here? That all depends on where you find yourself at the end of this short journey.

If you're struggling to maintain your momentum and motivation towards the end of this challenge, consider taking a short break (5-7 days) and complete the challenge again. Sometimes, it can take several attempts before you build up the habits and momentum you need to take your training to the next level.

If you're fired up to learn more and go beyond these exercises, you can dial in your training through any of [my books and training programs available on the Red Delta Project PDF Store](#).

I also offer remote and Micro Coaching services so I can help you personally beyond this program. [Click here to learn more](#).

The world of calisthenics training is broad, deep, and most of all rewarding. There are many paths you can take towards many different destinations and I can't wait to show you just how far you can go. The path is laid out before you and you're already moving forward with a good head of steam. All that's left to do now is to pick a heading and continue moving forward.

You're humble coach,

-Matt Schifferle