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LEVEL C EXERCISES

The exercises in this handout are again variations of what you already know from Levels A and B. Everyone should do these basic exercises regularly for the rest of their lives. These sorts of *resistive exercises* (i.e., using weights, bands, or just gravity resistance) are necessary for guarding against osteoporosis (weakening of the bones with age) and also for maintaining general fitness so you can lift groceries and shovel snow. Throwing in some core and upper body lifts between these exercise sets will make things less monotonous and improve your overall fitness.

Level C - Exercise 1: Double Leg Squats with Dumbbells

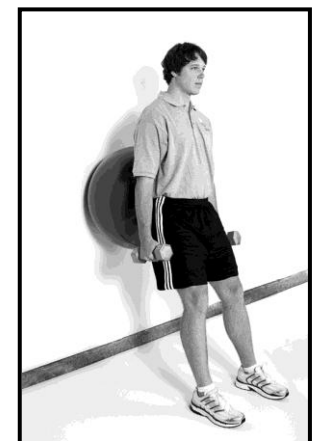
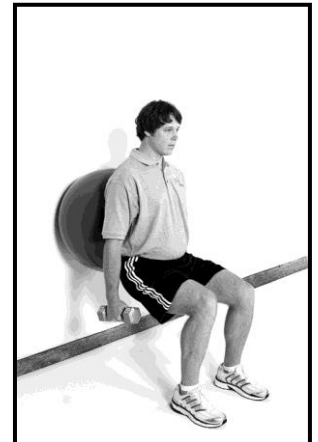
Purpose: To achieve maximum pumpitude by doing variations on the most important and functional exercise in the world, the squat. I know what you're thinking: been here, done this. Truth is, when it comes to the mother of all exercises, you can never do enough. The squatting motion is so much a part of your life- with gardening, sports, stairs, etc. you need to get these muscles as fit as possible.

Starting Position: Feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent with quads and hamstrings already co-contracted. Keep back and arms straight with 5 lbs. in each hand and increase the weight of the dumbbells as you become stronger. You can also use the stability ball or, better yet, do some reps with the ball and some reps without.

Action: Squat as if you are sitting in a chair. You can squat as far as you feel in control but not lower than 90 degrees at the knees. Your low back should feel strong and stable. Use a weight-lifting belt if you have one. You are not born knowing how to properly squat so have someone knowledgeable critique your technique. Do 3 sets of 10 reps, three times a week.

Note: Keep your weight evenly distributed over both feet. Tempo = 2 seconds down/2 seconds up, *or slower*.

Variations on the theme: I want you to really move *slowly* and increase the resistance (e.g. weight or heavier exercise bands) in Level C. To add more stress, hold your squat at the lowest point for as long as you can-and then some. You should feel a tremendous burn in your muscles by 15-30 seconds. As you get stronger, try to hold it longer and longer. This is where large gains in functional strength will be made. Obviously squats can be done with a barbell instead of dumbbells. This necessitates different technique and thus it is imperative that someone knowledgeable verifies your form and acts as a spotter. As you increase the weight, you should feel your muscles fatigue before finishing the 10 reps. This means it's time to get a personal trainer to help you with your program.



Level C - Exercise 2: Hamstring Curls, Single Leg with Stability Ball

Purpose: To increase strength of the hamstrings, hips, and back (the “core”).

Starting Position: Lying on the floor one heel propped on a chair or stability ball, the other leg straight up in the air, arms at your side.

Action: When using a stationary object like a chair, push down on the heel while bending at the knee and lifting the hips. When using a stability ball, get balanced and curl your heel towards your buttocks as far as you can. Return to the starting position in a controlled manner. Do not let your hips touch the ground between reps. Do 3 sets of 15 reps, *each leg*, three times a week.

Note: Using the stability ball takes some practice but it really challenges your balance, even while lying on your back. This is one of my favorite exercises as you can really feel it also working your core – the abdominal, back, and hip muscles.

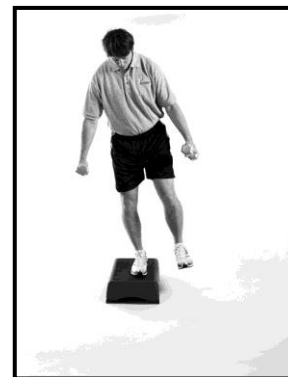
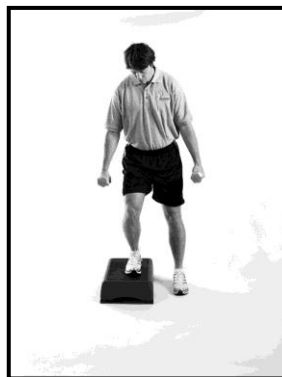


Level C - Exercise 3: Lateral Step-Up with Dumbbells

Purpose: To move powerfully side to side while challenging balance and coordination.

Starting Position: Standing next to a box or step, start with light (5lb.) dumbbells.

Action: Step laterally onto a 3 inch high box and shift your weight completely to that leg. You should step with a slow, strong motion. Feel a good co-contraction as you straighten the knee without fully locking it into extension. Lower your opposite foot back to the floor slowly i.e. do not just drop down. Do 3 sets of 10 reps, three times a week.



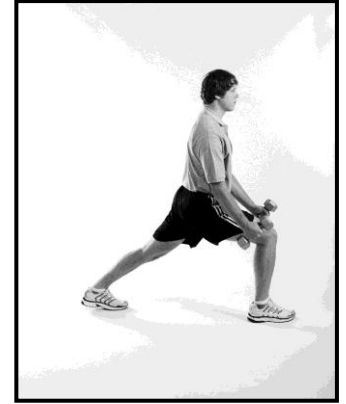
Note: The key is not to push off the floor when stepping up, and to lower slowly on the way down. Start with a 3 inch high box (a normal stair rise is 8 inches). Aim for a step of up to 10” and heavier dumbbells as you get stronger.

Level C - Exercise 4: Forward Lunges

Purpose: A dynamic variation on the squatting theme, lunges are another functional motion that are part of everyone's life. Life does not stay in two dimensions, and neither should your exercises.

Starting Position: Legs shoulder-width apart

Action: Step (lunge) forward onto one foot while keeping the back foot on the floor. The majority of your weight moves with the front foot. Push off the front foot and return to the starting position. Switch legs. Make small lunges at first, slowly progressing to a lunge where the knee is bent 90 degrees *and the foot is directly below the knee*. This can be a tough exercise so start with 2 sets of 6 reps, three times a week.



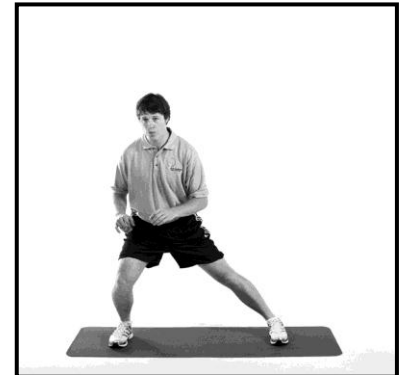
Note: Have someone knowledgeable watch and criticize your form. As you improve, add dumbbells, starting with 5 lbs. The biggest mistake people make is bending the knee so it is past the foot. Don't do this!

Level C - Exercise 5: Lateral Lunges

Purpose: To safely introduce coordinated lateral (side to side) motions keeping strong and balanced.

Starting Position: Legs shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, hands forward, and head up (the "ready position").

Action: Step (lunge) to the side putting the majority of your weight on the lunging leg. Maintain an erect upper body. Push off the lunging leg to return to the starting position. Switch sides. Begin with small steps. Just as the forward lunge, start slow with 2 sets of 6 reps, three times a week. Slow and strong!



Note: Lunge as far as you can while maintaining good posture. Feel strong as you move back to the starting position. Begin with no weight and then add in 5 lb. dumbbells and increase the weight as you get stronger. Watch yourself in a mirror and correct your form. You should look like an athlete.

Level C - Exercise 6: Single-Leg Bench Squats with Dumbbells

Purpose: Yet another variation on the squatting theme.

Starting Position: Standing in front of a bench or chair, put one leg up and leave the other leg slightly bent.

Action: While holding the dumbbells, perform a single leg squat while maintaining an upright position with a strong back. Tempo = 2 seconds down/2 seconds up or slower. Feel a good stretch in the hip of the “up” leg.

Note: Take a large step away from the bench to get into the starting position. Besides the TV, another trick to avoid rushing your exercises is to use a *metronome* (seriously- the one on the piano). I recommend 4 seconds for each rep (2 seconds up and 2 seconds back), but doing some reps slower is better still. The next variation would be to do 5 reps very slow, 5 reps slow, and 5 reps fast (but controlled!).

Yet another variation would be to change your body position by leaning forward like you are looking for something on the ground. This should be done with lighter weight than when your back is upright.

