

10 BEST BODY WEIGHT EXERCISES OF ALL-TIME

+4

**BONUS
EXERCISES!**



Published by

CRITICAL BENCH.com

Chris Wilson, CPT, RKC, CSN

LEGAL STUFF

© 2022 & Beyond, Critical Bench, Inc.
All Rights Reserved. International Copyright
www.CriticalBench.com

This publication is fully copyrighted and does not come with giveaway or resale rights. You may not sell or redistribute this report. It is reserved solely for paid members of CriticalBench.com. Copyright and illegal distribution violations will be prosecuted. This document has been watermarked with a digital GPS identification tag.



NOTICE

The information presented is not intended for the treatment or prevention of disease, nor a substitute for medical treatment, nor as an alternative to medical advice.

This publication is presented for information purposes, to increase the public knowledge of developments in the field of strength and conditioning. The program outlined herein should not be adopted without a consultation with your health professional.

Use of the information provided is at the sole choice and risk of the reader. You must get your physician's approval before beginning this or any other exercise program.

10 BEST BODY WEIGHT EXERCISES OF ALL-TIME



By Chris Wilson, CPT, RKC, CSN

10 BEST BODY WEIGHT EXERCISES OF ALL-TIME

Could a guy on a deserted island get buff? Is that even possible without weights?

Most powerlifters and bodybuilders would argue that ONLY free weights can deliver ultimate muscle mass and strength. Frankly, it's hard to disagree with that assessment.



However, contrary to that opinion, there are several factors that indicate that muscles can come from body weight movements alone without the need for heavy equipment.

While attaining a monster 1RM is a remarkable measure of overall strength and muscularity, we must also remember that men hundreds of years ago developed large, powerful muscles without stepping foot into the gym. They did so by living a life of survival. A life that required them to be strong in many different ways in order to hunt, build shelter and defend themselves from animals (or other people).

That's not to say free weights aren't awesome and highly encouraged. Bang those plates around gentlemen and spend plenty of time doing compound exercises that work the entire muscular system.

But remember that the body can be its own BEST free weight. And sometimes that kind of resistance training can provide all the stimulus we need to gain muscle mass, burn calories, lose body fat and do so without as much concern for injury and tissue damage.

Take for example the Pull-up. It not only works nearly every muscle in the upper

body but it provides maximal response due to the nature of the exercise. The body is completely suspended forcing the laws of physics to work their magic against you.

The pull-up can mesmerize people and for that reason, you see plenty of guys NOT doing them. For men who are lean and have a low body weight, they are capable of astonishing things on a pull-up bar. This is precisely why the military uses it as one of their most important measures of strength and conditioning. Even if you're strong, you may only get 3 or 4 reps due to your body weight.

For the guy on the deserted island, doing pull-ups in order to survive may be a daily requirement. By the way, this island came equipped with many coconut palm trees for him to climb. His need to be not only good but great at climbing and pulling his body up could be a life or death situation. A guy like this would have very large back muscles along with superior strength in his arms and that's just one exercise.

Before diving into the *10 BEST Body Weight Exercises of All-Time*, we should first understand a few key concepts that make body weight training so effective.

#1 Manipulation of Time Under Tension

#2 Speed

#3 Body Position and Placement

Now, there are other variables that can determine the “intensity” and thoroughness of your training but let's focus on these three common ones.

Time Under Tension or (TUT) is simply the amount of time you load your muscles during an exercise. A body weight squat can take 3 seconds to complete or 10 seconds depending on how slowly you perform a repetition.

Something as simple as pausing at the bottom of the exercise for 5 seconds can make a set of 10 reps significantly harder and much more effective. This principle can be implemented in so many capacities and there are so many examples that could be mentioned to demonstrate how valuable a tool this is but for now we will stick to the squat example.

The **Speed** in which we perform our body weight exercises also determines quite a bit about our body's response to the exercise. When we do a push-up slow and controlled, we recruit a certain amount of muscle tissue (fibers) to help us move through the exercise. However, if we go from doing a standard push-up to something a bit more explosive like a clap push-up, the response is different.

The clap push-up is one of many variations of the household gem that has measured a man's strength for generations. When performing a clap push-up, the body must accelerate and decelerate along with providing enough explosive force to lift the body high enough to allow for the hands to come together and then go back into the original push-up position. Because of that additional element, we have forced ourselves to do the exercise faster which recruited more muscle fibers to get the job done.

It's no different than if you had to build a house in 3 months or in 3 weeks. The **ONLY** thing that would change would be the number of people helping to complete the task. A group of 10 men with the right skill level may be able to complete a home in 3 months-time whereas a workforce of 30 men may be able to complete the same task in only 3 weeks. You **RECRUITED** more people to get the job done faster.

The body is no different and this concept goes for any exercise done faster and more explosively. The element of speed is a very powerful strength tool.

Lastly, **Body Position and Placement** can also provide effective ways of building muscle and strength. Let's look at the basic crunch exercise for the abdominals as one example. The standard crunching motion is simply flexing the spine and demanding the abdominal wall to contract raising the upper body (shoulder blades) off the floor.



Taking that same exercise and adding in a twist as you near the top of the movement can make a basic exercise more challenging. Why? Because you've added a dimension of rotation which requires more muscle to be stimulated which equals more work for the body. This goes back to muscle recruitment.

The more muscle we recruit at one time, the more effective and powerful we become. This also helps to fatigue our bodies faster which often times is the intended goal with a workout program.

One more example to help with the placement element. When doing a plank exercise in a prone position with arms extended (like the start of a push-up) we must fire several muscle groups to maintain good posture. The level of muscle contraction for this would be considered low to medium for such an exercise. But, if you removed one point of contact with the floor, the level of intensity would drastically increase causing the body to respond differently.

With the right arm now extended straight out overhead (as if to shake hands with someone) you have now forced the legs, abs, planted arm, chest, back and shoulder muscles to work a lot harder. The once easy to hold 4-point plank has now become a 3-point plank causing the muscles to react with stronger, tighter contractions and the overall workload to improve considerably.

NOTE: There are MANY amazing body weight exercises that were deserving of being on this list but the ones selected were hand-picked based on many strength variables and their ability to fully develop the muscles of the body.



THE TOP 10 BODY WEIGHT EXERCISES OF ALL-TIME

(listed from 10-1)



NOTE: To see a Video Demonstration of ALL the Exercises in this Report,

[CLICK HERE](#)

#10 - MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS



The mountain climber has become a very popular exercise in recent years for its effectiveness at fatiguing the core muscles and raising the heart rate quickly. Starting position for this exercise appears as a push-up but instead of moving the body up and down, you basically run in place. The key to doing this correctly is to really pull the knees towards the chest and move with speed.

If done properly, this is an exercise that only last for 20 seconds or so with quality form. Not only are the muscles of the abdominal wall working hard but so are the shoulders, triceps and all the muscles of the leg. This exercise can be implemented with nearly any training program to help with conditioning, core strength and calorie burning.

#9 - HANGING LEG RAISE

This exercise made the top ten for a few reasons. Just hanging from a bar has its merits. The muscles of the arms and back are hard at work which can also greatly improve shoulder strength. While hanging under control, you must raise your legs to form an L shape with your body. Pausing at the top briefly is suggested to keep from swaying and to demonstrate control over the muscles versus swinging them upward and dropping them down under poor control.

Working the abdominals in this manner is far more effective than most floor based exercises and is significantly more intense. Therefore, doing an overabundance of reps is unnecessary and impossible for most.

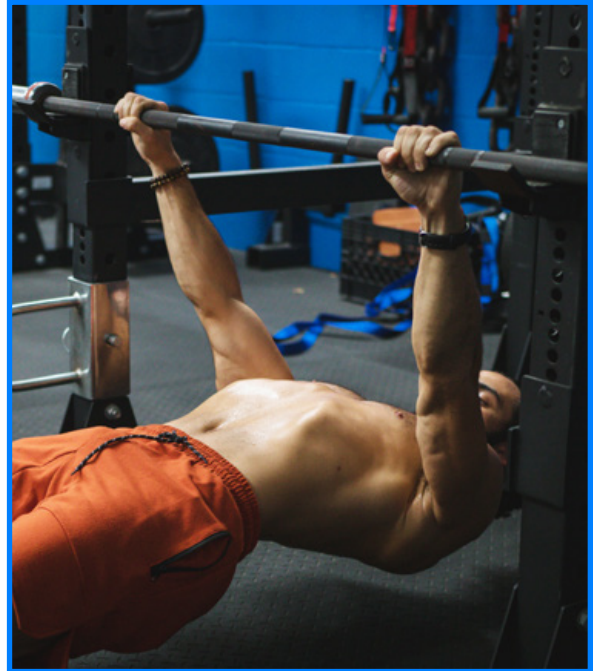


#8 - INVERTED ROWS

Also called Horizontal Rows by some, this exercise does a phenomenal job of working all of the back muscles along with the biceps and forearms. Secondly, the body must maintain a perfect plank position the entire time so muscles in the abs and legs are also engaged. The key is to position the body below a secure bar and hang from it with your feet (heels) placed on the floor. To begin, it is best to start with approximately a 45 degree angle which can be modified as you gain strength.

While not as impressive as the pull-up, the inverted row does a very good job of strengthening the upper, mid and lower back muscles and allows for various hand grips.

This movement would be considered the opposite or antagonist of the push-up making it extremely important in balancing the posterior strength many people lack. As you improve your strength with this exercise, you can decrease the angle in which you hang below the bar. The closer you are to the floor, the harder it becomes.

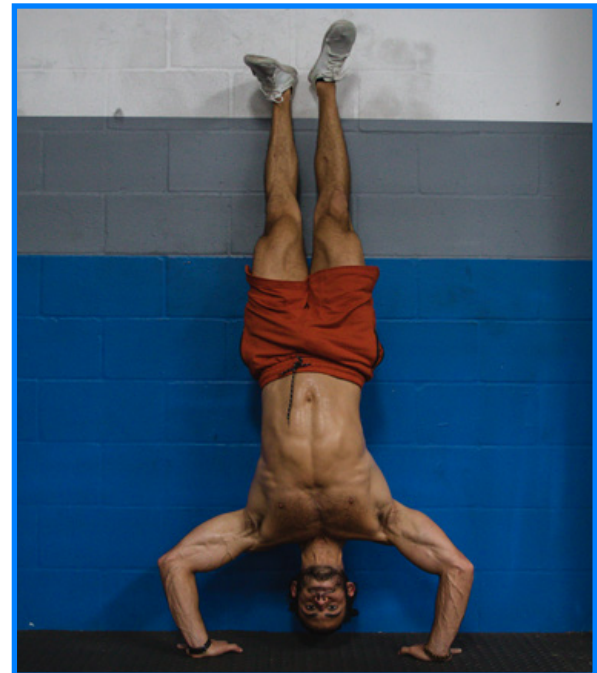


#7 - HANDSTAND PUSH-UPS

A far more challenging exercise but because of its effectiveness, it had to crack the top ten. This movement is extremely difficult for most and not even possible for some. Just the act of maintaining a handstand position against a wall has plenty of value and is the best way to start in the progression.

Once you can comfortably get into and hold a handstand position for 20-30 seconds at a time, it is recommended you begin attempting some quarter reps. Again, this exercise can be very intense for people and safety is of utmost importance. Once you can complete 5 or more quarter reps in successive sets, you can begin to drop yourself lower to the floor. Another very important element to this exercise is body position and placement.

When setting up, place your hands about 8-10 inches from the wall and just outside of shoulder width to provide a sturdy foundation. Kick yourself up and spread the feet apart some (if necessary) with your heels acting as guides that move up and down the wall to help keep you inverted. The body must remain tight and motionless except of course for the movement of the arms.



#6 - PISTOL SQUATS

Another hardcore exercise that many fitness guys and gals cannot do, at least all the way. And like other challenging exercises, there are progressions with this exercise that are best to begin with. A true pistol squat is done on one leg and means lowering yourself as far down as a traditional squat on one leg or even slightly lower based on increased range of motion.

When at the bottom, one leg is pointed straight out in front of you while the planted leg or working leg is completely bent holding all of your weight. From there, you must push all the way up to standing position and repeat.

The best way to start with an exercise as difficult as this is to start from a bench so that you have something below you that helps you to work the top portion of the movement where you're strongest. As you gain some strength, you can place both legs together, lower down into the bottom position on both legs and when down in the bottom of your squat, attempt to pick up one foot and form the pistol position. This can be done holding on to something sturdy like a power rack or door frame.

You can even hold a light dumbbell (20 lbs) out in front of you that acts as a counterbalance and prevents you from falling over backwards. This is highly recommended. Practice picking each foot up and holding the pistol on each side as many times as you can. With this exercise, practice, practice, practice and work through the progressions to see results.

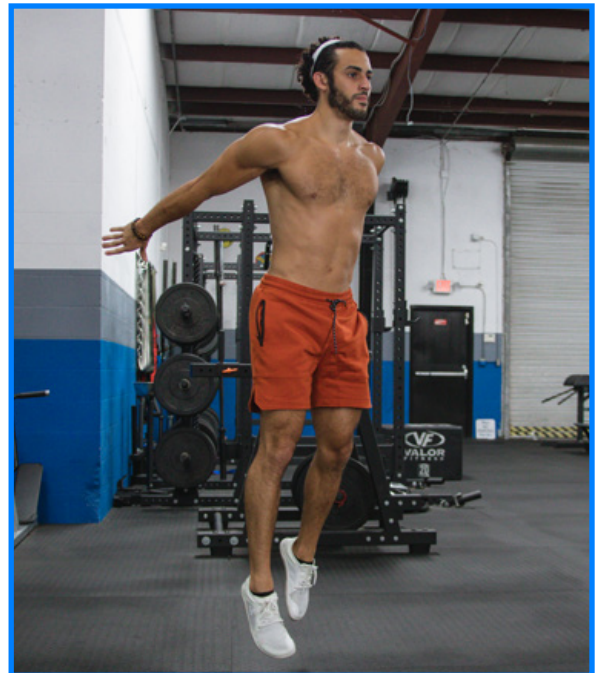
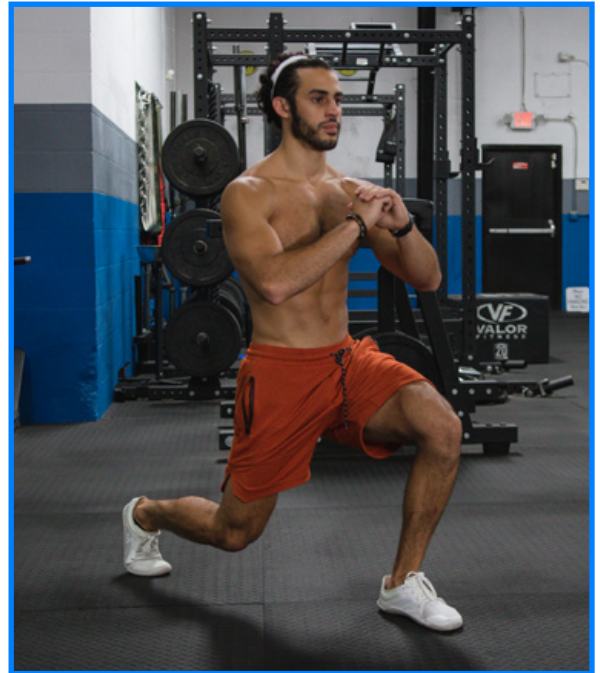


#5 - JUMP LUNGES

A truly helpful exercise for athletes to become more explosive and improve balance. This is the first truly explosive movement that requires a certain amount of speed to facilitate power. The other exercises require strength and control but jumping requires you to move fast and that's a good thing. Speed is where power comes from. You don't see Olympic lifters doing a Clean & Jerk slowly, do you?

The jump lunge helps work on foot placement, acceleration (pushing upward) and deceleration (coming back down). It demands you drive hard through your front leg to explode off the ground before switching legs and repeating right away with the other leg in front. To get good at this exercise, get good at basic lunge variations first.

Once your body has learned how to maintain a long spine and properly engage the leg muscles and gluteal group, you can proceed to jumping. This would be another exercise where fatigue and muscular failure play a role around the 20 second mark. Exercises that are more explosive in nature tend to tax your system more and have a shelf life of 20-30 seconds before having to rest when form breaks down.



#4 - BURPEES

A CrossFit favorite but this exercise has become popular (and hated) for good reason. The burpee blends several movements together to create the perfect storm of exercise. Starting from a standing position, you must then drop down to a push-up position kicking your legs out. Proceed by completing one full push-up but as you “pop” off the floor, you must then pull your legs back in so that you may again stand up and jump into the air.

All of this happens very quickly and only with some practice do you become efficient at this movement. For a beginner, there is a lot of wasted energy making this exercise even harder than it has to be. The key is to hip hinge well and try to keep the legs extended as much as possible. The more bent you are throughout the process, the more you’re loading and fatiguing the leg muscles and the legs drive this exercise. Once they hit failure, your burpees are done.



#3 - SPIDERMAN PUSH-UPS



The standard push-up could certainly have been placed at #3 but we decided to add an extra element to the legendary exercise to make it even better. The elbow to knee push-up or 'Spiderman' push-up provides you with increased core stabilization, body control and reduces points of contact making the exercise far more challenging than the basic movement.

Assume a standard push-up position and as you lower yourself to the floor, pick up one leg and bring the knee to the elbow as you near the floor. As you press back to start position, the leg also returns to its original position and you repeat with the other side.

Beyond the chest, shoulders and arms, the legs and abdominals have become even more strained to hold your body from tipping or falling over. This forces a more powerful contraction in the core as well as the glutes and quads making this version of the push-up superior and substantially harder.

#2 - PULL-UPS & DIPS

(ladies and gentlemen, we have a tie)

It was a coin flip for the top 3 contenders on this list. The pull-up and the dip by all accounts can be argued to be the greatest, most effective upper body exercises of all-time and we wouldn't disagree. But, we still put them TIED for second place.

The pull-up, as stated earlier, is the single best exercise for the muscles of the back and arms due to its high level of intensity. The total suspension of the body makes this movement the ultimate body weight exercise and recruits more muscle fibers than most weighted back exercises like dumbbell rows or low cable rows.

There are many variations of the pull-up and because most people have a hard time with just a few pull-ups, it is wise for them to use an assisted machine or do lat pulldowns to supplement this movement. This allows them to work the muscles similarly and is highly recommended for those people just starting out.

But there are also some things you can do with the standard pull-up to improve your ability. Since we are stronger eccentrically (that would be the negative portion of a rep), we can use that portion of the exercise to target the muscles of the back and arms. Simply grab the bar overhead and jump up as you pull yourself to the bar. If you need to stand on something like a bench or prop of some kind, go ahead. When at the top of the exercise, lock in your position and very slowly lower yourself



back down until your arms are straight again. That equals one rep.

Do this for 4-6 repetitions and count to 6 or 8 seconds each time you lower yourself down. When you are able to do multiple sets of negative pull-ups, you may just be ready to start adding in some regular sets of 3 or so reps.

As far as the body weight dip, this too is an exercise that fully suspends the body making it extremely challenging and highly valued in the gym much like the pull-up. Even with all of the free weights around at a commercial gym, you will see many guys doing dip variations on bars and benches. This exercise targets the chest muscles, shoulders and triceps making it a very manly exercise to get good at and it certainly helps guys improve their pressing ability.

Performing dips on parallel bars is ideal but doing them between benches is still very effective at building muscle and strength. The dip between benches does more to isolate the triceps (based mostly on body and arm position) while the traditional dip between bars recruits more of the chest and shoulder muscles more making it a more complete body weight exercise.

The bench would be a good place to begin this exercise but of course there are assisted dip machines available in many gym settings so that you may work with only a percentage of your body weight.

The mechanics of the dip are simple, with your arms fully extended supporting your body weight, bend the arm under control until your elbows reach a 90



degree bend. Once you've achieved maximum range of motion, press the body back upwards until the arm fully extends again. This movement can be done effectively at all rep ranges depending on your level.

Again, it cannot be stated enough how vital these two body weight strength movements are. The Pull-up and the Dip together stimulate all of the upper body muscles and give you the true essence of 'push-pull' providing the ultimate balance of strength. Now that we've concluded what the two "runner-up" exercises are, it's time to unveil the KING of all body weight exercises!

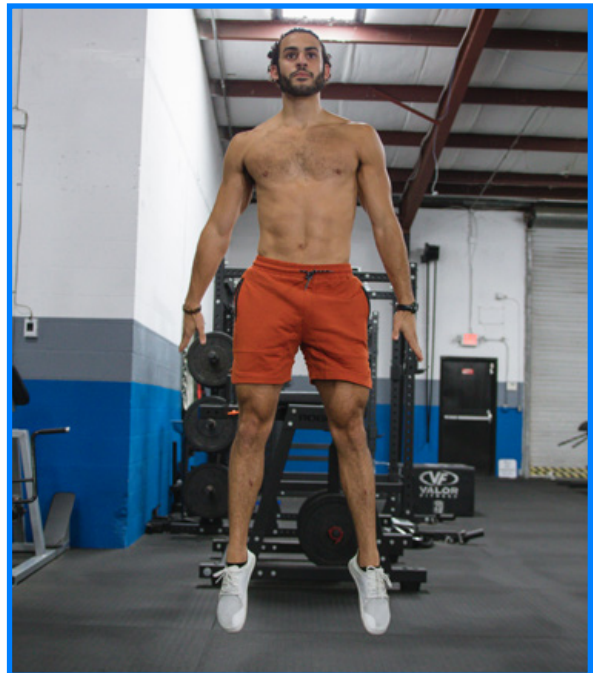
#1 - JUMP SQUATS

The squat HAD to be the #1 exercise. The legs are the strongest most important muscles we have on our body. And since the squat and deadlift are considered the two most important weighted exercises in the world, we had to follow suit.

But again, we had to make this exercise even better by going with the more explosive version of it.

The jump squat does everything the standard squat does for you but with more force and speed. The key is to assume the proper athletic position. The athletic stance is behind all sports moves because it puts the body into the strongest possible position for doing work. You will notice the similar “ready” position from sport to sport: a shortstop in baseball, a tennis player, a linebacker in football, a goalie in hockey to name just a few. All of these athletes are preparing to move in any direction with power and speed. There is no better position for maximal output than the ready position or semi-squat position.

To do them properly, first drop down as low as you can in squat position. You have in a sense just compressed the “spring.” What happens when a coil or spring gets compressed? It builds up tension (energy) that eventually must be released. Blasting upward into the air helps to recruit even more muscle fibers and coming down demands your body to absorb



that energy which requires far more work than a typical squat. A perfect display of massive acceleration and deceleration that gets repeated over and over again.

This movement works all the muscles of the legs (and the abdominal wall) and is another example of an exercise that takes only seconds to cause muscular failure. After 20-30 seconds of the jump squat (if done properly), your legs are exhausted and in need of recovery time. In terms of calorie burning, strength producing and muscle building, there is no better body weight exercise on the planet!

**PLUS 4
BONUS
BODY WEIGHT
EXERCISES**
(Advanced Strength Training)

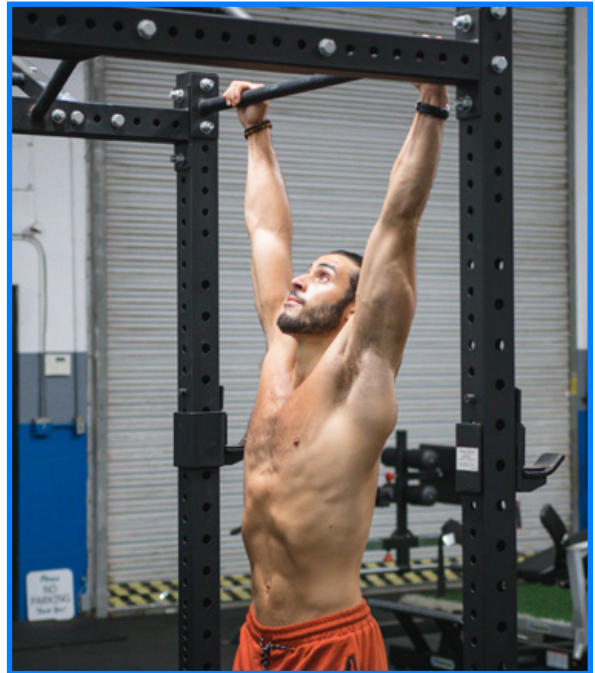
DIAMOND PUSH-UPS

Again, this is just a variation of the standard push-up with a much smaller foundation to push from. The hands go side by side with the fingers and thumbs forming a diamond underneath the chest. Lower yourself to the ground like a basic push-up while keeping the elbows tight to the body emphasizing the triceps. This looks very similar to a close grip bench press but with your body weight and is phenomenal at increasing arm strength.



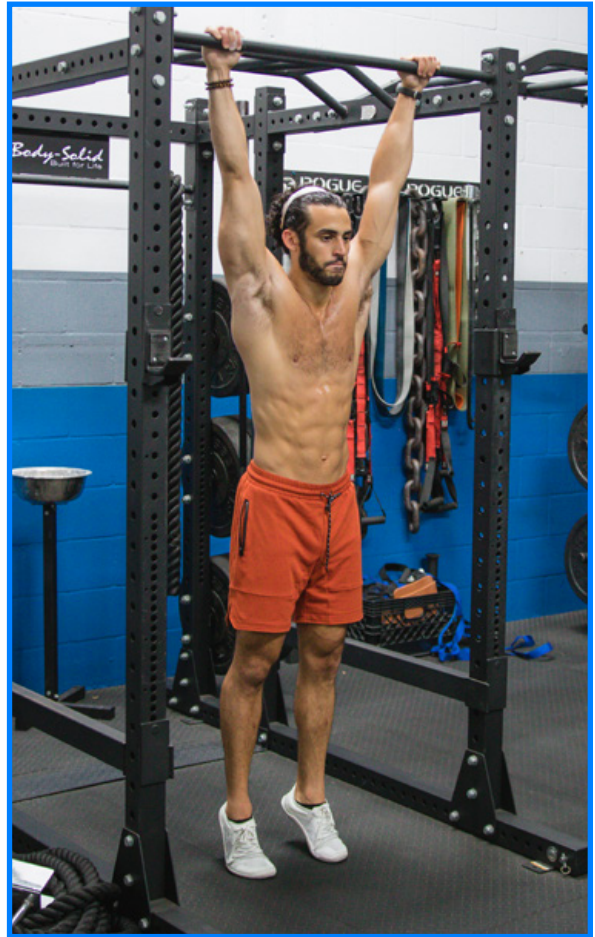
MUSCLE-UPS

A perfect combination of the pull-up and dip in one movement. This exercise takes serious practice but for those that get efficient at them, they demonstrate extreme upper body strength and impressive body control. Technique does play a key role in all exercises but this particular movement requires significant repetition. Hang beneath the bar or rings like you would for a regular pull-up and as you reach the top of the exercise with a certain amount of speed, you proceed to press downward on the bar/rings and push yourself upward over the top fully extending your arms.



TOES TO BAR

This of course is just the “harder” version of the Hanging Leg Raise but demonstrates even more core strength and body control when done properly. The key to this movement is to fire the intended muscles (the abdominals) while not swinging or using momentum which is super difficult for most. The legs remain extended and the toes reach to the bar between the hands prior to lowering them under total control to floor.



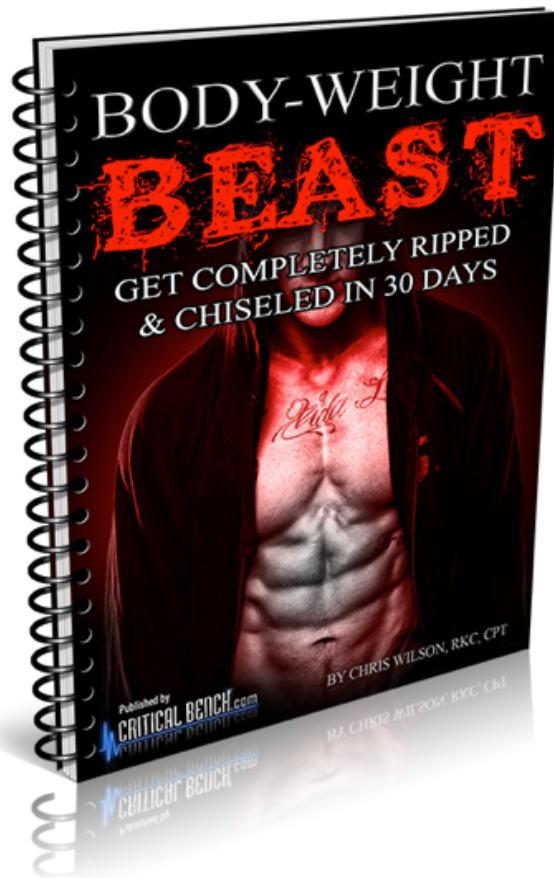
DRAGON FLAGS

Remember that scene in Rocky IV when he's training to fight Ivan Drago...yeah, that one where Sly's abs look like they're about to pop through the skin. A dragon flag puts as much tension on the abdominal wall and lower back as possible. This is a very controlled movement requiring lots of practice and a very high level of core strength. The upper back/shoulder blades remain on the bench while the rest of the body is pulled up vertically and lowered back down just hovering above the bench.



Now that we've named the
10 BEST Body Weight Exercises of All-Time
(plus 4 BONUS exercises),
don't you want to know HOW to mix all of these
amazing exercises together?

CLICK HERE to
Become a Body-Weight BEAST in 30 Days!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

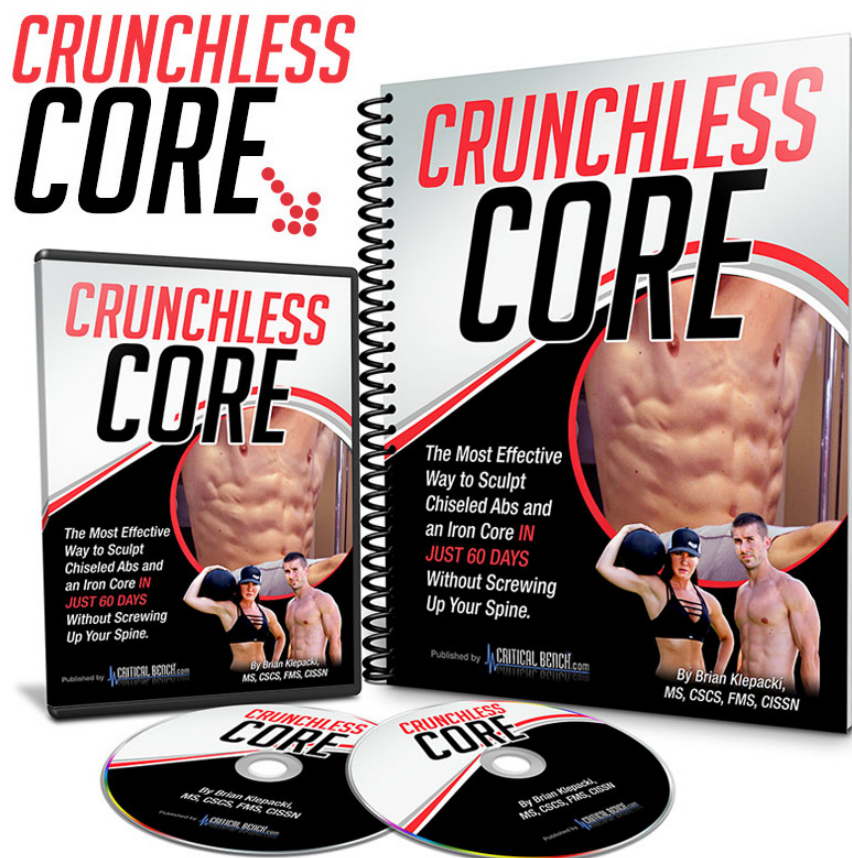
Chris Wilson is a lifelong fitness and health advocate. With nearly 25 years of experience in the fitness industry, Chris has worked alongside and learned from leaders in the industry such as Charles Poliquin, mentor and friend Ben Prentiss, 3-time World Champion Powerlifter Lloyd Weinstein, 4x Mr. Olympia Jay Cutler, IFBB Pros Darrem Charles, Ben Pakulski, John Hansen, BIG Aaron Reed and his lifelong friend and Owner of Critical Bench, Mike Westerdal.



Chris is a strength coach and VP of Content at Critical Bench Publishing. He is also a Certified Personal Trainer (NASM), Specialist in Sports Nutrition (ISSA), Certified Balance and Stability Instructor (ASFA) and a Certified Kettlebell Instructor (RKC). Chris oversees the Strong By Design Podcast Show as well as the Critical Bench YouTube channels with over 1 Million subscribers and over 4,000 videos.

He resides in Clearwater Florida with his wife of 16 years Samantha and their beautiful children Kellan and Camryn. His passions outside of work... he loves the Lord, college and pro football, coaching youth baseball, dogs and cats, traveling with his family, family game time and movie night and listening to podcasts, audiobooks and loud music while driving to work :)

THE **SAFEST**, MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO **SCULPT CHISELED ABS** AND DEVELOP AN IRON CORE IN JUST **60 DAYS** WITHOUT SCREWING UP YOUR SPINE.



[HTTP://CRUNCHLESS6PACK.COM/](http://crunchless6pack.com/)

“Got Questions???”

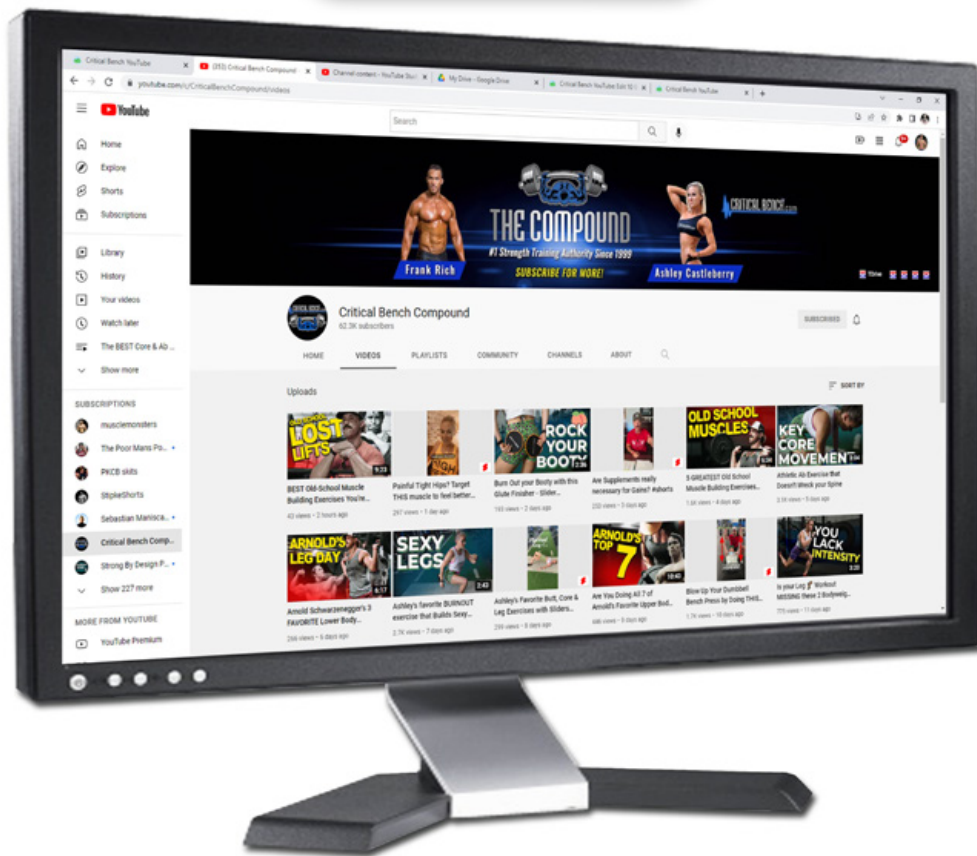
Check Out our CriticalBench Fan Page for More Strength & Health Insights and Facebook LIVE Videos Every Week!



www.facebook.com/criticalbench

For More Strength & Health Tips

Subscribe



To The Critical Bench Compound

You **Tube** Channel **FREE**

<https://www.youtube.com/gymexercises>