

# PUSHUPS & PISTOLS

## APRIL CHALLENGE

### Pushups and Pistols

#### *April 2018 Challenge*

For this Challenge, here is the [instructional playlist](#).

#### Day 1 – Assessment

For the pushup portion of this challenge, we need to figure out your strength level – that'll determine what you'll do next. It's like a Choose Your Own Adventure story, but with more soreness in your chest and triceps!

Establish Starting Point

#### What is considered correct execution for a pushup?

- Must maintain a straight line between the head, hips and heels at all times
- Chest or chin must make contact with the floor (or bar if using an elevated pushup to begin)
- Must be pressed to full extension of the arm

Find the point where you are able to do 10 correctly-executed pushups.

- *If you are unable to do 10 pushups with hands on the floor, use Section A (see below)*
- *If you can do 10 pushups with hands on the floor, skip Section A and go to Section B (bottom of page 2)*

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#### Section A – If you CANNOT do a pushup on Day 1, start here

#### Weeks 1 and 2 – complete routine 2-3 times per week

- A) Eccentric pushup – find a point that's about 6" below where you can do your 10 pushups – this is the distance between pegs of the squat rack if you're doing this at AST. You'll be lowering yourself from arms' length to the bottom of the pushup over 20 seconds, then pushing back to the top again.

*4 sets of 2-4 reps, resting 60 seconds between sets. If you are able to perform 4 sets of 4 reps, move yourself closer to the floor the next time you do this workout*

- B) Pushup to failure – go back to the spot where you can do your 10 good pushups, and do one all-out set to failure. You may pause at the top of each pushup, but you may not take your hands off of the bar or let your hips come out of alignment with your head and heels.

***1 set to failure, trying to beat your repetitions each time you do this workout***

- C) Power Plank – this is set up just like a plank, but the goal is to make it as hard as possible so you can't hold it for more than 30 seconds at a time. Feet and heels should be together with your chest over your elbows. Try to pull your elbows and toes toward each other to contract your abs as hard as you possibly can – think of how you would react if somebody had to stand on your lower back while you did these.

***3 sets to failure resting only 30 seconds. If you can hold it for more than 30 seconds, squeeze harder next time!***

### **Weeks 3 and 4 – complete routine 3 times per week**

- A) Close grip pushup – do these at the same position you finished your eccentric pushups from weeks 1 and 2. Put your hands about 2 inches inside your shoulders. You're going to come all the way down, touch the bar LIGHTLY with your chest, count to 2, and press back up again. DON'T RELAX WHILE YOU HOLD IT – you want to just BARELY touch the bar and stay in that same position while you hold it.

***4 sets of 2-4 reps, resting 60 seconds between sets. If you are able to perform 4 sets of 4 reps, move yourself closer to the floor the next time you do this workout***

- B) Pushup to failure – do these at a lower point than you did during weeks 1 and 2. Again, you're doing one all-out set to failure, and again, you can pause at the top but don't come out of a straight line while you're resting. Go until you can't physically push yourself up anymore.

***1 set to failure, trying to beat your repetitions each time you do this workout***

- C) Stir the Pot – do 3 sets on these, trying to get at least 6 reps every time. Think about pushing yourself away from the ball as you do the movement or you'll put too much stress on your shoulder joint. Start by making small circles, and then make them bigger as you work your reps up.

***3 sets to failure, focusing on core control. Try to beat your reps on the first set each week and keep 30 second rest periods***

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### **Section B – if you CAN do a pushup on Day 1, then you are the right place, start here!**

Each week you're going to get a new pushup variation to progress on, and we'll use the same set and rep structure each week, increasing the difficulty of each pushup variation as we go.

Aim to do this 2-3 days per week, rotating each workout between the A and B workouts. For example, if you did this 3 days per week on a Monday/Wednesday/Friday rotation, it would look like this:

Week 1 – Monday A, Wednesday B, Friday A

Week 2 – Monday B, Wednesday A, Friday B

Week 3 – Monday A, Wednesday B, Friday A

Week 4 – Monday B, Wednesday A, Friday B

#### **Workout A:**

- A) Pushup Variation (see page 4) – whatever the pushup variation, start by performing 8 sets of 3 with it, using an 8-second negative and lifting as fast as you can. If you can't get all of the reps, do as many as you can.

***8 sets of 3 reps with an 8-second negative. Rest 60 seconds between sets.***

- B) Hanging Leg Raise – draw your legs up as high as you can on each rep without swinging. Switch to a bent-knee leg raise if you can't get all of your reps.

***3 sets of 8-12 reps with a 60 second rest. Go as slow as you can on the way down, and no swinging!***

- C) Stir the Pot - Think about pushing yourself away from the ball as you do the movement or you'll put too much stress on your shoulder joint. Start by making small circles, and then make them bigger as you work your reps up.

***Do one set, aiming to get as many reps as you can. Or, set a stopwatch and try to hold it longer every week.***

#### **Workout B:**

- A) Pushup Variation (see page 4) – whatever the pushup variation, do 2 sets to failure with it. Rest 90 seconds between each attempt – you want to regain as much strength as you can for the second time around.

***2 sets to failure, resting 90 seconds.***

- B) Dumbbell External Rotation – strong and stable shoulders are a must for any pressing exercise, pushups included. Do 3 sets of 8 reps, lowering slowly over 4 seconds. Do not try to go too heavy too soon on these – every rep should be done strictly. You don't want to get overzealous when it comes to your rotator cuff muscles!

***3 sets of 8 reps, resting 30-60 seconds after you've done both sides. Guys should try starting with an 8-10lb dumbbell, women may want to start with 4-6lbs to get a feel for the difficulty.***

- C) TRX Tricep Extensions – The TRX works great because it forces you to maintain a straight line in your body just like you do for pushups. Lower down slowly so that your hands come right beside your head, then extend up using just your triceps – the only movement should be happening at your elbow joint.

*3 sets of 12-15 reps, squeezing hard for a second at the top of each rep. Rest 60 seconds between sets.*

***THESE ARE THE PUSHUPS VARIATIONS YOU NEED TO USE BETWEEN WEEKS 1-4***

### **Week 1 – Stretch Pushups**

The stretch pushup increases the range of motion from a traditional pushup, allowing your chest to go several inches lower than if you were to leave the hands on the floor. Just like squatting several inches lower, that extra range of motion will make it a lot tougher!

### **Week 2 – Dips**

While it's not a "pushup" in the traditional sense, the dip is an awesome bodyweight exercise. Besides, part of the coaching description for the dip includes the phrase "...then, push yourself up." Push. Up. PUSHUP!

### **Week 3 – Pseudo Planche Pushups**

One of two gymnastics-inspired pushup variations, this one ramps up the need for lots of core strength, and also puts your chest and triceps at a disadvantage in leverage, making 2 or 3 reps of these done well an extremely challenging task.

### **Week 4 – Pseudo Maltese Pushups**

One of the hardest pushup variations I've ever done – last week will feel easy compared to how these are going to feel.

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## **Pistol Squats**

Like the pushup, there are options depending on whether or not you can do a full range pistol squat.

What makes a full range pistol squat?

- The non-working leg stays extended out in front of you the entire time and does not touch the floor
- The hands are held extended straight out in front of your chest
- Your glutes and hamstrings make contact with the calf at the bottom, and you're able to come to a complete stop

The pistol squat should be done without any significant loss of balance, and NO BOUNCING AT THE BOTTOM!

- *If you are unable to do one full pistol squat, start with Section A (page 5-6)*
- *If you can do a full pistol squat, skip Section A and go straight to Section B (page 7)*

## Pistol Squat Progressions

### Section A – If you CANNOT do a full pistol squat on Day 1, start here

Weeks 1 and 2 – do each workout once per week

\*Note: Any time you successfully complete the pistol squat portion of the workout, try to squat to a lower box the following workout. Keep progressing lower and lower throughout the first two weeks

#### Workout A

- A) Pistol squat to box – find the lowest height that you can squat onto while performing the pistol squat motion. The same rules apply as the regular pistol squat – no bouncing, a full stop, and the non-working leg should stay extended out in front of you without touching the floor.

*5 sets of 5 reps on each leg, resting 60 seconds in between sets.*

- B) Barbell hip thrust – getting low into a pistol squat requires a lot of glute power so they'll be getting trained quite a bit through this. Come to a dead stop at the bottom of each rep and come up all the way so that the bar ends up at about knee level.

*2 sets of 20 reps, resting 90 seconds in between sets. You should feel like you need the full rest before you can go again so make sure you use a challenging weight.*

#### Workout B

- A) Weighted pistol squat to box – hold a lighter weight to your chest – 10-15lbs goes a long way – and do one set to failure, aiming for at least 10 reps.

*1 set of at least 10 reps, resting about 30 seconds between each leg.*

- B) Barbell Glute Bridge – you should be able to go a lot heavier on these than the hip thrust since the range of motion is shorter and the reps are a lot lower. Come to a dead stop at the bottom of each rep and use your glutes, not your lower back.

*5 sets of 5 reps, resting 90 seconds between sets.*

#### Workout C

- A) Goblet Squat – no pistol squats today, but try to squat to a good depth, aiming for about 1-2" lower than you would usually squat. No heel elevation, just use a shoulder-width or so stance.

*Do a Tabata with a challenging weight (35-45lbs for women, 55-65lbs for men would be a very strong weight to use, so adjust based on your strength). Do 8 rounds of 20 seconds, resting for only 10 seconds between rounds. The last few rounds should be extremely tough and you should only be getting a couple of reps on those last rounds.*

*That's it – nothing else today!*

**Weeks 3-4 – do each workout once per week**

\*Note: try to lower your box height again or start trying to see if you can do a bodyweight pistol yet

### **Workout A**

A) Pistol squat to box – add 5lbs or so to the weight you were holding during weeks 1-2 if you can. Hopefully by now you're starting to use a lower box than you started with.

*3 sets of 5 reps on each leg, resting 60 seconds in between sets.*

B) Barbell hip thrust – Use the same weight you did 20 reps with the first 2 weeks, and do 20 again on the first set.

*1 rest-pause set totaling 50 reps. You should get 20 on the first attempt, then rest 30 seconds and go again, and keep repeating until you get to 50.*

### **Workout B**

A) Supported pistol squat – hold onto a squat rack with one hand, and use as little help from your hand as possible on the way down and up.

*10 total reps per leg, alternating legs after each rep. Rest 20-30 seconds every few reps as needed.*

B) Barbell Glute Bridge – these will stay the same as the first two weeks – just keep working your weight up as heavy as you can.

*5 sets of 5 reps, resting 90 seconds between sets.*

### **Workout C**

A) Pistol squat to a box – use the same height you're using on Workout A, and try to get a total of 25 reps per leg with no weight. Just alternate back and forth every time you fail with one leg.

*25 total reps, looking something like this: 10 reps left leg, then 10 right leg, then 8 left leg, then 8 right leg, then 4 left, 4 right, 3 left, 3 right. Done.*

*That's it – nothing else today!*

## **Section B – if you CAN do a full pistol squat on Day 1, start here**

If you can do a pistol squat, there are going to be three workout options, and you'll aim to train them 2-3 days per week. Whenever you successfully complete a workout, try holding a small weight to your chest the next time you do it (start with 5lbs and go up 5lbs at a time).

### **Workout A**

A) Pistol Squat Tabata – make sure every rep is full range of motion!

*Do 20 seconds on the left leg, rest 10 seconds, then do 20 seconds on the right leg, rest 10 seconds, and keep repeating for a total of 8 rounds and lasting 4 minutes. You'll be doing 2 full Tabatas like this, so rest 2 minutes after you complete the first one.*

### **Workout B**

A) 20 Rep Total – the name says pretty much everything you need to know.

*Try to get 20 reps on each leg as fast as possible and keep track of your time. If it takes you less than 8 minutes to get 20 reps on both legs, add weight the next time you do it.*

### **Workout C**

A) Kettlebell Pistol Squat to box – use a box that allows you to squat to parallel with the floor since the weight here will be a little higher. You'll hold a kettlebell by the handle in the rack position at the chest with just one hand (think about how you would hold it if you were going to press it overhead), and hold the opposite leg straight out while you squat to the box.

*Do 5 sets of 5, resting 60 seconds between legs*