

Get in Shape with Little or No Gear

One common barrier for people who want to get fit is a lack of money for gyms and/or home equipment. Well, if this is what is stopping you, you're in luck. It takes no equipment to get a great workout and get in shape, and with one or two pieces of simple equipment, you can turn that great workout into a fantastic one. Plus, since little or no equipment is required, you can work out at home, or wherever you are and whenever it's convenient for you.

Bodyweight Exercises

Using just your bodyweight, you can do a large number of challenging exercises. If you add just one or two pieces of equipment: a dumbbell, a kettlebell, a jump rope, a medicine ball, or a chin-up bar, for example, you can increase the challenge even more.

Some benefits of bodyweight exercises include:

1. No gym fees or need to buy expensive equipment.
2. You can do the workout anywhere, anytime.
3. Most exercises involve many muscles working in coordination, resulting in great overall fitness and strength.
4. For people who are just starting with strength training, bodyweight is often more than enough to begin with. And it gives you a good foundation of strength you can build on later.

Some limitations to bodyweight exercises include:

1. After a while (a couple months perhaps), they aren't all that challenging. You'll need to continue to build your strength by adding weights. You can do that with some simple equipment (see below).
2. If you don't have at least one or two pieces of equipment — a chin-up bar or a resistance band perhaps — some muscles don't get worked out as much as others. That's not a problem over the short term, but over the long term you'll want to make sure you get a balance.

Consider starting with bodyweight exercises, and then slowly transitioning to a combination of bodyweight and weight training to get a good balance. And even if you're doing a complete weight training program, you can always use bodyweight exercises anytime you can't make it to the gym.

Sample Exercises



Below is a collection of exercises that use compound muscles and joints to give a total-body workout with nothing but your bodyweight and a chin-up bar. These are not the only exercises you can do, it's just a sample. The section that follows offers a ideas for a variety of challenges.

NOTE

Always check with a doctor before beginning any exercise program, especially if you have any health co make the program or any of the individual exercises a risk for you.

Proper form is important to prevent injury and work the muscles effectively. Consult a fitness profession search online for "how-to" instructions and/or video from a reputable source.

Stretch and warm up prior to beginning the workout. Then do the exercises in order, for 30 seconds to two minutes (depending on what kind of shape you're in), with as little rest in between as possible. If you're new to exercise, feel free to rest fully between exercises, but if you're in decent shape, doing them one after another is a great workout. You may have to stop to catch your breath a few times — it's a tough workout!

1. Pull-ups (palms facing away from you). Chin-up bar required.
2. Pushups. As many as you can. Do modified pushups if you can't do full pushups, with your knees on the floor. If those are still too hard, do wall pushups, leaning against the wall or a chair.
3. Jump squats
4. Bicycle crunches
5. Jumping lunges
6. Burpees.
7. Hanging knee raises. Chin-up bar required.
8. Hindu pushups.
9. Diamond pushups.
10. Chin-ups (palms facing toward you). Chin-up bar required.

Create Your Own Workout

Using the exercises in the sample workout, you can create your own program by picking whatever exercises suit your fitness goals, level and workout timeframe. Just choose 5 to 12 exercises and do them all, either with or without resting. Once that gets easy, do a second circuit.

A few considerations:

1. Choose a variety of exercises that work out all the parts of your body.
2. If you want a real challenge, mix cardio exercises (see below) with the strength exercises.
3. There is no need to buy equipment. You can get a great workout without equipment, at least for a while. If you have some of the equipment listed below, use it. If you can/want to purchase equipment, you can add one or two items at a time.

4. If you're just starting out, take it easy and gradually build up. Don't get discouraged, and don't overdo it!
5. As you get stronger, gradually add weights. Dumbbells, barbells, kettlebells, and medicine balls are some good ways to do that. It'll take a couple months of bodyweight exercises, though, before you really need to move to weights.

Basic Bodyweight Exercises

There are many, many variations of bodyweight exercises with varying degrees of difficulty, but here are some of the more common ones:

- Pushups (there are many variations with varying degrees of difficulty)
- Burpees
- Squats (variations include: jump squats, Hindu squats)
- Lunges (variations include: jumping lunges, side lunges)
- Chair dips
- Planks (variation: side plank)
- Crunches (there are many variations with varying degrees of difficulty)
- Bear crawl
- Lateral barrier jump
- Isometrics
- Plyometrics

Exercises Requiring Minimal Equipment

You don't need to buy this equipment but if you have it, you can use it. Or consider purchasing a few items to add a challenge to your workout.

- Pull-up bar
- Resistance band
- Medicine ball
- Kettlebell
- Dumbbells
- Tractor tires

Cardio Exercises

- Jumping jacks
- Jump rope
- Side shuffles
- Touchdowns
- Run 800 meters (or a mile)
- Interval running

- Stair/hill running
 - Rowing (requires a rowing machine)
 - Elliptical or Step Machine
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