

Push-Ups: Which Version is Best for You?

Think “push-up” and the image of a buff bodybuilder sweating his way through a hundred reps comes to mind. We may think that this is the only option for this exercise, and then avoid doing them because it’s too difficult, or intimidating. However, there are several versions of this common exercise available, to benefit everyone from a deconditioned beginner, to a seasoned exerciser. Each version will work your pectorals (chest muscles) and triceps (back of the upper arm), your shoulders (deltoids), and will also engage your core muscles.

The Seated Push-up: This exercise works well for someone who has difficulty standing. Sit in a chair or locked wheelchair, about an arm's length away from the edge of a sturdy table or a kitchen counter. Place your feet on the floor, wider than the chair, for stability. Pull your belly button (navel) to your spine by tightening your abs; then place your hands on the edge of the table. Keeping your back flat and abs tight, bend your elbows and lean in towards the table, breathing in. As you breathe out, slowly straighten your arms, and push yourself away from the table, keeping your hands firmly on the edge of the table, and keeping the abs braced. Repeat slowly, until you reach fatigue (can’t do any more with good technique).

The Standing Push-up: If you have difficulty getting down or up from the floor, this is a good choice. Stand in front of a wall with your feet slightly wider than your hips, and several inches away from the wall. You’ll need to experiment with how it feels, to determine your distance from the wall. First, place your hands directly out from your shoulder onto the wall. Next, draw the navel towards the spine, and keeping your abs braced, and your back flat, inhale and slowly

bend your elbows, moving towards the wall. Do not allow your hips to sag forward. As you exhale, slowly straighten your arms, engaging the pectorals, deltoids, and triceps. Do not allow your hips to lead the way; keep your body in a straight line. Repeat until you can't do any more with good technique.

The Side-Lying Push-up: The level of difficulty here is more than the standing push-up, but not as strenuous as a push-up from the knees or toes. To do this one, sit on a mat on your right hip, with your legs out to the left, and comfortably bent, and your hands on the floor in front of you. Tighten your abs and keep your back flat. Spread your fingers out a bit for stability, and inhale as you bend your elbows, and lower your upper body towards the ground. Exhale as you slowly push back up, straightening your arms. Do one set to fatigue on this side. Rest, and repeat this movement on your other side, until fatigue.

Push-up From Knees: This is the next degree of difficulty. Get face down on a mat, with your body weight resting on your hands and knees. Your arms should be placed a few inches outside of your shoulders, with the hands below shoulder level. Lower your hips until a straight line forms between your shoulders and your knees - your hips should not be elevated in the air. Brace your core muscles, and inhale as you slowly lower your body to the floor, and exhale as you straighten your arms and push up.

Push-ups From the Toes: This is the most challenging of the push-ups described here. The technique is the same as for the version from the knees, but the body weight rests on the hands and

the toes. Make sure that the core muscles are braced, and do not allow the lower back to sag

As with any exercise, make sure that you pick the appropriate level to start with, and that you perform it with good technique, to avoid injury. If you are new to exercise, please check with your doctor to ensure that it is all right to engage in physical activity, and seek out proper instruction for all activities.

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