

## Squat Exercises

To prevent risk of injury, follow these guidelines when performing squats:

1. Keep your abdominal muscles engaged and your spine in a neutral position throughout the movement. Arching or rounding your back during the movement can stress your lower back.
2. The movement comes from “hinging” at the hips more than bending the knees. Strive to send your hips and buttocks backwards, instead of just bending your knees.
3. Don’t allow the knees to move too far forward. The general rule is that your knees should not move past your toes. Keep your knees in line with your hips so they don’t drift together.
4. When returning to the standing position, squeeze your buttocks' muscles, engage your abdominal muscles and drive your weight through your heels.
5. When performing the more advanced squats, the lower you bend, the harder the exercise.
6. Only progress the exercise when you are sure you are performing the squat with proper form.



**Sit to Stand:** This is the beginner squat exercise and entails the simple movement of going from sitting to standing out of a chair.

- Use a sturdy chair that won’t slide on the floor or swivel.
- Sit at the front edge of the chair, with your arms crossed in front of your chest.\*
- Line your feet up so your toes are under your knees.
- Lean forward a little to bring your nose over your toes and push up with the legs to a standing position. Make sure your spine stays straight and does not arch or round.
- To sit, slightly bend the knees and push your hips backward as you lower yourself to the chair.
- Perform 5-10 times, progress in repetitions as able.



\*At first, you may need to use your arms to help push up off the chair or for balance. As you get stronger, progress by pushing up more through your legs and less with your arms.

**Stand to Partial Sit:** This exercise is a progression to performing an independent squat. Although you never fully sit down, having a chair behind you reinforces the correct motion.

- Start in a standing position with chair placed behind you.
- Arms can be positioned straight out in front of you or crossed in front of your chest.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles and keep your spine in a neutral position.
- Begin the squat movement by pushing your buttocks backward while hinging at the hips and allowing your knees to bend slightly.
- Lower your buttocks down until it just slightly touches the chair but do not sit.
- Stand back up, engaging your abdominal muscles, squeezing your buttocks muscles and driving your weight through your heels.
- Perform 5-10 times, progress repetitions as able.



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**Squat with Weight:** Adding weight will increase the challenge of this exercise.

- Perform the exercise as above while holding a light weight in front of the body at chest height. Keep the weight close to the body.
- Suggested starting weight is 2-3 lbs. If you don't have a weight, you can use a can, a water bottle or a water jug. Any item that adds some weight and is easy to grip will work.
- Once you can perform the exercise with proper technique (neutral spine, hinging at the hips and not bending the knees past the toes), you don't need to use a chair behind you anymore.



**Squat with Arm Push Weight Forward:** Adding the arm push forward will add an extra challenge.

- Perform the exercise as above while holding a weight in front of the body at chest height.
- As you squat down, extend your arms forward and straighten your elbows.
- Keep your hands inline with your chest.
- Be careful not to allow your back to arch or round.
- Suggested starting weight is 2-3 lbs.



**Sumo Squat:** This exercise is an advanced exercise and should only be performed when you are sure you are doing the squat with proper form and technique and have mastered the above exercises.

- Start in a standing position with your feet wider than shoulder-width apart and toes slightly turned out.
- Hold the end of a dumbbell with both hands as shown.
- Begin the squat movement by pushing your buttocks back, hinging at the hips and bending your knees. Keep your back straight.
- Return to a standing position by pressing through the heels and squeezing the buttocks muscles.
- Perform 10-15 times. Starting weight will be dependent on fitness level, but do not lift any weight that causes you to lose your form.

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