

20 BEST FUNCTIONAL UPPER BODY EXERCISES TO SCULPT YOUR TORSO

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1. Pull-Up

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Lats, Traps, Abs, and Biceps
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Pull-up Bar
- **Goal:** Build Strength, Mobility, and Muscle

Benefits

- Pullups help develop strength and mass and bolster your grip.
- It works on various muscles simultaneously, primarily the **back and biceps**.

How-to Instructions

1. Lift yourself up and grab the pull-up bar with an overhand grip. Keep your hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.
2. Brace your abdominal muscles and pull up until your chin is close to or above the bar.
3. Pause and then slowly lower yourself until your arms are straight. That's one rep.

2. Parallel Bar Dip

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Triceps, Chest, Anterior Delt, and Abs
- **Exercise Level:** Beginner to Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Dip Stand
- **Goal:** Develop Strength, Mobility, and Muscle Definition

Benefits

The bar dip is an incredible upper body functional workout that **targets the chest**, shoulders, abdominals, and triceps and helps build an athletic torso.

How-to Instructions

1. Grab the bar handles firmly and hoist yourself up.

- ❓ Brace your abdominal muscles, look forward, and keep your knees bent and crossed.
- ❓ Bending your elbows, dip your body as low as possible.
- ❓ Pause briefly, then extend your elbows until your arms are straight.

3. Barbell Push Jerk

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Shoulders, Core, and Arms
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate to Advanced
- **Equipment Needed:** Barbell and Plates
- **Goal:** Improve Strength and Explosiveness

Benefits

- Push jerks work on several muscles simultaneously, improving strength, agility, and endurance.
- It also [enhance anaerobic fitness](#) and performance.

How-to Instructions

- ❓ Grab a loaded barbell and hold it on the front of your shoulder.
- ❓ Slightly bend your knees and push your hips back to lower yourself into a partial squat.
- ❓ Explosively press the bar overhead and jump your feet into split stance simultaneously.
- ❓ Stand upright while holding your arms straight overhead. That's one rep.

4. Barbell Military Press

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Shoulders and Triceps
- **Exercise Level:** Beginner to Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Barbell and Plates
- **Goal:** Build Firm and Aesthetic Shoulders

Benefits

- The military press reinforces anterior and lateral delts and helps forge shoulder muscles.
- It also helps **enhance pressing strength** and helps you lift more during the bench presses.

How-to Instructions

- 🔗 Place a bar into the squat rack and put the desired weight.
- 🔗 Reach under the bar and grab it with your hands wider than shoulder-width apart.
- 🔗 Now, press the bar overhead until your arms are straight overhead.
- 🔗 Return the barbell to the start. That's one rep!

5. Barbell Bench Press

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Chest, Triceps, and Core
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Barbell and [Olympic Bench](#)
- **Goal:** Develop Strength and Mass

Benefits

- The bench press hits the chest, shoulders, and triceps and builds a muscular torso.
- It **stimulates strength and hypertrophy**.

How-to Instructions

- 🔗 Lie on the bench with your feet flat on the floor and chest underneath the bar.
- 🔗 Lift the bar off the rack and hold it over your chest (with arms extended straight).
- 🔗 Lower the bar toward your chest in a controlled manner until the bar reaches close to your body.
- 🔗 Brace your core and press the bar over your pecs until your arms are almost straight.

6. Barbell Thruster

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Legs, Shoulder, Abs, and Arms
- **Exercise Level:** Advanced
- **Equipment Needed:** Barbell and Plates
- **Goal:** Build Strength, Mobility, and Muscle

Benefits

- The barbell thruster is an upper body functional exercise that works on shoulders, arms, and core, as well as strengthens quads and glutes.
- It also **torches significant calories**, enhances cardiovascular fitness, and improves body composition.

How-to Instructions

- 1 Grab a loaded barbell and hold it on the front of your shoulder.
- 2 Lower into a squat and then thrust the barbell overhead as you return to the standing position.

7. Bent Over Barbell Row

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Back, Biceps, and Abs
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Barbell and Plates
- **Goal:** **Build a Sturdy and Broad Back**

Benefits

- The bent-over row **targets the lats**, traps, and rhomboids.
- Develops muscles that support a straighter back.
- Increases hand and forearm strength.

How-to Instructions

- 1 Grab a barbell with an overhand grip, with your feet just outside your hips.

- ❓ Stand upright in the shoulder-width stance and slightly lean forward, keeping your back straight.
- ❓ Brace your core, look forward, and pull the bar toward your lower abs until you feel the contraction in your back muscles.
- ❓ Pause for a moment and return to the start.

8. Kettlebell Swing

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Shoulder, Hamstrings, Lower Back, and Core
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Kettlebell
- **Goal:** Increase Strength, Speed, and Endurance

Benefits

- The kettlebell swing helps develop aerobic power, muscle strength, and explosiveness.
- It works on multiple muscles from the lower to the upper body and helps **improve overall performance**.

How-to Instructions

- ❓ Holding a kettlebell with your hands, stand tall with your feet two times wider than hip-width apart, and keep your arms straight between your thighs.
- ❓ Slightly lean forward so the kettlebell swings back between your legs, and then extending your hips, swing the kettlebell in front of you until your arms are straight, at least at your chest level.

9. Rowing

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Back, Core, Arms, and Rear Delt
- **Exercise Level:** Beginner to Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Rower Machine
- **Goal:** Increase Strength, Endurance, and Power

Benefits

Rowing is an excellent high-intensity exercise that works throughout the body, annihilates plenty of calories, and helps improve strength, power, and aerobic fitness.

How-to Instructions

- ❓ Set up the rowing machine, securing feet in straps.
- ❓ Sit tall with a straight back, grip handle with hands shoulder-width apart.
- ❓ Push through legs, extend them fully.
- ❓ Pull handle to lower chest, leaning back slightly.
- ❓ Extend arms, hinge at hips, and bend knees for the recovery phase.

10. Battle Rope

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Shoulder, Core, and Arms
- **Exercise Level:** Beginner to Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Cross Training Battle Rope
- **Goal:** Increase Strength, Endurance, and Speed

Benefits

- Engages multiple muscles simultaneously, especially the arms, core, and back.
- Improves cardiovascular fitness and endurance.
- Provides a dynamic and fun alternative to [traditional cardio exercises](#).

How-to Instructions

- ❓ Grab the rope tightly with your hands and stand straight with your feet shoulder-width apart. Palms facing each other.
- ❓ Lower your hips and whip ropes up and over in front of you for the maximum number of times.

11. Hanging Knee to Elbow

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Abdominal Muscles
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate

- **Equipment Needed:** Pull-up Bar
- **Goal:** Build Strength, Mobility, and Thicken Rectus Abdominis

Benefits

The knee-to-elbow is one of the [advanced abs exercises](#) that helps to build a strong core. It also improves grip strength and your ability to pull the body weight against gravity.

How-to Instructions

- 1 Grab the pull bar with an overhand grip and keep your hands shoulder-width apart.
- 2 Bring your knees up until they make contact with your elbows. Your torso will slightly lean back as you bring your knees up.
- 3 Return your knees to the start and repeat.

12. Muscle-up

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Back, Shoulder, Arms, and Core
- **Exercise Level:** Advanced
- **Equipment Needed:** Pull-up Bar
- **Goal:** Scale bodyweight strength, balance, and explosiveness

Benefits

- Muscle-up is an advanced [calisthenics exercise](#) that reinforces various muscles throughout the body.
- It combines both pull and push movement, helping you improve your strength, speed, and mobility.

How-to Instructions

- 1 Start by standing two to three steps away from the bar.
- 2 Walk and jump out to quickly hang onto the bar with your hands a bit wider than shoulder-width apart. Keep your thumbs on the bar with your other fingers instead of under it.
- 3 Pull yourself up until your chin crosses the bar, and from that position, perform a dip by pressing the bar downward.

- ❓ Once you complete the dip, return to the starting position. That's one repetition.

13. Ring Pushup

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Chest, Triceps, Anterior Delt, and Core
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** Gymnastic Ring
- **Goal:** Develop Strength, Balance, and Muscle Coordination

Benefits

The ring pushup bolsters your chest, shoulders, arms, and core while also improving balance, coordination, and strength.

The rings allow you to go deeper into your pushups, provides a decent stretch to your pecs muscles, and **build defined chest**.

How-to Instructions

- Adjust the ring in an appropriate position, grab it firmly, and get into a high plank position with your arms straight below your shoulders and toes on the ground.
- Perform the suggested number of pushups in a controlled manner.

14. Toes to Ring

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Lats, Traps, and Biceps
- **Exercise Level:** Advanced
- **Equipment Needed:** Gymnastic Ring
- **Goal:** Develop Strength, Mobility, and Awareness

Benefits

The toes-to-ring buttresses your midsection which **provides stability to your lower back** and helps you perform other upper body exercises efficiently.

How-to Instructions

- 🔗 Grab the rings and hang onto them with your arms and legs straight.
- 🔗 Keeping your arms extended, swing your legs back, and then raise them in front of you until your toes touch the ring.
- 🔗 Return and repeat for the suggested reps.

15. The Ring Row

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Upper Back, Biceps, and Abs
- **Exercise Level:** Beginner
- **Equipment Needed:** Gymnastic Ring
- **Goal:** Build Muscle and Improve Mobility

Benefits

The ring row engages the upper body muscles, particularly the **back and biceps** and helps scale up for **various ring exercises**.

How-to Instructions

- 🔗 Adjust the ring to an appropriate height and grab it firmly with a neutral grip.
- 🔗 Extend your legs in front of you and lean backward until your arms are fully straight.
- 🔗 Keep your core tight and back straight. That's the start.
- 🔗 Pull yourself up until you feel the full contraction in your back muscles.
- 🔗 Pause for a moment and then slowly return to the start.

16. Standard Pushups

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Chest, Triceps, and Front Delt
- **Exercise Level:** Beginner to Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** None
- **Goal:** Strength and Muscle Building

Benefits

Pushups are an excellent functional upper body workout that works primarily on chest muscles and helps develop the upper body physique. The best thing is you can do them anywhere, anytime.

How-to Instructions

- ❓ Place your hands on the floor with your arms directly underneath your shoulder.
- ❓ Extend your legs behind you and get into a high plank position with your body straight from top to bottom.
- ❓ Keeping your core tight, perform as many pushups as you like.

17. Bench Dips

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Triceps and Front Delt
- **Exercise Level:** Beginner
- **Equipment Needed:** Bench/Chair
- **Goal:** Strengthen and Tone Triceps Muscles

Benefits

The bench dip is an excellent exercise to build up triceps muscle which helps perform better during [various push exercises](#), such as pushups, bench presses, overhead presses, and push presses effectively.

How-to Instructions

- ❓ Start with sitting on the chair with your legs straight in front of you.
- ❓ Keeping your arms extended and hands on the bench, lift your butt and slightly move your torso forward. Now you're ready to do dips.
- ❓ Bend your elbows and lower your hips down toward the floor.
- ❓ Hold for a second, then press back through your arms to return to the start.

18. Burpees

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Full Body
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** None
- **Goal:** Develop Endurance and Cardiovascular Fitness

Benefits

Burpee is an ultimate total body workout as it involves different movements, such as push-ups, squats, and jumping. It is explosive and burns decent calories in a short period and helps take your fitness to the next level.

How-to Instructions

1. Stand straight with your feet shoulder-width apart and hold your arms straight at your sides.
2. Lower your hips, bring your hands in front of your leg, then kick your feet behind you. Now, you're in a pushup position, complete one push-up.
3. Quickly bring your feet under your hips and then extend your hips to stand upright. As you stand up, perform a squat, jump quickly in the air with your arms straight overhead, land your feet, and repeat.

19. Handstand Push-up

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Shoulders, Arms, Abs, and Upper Back
- **Exercise Level:** Advanced
- **Equipment Needed:** No
- **Goal:** Build Muscle, Improve Mobility, and Enhance Mind-Muscle Connection

Benefits

The handstand pushup is an advanced variation requiring incredible core strength, balance, and control. It works on various muscles simultaneously, particularly the shoulder and triceps, and helps improve overall athleticism.

How-to Instructions

1. Begin in a handstand against a wall with hands placed shoulder-width apart.
2. Lower body by bending elbows until head lightly touches the ground.
3. Push back up to the starting position.
4. Keep core engaged and maintain a straight line from head to heels.
5. Perform controlled repetitions with proper form.

20. Sit-up

About Exercise

- **Muscles Worked:** Core
- **Exercise Level:** Intermediate
- **Equipment Needed:** None
- **Goal:** Bolster Abdominal Strength

Benefits

Although there are many compound exercises [engage the core muscles](#), you can do sit-ups if you still want to work the abs specifically. The sit-up is a classic core exercise that isolates the rectus abdominis and improves the appearance of your six-pack abs.

How-to Instructions

- Lie on the floor on your back.
- Keep your legs bent and fingertips on your ears.
- Lift your torso until you feel the work in your abs.
- Return and repeat.