

Tips To Improve Your Pull Up Power

By Shawna Kaminski



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Published by:

Kaminski Fitness Consulting Ltd.

Calgary, AB, Canada

E-mail: Support@ChallengeWorkouts.com

Website: www.ChallengeWorkouts.com

Phone: (587) 355-8353

Exercise Considerations

Consult with a physician before beginning the exercises in this book. A physician can determine which exercises are appropriate for you or your clients, and if any should be avoided or modified.

Disclaimer

Injury Free Pull Up is primarily an educational resource and is not intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of a physician. If you suspect you or your client has a health problem, please have him or her seek the services of a physician or healthcare professional.

Exercise is an ever-changing science. As new research and clinical experience broaden our knowledge, changes in exercise and exercise prescriptions are inevitable. The author has checked with sources believed to be reliable in her effort to provide information that is complete and generally in accord with the standards accepted at the time of publication. However, in view of the possibility of human error or changes in exercise science, neither the author nor any other party who has been involved in the preparation or publication of this work warrants that the information contained herein is in every respect accurate or complete, and they are not responsible for any errors or omissions or for the results obtained from the use of such information. Readers are encouraged to confirm the information contained herein with other sources.

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How to Do Pull Ups - Injury-free

You can't deny the power of the pull up; **a beautiful physique can be sculpted with the simple pull up.** It broadens and strengthens the back, while sculpting the waist in one fluid easy to understand (but difficult to do) maneuver.



The prime mover for the pull up is the latissimus dorsi. Surprisingly, the pull up engages the core a great deal. The secondary movers and stabilizers for the pull up include the trapezius, rhomboids, biceps, serratus anterior, transverse abdominus, and the obliques. You can see how the pull up is a compound movement and can effectively train the core.

As with any movement, it's imperative to ensure that proper form is used to prevent injury.

Pull Up Body Position, Form, and Technique

I once made the mistake of overzealous training when trying to do the human flag and my elbows and I weren't on speaking terms for several weeks.

I consulted with '[ExercisesForInjuries.com](#)' expert, Rick Kaselj to help me with my sore elbows:



<http://youtu.be/tULEMUtMcZs>

The pull up is no different. There are a few things that can be done to prevent injury - specifically overuse injury - when doing the pull up. First of all, you need to get your mind focused on the correct muscles in order to get your first pull up. Rather than using the back muscles, many people will try to lift with their arms, chest, shoulders, anything

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to get their body to move. **This will get you NOWHERE FAST.**

When doing an assisted pull up, you need to be in the correct position.

You need to get your body UNDER the bar like this:



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You need to position yourself so that you're looking up and you're ready to engage the BACK muscles, NOT just the muscles of the arms. Your legs will be used to help you but they need to be directly UNDER your hips, not in front of you. If your legs are in front too much, it will cause you to lay back and get out from under the bar.

Place the legs directly under your hips for the assisted pull like this:

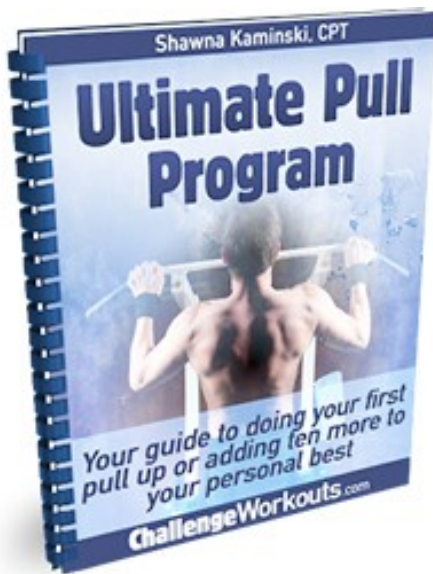


Using a bench or box directly under you is most helpful.

It may seem like I'm splitting hairs with the correct position for the assisted pull up. I am.

This is the KEY in order to be successful.

Simple Exercise to Help You Find Your Pull Up Starting Position



A simple exercise that anyone can do. In order for you to FIND the back muscles, do a simple hang from a suspended bar.

As you hang, look up and think about inwardly rotating your scapula, or squeezing your shoulder blades together. This will press your chest forward. You should start to feel a slight elevation of your body, even if you can't move your entire body up to the bar yet.

This improved body position will address the common error of inwardly rotating the shoulders to pull the body up. The back is much stronger and everyone will be more successful when they engage the muscles of the back when doing a pull up.

The Best Grip for a Pull Up

Another area to be concerned with is the grip. Your grip can lead to some elbow pain and strain. Even though you're actually "hanging on for dear life" when doing a pull up, try not to use this "power grip" as it actually radiates up the arm and can effect the elbow. Hold the pull up bar more loosely and this will alleviate or prevent elbow pain.

In addition, when you come to a full hang position, you will put strain on the elbow joint. If you're going to be doing a copious amount of pull ups, it's best to not fully extend the arm in the hanging position. By keeping a slight bend at the elbow in the extended position, you will work the bicep more and strain the joint less.



One of the best things about pull ups is the variety of ways you can

do them.

You can constantly change your grip from shoulder width, to narrow grip, palms facing each other, or parallel.

Every workout you do can be different just by changing up the grip. This helps with overuse injuries as you'll put stress on different areas of the shoulder/back as well as the elbow/arm.

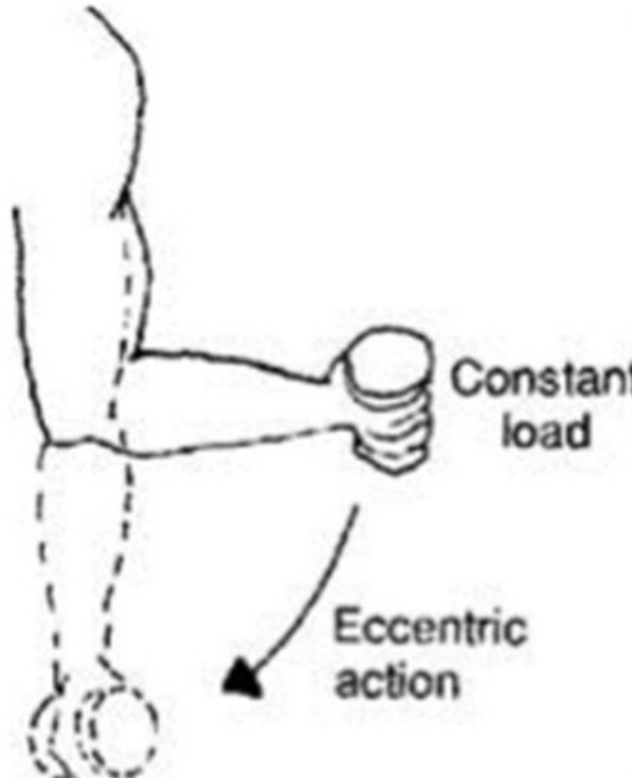
Pull Up and Eccentric Training

The key to learning how to do a pull up is to work the “eccentric” contraction.

The eccentric, or lengthening portion of any movement, is the strengthening phase; this is opposite to what most think. There are a variety of ways that you can work the eccentric contraction when doing a pull up. You can do assisted pull ups, jump pull ups, suspended pull ups, inverted rows, or weighted pull ups (all of these are discussed in my [Challenge Workout Program](#), by the way).

A caution when training eccentrically: the lengthening phase is the portion of the movement that causes the most muscle soreness. You need to be careful when doing eccentric contractions as you will cause more delayed onset muscle soreness, and due to fatigue, there is a greater incidence of injury where you strain the muscle

excessively. While eccentric training is a great way to start to build up the strength to be able to do a pull up or increase the number of pull ups you can do, caution is necessary to prevent injury.



If you're overzealous to get your first pull up, or increase your maximum pull ups, you may be doing yourself more harm than good.

Trust me, you should learn from my mistakes. My shoulders and elbows have paid the price of my enthusiasm from time to time. I seem to be better at dispensing advice than listening to my own.

While pull ups are super cool, you can dramatically increase your strength by doing *other* back exercises. Expand your training protocol. You don't have to just do pull ups and pull up variations

when trying to increase your pull up personal best. It helps to have access to some dumb bells and a suspension trainer.

If you are trying to do your first pull up or improve the number of pull ups you can do, here are a few exercises that will help:

Exercise #1 to Help with Your Pull Up

I like to do single DB rows so I can address muscle imbalances.

NOTE: I always train my weak side first since you'll always have a strong and weak side. With continued training you'll lessen the gap of strength differences.



It's imperative with this movement that you protect the lower back and learn to isolate the latissimus dorsi. Support one knee and one hand on a bench and flatten the back so that your chest is parallel to the floor. If you're too upright, you'll work the upper trap, an area that usually needs less development than the lat, the lower trap and rhomboid muscles. Imagine what the pull of gravity is: basically a straight line from the DB to the floor. Allow the DB to hang to the floor

while maintaining this flat back position. Bring the DB to the ribs and bring the scapula, or shoulder blade in towards the spine. Return the DB to the full hanging position and allow the shoulder blade to slide away from the spine.

A common error is using the muscles of the arms exclusively to pull the DB into the ribs; this is the same mistake that folks make when trying to do a pull up. You need to find the back muscles and engage them in pulling the DB towards the body. Then allow the DB to extend towards the floor with the arm fully extended.

Exercise #2 to Help with Your Pull Up



I'm a big fan of my suspension trainer. It basically uses body weight as resistance. You can increase or decrease the amount of resistance by changing the angle of pull with your foot position. It's really a brilliant idea. Another benefit of the suspension trainer is the need for core stability with its use.

The **suspended back row** is helpful in strengthening the back and improving your pull ups. As seen in the picture, it's a very basic row. One thing to keep in mind is to maintain a long neck, keep the shoulders down, and don't let them creep up to the ears. Many people elevate the shoulders unconsciously.

A second pointer is to ensure you drop the hips slightly; don't lead

with the hips and arch the back. You'll feel more through the middle back, and less through the arms, if you have a slight hip flexion.

Exercise #3 to Help with Your Pull Up

Not surprisingly, core strength is helpful to increase your pull up prowess. A strong core helps maintain the proper body alignment in order for you to engage your back muscles.



A good way to train the core and at the same time increase grip and back strength is to do **hanging leg raises**. Many people tend to just work their hip flexors when doing leg raises. The point of the leg raise is to contract the abdominal wall and allow the hips to roll. It's a matter of pressing the belly button in towards the spine to contract the core and not just lift the legs up.

Last Key Ingredient to Pull Ups

The last component I'd like to address is **rest**. I'm my own worst enemy at times where this is concerned, once I get a goal in mind. For example, my elbows ached for a few weeks after I worked the human flag daily.

Umm, not a good idea.

The same goes for you and your pull-ups.



Your body needs rest and recovery. If your muscles are still sore and you have a workout planned, you may want to postpone the training of the sore muscles until you feel recovered. I'm not giving you permission to slack off, I'm reminding you that an important part of your training is allowing your body to recover fully. You need to listen and know when you're just slacking off and when you really need an

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extra day to recover. Maybe you'll do a HIIT (high intensity interval training) workout or a [workout finisher](#), something different than strictly strength work and pull ups.

The pull up is clearly one of the most impressive body weight movements that can be done. With proper training and a mind towards injury prevention, you'll be more likely to succeed at increasing your pull up power and not your aches and pains. You can check out Shawna's pull up program [here](#).



About Shawna Kaminski

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Shawna Kaminski is in her late 40's but she can kick most 20 year olds' butts when it comes to pull ups, push-ups and the human flag. She loves a challenge and trains with passion and intelligence. She has put together a program that will help improve the quality and quantity of your pull ups and push ups. You can check out her Challenge Workouts [here](#).