

worksheet: workout challenge

IF YOU TOOK THE REAL SIMPLE FITNESS TEST (June 2006, page 189) and weren't happy with your results, here's your chance to improve them. This three-month program, created by Los Angeles-based trainer Gunnar Peterson, will increase your upper-body and abdominal strength, improve your flexibility, and boost your endurance—all the elements that the test measures. Print out this workout plan and try to commit to doing the recommended exercises each day. Remember to warm up for 5 to 10 minutes beforehand. Within weeks you should notice that your arms feel tighter, your hamstrings looser, and your lungs stronger. After three months, take the fitness test again—and gloat over your improved results

Month One

Rest for no more than 30 seconds between sets.

MONDAY

- **Bench dips:** Sit on the edge of a bench with your hands beside your thighs, palms down. Extend your legs out and move your behind forward and off the bench; your weight should be supported by your heels and arms. Keeping your legs straight, bend your elbows to lower your body until the upper arms are parallel to the floor, then push back up. Keep your chin and chest up and your back straight. Repeat 10 times.
Works: Triceps and deltoids (shoulders).
- **Incline push-ups:** Facing a sturdy chair, place your hands on the seat and extend your legs behind you so your head, neck, back, and legs are in a straight line. Bend your elbows out to the sides and lower your body toward the seat; your upper arms should be nearly parallel to the floor. Pause for two seconds, then push yourself back to the starting position. Repeat 10 times.
Works: Pectorals (chest), triceps, deltoids, and abdominals.
- **Explosive wall push-ups:** Stand about three feet away from a wall, facing it, with your feet shoulder-width apart. Lean forward and place your palms flat on the wall, in line with your shoulders. Lower your body toward the wall, bending your elbows downward, then push back with an “explosive” force; your hands should come off the wall. Keep your abdominal muscles tightened to prevent falling backward. Repeat 10 times.
Works: Abdominals, pectorals, triceps, and deltoids.
- **Forward lunges:** Stand with your arms at your sides and step forward with your right leg. Bend your knees and lower your back knee toward the floor until your right thigh is parallel to the floor. Keep your right heel down and your right knee directly over your ankle. Tighten your abdominals and push through the front heel back to the starting position. Repeat with the opposite leg. Alternate until you've done 10 repetitions on each side.
Works: Quadriceps, glutes, and hamstrings.
- **Reverse crunches:** Lie on your back, bend your knees, and lift your feet until your thighs are perpendicular to the floor. Cross your ankles. Keep your arms at your sides, palms on the floor. Relax your shoulders and, keeping your head and back on the floor, contract your abdominal muscles as you slowly lift your hips two to four inches up off the floor. Hold for a count of two. Lower back down and repeat 15 times.
Works: Lower abdominal wall.
- **Figure-four stretch:** Sit on the floor with your right leg extended in front of you. Bend your left leg so the sole is touching the inside of your right thigh. Keeping your back straight, lean over your right leg and reach for your toes. Stop when you feel tension and hold for 20 seconds. Sit up and repeat with the opposite leg.
Stretches: Hamstrings and glutes.
- **Dead hang:** Stand with your heels on the edge of an elevated surface about two inches high, such as a couple of hardcover books or a length of two-by-four-inch wood, with your toes on the floor. Cross your arms over your chest and bend from the waist. Let your cradled arms hang down. Hold for 30 seconds. Stand up, then repeat once.
Stretches: Hamstrings, glutes, and erectors (lower back).
- **For extra credit:** Repeat the entire cycle.

(continued on the next page)

TUESDAY

- **Leg raises:** Sit on the edge of a chair, grasping the sides of the seat with your hands. Extend your legs out in front of you, heels touching the floor. Bend your knees slightly. Lean back just enough to feel your abdominal muscles tighten, and keep them contracted as you lift your legs six to eight inches off the floor. Slowly lower to the starting position and repeat 10 times.

Works: Abdominals.

- **Squats:** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Hold a two- to five-pound dumbbell (or a two-pound can) in each hand; raise your arms out in front of you to shoulder height, palms facing down. Keeping your chest lifted and your abs tight, bend both knees and lower your body until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Stand back up, pushing through your heels. Repeat 10 times.

Works: Hips, glutes, hamstrings, and abdominals.

- **Supermans:** Lie facedown on the floor, arms stretched out over your head. Tighten your abdominal muscles and lift your right arm and left leg a few inches off the floor. Hold while you take three deep breaths. Slowly lower to the starting position and repeat with the opposite arm and leg. Alternate until you've completed five repetitions on each side.

Works: Erectors, glutes, deltoids, and abdominals.

- **Figure-four stretch:** See Monday.

- **Dead hang:** See Monday.

- **For extra credit:** Repeat the entire cycle.

WEDNESDAY

- **Walk-run:** Walk at a brisk but comfortable pace for five minutes to warm up. Then run for one minute before slowing down to walk for five minutes (at a pace slightly faster than your warm-up walk). Alternate between running for one minute and walking for five for a total of 30 minutes. Finish by walking slowly for five minutes to cool down.

THURSDAY

- Repeat Monday.

FRIDAY

- Repeat Tuesday.

SATURDAY

- Repeat Wednesday, but add six minutes (one minute of running, five of walking), making the walk-run a total of 36 minutes.

SUNDAY

- Rest or do something active that you love, like hiking, playing tennis, or golfing.

Month Two

- Do the same exercises but limit your rest between sets to 20 seconds or less.
- Increase your walk-runs to three times a week.

Month Three

- Do the same exercises, but if you're outside, do a one-minute sprint in between each move; if you're inside, run in place or up and down the stairs for one minute.
- Increase your walk-runs to four times a week.