

The 30-Day Push-Up Challenge—Anyone Can Do!

Even if you can't muscle out a single "real" push-up, don't worry! By next month, you could be cranking out 50 and look more toned than ever.



Push-ups are the perfect busy-person's exercise. With this back-to-basics move, you get a near total-body workout in less than 10 minutes. "Push-ups target your chest, shoulders, and arms, while also working your back, abs, glutes, and legs," says Wayne Westcott, Ph.D., author of *Building Strength and Stamina*. Along with toned arms and shoulders, you'll build stronger bones in your upper body because push-ups are a weight-bearing exercise. And, knocking out reps of "real" (on-your-toes) push-ups can be a big confidence booster!

So let's get started! Unlike many other push-up challenges, this one involves more than just push-ups to avoid injuries and muscle imbalances. You'll start with Prep Moves to strengthen key muscles. Then, you'll add push-ups, performing them on a staircase so you can easily adjust the level of difficulty and gradually work your way down to doing full push-ups on the floor. You'll also do Complementary (aka Comp) Moves to train opposing muscles groups for a complete strength-training plan. In just 30 days, you'll be firmer and stronger all over—and able to do "real" push-ups. **Here's the plan.**

MINDFUL PUSH-UP CHALLENGE

In the beginning, your goal for each session is to complete 50 push-ups, 5 sets of 10 reps with at least a 30 second rest between sets.

If you are confident that you can do some full push-ups on the floor using good form, start there and do as many as possible. When that becomes too challenging complete the remainder of your reps by doing push-ups on a staircase. For example, you might be able to do 1 set of full push-ups on the floor, then 2 sets on the first step, 1 set on the second step, and your final set on the third step.

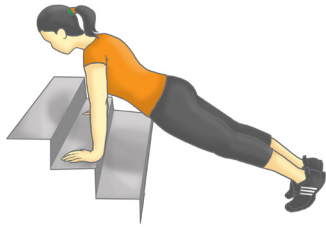
If you're not sure of your ability to do full push-ups, start by doing 1 set on the highest step you can reach. Then, move down a step for each set until you find the step in which you aren't able to complete a full set. On your next session, start on that step and then move up steps for remaining sets as you fatigue. When you can do a full set or two on your starting step, move down to the next one.

If you can't complete a set on a particular step, that's OK! Simply move up a step to finish without risking an injury. You can rest as long as needed in between sets. You can even split up the sets throughout the day if needed in the beginning.

Once you are doing full push-ups, work on doing more reps and fewer sets, for example 3 sets of 15 + 1 set of 5, 2 sets of 20 + 1 set of 10, or 2 sets of 25.

On Day 30, no matter how many full push-ups you do, **CELEBRATE!!!** It's more than you were able to do at the beginning. Depending upon where you started on the staircase, you may need more time to reach the 50 full push-up goal, but every push-up you do no matter what step it is on, it is making you stronger!

Stair Push-Up



- Stand a few inches away from a staircase. Place your hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart on the step that is in line with your shoulders when you lean forward, bringing your heels off the floor. Your body should be at about a 45-degree angle to the floor.
- Bend your elbows out to the sides and slowly lower your upper body toward the stairs until your elbows are bent about 90 degrees. Press against the step and straighten your arms to return to the starting position.

DOS & DON'TS:

- Do look at the step in front of you. Don't lift your head up or let it drop down.
- Do keep your abs tight. Don't let your belly sag toward the stairs.
- Do keep your body is in line from head to heels. Don't bend at your waist or hips.

TO PROGRESS:

Place your hands on the next lower step and walk your feet out farther until your body is in a straight line.

As you become stronger, move down to lower steps with your feet farther away from the staircase until you are down to the floor.

TIP:

Inhale as you lower and exhale as you push back up.

Full Push-Up



- Get down on the floor on all fours with your hands slightly more than shoulder-width apart. Tuck your toes under and lift your knees off of the floor, stepping your feet back so you are in a plank position, balancing on your palms and your toes and balls of your feet.
- Bend your elbows out to the sides and slowly lower your upper body toward the floor until your elbows are bent about 90 degrees. Press against the floor and straighten your arms to return to the starting position.

DOS & DON'TS:

- Do look at the floor in front of you. Don't lift your head up or let it drop down.
- Do keep your abs tight. Don't let your belly sag toward the floor.
- Do keep your body is in line from head to heels. Don't bend at your waist or hips.

TIP:

If your wrists hurt when doing push-ups on the floor, grab a pair of dumbbells. You'll avoid flexing your wrists and reduce pressure by placing the dumbbells on the floor and holding onto them instead of placing your palms flat on the floor.

Week 1
Prep Your Body

Push-ups are easier and less risky if you build some strength first. This week, you'll prepare key muscles that are needed to perform push-ups with good form.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kickback Lateral Raise (3 sets, 10-12 reps)	Crunch Step-up Plank (3 sets, 10-12 reps; hold Plank for 30 seconds)	Kickback Lateral Raise (3 sets, 10-12 reps)	Crunch Step-up Plank (3 sets, 10-12 reps; hold Plank for 30 seconds)	Kickback Lateral Raise (3 sets, 10-12 reps)	Crunch Step-up Plank (3 sets, 10-12 reps; hold Plank for 45 seconds)	Rest

Week 2
Start Training

Time for push-ups! Don't worry, you'll start slowly and gradually progress. You'll also add Comp Moves and continue with some Prep Moves for a total-body program.

8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Push-ups (5 sets, 10 reps on stairs and/or floor)	Pull-down Curl Row (3 sets, 10-12 reps)	Crunch Step-up Plank (3 sets, 10-12 reps; hold Plank for 45 seconds)	Rest	Push-ups (5 sets, 10 reps on stairs and/or floor)	Pull-down Curl Row (3 sets, 10-12 reps)	Crunch Step-up Plank (3 sets, 10-12 reps; hold Plank for 60 seconds)

Week 3
Build Strength

You get stronger by challenging your body. To do that, move to lower steps for your push-ups. Add extra reps and/or more resistance for other workouts.

15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Push-ups (5 sets, 10 reps on stairs and/or floor)	Pull-down Curl Row (3 sets, 15-20 reps)	Push-ups (5 sets, 10 reps on stairs and/or floor)	Rest	Crunch Step-up Plank (3 sets, 15-20 reps; hold Plank for 60 seconds)	Push-ups (5 sets, 10 reps on stairs and/or floor)	Pull-down Curl Row (3 sets, 15-20 reps)

Week 4
Get Focused

This week is all about push-ups! Get ready to move down to the bottom step and onto the floor.

22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Push-ups (2-5 sets, 25-10 reps on stairs and/or floor)	Rest	Push-ups (2-5 sets, 25-10 reps on stairs and/or floor)	Rest	Push-ups (2-5 sets, 25-10 reps on stairs and/or floor)	Rest	Push-ups (2-5 sets, 25-10 reps on stairs and/or floor)

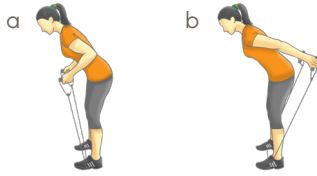
Final Days
You Can Do It!

You've worked hard! Now, it's time to see just how far you've come!

29	30
Rest	Push-ups (1-5 sets, 50-10 reps on stairs and/or floor)

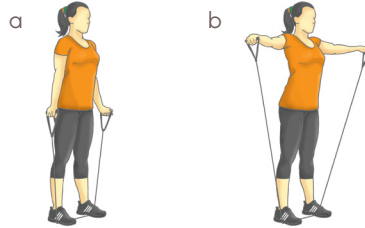
- Prep
- Comp
- Push-ups
- Rest

Kickback



- a) Stand with an exercise band under your feet and your feet about shoulder-width apart. Grasp the ends of the band, bend your elbows 90 degrees with your palms facing in, and hinge forward from your hip.
- b) Straighten your arms, raising your hands behind you. Keep your upper arm stationary. Pause for a second, then slowly return to the starting position.

Lateral Raise



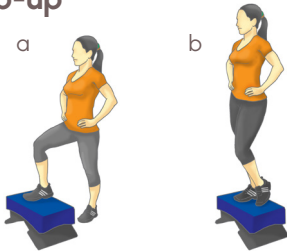
- a) Stand with an exercise band under your feet and your feet about shoulder-width apart. Grasp the ends of the band with your arms down at your sides, palms facing in.
- b) Raise your arms out to your sides to about shoulder height, palms facing down. Don't lock your elbows. Pause for a second, then slowly lower.

Crunch



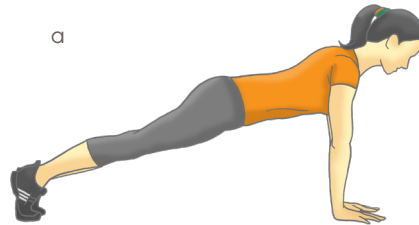
- a) Lie face-up on the floor with your legs bent, feet flat on the floor, and hands behind your head.
- b) Contract your abdominal muscles and slowly lift your head, shoulders, and upper back off the floor. Exhale as you lift. Pause for a second, then slowly lower as you inhale.

Step-up



- a) Stand facing a step or low bench with your feet together and hands on your hips.
- b) Place one foot onto the step and lift your body up. Tap the toes of your opposite foot on the top of the step and immediately step down, one foot after the other. Repeat with the opposite foot.

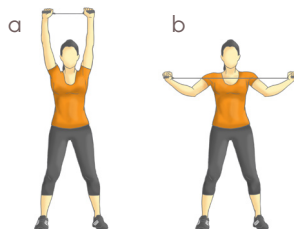
Plank



- a) Get down on the floor on all fours with your hands under your shoulders. Tuck your toes under and lift your knees off of the floor, stepping your feet back so you are balancing on your palms and your toes and balls of your feet. Your body should be in line from your head to your heels. Hold for the recommended amount of time.

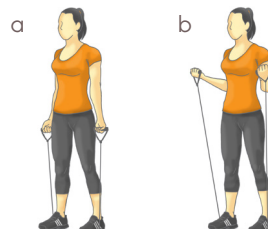
If you are unable to hold a Plank, maintaining good form, for the recommended amount of time, rest for 30 to 60 seconds and then do it again. Repeat Planks until they add up to the recommended time.

Pull-Down



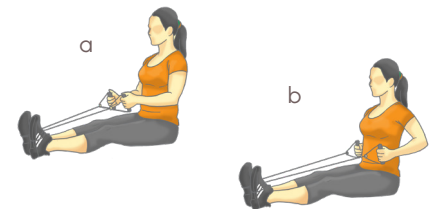
- a) Stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart and hold an exercise band overhead with your hands about 12 to 18 inches apart.
- b) Bend your elbows and bring your hands down to about shoulder height. Pause for a second, then slowly return to the starting position.

Curl



- a) Stand with an exercise band under your feet and your feet about shoulder-width apart. Grasp the ends of the band with your arms down at your sides, palms facing forward.
- b) Bend your elbows and raise your hands toward your shoulders, keeping your upper arms stationary. Pause for a second, then slowly lower.

Row



- a) Sit on the floor with your legs extended and loop an exercise band around your feet. Grasp an end in each hand with your arms extended in front of you.
- b) Bend your elbows and pull them back behind your, bringing your hands toward your rib cage. Pause for a second, then slowly return to the starting position.