

Barbell Curl

Technique guide | Arms

Equipment: Straight barbell



01 Start

Underhand grip; elbows beside the torso.



02 Curl

Bend the elbows while the torso stays still.

Muscle focus

Primary

Biceps brachii (both heads)

Assisting

Brachialis and brachioradialis

Posture and grip

Wrist flexors, shoulder muscles and trunk muscles

Postural and grip roles do not imply the same training stimulus as the prime mover.

What this exercise does

A basic elbow-flexion exercise for the front of the upper arms. The bar travels in an arc around the elbows. Both hands share a fixed bar, so choose a grip width that feels comfortable at the wrists.

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How to perform

1 Set up

Stand with feet hip- to shoulder-width apart and gently brace your trunk. Take a comfortable, roughly shoulder-width underhand grip. Wrap your thumbs around the bar, align wrists with forearms, and keep elbows by your sides.

2 Curl

Breathe out and bend your elbows, curling the bar toward your shoulders in an arc. Keep your chest and hips still and your upper arms mostly in place. Stop at a comfortable height, keeping the bar clear of your torso.

3 Lower

Breathe in and lower under control until your elbows are comfortably extended. Avoid snapping the elbows straight, and maintain your wrist and bar alignment.

Bend the elbows. Keep wrists aligned. Lower slowly.

Common mistakes and corrections

Mistake	Correction
Back, hip or knee swing	Reduce the load; keep the torso and legs still.
Bending the wrists	Keep wrists in line with the forearms.
Pushing elbows far forward	Keep the upper arms mostly in place.
Dropping the bar	Control the lowering phase as well.

Getting started

Rehearse with a light bar and keep the same posture on each repetition. Choose a load you can control throughout. Stop if your wrists or elbows hurt.

Sources and demonstration

1. ACE - Bicep Curl
2. ExRx - Barbell Curl
3. NASM - Barbell Bicep Curl
4. ScottHermanFitness - How To: Barbell Bicep Curl

References accessed: 2026-10-17