

Bent-Over Barbell Row

Controlled overhand row from a held hip hinge

Key positions



1. Hanging start



2. Pulling phase



3. Controlled top

Muscles worked

Main muscles

- Latissimus dorsi moves the upper arms backward.
- Middle trapezius and rhomboids retract the shoulder blades.

Supporting muscles

- Rear deltoids assist; biceps and other elbow flexors bend the elbows.
- Spinal erectors, abdominals, glutes and hamstrings stabilize the hinge; forearms maintain the grip.

What makes it useful

A compound back exercise combining a two-handed pull with an unsupported hip hinge. Grip and elbow path affect emphasis. This overhand version returns to a hanging bar between repetitions, without resetting on the floor.

Movement & technique

Bent-Over Barbell Row | Hold the hinge. Control both the pull and the return.

Before you start

Use light, evenly loaded plates and secure collars. Clear the area and prepare a safe rack. Practice an unloaded hinge first.

1 Take the bar safely

Stand about hip-width. Grip overhand outside your knees, thumbs wrapped and wrists steady. Unrack the light bar close to your body.

2 Set the hinge

Soften your knees and push hips back. Brace your abdomen and keep your neck and back neutral. Let arms hang below your shoulders. Hinge only as far as you can maintain position.

3 Drive elbows back

Exhale and draw the bar toward your lower chest or upper abdomen. Let shoulder blades come together naturally. Keep the torso steady; avoid shrugging, standing up or striking your body.

4 Lower with control

Inhale and straighten the elbows back to the hanging start. Allow natural shoulder-blade movement without rounding your lower back. Keep feet, knees and hips stable.

Form reminders

- Hold your torso angle through both phases.
- Avoid excessive elbow flare or curling your wrists.
- Keep the bar clear of your knees and both grips fixed.
- Reduce load or range if you need momentum or lose alignment.

Finish safely

- After the set, extend your hips with a steady back and rerack safely. Do not shift your footing or release the bar during the movement.
- Stop for pain or dizziness. If a light load still prevents a stable hinge, choose a supported row.

References

1. ACE - What Is the Best Back Exercise? (contentcdn.eacefitness.com)
2. NCSF - Correcting the Bent-Over Row (www.ncsf.org)
3. CSCCa - Barbell Bent Over Row (www.csc.ca.org)
4. Jeremy Ethier - How To Do Barbell Rows (builtwithscience.com)