

Bodyweight Split Squat

Equipment: Bodyweight; no equipment

Primary target: Quadriceps: extend the front knee / Gluteus maximus: extends the hip

A compound leg exercise performed in a fixed staggered stance. Train each side without stepping between repetitions, developing leg strength and balance using bodyweight.



01 START POSITION



02 LOWER WITH CONTROL

AI-generated illustration showing key positions

How to perform

01 Set a staggered stance Keep the feet about hip-width apart sideways, with one foot behind. Plant the entire front foot. Support the rear foot through its forefoot/toes, heel raised. Brace the trunk and face hips forward.

02 Lower by bending both knees Inhale and bend both knees, lowering the rear knee toward the floor. Track the front knee with the toes, keep the front heel down, and stop at a controlled, comfortable depth without striking the floor.

03 Push through the front foot Exhale and press through the whole front foot to rise. Keep both foot positions fixed, avoid snapping the knee backward, and complete repetitions before changing sides.

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Muscles and technique checks

Muscle roles

Primary Quadriceps: extend the front knee / Gluteus maximus: extends the hip

Assisting Hamstrings: assist hip function and control / Adductors: assist hip extension and pelvic control

Stabilizing Gluteus medius and other hip stabilizers: control pelvis and thigh alignment / Abdominal and back muscles: maintain trunk position / Calf and foot muscles: support ankle control and balance

Muscle demands change with stance and trunk angle. The rear leg provides support while the front leg supplies most of the drive.

Technique cues and common mistakes

KEEP IN MIND

- Front foot flat; rear heel raised
- Keep the stance fixed; move up and down
- Bend both knees
- Let the front knee track with the toes
- Keep a neutral, steady trunk

AVOID

- Lifting the front heel
- Collapsing the front knee inward
- Balancing on a tightrope-width stance
- Stepping between repetitions
- Bouncing or striking the rear knee on the floor

A small natural forward lean is acceptable. Prioritize foot contact and knee control rather than forcing a perfectly vertical torso or a universal knee-behind-toes rule. Adjust stance length to your build and comfort.

Train with control

Warm up, begin with a shallow range, and use a depth you can control. Lightly hold a stable support if balance is uncertain. Stop for pain, numbness or dizziness. Seek qualified advice for an existing knee or hip injury or persistent symptoms.

References

1. Muscle & Strength - [Split Squat Video Exercise Guide](#)
2. PureGym - [How To Do Split Squats](#)
3. Song et al. (2023) - [Step length and lower-limb mechanics in the split squat](#)
4. Mayo Clinic - [Weight training: proper technique](#)
5. Get Exercise Confident - [Perfect Split Squat: Technique and Common Mistakes](#)

Linked sources checked 16 October 2026. Muscle roles explain the movement, not measured activation or hypertrophy percentages.