

Pull-Up

Strict overhand bodyweight technique

Key positions



1. Start: controlled straight-arm hang



2. Pull: drive both elbows down



3. Top: chin above bar height

Muscles worked

Main muscles

- Latissimus dorsi: draws the upper arms toward the trunk to help raise the body.
- Upper back, including rhomboids and trapezius: supports shoulder-blade movement.

Supporting muscles

- Biceps, brachialis and other elbow flexors assist the pull; posterior deltoids also contribute.
- Forearm muscles maintain the grip; trunk muscles help control body position.

What makes it useful

A compound vertical pull that raises your body toward a fixed overhead bar. It develops back and arm pulling strength, grip and shoulder-blade control. This guide uses an overhand grip with a steady trunk and quiet legs.

Movement & technique

Pull-Up | Keep the body steady. Control the full movement.

Before you start

Check that the bar is secure and the area is clear. Reach it from stable footing. Start around shoulder width or a little wider, adjusting the grip to your build and comfortable shoulder movement.

1 Grip and settle

Take a closed overhand grip, palms facing away, with thumbs wrapped. Clear the floor and straighten your elbows while retaining shoulder control. Brace gently and let any swinging settle.

2 Pull with control

Coordinate shoulder-blade movement with elbow bending and pull up evenly. Think of driving both elbows down. Keep your trunk and legs steady without kicking or excessively arching your lower back.

3 Clear the bar

Raise your body until your chin is above bar height. Keep your head in a comfortable position instead of craning your neck. Leave clearance for your face and neck, with hands and bar staying fixed.

4 Lower fully

Lower smoothly to straight elbows, controlling shoulders and elbows throughout. Allow the shoulder blades to move naturally as your arms extend. Avoid suddenly dropping into the bottom; settle before the next repetition.

Form reminders

- Keep the same hand positions and pull evenly. Adjust grip width for comfortable shoulder movement.
- Let the shoulder blades move with your arms rather than forcing them into one fixed position.
- Keep the trunk and legs quiet; avoid kicking, swinging and kipping.
- Avoid prolonged breath holding; exhale as you rise and inhale as you lower.

Finish safely

- Use appropriate assistance if you cannot control a complete bodyweight repetition. Stop for pain or dizziness.
- Do not drop suddenly into the hang. Finish by returning your feet to a stable platform or the floor before releasing your grip.

References

1. NASM - Pull-Up (www.nasm.org)
2. NASM - Chin-Ups vs. Pull-Ups (www.nasm.org)
3. ACE - 4 Moves to Help You Master the Pull-up (www.acefitness.org)
4. Calisthenicmovement - The Perfect Pull Up (movement reference) (www.youtube.com)