

Romanian Deadlift

Barbell hip hinge from a standing start

Key positions



1. Start: standing with soft knees



2. Lower: send hips back



3. Bottom: stop within control

Muscles worked

Main muscles

- Hamstrings extend the hips and accept load while lengthening during descent.
- Gluteus maximus extends the hips to raise the torso.

Supporting muscles

- Adductor magnus assists hip extension.
- Spinal erectors and abdominals stabilize; upper back and lats steady the bar, while forearms maintain grip.

What makes it useful

A standing hip hinge emphasizing hamstrings and glutes with limited knee movement. Depth varies with build and mobility; the bar does not need to reach the floor.

Movement & technique

Romanian Deadlift | Keep soft knees and guide the bar close to your legs.

Before you start

Practice an unloaded hinge first. Use light, evenly loaded plates with secure collars, a suitable thigh-to-waist-height rack and a clear area.

1 Set up standing

Stand about hip-width. Hold the bar outside your legs with a closed overhand grip at your thighs. Soften your knees, brace and keep your neck and back neutral.

2 Send hips backward

Inhale and hinge, slowly guiding the bar close along your legs. Keep arms straight, knee bend modest and your whole foot planted.

3 Stop at controlled depth

Stop with hamstring tension while maintaining spinal and pelvic control. Knee-to-mid-shin height is a guide, not a target. Avoid rounding your back to reach lower; floor contact is unnecessary.

4 Extend hips to return

Exhale and use glutes and hamstrings to return upright, keeping the bar close. Do not pull with your arms or lean backward at the top.

Form reminders

- Keep knees soft without sinking into a squat.
- Let your gaze follow the hinge without craning your neck.
- Keep the bar close and arms straight; do not row it.
- Prioritize control over depth; avoid bouncing or painful range.

Finish safely

- Return to a stable upright position and rerack securely.
- Reduce load or range if position deteriorates; return to an unloaded hinge when needed. Stop for pain or dizziness.

References

1. NSCA - Romanian Deadlift (RDL) (www.nasca.com)
2. ACE - The Romanian Deadlift (www.acefitness.org)
3. NASM - Romanian Deadlift Barbell (www.nasm.org)
4. Jeff Nippard - Romanian Deadlifts (movement reference) (www.youtube.com)