

Standing Barbell Overhead Press

Front-of-body strict standing press

Key positions



1. Start: support the bar near the upper chest



2. Overhead: balance above a braced trunk

Muscles worked

Main muscles

- Anterior and middle deltoids: the main shoulder muscles raising the upper arms overhead.

Supporting muscles

- Triceps extend the elbows; the upper chest assists the press.
- Trapezius and other shoulder muscles support scapular movement and shoulder stability.
- Abdominal, gluteal and spinal erector muscles stabilize the standing trunk and pelvis.

What makes it useful

A standing multi-joint press from the upper chest to overhead. The shoulders and triceps move the bar while the trunk stays braced without a leg drive. Begin light within your comfortable overhead range.

Movement & technique

Standing Barbell Overhead Press | Brace your trunk and glutes. Clear your face, press overhead, and lower slowly.

Before you start

Set rack hooks around upper-chest height. Check the bar, plates, collars and overhead clearance. Choose a light load and establish a safe way to return the bar to the rack.

1 Set your grip and stance

Take a closed overhand grip slightly outside shoulder width. Unrack and plant your feet about hip-to-shoulder width. Hold the bar near the front shoulders/upper chest, supported over the forearms.

2 Brace and align the elbows

Inhale and brace your abs and glutes with ribs over pelvis. Set the elbows naturally forward to support the bar. Avoid a knee dip, leg drive or extra low-back arch.

3 Clear the face and press

Move your head back just enough to clear the chin and press upward. Once the bar clears the forehead, return your head underneath. Allow natural scapular upward rotation and extend the elbows under control above your body.

4 Lower to the same start

Balance at the top and breathe out. Clear your face as you bend the elbows and lower to the same comfortable upper-chest start. Keep feet planted and trunk stable, then rerack after your repetitions.

Form reminders

- Support the bar over the heel of the hand/forearm and keep the same grip.
- Avoid leaning back under the bar or using a leg drive.
- Balance the overhead load above mid-foot without pinning the shoulders down.
- Use a controlled range without forced elbow/knee hyperextension or neck extension.

Finish safely

- Stop for shoulder, elbow, wrist or back pain or dizziness. Reduce the load or modify the exercise if overhead motion requires a large back arch.
- Keep the bar clear of your face/head and rerack under control. Avoid forced repetitions or prolonged breath-holding; seek coaching assistance when needed.

References

1. ISSA - Barbell & Dumbbell Overhead Press Guide (www.issaonline.com)
2. ISSA - Overhead Press Form and Common Mistakes (www.issaonline.com)
3. NSCA - Exploring the Standing Barbell Overhead Press (abstract) (doi.org)
4. ScottHermanFitness - Overhead Press (movement reference) (www.youtube.com)