

8

Calisthenics



In this chapter you will learn about:

- ◆ Proper form and guidelines for performing calisthenics.
- ◆ Designing a calisthenic exercise program.
- ◆ Abdominal exercise techniques.

Calisthenics require minimal equipment and can be performed in almost any location. These exercises can be used to develop and maintain muscle strength and muscle endurance, and can be particularly useful when strength training equipment is not available.

Calisthenic Guidelines

When performing calisthenics to develop muscle strength or endurance, you should follow the same recommendations outlined in [Chapter 7](#). Intensity is largely based on the number of sets and reps, and the length of rest periods. Resistance is provided by body weight rather than an external resistance. Proper form for calisthenic exercises follows many of the general exercise guidelines outlined in [Chapter 7](#), including muscle balance and exercise order. Any of these exercises can be added to your gym-based routines to create more variety. Detailed instructions for some calisthenic exercises are in [Table 8-1](#) (adapted from *The Navy SEAL Physical Fitness Guide*.)

To begin a calisthenics program select one exercise per muscle group from [Table 8-1](#). Perform this routine two to three times per week.

- ◆ For each exercise, start with one set of eight reps. Rest 60 seconds after each set.
- ◆ Increase your workout each week by adding one to two reps until you can do 12 reps.

- ◆ Once you have reached this point, do two sets of eight reps of each exercise. Again, increase your workout by one to two reps per set each week until you can perform two sets of 12 reps.
- ◆ Once you have reached this point, do three sets of eight reps; again, increasing your workout by one or two reps per set each week until you can do three sets of 12 reps.
- ◆ Once you can do three sets of 12 reps, try increasing the difficulty of your workout by: 1) changing the exercises you perform; 2) decreasing your rest periods; 3) using a weighted pack or having a partner provide resistance; 4) exercising one side of the body at a time. Other suggestions are in [Table 8-1](#).



Table 8-1. Calisthenic Exercises Arranged by Muscle Group

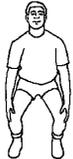
NECK	<p>Neck Rotations Lie on back. Count 1: Lift head up and over to side. Count 2: Bring head to center; Count 3: Bring head to other side. Count 4: Return head to start position. Works neck flexors.</p>	
LEGS	<p>Straight Leg Raise Sit on the edge of a bench, keeping back straight. Place hands behind you for support. Bend left knee 90°. Straighten right leg in front of you with your right heel resting on the deck. Count 1: Slowly raise your right leg, lifting it no higher than your hips, keeping your back straight. Count 2: Lower heel to 1 inch above the deck. Works hip flexors. Variation to increase difficulty: use an ankle weight.</p> <p>Hand to Knee Squat Place feet shoulder-width apart, arms at sides. Count 1: Bend at hip and knees, keep back straight and feet flat, until your fingertips pass knees. Knees should not go beyond toes. Count 2: Push through the heels to return to start position. Works quadriceps, hamstrings, and gluteals.</p>	 

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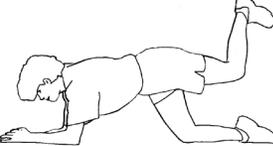
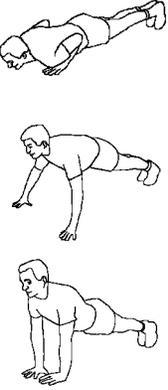
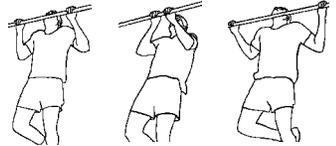
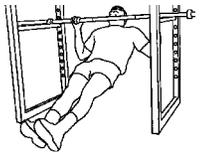
LEGS	<p>Burt Reynolds Lie on left side with head supported by hand, bend right leg and place it in front of left knee. Count 1: Lift left leg approximately 8 inches off deck. Count 2: Lower left leg to 1 inch above the deck. Repeat for the right leg. Works inner thigh (hip adductors).</p>  <p>Leg Lifts Lie on left side, bend both knees at a 90° angle from torso. Count 1: Lift right leg 6-8 inches, keeping knee and ankle level. Count 2: Lower right leg to 1 inch above left leg. Repeat for the left leg. Works outer thigh (hip abductors).</p> 	<p>One-Legged Squat Shift weight to right leg, lifting the left leg straight out in front of you. Count 1: Bend right knee until it is over your toes. Count 2: Push up through right heel to return to start position. Repeat using other leg. Works quadriceps, hamstring, and gluteal muscles.</p>  <p>Calf Raises Stand on step with heels hanging off edge. Count 1: Lift heels 3 inches. Count 2: Lower heels 3 inches. Works calf muscles. Variations: Perform exercise with toes pointed inward, straight forward, and turned outward.</p> 
GLUTEALS	<p>Rear Thigh Raises Start on hands and knees and forearms. Lift left leg, keeping it bent 90°, so that left knee is no higher than hips. Keep back flat and hips level. Count 1: Lower left leg 6 inches. Count 2: Lift leg to start position. Switch legs and repeat. Works gluteals. Variation to increase difficulty: Straighten leg to be lifted.</p> 	
LOWER BACK	<p>Superman Lie on stomach. Count 1: Lift opposite arm and leg (i.e., right arm, left leg) 6 inches off deck. Hold for 3-5 seconds. Avoid hyperextension of the back. Count 2: Slowly lower arm and leg to deck. Repeat using opposite arm and leg. Works lower back and gluteals. Variation to increase difficulty: Add weights to arms and legs.</p> 	<p>Prone Back Extension Lie face down, hands clasped behind back. Count 1: Lift upper torso until shoulders and upper chest are off Deck. Hold 3-5 seconds. Avoid hyperextension of back. Count 2: Return to start position. Works lower back. Variations to increase difficulty: Place hands behind back (easiest), behind head, straight over head (most difficult).</p> 

Table 8-1. Calisthenic Exercises Arranged by Muscle Group

CHEST, SHOULDERS, ARMS	<p>Push-Ups Lie on stomach, feet together and hands shoulder width apart on deck, head facing forward, body straight. Extend arms. Count 1: Bend elbows 90°, lowering chest toward deck. Count 2: Return to start position. Works triceps, chest, shoulder, and abdominals. Variations: Fingertip Push-ups - Begin as above, except use fingertips to support weight. Works forearms and improves grip strength. Triceps Push-ups - Begin as above, except place your hands close together beneath your chest and spread fingers apart. Your thumbs and index fingers of both hands should almost touch.</p>  <p>Dips Rest hands on parallel bars. Extend arms; legs are not to support your weight unless needed for assistance. Count 1: Bend the elbows until shoulders are level with the elbows. Count 2: Extend arms to return to start position. Works triceps, chest and shoulders.</p> 	BACK, ARMS	<p>Pull-Ups Begin from a dead hang on a horizontal bar, arms shoulder-width apart, palms facing out. Count 1: Pull body up until chin touches bar. Do not kick. Count 2: Return to start position. Works the back and forearms. Grip variations: Narrow, Wide.</p>  <p>Incline Pull-Ups Using a low bar, lie or sit on the deck with chest under bar, place hands shoulder-width apart on bar, palms out. Count 1: Pull upper body toward bar at a 45° angle. Squeeze shoulder blades together during movement. Count 2: Extend arms. Works back, shoulders, and arms.</p>  <p>Chin-Ups Begin from a dead hang (i.e., full extension) on a horizontal bar, arms shoulder-width apart, palms facing in. Count 1: Pull body upward until chin touches top of bar. Do not kick. Count 2: Return to start position. Works the back, biceps.</p> 
ABDOMINALS	<p>Crunches Lie on back, knees bent 45°, hands behind head, elbows back. Count 1: Lift upper torso until shoulder blades are off the deck, tilt pelvis so lower back is pressed to the deck. Lead with the chest, not the head. Count 2: Return to start position. Works abdominals and obliques. Variations to increase difficulty: bring knees toward chest; extend legs vertically in the air; place a rolled towel under lower back. Arms may be placed (easy to most difficult) by sides, across chest, hands behind head, or hands clasped above head.</p> 	<p>Curl-up Lie on back with knees bent, feet flat on deck, heels 10 inches from buttocks and anchored down. Cross arms and hands on chest or shoulders. Count 1: Curl torso up, touching elbows to upper thighs while hands remain on the chest or shoulders. Exhale as you lift. Count 2: Lie back until the lower edge of your shoulder blades touch the deck. Inhale as you lower. Works abdominals, obliques, and hip flexors. Note: Curl-ups are part of the Navy PRT. However, if you experience any lower back pain when performing curl-ups, try performing crunches instead.</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">OPNAVIST 6110.1E</p>	