

# GO BACK TO BACK THIS SUMMER

## Incorporating the posterior chain into outdoor training

The posterior chain is often neglected in outdoor training sessions. By including a selection of back exercises in your outdoor training you can help clients attain a more balanced physique, says *Jodie Low*.

**T**he explosion of boot camps in recent years is testament to the huge popularity of outdoor training in Australia. And who can blame clients and participants for wanting to get the blood pumping in the fresh air after spending tiresome hours stuck inside in front of a computer or on the road slumped behind the wheel? We live in one of the most beautiful countries in world with a climate conducive to training in the great outdoors. We just need to make sure that the exercises we oversee in the parks and on the beaches target the same range of muscle groups as those prescribed to indoor training clients.

### From front to back

A major problem I have repeatedly noticed with outdoor training is the dominance of exercises that focus on working the anterior chain, and the neglect of moves that challenge the posterior chain. The posterior chain is a group of muscles, tendons and ligaments on the posterior kinetic chain of the body. Some of these muscles include the biceps femoris, gluteus maximus, erector spinae muscle group, trapezius and posterior deltoids.

Put simply, too many outdoor training sessions feature too much 'push' and not enough 'pull'. A consequence of this imbalanced training is that the front of the body will become far more conditioned than the back of the body.

Is this a case of trainers training their clients to strengthen and condition only the areas they can see in the mirror? Do we neglect what we can't see? Do we train what we already feel strong in? Or could it simply be that trainers find it easier to work the anterior than the posterior chain in outdoor training sessions? I witness session after session of push ups, commando crawls and sit ups, which are all easily added into shuttle runs and training drills. And then, of course, there are the ubiquitous outdoor boxing sessions: a great workout, but highly focused on the front of the body.

The bottom line is, the anterior chain and the posterior chain are both important and should be included for a balanced work out. In addition to the reduced performance

it facilitates, an imbalance of strength and power between the muscles of the two chains is also one of the quickest routes to injury.

### Restoring balance

As personal trainers we have a responsibility to our clients to give them what they want, by helping them reach their goals. More importantly, however, is our responsibility to give them what they need, by providing them balanced workouts.

If your client spends the majority of their time in a sedentary job, often focused on a computer screen, the chances are their posterior chain will weaken and their posture will be compromised. Over time their spine will deviate away from good posture to forward head position, round shoulders, tight pectorals and weakened back muscles. All of this can lead to unnecessary stress on joints and ligaments – not to mention the fact that slumped posture looks terrible!

The spine is designed to help absorb shock and keep you balanced, but as the spinal position changes this ability becomes compromised. It is critical, therefore, that importance is placed on strengthening the back for a balanced body. It would make sense that if clients are using their own body weight to work out the anterior chain, they should, ideally, also be able to use it to strengthen the posterior chain. If you can push your own body weight, you should be able pull your own body weight.

*Put simply, too many outdoor training sessions feature too much 'push' and not enough 'pull.'*

## The exercises

The following back exercises are ideal for inclusion in outdoor sessions;

### BACK ROW

Use either an outdoor training station or equalisers which are freestanding, allowing back rows to be performed without needing anything to suspend from.



Level 1: Bent legs.



Level 2: Feet placed on ball.

### REVERSE PLANK

Easily worked into any session, if tight chest, place hands higher (e.g. equalisers or bench). The higher the hands, the easier the exercise.



Level 1: Wrists under shoulders, ankles under knees.



Level 2: Wrists under shoulders, straight legs, full plank position.

### BUDDY SYSTEM UNILATERAL WIDE ROW

Compliments a boxing session perfectly, partnering up, using the opposite muscles, getting some thoracic mobilisation through the spine.



Level 1: Squat position, bilateral wide row.



Level 2: Squat position, bilateral wide row, walking backwards with resistance.



### SUPERMAN

In both levels, the head lifts from the ground, facilitating thoracic extension. Emphasis should be placed on length through the spine, not height.



Level 1: Prone, lift opposite arm and leg.



Level 2: Prone, lift arms and legs.

#### RECOMMENDED EXERCISES TO SUPERSET:

- ▶ Push ups with Pull ups
- ▶ Abdominal work with Superman
- ▶ Plank with Reverse plank
- ▶ Boxing with Bi-lateral row



#### Jodie Low

The co-owner of Supply Fitness, Jodie has over 15 years fitness industry experience and specialises in delivering outdoor group training and Pilates services. A former Miss Fitness Australia, Jodie's fitness experience and presenting skills have allowed her to host and co-host a number of TV shows, including Crunch, Aerobics Oz Style, Inside Sport and Gymvision. For more information visit [www.jodielow.com.au](http://www.jodielow.com.au)

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