



upper management

Want serious bang for your fitness buck? Hit the floor (or steps, or ball) for old-school push-ups, the undefeated world champion of body-weight exercises



SHOULDERS. BICEPS. TRICEPS. *If your gown is sleeveless or backless, you'll want to tone every square inch north of your waist. Happily, push-ups can help you do just that. (Bonus: They also firm your core.) The best part? You can tweak this adaptable move to your fitness level.*



THE INCLINE PUSH-UP

Degree of Difficulty



HOW: Place your hands on a stable surface, slightly wider than shoulder-distance apart. Starting with your arms straight, lower your torso by flaring your arms at a 45-degree angle. Push up until your arms are straight again. Do as many reps as possible while maintaining good form.

WHY: Elevating your hands reduces resistance, scaling back the required effort. "You're pushing a smaller portion of your body weight," explains Edward Gemdjan, a trainer for Equinox gyms. "With my female clients, there's often a lack of shoulder strength. So I always start them with an incline push-up."



THE CLASSIC PUSH-UP

Degree of Difficulty



HOW: With your hands flat on the floor, proceed as at left. To maximize each rep with all three types of push-ups, "you want to tighten your glutes and abs and maintain a nice straight line," says strength coach Joe Dowdell, author of *Ultimate You: A 4-Phase Total Body Makeover*. And keep your head in a neutral position, so you're staring straight at the floor.

WHY: Done correctly, a standard push-up engages virtually every major muscle group. Plus, you can't beat the convenience. "It's a great exercise," says Dowdell, "because you can literally do it anywhere."



THE DECLINE PUSH-UP

Degree of Difficulty



HOW: Assume push-up position with your feet elevated to a comfortable level. (You'll know.) Opt for a stable surface or, if you're up for it, an exercise ball. It will undoubtedly wobble a bit, but that will only work your core harder as you attempt to hold yourself steady. Proceed as at far left.

WHY: This extra-credit move not only chisels your upper body but can boost overall strength, too. "The more muscles you recruit in an exercise, the more calories you burn," notes Dowdell. Ripped arms and torched calories? Sign us up.