

UPPER-BODY FOUNDATIONAL STRENGTH EXERCISES

Pull-Up

Focus: Strengthen the latissimus dorsi and the shoulder adductors that help with power production in the pull.

Procedure

1. Use a stool or jump up to grab a pull-up bar with an overhand grip (so your palms face away from you). Your hands should be slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.
2. Hang briefly with your arms straight. Your feet should not touch the ground.
3. Using your arms and the muscles of your upper back, pull your body upward until your chin passes above the bar.
4. Hold this position briefly and slowly lower your body back to the starting position.
5. Do not allow your body to swing; keep the upper body rigid.



Variation: The chin-up is performed by reversing the position of the hands on the grip so that the palms face you. This places more emphasis on the biceps muscle of the upper arm.

Note: Swimmers may find they cannot do more than one or two pull-ups. If this is the case, substitute lat pull-downs for pull-ups or enlist the help of a teammate to support your feet as you execute your pull-ups.

Lat Pull-Down

Focus: Develop strength in the latissimus dorsi and the muscles of the upper back—some of the most important muscles for generating the power behind your pull.

Procedure

1. Loop a piece of strong elastic tubing over a lifeguard chair or through a fence.
2. Sit on a stability ball or kneel on the pool deck so there is tension in the band when the arms are extended overhead (*a*).
3. Pinch your shoulder blades together and pull your upper arms to your sides until your hands reach about ear level. Keep the elbows pointed out toward the sides throughout the movement. The elbows should be bent 90 degrees in the finish position (*b*).
4. Hold this position briefly and return to the starting position.

Note: The lats are the muscles that give many swimmers their V shape and are used every time a swimmer pulls. You likely will want to use a fairly heavy resistance when training these muscles since the lats are some of the strongest muscles in the body.

Variation: You can also perform this exercise in the weight room using a lat pull-down machine. Sit at a lat pull-down machine and grab the pull bar so that your hands are slightly wider than shoulder-width apart—the wider the grip, the more you will engage the lats. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and pull the bar straight down to your upper chest. Slowly return to the starting position.



Core Chest Press

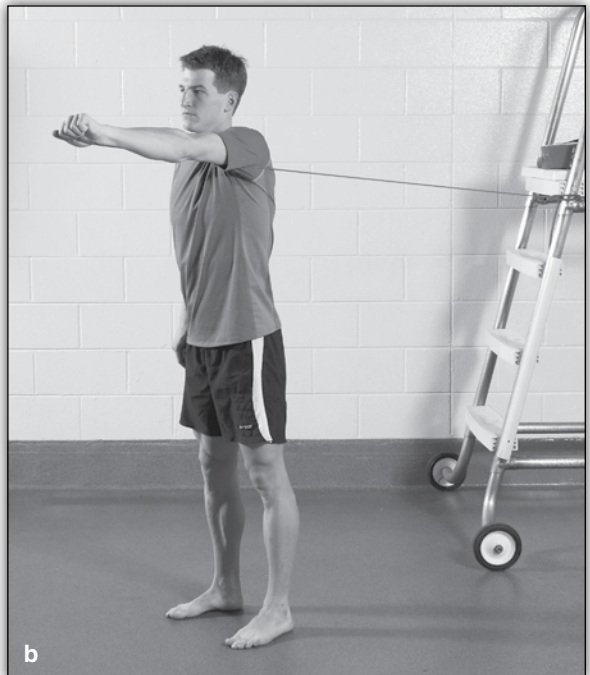
Focus: Improve strength in the chest muscles while also developing core stability.

Procedure

1. Attach one end of a piece of elastic tubing to a fence or other stationary object at shoulder height. Grab the other end with one hand and face away from the fence.
2. Hold the tubing at chest level and step away from the attachment point so there is tension in the tubing in this position (*a*).
3. Contract the core muscles and lock down the pelvis by contracting the abdominal, lower-back, and gluteal muscles.
4. Push the hand straight away from the body (*b*). Do not lean into the exercise or use the legs—keep a stable posture.
5. Slowly return the hand to the starting position.

Variations

- You can also perform this exercise using both arms at the same time (this is actually an easier version of the exercise). Loop the elastic tubing around a backstroke flagpole, around another post, or through a fence and grasp one end with each hand.
- You can make the exercise more challenging by standing on one leg or while balancing on a foam pad or a pillow.



Reverse Fly

Focus: Develop strength in the upper back and the rear part of the shoulders.

Procedure

1. Lie facedown on a stability ball with your feet on the ground. Hold a light weight in each hand. Your body should be at about a 45-degree angle to the ground.
2. Bend your elbows 90 degrees and allow the arms to hang toward the ground (*a*).
3. Squeeze the shoulder blades together and lift the arms until they are parallel to the ground (*b*). Keep the elbows bent throughout the exercise.

Variation: You can also perform this exercise by looping a piece of elastic tubing to a fence at chest level. Grasp one end of the tubing in each hand and pull the hands outward to the sides while also squeezing your shoulder blades together.

