



LEGS WORKOUT GUIDE

**MUSCLE
& FITNESS**

IF YOU'VE NEVER WORKED LEGS before, this routine is just what you need for a good start. Created around machine moves, it allows your body to gradually adapt to the new muscle stimulus you're giving it.

➡➡ Don't go overboard on your weight selection. As a beginner, lighter is better; it's more vital that you learn good form early. Once you teach yourself bad habits, they're very difficult to break.

#40

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Smith-Machine Squat	3	15, 12, 12
Leg Extension	2	10-12
Lying Leg Curl	2	10-12
Standing Calf Raise	2	15



SMITH-MACHINE SQUAT

START: Stand with the bar across your shoulders and traps, grasping it just outside your shoulders. Twist the bar to unrack it.

MOVE: With your chest high, head up and back slightly arched, bend your knees and hips as if you're sitting back in a chair until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Reverse the motion by driving through your heels and pressing your hips forward to return to the starting position.



LEG EXTENSION

START: Adjust the seat backrest (if so equipped) and footpad so your knees are at the edge of the bench and your ankles are just below the footpad/rollers. Sit back against the backrest, if applicable.

MOVE: Grasp the handles or the bench edges behind your hips and keep your upper body stable as you straighten your legs in a smooth movement until fully extended. Contract your quads at the top and lower under control. For full benefits, don't let the weight touch down between repetitions. Keep the motion fluid and concentrate on feeling the muscle work.



LYING LEG CURL

START: Lie face down on a leg-curl machine and position your Achilles' tendons below the padded lever, your knees just off the edge of the bench. Grasp the bench or the handles for stability. Make sure your knees are slightly bent to protect them from over-extension.

MOVE: Raise your feet toward your glutes in a strong but deliberate motion, squeezing the muscles at the top, then lower to the start position. Keep your hips down on the bench; letting them rise to get more leverage will take emphasis away from the hams. A good mental trick on hamstring moves is to think of them like the biceps of your arm; on each rep, you want to flex them into a tight ball, then release.



STANDING CALF RAISE

START: Stand squarely beneath the shoulder pads of the calf-raise machine, with the balls of your feet at the edge of the foot rest. (Note: The exercise is shown on the Smith machine here.)

MOVE: With your legs straight, lower yourself to stretch your calves, then rise as high as you can, squeezing the muscles.



SPEED IS KING IN THIS ULTRA-FAST

thigh blaster. And instead of wimping out on machines to rip through your legs in a hurry, you get the benefits of the best two exercises ever invented: squats and deadlifts. No, this isn't easy, but there's no doubt it'll get you results.

➡➡ Set up for both exercises in the first compound set before beginning. This means having the step-up box and dumbbells next to the squat rack before you start your squats. (On the second compound set, you need nothing except your own body for the mountain climbers, so any potential equipment problems are eliminated.)

#41

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Walk/Jog 3 minutes on treadmill		
Barbell Squat (compound set with)	3	12, 10, 8
Dumbbell Step-Up	3	10 per leg
Traditional Deadlift (compound set with)	3	12, 10, 8
Mountain Climber	3	30-60 seconds



BARBELL SQUAT

START: Step under the bar in a shoulder-width stance, and keep your elbows back to form a ridge along your upper back where the bar can sit.

MOVE: Keeping your head up and your body tensed, bend at the knees and let your glutes track backward to lower yourself. At the point where your thighs are parallel to the floor, reverse direction, driving up forcefully through your heels to a standing position.

DUMBBELL STEP-UP

START: Place a knee-high step in front of you and grasp a dumbbell in each hand. Stand with your feet in a comfortable shoulder-width stance.

MOVE: Step forward with one leg onto the step and drive through that thigh to bring your body upward. Bring the trailing leg to the top of the step and stand on the box, then step back with the opposite leg to the floor and lower yourself. Be sure to keep your lower back in its natural arch and your upper body upright through the whole movement. (If you prefer, instead of alternating legs, you can complete all reps for one leg, then do all your reps for the other – in this case, your working leg steps onto the bench and also steps back to the floor.)





TRADITIONAL DEADLIFT

START: The deadlift is often thought of as a back exercise – and it is, but it's also an incredible leg-builder, as you're essentially dropping into a squat in the bottom position. Grasp a barbell with a mixed grip (one palm forward, one back – this helps you maintain your grip on the barbell during the exercise). Bend deeply at your knees, look up and make sure you maintain the natural curve in your lower spine. (In fact, the minute you start losing control over your lower back and round forward, stop the set!)

MOVE: Keep your abs pulled in tight and tense your entire body, then drive through your heels to straighten your knees and bring your hips forward until you are in a standing position. Once standing, bring your shoulders back slightly and pause. Lower the barbell along the same path (close to your body all the way down) to the floor. Touch the plates lightly to the floor and begin your next rep. As a final note, don't make the common mistake of using too much lower back; bend deeply at the knees on each rep, and, as mentioned above, keep your lower spine arched.

MOUNTAIN CLIMBER

START: Get into a push-up position, placing both hands about shoulder-width apart on the floor and set your feet so you're on your toes.

MOVE: Without moving your hands, bring one leg forward, then start alternating your foot position, pushing up off the floor with your feet and switching foot position, one forward, one back, as quickly as you can for the prescribed time.



LEGS ARE THE HARDEST BODYPART

to train at home. And there's so much great equipment available at the gym — power racks, leg presses, hack squats, leg extensions . . . you get the idea. However, as this routine proves, training legs at home is far from impossible.

➔➔ The front squat was included instead of the rear squat because if you're a seasoned lifter, you can "clean" the barbell into place if you don't have a rack. If this isn't an option for you, replace this move with dumbbell squats, in which you hold a dumbbell at each side to do the exercise.

#42

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Front Barbell Squat	4	15, 12, 10, 8
Dumbbell Split Jump	2	12
One-Leg Dumbbell Squat (or) Sissy Squat	3 3	10 per leg 12
Lying Dumbbell Leg Curl*	3	10-12

* See this move in **JAY'S** workout.



FRONT BARBELL SQUAT

START: In an upright, shoulder-width stance, take a barbell from a rack (or have a spotter help you), letting it rest along your upper chest. Grasp the bar with an Olympic-style grip, where you hold the bar in place with the ends of your fingers. This position can be stressful on your wrists, but stretching them out and slowly increasing the weight you use will help you adapt to this in due time. In addition to providing the most control over the bar, holding the bar in this manner also allows you to handle more weight and squeeze out more reps.

MOVE: Perform a basic squat, bending your knees and driving your hips back to lower yourself until your thighs are parallel to the floor or slightly beyond. (Look forward and maintain the natural arch in your back throughout the squat). Think of the movement like sitting back into a chair. From the bottom, drive back up through your heels to the start position.



DUMBBELL SPLIT JUMP

START: Grasp a dumbbell in each hand and step into a lunge position, one foot forward (that knee bent 90 degrees), the back leg nearly straight, toe down, knee not touching the ground.

MOVE: Push explosively off the ground using both legs and switch foot position mid-air, landing with your other foot forward. Repeat for reps — one full rep is two jumps.

ONE-LEG DUMBBELL SQUAT

START: Stand on a bench set next to a stationary object you can hold onto. Grasp a dumbbell in your free hand, step to the side of the bench so one leg is in the air (with no bench beneath it, as shown).

MOVE: As in a two-leg squat, keep your head up and back arched as you bend at the knee to lower yourself, moving your hips backward until your working thigh reaches a point parallel with the floor. From there, drive up through your heel back to a standing position. Move slowly and deliberately (especially in the deep position). Your non-exercising leg can be kept either in front of your body, which is better, or behind. To get the hang of the movement, work without the dumbbell for your first few leg workouts.



SISSY SQUAT

START: Grasp a stationary object with both hands and lean back with your body straight and knees extended.

MOVE: Let your knees bend and extend out in front of you and lean back as your torso descends. Slight changes in body position, such as leaning back further, can make this movement much harder. As your knees come forward, your heels will come up off the ground. At the bottom, simultaneously push down through your feet and drive your hips forward and up.

ARGUABLY THE BEST PRO

bodybuilder to have never won the Mr. Olympia (he finished in the top 5 for 12 years straight, 1990–2001), Shawn Ray is a guy you want to listen to when training advice is being dispensed.

➤➤ “I never map out my leg workouts, and that’s probably why my workouts are so fresh,” Shawn says. “The most consistent thing I do on leg day is a few light leg extensions first to warm up the muscles and get the blood moving.”

➤➤ Although Shawn performs regular hack squats, he also likes reverse hack squats, where you stand in a regular hack machine backward.

#43

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Unilateral Leg Extension*	4	20
Barbell Lunge	4	12
Leg Press (or) Hack Squat	4 4	15 15
Leg Extension	4	12

* See exercise description in **MILOS'** workout.

This is just a sample workout from Shawn; a firm believer in instinctive training, he changes his workout each time he goes to the gym.



B



A

BARBELL LUNGE

START: Adjust a barbell across your shoulders and traps so it rests comfortably, and focus your gaze forward. Start with both feet together, abs tight and back straight and strong.

MOVE: From this standing position, step forward with one foot, leading with your heel, and lunge down toward the floor, maintaining control over the speed of your descent. Lower yourself until your opposite knee almost touches the floor, then push back off your lead foot, returning to the start position. Complete all repetitions on one side before switching to the other.



LEG PRESS

START: Begin the exercise with your feet shoulder-width apart in the centre of the foot plate.

MOVE: Slowly lower the weight, bringing your knees toward your chest but stopping before your hips curl off the pad. Keep your lower back pressed against the seat back throughout the movement. Pause a moment before pressing through your heels to return the weight to the start position. "I see a lot of people pressing on their knees with their hands to move the weight back up," says Shawn. "Let your legs do all the work or you're cheating yourself of the full potential of the exercise."

HACK SQUAT

START: Stand with your feet slightly forward of your body and adjust your torso so the pads rest comfortably on your shoulders.

MOVE: Lean into the machine so your back is entirely supported and unlock the weight stack, slowly squatting down until your hips and knees are at, or just below, 90-degree angles. From here, stand back up by pressing through your heels to lift the sled.

Come almost to a full extension at the top without locking out your knees before descending again into your next repetition. "I'm pretty consistent on my rep speed," Shawn notes.

"I keep constant tension on my legs and maintain a continual motion throughout the set."



LEG EXTENSION

START: Adjust the machine so your back is fully supported and your legs rest comfortably over the seat; the footpad should touch just above your ankles. Grasp the handles at your sides.

MOVE: Flex hard through your quads to raise the weight stack, kicking your legs straight out in front of you. Squeeze your quads at the top of the movement before slowly returning to the start position, keeping a constant tension throughout the motion by not letting the weights hit the stack.

MILOS SARCEV, THE MAN WHO

has competed in more pro bodybuilding shows than anyone in history (72 in a span of 12 years), knows a thing or two about mental toughness. He's also come back from a devastating knee injury in 2002. Workouts like this show he has no intentions of letting up.

➡➡ Warm up is key. "I always begin my leg workout with 10 minutes of cardio, then I move to leg extensions to further warm up my muscles," Milos says.

➡➡ Change is good, he adds. "It's insanity to do the same thing over and over and expect results. Change your routine often to keep making progress."

#44

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Unilateral Leg Extension	3	15, 12, 10
Barbell Squat	5*	10, 10, 8, 6, 5
Unilateral Leg Press (or) Leg Press (both legs)**	3 3	10, 10, 8 10
Hack Squat***	3	10

* The first two sets are warm-ups.

** Milos alternates weekly between unilateral and two-legged leg presses. For two-legged press description, see the previous page.

*** On unilateral leg press weeks, Milos does drop sets instead of straight-weight sets of hack squats. For hack squat description, see previous page.



UNILATERAL LEG EXTENSION

START: Adjust the machine so your back and legs are fully supported. Hook both feet underneath the roller, but use only one at a time to lift the weight.

MOVE: Inhale and slowly contract your working quad to lift the roller until your leg reaches full extension. Exhale and squeeze for one count at the top before slowly lowering to the start. Complete all reps on one leg before switching to the other.





BARBELL SQUAT

START: Balance a barbell across your traps and stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.

MOVE: Keeping your head up and your shoulders back, squat down, kicking your hips behind you as if you were sitting in a chair. When your thighs reach parallel to the floor or slightly below, power back up to the start, stopping just short of locking your knees.



UNILATERAL LEG PRESS

START: Place one foot high on the platform, keeping the other flat on the floor for stability, and unlock the handles.

MOVE: Slowly lower the platform toward your body, keeping your foot flat and your back pressed into the seat until your knee comes close to touching your shoulder. Press back up forcefully and stop just before locking out your knee. Repeat for reps, then switch legs. "I see so many people doing 1,000-pound, one-inch leg presses," Sarcev says. "That won't help you develop anything but a big ego. [Use] a full range of motion."



"If you finish this workout without being sick to your stomach, you didn't do it right!" Milos says.

THREE-TIME ARNOLD CLASSIC

champ Jay Cutler is a superhuman figure in an otherworldly sport. With a quiet intensity, he has expanded the bounds of human potential. Now he helps you expand the bounds of your leg development with this hamstring-focused routine.

➤➤ “Weight is not a priority,” Jay says. “Hams don’t respond as much to heavy weight as they do to tight form.”

➤➤ Include stiff-legged and curling moves in any ham routine. “This ensures you work the hams from both the hip and knee joint.”

#45

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Lying Dumbbell Leg Curl*	2-3	8-12
One-Legged Machine Curl	2-3	10-12
Romanian Dumbbell Deadlift	5	8-12

* Perform 2 to 3 warm-up sets before performing the 2 to 3 working sets.

LYING DUMBBELL LEG CURL

START: Place a dumbbell at the foot of the bench so you can clamp it between your feet before you lower yourself down (or, if you have a partner, he or she can help you by putting the dumbbell in place when you lie down). “I lie face down on a bench with my kneecaps just over the edge,” Jay explains. “I place my hands on the floor or grasp the front legs of the bench for stability. In the start position your body should be in a straight line, with your hips down and your hamstrings almost fully extended — keep just a slight bend in your knees.”

MOVE: Allow the tops of your quads to dig into the bench as you slowly bring the weight up until your lower legs are fully upright. Don’t bring the weight much beyond that or you’re going to lose tension on your hams. When you get to the fully upright position, squeeze and hold for a count of one. Then as you come back down, hold your hamstrings tight as you let the weight stretch them, fighting against gravity. Keep lowering the weight until your lower legs are just short of parallel.





A



B

ROMANIAN DUMBBELL DEADLIFT

START: Stand on a bench or box, and hold a dumbbell in each hand. Your shoulders should be rotated back, and your lower back should be in its natural arch.

MOVE: Maintaining the arch in your lower back and holding your hamstrings taut, bend from the hips, feeling a stretch in your glutes and hams. "You want to avoid relaxing your hamstrings," Jay cautions. "That transfers the effort to other body parts and reduces hamstring stimulation." Lower your upper body and keep your head up as you allow the dumbbells to naturally come out to your sides. Then bring your torso back up, going through the same track of motion in reverse.



A



B

ONE-LEGGED MACHINE CURL

START: Using either a standing or supported one-legged curl machine, step into the machine with one leg under the pad.

MOVE: Bring the weight up slowly, stopping at the point where you feel a maximal contraction in your hamstrings. "Some guys bring the weight up really fast and let it bounce off their butt, then catch it on the way back down. That's terrible form, and it's a good way to pull a hammy or throw out your lower back," Jay cautions. At that point of maximal contraction, squeeze and hold for a count of one, then slowly lower the weight. Avoid letting the weight touch down to the stack at the bottom.

MORE WORKOUTS TO TRY:

#46) As #46, #47 and #48 all emphasise different parts of your thigh, they work well together. Rotate between the three every leg workout (for instance, if you work legs twice per week, do #46 Monday, hit #47 Thursday and #48 the following Monday).

#47) If your hams lag behind your quad development, you can do this ham-focused workout in addition to a regular leg workout each week.

#48) The adductor machine mentioned is the one you place your inner knees against pads and squeeze your thighs together against resistance. The abductor machine is where you place the outside of your knees against pads and open your thighs against resistance.

#49) Not only will this workout improve your squat, but it will build mass simultaneously. The superset is the same as a compound set, except it involves two opposing muscle groups (in this case, quads and hams).

#50) This is for those of you who want to refine your thigh muscles. For the bench jump, stand next to the long side of a flat bench, leap onto the bench with both feet, then jump backward to the floor. As you become more adept, go faster.

#51) If your quads outmuscle your hams, this routine will help even the score.

#52) Tack this onto your leg workout, or use by itself.

#46 QUADS EMPHASIS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Leg Press	5	15, 12, 10, 8, 6
Barbell Step-Up†	3	10-12
Hack Squat	3	10-12
Leg Extension	3	10-12

† Like Dumbbell step-up in **15-MINUTE** except using a barbell.

#47 HAMSTRINGS EMPHASIS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Romanian Deadlift	4	12, 10, 8, 6
Leg Curl*	3	10-12
Unilateral Lying Leg Curl†	2	15, 10

* Seated or standing. † One leg at a time.

#48 WIDTH EMPHASIS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Smith-Machine Squat	4*	10
Side Lunge†	4	12
Adductor Machine (compound set with)	3	6-8
Abductor Machine	3	12-15

* Two sets with feet 4 to 6 inches apart; two sets with feet just outside shoulder-width. † Similar to lunge in **SHAWN'S** workout, but step out to each side rather than forward.





#49 POWER UP YOUR SQUAT

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Leg Extension	2	15
Barbell Squat	8 5, 5, 3, 1	15, 12, 10, 8,
Leg Press	4	12, 10, 8, 8
Leg Extension (superset with) Seated Leg Curl	2 2	12 12

#50 HIGH DEFINITION

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Leg Press Machine	4	15-20
Split Squat*	3	15
Tri-Set:		
Hack Squat	3	12-15
Alternating Dumbbell Lunge	3	10†
Bench Jump	3	15

* Like barbell lunge in **SHAWN'S** workout, except you stay in the forward position and squat up and down (no stepping forward or back). † Per leg.

#51 PRE-EXHAUST

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Leg Extension	3	12-15
Smith-Machine Squat	4	8, 10, 12, 15
Leg Press (or) Hack Squat	3	12-15
Lying Leg Curl (compound set with) Romanian Deadlift	3 3	12-15 10, 10, 8

#52 CALF ROUTINE

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Standing Calf Raise	4	25, 20, 15, 10
Donkey Calf Raise Machine	2	20, 15
Seated Calf Raise	3	20, 15, 10