MEDICINE BALL WORKOUTS

SAMPLE
MEDICINE BALL WORKOUTS

Strengthen Major and Supporting Muscle Groups for Increased Power, Coordination, and Core Stability

BRETT STEWART
To my kids, Vivi & Ian—you are stronger, smarter and more talented than you may ever imagine.
When you believe in yourself, anything is possible.
—Dad
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PART 1:
OVERVIEW
Interestingly enough, the above example is exactly the type of situation that got me started in medicine ball workouts. I was the director of engineering for a technology start-up and spent five days (or more) a week plopped behind a desk filling out paperwork, dealing with software development issues or attending meetings about meetings where we’d discuss why we didn’t accomplish what we talked about last meeting. Usually, the answer was to put together another meeting with the stakeholders. Buzz words abounded, but extremely little progress was made. Someone would “ping” someone about “synergies” and we’d all brainstorm about who the hell knows what for our “version 2.0” product and, before we knew it, the whole engineering team was a bunch of jaded zombies showing up for a paycheck and desperately trying to get through each mind-numbingly boring day with as little interaction with everyone else as possible. Does this sound like your workplace?

Well, Jason Warner (my co-author on Ultimate Jump Rope Workouts and 7 Weeks to 10 Pounds of Muscle) and I decided enough was enough and if we couldn’t change the working atmosphere inside the office, we were going to take full advantage of every second before the morning commute, at lunchtime and immediately after work. A huge advantage of working with your best friend and workout partner is the built-in motivation from being around someone who is pushing to reach their goals, no matter how different those goals may be from your own. Jason is all about strength; he’s 4 inches taller and 60 pounds heavier than me and loves lifting weights, packing on muscle, playing rugby and all that burly-man stuff.
What Is a Medicine Ball?

A medicine ball is also known as an exercise ball, a med ball or a fitness ball, not to be confused with an inflatable exercise ball, a physio ball, a stability ball or a buffoon ball. (Ok, I made up that last one—just trying to have a little fun with all these redundant names.)
There's a reason why nearly all sports are based around a ball. The spherical shape allows for multiple hand placement for lifting, tossing and catching in play, and also makes the perfect object for strength training or optimal sports performance. Speaking of sports, the irony is not lost on me that a bowling ball, used by some of the least-fit professional athletes on the planet, is more akin to a medicine ball than the footballs used by modern gladiators of the gridiron. It just doesn't seem to add up, right? Well, enough about that.
How to Use a Medicine Ball

If you’ve ever picked up a basketball or volleyball, all but the largest and heaviest of medicine balls shouldn’t be too much of a surprise when you first grab one. Normally, rubber-coated balls are textured to provide plenty of grip and many of the high-tech newer models feature dimples and patterns to enhance the tactile experience. Larger and heavier leather ones may take a little getting used to, but those should be handled once you’ve developed a little more experience, dexterity and strength.
Q. *What type/size/weight should I use?*

A. Well, it depends on how big your hands are, how strong you are and what your fitness goals are. This multi-part question requires at least a few answers, and is a common one I receive all the time. Experienced athletes looking to build strength while developing sports-specific proficiency should opt for the heaviest balls they can handle, while individuals looking to develop their flexibility and tone their physique are best served by easier-to-handle, lighter balls. For the most part, the exercises found in this book can be performed with any of the medicine balls listed in the table on page 14. The easiest to obtain and usually the least expensive are the first two on that list (9-, 10- or 11-inch models), and they’re normally available in weights ranging from 4 to 25 pounds. You can find them at most large sporting goods stores.
mobile app like the one I made as a companion to this book (shameless plug). The bottom line is: You can find the time quite easily if you want to, and you want to, right?

Tip: Work out for half of your lunch break three days a week. If you get an hour, use 30 minutes to warm up, work out, cool down and clean up and you'll still have plenty of time to eat the (healthy) lunch that you packed. It only takes a little planning to make this work, so make it happen!

Q. What's this “rest” thing you keep talking about? Have you seen my schedule?

A. If you don't rest, you won't recover. If you don't recover, you lose most of the benefit from your workout. I use the term “most” because you still burned some extra calories during the exercise and raised your heart rate to obtain some cardiovascular conditioning benefit—but if you don't rest well, you'll miss out on the benefits of building lean muscle.

Q. What are the benefits of building lean muscle?

A. Wow, what a perfect segue from the previous question! Aside from the obvious aesthetic benefits of having a muscular physique, building lean muscle is one of those “gifts that keep giving”: the more lean muscle you have, the more calories your body will naturally burn throughout the day to keep your awesome physique, well, awesome. Lean muscle not only acts like a furnace for burning calories and fat, but it also makes the muscles that you have even more adept at growing by stimulating insulin and testosterone development. (Yes, this is a ridiculously simple overview of your body's biomechanics and energy systems, but this is just an FAQ, not a PhD dissertation.) Lean muscle is a good thing, cool?

Q. My buddy/the guy at the gym/my mother's co-worker Dawn said I should do Workout X and I'll be the fittest person on the planet! Why don't you just show me a shortcut to fitness like Workout X, huh? Are you trying to hide something?!

A. Step 1: Chill. Out.

Step 2. Repeat Step 1.

I'll let you in on a little secret: Every workout is the best ever, provided you stick to it and get the results you want. I've developed and tested hundreds of my own different programs. Along the way I've tried out many of the big-name programs that you see online and even on late-night TV with varying levels of success. Some I like quite a bit to this day and others I'm glad I tried out just once. There are a million different ways to work out—the best way to learn what works for you is to give new exercise routines a shot. Not only will you add to your repertoire of exercises, you'll be hitting some muscles in new and exciting ways and getting fitter along the way. I like to view getting—and staying—fit as a journey: Take it all in and try some new stuff. You never know what you'll learn along the way!

Q. I have an injury. Can I still work out?

A. See your doctor. Boring answer, but the truth. The workouts are rigorous and the addition of a medicine ball could make some very common injuries worse if you're not careful. Above all else, be safe and see your doctor first before performing any demanding physical activity.

Q. I already work out at the gym. Would I get anything out of this?

A. Absolutely! The exercises and workouts here would make anyone a fitter person, not to mention a better athlete. Who can't use a stronger core,
Before You Begin

If I haven't beaten you over the head with the “see your doctor first before starting any workout program” phrasing, let's just give you five practical examples of why seeing a doctor first is the most important step toward getting in shape:
Anatomical Position: This is essentially the "default position" for your body as nearly all joints are in neutral position with the exception of your elbows (which are rotated forward to bring your palms onto the frontal plane)—feet face forward and are about shoulder-width apart, spine is erect, arms are extended at the sides of your trunk with palms facing forward. The three different anatomical planes of movement are median, frontal and horizontal, and all are described by starting with the anatomical position. Median plane splits your body laterally into right and left halves with a line vertical to your belly button (the medial line). Frontal plane splits your body into a front (anterior) and back (posterior) from the side, bisecting your torso vertically in a line that runs through your ears, shoulders, hips and ankles. Horizontal plane splits your body into upper (superior) and lower (inferior) halves at your belly button. Most motions in life are a combination of these planes.

Athletic Position: Similar to anatomical position, this is often described as "ready position" for many sports or training. I'll refer to this in nearly every exercise where you're on your feet. In a standing position, your feet face forward and are approximately shoulder-width apart and slightly rotated outward (laterally) about 10–15 degrees for greater balance. Knees, hips and elbows are slightly bent (commonly referred to as "softening your joints"), and arms are rotated slightly forward at the shoulders. This position should have you ready for quick action or reaction in any direction, primarily a median or horizontal plane.

Tip: Don't confuse athletic position with the "ready position" of some sports. For example, a shortstop will have a far deeper knee bend and hip drop to allow for a more explosive lateral or vertical movement when the ball is hit.

Flexion & Extension: Often confused, these are relatively easy to remember once you get the general mental picture. Flexion is accomplished by bending a hinge (elbow, knee) joint, while straightening is extension. Forcing one of these joints past straight is considered hyperextension, and commonly responsible for serious injuries. Note the word "general" above—you can also extend and flex at the hip and shoulder (ball and socket) joints without bending; raising your arm or leg forward and upward is flexion, while returning it to anatomical position is extension. The neck, wrists, fingers and toes all get in on the flexion and extension action, but you get the general idea and you're not getting quizzed.

Rotation: You'll be using this one quite a bit, primarily when twisting the trunk. Simply put, this rotation is bringing the side of the body bisected by the frontal plane toward the medial plane while traveling along the transverse plane. Sorry, couldn't resist. In other words, rotating your trunk so one of your shoulders is aligned with your belly button. Easy, right?
to 20 additional pounds in your hands. It's very important that you focus on proper form and utilize the proper muscles to complete each exercise. This means no cheating by arching your back on push-ups or allowing your knees to bow in during squats—you're only cheating yourself. Every proper-form rep just gets you closer to your goals!

If you have a pre-existing condition like joint instability or a muscular imbalance, make sure you recognize any physical limitations, take your time and work your way up slowly while focusing on training with good form. It's far more important to be careful with nagging injuries than it is to worry about completing all the exercises in any specified amount of time. Performing the exercises with proper form will help you to build strength, flexibility and balance as well as improve your sports performance—but not if you ignore the warning signs and hurt yourself. If pain or soreness persists, please see a medical professional.

When performing any exercise routine that requires you to lift, pull or press your bodyweight, don't take any chances with unsafe equipment. In addition, make sure you're properly trained to use any equipment before you start a workout. Always be aware of your surroundings and make sure you have plenty of room to execute moves safely without hitting or tripping over other objects.
Guess what, you’re not a professional athlete. How do I know? Because you’re reading this section. Seriously, every professional athlete I’ve ever worked with would already be three exercises into the Advanced program—it’s just how they’re wired. The good news is that, because you’re not getting paid to train and perform, you can take your time getting in tune with the workouts and preparing your body to perform each exercise with proper form. No one will be holding a finish line at the end of each workout, and no one will be judging you as you progress from simple to advanced movements. If they’re secretly taking inventory of your exercises, then they should focus on their own workout!
Stretching should generally be done after a workout. It'll help you reduce muscle soreness from the workout, increase range of motion and flexibility within a joint or muscle, and prepare your body for any future workouts. Stretching immediately post-exercise while your muscles are still warm allows your muscles to return to their full range of motion (which gives you more flexibility gains) and reduces the chance of injury or fatigue in the hours or days after an intense workout. It's important to remember that even when you're warm and loose, you should never “bounce” during stretching. Keep your movements slow and controlled.

Here’s the proper workout progression to keep in mind:

1. **Basic warm-up**: Walk, jog, jumping jacks—raise your heart rate and body temperature slightly, loosen up stiff muscles and get a very light sweat (if any).

2. **Dynamic warm-up/shake-out**: After at least 5 minutes of warm-up, shake out your arms and legs and perform some of the dynamic warm-ups listed in the “Dynamic Yoga Warm-Up” on page 104.

3. **Perform some slow, controlled bodyweight exercises**: Focusing on maintaining perfect form, perform 3–6 bodyweight reps of a multi-joint, multi-muscle exercise like wood chops (page 57) or burpees (page 60). Skip the medicine ball for this warm-up.

4. **Work out**: Be mindful of your form on every rep. Maintain your intensity and crush your workout.

5. **Shake-out/stretch**: Shake out your tight muscles, then perform some stretches listed on page XXX.

6. **Eat**: Immediately post-workout, consume a recovery drink with a 4:1 ratio of carbs to protein in order to replenish your glycogen stores and also give your muscles the amino acids they need to repair and strengthen. A protein shake with a banana or chocolate milk are very good choices.


**Avoiding Injuries**

As we covered earlier in the FAQs (page 19), bodyweight strength training combined with weights is an incredibly efficient way to build strength, flexibility and balance as well as develop a lean, ripped physique. Let's be honest, though; none of us are perfect. Due to years of improper posture, sports injuries or even weak musculature, we all have imbalances that can affect proper form and even put us on the fast track to injury. In addition, jumping into a new exercise routine too quickly or doing the exercises with improper form can exacerbate any pre-existing injury. Unstable surfaces make it even more precarious for first-timers or those coming back after a layoff. This is why I recommend starting out by performing bodyweight versions of each exercise before stepping it up by adding in weights.

Throughout the routine, you should expect to experience mild soreness and fatigue, especially when you’re just getting started. The feeling of your muscles being “pumped” and the fatigue of an exhausting workout should be expected. These are positive feelings.

On the other hand, any sharp pain, muscle spasm or numbness is a warning sign that you need to stop and not push yourself any harder. Some small muscle groups may fatigue more quickly because they're often overlooked in other workouts. Your hands and forearms are doing a tremendous amount of work and can easily tire out. If you feel you can’t grip or support yourself
Let's face it—some days we all feel like we need a good reason just to get out of bed in the morning. I have a great gig writing books and training some awesome folks, but there are plenty of times when I’d like to smash the alarm and bury my head under the covers. Workouts are the same way for most people—if you can think of any reason to skip it, you probably will. I’ll admit to missing my share of workouts, but it never seems to be worth it: When I skip one, I just end up paying for it later with a subpar performance at a race or even feeling miserable because I feel like I’ve let myself down. Usually the penalty is worse and lasts longer than the workout would’ve anyway. My wife can always tell when I’m cranky and has even thrown me out of the house to go for a run and cheer-up—and it actually works!
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<th>Goal</th>
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<td>weight loss</td>
<td>Perform each exercise in rapid succession with little or no time in between. This “circuit training” will keep your heart rate elevated for the entire workout and for hours afterward, helping you burn fat. Combine this with a balanced, healthy diet of 45% protein, 30% carbohydrates and 25% fats.</td>
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<td>toning</td>
<td>Similar to the weight-loss plan in terms of nutrition and circuit training, toning requires a great deal of focus on form and squeezing every muscle with every rep. It also doesn’t hurt to add some additional repetitions to each set to maximize the fat burn and strengthening of lean muscle.</td>
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<td>muscle gain</td>
<td>Gaining muscle requires using heavier weights and keeping your muscles under tension for longer periods of time. Slower recovery phases and rapid exertion phases with weighted movements does the trick. Focus on the form of each exercise and perform it with the heaviest weight possible. Move slowly between sets and exercises, taking a 30-second break. Each week, you’ll be adding more weight or additional reps to continue to grow your muscles. Also, you’ll be adding more protein to your diet—about 1 gram of protein relative to your target body weight. If you’re looking to get to 165 pounds, that means you’ll be eating upwards of 165 grams of protein a day.</td>
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<td>endurance</td>
<td>Less about heavy weights and more about prolonged exertion, building endurance is similar to weight loss (above) and greatly benefitted by adding 2–3 additional sets to your workout. By training your body to keep performing after fatigue, you push the barrier of exhaustion further away. “Going long” requires additional slow-burning carbohydrates for fuel (whole wheat, sweet potatoes, etc.). Approximately 40% protein, 40% carbs and 20% fats is pretty common for endurance athletes looking to stay fueled yet remain as light as possible.</td>
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<td>speed</td>
<td>Quick, explosive movements are the name of the game to build speed. You’re looking to activate and develop your fast-twitch muscle fibers by performing plyometric movements, combining sprints, explosive tosses and “amping up” exercises. Add moves like squat jumps, burpees or mountain climbers (these and more descriptions and photos are available at 7weekstofitness.com) to your workouts and perform each exercise with high intensity. Fueling and nutrition is similar to weight loss but with just a little more carbohydrates for refueling after a hard workout; shoot for 40–45% protein, 35–40% carbs and the remaining 15–25% healthy fats.</td>
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<td>enhanced athletic performance</td>
<td>A well-rounded program contains elements of weight loss, toning, muscle gain, endurance and speed spread out throughout the course of a week’s workouts, switching it up each week. For example, Monday = toning &amp; endurance, Wednesday = speed &amp; weight loss, Friday = muscle gain. Nutrition needs are based on the specific goals: lower carbs for weight loss, more protein for muscle gain or more carbs for replenishment after speed or endurance workouts.</td>
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PART 2: PROGRAMS
Basic Program

Welcome to the start of a new you! Right now, you're on the ground level and are about to start building a foundation of fitness through strength-building bodyweight exercises and the addition of medicine balls and more explosive movements once you're ready. This progressive program is a great starting point for nearly all but the most conditioned athletes, because you can focus on nailing your form and prepping your mind and body for progressively harder workouts to come.
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<th>Day</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>set 1</td>
<td>3 Goblet Squat (page 54)</td>
<td>6 Mason Twist (page 73)</td>
<td>6 Good Morning (page 74)</td>
<td>4 Push-Up (page 70)</td>
<td>:25 Plank (page 66)</td>
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<td>set 2</td>
<td>3 Ball Thruster (page 55)</td>
<td>4 Elephant Twist (page 65)</td>
<td>5 Sit-Up (page 76)</td>
<td>4 Curl &amp; Press (per arm) (page 71)</td>
<td>6 Crunch w/Toe Touch (page 77)</td>
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<td>set 3</td>
<td>5 Romanian Deadlift (page 59)</td>
<td>6 T-Twist (page 64)</td>
<td>4 Superman (page 75)</td>
<td>6 Press &amp; Triceps Ext. (page 72)</td>
<td>6 Mason Twist (page 73)</td>
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<td>4 Lunge &amp; Twist (page 58)</td>
<td>4 Superman</td>
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Congratulations on reaching the Advanced program! I hope you enjoyed progressing through the Basic program to get here and learned a lot about the exercises (and yourself) along the way. If you’re jumping straight into the Advanced program, you should be extremely familiar with performing each of the exercises in the upcoming charts with flawless form and be adept at using the medicine ball to make these exercises more strenuous and effective. If that doesn’t sound like your level of fitness, there’s no shame at all in starting with the Basic program to learn the ropes and build a rock-solid foundation for fitness.
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<th>Week</th>
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Beyond Medicine
Ball Workouts:
Maintaining Your Physique

Congratulations on completing the Advanced program! I hope it was a fun challenge that you’re proud of! I've been extremely lucky to be able to share dozens of different programs and hundreds of exercises, stretches, warm-ups, routines and games so far in my 7 Weeks to Fitness and Ultimate Workouts book series. It’s an amazing and humbling experience when I receive e-mails or Facebook posts from around the world thanking me for any of my books making a difference in someone’s life. Nearly all of those messages end with the question: “What do I do next?”
PART 3: EXERCISES
Ball Thruster

TARGET: Quadriceps femoris (quads), gluteus maximus and minimus (glutes), hamstrings, erector spinae, rectus abdominis (abs), deltoids, triceps

**STARTING POSITION:** From an athletic position, hold a medicine ball to your chest with your arms bent.

**1** Bend at the hips and lower your body into a goblet squat (page 50) until your knees are bent at least 90 degrees. Pause.

**2** While pushing straight up from your heels back to standing, press the medicine ball directly overhead by rotating your shoulders forward and extending your arms; your biceps should finish in line with your ears. Don’t lock your knees at the top of the exercise. Keep your core flexed throughout the movement and don’t arch your back when you lift the ball overhead. Pause.

Carefully reverse the motion and return the ball back to your chest.
Wood Chop

TARGET: Quadriceps femoris (quads), gluteus maximus and minimus (glutes), hamstrings, erector spinae, rectus abdominis (abs), deltoids, triceps

STARTING POSITION: From an athletic position, hold a medicine ball to your chest with your arms bent and initiate a squat (see page 54 for goblet squat technique): Drop your torso straight down until your legs are past parallel; your butt should be as close to the floor as you can get without falling backward. Don’t let your knees bow inward, which can cause injury. Slowly bring the ball toward your right foot using your arms; your shoulders and hips should remain pointing straight forward. Don’t lean to the right because the imbalance of the weight helps to work your left obliques to maintain proper position.

1-2 Pressing through your heels, raise your torso straight up and lift the ball up and toward the left side of your body. When the ball reaches your left shoulder, twist your core to the left and continue pressing the ball directly overhead, with both arms fully extended, back straight, head up high and looking to the left, and your entire core engaged (abs and glutes contracted) to keep you in a stable position.

   Slowly return the ball back to the starting position in a controlled manner.
   Repeat to the other side. That’s 1 rep.

TIP: During the twist and top position, your hips should be pointing forward as much as possible; you’re rotating with your obliques and torso, not your hips. Of course, there will be some hip rotation, but keep it to a minimum.
Romanian Deadlift
TARGET: Gluteus maximus and minimus (glutes), hamstrings, erector spinae

**STARTING POSITION:** From an athletic position, hold a medicine ball at your waist with your arms fully extended.

1. Keeping your lower back straight and knees slightly bent, bend at the waist to lower the ball as close as you can to your legs as you descend. Don't bounce at the bottom of the movement—descend in a slow, controlled manner and maintain your balance. Keep your shoulders back to prevent your upper back from rounding. Pause.

2. Engage your hamstrings and glutes to assist your lower back in raising your body back to start position.
   That's 1 rep.
Using your chest and arms, press your body up as explosively as possible in order to raise your entire torso, hands and medicine ball off the floor while simultaneously bringing your feet under your body and placing them on the floor underneath your hips.

Inhale as you lower your torso toward the medicine ball, performing a push-up (page 70). Stop when your body touches the backs of your hands.

Exhale and continue extending the ball directly overhead while pushing off from your forefeet to jump straight up in the air as high as possible. Land with your knees and elbows slightly bent to absorb the impact before descending into your next rep.
3 With your upper body balanced on the medicine ball, lift your right foot, bend your right knee and pull it up toward your right elbow, stopping before you make contact.

4 Extend your right knee and place your foot back on the floor. Now bring your left knee to your left elbow.

5 Extend your left leg back.

6 Bending at the waist, hop both feet back on each side of the medicine ball, straighten your legs and lift the medicine ball back to start position, engaging your hamstrings and glutes to assist your lower back to extend your waist.
Elephant Twist

Start without a medicine ball or use a very light one until you get comfortable with this exercise, and never bounce or swing during the movement.

TARGET: Gluteus maximus and minimus (glutes), hamstrings, erector spinae, obliques

STARTING POSITION: From an athletic position, hold a medicine ball in front of you with your arms extended.

1. Bend forward at the waist 90 degrees so that the ball is hanging from your arms just above your feet.

2. Using your core, slowly twist your torso to the right 30 to 45 degrees (or as far as you can comfortably go) so that your arms and the ball form a straight line pointing at the ground outside of your right leg.

3. In a slow, controlled manner, straighten your torso and return the ball to the center position between your legs.

4. Pause, then repeat to the left side.

Bring the ball back to center and lift the medicine ball back to start position by engaging your hamstrings and glutes to assist your lower back.

That's 1 rep.
Roll-Out

This is a subtle movement. The ball may move as little as an inch in either direction, though experienced athletes should shoot for more.

TARGET: Gluteus maximus and minimus (glutes), hamstrings, erector spinae, rectus abdominis (abs), forearms, pectoralis major (pecs)

**STARTING POSITION:** From your knees, place both hands on top of a medicine ball and roll it forward to position the ball directly under your sternum (the center of your chest). Straighten your legs, with the balls of your feet and toes in contact with the floor. Reposition your hands as needed to obtain a stable position. Engage your core and squeeze your glutes together to keep your spine erect and your body in a straight line from head to toe.

1. Using your forearms and hands, roll the ball forward (toward your head) as far as you can.
2. Bring it back to start position, then roll it backward (toward your feet) as far as you can before. Return to start position.
**T Push-Up**

**TARGET**: Gluteus maximus and minimus (glutes), hamstrings, erector spinae, rectus abdominis (abs), obliques, forearms, triceps, biceps, pectoralis major (pecs)

**STARTING POSITION**: Assume a plank position (see page 66) with your right hand on the medicine ball and your left hand flat on the floor. Engage your core to keep your spine erect and keep your body in a straight line from head to toe.

1. Inhale as you lower your upper body toward the floor, stopping when your chest touches the back of your right hand.

2. Using your arms, chest, back and core, exhale and push off the floor to return to start position, gradually transitioning your weight to your left hand while sliding your right hand under the medicine ball (you’ll be cupping it in order to lift it).

3. With your left arm supporting your upper body, rotate your entire body to the right, slowly raising your right hand and pressing the ball upward until your body forms a “T.” Stack your feet on top of each other if you can (stop if you experience any knee instability), maintain a contracted core and keep your spine erect. Pause.

   Slowly rotate your torso back to plank position, controlling the downward motion of the medicine ball by cradling it with your right hand, then placing it on the floor. Roll the ball to your left, switch hand positions and repeat. That’s 1 rep.
Single-Arm Curl & Overhead Press

TARGET: Triceps, biceps, deltoids

STARTING POSITION: From an athletic position, hold a medicine ball in your right hand, with your arm bent 90 degrees and your elbow and upper arm against your side, as if you were a waiter holding a plate of food in front of you.

1. Flex your biceps and raise the ball to your shoulder so your fingers are nearly touching your shoulder.

2. Press the ball directly overhead in a slow and controlled manner. Pause.

   Bend your arm and carefully return the ball to your shoulder, supinate your forearm and rotate your hand with your fingers pointed away from your torso, and lower the ball slowly until your forearm is 90 degrees in relation to your upper arm.

   Flip the medicine ball to your left hand (hopefully you can catch it; if not, then you may need to work on your athletic prowess a bit!), catch and repeat with your left hand. That's 1 rep.
Mason Twist

TARGET: Gluteus maximus and minimus (glutes), hamstrings, erector spinae, rectus abdominis (abs), obliques

STARTING POSITION: Sit on the floor with your knees comfortably bent, feet on the floor, arms bent 90 degrees and hands holding a medicine ball in front of your chest. Lift your feet about 4–6 inches off the floor and balance yourself on your posterior. Keep your core tight to protect your back.

1 While maintaining the same hip position, twist your entire torso at the waist and touch the ball to the floor on the right side of your body.

2 Keeping your feet off the floor and maintaining your balance, rotate back to center and then rotate to your left, touching the ball to the floor. Return to center. That's 1 rep.
Superman

*Use a very light medicine ball to start.*

**TARGET:** Gluteus maximus and minimus (glutes), erector spinae

**STARTING POSITION:** Lie face down on your stomach, extend your legs behind you and extend your arms directly in front of you with a medicine ball between your hands. Stretch as long as you possibly can but keep your glutes and core contracted throughout the entire movement to help stabilize your spine.

1. Gripping the medicine ball with both hands, contract your back muscles (erector spinae) and raise your arms and legs about 6–8 inches off the floor in a slow and controlled manner. Hold for 3–5 seconds.

   Lower slowly back to starting position.
Ab Crunch with Toe Touch

TARGET: Hip flexors, erector spinae, rectus abdominis (abs)

**STARTING POSITION:** Lie face up on the floor with your legs straight and heels pointing at the ceiling so that your body is in an “L” position. Place the medicine ball on the center of your chest, with your hands on opposite sides of it to keep it in place. Press the ball straight up toward your toes.

1. Exhale and contract your abdominal muscles to slowly lift your head, arms and upper back off the floor in a controlled manner. Keep your upper back and neck straight and maintain your hand position on the ball through the movement. Push the medicine ball upward to touch the tips of your toes. Pause briefly.

   Keeping your abs tight, inhale and return to start position, lightly touching both shoulder blades to the floor. You may round your upper back slightly and roll your spine on the floor as you do so.
Turkish Get-Up

This is a complicated move to perfect. The best way to perform this is with a training partner reading the instructions while you master the movements. Good luck!

TARGET: Full body

STARTING POSITION: Lie face up on the floor and press a medicine ball to the ceiling with your left hand. Your right arm should be extended along the floor at about 45 degrees relative to your torso. Your right leg is extended straight out from your hip, toes pointing upward. Bend your left knee and bring your left heel as close to your butt as possible, with your toe rotated outward about 5–10 degrees.

1 Press your left hand higher while rolling your torso onto your right forearm, bending at the elbow and pressing your left heel into the floor to raise your left glute off the floor while rolling onto your right hip.

2 With your left hand still holding the medicine ball, press off the floor with your right forearm and hand to straighten your right arm and place your hand on the floor; press your hips upward to lift your butt off the floor. You’re now supported by your left foot flat on the ground, the outside of your right foot and your right hand.
Advanced
Medicine Ball
Exercises
Leg Raise

TARGET: Trapezius, latissimus dorsi, biceps, triceps, rhomboids, pectoralis major (pecs), abs

**STARTING POSITION:** Stand below a pull-up bar with a medicine ball on the ground between your feet. Press your feet together to pin the medicine ball between them, inhale, bend your knees and jump up and grab the bar with your preferred grip (underhand, overhand or mixed). Hang from the bar with your arms fully extended but elbows not locked.

1. Contracting your abdominal muscles, slowly bring your knees up toward your chest while keeping your torso as close to vertical as possible. Don’t lean back during the movement or swing between reps. For this exercise, count 3 seconds up, hold 1–3 seconds, and then 3 seconds down.

Lower your legs in the same slow manner to start position.
**ABSOLUTELY RIDICULOUS ADVANCED VARIATION:**

Not for the inexperienced—make sure you’re extremely proficient at each of the advanced moves before you think about trying to pull this off. Combine these advanced moves into a “Ball Toss Pull-Up”: Grab the bar with an underhand grip and perform a pull-up while tossing and catching the ball on top of (or between) your thighs. Once you figure it all out, it's a blast!
Medicine balls are a fantastic way to add weights to calisthenics but there's a lot of fun to be had just by tossing a medicine ball. Explosively throwing a medicine ball as far as you can, twisting and tossing to a partner or heaving one down against the floor or up a wall can all help to strengthen and shred your body as well as forge an iron core. And the best part? These tosses, drills and games are a blast!

Medicine Ball Tosses
With your feet pointing forward, assume a squat position with the ball on the ground between your feet. Put your hands under the ball and shovel the ball forward as you explode upward. Your arms are just guiding the ball; you should be throwing the ball with the explosive force of your legs. This movement is not like a kettlebell toss—you’re not swinging the ball between your legs to build momentum, but lifting and tossing from a static position. This is much harder and requires more muscle fiber recruitment to get the ball in motion and toss as far as you can.

2. Underhand Forward

ball in both hands just below and in front of your knees. When you explode upward, your
4. Shot-Put

Place the ball in one hand next to your shoulder with your palm up (use your other hand to steady it if necessary). Your feet should point directly in the direction you'll be tossing. Squat straight down (don’t twist) and, when you’ve reached the deepest part of your squat, explode upward, leave your feet and toss the ball forward as far as you can. While this move uses a lot of arm muscle, you'll be using far more force from your legs to launch the ball. Alternate between hands for throws.
With your arms extended straight overhead with the ball between both hands, keep both feet planted (no steps allowed) and lean back slightly, engaging your core and lower back muscles. Do not bend your elbows to bring the ball behind the top of your head; your arms should always remain straight. Rapidly contract your core, bring your whole upper body forward, bending at the waist, and release the ball, throwing it as hard as you can onto the ground between 6–10 feet away from your body in order to get it to bounce. You should be throwing the ball with your core, not your arms. The distance is measured by where the ball stops rolling and is traditionally one of the shorter tosses based on the bounce and roll of the ball.
8. Single-Leg Shot-Put

With ball in hand, stand with both feet pointed at your target and lift the foot opposite from the hand holding the ball off the ground. Squat down as far as you can without letting your “up” foot touch the ground and launch upward from your one leg, extending your arm to release the ball. This is an excellent move to improve your balance and massively improve your core and quad strength, but also a great way to end up on your butt. This one usually takes a while to master—it’s not often that you use a movement like this in daily life! Alternate between hands for each toss.
Getting in shape is hard work; there's no real way around it. You need to eat right, exercise and recover in between workouts, not to mention try and function in your daily life. Some exercises are more enjoyable than others, but none are quite as exciting as playing competitive games with yourself or a partner. Whether you're on your own or facing off against a friendly opponent, challenge yourself with these games by giving your all to each sprint, lift, carry or toss and you'll reap the endurance, strength, speed and weight-loss benefits. These games were designed to enhance athletic performance and erase the doldrums and monotony of plain old cardio while using medicine ball tosses, lifts and carries. They'll augment squats and sprints to stoke your metabolism, torch fat and build a lean, strong physique. “Toss and Run” was actually inspired by and adapted from an exercise performed at some NFL training camps to build functional strength, develop a strong core and support muscles for the rigors of a football season.

Games
DESCRIPTION: Using 4 cones, place 2 cones side by side and the other pair about 10 feet away. Stand next to a pair of cones and face your partner, who’s standing next to the other pair of cones. Choose who goes first. Begin tossing the ball as far as you can toward your partner’s cones. Your partner will move his “distance cone” (just pick one of the cones to move) to the spot where your ball bounces. In the case of the forward slam, it’ll be where the ball finishes rolling. Your opponent will make his next throw from there, whether it's farther or closer than the original 10 feet. The “starting cone” will remain in place to mark the spot from which you began the match. A match is played by alternating through all 9 tosses on page 87 to determine a winner for each round. The winner is the person whose distance cone is still closest to his starting cone.

Cross-Ball
This game started out pretty simply as two players trying to toss a light (4- or 6-pound) medicine ball past each other within the confines of a “goal” made up by 2 cones. Immediately, it was a hit and Jason (author of Ultimate Jump Rope Workouts) and I started playing a ton of matches daily and refined the rules in a whole host of ways. We developed penalties, different scoring plays and even a round-robin tournament with multiple players on each team where the action never stopped. Maybe in retrospect we loved the game a little too much and tinkered with the rules a little too often. So here it is in the original form. If you’d like to expand on it, then have a blast.

ALLOWED TOSSES: Shot-Put, Chest Pass, Hip Toss, Underhand Forward

PLEASE NOTE: There’s some risk associated with this game since you and a partner will be heaving a medicine ball toward each other with the intention of catching it off the bounce. Overhand forward and underhand backward are too dangerous to be used in this type of game as the ball can be thrown with high velocity. Only use the allowed tosses and be cautious—this game is for fun and fitness, not trying to hurt each other! Always be careful when catching a bounced medicine ball as you can easily injure your hands, arms or any part of your body that unintentionally comes in contact with the ball. Never try to catch a ball that has not bounced in the field of play.

DESCRIPTION: Set up 2 goals with cones 12 feet apart from each other—this area is the field of play. Both goals should be 8 feet wide. The goal is to toss the ball so that it bounces in the field of play and then through the opponent’s goal; the opponent’s goal is to catch the ball with both hands before it touches the ground inside their goal. There is no point scored unless the ball touches the ground, despite bouncing over the goal line.

All tosses take place from each goal line; there’s no stepping forward into the field of play in order to toss the ball. That’s a foul and the ball is turned over to the opponent.

SCORING:
- 1 point if ball bounces in the field of play and then touches the ground on the opposite side of the opponent’s goal line
- 1 point for opponent if you toss the ball over their goal line without it bouncing in the field of play
- 1 point for opponent if you toss or bounce the ball out of bounds on the outside of either of your opponent’s goal cones. The first one to 5 points wins.
PART 4: APPENDIX
Once you’ve completed a basic warm-up (like 5 minutes of walking on a treadmill or elliptical, 50 jumping jacks, 50 toe touches or similar), use the “Dynamic Yoga Warm-Up” on page 104. This sequence of movements will get your lower body ready.

POOR MAN’S YOGA DYNAMIC WARM-UP

Dynamic Yoga Warm-Up on page 104 is called the “Poor Man’s Yoga” sequence because it’s a combination of moves that requires balance, flexibility and strength while providing great post-warm up dynamic activation of your lower body and core. This sequence will get the muscles and joints of your lower body ready for the workout and will make sure your muscles, tendons and ligaments have full range of motion and sufficient pliability for your workout. Remember, this isn’t a stretch per se; it’s a fluid series of sequential movements to work your body on multiple planes using multiple muscles across multiple joints—the true definition of a dynamic compound movement. Be sure to perform each movement carefully and correctly to maximize the benefits. I greatly recommend that you practice all three of these moves by themselves before you do them in combination, especially the lunge.

Like any other exercise, performing warm-ups, stretches or dynamic movements like these is a complete waste of time and can potentially cause an injury if done with bad form. Bad lunge form can cause you to bow your upward knee inward and potentially damage your knee—bad news. Plus, you may need to build up your balance from position to position in order to maintain proper form. Take your time, learn how to do it right and then worry about adding intensity or frequency. Don’t rush movements simply to move on; just focus on doing them correctly and it will become second nature.

After you’ve completed the “yoga” sequence, be sure to also warm up your upper body. Work through the movements on pages 106 to 108 to prepare your arms, shoulders, chest and back. These exercises also serve as great stretches for your entire body after you’re done with your workout.

TIP: Walk to the gym if you can. One to two miles of walking will raise your body temperature, engage your core and warm up your legs. Aside from the physical benefits, this is a great way to clear your mind and mentally prepare before a workout and to cool down and loosen up tight muscles on your way home.
3 Slowly press up from your left heel and push your body back into a standing position with both feet parallel.

4 Bend at the waist and bring your head toward your knees, placing your hands on the backs of your lower calves and pulling slightly to assist in getting your noggin closer to your knees.

5 Release your hands and slowly return to starting position. That's 1 rep.

Repeat with your right leg. Perform 5 reps on each side. Never bounce or yank with your arms to pull yourself into position. As you repeat, each subsequent movement should provide a little deeper range of motion.
Arm Circles

**STARTING POSITION:** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.

1–3 Move both arms in a complete circle forward 5 times and then backward 5 times.

---

Around the World

**STARTING POSITION:** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and extend your hands overhead with elbows locked, fingers interlocked, and palms up. Keep your arms straight the entire time.

1–3 Bending at the hips, bring your hands down toward your right leg and, in a continuous circular motion, bring your hands toward your toes, then toward your left leg and then return your hands overhead and bend backward.

Repeat 3 times then change directions.
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Special thanks and belated apologies to Michael Bennett, my marathon, ultramarathon and Ironman training partner, teammate, photographer and friend. I'm really sorry you misjudged the bounce of that medicine ball back in 2010 and broke your rib a few weeks before P.F. Chang’s Rock 'N' Roll Marathon. Now, can you never bring that up again as an excuse for your slowest marathon time ever?

Of course, how could I ever write this book without everything I learned from Jason Warner, my co-author for Ultimate Jump Rope Workouts, 7 Weeks to 10 Pounds of Muscle, and contributor to nearly all my other books including 7 Weeks to Getting Ripped, where a lot of the ideas and exercises in this book got their start.

All my love and heartfelt thanks to my family and friends for their support. (My parents and brother are pretty awesome.) Vivi and Ian, I love you both very much and am so proud to be your dad. Kristen, I still can't figure out why you love me so much, but far be it for me to question the best thing that has ever happened to a geek like me.