

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

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FREE FORM SQUAT

A. Emphasis. The primary muscles stressed in this movement are the muscles in your upper legs (upper hamstrings, glutes and quadriceps). The secondary muscles stressed are the muscles in your stomach and lower back.

B. Starting Position. Stand approximately **6 to 12** inches from and facing a bar on a squat rack or a railing (at waist level). Hold on to the bar for balance only. Keep your back straight.

C. Movement. Bending at the hips and knees, take **2 to 3** seconds to squat down until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Push up off the floor through your heels, returning to the starting position. Contract your abdominals, glutes and quadriceps hard before repeating.

D. Training Tips.

- 1) Keep your back straight throughout the entire exercise to reduce stress placed on the lower back.
- 2) Contract your abdominals throughout the entire movement. This will help to support your lower back.
- 3) Avoid pulling your body up when pushing up to the starting position.
- 4) If you do not have a problem with your knees you can perform this movement to **90** degrees. This incorporates more work from the hamstrings and glutes.
- 5) When performing any squatting movement from the floor you must evaluate the flexibility of your Achilles tendon. Poor flexibility will result in your heels coming off the floor before your thighs are parallel to the floor. This will create an unstable situation for your knees. Depending on the degree of flexibility, a ½ -inch, 1-inch or 1 ½ inch board should be placed under your heels.

E. Options.

There are **3** stances that can be used for this exercise.

- 1) **Close Stance** - The feet are placed **1 to 2** inches apart Concentration is on the Vastis Lateralis (outer thigh).
- 2) **Medium Stance** - The feet are placed shoulder width apart. Concentration is on the entire quad, hamstring and glutes.
- 3) **Wide Stance** - The feet are placed just outside the width of the shoulders. Concentration is on the Vastis Medialis (inner thigh).

F. Warning Tips.

- 1) **Do not** lean forward during this movement. This can cause serious injury to your back.
- 2) **Do not** bounce as you reach **90** degrees. This can cause serious injury to your knees.
- 3) **Do not** squat down any faster than **2 to 3** seconds. You must stay in control at all times during this movement. The faster you perform this movement, the less control you will have which in turn will increase your risk of injury.
- 4) **Do not** lock out your knees. This can cause serious injury to your knees.