



A Simple guide to:

## LUNGES

If you've ever knelt down to tie your shoe or seen someone propose on bended knee, you're familiar with a lunge. A lunge is a single-leg bodyweight exercise that works your hips, glutes, quads, hamstrings, core, and the hard-to-reach muscles of the inner thigh.

Lunges can help you develop lower-body strength and endurance, and unlike squats, they are highly effective at evening out muscle imbalances. They're also a great beginner move. Why? Because you pretty much do them daily (they mimic our walking pattern)



### How do you do a lunge?

1. Stand tall with feet hip-width apart. Engage core.
2. Take a big step forward with right leg and start to shift weight forward so heel hits the floor first
3. Lower body until right thigh is parallel to floor and right shin is vertical (it's okay if knee shifts forward a little as long as it doesn't go past right toe). If mobility allows, lightly tap left knee to ground while keeping weight in right heel.
4. Press into right heel to drive back up to starting position.
5. Repeat on the other side

### **Common Mistakes you must avoid.**

- Lunges will challenge your balance, but there's no reason to make it extra hard on yourself by narrowing your stance. Avoid bringing front foot directly in line with back foot (as if you're walking on a tightrope). This dramatically reduces stability. Always start with feet hip-width apart and maintain that distance as you step.
- When it comes to lunging, you want to step forward enough that your front heel won't lift up off the floor. If your step is too shallow, your knee will travel forward past your foot, which puts unnecessary stress and strain on the knee. The trick is to try out your step first to gauge a comfortable distance, plant heel, and drive into floor to return to starting.
- With a forward lunge, it's okay to shift your weight forward. But beware of bending at the hip and letting your upper body drop, which will put added strain on your knee. This is especially important if you are doing a lunge under load or with a weight. If your chest falls, you run the risk of losing balance, falling, or even dropping the weight on yourself. Therefore, engage your core (think about pulling your belly button to your spine) and keep your eyes forward instead of looking down

### **Why are lunges such a good exercise?**

#### **1. Shapes your legs and bum**

Whether you are looking to slip into a pair of jeans or a skirt, lunges are one of the most effective exercises for shaping your legs and bottom. Lunges target the quadriceps, but involve additional muscles, including the glutes, hamstrings, calves and core muscles, making them an important exercise for toning the lower body. They are also back-friendly, because of the need to keep your back straight and your chest lifted, so you have little risk of back strain. Include must-do lunges in your regular workout routine to get lean, shapely legs and a firm bottom.

#### **2. You can do them anywhere**

Lunges are a perfect addition to your daily routine. They can be done virtually anywhere -- try knocking out a set in front of the TV or in the kitchen while you are waiting for dinner to cook. They also do not require any equipment to be effective. Lunges are body-weight exercises, meaning they make use of the body's own weight as resistance. If you tire of the same old thing and desire a bit more of a challenge, you can up the intensity of your lunges by adding weights, increasing the number of repetitions, widening your stance or using an inclined surface, such as a bench or chair.

#### **3. Works a lot of muscles**

Lunges target most, if not all, of the muscles in your lower body. Don't be fooled into thinking that lunges only help your legs, they also require the development of your abdominal and lower back muscles to stabilize your core and provide balance. Changing the position of your lunge, for example alternating between front, side, back and deep lunges, can also change the muscles used and vary the effects. In addition to strengthening, lunges also improve flexibility in your hip flexors, which helps your body maintain alignment and reduces your risk of back pain and injury.

#### 4. **Helps with Balance and Coordination**

Lunges are performed on one leg at a time, independent of the other leg. This is known as unilateral training. Unilateral training improves both balance and coordination rather than simply developing strength as with exercises that train both sides at the same time such as squats. Lunges also require the abdominal and back muscles to be tensed to aid in control of the movement and this helps develop your core muscles. Strong core muscles are vital for posture and balance.

#### 5. **Prevent Injuries**

Because lunges are executed using only one side of the body, they can help even out muscular imbalances in strength and control. Performing additional lunges on the weaker side can help these muscles to develop at a slightly faster rate, allowing them to catch up with your stronger side. This will aid in sports and physical activities, as well as lower the risk of injury because of imbalance

