

Training Guide

The Elite Rings have been designed to offer gymnastics-style strength training to non-gymnasts. They are adjustable in height to allow for self-spotting and to provide additional exercises that provide a stepping stone into the world of gymnastics. The intent of this training guide is to help you learn the basics with safety and attention to proper form.

Support Position



The support position is one of the most basic positions on rings. In this position, you hold yourself above the rings with straight arms. It can be thought of as the top position of a dip. It is important to be able to hold this position before progressing onto more advanced exercises like dips and muscle-ups.



In this position, your arms should be completely straight and should not be resting against the straps. By bracing yourself against the straps, you are using friction to stabilize the rings instead of your muscles. Instability is one of the unique advantages offered by rings, so you will get stronger much more quickly by keeping your arms free of the straps. It also helps to turn the rings slightly outwards.



The wrong position is demonstrated here with the rings turned inwards and the arms pushing against the straps.

Pushup



The simple pushup is one exercise that is greatly enhanced by the rings. You add not only the instability of the rings, but also the mobility, which opens up countless new variations. The support position is much the same as before, rings turned out and arms free of the straps. The only difference is that your body is in a horizontal position instead of vertical. By adjusting the height of the rings, you can adjust the difficulty of this exercise. The higher the rings are, the easier it will get. Once you have gotten all the way to the floor, you can elevate your feet to make them harder.



Creating new variations of the pushup on rings is easy. You can move them forwards, backwards or out to the sides. You can also perform some variations with straight arms, bent arms or one of each.

The standard pushup is just like on the floor. Your arms stay close to your sides and you go through a full range.



The **wide grip pushup** is similar to the standard, except that your arms flare out to the side.



The reverse grip pushup, or **pseudo-planche pushup**, is more difficult because it increases the leverage on your shoulders. To do this variation, you perform the pushup with your hands closer to your stomach. It is a nice exercise for developing the strength required for a planche.



The **tricep pushup** is performed by doing a pushup with the rings in front of your head. As the name implies, it requires a lot of tricep strength and works the abs as well.



The **jackknife pushup** is similar to the ab wheel you have probably seen advertised on TV. On rings, the same exercise can be performed and you can also vary the resistance by raising or lowering the rings. Start out in a pushup support position. From here, without bending your arms, push the rings straight forward until they are as far out as you can reach. Be sure not to arch your back during this exercise. It should remain rounded at all times.

Many more variations are possible, depending on how you move the rings, bend your arms or position your body.

Body Rows



The body row, or ring row, is a great exercise for the arms and upper back. It can help develop the pullup or it can be used to develop the front lever. Like the pushup, the height of the rings can be adjusted to vary the level of difficulty. Bending your legs or performing them from a seated position makes this exercise more accessible to beginners. And more variations are possibly depending on hand placement and different movement patterns.



Dip



The dip is a classic strength training exercise that is greatly enhanced by the mobility and instability of the rings. Gym rats will call this a chest, tricep and front delt exercise, and typically will not perform it because they prefer to work their muscles one at a time. Whatever they say, do the opposite. The rings actually bring more muscles into play. You will immediately notice that the lats become one of the primary muscles trained in this movement. This is beneficial because learning to use your lats and pecs together will teach you to stabilize your shoulder joint more effectively, increase the efficiency of your workouts and help develop an iron cross.



The goal should always be to achieve a full range of motion on the dip. This means that your shoulders should almost touch your hands. This will help develop flexibility for a muscle-up. It is a good idea to set the rings at a height where your feet will barely touch the ground in between reps.



There are two main variations of the ring dip. One is the standard dip, where your shoulders remain close to your sides. The other is the **wide dip**, where you arms move out to the sides. This variation is more specific to learning the iron cross.

If you have trouble learning the dip, work first on developing a rock solid support and then gradually

increase the range of motion on your dips.

Pullup



This is another classic exercise that can be enhanced on the rings. Bars lock your hands in place, so you are limited in your shoulder mobility. On rings, the hands are free to rotate and move from side to side. This allows for the most natural groove on this exercise, regardless of your body type. People with injured shoulders often find the rings to be the most comfortable, and often only, place to do pullups.

The pullup on rings blurs the distinction between pullups and chinups. Because the rings rotate, you might start in a pullup position, go to neutral and end in a chinup position. Whatever you find most natural is the best. The width is also up to your own personal preference. Full range is the only way to go. A pullup should start with your arms straight and end with your head above the rings.

Muscle-up





The muscle-up combines the pullup and dip into one compound movement. It is similar to the clean and jerk of weightlifting. It works the entire upper body and teaches you to efficiently surmount any obstacle. The muscle-up is unrivaled in terms of functional upper body exercises. It is also a challenging movement for most people and can require a lot of preparation work.

You should be comfortable in both pullups and dips before working on the muscle-up. Some people recommend having 15 pullups and 15 dips. My recommendation is to have 8 false grip pullups and 8 full range ring dips as a minimum. Your shoulders should be acclimated to full-range dips, because the muscle-up requires a lot of flexibility in the shoulders.



The false grip is key to developing a muscle-up. A false grip is when you use your wrist to support your bodyweight, instead of your hand or fingers. However, this is not a thumbless grip. You always want to have your thumb wrapped around the ring. You are merely shifting your wrist upwards. If you are doing them correctly, you will have red marks on your wrist from where you make contact with the rings.

False grip pullups are the most important developmental exercise for the muscle-up. They will strengthen your false grip and your ability to exert pulling strength while using a false-grip. To perform a muscle-up, you first need to set your false grip. It is best when starting out to set the rings at a height where you can set your grip with your feet on the ground. Once you get the hang of it, you can do a pullup and set your false grip one hand at a time, or roll them both over simultaneously. With your grip set, pull yourself up till your hands are near your armpits. Your elbows should be in front and you should be leaning back slightly.

The **transition** is the most difficult part. To get over the rings, instead of trying to press the rings downward like a triceps pushdown, think instead of rolling your shoulders forward and over the rings. This will leave you in a very deep dip position with your elbows behind you and your shoulders in front of the rings. From here, you simply press out of the dip to a support. Always make sure you hit a solid support with arms straight and rings slightly turned out.

If you are struggling to learn a muscle-up, it might help to approach the problem in reverse. Start in a support position and lower yourself through the transition. Be sure to maintain a false grip all the way down. This will help teach you to keep your body close to the rings.

The swinging muscle-up also makes this move somewhat easier and can be a nice exercise for metabolic workouts. To do this, as you reach the transition, swing your legs forward and upwards. The extra momentum will help you through the transition. The strict muscle-up will develop the type of strength you will need for more advanced skills, but this is a way to start out.

Top 5 Muscle-up Mistakes

1. Not keeping the rings close to your body. If the rings flare out to the side, you will have much more difficulty.
2. Having the rings in front of your body. If you try to transition with the rings in front of your body, you will be effectively lifting your whole body with your triceps. During all points of the muscle-up, half of your body should be in front of the rings and half behind the rings.
3. Pulling too explosively. Believe it or not, it is actually easier to do a muscle-up with a slow and smooth motion versus an explosive, jerky pull. Most people lose the momentum during the transition and end up falling before they are above the rings.
4. Not using a false grip. Learn the false grip, get strong with it and use it. Just learning a proper false grip is enough to help most people.
5. Fighting too hard. The transition is not a high-strength move. It is more about technique. If you are straining really hard during the transition, you are probably using inefficient technique.

L-Sit



The L-sit is a great abdominal exercise. It can be done on the ground, on bars, rings and virtually anywhere else you can think of. On rings, it is more difficult, because the support position is more challenging.

The L-Sit involves holding a support position with your legs bent 90 degrees at the hip joint. When holding this position, you should be able to hold a wooden dowel on your legs without it rolling down.



To develop this skill, I recommend starting with the hanging L position. This is easier for some people, but it does require flexible shoulders. Slightly bending your arms can take the pressure off your shoulders. Starting with bent knees is another option. Gradually, work up to doing one leg straight, one leg bent. Eventually, you will have no problem straightening out both legs. Stretching your hamstrings will also help a lot.

Skinning the Cat



This exercise with a silly name is both a nice stretch for your shoulders and a challenging core exercise. To do it, hang from the rings and lift your legs over your head. Keep your body compressed tightly and continue to roll backwards. Point your feet towards the ground and lower your body as far as the flexibility of your shoulders allow. You should try to touch your toes to the floor.

At first, set the rings at a height where you can easily touch the floor at the bottom. Over time, you can raise the rings and increase the range of motion. If you cannot pull yourself back up, let go of the rings. But first, make sure that your feet are pointing towards the ground and not your head!

10 Tips for Getting the Most Out of your Elite Rings

1. Take them with you. They are designed to be light and portable. Take them with you to the park, on vacations, etc.

2. Create your own exercises. The exercises shown in this guide are just a starting point. You can create your own exercises by changing your body position, the height of the rings, your hand placement and other

variables.

3. Attend an adult gymnastics class. Visit www.adultgymnastics.com for listings and your local phone book.

4. Master the basics. Learning something as simple as a support pays big dividends later. If something seems easy, you might be doing it wrong.

5. Design progressions. In weightlifting, the path from point A to point B is very clear. You just add more weight. In gymnastics, you are stuck with the weight of your body, so you must be creative. If you are struggling to learn a skill, break it down into several intermediary skills and progressively learn those in order to build up to the harder skill.

6. Adjust the height. One of the ways to vary the difficulty of an exercise is to adjust the height of the rings. For pushups, you can raise the height to make them easier, or you can even elevate your feet to make them harder. This is just one possible progression.

7. Regularly visit www.ringtraining.com for new articles and participate in the online discussion forum.

8. Do not train the same exercises or the same workout every day. Mix things up and train a variety of exercises.

9. Design yourself a ring routine. This is what competitive gymnasts do and it is largely responsible for their incredible strength. A routine should be 5-10+ connected movements. You should not repeat a movement unless it transitions to another movement differently.

10. Use the rings with your other favorite training tools. Mixing barbell, Kettlebell, running, rowing, calisthenics and other forms of exercise with ring training can lead to a very challenging whole-body workout. Visit crossfit.com for one great example of how this is done.

Workout Design Templates

The workout templates presented below are designed to provide a conceptual framework for designing your own workouts. You can take any of the templates presented below and plug in your own exercises and customize them to your liking. Also, be sure to visit our [discussion forum](#) and read through other people's training logs for ideas.

5 Minute Workout

This one sounds easy, but it's not. Pick 5 exercises and perform them for 1 minute and rest 1 minute in between. It takes 9 minutes to complete this workout, with 5 of them being all-out effort. It feels a lot longer.

Example 1: Muscle-ups, pullups, dips, body rows and pushups.

You can make the workout longer and more cardio-oriented by inserting a lower body exercise in between. This will make it a 19 minute workout, including 9 minutes of rest.

Example 2: Muscle-ups, squats (bodyweight), pullups, squats, dips, squats, body rows, squats, pushups, squats.

Keep track of your total reps and monitor them over time.

Instead of resting, you can jump rope, run or do squats. This will make it a brief, but intense workout.

Time Interval Workouts

For these, select one to three exercises and perform as many reps, in equal amounts, as possible in a specified time interval.

Example 1: As many pullups and dips as possible in 15 minutes.

Example 2: As many clean and jerks (with a weighted implement) and muscle-ups as possible in 20 minutes.

Fixed Rep Workouts

Pick some exercises and specify a number of reps for each. Perform the entire workout in the shortest time possible.

Example 1: 30 Muscle-Ups for time

Example 2: 100 pullups, 100 dips, 100 dumbbell/Kettlebell snatches for time

Example 3: 50 ring pushups, run 800m, 50 ring pushups for time.

You can visit www.crossfit.com for more examples of this type of training.

Fatigue Cycling

In this method, you will perform a fixed number of reps for a selection of exercises. These should be strength oriented exercises. Perform the most difficult ones first and the easiest ones last. Use low reps on the hard ones and higher reps on the easy ones.

Example: 3 ring flies, 5 muscle-ups, 8 psuedo-planche pushups, 10 L-pullups, 12 ring dips, 15 body rows

When this workout becomes easy, start placing your easier exercises towards the front of the workout and the harder ones further in. This is a form of periodization.

Example: 15 body rows, 12 ring dips, 10 L-pullups, 8 psuedo-planche pushups, 5 muscle-ups, 3 ring flies.

As you would expect, it is much harder to perform the challenging exercises due to the fatigue from earlier exercises. Once you have completely reversed the workout, you can add more reps or switch to more difficult exercises.

Strength Workouts

In general, strength workouts will have fewer reps, but the exercises will be harder. **Pavel Tsatsouline** has proposed the 3-5 rule for strength workouts. 3-5 sets of 3-5 reps is best for strength training. He also recommends 3-5 exercises. You can read about this style of training in his book, *Power to the People*.

Sample Workout:

3x3 Weighted Pullups
2x5 Weighted Dips
1x5 Jackknife Pushups
1x5 Psuedo-Planche Pushups
2x4 Alternating One-Arm Body Rows

Singles

Multiple single reps are a great way to build strength. If you can do a muscle-up, but not consecutive reps, you can try singles.

Perform 10 single reps with 15 seconds of rest in between. Stop if your form begins to break down. Pick 2-3 more challenging exercises and do the same. Between each single rep, it is okay to reset and shake out your arms.

Density Training

Ethan Reeve of Wake Forest University is a proponent of this excellent method for rapidly gaining strength, endurance or both. You pick a target goal of reps you wish to achieve and then double it. You will perform this number of reps, divided into multiple sets, in each workout. In this example, your goal is to get 15 consecutive muscle-ups:

Workout 1: 3 reps every minute for 10 minutes (30 total reps)

Workout 2: 4 reps every minute for 8 minutes (32 total reps)

Workout 3: 5 reps every minute for 6 minutes (30 total reps)

Workout 6: 6 reps every minute for 5 minutes (30 total reps)

Etc.

You keep repeating this until you reach your goal. When you reach 8-10 reps per minute, you probably have it. Once you have reached your goal, you can add weight to your body, add more reps, or switch to a harder exercise or variation.

Difficulty Ladders

Pick a number of exercises and perform them in ascending order of difficulty.

Example: 5 conventional pushups, 5 elevated pushups, 5 wide grip pushups, 5 pseudo-planche pushups, 5 Jackknife pushups

If you can no longer perform the hardest exercise, drop it and continue the ladder with the remaining exercises. Continue until you are left with only one exercise.

Rep Ladders

For this, you will start out with an easy set and increase the number of reps with each set. When you reach a set that is challenging, but not impossible, start back at your easy set.

Example 1 : 1 rep, 2 reps, 3 reps, 4 reps, 5 reps, 1 rep, 2 reps, 3 reps, 1 rep, 2 reps, 1 rep, 1 rep.

You don't necessarily have to start at 1 rep or go up in single rep intervals.

Example 2: 5 reps, 10 reps, 15 reps, 20 reps, 5 reps, 10 reps, etc.

All of these workouts described above are theoretical templates. You can substitute your own exercises, including non-ring exercises.

Progressions

Weight lifters know that in order to lift 150 lbs, you must first lift 125 lbs and every available increment in between. On rings, you start and end with your bodyweight. As a result, you must use other progressions in order to bridge the gap between skills.

Leverage is one way this can be done. As an example, pushups from your knees are easier than pushups performed from your feet. Body rows can be performed from a seated position, with bent legs or straight legs.

Changing your **body angle** is another way to vary the difficulty of a skill. If you can easily do ring flies from your knees, but not your feet, simply raise the rings up higher to a point where you can perform them from your feet. As you get stronger, you can lower the rings back down to the floor.

Adding weight with a weight vest, a dip belt or a diver's weight belt can also help you improve your strength. You can also take away a portion of your bodyweight through the use of flexbands (large rubber bands) or pulley systems. You can search the ringtraining.com community section for more details.

Using **easier**, but **related, exercises** is a great way to keep your training interesting and develop new skills. If you are working on a front lever, weighted pullups and one-arm body rows can help. Working on iron cross progressions can be helpful too. The exercises do not even need to be from the same family, such as the cross and front lever. There is a lot of overlap between them in terms of the muscles used, in spite of the obvious differences.

Simulating a movement with weights can be very helpful as well. The planche can be trained by lying on your back and pressing dumbbells through the same range of motion with straight arms. This will not provide you with the necessary core strength, but it does help with shoulder development. Similarly, the inverted cross can be developed by lowering dumbbells from overhead with straight arms. You will not develop the

balance necessary for this move on rings, but it will help with the necessary shoulder strength. The dumbbells movements are typically inferior to the actual movements on rings, but they can offer useful assistance at times.

Set-Up Guide



1. Thread webbing through slot on ring.



2. Pull webbing through slot till the buckle arrives at the ring.



3. Place webbing over mounting surface. If the surface is abrasive, place a towel over it to prevent damage to the webbing.



4. Thread webbing through buckle. See diagram on side of buckle. The webbing goes through the window in the back and out the front of the buckle. **Caution:** The buckle works only in one direction. The webbing will slip if it is threaded through the buckle in the wrong direction.



5. Optionally, slide the buckle out of the way by sliding the webbing through the slot on the ring.

Eye screws can be used for mounting. Be sure to mount them into a sturdy surface and consult with an expert on properly installing them. Overhead beams work great. If they are very high, you might need to mount extensions from which you will hang the Elite Ring straps. Loops of climbing rope work well for this application.

Customizing Your Rings

To customize the feel of your rings, you can use heavy sandpaper to add or light sandpaper remove texture. Use horizontal strokes with sandpaper to give them a nice grain. Wrapping them with athletic tape offers a rough surface. Tennis racket overgrip offers a softer surface.

Thank You!



In **Ring Strength**, you can see all of the exercises in this guide, and several more, performed by Jordan Jovtchev. He is a 2-time World Champion and 4-time Olympian from Bulgaria. We produced this DVD as an introduction to the rings and to provide a bridge between the fitness world and the gymnastics world. It is a highly recommended study aid for all aspiring ringmen and ringwomen.

Thanks again for purchasing the Elite Rings. To enhance your training further, read articles and join the community at ringtraining.com and share your results and experiences. See you there!

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