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16 Strength-Training Exercises for Kids



These exercises use your own body weight to help build strength. They're perfect for kids and the whole family to do together.

Whether your child is training for a 5K or obstacle course race, or she just wants to get in shape, these strength-training moves—courtesy of Ewunike Akpan, a certified personal trainer with the American Council on Exercise and a Master Build Our Kids' Success trainer who specializes in getting both kids and adults into shape—are a great addition to a workout routine at just about any age.

1. Bench step-ups: Step right foot, then left, up onto a low bench, then step down. Switch your starting side with each set.

2. Burpees: From standing, squat down, place your hands on the ground, and jump your feet back into a plank position. Lower body to the floor for a push-up. Push back up to plank. Hop feet back in and stand up.

3. Calf raises: From standing, lift up onto your tiptoes and hold, then lower.

4. Cartwheels: A blast! If anyone can't pull them off, just try to approximate the move.

5. Crab walks: Sit with your knees bent and feet flat on the ground; place palms on the ground behind you. Lift hips a few inches and walk forward on your hands and feet like a crab, then walk backward.

6. Crab toe touches: From your crab position, lift left leg and right arm and try to touch your toes. Lower and repeat on the other side.

- 7. Handstands against a wall:** Make it a game and see who can hold it the longest.
- 8. Hip bridges:** Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the ground; rest arms by sides. Press feet firmly down as you slowly lift your hips off the ground; hold for a few counts, then lower.
- 9. Inchworms:** Bend forward at the hips and place hands on the ground with knees slightly bent, then walk them forward until you're in a plank position. Now walk feet in to meet your hands and stand back up.
- 10. Planks:** Lie on the ground on your belly, chest lifted off ground. Flex your feet (toes on the floor), engage legs, and lift body up, balancing on forearms and toes. Keep entire body strong and butt in line with shoulders and heels. Hold.
- 11. Push-ups:** Get into position and bend elbows and lower chest toward the ground, then push back up.
- 12. Side leg raises:** Lie on one side, with your feet and hips stacked; prop yourself up on your forearm. Align shoulder over elbow. Lift your top leg straight up, keeping foot parallel with the ground and flexing your toes; pause at top, then lower.
- 13. Side planks:** Lie on one side and prop yourself up on your forearm. Stack your feet and hips. Lift hips straight off the ground. Hold. Repeat on the opposite side.
- 14. Squat jumps:** Stand with your feet hip-width apart, bend your knees, and squat your butt back and down, then jump straight up in the air, and land back down in the squat with knees bent.
- 15. Straight-arm planks with arm row:** Get into a push-up position, with feet slightly wider than hip-width. Hold it while you bend right elbow and lift it straight up, bringing hand up by side. Lower hand and repeat on the other side.
- 16. Supermans:** Lie facedown, with your arms and legs extended. Slowly lift your arms and legs off the ground as high as you can; keep the neck relaxed and look down at the ground. Hold, then lower.

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