

SPECIAL REPORT

Top 10 Ways **to improve *Your Glutes***



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1.

Learn How to Activate Your Glutes

Simply put, most of the world rarely activates their glutes. The research shows that the glutes don't fire much when doing easy tasks such as walking or standing up from a seated position. Research does show that the glutes fire very hard when sprinting, jumping, and lifting weights, but sadly, most individuals' daily activity does not involve strenuous activity which requires the glute's involvement.

Since the glutes don't fire much throughout the day, they slowly become dormant, making it more difficult for them to fire over time. Prolonged sitting adds to this problem in several ways. When sitting, you compress the glutes and decrease the amount of nutrients they receive. Furthermore, in the seated position, the muscles at the top of your thighs (known as the hip flexors) are placed in a shortened position. They can and will become short and/or stiff over time, which is sometimes referred to as "adaptive shortening." The body reacts to this shortening in an unusual manner - it decreases firing power to the muscles on the opposite side of the body. This is usually described as "reciprocal inhibition," which is just a fancy way of saying that the body will shut down opposing or antagonistic muscles when they are tight.

Some researchers and practitioners have coined this epidemic "gluteal amnesia." Once you've trained as many people as I have, you develop an eye for spotting properly-functioning glutes. You see it in the way people move. The glutes are a very large muscle group, and the problem with a large muscle group is that from an energy perspective its contraction uses up a considerable amount of energy, so in an effort to conserve energy, the body will figure out ways to spare the glutes and use them only when it is absolutely necessary. Depending on the task, it may use the low back muscles, the hamstrings, the adductors, or the quadriceps. This is often labeled "synergistic dominance" and involves "helper" muscles picking up the slack for muscles that aren't pulling their weight.

This epidemic can be solved by teaching the glutes to contract really well and encouraging their involvement in daily activity. You can do this through glute-activation techniques. Glute activation techniques require low-loads, and the focus must be on quality of contraction, not quantity. Simply flexing the glute musculature from different positions and performing basic bodyweight movements while attempting to fire the glutes as hard as

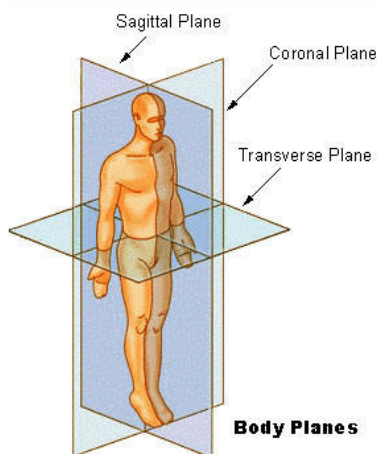
possible can “re-educate” the glutes and teach them to fire automatically during every day movement.



Improve Your Hip Stability

Sure you need adequate levels of hip mobility, but you also need adequate levels of hip stability. The hip is a very unique joint. Throughout the various ranges of motion, different muscles contribute in varying proportions. Certain muscles may be very active in some ranges of motion but not active in others. Some muscles have different roles depending on the motion. For example, the adductors assist in hip extension when rising out of the bottom of a full squat; however, they assist in hip flexion when raising your leg off the ground from a standing position.

During exercise, you usually move in one plane of motion while controlling or preventing motion in the other planes of motion. For example, when you perform a Bulgarian split squat, you move up and down in the sagittal



plane. Weak and unstable individuals find it very difficult to control their femur during single leg movements, and they usually end up leaking energy by failing to control the femur in the frontal (coronal) and transverse planes. In other words, their femur will move laterally from side to side and will internally or externally rotate throughout the movement, especially at the bottom portion of the movement. Ideally you want the knees to track over the toes in this exercise, which requires sufficient hip stability.

Hip stability becomes more challenging when greater ranges of motion are reached. Since the glutes respond very well to large ranges of motion, it's important to be able to control the femur and move fluidly while preventing wasted unnecessary movement. You can improve your hip stability by performing activation work,

single leg exercises, isometric holds, and exercises that move your hips through full ranges of motion.



Improve Your Hip Mobility

The hips are a ball-and-socket joint which allows a lot of movement. The hips can move in many directions; they can flex (ex: raise the knee from a standing position), extend (ex: pushing the thigh rearward while walking), abduct (ex: move the thigh outward as in a jumping jack), adduct (ex: move the thigh inward from an adducted position), internally rotate (ex: point the toes towards each other), and externally rotate (ex: point the toes away from each other).

In order for the glutes to do their job, you need to create an environment that encourages their activation. If the hips are bound up and can't move through full ranges of motion, then the glutes will not be able to “do their thang” and demonstrate their strength. The glute's main roles are hip extension, hip external rotation, and hip abduction. If hip mobility is impaired in any particular direction, it will most likely result in decreased gluteal activation. I'll give you some examples to illustrate this point.

Let's say that your hip flexion mobility is not up-to-par and you have tight hamstrings. When you bend over, as in the case of picking up something off the ground (such as performing a deadlift), you will only be able to go down as far as your hamstring flexibility allows. When it runs out and the body still needs to go further, it will get you from point A to point B by bending at the spine. Now you have the spinal erectors serving as prime

movers when ideal movement patterning in this scenario involves keeping the spine stable while moving mostly at the hips.

The spine and pelvis are intimately connected with the hips, and the spine will pick up the slack and make up for any lack of flexibility in any direction in the hips. If your hips can't extend past neutral due to tight hip flexors, the spine will hyperextend in order to take your body where it needs to get in extension. It's been said that squatting with tight hip flexors is like driving with the parking brake on. Here's another example. Let's say that your hips can't rotate well, as in the case of a golf swing. To swing a golf club, your body has to rotate through a considerable range of motion. If your body possesses sufficient internal and external rotation in the



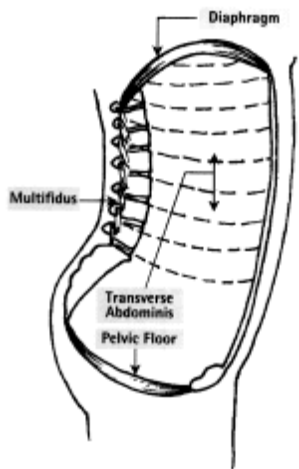
hips, the body will use that flexibility while it rotates. However, if the hips are jammed up and don't allow for much rotation, the spine will adjust accordingly and increase its amount of rotation, which places tremendous forces on the spine and eventually leads to back pain. This pain will further decrease flexibility and further impair the glute activation, as pain has been shown in the literature to inhibit the glutes.

Mobility and proper muscle activation go hand in hand. You can increase your hip mobility in several ways. First, you can practice self-myofascial release (SMR), which improves soft-tissue quality and eliminates “restrictions” in joint range of motion. Second, you can perform mobility drills, which involve actively moving your body into end ranges of motion. And third, you can employ various types of flexibility work such as static stretching, which involves passively moving your joints into end ranges of motion.

Increase Your Core Stability

The word “core” has been a big buzzword in the past decade. What exactly comprises the core is debated by the experts, with some believing that the core consists of muscles that lie between the pelvis and ribcage, and others believing that the core consists of muscles that lie between the shoulders and knees. Most people would agree

that the abdominals, obliques, and erector spinae are “core” muscles. Some believe that the glutes, lats, hip flexors, and scapula retractors serve as “core” muscles. Some even feel that some of the neck muscles are



“core” muscles. There are smaller muscles that are very important for core stability, including the multifidus and quadratus lumborum. Many like to use the terms “inner core” and “outer core” to describe the core’s function. The inner core consists of muscles that form a cylinder and help create intra-abdominal pressure (IAP) which protects the spine by pushing up against the spine when under load and buttressing against dangerous forces. IAP is a good thing for spinal stability, and the diaphragm up top, multifidus in the rear, pelvic floor at the bottom, and transverse abdominis in the front and sides form the cylinder (with some of the internal oblique and erector

spinae fibers contributing as well). More “global” muscles help create spinal stability by directly resisting motion and by “co-contracting,” which compresses the spine in order to make the spine rigid and more difficult to bend. These “outer unit” muscles involve the rectus abdominis, the internal and external obliques, the erector spinae, and more.

What you need to understand is that core stability, which is the ability to keep the spine in neutral position and prevent “energy leaks” in the spine such as rounding or hyperextending, is a critical component to gaining strength. The saying, “You can’t shoot a canon out of a canoe” is very appropriate here. If you want to exert maximum strength or power, you need a stable base from which to fire. The core needs to be able to lock down and prevent excessive movement so it can transfer force from one part of the body to the next and allow for proper movement patterns.

You can improve your core stability by performing core stability drills from various directions. Strengthening the core from multiple directions will ensure that you have balanced core strength and have sufficiently developed the core muscles needed to stabilize the body and allow for the demonstration of maximum strength.



Improve Your Motor Control

Motor control is your ability to regulate and direct the mechanisms that control movement. The brain and nerves organize the body's joints and muscles into coordinated, functional movement patterns and detect stimuli from the environment so they can respond accordingly.

As your body changes position and interacts with the ground and the load, tremendous amounts of coordination and balance are required to maximize strength and power production. Motor control blends together mobility and stability to control your joints through entire spectrums of motion.

While all aspects of training will improve your sensorimotor control, in general, you need to increase your “kinesthetic awareness,” which involves the tensioning of muscles in response to proprioceptive feedback based on space and time to maintain balance and control. Many individuals are completely oblivious to their mechanics, and they rush through their dynamic warm-up without realizing that this portion of the routine is ideal for focusing on form. By focusing on quality (how you perform the movements) rather than quantity (how many sets and reps and how much weight you use), you can improve your motor control, which will allow you to get stronger over time.



Learn Proper Exercise Form

There are subtle ways to make the glutes “do more” during exercises. Employing these methods is important because although strong glutes spare the spine, they won't help you if you're not using them while you move.

It's okay to lean forward a bit in the lunge for variation as research shows that it increases glute activation. In general, the deeper you go in a squat, the greater the glute activation. Furthermore, the wider your stance in a squat, the greater the glute activation. While many women can squat deep with a wide stance, most men cannot. They have to choose between going wide or going deep. Wide stance squats can beat the hips up over time, so it's important to incorporate variety into your training. You should know how to perform many different types of squats, deadlifts, bridges, and single leg exercises.

You should also know the different bar positions for the squat and deadlift: low bar, high bar, front, Zercher, snatch grip, clean grip, neutral grip, and behind the back. You should know the difference between a full squat, a parallel squat, a front squat, and a box squat. You should know how to deadlift conventionally, sumo-style, out of a rack, and with a trap bar. You should know how to perform hip thrusts in different manners. You should know how to perform a single leg squat, single leg Romanian deadlift, single leg hip thrust, and single leg back extension.

After you've gained experience, you'll understand that there are certain rules that pertain to good lower-body exercise form - sit back, keep the chest up, push through the heels, keep the knees out, and keep an arch in the low back.



Formulate an Intense “Mind Muscle Connection”

This topic goes hand-in-hand with the first topic on glute activation, but it bares repeating. Envision a river with three waterfalls. The three waterfalls represent the motor output running to the erector spinae, the glutes, and the hamstrings. During movement, you want an equal amount of water flowing down each waterfall. Many individuals have much more “juice” flowing to the erector spinae and hamstrings than the glutes.

Ideally you want 33% going to all three muscle groups, but just by palpating beginners’ glutes when they exercise, it’s obvious that many individuals have around 50% going to the erectors, 35% going to the hamstrings, and 15% going to the glutes. Over time you will rewire your neurocircuitry and formulate new motor engrams that are ingrained into your movement patterns. You won’t have to think so much about using your glutes; it will become automatic.

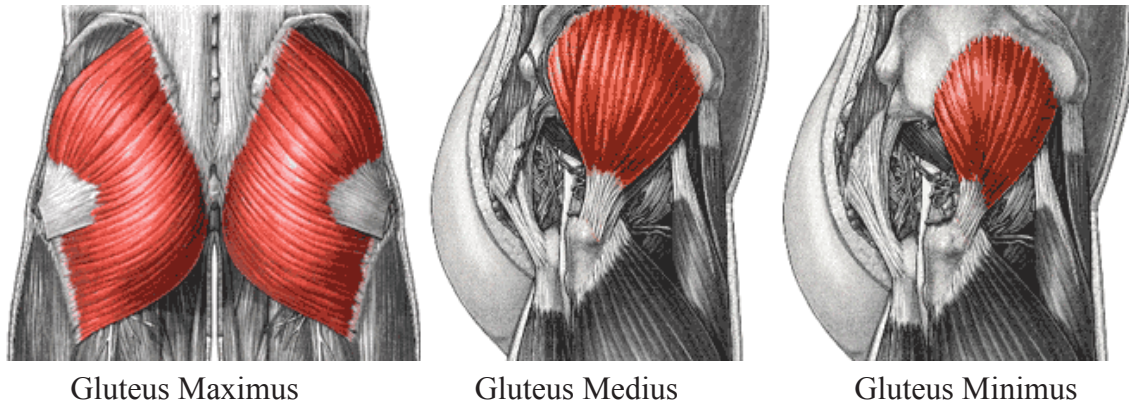


When I first learned how to use my glutes, I started becoming highly-aware of their presence. I would flex them constantly while I sat, while I walked, and while I was standing. I would stand up from a chair like I was performing a box squat and I’d finish off strong by firing the glutes into lockout. When I would walk up stairs, I’d fire the glutes intensely.

All of my clients can relate to this phenomenon. After six weeks of training with me, they all tell me that they’re amazed at how hard their glutes contract when they exercise. They finally understand why a “back extension” should really be called a “hip extension” or a “glute extension.” They feel like their glutes can crush walnuts.

They use them when they lockout a deadlift, when they power out of the hole in a squat, and they have to hobble away from barbell glute bridges as their glutes get so pumped they can't walk correctly.

If you want to maximize your glutes aesthetics and strength, then you must formulate this mind-muscle connection and teach the glutes to fire on command.



Perform the Best Exercises for the Job

If your goal is to improve the shape and strength of your glutes, then it is imperative that you perform the exercises that will give you the biggest bang for your buck. Some exercises work the glutes really well in a stretched position. This does a great job of stimulating muscular growth (also known as hypertrophy) as it creates muscular damage, which has been shown to initiate hypertrophic adaptations. The full squat and lunge fit this description. Other exercises do a great job of working the glutes in a position of end-range contraction. These exercises do a great job of stimulating muscular growth as they maximize muscle volume, also known as cellular swelling, which has also been shown to initiate hypertrophic adaptations. The hip thrust and back extension fit into this description.

Whenever I look over exercise routines, I'm almost always disappointed in people's choices of exercises. Many individuals spin their wheels as they're not performing the best movements for the glutes. There are many different types of glute exercises, and it is important to understand the various categories so you can work the glutes through their various roles and hit them from multiple angles. Furthermore, the glutes can work as both prime movers and as stabilizers, and can get worked through basic calisthenics, heavy strength training

exercises, and high-speed movements including sprints, plyometrics, ballistics, and agility drills.

Strength training will always give you the most benefits in terms of muscular shape for the glutes due to the increased time under tension. One of the most effective glute workouts consists of the walking lunge, the hip thrust, and the band hip rotation. These three exercises team-up very nicely together. However, most individuals don't know how to perform these movements correctly and would greatly benefit from incorporating them into their routines. Beginners need to start off with basic bodyweight exercises, whereas advance lifters need to perform the most challenging movements for the glutes.



Get Strong!

This is the single most overlooked aspect of getting nice glutes. If you're a person who has a genetic predisposition for having nice, round, sculpted glutes, then lucky you! You're in the vast minority. However, if you're like the rest of us "normal folks," then you need to work hard to make your butt look better - and it takes more than just going to the gym and going through the motions.

What women fail to realize is that when they describe what they want their butts to look like, they're describing muscle hypertrophy. Sure they need to lose fat but when they say they want it "rounder and perkier," this desire equates to muscle hypertrophy, not muscle tone. Let me repeat that:

ROUNDER & PERKIER = GLUTE HYPERTROPHY



Increased strength is highly correlated with muscle cross-sectional area (CSA). The stronger a muscle, the larger it will usually be. People seeking better glutes need to realize that they are seeking hypertrophy/muscle gains, not “toning” adaptations. Decreasing overall bodyfat will make your hips narrow, whereas strengthening the glutes will give your glutes more “pop” and more 3-Dimensional shape.

I have an identical twin brother. We are not genetically gifted in the glute-department. But my hips are five inches larger in circumference due to the fact that my glutes are larger than his. What’s sad is that mine still need to be larger to look perfect, but at least I’ve demonstrated that strong glutes are correlated with muscular glutes. If you want your butt to look its best, you need to get very strong. Bodyweight exercises won’t cut it for most individuals. You need to eventually be holding onto dumbbells

and putting a bar on your back, in your hands, and across your hips. Many of my female clients can hip thrust over 185 pounds, and although they love the improvement they’ve seen in their glutes, they still want more. You need to get very strong at big, compound movements such as squats, deadlifts, hip thrusts, and walking lunges.

You get strong by learning proper form, “releasing the brakes” by eliminating dysfunction that slows you down such as immobility and instability, and by utilizing progressive overload. Each month you should be stronger than the month before. You can progress in many ways, such as increasing range of motion, performing more repetitions with a given weight, or performing the same amount of repetitions with a heavier weight. Many women will see a picture of Jamie Eason and admire her sculpted booty. What they fail to realize is that Jamie’s glutes are very strong.

Strong glutes equal sexy shape. Strength training isn’t about “just showing up.” It’s not just about “training hard” either. It’s about showing up, training hard, training smart, tinkering with the variables, and progressing.

Learn How to Design Great Programs

There are many ways to train effectively. Programs can be designed in a variety of ways and still lead to great results. Program design can be extremely complicated, as there are many acute variables that must be manipulated depending on the training goal.



First, you have to determine your total training mix. This involves deciding on what components you'll include in your program. A recreational lifter may just include a specific warm-up along with basic strength training. An athlete may incorporate self myofascial release (SMR), static stretching, mobility and activation drills, movement prep, linear speed work, agility and quickness work, plyometrics and ballistics, sled work, explosive strength training, lower body strength training, upper body strength training, core training, energy system development, and recovery protocols. As you can see, training for sports can be quite in-depth!

Next, you have to consider periodization schemes and determine your general split. Some opt for full body workouts, others prefer push/pull, some go with lower/upper body splits, and some pick bodypart splits. Now you have to consider exercise selection (which exercises you'll perform on the various days), exercise sequence (order of exercises), frequency (how often you'll train and how often you'll train the various movement patterns and hit the various muscle groups), volume (sets and rep schemes), intensity (how heavy you'll be lifting), density (time under tension versus rest time in between sets), intensiveness (how physically hard you'll push yourself), and tempo (rep cadence).

If you're seeking hypertrophy results, you want to make sure you're stimulating all the hypertrophy mechanisms: mechanical tension, muscular damage, metabolic stress, cellular swelling, and hormonal milieu.

Finally you need to consider advanced methodology and possibly incorporate some constant tension work, rest

pause methods, fascia stretching and active recovery, drop-sets, heavy eccentrics, and paired supersets. Most important, you need to learn how to “auto-regulate” your workout and make adjustments based on listening to your biofeedback. This takes time to master.

Training can be extremely complicated, but it can also be very simple. For example, if all you want is to have nice glutes, then here’s a simple routine you can perform at your gym:

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Full squat	Walking lunge	Bulgarian split squat
Deadlift	Hip thrust	Single leg RDL
Barbell glute bridge	Reverse hyper	Back extension
Band seated abduction	Band hip rotation	Cable standing abduction
<i>Perform 3 sets in the 6 to 15 rep range with 1-2 minutes of rest between sets</i>		

Of course, in this routine makes a bunch of assumptions, as these exercises are quite advanced and beginners would be better served following a different program. This program only includes the strength training component and doesn’t include any information pertaining to the general warm-up. Finally, this program will work for a period of time, but eventually, like all programs, it will lead to stagnation. You’ll need to switch things up each month for continuous results.

Last but not least, no “program” is complete without nutritional considerations. If you’re trying to lose weight, then you need to reduce your calories. If you’re trying to gain weight, then you need to up your calories. You always want to consume adequate protein and essential fatty acids, but calories and strength are the most important facets to looking good.

I’m currently working on a new eBook for the glutes which should be finished some time in January of 2011. The new program will elaborate on the topics mentioned in this report and will include basic templates that I’ve used to train my clients.

For updates and all my latest information, please check out my site (click link) www.BretContreras.com

Now go hit the gym and make your booty stand apart from the crowd!

