



The Full Body Surf Workout and Surf Training Program



A BROTHER
ABROAD

In surfing, the most difficult part of the experience is the physical aspect. The daunting task of paddling fast enough to get through crashing waves while controlling a log, having the stamina and power to paddle fast enough to catch the waves, and having enough energy left to enjoy the experience of surfing is a shockingly difficult task for pretty much any beginner. Surf fitness and the strength and stamina required are one of the most underestimated aspects of the sport.



Though time in the water, paddle for hours on end, will condition your paddle to paddle and wield your board, whipping it around into waves and having the strength to control it in the washing machine, there is a shortcut – starting full body surf workouts *before* hitting the water. Taking on the right surf training workouts with a good surf training program, like the ones we'll share, will ensure you spend more time enjoying learning the art of surfing than struggling and being reminded that you should have gotten into surf shape before.

By training on land for strength and stamina in the major movements of surfing – paddling, popping up when you're exhausted, and maintaining control of the board when the wave rides you – we can cut the time to progress in surfing exponentially. Showing up to our dream surfcation, after months away from the water, yet still physically equipped with the strength and



stamina to paddle out, get in, and make the most of our ride. That's our goal in sharing this highly effective, full body surf workout and the best surf exercises we could find

Read on for the surf workout that you can do on land to amp up your surf adventures at sea.

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WHY YOU NEED THIS SURF TRAINING PROGRAM AND WORKOUTS

Ultimately the point of this surf training program and workout plan is to get you in surf shape before getting in the water, or more specifically...

- To prep for the physical aspect of surfing before you enter a surf camp for the first time
- To get ready to get back into surfing after a long break
- To improve the power in your paddle, or your endurance, to better get over bigger waves on the outside and paddle into fatter or faster waves

Why does this matter? Because for most people, how much they enjoy surfing and how motivated they are to continue depends on how well they surf. As most of surfing is paddling around, whether getting into or avoiding waves, if you're not in "surf shape" then you end up wasting more time missing waves or (even worse) getting hit by waves.

If you're new to surfing and headed to a camp, you'll make much better use of your time during that quick week if you have the strength and endurance to paddle for the entire 1 to 2 hour session.



If you're experienced and coming back after a hiatus, you already have the skills, so why not show at your best to make use of the waves, instead of wasting those sessions "getting your paddle back"?

And if you're already active in surfing, maybe you want to hit a new location or break, with bigger or faster waves that require a little more, faster, or harder paddling? Stay safe by putting in some effort to get into the shape you need to be in to avoid overreaching and getting in over your head.

Ultimately, putting in a little time working out, with a surf specific workout, will make you more competent in the water, more quickly.

HOW TO USE THE SURF PREP WORKOUT



A little investment in getting fit before you surf can ensure you're spending more time catching waves and less time struggling and watching other surfers enjoy.

Start with the [low intensity](#) surf prep workout.

As you progress and are capable of doing the advanced movements (muscle-up, reverse muscle-up) through an entire workout, continue on to the [advanced surf prep workout](#)

Everyone should end their workout with a stint of cardio. The [Tabata Workouts](#) listed below take less than 5 minutes and deliver the benefits of a 20 minute+ cardio session while promoting quicker cardiovascular recovery.



Ending your workout with cardio (after the strength building movements) aims to train, and extend, your overall stamina. Training cardio while you're already tired helps you train to build more stamina (gas in the tank) after you've already spent an hour paddling, and improving your recovery between waves.

THE COMPONENTS OF SURFING THAT YOU NEED TO PREPARE FOR PHYSICALLY

We can do any activity better by breaking the larger activity into its main, most important components and training do those elements better. Surfing is no different.

The following “elements” of surfing are the cruxes of the activity and the parts that, for beginners, will leave you so tired you'll question whether you have enough in your for the sport. With a little planning, and this program, we can have you going into a surf camp (or the next surf season) with the strength and stamina in all areas that allow you to focus on improving your technique and better reading the ocean, instead of just trying to survive while your lungs burn and arms feel like spaghetti.

The following “elements” of surfing are the movements, techniques, and strengths we'll build to make our time in the water more productive.

Ultimately, the most essential aspects of preparing physically for a good surf session are a strong upper body, cardiovascular fitness tuned for surf endurance and quick recovery, core strength, warmup and cool down for good joint health and preparing for the intensity surfing demands in each session.

THE MAJOR PHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF SURFING

- [Paddling](#)
- [Controlling the Board \(Push Pull\) to get through waves](#)
- [The Pop Up](#)
- [Quick Recovery Between Waves & Cardio](#)



PADDLING

Paddling is the act of lying on the board and using the crawl stroke (similar to swimming) to get your board moving. This could involve paddling *with* a wave, aiming to get enough speed to actually *catch* the wave and ride it.

Paddling is also just as important in “paddling out”, or paddling to get out to the area where the waves are breaking and you’ll (hopefully) be catching them. The problem is you’ll have to paddle through breaking waves (if you pick the wrong entry) and fast enough to beat the timing of breaking waves

Paddling is half of surfing, and a lot more than that when you’re learning how to catch waves. For most, this is the most discouraging part of learning to surf – as the paddling gets them nowhere if they don’t have the strength in the lats and arms or the stamina to last through 5 to 10 minutes of paddling.

How we train for a stronger paddle: Proper paddling involves a reach, digging deep into the water, and pulling down along the board. This movement – reach + pull – is similar to the movement of a pull up transitioned into a dip, or a muscle up, so we train as beginners with pull ups and dips and progressing to muscle ups.

In the second half of the paddle, we pull the arm up and out of the water, reaching forward to repeat the movement. In training, we mimic this same movement to train for balance, using either a clean and press movement or a reverse muscle up (high pull + transition + shoulder press)

The first time you paddle out, your arms will feel like jelly once you’ve made it out – but floating around with dead arms or completely exhausted makes you a risk in the water. To ensure that at any point, you’re ready to paddle and surf, we train cardio and stamina as well

How we train for stamina in paddling: [Cardiovascular workouts](#) listed are short, focus on intense bursts of energy (as expend paddling) and work in lower body and upper body to account for the full body element of surfing.

- **Muscles involved:** Lats (back muscles), chest (shoulder muscles),
- **Intro Exercises to do:** [Suspension Trainer Muscle Ups](#), [Suspension Trainer Clean and Presses](#), Pull Ups, Dips, High Pulls, Overhead/Military Presses.
- **Advanced Exercises to do:** Muscle Ups, Clean and Presses (Reverse Muscle Ups with bar)
- **Tools to Use out of the Water:** [Suspension Trainer](#), [Sandbell](#), Olympic Bar, Pull Up Bar



CONTROLLING THE BOARD (PUSH PULL) TO GET THROUGH WAVES

Why does board control matter? First, because you actually want to make it out to the waves *with* your board. Second, when you have to duck through an oncoming wave (that you won't be riding) you don't want that board to fly loose and hit anyone.

The solution to both situations is a well executed [turtle roll](#) or [duck dive](#) while maintaining control of your board, and pulling your board under or through the wave.

To do this we need to have the grip strength to hold the board when the water is trying to pull it away, as well as the strength pull or push the board in whatever direction we need to, against the power of the wave.

How we train for controlling the surfboard: Pushing and pulling exercises performed with resistance (a dumbbell, kettlebell, or [sandbell](#)). Push up Rows, or push ups and then rows, will do, but the renegade manmaker exercise builds durable pushing and pulling strength in all directions. We'll use both in our workout plan.

- **Muscles involved:** Lats (back), Chest, Forearms (Grip Strength), Core
 - **Exercises to do:** Push Ups, Rows
 - **Advanced Exercises to do:** Push Up Rows, Renegade Manmakers, V-Hold (Core), Plank (Core)
 - **Tools to Use out of the Water:** Dumbbells, [Sandbells](#)
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THE POP UP

The “Pop up”, or standing up on the board is where things get fun and *real* surfing actually starts, but you need to have enough energy left to do it right.

Not much strength is required to do a pop up, but you will need the stamina. Considering you'll have likely just paddled like hell to catch the wave, once you're moving you want the stamina to pop up with enough finesse to place your feet properly on the board and be ready to execute the finer movements and balancing movements that make up the ride.

Bottom Line: Your goal in training for the popup should simply be not being too winded after paddling and having enough energy to maintain your balance.



How we Train for The Popup: Exercises that mimic the movement of the popup, such as burpees or renegade manmakers, executed in a short workout structured for cardio and performed after upper body strength training (mimicking paddling) is your best bet. This way, even after paddling you'll still have the stamina to land your pop up and be able to maintain your balance.

- **Muscles involved:** Chest, Lower Back, Core, Legs
- **Exercises to do:** Burpees, V-ups, V-Holds, Planks
- **Tools to Use out of the Water:** (All bodyweight exercises)

CARDIO AND QUICK RECOVERY FOR SOLID ENDURANCE SURFING

Cardiovascular fitness, and the quick recovery that comes from [High Intensity Interval Training or HIIT workouts](#) is essential because surfing's activity comes in bursts dotted with rest periods.

As an oncoming wave approaches, you'll paddle like hell to get over it, then plop back on your board for a seat, breath, recovery, and wait for one you catch. The same happens while paddling out. On a rough day, you may have to paddle quickly through the surf, rolling or duckdiving through, in 5 to 10 hard minutes (or a lot more) before taking a rest for the burst required to paddle for a wave.

The Bottom Line: Cardiovascular exercise will improve your overall stamina and HIIT style workouts will condition your body for the huge bursts of activity followed by recovery periods.

How We Train Cardiovascular Fitness and Recover: We train for stamina and quick recovery with a handful of short workouts ([tabatas](#) and [kettlebell hell](#)) that use resistance movements to overload your body over short periods, with *very* brief breaks.

- **Workout Routines:** [Tabata](#), [Kettlehell](#)
- **Exercises to do:** Burpees (Tabata), Jumprope, [Kettlebell Exercises](#)
- **Tools to Use out of the Water:** [Sandbell](#), [Kettlebell](#)

Now that you understand the elements of surfing we'll build this workout on, let's review the exercise movements we'll use to recreate our major surfing movements with resistance.



THE EXERCISES YOU CAN USE TO TRAIN FOR SURFING ON LAND

Though surfing is an all water experience, we can train for the physical aspects (listed above) on land using the following movements.

LOW INTENSITY MOVEMENTS:

- [The Suspension Trainer Muscle Up](#)
 - [Push Up Rows](#)
 - [Suspension Trainer High Pull + Transition + Overhead Press](#)
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HIGH INTENSITY MOVEMENTS

- [The Muscle Up](#)
 - [Clean and Press](#)
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CARDIO AND STAMINA WORKOUTS

- [The Burpee Tabata](#)
 - [Renegade Man-maker Tabata](#)
 - Push Up, Squat, Sit Up Tabata
 - Jump Rope (Double Unders) Tabata
 - Kettlehell
-

THE SUSPENSION TRAINER MUSCLE UP

The suspension trainer muscle up is an adaption of the true muscle up. As a tool to train for surfing, it conditions the entire “pull” movement, pulling the surfer and board forward in the act of paddling.



By recreating the muscle up with a suspension trainer, we can scale down the resistance making it an easy starting point

HOW TO DO A MUSCLE UP WITH A SUSPENSION TRAINER

PUSH UP ROWS

Push up rows are performed by holding a pair dumbbells while in the push up position then performing a push up and a dumbbell row at the top.

This balance of resistance a pushing (via the push up) and a pulling movement (via the row), along with grip strength (via holding the dumbbell) builds the strength necessary to control the board when turtle rolling, duck diving, and generally navigating through waves.

SUSPENSION TRAINER HIGH PULL + TRANSITION + OVERHEAD PRESS

The high pull and overhead press balances the strength and muscle development of the muscle up (for paddling).

Also, when you're completely smoked, the backs of your shoulders will burn and feel smoked, making lifting your arm back for another stroke a bear – the high pull plus overhead press improves endurance (and strength) in this movement

CLEAN AND PRESS WITH A SUSPENSION TRAINER

THE MUSCLE UP

A more advanced move due to the power required, the muscle up works the exact same movement and muscles as paddling on a surf board – except each muscle-up requires exponentially more power.

By training the muscle-up, and the power it brings, you'll be able to put more power into each paddle, making you faster in the water when “burst paddling” to get over or get into a wave.

SUSPENSION TRAINER MUSCLE UP



REVERSE MUSCLE UP OR CLEAN AND PRESS

Just like the suspension trainer high pull and overhead press, the clean and press balances the muscle up movement, but with much more resistance.

As you train the muscle up more, you'll absolutely want to increase resistance in the clean and press to ensure balance in development.

THE BURPEE

The burpee is a beast of an exercise that not only trains the whole body, but when done repeatedly because an awful (and awfully effective) cardio workout.

The burpee movement consists of a push up, jumping or stepping the feet forward, standing up, and jumping. When it comes to surfing, this movement resembles the pop-up (standing up on the surfboard) very much. This ultimately allows us to use the burpee (a movement similar to the pop-up) to train cardio in the movements that will be our last in catching a wave.

My choice method for burpee cardio is the [Tabata workout](#) using burpees.

Tabata's are high intensity cardio workouts that are only 5 minutes long, and extremely effective. So for the [Burpee Tabata](#), we'd perform 20 seconds of burpees as fast as possible followed by 10 seconds of rest, and repeated for 8 rounds.

[Click here to read more about the Burpee Tabata workout](#)

RENEGADE MAN-MAKERS

The Renegade Man-Maker is a one-up on the burpee in terms of intensity. For surfing application, it will build the strength for controlling the surfboard while paddling (push, pull, and grip) with a *heavy* touch of cardio.

The Renegade Man Maker consists of taking two dumbbells and performing a push-up + row with each arm, jumping the feet forward, standing, then completing a clean and an overhead press with each dumbbell.



As a workout, Renegade Manmakers are perfect for the Tabata workout, for Cardio, or setting a specific number (like 100) and doing them straight until completion, with no rest

OTHER USEFUL EXERCISES FOR SURF CONDITIONING

PUSH UP + SQUAT + SIT UP TABATA: FULL BODY CARDIO WORKOUT

We've already mentioned the [Tabata workout](#), a 4.5 minute workout structure that has insane cardio results. Instead of doing just burpees, as mentioned before, consider doing a 3x Tabata workout of pushups, squats, and sit ups – adding up to one 8 round, 4.5 minute Tabata workout for the pushup, then the situp, then the squat, with a 1 minute rest between each of the 4.5 minute workouts

The pushups + squats + sit ups Tabata is a great, no equipment full body workout you can do anywhere for great results. Just be sure not to sand bag it.

JUMPING ROPE (DOUBLE UNDERS) TABATA

Jumping rope is a great, simple cardio exercise. Doing “double unders”, or making the rope go under your legs twice with a single jump is brutal – a test of stamina, explosive power, and agility when you're tired and smoke. Doing a “Double Under Tabata” is next level brutal.

Apply the same 4.5 minute Tabata workout structure to the double unders exercise as a good “cardio topper” at the end of your workout – training for more stamina when you're already beat down.

KETTLEBELL SWINGS

Kettlebell Swings are an amazing, durability building exercise that works your legs and everything on the back of your body – glutes, lower back, upper back, shoulders, and more.

In surfing, the kettlebell conditions you to be ready for proper paddling technique – with your check off the board and lower back engaged to stabilize you and support your paddle.

To add the kettlebell swing to the end of your workout as a “stamina smoker” try one of these methods:



1. Set a target number (ideally 100, but start at 50) and do that number of kettlebell swings straight to completion, ideally with no rest possible. If you do stop, keep the rest short and finish your set. As a benchmark, my end of workout smoker is 100 kettlebell swings with a 50lb kettlebell.
2. Kettlebell Tabata
3. 25 kettlebell swings x 4 to 8 sets (depending on how froggy you're feeling)

I highly recommend checking out the [sandbell](#) if you travel a lot. It is a collapsible drybag designed to be filled with sand or water and used just like a kettlebell – except its easily collapsible when you're done.

KETTLEHELL

This sadistic workout will break you down...and build you up in a way that you've never experienced. This high intensity interval training (HIIT) workout is a circuit of kettlebell (or dumbbell) movements performed in a circuit that conditions strength endurance in the shoulders, lats, lower back, and arms.

If you do this workout...I would looooooove to hear your feedback. Its been a favorite for 10 years, and is one of my benchmark workouts.

KettleHell Workout:

Complete 5 Rounds as quickly as possible

- 20 Kettlebell Deadlifts (two handed)
- 20 Sumo Deadlift High Pulls (two-handed)
- 20 Kettlebell Swings (two-handed)
- 10 Kettlebell Swings (right hand)
- 10 Kettlebell Swings (left hand)
- 10 Clean and Presses (right hand)
- 10 Clean and Presses (left hand)

Repeat

Recommended Weight: 45lbs, scale to 25lbs to start

[Or click here to learn more about the Kettlehell Workout](#)



Now that you're familiar with the strength training exercises that line up with the major movements and physical requirements of surfing, let's put them together into two workouts that will cultivated

How to do these workouts: I recommend doing the primary surf workout and following it with one of the cardio smokers every session – to develop strength and increase your stamina and endurance.

Don't forget to squeeze in a dedicated [leg workout](#) on your non-surf workout days – we don't need no prison bodies (barrel chest + stick legs) showing off in the water. Plus, studies show good leg resistance workouts improve strength gains throughout the body.

How often to do these workouts: Listen to your body (and your physician) is the primary advice. Second to that, I recommend 2 to 3 times a week *but* listen to your body. If your muscles are hurting from the last workout, skip a day. If your joints are hurting, skip two days (at least) and ****train mobility**** instead or do a low impact workout. If you've seen a loss in strength or extra fatigue (like you haven't recovered) do these workouts less often.

CAUTIONS:

- **Train mobility as well:** You should put just as much time into flexibility and mobility as working out
- **Warmup before:** The [world's greatest stretch](#)** plus 3x5 pushups and squats should do it
- **Listen to your joints:** If your joints start screaming, respond with rest days, stretching, water, and good nutrition
- **Eat to train – don't train to eat:** Eat food that will help you exercise and recover better. I still approve of beer – it amps up the happiness factor.

Now, let's jump into the surf workouts...

The Low Intensity Surf Workout is designed for people new to these training movements and built with exercises that have scalable resistance. Once you've reached max resistance, step up to the high intensity workouts

[– Click to jump to the Low Intensity Surf Workout –](#)

The High Intensity Surf Workout consists of advanced movements, that require a lot more strength, but develop an insane amount of power. Once you can knock out these movements, paddling will be no



[– Click to jump to the High Intensity Surf Workout –](#)

THE SURFER'S WORKOUT (LOW INTENSITY)

- 4 x 12 – [The Suspension Trainer Muscle Up](#)
- 4 x 12 – [Suspension Trainer High Pull + Transition + Overhead Press](#)
- 4 x 12 – Push Ups + Suspension Trainer Rows
- Finish with a Cardio Smoker ([Tabata](#), Kettlebell Swings, etc.)

THE SURFER'S WORKOUT (HIGH INTENSITY)

- 4 x 12 – Muscle Up (High Intensity)
- 4 x 12 – Clean and Press (High Intensity) *aim to make the movement slow and controlled, like a reverse muscle up*