

PLT4M Foundational Movements

The Points of Performance



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INTRODUCTION

At PLT4M, we believe in providing every student with a foundation of fitness upon which they can develop their personal fitness or performance training. To do this, we introduce the foundational human movement patterns, and cement proper mechanics before adding intensity or variation to the equation.

These are:

- The Squat
- The Press
- The Pull
- The Hinge
- The Lunge

With a strong foundation, we can expound upon our mastery of human movement by developing relative strength, mobility, and our performance capacity—in a variety of fitness categories.

These movement patterns are first introduced in PLT4M's Intro to Fitness Part 1 Program, in their most basic form—performed with just our bodyweight. Through Intro to Fitness Part 2, we expound upon our mastery of these movements, by introducing new variations and loaded objects. We'll continually revisit these movement patterns, and their variations, in subsequent programs. Having mastered the basics, students are well-positioned to continually develop their foundational movement patterns which appear in a variety of fitness and training paths.

This guide takes a closer look at the 5 foundational movements, how to execute them, and why they're important.

THE SQUAT

Points of Performance for The Squat:



Point 1: Stance

Begin with feet slightly wider than the hip, or, "shoulder width stance" with toes splayed out slightly—at 11 & 1 on a clock. The entire foot remains in contact with the ground throughout the duration of the movement.



Point 2: Maintain Lumbar Curve

Maintain a neutral spine throughout each repetition.



Point 3: Keep Tracking Toes

Keep knees stacked directly over the ankle through the entire movement. Avoid the knees caving in!



Point 4: Depth

A full range of motion squat is achieved when the hips descend below parallel (hip joint below the knee joint).

Why It's Important:

Squatting (properly) is how we are designed to sit—chairs, couches, and toilets haven't always existed. Squatting is our way of getting up and down.

Variations:

- Air Squat
- Front Squat
- Back Squat
- Goblet Squat
- Split Squat

THE PRESS

Points of Performance for The Push-Up:



Point 1: Hand Placement

Begin with palms flat on the ground, fingers forward, placed just outside of the shoulders.



Point 2: Elbow Path

Shoulders should remain externally rotated, with elbows tracking back towards the rib cage, so that the upper arms create an “Arrow”, not a “T” when looked at from above. No elbows flaring out to the side!



Point 3: Stable Midline

Core should remain engaged through the lift, maintaining a neutral spine—just like our plank. Hips should not sag or hit the ground, or move independent of the torso. Hips should move in time with the shoulders.



Point 4: Full ROM

The chest must hit the ground/surface at the bottom of every rep, without the thighs doing so as well. At the top, elbows should be locked out the full extension, without hips sagging. No half reps!

Why It's Important:

When done well, the press develops strict pressing strength, reinforces safe/powerful shoulder mechanics, and works midline strength & stabilization.

Variations:

- Horizontal Pressing – The Push-Up
- Vertical Pressing – Overhead Press, Bench Press

THE PULL

Points of Performance for The Pull Up:



Point 1: Hand Placement

Grasp the bar using an overhand grip (palms facing away from body), with the arms fully extended.



Point 2: Elbow Path & ROM

Activate the shoulders and lats, then pull the body until the chin clears the top of the bar with the elbows tracking down, then lower to a position with the arms fully extended. This is one (1) rep.



Point 3: Stable Midline

The pull-ups should be done in a smooth motion. Jerky motion, swinging the body, and kicking or bending the legs is not permitted.

Why It's Important:

The importance of pulling your own body to an object, or an object to your body, cannot be overstated. Pulling is a physiological necessity in order to optimize results and avoid injury.

Variations:

- Horizontal Pulling – The Inverted Row
- Vertical Pulling – The Pull Up

THE HINGE

Points of Performance for The Good Morning:

Point 1: Hips Width Stance & Soft Knee



We begin the Good Morning by establishing a hip width stance. This means our feet should be directly under our hips, not our shoulders as done while squatting.

Then, we “soften” the knee by bending it just slightly. At this point, our torso should still be vertical, shoulders stacked over the hips.

Point 2: The Hip Hinge



Once set, we can initiate the movement at our hips

WITHOUT dropping hip level or further bending the knees, we push the hips back as if reaching for a wall behind us with our butt. We should feel a stretch through the hamstrings. If we drop hip level and let the knees bend, we are replicating the squat pattern and are no longer hinging.

Point 3: Neutral Spine



As our hips push back, we are, at the same time, letting the torso lean forward. Absolutely crucial during this descent of the torso, though, is maintenance of a “neutral spine”.

Why It's Important:

A “hip hinge” is performed every time we bend over. Whether it be picking up a backpack off the floor, or preparing to jump—we are performing this primal movement pattern. Learning and training the hip hinge helps to avoid injury, improve performance, and open up your total body mobility and stability.

Variations:

- The Good Morning
- The Romanian Deadlift
- The Deadlift
- The Burpee

THE LUNGE

Points of Performance for The Lunge



Point 1: Lead Leg

The lead, or "lunge" leg, should be stepped forward as to create a 90 degree angle of the knee in the bottom position. The lower leg should be straight up and down with the knee stacked directly over the ankle.



Point 2: Torso Position

Maintain a neutral spine and vertical torso. Engage your midline and keep the upper body in a static position over your hips throughout the repetition.



Point 3: Back Leg

The back leg should also aim to create a right angle with the ground. This time, the thigh should be straight up and down, with the hip stacked directly over the knee.



Point 4: Stance Width

Always remain within the framework of your shoulders. Feet should be operating as if they are on train tracks, not a tightrope.

Why It's Important:

The Lunge is the basis of your most primitive movement pattern, meaning it shares much in common with walking/running/carrying. Training the unilateral lunge pattern allows us to highlight and erase imbalances in a movement pattern we use throughout our lives without even realizing it.

Variations:

- Forward Lunge
- Backward Lunge
- Walking Lunge
- Jumping Lunge
- Lateral Lunge
- Loaded Lunge
- Overhead Lunge