

BODYWEIGHT TRAINING GUIDE

The Complete Calisthenics Plan

A complete calisthenics workout plan for every level — beginner to advanced, with sets/reps tables, a plateau-fix decision tree, and this printable tracker companion.

3

TRAINING
TIERS

24+

WEEKS
COVERED

3–5

DAYS /
WEEK

1

PULL-UP
BAR NEEDED

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FORMAT
Printable PDF

UPDATED
June 2026

The Complete Calisthenics Workout Plan

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This calisthenics workout plan takes you from your first wall push-up to a muscle-up across three tiers: a beginner full-body block (weeks 1–8), an intermediate push/pull/legs build (weeks 9–24), and an advanced 12-week skill block. Pick your tier with the self-test below, follow the sets/ reps tables, and use this PDF alongside the Google Sheet tracker.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- 01 How This Plan Works
- 02 Beginner Plan (Weeks 1–8)
- 03 Intermediate Plan (Weeks 9–24)
- 04 Advanced Plan (12-Week Block)
- 05 Stuck? The Plateau Decision Tree
- 06 Nutrition by Tier
- 07 Frequently Asked Questions

How This Plan Works

There are three tiers, and you choose by what you can already do, not by how long you've trained. The whole plan runs on progressive overload — you make a movement harder over time by adding reps, slowing the tempo, shortening rest, or switching to a tougher variation.

Self-test: max strict push-ups, dead-hang pull-ups, and full-depth bodyweight squats (3 separate maximal sets, full rest between). Your *weakest* result sets your tier.

Tier	Weeks	Days/week	Split	Graduate when you can...
Beginner	1–8	3	Full-body A/B circuits	15 push-ups · 5 pull-ups · 20 squats, all strict
Intermediate	9–24	3–4	Push / Pull / Legs	25 push-ups · 10 pull-ups · 10 pistol-squat negatives
Advanced	12-week block	4–5	Skill + strength split	Train specific skills (muscle-up, lever, OAP)

WHY IT WORKS

Frequency drives skill more than volume when you're new. Hitting a push pattern three times a week teaches the movement faster than blasting it once — and you recover fine, because the loads are low relative to a trained lifter.

Beginner Calisthenics Plan — Weeks 1–8

Full-body, 3 days/week. Graduate at 15 push-ups · 5 pull-ups · 20 squats, strict.

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Tempo	Regression if too hard
Push-up	3	8–12	2-0-1	Incline → knee push-up
Inverted row / band-assisted pull-up	3	8–12	2-0-1	Raise bar / shorten body angle
Bodyweight squat	3	12–20	2-0-2	Box squat to a chair
Walking lunge	2	10 each leg	controlled	Static split squat, hold support
Plank	3	20–40 sec	hold	Knees down
Glute bridge	3	15	2-1-2	—

Weekly Schedule — 3-Day Full-Body

ESTABLISH FOUNDATION

- **Mon:** Circuit A (push-up, inverted row, squat, plank)
- **Tue:** Rest or 20-min walk
- **Wed:** Circuit B (incline/knee push-up, band pull-up, lunge, glute bridge)
- **Thu:** Rest
- **Fri:** Circuit A
- **Sat/Sun:** Rest, mobility, or light cardio

Rest 60–90 sec between sets. Two to three sessions/week is the right beginner dose — training frequency drives strength gains with diminishing returns past a point (Source: Pelland et al., SportRxiv preprint, 2024).

Intermediate Calisthenics Plan — Weeks 9–24

Push/Pull/Legs, 3–4 days/week. Graduate at 25 push-ups · 10 pull-ups · pistol-squat negatives.

Day	Exercise	Sets	Reps
Push	Push-up (feet elevated)	4	10–15
Push	Parallel-bar dip	3	6–12
Pull	Pull-up	4	5–10
Pull	Chin-up	3	6–10
Legs	Bulgarian split squat	4	8–12 each
Legs	Pistol-squat negative	3	3–5 each

Aim for 10–15 hard sets per muscle group/week. Last set within 1–2 reps of failure (RIR 1–2).

Advanced Calisthenics Plan — 12-Week Skill Block

4–5 days/week: skill practice fresh, strength volume after. For 25+ push-ups / 10+ pull-ups / pistol-negative level.

Phase (4 wks each)	Skill block (fresh)	Strength block (after)	Frequency
1 — Accumulation	Skill regressions, 4–6 short sets, RIR 4+	High-volume dips/pull-ups/pistols: 4×8–12	4 days
2 — Intensification	Harder regression, 5–6 sets, RIR 2–3	Heavier load, lower reps: 5×4–6	4–5 days
3 — Realization	Test full skill, low reps, full rest	Maintenance volume: 3×6–8	4 days

01 Muscle-Up

High pull-ups → explosive pull-ups → band-assisted → slow negatives → straight-bar muscle-up. The transition over the bar is the sticking point, not the pull.

02 One-Arm Pull-Up (OAP)

Weighted 2-arm pull-ups → archer → one-arm assisted (towel/band) → one-arm negatives → full OAP. Build to a weighted pull-up with ~half bodyweight added first.

03 Front Lever

Tuck → advanced tuck → single-leg (straddle) → full front lever. Hold each progression 10+ controlled seconds before extending.

04 Pistol Squat

Box pistol → assisted pistol (hold post) → pistol negatives → full free pistol. Ankle mobility is the silent blocker — fix it before adding range.

DELOAD NOTE

Deload in week 8 if joints feel beat up — cut sets by half and keep skill practice light. Advanced calisthenics is more elbow- and shoulder-tendon-limited than muscle-limited.

Stuck? The Calisthenics Plateau Decision Tree

The single most common reason progress stalls is repeating the same reps at the same difficulty week after week. Change tempo first, then variation, then add load — in that order.

Push-up — below ~10 reps

Add tempo first: 3 sec down, every rep, 2 weeks. Still stuck? Drop to incline, rebuild volume.

Push-up — 15–25 reps

Stop chasing reps. Harder variation: feet-elevated → archer → pseudo-planche.

Push-up — 25+ reps, no harder variation yet

Add load (backpack + books). Treat as a weighted set of 6–10.

Pull-up — can't add reps past 3–5

Use negatives: jump to top, lower 5 sec, 3–4 sets.

Pull-up — stuck at 8–12 reps

Add weight (5–10 lb), 5–8 rep range, or archer/commando pull-ups.

Pull-up — grip fails before back

That's a grip plateau — add dead hangs + farmer holds, 2x/week.

Squat — easy past 25 reps

Move to single-leg work: split squats → pistol progressions.

Squat — stuck on pistol negatives

Usually ankle mobility/balance — elevate heel or hold support, drill negatives.

What Should You Eat? Sample Nutrition Day by Tier

Tier	Daily calorie aim	Protein target	Sample day
Beginner (recomp)	Maintenance to +150	~1.4 g/kg	Oats + eggs · chicken rice bowl · Greek yogurt + berries
Intermediate (lean build)	+200–300	~1.6 g/kg	3-egg omelet + toast · turkey wrap · cottage cheese + nuts
Advanced (skill phase)	+300–400	~1.8–2.0 g/kg	Protein oats + whey · chicken pasta · steak, sweet potato, broccoli

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How many days a week should I do calisthenics?

A. Two to three days for beginners, three to four for intermediates, four to five for advanced trainees. Beginners need recovery between full-body sessions; advanced lifters split work to manage volume and skill practice.

Q. How long does it take to see results?

A. 2–4 weeks for noticeable strength and rep increases (mostly neural), 6–8 weeks for visible muscle definition, 10–12 weeks for a clear physique change, 3–6 months for a major transformation in skills, leanness, and strength.

Q. Can you build muscle with calisthenics alone?

A. Yes. A randomized trial found push-ups adjusted to a comparable load produced muscle and strength gains similar to low-load bench press over eight weeks (Source: Kikuchi & Nakazato, Journal of Exercise Science & Fitness, 2017).

Q. What is the best calisthenics workout split?

A. There isn't one best split — full-body 3x/week wins for beginners (frequency builds skill fast), push/pull/legs wins for intermediates (more per-muscle volume), skill-plus-strength wins for advanced trainees chasing specific moves.

Q. How do I progress from beginner to advanced?

A. Hit each tier's graduation numbers before moving up. When any lift stalls, change tempo first, then variation, then add load. Log every session so you can see the stall instead of guessing.

Q. How long should a calisthenics workout be?

A. Most sessions run 30–45 minutes. Beginner circuits finish in 30–35, intermediate PPL runs 40–45, advanced sessions stretch toward 45–60 because skill practice needs long rests between attempts.

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

Pair this PDF with the companion Google Sheet tracker — log reps per session and it auto-flags PROGRESS, HOLD, or STALLED so you know exactly when to hit the plateau tree. Full guide at gymnasetips.com/calisthenics-workout-plan-beginner-advanced/