

FREE PROGRAMME · STRENGTH

YOUR FIRST PULL-UP

An eight-week progression from dead hangs to your first full, unassisted rep. Four exercises, two or three short sessions a week.

8 WEEKS | 2–3 SESSIONS A WEEK | BEGINNER

WHY IT IS HARD

YOU WEIGH WHAT YOU WEIGH

A first pull-up is one of the most popular strength goals there is, and one of the most satisfying to hit. Lifting your whole bodyweight is harder than it looks.

On a bar there is no lighter plate to choose. Gravity is pulling the full weight of you down, so the only thing you can change is how strong you are. So this plan starts with lighter versions and builds the strength one step at a time.

THE MOVEMENT

Hang from a bar, fully straight. Pull until your chin is over the bar. Lower under control until your arms are straight again. That is one rep.

THE VERSION WE ARE BUILDING

The **pronated** pull-up: palms facing away from you, hands just wider than your shoulders. It is mostly a back exercise.

OTHER GRIPS YOU WILL HEAR ABOUT

SUPINATED

Palms facing you. Usually called a chin-up; more biceps, so a little easier.

NEUTRAL

Palms facing each other, on parallel handles. Kind to the shoulders.

ASSISTED AND WEIGHTED

A band or machine takes some weight off; a belt adds it. The first gets you here, the second comes after.

Before you start. If you have an injury or a condition that might be affected, check with your GP first. Train in clothes and shoes that let you move, and warm up properly before every session: a few minutes of light cardio, then arm circles, band pull-aparts and some easy hangs.

THE FOUR EXERCISES

WALK BEFORE YOU RUN

These four build every part of the pull-up separately. Add them to the end of your current training, or do them as a short session on their own.

01

INVERTED ROW

Hold a low bar or a set of TRX straps, arms straight, heels on the floor and body in a straight line. Drive your elbows back and squeeze your shoulder blades together until your hands reach your sides. Lower with control. **The more upright you stand, the easier it is.** Walk your feet forward to make it harder.

02

DEAD HANG

Grip the bar with hands shoulder-width apart and hang with straight arms. Squeeze your glutes, keep your ribs down and hold for as long as you can with good form. This builds the grip and shoulder control every rep depends on.

03

NEGATIVE PULL-UP

Use a box, or jump, to get your chin over the bar. Then lower yourself as slowly as you can, taking **3 to 4 seconds** to reach straight arms. Step or jump back up and repeat. The lowering half is where most of the strength is built.

04

ASSISTED PULL-UP

The full movement with some of your weight taken away, by an assisted pull-up machine or a resistance band looped over the bar. Over the weeks, use less assistance: a lighter band, or a smaller counterweight.

THE PROGRAMME

EIGHT WEEKS

Each exercise 2 to 3 times a week, on non-consecutive days. Move up a block when you can hit the top of the rep range with good form.

WEEKS	EXERCISE	SETS × REPS	FOCUS
1–2	Inverted row	3 × 8–12	Lower the angle as it gets easier
	Dead hang	3 × 30 s	Grip and shoulder stability
3–4	Inverted row	3 × 10–15	Harder angles
	Dead hang	3 × 45 s	Longer holds
	Negative pull-up	3 × 4–6	Slow, controlled lowering
5–6	Dead hang	3 × 60 s	Grip and shoulder stability
	Negative pull-up	3 × 5–8	Own the lowering phase
	Assisted pull-up	3 × 6–8	Reduce assistance gradually
7–8	Dead hang	3 × 60 s+	Hold or extend the time
	Negative pull-up	3 × 6–10	More reps, same control
	Assisted pull-up	3 × 8–10	Less assistance again
	Full pull-up	1–3 reps, 2× a week	Test it first, while you are fresh

NOT THERE AT WEEK 8?
Normal. Repeat weeks 7 and 8 and keep testing. Strength does not read the calendar.

GOT ONE?
Practise little and often: a single rep, several times through the day, builds to sets fast.

SUCCESS IS A SLOW PROCESS. QUITTING DOES NOT SPEED IT UP.

WANT IT BUILT AROUND YOU?

I'm Tom, Head Coach at TC Coaching. In **Project Legacy™** a team builds your training around your diary, your data and your goal: training from me, nutrition from Adam Glover, rehab from Gaz McNamara. Tag **@coaching.tc** when you get that first rep.

APPLY FOR COACHING

FREE TOOLS