

How To Do Pull-ups and Chin-ups With Proper Technique



Pull-ups

Pull-ups & Chin-ups force you to lift your own body-weight. They are the best strength training exercises you can do for upper-body strength & muscle mass. Unfortunately Pull-ups & Chin-ups are hard. Very hard.

If you're a beginner, chances are you can't do 1 Pull-up or Chin-up. This article will not only teach you how to do Pull-ups & Chin-ups with proper technique, but also how to get stronger at them so you can do the weighted versions.

What are Pull-ups & Chin-ups? Hang on a pull-up bar with straight arms & pull yourself up until your chin passes the bar. The difference between Pull-ups & Chin-ups is in the grip:

- **Pull-ups.** Palms facing away. Less biceps, more back. Harder.
- **Chin-ups.** Palms facing you. Work your biceps more. Easier.

Other Pull-up variations include: palms facing each others, thumbless grip, towel Pull-ups, Fat Bar Pull-ups, Mixed Grip Pull-ups, Horizontal Pull-ups, Kipping Pull-ups, etc. This article deals with Pull-ups & Chin-ups.



Benefits of Pull-ups & Chin-ups:

- **Build Muscle.** Pull-ups & Chin-ups force you to lift your own bodyweight. This stresses your body, building the muscles of your arms & back.
- **Grappling Strength.** Pull-ups & Chin-ups help any sport which involves gripping, grappling & pulling, like MMA or Rock Climbing.
- **Carryover.** Get stronger at Pull-ups & Chin-ups and you'll get stronger on the opposite movements: the Overhead Press & Bench Press.
- **Shoulder Health.** Balancing press exercises like the Bench Press with pull exercises like Barbell Rows & Pull-ups prevents muscle imbalances.

What Do You Need for Pull-ups & Chin-ups? A Power Rack with a Pull-up bar works best. Or a Doorway Pull-up bar. Any surface where you can hang from at arm's length will do for Pull-ups & Chin-ups.

What if You Can't Do 1 Pull-up or Chin-up? Whatever method you choose: pull yourself up as if nothing/nobody was helping you. Pull-ups & Chin-ups feel very different without assistance. And always try to beat your previous record.

- **Chin-ups.** Chin-ups are easier than Pull-ups. If you can't do 1 Pull-up, try Chin-ups. Alternate Chin-ups with Pull-ups when you get stronger.
- **Resistance Band.** Attach a resistance band to your pull-up bar and loop it around your knees. They really can make a huge difference.
- **Ask For Help.** Ask someone to grab your side with his hands. Let him help you on the way up by squatting down & pressing up.
- **Kipping Pull-ups.** Swing your hips while pulling yourself up until you get stronger.
- **Routine.** You can also try this strength training routine to increase your strength on Pull-ups (or Chin-ups).
- **Use Momentum.** Jump up & use momentum. Control yourself on the way down. This one will get you a sore back & arms. You're warned.

I'm too Heavy For Pull-ups & Chin-ups. Your body-weight is not the problem. Strength is. If you want to get stronger at Pull-ups & Chin-ups, do them more or start with assisting yourself with resistance bands and steadily use less resistance with lighter bands. You may even do drop sets with your own body weight and when you hit failure, loop an band over your knees and rep out again. It will take time and your strength gains will be measurable. You can do them, remember to train smarter not harder.

Weighted Pull-ups & Chin-ups. Once you can do 10-15 Pull-ups or Chin-ups in a row, add weight to keep the exercise challenging. Here's how:

- **Dumbbell Between Legs.** Gets you an ab workout too. Doesn't work once you're using more than 10-20kg.
- **Rucksack.** Wear a rucksack & put plates in it.
- **Belt & Chain.** What I do. Wear a belt. Suspend plates from a chain, attach the chain to your belt.

Pull-up & Chin-up Technique. Start each rep from a dead hang with straight elbows. Clear the bar with your chin on every rep.

- **Squeeze The Bar.** And put the bar close to your fingers, not in the palm of your hand.
- **Breathe at The Bottom.** It's easier to breathe at the bottom. Take a big breath before pulling yourself up.
- **Chest Up.** Don't let your shoulders go forward: it's unhealthy for your shoulders. Lead with your chest up & keep your shoulders back.
- **Look Up.** Never look down during Pull-ups & Chin-ups. Look at the bar. Look where you're pulling yourself up to.
- **Elbows to The Floor.** Drive with your elbows to the floor. This involves your stronger back muscles more.
- **Bend Your Legs.** And cross your feet. Letting your legs hang means less strength in my experience. Squeeze your glutes on the way up.

Common Errors. Most common error on Pull-ups & Chin-ups is cheating the range of motion by not going low or high enough on each rep.

- **Not Straightening the Arms.** Start from a dead hang with straight elbows, like on the picture above. No partial Pull-ups/Chin-ups as this can strain your biceps and hinder your progression.
- **Shoulders Going Forward.** It's bad posture & bad technique. Lead with your chest up while driving your elbows to the floor.
- **Using The Hips.** Keep your legs in line with your torso, unless you're doing Kipping Pull-ups.
- **Chin Over Bar.** Nose or forehead against the bar is a partial Pull-up/Chin-up. Chin over bar unless you're not strong enough yet.