



YOUR FIRST **MUSCLE UP**

VAHVA FITNESS

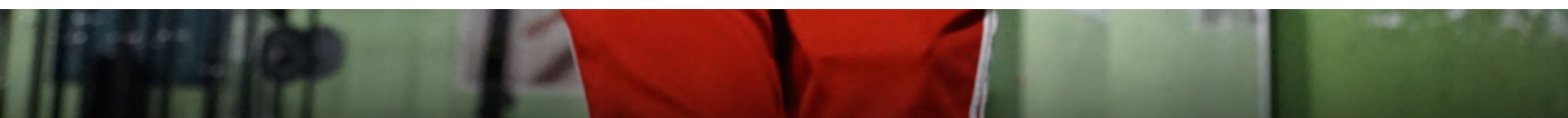


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WHAT IS A MUSCLE UP?

Muscle up is a strength move, which, during the past decade, has become a notorious strength feat to showcase physical prowess.

Muscle up, in short, is nothing more than a pull-up and a dip combined by a transition phase. The purpose of the skill is to get on the top of rings or a bar.

Originally, muscle ups were a move just to get on the top of the rings or horizontal bar in gymnastics. In gymnastics, the muscle up is such a basic move that it is not even scored in the gymnastic cards.

Kids and adults from all ages, all over the world, are performing muscle ups, whether it is part of a local street workout group or gymnastics.

Nowadays, muscle ups have become massively prevalent in many exercise programs.

Many athletes, such as MMA fighters, include muscle ups in their training regimen to improve their strength and conditioning.

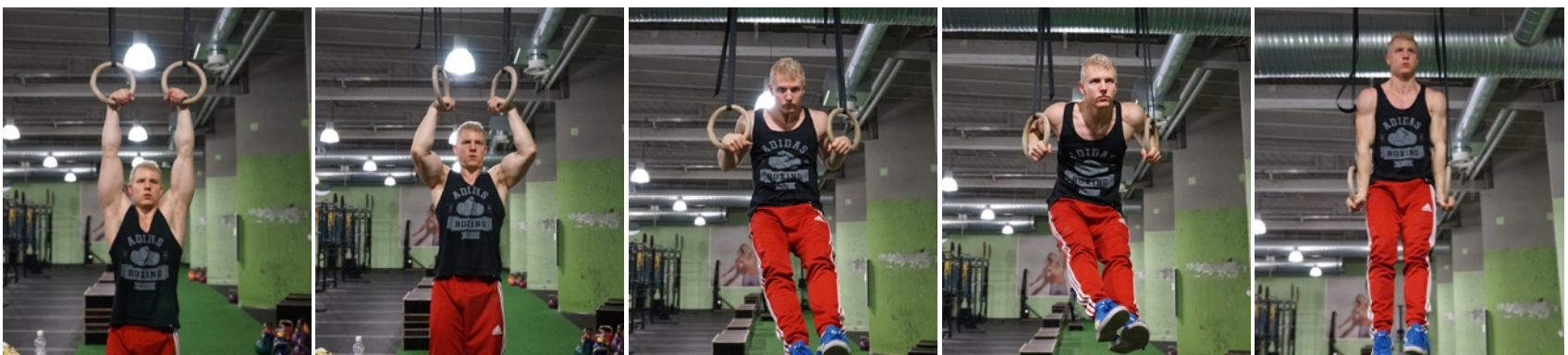
One of the fastest growing sports in the world, CrossFit, has also included their version of a kipping muscle up in their programs.

Muscle up is also a central part of most street and bar workout routines and is continuing to build its reputation as one of the foundational moves of the sport.

BASIC BREAKDOWN OF A MUSCLE UP

Whether a muscle up is performed on a bar or on rings, the muscle up consists of three parts:

1. **Pull-up** - pulling bodyweight up
2. **Transition** - internally rotating elbows on the top of the bar so you can start the next phase.
3. **Dip** - pushing yourself up to straight arms.



Muscle up is a special kind of a beast, because the move includes both a pulling motion, pressing motion, and the transition phase between a pull-up and a dip.

Muscle up is an amazing move to improve pulling: strength and size in biceps, middle back, and upper back.

The pressing motion improves pressing strength by adding size and strength to triceps, front deltoids, and chest muscles.

The transition phase increases strength and size in forearms, shoulders, rotator cuffs, and numerous of smaller muscle groups in the scapula, or shoulder girdle.

I believe the built strength that is required to perform a clean muscle up is the biggest benefit one can achieve by learning the muscle up.

Learning the muscle up will enhance the entire upper body athletics like no other exercise.

The transition phase will build your forearms, rotator cuffs, and shoulders, which not only translate directly to overall strength, but also keep you injury free like nothing else.

Muscle up is an extraordinary exercise, which can be approached safely and effectively with the right preparation.

When mastered, the muscle up is not only an exercise that will make the jaws drop from everyone around you, but it also has the potential to turn you physically into a whole new beast.

Still, to this day, a muscle up happens to be one of the more “impressive” strength feats one can perform in a gym or a park, and will also convey that the person is capable of for more than just flexing his muscles.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF A MUSCLE UP

Muscle ups can be separated into two groups based on the apparel that is used to perform the feat:

1. **Ring muscle up** - A muscle up on gymnastics rings.
2. **Bar muscle up** - A muscle up on a horizontal bar.

In addition, muscle ups can be divided into two groups based on their execution:

1. **Strict muscle up** - A clean and strict muscle up.
2. **Kipping muscle up** - A muscle up where momentum is used to complete the repetition.

Kipping muscle ups are particularly popular among bar athletes and CrossFit practitioners.

The biggest disadvantage of the kipping muscle up is that the momentum is used to skip the most strenuous and effective part of the muscle up - the transition phase.

As a result, the kipping variation is significantly easier, but the benefits of the exercise are also minimized.

In this guide, we will solely focus on the strict, clean version of the muscle up. Strict muscle ups will give you the best bang for your buck.

Moreover, if you master the strict version, the kipping will seem almost like too easy.

Just practicing the kipping version will barely transfer to the strict version, and will not ensure all the strength benefits of the muscle up.

In this guide, we will go through both the bar and ring versions of the muscle up.

The biggest difference between a bar and ring muscle up is that the center of mass is distributed differently, and as a result, they provide slightly different challenges.

Mastering a strict bar muscle up will transfer directly to the strict ring muscle ups.

There are also other muscle up variations, such as wide ring muscle ups, L-sit muscle ups, weighted muscle ups, explosive muscle ups, one arm muscle ups, etc.

This guide is about learning your first muscle up, and doing it in an effective and safe manner.

If you are interested in the advanced variations of the muscle up, please visit our website [VahvaFitness.com](https://vahvafitness.com) and/or our [YouTube page](#) for more.

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Originally, I was introduced to muscle ups, and calisthenics in general, in 2009-2010, after seeing the world-renowned bar athlete Hannibal performing numerous advanced calisthenics tricks on a YouTube video.

It wasn't long after that I started to practice muscle ups, and also read every single related document I could get my hands on.

The general advice for achieving a muscle up was very straightforward: Just learn the technique, practice the false-grip, and then get strong enough in pull-ups and dips.

Eventually, I was performing chin-ups and pull-ups with an extra 50 kg(110lbs) and dips with an extra 40kg(88lbs). My form was also perfected and I had developed great mobility and flexibility in both exercises.

My false-grip and grip strength were on point, too.

I still couldn't do muscle ups. I kept going and improving my numbers and eventually I got my first muscle up, but my progress pretty much stagnated there.

I could maybe do a couple of muscle ups in the beginning of my workout, but then I immediately lost the strength to do more. Not only that, the reps were painful and it felt like my arms were going to explode.

Then, one day I saw a 17-year-old kid doing clean, strict, and beautiful muscle ups.

The muscle ups weren't the thing that shocked me, but his overall strength instead: He could barely do 5 good chin-ups and he could perform maybe 2 shaky ring dips.

What the heck was going on?

How is it that this kid can do such a picture-perfect muscle ups, when he is so... weak?

At that point, I changed my entire approach to muscle ups and I really started to get deep into the kinesiology and biomechanics behind the muscle ups.

I realized that nearly all muscle up guides and tutorials were shallow and only penetrating the surface.

I realized that the simple, and easy advice worked on many people, but only a portion, and those who learned muscle ups with ease, were gifted individuals who had well-developed structural balance and strength levels in their body.

I know there are people who have been training for muscle ups for years and can't perform good reps. I was one of them.

Moreover, I know there are people who bust their asses for muscle ups, but still get very miniscule and/or bad results.

Muscle ups are a great feat and a great move, but they aren't anything special.

It is not the muscle up that is hard, but the preparation for learning one that is flawed and doesn't produce any results.

I personally started from absolutely zero and struggled for years with muscle ups, but I overcame the challenge.

Eero Westerberg, our main athlete of Vahva Fitness, has followed the Vahva Method of learning and perfecting muscle ups, and he is soon to become the undisputed king of muscle ups.

He is performing clean, strict reps with an extra 20 kg (45lbs) and is working towards a +40kg (90lbs) muscle up.

In this guide, I will introduce all the "secrets" and keys for achieving the muscle up.

I want you to learn the muscle up regardless of your gender, physical background, or years in training. Muscle up is achievable for all healthy males and females regardless of age.

How fast you will learn the muscle up depends on individual factors, which is why it is impossible to give any general learning time.

Don't be discouraged if you don't learn the skill as fast as everyone else, because everyone is progressing with their own personal speed.

If you put the hard work in, and do the necessary preparation and stick to the process, I am confident you will learn the muscle up.

The purpose of this guide is to provide the best and most informative muscle up guide on the market. For free.

I wish you all the best,

Samuli Tapio



Samuli Tapio (left) and Eero Westerberg - Vahva Staff.

STRENGTH PRE-REQUISITIES

In order to ensure the safest and the most effective path to muscle up, you should already have built up a reasonable level of fitness before attempting to learn the muscle up.

You should have at least 3 to 12 months of training under your belt.

The quickest way to learn the muscle up is not to start practicing it right away, but to pay your dues first.

At first, you should focus on building the basic level of fitness.

If you want to maximize your progress and effort, our Vahva Fitness website provides top level guidance and programming for everyone regardless of gender or age, and regardless of previous or current level of fitness.

Vahva Basics fits everyone, from absolute beginners to more advanced fitness enthusiasts.

[Read more about Vahva Fitness and transform your body.](#)

Different people start from different starting points and progress with different paces, but before embarking on your journey to the muscle up, you should be able to complete two simple exercises: a pull up and a dip.

10 CLEAN REPS OF THE BASIC PULL-UP

Form: start from a deadhang (straight arms) and then pull up to your lower neck level. Lower down with control.



10 CLEAN BAR DIPS

Form: start from straight arms at the top, lower yourself until you feel your shoulders being stretched, then push yourself up.





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A: MUSCLE UP MOBILITY

The muscle up mobility consists of two parts: pull-up mobility and elbow mobility.

If you cannot perform a clean pull-up with full range of motion, a muscle up won't happen either. The good thing is that a great deal of pull-up mobility is unlocked by improving the elbow mobility.

Elbow mobility is often the missing link between lack of progress and performing a clean muscle up.

It is a crucial factor and it is unbelievable that almost no one teaching muscle ups has really figured this out.

The thing is, it doesn't matter how strong you are if your elbows are too stiff to allow your body to rotate your shoulders on the bar or rings without restrictions.

1. PULL-UP MOBILITY

LEVEL 1



Isometric chin-up hold.

5 sets for 15 seconds.

The key here is to build stability and mobility at the top of the chin-up form. Focus on pulling the bar as low as humanly possible. When you can no longer hold the maximum range of motion, finish the set and rest for the next one.

You can move to level 2 after you are able to hold the bar tightly to your chest and hold the 5 sets of 15 seconds with ease. The bar has to touch the chest the entire time.

LEVEL 2



Isometric pull-up hold.

5 sets for 15 seconds.

The same as the chin-up hold, except the grip is reversed.

You can move to level 3, after you have achieved the range of motion to hold the bar to your chest.

LEVEL 3



False-grip pull-up.

5 sets for 5 repetitions.

From: straight arms to the bar touching your chest. You can also do this exercise with rings(recommended option) and, in this case, just pull up to the maximum range of motion you have the capability for.

2. ELBOW MOBILITY

LEVEL 1



Elbow stretch.

Use one arm to stretch the other arm by pushing your forearm down towards your shoulder. If you lack flexibility in your elbow, you will surely feel pressure in your elbow joint.

Start cautiously, but eventually you should be able to press the arm quite hard. When you no longer feel any benefit or a stretch, move to level 2.

LEVEL 2



Elbow stretch with *resistance*.

Start by stretching your elbow as you did in the level 1, then apply pressure to your elbow joint by trying to press your stretched arm open. Use the other arm to hold the arm in place, and just feel the pressure in your elbow joint.

As usual, begin cautiously. This is an exercise you can do for forever. After you have focused on this for 2-4 weeks, feel free to move to level 3.

LEVEL 3



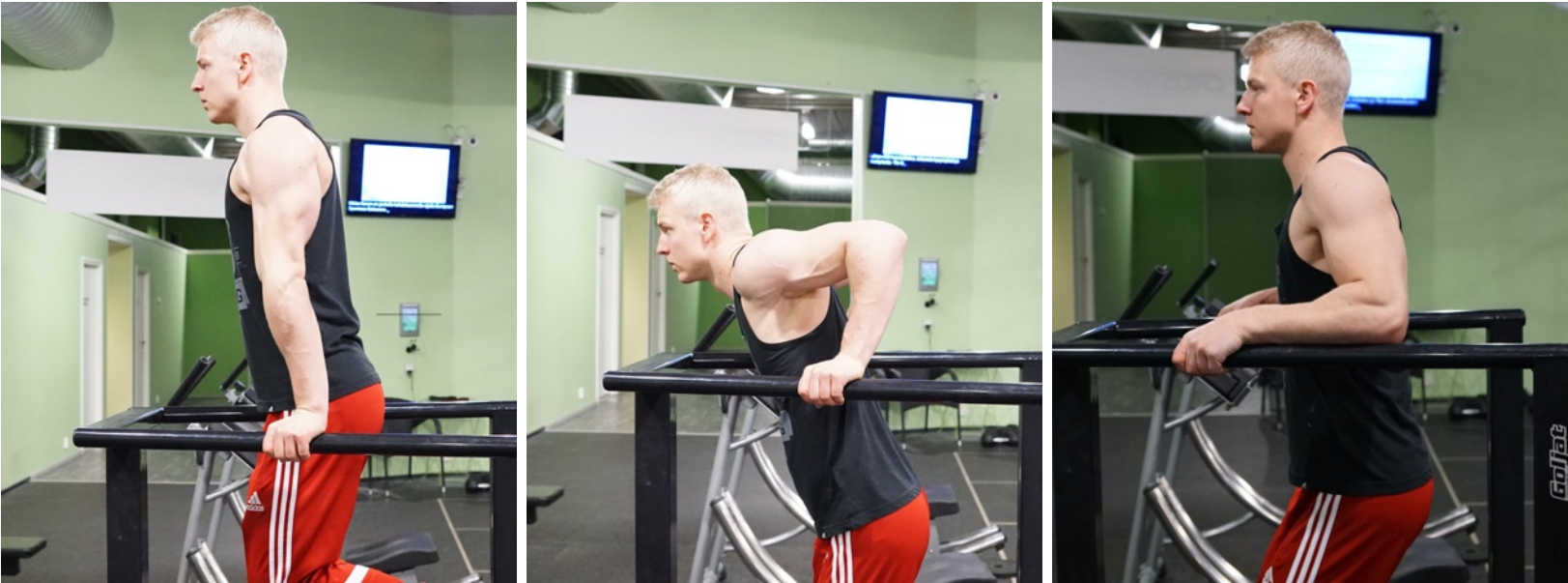
Forearm push-up.

Mastery: 5 sets for 10 repetitions.

Likewise, you should be in 100% control of the entire range of motion.

After mastery, move to level 5.

LEVEL 4



Russian dip.

Mastery: 5 sets of 5 repetitions.

Similarly to forearm push-ups, you should be in 100% control of the entire range of motion. The control creates the mobility and the mobility creates the perfect muscle up.

After you no longer feel any benefits from this, move to level 6.

LEVEL 5



Single bar russian dip.

Mastery: 5 sets of 5 repetitions.

100% control of the entire range of motion. Stop when your forearms are horizontal to the bar, and then press yourself up.

After you have achieved this, you should be very close to achieving the full muscle up.

LEVEL 6



Negative muscle up.

Mastery: 5 sets for 3 repetitions.

Lower yourself from dip support with control. You should feel this very intensively in the elbows.

To make it easier, keep the hands and arms close to your body.

Negative muscle up is actually more strenuous than the actual muscle up! After you have achieved mastery in this one, you should be able to perform a regular muscle up with ease.

LEVEL 7



Strict muscle up.

Mastery: 5 sets for 5 repetitions.

At this point, you should be able to perform the actual muscle up or at least be very close to achieving one.

Congratulations!



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B: FALSE-GRIP MOBILITY

In the muscle up, you are as strong as your weakest link. If you're lacking wrist strength, then performing a strict muscle up can seem almost hopeless.

False-grip strength is especially important in the ring muscle up, where completing a clean rep is nearly impossible without holding the false-grip.

Bar muscle ups can be performed without false-grip, but wrist & forearm strength will still play a major role.

There is only one cure though, and that is the specific false-grip strengthening.

LEVEL 1



Bent arm false-grip hold with leg support.

Mastery: 5 x 15 seconds.

LEVEL 2



Straight arm false-grip hold with leg support.

Mastery: 5 x 15 seconds.

LEVEL 3



Bent arm false-grip hang.

Mastery: 5 x 15 seconds.

LEVEL 4



Straight arm false-grip hang.

Mastery: 5 x 15 seconds.

Mastering the level 4 should provide enough false-grip mobility to perform your first muscle up.

You can also include wrist curls and reverse wrist curls with a dumbbell or a barbell to your training regimen. All grip work is beneficial.

However, the only way to really improve the false-grip is to practice the false-grip, so focus on the thing that actually matters.

After you have achieved the level 4, you can add weight, increase the duration of the sets, or practice one arm false-grip variations.



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C: ROTATOR CUFF MOBILITY

The strength of the rotator cuff plays a key, major role in the muscle up. The transition phase of the muscle up is a heavy internal rotation of the scapula.

The targeted muscle with all internal rotational work is the subscapularis muscle, which is the dominant muscle in internally rotating the shoulder.

In order to maintain the structural balance in the shoulder and allow the rotator cuff to strengthen with great efficiency, both internal rotation and external rotation should be trained to prevent injuries, improve athleticism, and build strength.

The majority of the individuals fall into the group where their internal rotators (subscapularis) are well-developed, but their external rotation (infraspinatus) lacks strength.

Any weakness in the rotator cuff hinders the development of the other muscles because the body always aims to maintain structural balance by default.

I was part of the rare group where my internal rotators were significantly weaker than my external rotators.

Weak rotator cuffs can be the missing link in your training if you have already mastered every other element of the muscle up.

Nonetheless, focusing on developing rotator cuff strength will improve general fitness and muscle up performance by leaps and bounds.

I recommend doing rotator cuff work after the muscle up workout.

In order to do rotator cuff mobility work, you will need elastic bands, small weights, or a cable machine.

1. INTERNAL ROTATION



My recommended variation is to perform internal rotation lying on the floor.

Start light - just with your bodyweight. The entire motion should be comfortable in all musculature. If it is not, then you will need to just focus on performing the internal rotation just with your arm without any extra weight.

Progress in small increments. It is not always necessary to add more weight.

Rotator cuffs are easy to injure, so start low and stay safe.

2. EXTERNAL ROTATION



This variation of external rotation can be performed lying on the floor, sitting, or standing.

My recommended variation is the standing external rotation, because it is the most demanding with the best range of motion.

Start with small weights and gradually increase the load every week.

PROGRAMMING

5 sets for 5 to 10 repetitions.

The final exercise of your muscle up workout.

To find your sweet spot for both internal rotation and external rotation, try 1.25 kg for 10 reps, and if it is too easy, try 2.5 kg.

After you have found your sweet spot, perform the 5 x 5-10 and gradually increase the weight every week or every two weeks. It all depends on how your body feels.

This is not a strength feat - this is just mobility work, so focus on form and safe execution.



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MUSCLE UP PROGRAMMING

The correct preparation for the muscle up involves three different elements:

A. Muscle up mobility.

1. Pull-up mobility; 2. Elbow mobility.

B. False-grip mobility.

C. Rotator cuff mobility.

1. internal rotation; 2. external rotation.

EXAMPLE MUSCLE UP WORKOUT ROUTINE

Example Muscle Up Program

A1 Full ROM Pull-Up Hold

A2 Forearm Push-Ups 5 x 15

B1 Leg-supported false-grip hang 5 x 15s

C1 Lying internal rotation 5 x 2.5kg/5 lbs

C2 Standing external rotation 5 x 2.5 kg/5 lbs

A1 and A2 are performed in a superset or with a short period of rest between (15 to 60 seconds). This means that after you finish the set of 15 seconds, you immediately perform the 15 repetitions of forearm push-ups.

After the forearm push-up, you take 60 to 90 seconds of rest and then start the second set of A1 and A2.

After all the sets of A1 and A2 are done, you move to B1. Finish all the sets of B1 and move to C1 and C2, both of which are also performed in the superset fashion.

All A, B and C elements are progressed individually.

This means that you follow different steps for all the elements. I.e., you can be on a level 1 for A1 and A2 but on a level 3 for B1 false-grip strength.

MASTERY

You have achieved the mastery of the level after you can perform the sets and repetitions required for mastery without feeling like you are dying. You have only achieved mastery when the exercise feels fairly comfortable.

To achieve the 5 x 5 mastery, you can use this weekly schedule:

WEEKS 1-2	WEEKS 2-3	WEEKS 3-4	WEEKS 4-5	WEEKS 5-6
5 x 1	5 x 2	5 x 3	5 x 4	5 x 5

For 5 x 10 mastery, use this schedule as a guide:

WEEKS 1-2	WEEKS 2-3	WEEKS 3-4	WEEKS 4-5	WEEKS 5-6
5 x 2	5 x 4	5 x 6	5 x 8	5 x 10

We at Vahva Fitness believe the 5 sets for each exercise is the sweet spot to produce the best strength gains.

You may need to stick to one week for a longer time than just one week if you are not making fast enough progress - but don't worry, it is normal.

You may not be able to complete all the sets with the same repetitions. In this case, just do as many repetitions as you can.

Moreover, after every 4 to 6 weeks, I recommend taking a deload week where you only use 50% of the usual repetitions.

WORKOUT: WHEN? HOW MANY TIMES?

I recommend performing the muscle up workout in the beginning of your usual workout, or as a workout during your off days.

You can do the muscle up workout 1-5 days a week.

If you workout just once a week, do not expect fast results - you will make progress though.

The sweet spot is between 2-4 times a week and it is usually better to start at 3, and then if you feel like it, you can increase the frequency up to 5.

Do this routine for as long as you need to and I am confident you will have good results. You can expect your pull-ups and dips to improve a lot in terms of mobility and strength.

Stay safe, train hard!

IN CLOSING

Thank you for reading and good luck on achieving your first muscle up.

If you want to learn more about health, fitness, and bodyweight training, please visit our websites for more:

VahvaFitness.com

VahvaLifestyle.com

Muscle up is only the beginning of a long journey. If you want to transform your body, maximize your potential, and improve with the safest and most efficient manners possible, then our Vahva Fitness is for you.

Vahva Fitness is to build healthy and strong individuals, from absolute beginners to the advanced athletes.

Vahva Fitness is for anyone, regardless of age, gender, or training history. Anyone can transform their life through fitness.

Vahva Method gives you an option to choose between bodyweight exercises or weights - it is all up to you!

In Vahva Fitness, we built the best foundation possible, while taking care of the structural balance and mobility.

If you stick to it, you can go from incline push-ups to doing full range of motion handstand push-ups. Anything is possible as long as you learn from the best and put the hard work in.

[Visit Vahva Fitness.](#)

WE ALSO OFFER ONLINE PERSONAL TRAINING

If you are truly serious about training and are willing to take yourself to the next level, or otherwise prefer a more individualized and personal approach to the training, then our online personal training program is for you.

The minimum commitment is for 3 months. You will get full access to personalized workout routines, structural assessment and complete interaction with our staff.

NOTICE

The information in this book is meant to supplement, not replace, proper exercise training. All forms of exercise pose some inherent risks. The author advises readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits. Before practicing the exercises in this book, be sure that your equipment is well-maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training, and fitness. The exercise and dietary programs in this book are not intended as a substitute for any exercise routine or treatment or dietary regimen that may have been prescribed by your doctor. As with all exercise and dietary programs, you should get your doctor's approval before beginning.

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