

HYBRID TRAINING

BY NICK NILSSON



Please Note: Any exercise program contains an element of risk. Be aware that the exercises in the book may not be familiar to you and, even though every attempt has been made to ensure safe instruction, how and if you decide to execute the exercises is ultimately your responsibility. Consult your physician before taking part in any exercise program. By reading the information in this book you hereby agree to the Terms and Conditions of use, found in this book.

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What is Hybrid Training?

Hybrid Training is EXTREMELY effective for building muscle and strength. In fact, in my experience, a single Hybrid set can be as effective at stimulating muscle and strength as two or three normally performed sets.

It's an incredibly powerful and efficient form of training.

Hybrid Training combines two distinct forms of resistance, using them at the same time, for example free weights and cables or free weights and bands, in order to more completely work the muscles.

By integrating two resistance and movement patterns together, you can...

- overcome changes in the strength curves of exercises (more closely matching the leverages of the exercises as they change)
- alter the direction of resistance in order to put unique stresses on the muscles
- eliminate the inherent weaknesses of some exercises (e.g. losing tension at the top of a dumbbell bench press)



What are the Advantages of "Hybrid Training?"

"Hybrid Training" allows you to put maximum tension on the target muscles in minimum time.

When you're using the free weight/cable variations, it's almost like doing a superset within the very same rep! This provides a greater stimulus to the muscles in a way that they've never experienced before. As you know, you must constantly challenge the muscles in order to keep progressing - "Hybrid Training" is perfect for this. When using bands and free weights (or bodyweight), the bands serve to better match the strength curve of the exercise you're using.

Specifically, "Hybrid Training" works to eliminate the weaknesses of specific exercises by overlapping those weaknesses with the strengths of other exercises.

For example, when doing cable flyes for the chest, you get very little tension at the bottom but plenty at the top. When you do dumbbell bench press, you get more tension at the bottom and very little at the top. When you combine the two movements, you get maximum tension at all points in the range of motion, maximizing the effects on the chest.

When it comes to movements such as barbell bench press, the weakest part of the range of motion is at the bottom and the strongest at the top - with regular free weights, you're only able to use as much weight as you can handle in the weakest range, leaving the rest untapped. By attaching elastic training bands to the bar, you are able to use more resistance in the stronger ranges of motion, better matching the strength curve of the exercise, which is VERY productive!

What Equipment Is Needed For "Hybrid Training?"

Here is a list of equipment that is used for Hybrid Training:

- free weights, e.g. barbells and/or dumbbells
- some form of cable resistance or elastic resistance (heavy-duty resistance bands are recommended)
- an ankle harness - two is better (the ankle harness/strap is optional but makes it much easier to perform the cable-dumbbell Hybrid exercises). These are inexpensive and WELL worth getting, especially if you really want to maximize your results with these training techniques.
- benches (flat, incline, preacher, etc.) and exercise balls. You don't need all of these but the more you have, the more options you will have for the training.

Where to Get "Hybrid Training" Accessories:

There are a variety of stores both online and off-line where you can get weights, bands, harnesses and other accessories. **I've got some specific recommendations on bands and ankle harnesses that can save you money!**

1. Training Bands

My recommended source for training bands is a company called "[Iron Woody's](#)". Not only do they offer a GREAT selection of bands at very reasonable prices, the bands are premium quality and won't break. I know this for a fact because these are the bands I use myself and I have torture tested them to their limits!

Bands are one THE best training tools I've come across in many years. They're very versatile and, once you know how to use them, they're downright addictive because of how effective and fun to use they are!



When it comes to bands, the thicker the band, the more resistance or assistance you'll get with the exercise.

For example, if you're doing an exercise where you want more resistance, use the thicker band - if you want less, use a thinner one. If you're doing an exercise where you're using the bands for assistance (like chin-ups), use a thicker band if you need more help - a thinner one if you need less help.

The bands come in a variety of packages - the one I've used is the Intermediate package which contains the red, blue and green bands pictured at left. Personally, I've been using the Intermediate package and it's been a very

good range of thicknesses for a wide variety of exercises.

You can get a set of [Iron Woody Training Bands here](#).

2. Ankle Straps

There are two main types of ankle straps - nylon with Velcro straps and leather buckle straps. I normally use the leather straps, since I have two of them, and those work great. The nylon straps are a LOT less expensive if cost is an issue but function basically just as well. The nylon ones generally have smoother padding on the inside.

The best price on nylon straps that I've found online \$4.89 each. [Check it out here](#).



Leather Ankle Strap



Nylon Ankle Strap

How To Incorporate "Hybrid Training" Into Your Training Programs



Essentially, you can directly substitute Hybrid exercises for regular exercises in your training programs. If the program lists bodyparts and sets only, you can just use Hybrid exercises freely. If a program lists specific exercises, you can very easily use the Hybrid version of the exercise.

For example, if a program calls for bench press, use a Hybrid technique such as the Reverse Band Bench Press to maximize the effects on the muscles.

Hybrid exercises are very easy to fit directly into any existing program!

**Learn How To Attach Cables
and Bands To Free Weights**

Chest Exercises

Cable/Dumbbell Flye & Bench Press

Band and Barbell Presses - From Above and Below

Band Push-Ups

Band Dumbbell Bench Press

Cable/Band Cross-Overs

Back Exercises

Cable/Barbell Rows

Cable/Dumbbell Rows - 1 Arm and 2 Arm

Cable/Barbell Deadlifts

Cable Resisted Chin-Ups

Band & Barbell Deadlifts - From Above and Below

Seated Band and Cable Rows

Band-Assisted Pulldowns

Band-Assisted Chin-Ups and 1 Arm Chin-Ups

Cable/Barbell Hyperextensions

Shoulder Exercises

Cable/Dumbbell Shoulder Presses

Cable/Dumbbell Lateral Raises

Band & Barbell Shoulder Presses

Cable or Band Barbell Shrugs

Bicep Exercises

Cable/Barbell Preacher Curls

Standing Vertical Cable/Barbell Curls

Cable/Dumbbell Single Arm Standing Curls (Facing Away)

Cable/Dumbbell Incline Curls

Standing Band & Barbell Curls

Tricep Exercises

[Cable/Barbell Lying Tricep Extensions](#)

[Band Parallel Bar Dips](#)

[Cable/Dumbbell Overhead Tricep Extensions](#)

[Band Close Grip Presses - Above and Below](#)

[Band Pushdowns](#)

Abdominal Exercises

[Cable/Barbell Bench Press Crunches](#)

[Cable/Barbell Curl Squats](#)

Thigh Exercises

[Hip Belt Lateral Cable/Band Squats](#)

[Dumbbell/Machine Leg Curls](#)

[Cable/Barbell Stiff-Legged Deadlifts](#)

[Band & Barbell Squats - Above and Below](#)

[Cable or Band Split Squats](#)

[Seated Band Leg Curls](#)

[Band Leg Press](#)

Calf Exercises

[Cable/Dumbbell/Machine Calf Raises](#)

[Band/Machine Calf Raises](#)

[One-Legged Band/Dumbbell Seated Calf Raises](#)

Note: The information found in this program does not constitute medical advice and should not be taken as such. Consult your physician before taking part in any exercise program.

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How To Attach Cables and Bands

The most critical aspect of the training techniques used in the book is attaching the cables and bands to the free weight apparatus or your body. This section will give you details on how this is done so we don't have to spend time going through it in each individual exercise. Be sure to check out the videos that demonstrate each technique as well.

IMPORTANT! Since you are using two forms of resistance in one exercise, you will need to use lighter weights than you probably think you'll need. Any time you do the exercise for the first time, decrease the amount of weight that you're using on free weight apparatus by at least 20 to 40%. For example, if you can do EZ curls with 100 lbs, the first time you do EZ curls with the cable attached, use 60 or 70 lbs on the EZ curl bar. It's a very different stress and your body will not be able to lift as much weight as with conventional training even though the tension is greater.

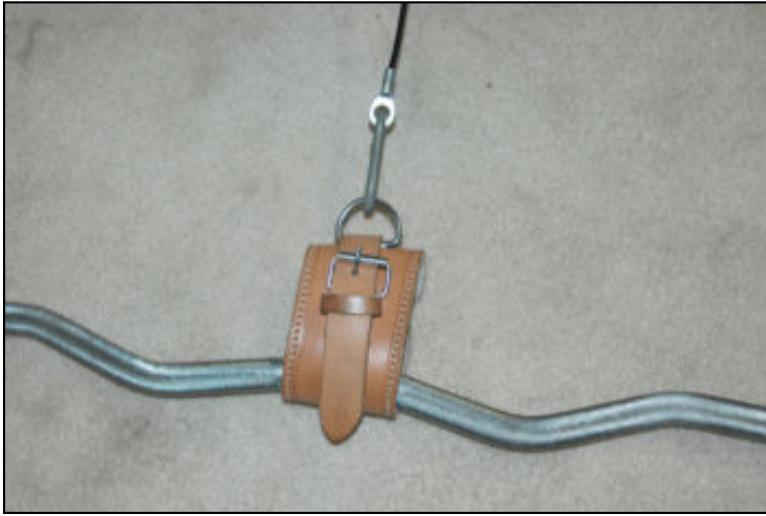
Increase as you can after that!

1. Attaching Cables To Barbells

The easiest and most effective way to attach a cable to a barbell is by using an ankle harness (leather harnesses work best and are most heavy-duty for bigger weights).

- loop the harness around the center of the bar and do up the buckle. The actual tightness of the harness doesn't matter at all so feel free to keep it at the largest setting, if you want.
- move the barbell close to the pulley that is going to be used.
- pull the pulley clip forward and attach it to the right on the ankle harness
- you're done!





This is as easy as it gets. The best part is, the soft material of the ankle harness prevent the cable from sliding around on the bar.

The next method can be used if you don't have an ankle harness to work with. This is simply looping the cable around the bar and clipping it onto itself.

- first, get the barbell set up and place it next to the cable to be used.
- next, pull the cable out and loop it around the bar (in the center)
- clip the cable right back onto itself at a point right next to the bar (it will automatically slide and tighten up)





This is a very easy method as well, the only downside being the cable is more likely to slide around on the bar as it has nothing to grip on. If you have a small towel, you can very easily place this on the bar first, then loop the cable on top of the towel. This will help the cable grip on the bar and keep it from sliding.

As a general point, you will almost ALWAYS use less weight on the cable than you will on the free weight. For example, if you're doing barbell curls, you may use 70 lbs on the bar and 30 lbs on the cable.

2. Attaching Cables To Dumbbells

Things are a little trickier when it comes to attach cables to dumbbells. There isn't as much surface to work with when it comes to attaching the cables directly onto the dumbbell handles as you've got to get your hands on them as well!

The easiest method that I've found for doing cable/dumbbell exercises is to use two ankle harnesses (of course, if you're using only 1 dumbbell, you only need 1 ankle harness). The trick here is that you don't put them on your ankles or on the dumbbells... you put them on your wrists! When the harnesses are on your wrists, it leaves your hands completely free to work with the dumbbells however you like, no strings attached, so to speak.

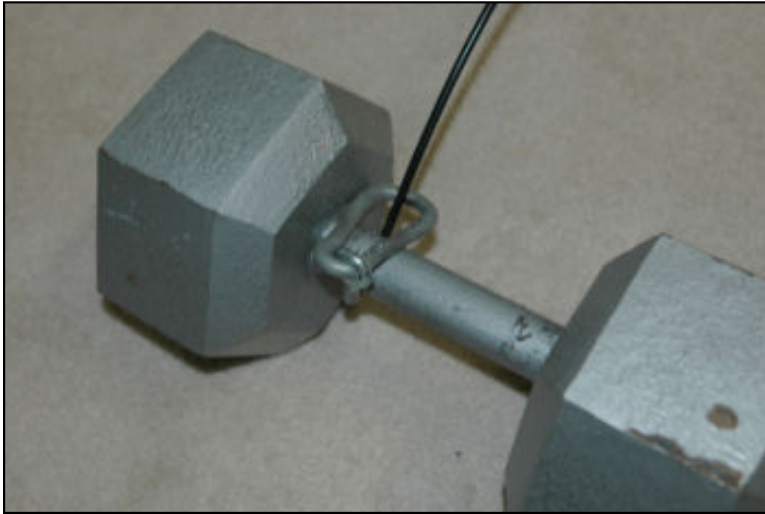
What I prefer to do is keep the harnesses very loose so you can slip your hands in and out of them without undoing them. This makes it much easier to get into position when you're performing exercises such as cable-dumbbell bench press. The leather straps are good and durable but the padded nylon straps will be less rough on the forearms.



If you don't have access to two ankle harnesses, you can also attach the cables directly onto the dumbbell handles themselves by using the same technique as with the barbell above.

- first, set the dumbbell right beside the pulley.
- next, pull the pulley out a little then loop it around the handle then clip it back onto itself.
- let the cable slide right to one end of the dumbbell handle
- if you're doing a two-arm exercise like the flye/press, repeat this on the other side with the other dumbbell





This technique works very well but does make it a bit trickier to get into position to start the exercise. The preferred method is definitely the two-ankle harness method.

One important point to note when you're attaching the cables directly onto the dumbbells - if you have round-plate dumbbells, they will roll when you set them down and the cables still have tension. If you set them down and forget, the cable weight stack will drop and pull the dumbbells back until the dumbbells hit something or the cable stack hits bottom.

Be sure to keep control of the dumbbells until they are resting against the base of cable machine so they don't fly off somewhere or hit somebody.

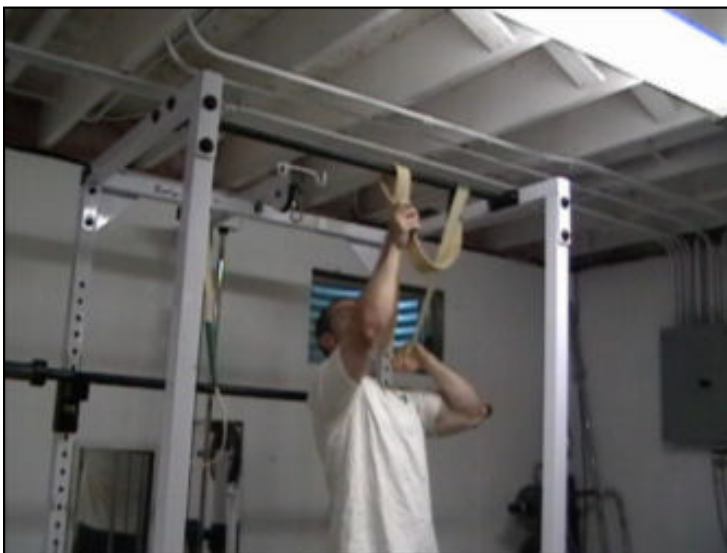
3. Attaching and Securing Bands

For the majority of band work, you'll need something solid to anchor the band onto. When doing squats, bench presses, shoulder presses and deadlifts, your best bet is to use the cross-beams or safety rails of the power rack. These are very handy for this purpose and make doing the exercises much safer anyway.

If you don't have a rack, look around your workout area for something solid to loop the bands around. When doing standing exercises, you can always just step on the bottom loop of the bands if you have nothing else you can use. Your bodyweight is enough to be effective.

It's a simple process to securely tie the bands onto a rail or post - you will use what is called a bale hitch. And you don't need to be in the Navy to figure out how to use it! Basically, all you do is lay the band on top of the rail so that the two ends are hanging down. Then just pull one end through the loop of the other end. When you pull that end all the way through, it creates a secure hitch.

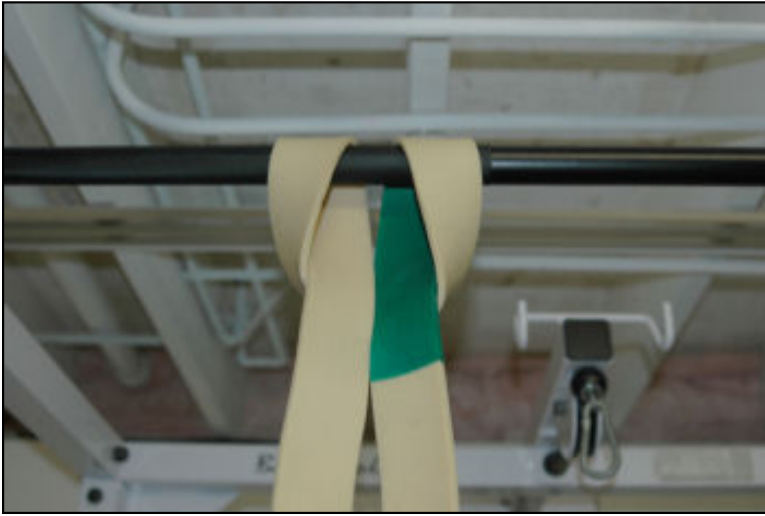




Now all you need to do is loop the free end around a barbell and you're good to go. More specific instructions on exactly how to set up bands and barbells will be provided for specific exercises that use them but that's the basic attaching hitch.

The Double Hitch:

If you want to change the effective range of motion of a band, you can do a double hitch on it. To do the double hitch, pull the band through as you normally would then wrap it one more time around and pull it through again. THEN pull down and attach it to the implement. This shortens the range of motion of the band and increases the stretch tension you'll get on it. It will look like this:



Single Hitch



Double Hitch





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Cable/Dumbbell Flye & Press

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise is a great example of why "Hybrid Training" is so effective - overlapping two strength curves to maximize tension on the target muscle. The Cable Flye exercise offers little to no tension on the chest at the bottom of the movement. But when you get to the top, you get maximum contraction of the pecs. The Dumbbell Press offers maximal tension at the bottom of the exercise, but it gradually tapers off until at the top, you get practically nothing - in fact, at the top, you can completely relax your pecs and the dumbbells will stay up!

So when you combine the two exercises into one, you get an exercise with lots of tension at the bottom and maximal tension at the top. The pecs don't get a single moments break.

How To Do It:

This exercise is performed on a Swiss Ball or flat bench (when using the flat bench, I prefer to use the Bench End technique, which I will explain below). Using the ball allows you to get your shoulders back and open the chest up, better isolating the pec muscles.

You will need to attach the cables directly to the dumbbells (as per "[How to Attach](#)") or use ankle harnesses on your forearms. I will explain how to get into position with both methods. The first time you do this exercise, pick dumbbells that are about half of what you'd normally use for 10 reps on the dumbbell press. Set about 20 or 30 pounds on the low pulleys on the cable cross-over machines.

Attaching Cables to Dumbbells - Set the dumbbell on the floor right beside the low pulley. Grab the clip and pull the cable out about a foot. Grab the cable itself (in between the dumbbell and the machine then use your other hand to loop the cable under the dumbbell handle and clip it onto itself. If you have a round dumbbell, the cable will pull the dumbbell up against the pulley. Repeat this on the other side with the other dumbbell.

To get into position, first sit on your bench/ball. Lean over to one dumbbell and grip it so that your pinky is right next to the cable. Because the cable is going to be pulling outwards, we want the outwards side of the hand by the cable. Pull the cable and dumbbell to the center then lean over and grab the other dumbbell in the same fashion. Set the dumbbells on your knees then bring them up into position to start the press. Since the actual weight on the cables is relatively light, you shouldn't have trouble getting into this position. Begin the press from there.

Wearing Ankle Harnesses on Your Forearms - As I mentioned above, this is the easiest way to do the exercise. First, attach your ankle harnesses onto your forearms. Now set up the bench and dumbbells (set them on the floor in front of the bench). Go over and clip the low pulley onto one harness then go over and clip the other one on. Pick up the dumbbells then get into position on your bench/ball. Begin the press from there.

The mechanics of the press/flye are very similar to the basic dumbbell press. Be sure, when you come to the top, that you bring the dumbbells together (no banging them together, though). Hold for a few seconds at the top to maximize the contraction on the pecs, then lower slowly.

The first few reps may seem too easy and you may be tempted to set the weight down and add more. Don't fall for it! Keep it up for a few more reps. You'll soon notice that your chest is not getting the rest it was used to when doing dumbbell presses or cable flyes. Do as many reps as you can then set the dumbbells down.



If you have round dumbbells and have attached the cables directly to the dumbbells, the pulley will roll them back. Control this rolling as best you can - don't just let them snap back. When you have harnesses on, set the dumbbells down then go and unclip yourself.

If you're doing this exercise with very short rest periods (e.g. 30 seconds or less) and using the ankle harnesses, don't take the time to unclip and reclip - your rest period will be gone. Simply clasp your hands in the middle and hold, using your grip to have the ability to relax the chest.

Cable/Dumbbell Flyes:

This exercise can also be done using a Dumbbell Flye grip instead of a pressing grip. To do this, your hands will be facing each other and your elbows will be locked in place. The execution and set-up is exactly the same as the press only subbing in the flye instead of the press.



How To Do This Exercise With Bands:

It is possible to substitute bands for the pulleys in this exercise. In order to do this, you'll need two bands and two objects to hitch the bands onto. These should be far enough apart that you have some stretch in the bands when you start the exercise. Use lighter bands for this exercise.

Hitch the bands to the solid objects and place your bench in the middle. Lean over and grab one band then the other. Hold them in your hands like you're going to press them. Now pick up your dumbbells, holding them directly on top of the bands - this helps keep the bands from moving in your hand. Begin the exercise as above - you'll get the increase in tension from the bands as you come to the top of the movement.

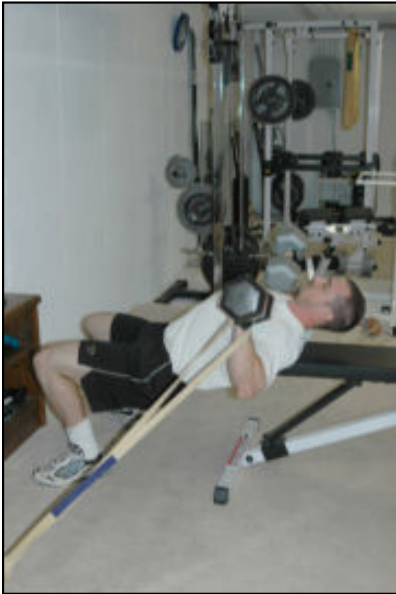
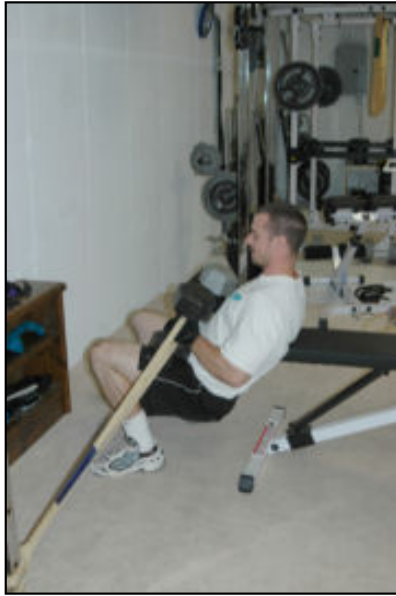
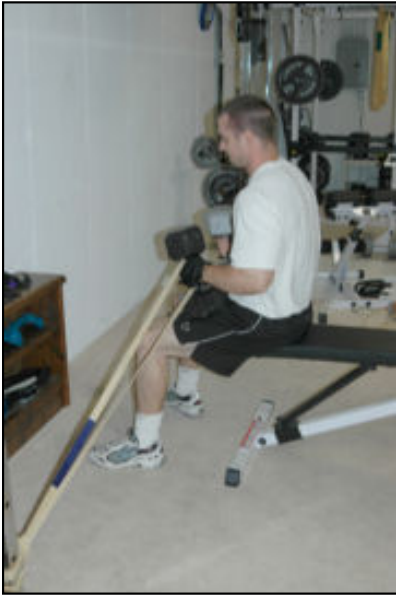
Note: you can also loop the bands directly onto the dumbbell but it isn't recommended. The reason for this is that the bands will pull down on the dumbbell end and change the balance of the exercise. By holding the band in the palms of your hands directly under the dumbbells, you get a much better feel on the exercise.



The Bench End Technique:

The basic position of the exercise is as follows: your upper back (from just below the shoulder blades on up) will be resting on the end of the bench with your upper torso essentially flat. Your hips will be down below the level of the bench, and your lower back will be arched so that your lower abdomen is angled down. Your knees should be very bent.

- You will look as though you are trying to wrap your back around the end of the bench. Practice this position once without any weight to get a feel for it.
- To get into position with weights, sit on the very end of the bench with the dumbbells on your upper thighs.
- Quickly move your butt forward off the bench, dropping into a squat, and allow your upper back to rest against the lead edge of the bench.
- Thrust your hips up and throw your upper body back onto the bench, kicking the dumbbells into the bottom position of a dumbbell bench press. Press up to the top position.
- If you are not completely in position with your entire lower back off the bench (the bottom of your rib cage should be in line with the end of the bench), weasel yourself down somewhat. Note: "Weasel" is the technical term for shifting back and forth as you slide yourself down the bench a little.
- Do the press from there and really try to expand the chest in the stretch position.
- When the exercise gets hard, fight the urge to lift your hips up. Consciously force them down. This is good practice for keeping your butt down on the regular flat bench press.



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Band & Barbell Pressing From Above and Below

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The rubber bands, combined with the barbell bench press, overcome one of the biggest problems with the bench press exercise: the strength curve. In a typical bench press, you have a sticking point just before you're halfway up. But your muscles are capable of moving much more weight once they get past this point. So to optimally work the muscles, you need dynamically-changing resistance.

This is where the bands come in. The resistance of the bands can be used to change the strength curve of the exercise, making it easier at the bottom and increasing the resistance as you get to the top - exactly what the exercise needs!

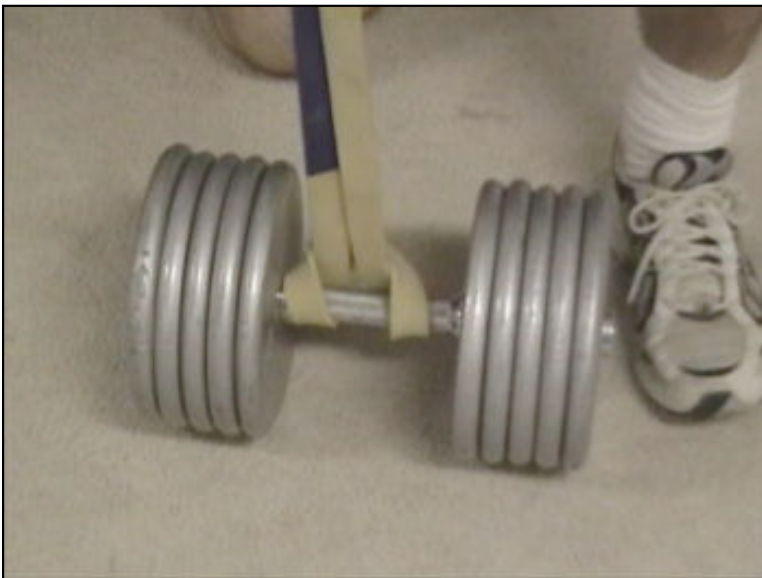
Band pressing with the bands anchored below is excellent for increasing explosive power and strength. Band pressing with the bands anchored above (known as the Reverse Band Bench Press) is excellent for muscle building purposes as well as strength.

How To Do It:

Bands Anchored Below:

To perform this exercise, you'll need to anchor the bands. There are a number of techniques for doing this without using specialized equipment.

1. Anchor with Dumbbells - Anchor the bands to heavy dumbbells (use the bale hitch on the dumbbell handles and set them on the ground beside your bench). With round dumbbells, you can set another heavy dumbbell on top on top of that dumbbell to keep it from moving. I've found that even round dumbbells generally don't move when they're heavy enough.



2. Band Under Bench - Another technique you might want to try is looping a single band underneath the bench. The easiest way to do this is to first set the bar on the bottom safety rails of the rack. If you're using a regular bench setup, just set the bar on the bench itself. Now shift the bar over so that one end is directly over the bench.

Loop one end of the band onto the bar. Pull the band underneath the bench then loop the other end underneath the end of the bar then slide it over the bar. Slide the bar back into the center of the rack and make sure the ends of the bands are even on the bar. The band should be under the bench where your chest level is. This technique works well if you have a bench with the legs near the ends.





If you have a bench that has open space near the upper area, you can just drape the band on top of the bar then pull the two hanging parts down and underneath the bench, about to where your chest will lay on the bench.



Keep in mind on either of these versions, the band tension will probably lift your bench off the ground unless it's heavy, bolted to the ground or part of a full bench press station. When you go to press, sit on the bench to get it back down on the ground and get it placed where you want it. THEN lay down on it.



Band placement on the bar can be used to adjust resistance - the wider the bands are set on the bar, the harder the bands will be stretched. For example, if you want more tension, set the bands outside where you grip on the bar. Even out wide, the bands will grip on the bar from the tension and won't shift inwards. For lesser tension, slide both ends towards the center so they're pulling straight up and down. The band itself should contact on your traps on top of your shoulders as you press.



3. Band Under Back - If none of the above appeals to you or works for you, you can borrow a page from the dumbbell press band technique. Lay out the band and grab both ends so that the bands are resting in your palms and hooked around your thumbs (like you are about to press the bands).

Now, put the band back over your head and wrap it around your upper back like you would wrap a towel when you are about to dry your back. The band should rest across your shoulder blades. The band surface should be on the top part of the forearms. Now lay back and set your hands on the bar as you normally would. This is a quick and easy way to set up the band presses.



4. Bands Under Rack - If your power rack isn't bolted down, you may also be able to slide the bands underneath the bottom frame of the rack itself. This is one of the best ways to go, if you can manage it with your setup.

Anchoring the bands below the bench means you're going to be seeing an increase in resistance as you press to the top of the movement. To really make this exercise effective, explode to the top of the exercise, pressing the bar up against the bands as fast as you can. The actual mechanics of the exercise are exactly like the regular barbell bench press.

One of the reasons this works so well (aside from the increasing resistance itself) is that the bands serve to decelerate the bar so you don't have to. In normal free weight training, part of the range of motion is used by the body to slow the bar down to prevent joint injury. With the bands pulling the bar down, this deceleration is taken care of and your body is free to accelerate strongly through the whole range of motion. This means when using heavy weight, your body isn't unconsciously holding back to slow the bar down at the top, improving your lockout strength and explosive power. You're training it to not hold back.

When using the bands anchored below technique, you may want to try bottom-start bench pressing. Instead of unracking and starting by lowering bar, you start from a dead stop at the bottom. I prefer to use this method as it makes it much easier to get into position. Instead of trying to maneuver the bar at the start, you just slide yourself under it and start pressing! This technique will also help you build great power out of the bottom since you're starting from a zero-tension, dead stop. When you go back to doing regular bench pressing with the normal elastic tension you get in the muscles on the way down, it means you'll be much stronger out of the bottom.

Since this technique will require the safety rails to be set a notch higher so you can get under the bar, continue using this technique on each rep - set the bar on the rails, release tension in your chest, then restart with a powerful push.



Bands Anchored Above - a.k.a. Reverse Band Pressing:

The Reverse Band Press is extremely useful for muscle-building purposes. When you perform the Reverse Band Press, you won't get the same elastic tension on the way up (that you work against for explosive pressing). What you will get is a lot of help at the bottom of the bench, which gradually decreases as you press the bar up. When you get near the top, you're doing the majority, if not all, of the work yourself.

This is the exact perfect strength curve of the bench press and it will allow you to use a heavier overall weight when pressing. Since you're at maximal tension the entire way up, you'll be doing a much more efficient pressing workout.

To set this up, you'll need to do your bench pressing in a rack. Set the flat bench in the rack and set your safety rails and racking pins at the appropriate heights as you do if you were doing a regular bench press. Use the thicker

bands for this as they'll match the strength curve of the exercise better. Hitch the bands to the upper crossbeams of the rack. You can choose from two places to hitch them up - the first is the side upper crossbeams. The second is the front or rear top crossbeam of the rack. Be sure to use the same hitch on both sides so that the lengths of the bands are even on the bar.

The main benefit of hitching to the side upper rails are that the bands get a straight up and down line of pull on the bar, maximizing the help they'll be able to give during the exercise. The downside is that you **MUST** hitch the bands exactly evenly on the side rails - if you don't, the bands will pull the bar in a rotational pattern and you will find one shoulder getting a lot of torque.

If you have a felt marker, you can measure and draw exactly even lines on your rack or, if you're in a public gym, use something else to measure (e.g. a weight plate or your hand) so that you get the same distance on both sides. Do a test rep with light weight to make sure the bands are even before beginning the real workout.

When you hitch the bands to the front or rear crossbeam, it's much easier to get an even pull on the bar as you can just hitch the bands right next to the uprights on the rack (as far wide as you can hitch them). That way, you'll know that they're even. The downside is that you don't get a direct upwards pull from the bands but an angled pull. When pressing, this will mean the amount of help the bands give you is reduced.

Once the bands are hitched to the upper crossbeam (whichever method), loop the other ends onto the barbell (after you've added the weight - you can go heavier than you normally would for the same reps when using the bands, e.g. add about 50 to 70 pounds to the bar - you'll need to play with the amount of weight you use).

You can loop the bands on the bar on the outside of the weight plates or on the inside. If you go inside, put the bands on the bar before you load the weight plates. Be very sure the bands don't line up with where you're racking the bar - if you rack the bar on top of the bands, you may damage the bands.

If you loop the bands on the outside of the weight plates, put the bands on **THEN** put the collars on the outside of the bands. This will keep the bands from shifting on the bar as well.

You're ready to press! Lie under the bar, grip it as you normally would, then lower it to your chest. You'll notice that it feels lighter at the bottom and you'll be able to accelerate the bar off your chest better. But as you come up, it gets harder and harder and you have to squeeze harder and harder to keep the bar moving. Lock it out and squeeze the chest hard, then go again!

The Reverse Band Press will help your body get used to pressing heavier weights and will really help you increase your power in the lockout phase of the bench press.





The Anchored Above and Below variations can be done with both Incline and Decline presses in addition to the Flat Bench versions listed here. You'll need to experiment with band setups for the varying heights.

As a special note on the decline version, I've found the decline reverse band press to be one of the most powerful chest-building exercises I've ever found. It allows you to not only use the most weight of any of the bench press variations but, because the bands are stretched over the ENTIRE range of motion, it more closely matches the strength curve of the exercise.

As an example, in the picture below, I'm using 455 lbs on the decline bench with the reverse bands. My actual maximum flat bench press is more than 100 lbs less than that! This puts GREAT tension on the pecs as well as really helping build the connective tissue, allowing your body to more comfortably handle heavier weights.





Diagonal Band Pressing

This variation of the band press puts a unique angle of tension on the muscles. Instead of anchoring the bands above or below, you'll use the rack and anchor them to the front uprights of the rack at a diagonal (bands anchored lower than the bar). This means you'll not only get additional resistance in the "up" movement, you'll get resistance pulling the bar towards your feet. That resistance means your upper chest fibers will have to fire to work to keep the bar on the vertical path.

First, hitch the bands to the front uprights of the rack, right near the base of the rack. You need to have good tension on the bands even while the bar is still on the racks at the top of the movement so it's important to hitch them as far down as possible.

As far as where to place the bands on the bar, you can go outside the plates or inside the plates, near your hand grips. Since you'll have tension on the bands even at the start, they won't shift on the bar at all.



Unrack the bar (be ready to have it get pulled forward), lower it and press up. Be sure to press up and back against the tension of the bands. Note that you won't get any tension in the bands at the bottom of the exercise, only as you push it up towards the top.

If you want more backwards-pulling tension throughout the movement, you can do a double-hitch on the rack uprights (looping the band through twice instead of just once) in order to get a shorter band length and more tension on the band.



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Band Push-Ups

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Push-Up is the bodyweight exercise most people are familiar with. But what happens when it gets too easy and you can do a lot of reps with your bodyweight? It's not always practical to add weight onto your back but the addition of the band can help. Similar to the strength curve of the bench press, the push-up gets easier as you come to the top. With the band, you get increased resistance as you push up.

How To Do It:

Single Band Across the Back:

First, grip the ends of the band in your hand, hooking the ends around your thumbs. The exact band you use will depend on your strength but start with the smaller ones first. Now flip it over your back as though it were a towel that you were drying your back with. The band should be just below your scapulae (shoulder blades) for best resistance in this exercise and come UNDER your arms (note: when doing band/dumbbell presses, the band comes over the top of the arms and rests across your upper back, somewhat different from this placement). Keep the band in that position in your hands and across your back then get down on the floor into push-up position.





When in the push-up position, lower yourself down then push back up. As you push up, the tension in the band increases and you get more resistance. Simple as that! Be sure to push hard as you come up.



Two Band Variation:

With this variation, we're going to be using the bands to actively try and pull apart your arms as you do the push-up. This adds an isometric tension element to the actual movement of the push-up - a very strong combination!

To do this, you'll need to find two solid objects about 10 feet apart (the distance will depend on the size of your bands). Basically, they should be far enough apart so that when you lay the bands on the floor, they are about a foot or two outside your push-up grip spacing on either side.

Kneel down on the floor between the two bands. Hook your forearm into the end of one band then reach over and hook your other forearm into the other band. Now squeeze your arms together and place your hands on the ground in the push-up position. You should feel good tension on the pecs just in the effort it takes to keep the bands stretched.

Now begin the push-up movement. With your pecs working to keep the bands stretched AND pushing your body up, you'll get a more intense pec contraction. It is recommended that you place the bands high up on your forearm near the elbow. The reason for this is that as you push up, the elbows actually move a little closer together. This means as you come up, you are stretching the bands even further in, increasing the effect on the chest.

To maximize this effect, try to consciously force the elbows together as you come to the top of the push-up. To help accomplish this, you may want to try setting your hands a little closer in than you normally would.





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Band & Dumbbell Pressing

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

Dumbbell pressing with bands presents a unique challenge - how to attach the band to the dumbbells while still being able to get into position to do the exercise. But the benefits are great - with the band properly set up, the tension is less at the bottom and much greater at the top of the exercise, right in line with the strength curve of the exercise.

How To Do It:

First, you'll need to get your two dumbbells ready - set them on the floor in front of the bench or ball that you're going to use. Next, grab a single band - a medium-to-lower resistance band will work best due to the mechanics of the exercise.

Lay out the band and grab both ends so that the band is resting in your palms and hooked around your thumbs (like you are about to press the bands). Now, put the band back over your head and wrap it around your upper back like you would wrap a towel when you are about to dry your back. The band should rest across your shoulder blades. The band surface should be on the top part of the forearms.







Holding the band in that position on your back, reach down and pick up the dumbbells. The handles of the dumbbells will rest right on top of the bands. Get the dumbbells into position for the bench pressing - if you are on a bench, set them on your knees then lie back and bring the dumbbells back into the bottom position. If you are on the ball, pick up the dumbbells, stand up (resting them on your knees) then sit on the ball. Roll forward on the ball, kicking the dumbbells up into the bottom position.

You should be VERY comfortable getting dumbbells into position on a bench or ball before ever attempting it with bands attached. You may want to have a spotter hand you the dumbbells instead.

Perform the dumbbell press exercise as you normally would. As you press the dumbbells up, the bands will stretch and increase the resistance. The bands should rest across the back aspect of the forearm (the same side as the back of your hands).

Due to the band setup, you won't get much, if any, inwards tension on the bands but you will definitely get resistance on the way up. Perform this exercise quickly, trying to power the dumbbells explosively up to the top. The tension on the band will slow it down but your muscles will fire more strongly.

When you're done, set the dumbbells down then release the band from your hands.





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Cable/Band Cross-Overs

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

When you do a standard Cable Cross-Over exercise you hit the chest at it's most contracted position. When you do a band version of the same exercise, it also hits the most contracted position. So why combine the two?

Basically, when you do a cable cross-over, the start of the exercise can be very tough on the shoulder joints. The arms are out wide and the shoulder joint is more vulnerable. It's tough to use a decent amount of resistance in this exercise, especially if you have bad shoulders. When you do band cross-overs, you get NO resistance at the start of the exercise - it increases as you get to the contraction, which is the most valuable part of this exercise.

By adding bands to the cables, you can use LESS weight at the start, saving your shoulders, but end up with MORE resistance at the contracted position. It's a win-win situation, saving your shoulders from the stress while still taking best advantage of the resistance curves of both exercises. Because you're also using cables, you still get tension through the entire range motion, unlike with just using bands, hence the advantage of using both.

How To Do It:

To perform this exercise, you will need a cable cross-over machine and two moderate-resistance bands. Attach the handles to the high pulleys of the cross-over machine. Now hitch the bands just below the pulleys on the frame of the machine. Let the bands hang down.



Set a fairly light to moderate weight on the cable machines until you get an idea of how much resistance you can use. It should be a weight that you can fairly easily get out of the start position of the cable cross-over exercise.

Grab the right band at it's bottom-most point (with the band hooked on your thumb) and grasp the cable handle with your right hand. You'll basically be holding the band AND the cable handle at the same time. Now move over and grab the left band in your left hand and grasp the left handle. Move yourself into the center and you're ready

to start!



When you begin the movement, you will notice that you can easily get the handles moving forward. But as you start bringing the handles together, the resistance on the pecs increases very quickly! When you've got the handles together, the tension on the chest is maximized.



Hold that squeeze for a few seconds, then return to the start position. Be sure to control the movement as the bands will have tension and will try to snap your arms back. You'll notice a LOT LESS shoulder stress when you go back to the start position.

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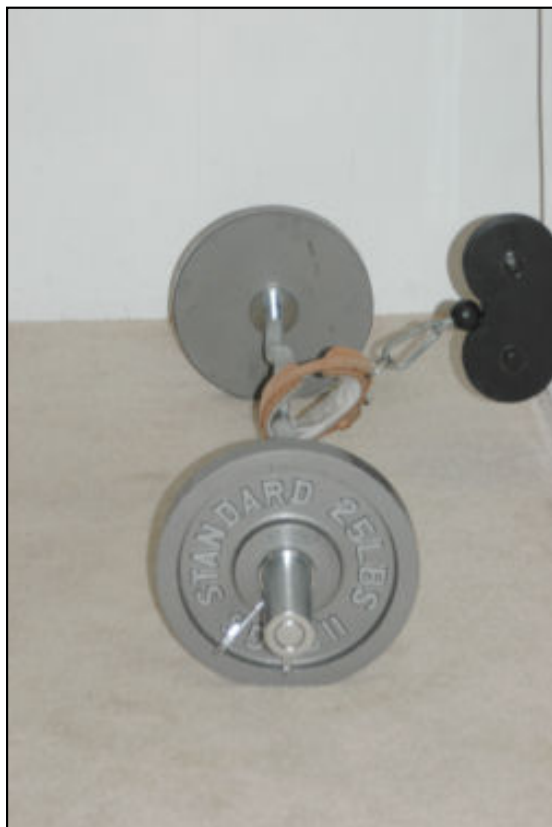
Cable/Barbell Rows

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Cable/Barbell Row much more closely mimics the most effective line of pull for the lats in the rowing position. The two resistances combine to provide resistance from start to finish. Instead of just pulling straight up and down, you're also going to be pull backwards.

How To Do It:

This exercise can be done with any type of bar, though the EZ Curl bar is easiest to maneuver because it's shorter. Attach the low pulley to the bar (per "[How To Attach](#)"), using a relatively light to moderate weight on the cable.



- Squat down and grip the bar with an underhand, close grip. Set your body into rowing position (though because of the forward pull of the cable, it will be a more upright position than you would normally use for the bent-over row) then take a step back to lift up the cable stack and get tension on the cable.
- Let the cable pull the barbell forwards, giving a bit of stretch to the back.
- Now row the bar back and up in a typical bent-over barbell row exercise.
- Squeeze hard at the top then lower the bar back down and forward to the start position.

You'll notice as you do this exercise that the bar follows a pronounced arc pattern and not a straight up-and-down pattern. This arc is a more natural and productive movement pattern for the back, similar to the curve of a pivot-based machine but while still using free weight and giving you the much greater benefits of free weights.

Do your full set then set the bar on the ground and control it as it the cable tension rolls it back to the start position.



How To Do It With Bands:

First, hitch the band around a solid object then put the bar through the loop, ensuring the band is in the center of the bar. Load the weight. Get into rowing position then step back, getting tension on the band. Perform the exercise as described above. Because you're using a band, the resistance will increase as you pull towards the contracted position of the exercise.



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Cable/Dumbbell Rows - 1 Arm and 2 Arm

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

By combining the two different resistance paths of the one arm dumbbell row and the cable row, you get not only the straight up and down resistance of the dumbbell row but a great forward-pulling stretch on the lat as you drop down to the bottom of the movement (due to the cable pulling forward on the dumbbell). When do this exercise with two dumbbells, you'll have the cables pulling your arms to the sides, which creates a different angle of pull on the back muscles, hitting more of the inner, upper back area.

How To Do It:

1 Arm Version:

For this version, set a flat bench in front of the cable machine (directly in line with the cable machine) and attach the cable to your dumbbell (as per "[How to Attach](#)"). You can either attach the cable directly to the dumbbell or use the ankle harness on your wrist.

- Get into position on the bench, reach forward and grab the dumbbell. If you're using the ankle harness, clip yourself on first, then grab the dumbbell. If you're using the cable clipped onto itself, make sure the cable is on the forward part of the dumbbell handle.
- Let the cable pull your arm forward to start getting the stretch, then row up and back as you normally would.
- As you lower the dumbbell, let the cable pull your arm forward into the stretch again.





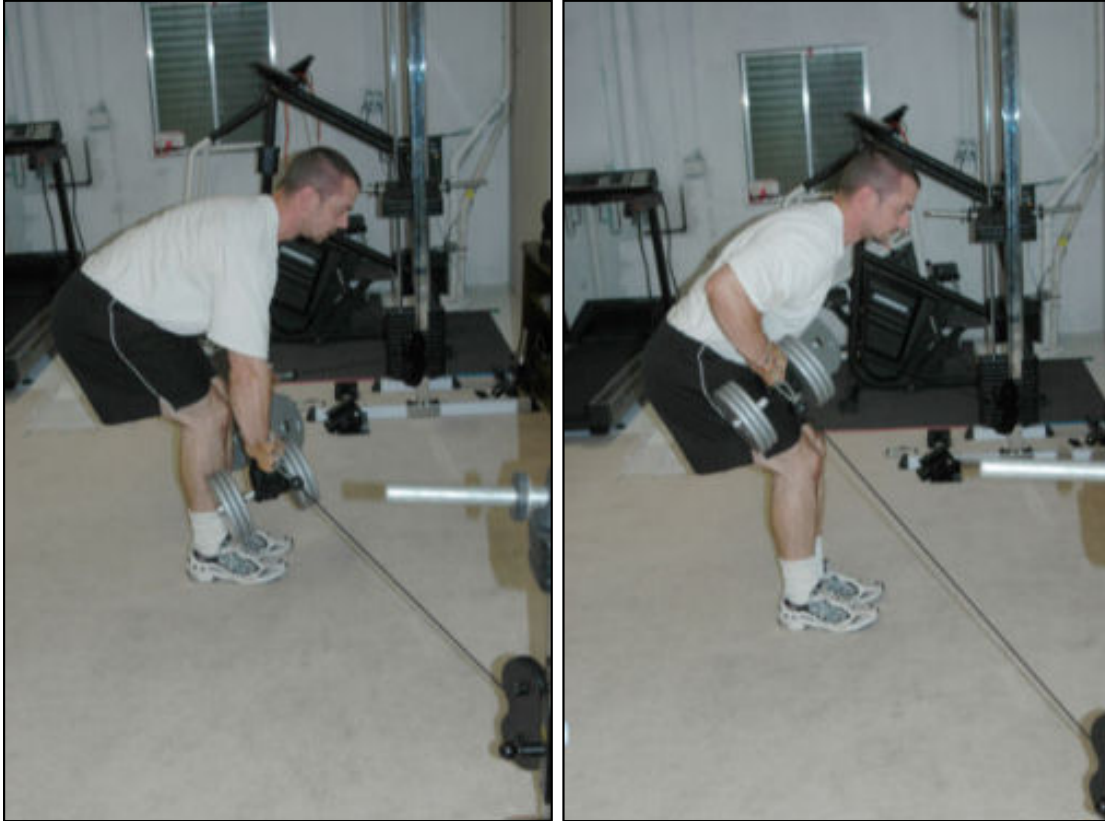
For a twist on this exercise, you can also place the bench perpendicular to the cable so that the cable is pulling the dumbbell out to the side as you row. This will help you hit the inner back area. When using this technique, row the dumbbell straight up and down rather than trying to stretch forward with it. When the cable is pulling directly to the side, the stretch forward won't accomplish anything.



2 Arm Version:

When doing the 2 Arm Dumbbell Row, you will use the cable cross-over machine low pulleys. Attach the cables to the dumbbells (or use 2 ankle harnesses), pick them up and take a step back so you're not directly in line between the two pulleys but a little back. This gives you a backwards angle of pull, which is more effective for the back.

Set your feet very close together and get into a bent-over position (keep your lower back arched and tight). Begin doing the dumbbell row movement - the cables will be pulling the dumbbells out to the sides so you will be hitting the inner/upper back area more.



How To Do It With Bands:

To use the band, simply hitch the band around a solid object low to the ground. Set the dumbbell on the floor perpendicular to the band. Grip the band first THEN grip on the dumbbell. This anchors the band solidly into the exercise.

Set the bench back a bit so that you can get some stretch in the band from the very start of the movement. You want to be sure that the band still gives you tension even when you're at the very bottom of the exercise. You can also do this exercise in a standing position with your other arm braced on your knee and your body in a bent-over row position.



To do this with two dumbbells, you'll need to attach two bands to two solid objects a good distance apart. This is a bit more complex and not as easy to set up but still effective if you have a good setup for it.

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Cable/Barbell Deadlifts

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Cable/Barbell Deadlift puts a very unique tension on your lower back. The redirected angle of resistance causes the lower back muscles to engage more strongly, increasing the effect on the area. This angle also helps develop lockout power in the traditional deadlift by strengthening the backwards-pulling movement of the deadlift.

How To Do It:

To do this exercise, you will need to place your barbell in front of a low pulley. Attach the pulley to the barbell (as in "[How To Attach](#)"), making sure the cable is in the center of the bar, then load the barbell. Use less weight than you normally would for regular deadlifts. The extra tension of the cable is going to make the exercise harder and very different.

Set about 20 to 60 lbs on the pulley (depending on how strong you are in the deadlift to start with - the stronger you are, the more weight you will need). Grip the barbell with your feet about 6 inches from the bar then sit back, pulling/rolling the barbell back with you. This lifts the cable weight up so be sure you're ready for it. Now to the deadlift movement.





It's critical to note that your balance will be very different with the pulley pulling you forward. Be sure you're sitting back and ready for this forward pull. Stand completely up then lower the bar down as you normally would, keeping it close to your shins. When you set the bar on the ground, the cable will be pulling the bar forwards. Resist this and do another rep.

You will notice MUCH stronger tension in your lower back than you are used to with regular deadlifts. The reason for this is that the lower back muscles are now being forced to work much more actively (flexing the spine against the forward-pulling resistance) than they normally would with a regular deadlift. Instead of firing isometrically (without movement) and just support the spine, they're working against the pulley.





How To Do It With Bands:

This exercise can be done with one or two bands very effectively. I like to use the uprights of a power rack, right near the base. I hitch the bands onto the uprights then loop the ends of the bands around the bar, outside the weight plates and put the collars on after that to keep the bands from shifting around on the bar.



You can also just hitch one band onto a solid object in front of you - just make sure that the single band is dead center on the bar when you go to do the exercise. If you're using one band, make sure you get the band around the bar first, **BEFORE** you put weight on. This will make it much easier to get the band looped around. After you've got the band looped, add the weight then roll the bar back until the band is taut.

The band version not only gives you the angled, backwards tension on the exercise, just like the cable version, you also get the advantage of being able to train for explosiveness against the bands.

When you go to start the movement, start with your feet 6 inches back from the bar. Pull the bar towards you, getting some elastic resistance right off the start - you want to be under elastic tension the whole time.. **THEN** deadlift the bar up. As I mentioned above, because of the way the band(s) apply tension, you will get increasing resistance as you pull the bar up to the top position **AND** the band(s) will be pulling you forward with more intensity as you do so. You will need to lean back more than usual as you do the exercise.

The nice thing about this leaning back is that it mimics what you **SHOULD** do with a regular deadlift anyway! Throwing your weight backwards as you lift the bar off the ground is a critical step to engaging the strong muscles of the posterior chain (glutes and hams in particular) when doing deadlifts. Normally, there is a tendency to let your bodyweight come forward, which forces more stress onto the lower back and limits the amount of weight you can safely lift.





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Cable Chin-Ups

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise uses the cable stack to provide a unique line of pull AND resistance during the Chin-Up movement. Instead of pulling the resistance straight up and down, you'll be pulling up at an angle.

How To Do It:

For this exercise, you will need one ankle harness and a pulley machine that has a crossbeam on it (like on a cross-over setup). Put on the ankle harness then attach it to the low pulley. Use a lighter weight to start with the first time you do it. Now take a big step back and reach up and grab the crossbeam. This works best if you're using the type of crossbeam that actually has a chin-up bar attached to it - if so, take an over/under grip as though grabbing a baseball bat. If your setup doesn't have this chin bar, just grip over the top of the crossbeam as best you can. Cross your other leg over the top of the leg that is attached with the harness.





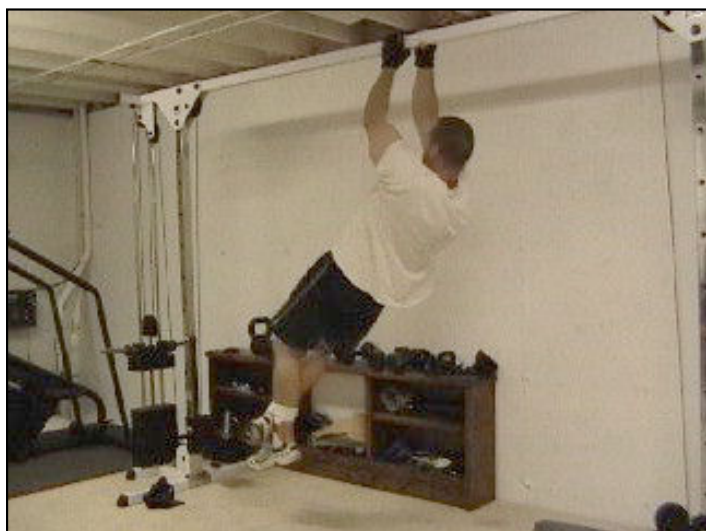
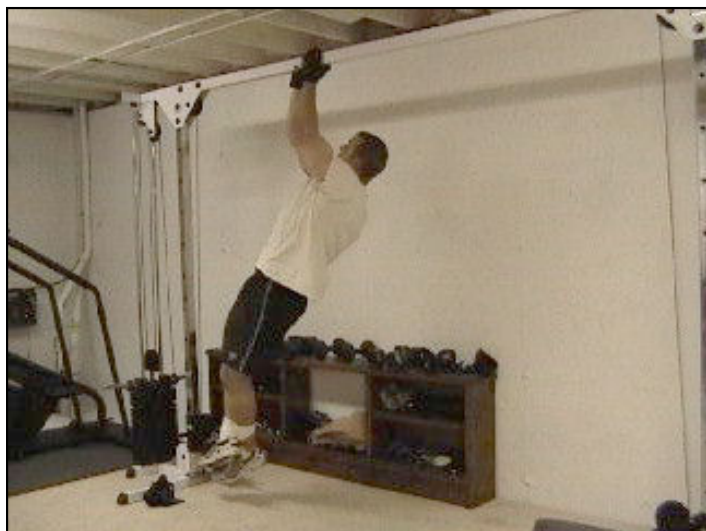
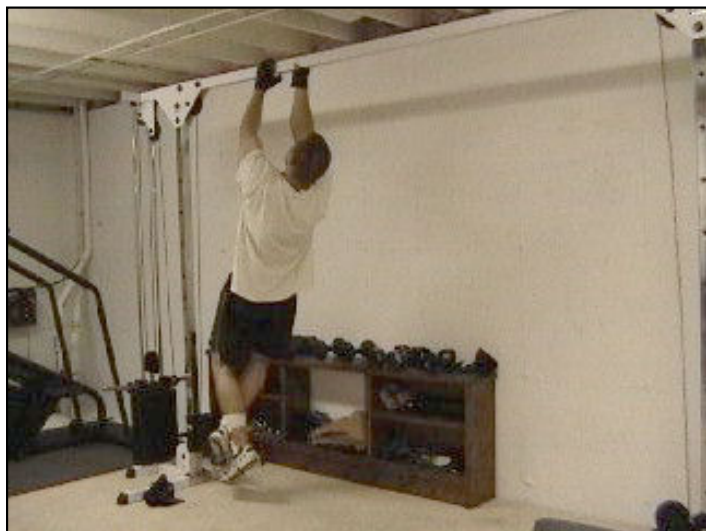
Now do a pull-up, leaning your upper body back and pulling up so that your sternum is coming up to the bar and your nose is almost touching the crossbeam. This lean-back is essential for getting the best line of pull on the exercise. You can also bring your head to either side of the cross-bar for variety.





Hand-Over-Hand Cable Chins

This exercise variation is extremely tough! Basically, you are doing a movement similar to the Cable Chin-Up exercise but you're working your way backwards (hand-over-hand) along the cross-beam. You aren't doing a full chin-up but are instead just moving yourself backwards, keeping continuous tension on the back and arms. What makes this exercise tougher is that you are bringing the cable weight stack along with you!





How To Do It With Bands:

To perform this exercise with a band, hitch the band to a solid object below and a few feet in front of your chin-up bar. You can easily use the very same set-up as you did with the cables, if you have the cross-beam set-up available. This could be something like a bench or a heavy dumbbell (set the dumbbell perpendicular to your bar so that the dumbbell doesn't roll towards you). Barbells with round plates aren't recommended here as they have a tendency to roll.

With the band, you will set BOTH feet into the loop (unlike just one with the cable version). Step back until you get tension on the band, grab your chin-up bar (make sure your solid object is far enough away that you get some tension in the band at the start of the exercise) and start chinning! The demo below shows it being done a cross-beam but you can certainly use a regular chin-up bar for this one, as long as you've got something to anchor the band onto.





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Band & Barbell Deadlifts From Above and Below

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

Using the bands in conjunction with free weights allows you to better match the strength curve of the deadlift. Generally speaking, the exercise is hardest at the bottom and easier as you get towards the top (though this may be different for different people, depending on biomechanics). When anchored below, the bands offer less resistance in the bottom position as you start, increasing as you get to the top. When anchored from above (as in the rack), the bands support more of the weight at the bottom and ease up as you get to the top.

Anchoring from below is best for building explosive strength out of the bottom of the exercise while suspending the bar from the top is better for muscle-building purposes and developing strength in the lock-out portion of the lift.

How To Do It:

Anchoring From Below:

There are several anchoring techniques you can use for this exercise (other than having a specific platform designed for band deadlifting).

1. Standing on the bands - For this version, you will need to loop the bands around the barbell, just inside where you will be gripping it. Lay the bands on the floor then stand on top of them (both sides of each band). You can adjust the amount and how soon the resistance picks up by where on the band you step on. The less slack you have on the bands when you step on them, the sooner the resistance will increase and the greater it will be.

For instance, if you step on the band right where it first touches the ground, you're going to get elastic resistance the moment you lift the bar off the ground. It will get harder very quickly. You may want to allow a little slack on the bands before you step on them. This will give you part of the range of motion before the elastic resistance kicks in and starts making the exercise harder. Experiment with where you step using a light barbell first so that you know where the resistance really kicks in.



2. Hitching to the frame of the rack - if your power rack isn't bolted to the floor, you may be able to slip the bands underneath the bottom side beams of the rack. This will allow you to use a full range of motion for the

exercise.

IMPORTANT! Use **LESS** weight on the bar than you normally would for deadlifts. The bands are going to add resistance to the bar so start conservatively with your actual weight plates until you get a better idea of how much you can use. You can always add more if you need it on the next set.

When you do this variation, proceed exactly as you normally would with the deadlifts except for one major point. Try to pull as explosively off the ground as you can, especially as you come to the top of the movement. Because the band is making it harder as you get to the top, you will be fighting harder and harder to stretch the band. Exploding up to this point will build explosive strength. You can lift the bar quickly and not have to worry about slowing it down.



Anchoring From Above:

This variation of band training will require you to do the exercise in a power rack, hitching the bands around the safety rails of the power rack. The rails are adjustable so you will be able to set the bands where you need to in terms of how much help you want from the bands. Ideally, you want to be sure the bands still have some tension (just a little) at the top of the deadlift to keep them from moving around on the bar when you get to the top. No slack line!

Hitch the bands to the safety rails first, then put the bar through the loops, THEN start adding weight to the bar. The bands should be directly underneath the safety rails of the racks so they're inside the weight collars of the bar.

Load the bar with MORE weight than you would normally would for your sets (how much you overload will depend on what size/resistance level of band you're using) and how stretched the bands are at the beginning of the exercise. The more stretched the bands, the more help they're going to give you at the bottom.

This variation offers a smoother strength curve and allows you to use more actual weight resistance for the exercise. As the bands retract, they give you less help but as they give you less help, you're also moving to a stronger position in the exercise. As you get to the top of the deadlifts, the bands should offer very little, if any, help at all. Anchoring from above will take some of the tension off the bottom, start position of the deadlift and help you improve your lockout power.





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Seated Band and Cable Rows

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

Adding the bands to the regular Seated Cable Row presents a very unique challenge to the back muscles. As you pull the handle towards you, the tension on the bands increases. This means as you approach the most contracted position of the exercise, you are getting much greater tension on the back! It also allows you to perform the exercise very explosively and still get great tension in the back. Normally, when you do a seated row and explode up, you end up with very little tension at the contracted position.

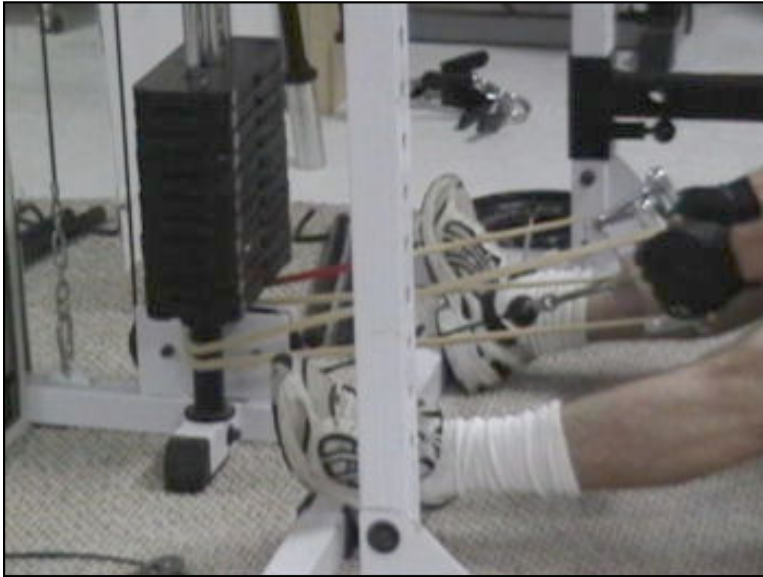
How To Do It:

The first step is to figure out how to best get your band(s) attached your seated cable row machine. As every cable row machine is different, you'll have to be creative in picking a solid place to anchor the band bands onto or around.

Your best bet is the frame of the machine itself. Use your best judgment to make sure the band won't interfere with the movement of the weight stack or cable. My favorite technique is to take one band and just loop it around the bottom post of the cable weight stack (below the stack). Basically, every pulley setup is different. You'll need to figure out what will work best for yours. You might be able to loop a band around like I do or you may have to hitch two bands to the frame of the machine on either side.

If you do need to use two bands, instead of gripping the band on the ends of the loops, you may need to grip lower down on the band itself, closer to the point where it's attached. That would be necessary if you otherwise wouldn't get enough tension in the bands during the exercise.





Now that you've got your bands hitched on, clip on the close-grip "V" handle (I've found this to be the best one to use, though you can use a straight bar handle as well). Grab one surface of the bands in each hand then grab the V handle, sandwiching the band in between your hand and the handle. The rubber of the band will actually help you keep your grip on this exercise.

Perform the seated cable row exercise as you normally would, focusing on squeezing your back **HARD** at the contracted position. When using the bands in this fashion, try to use an explosive rowing movement, basically trying to row the cable up as quickly as you can. Don't let the weight crash back down - control then explode up again.

This exercise will build explosive power in the back.





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Band Assisted Pulldowns

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise allows you to use more weight with the pulldown exercise than you normally would because of the force that the band is adding to the start of the exercise (where the major sticking point of the exercise is). The help of the band also changes the strength curve of the exercise, reducing the resistance at the top part and forcing your back to take up more of the tension at the bottom, contracted position.

How To Do It:

First, you'll need a medium-tension band (you can experiment with which band-size you use). Use the bar attachment for the pulldowns, not the V bar (the band doesn't hook as well onto the V bar). Loop the band over top of the pulldown bar (like looping necklace over a person's head). Make sure your weight is already set on the pulldown bar (you will be able to use more weight than you normally would).





Grab the two sides of the band towards the bottom then pull the band down and hook it under the thigh pads of the pulldown machine. This is the most effective place to hook it on. This will give you stretch in the band right from the start.

Sit in the pulldown machine, take a close grip on the bar and pull down as you normally would, leaning slightly back and puffing your chest out as you pull the bar down. The exercise will be easier at the top and, as you get to the bottom, the resistance will increase. Just f.y.i., the resistance won't be increased by you working against elastic tension - the band is used as a self-spotting tool, helping you to use more weight on the weight stack.





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Band Assisted Chin-Ups and 1 Arm Chin-Ups

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Chin-Up is one of the very best exercises you can do for the back but what can you do if you're unable to do full reps on your own? This exercise allows you to use bands to help you do chin-ups if you can't do chins with your full bodyweight. Also, you can use the bands to help you perform 1 Arm Chin-Ups very effectively if you're already strong enough to do chins on your own.

How To Do It:

First, you'll need one band. Hitch it onto your chin-up bar right in the middle of the bar. Set a bench in front of the band and stand on the bench. Set one foot in the band loop then step down onto the bench. Now step into the band loop with the other foot.





Grip the bar with a close (about 6 inches apart) underhand grip and step off the bench. Do your chins from there with regular chin-up form. The band will help you more at the bottom and ease up at the top, helping you with the exercise at the hardest part of the range of motion.



Band-Assisted One-Arm Chin-Ups

You can also use the band-assist technique to perform 1 Arm Chin-Ups. This is extremely effective for building strength if you're an advanced trainer but can't do full one-arm reps on your own. You should be able to do at least 10 full chin-ups without help before doing these. You'll get some help at the bottom but at the top, where you're strongest, the exercise will be primarily all you.

When doing 1 Arm Band Chin-Ups, place your other arm out to a side support of the chin-up bar to stabilize your body, otherwise you'll find that you move around a lot and won't get as much out of the exercise. A power rack chin-up bar is the best place to do these for that reason. Perform the exercise as you would a regular chin-up but as you come to the top, make a concentrated effort to get yourself up as high as you can. The band help is going to ease off at the top and you'll need to use more muscular force at that point.





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Cable/Barbell Hyperextensions

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

Regular Hyperextensions are one of the best directly-targeted lower back exercises you can do. When you add resistance, you normally only add it in a vertical plane, either by holding a dumbbell, barbell or weight plates. This gives you a limited angle of resistance that doesn't match the path of the body. When you attach a cable to the bar, you not only get vertical resistance but horizontal resistance that you must also pull back against. This provides a much greater contraction of the lower back muscles.

How To Do It:

First, set a loaded barbell in front of the cable machine - the EZ Curl bar is best as it's shorter and easier to handle than a full-size Olympic bar - and attach the cable to the bar (see [How to Attach](#)). Use a fairly light weight on both the barbell and the cable machine to start. It's going to be a very different type of resistance...one you're not likely to have used before.

Set a Hyper bench directly in front of the cable stack, about 3 feet away. Get set in the bench then reach forward and grab the bar with an overhand grip. Keeping your lower back tight, pull up and back into a regular Hyperextension. Pull the bar towards you as you come up. Hold for a few seconds then lower the bar, letting the cable pull forward as you lower.





You can also perform this exercise to target the hamstrings and glutes. Instead of keeping the bar low the whole way up, lift it up a bit, bending your elbows, and pull it in towards your abdomen. As you pull up, bend your knees a bit, imagining as though you're dropping your knees down a bit as you pull the cable back. Your upper body will be vertical at the end of the movement. This hits the hamstrings strongly as not only are you using the hip extension function of the hams, you're also adding in the knee flexion function of the hams...they're contracting from both ends at once!





How To Do It With Bands:

This exercise can also be done using a band. First, hitch the band to a solid object down low then loop the band around the bar. Perform the exercise exactly as demonstrated above. The movement is exactly the same - the only difference is that the tension will increase as you come up because of the elastic tension of the band increasing.





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Cable/Dumbbell Shoulder Press

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Cable/Dumbbell Shoulder Press combines two separate strength curves to maximize tension on the shoulder muscles. When you do regular dumbbell shoulder presses, you're only getting vertical tension on the shoulder muscles. But the shoulders don't operate only straight up and down! As a demonstration, let your left arm hang straight down beside your body. Put your right hand on top of your left shoulder. Now, keeping your left arm straight, bring it directly out to the side until it's straight overhead. Feel those shoulder muscles tightening up?

With this exercise, we're going to combine the vertical tension of the dumbbells with the lateral tension of the cables. As you perform the shoulder press, you're not only getting vertical resistance (which your body is used to) but you will also get horizontal resistance. This means that as you press up, your shoulders are also working against resistance to bring the dumbbells together overhead. This dramatically increases the tension on the shoulders at the top of the movement.

How To Do It:

To do this exercise, you'll need a cable cross-over setup and dumbbells. It's good to use a bench designed for shoulder pressing or, as is my preference, a Preacher Bench facing backwards. The Preacher Bench allows you keep a more natural supporting curve in your lower back while giving your mid-back something to lean against. Put the bench in the center of the cross-over machines, as close to dead center as you can.

Attach the cables to the dumbbells (as per [How To Attach](#)) or use the ankle harnesses on your forearms. You will be using the two low pulleys for this exercise. Use a light weight on the cables as you won't need much extra resistance to get the job done.

If you have the cables looped around the dumbbells, lean over and grab one then lean over and grab the other. Make sure you grab the dumbbell so that the cable is on the PINKY side. Otherwise, it will be pulling against your hands. Bring them up to the bottom position the shoulder press then start pressing. This is easier with the ankle harnesses around your forearms simply because it keeps your hands free to grab the dumbbells.

Press the dumbbells up overhead then together at the top. Make sure you don't crack them together at the top. You'll feel a stronger pull on the shoulders at the top of the movement due to horizontal tension being placed on them by the cables. It will almost feel as though you're doing overhead flyes as you come to the top of the shoulder press due to the horizontal tension. Your shoulders will likely have NEVER felt this kind of tension before.

Do a full set then set the dumbbells down. If the cables are directly attached and you have round dumbbell plates, make sure to control the dumbbells - the cable will draw them back and it could be fast!



As you tire doing reps with both arms at the same time, you can also easily switch to doing one arm at a time. Hold one dumbbell at shoulder level then explosively press the other overhead and a little past the head towards the opposite side. Since you get horizontal resistance, you'll get resistance even as you bring the dumbbell over top of your head.



How To Do This Exercise With Bands:

There are several ways to use bands with this exercise. The first method is to hitch them up exactly duplicating the cable version of the exercise - to two low points wide to the sides. First, lean over and grasp the right band in your right hand, then lean over and grasp the left band in your left hand. Now grab the dumbbells (the bands will be pressed in your hands), get them up to the start position and start pressing!



To do the second version, you'll need two solid objects to hitch the bands onto (about 10 to 12 feet apart). Hitch them at about chest height. Instead of looking to mimic the pulley version exactly, we're going to focus on adding horizontal tension at the top of the press movement. Use the smallest bands for this one as you won't need much tension to get the shoulders screaming.

Instead of holding the bands in the hands or hooking them on the dumbbell, we'll be looping them directly around your forearms (near the elbow). The forearms should stay vertical through the whole exercise so the bands shouldn't move around much. If you want, you CAN hold the bands in your hand or loop them around the dumbbell ends. That will work just fine as well, especially if you find you need a bit more resistance.

Do the press as you normally would. As you bring the dumbbells together, the tension on the bands increases, making it tougher to bring the hands together. This is very unique stimulus to the shoulders as they don't normally get work in this range of motion of the press.





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Cable/Dumbbell Lateral Raise

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Cable/Dumbbell Lateral Raise addresses strength curve issues with the regular dumbbell lateral raise. When you do the regular dumbbell lateral raise, you get almost no resistance at the bottom and most at the top. With the cable lateral raise, you get increased resistance at the bottom (it's important to note you also get resistance at the top, so the effective is additive). Combined, these two exercises make for a more complete movement.

How To Do It:

Attach the low pulley to a dumbbell (as per [How to Attach](#)). You can do this exercise either standing or kneeling down (on both knees, not on one knee or your leg will get in the way of the cable). When kneeling, you'll get more horizontal pull on the cable, which will give you better resistance at the bottom.

In the kneeling position, you will also get a little less resistance at the top with the cable than you would with the standing version. Since the resistance is additive, the greater resistance at the bottom and less at the top is a better match for the strength curve that we're looking to hit.



Kneel down or stand a few feet from the pulley. Reach across your body and grip the dumbbell. If your left side is to the pulley, reach across and grab the dumbbell with your right hand. Pull the cable up and let it stretch your arm across your body. This gives you the most complete range of motion for the side delts.

Do a lateral raise from here, bringing the dumbbell up and to the side in a controlled movement. Do your full set of reps with one arm then switch to the other. To help adjust for the strength curve of the exercise, you can use your other hand to help spot yourself towards the top, where the exercise is hardest and where the effects of the two resistances are additive.

Kneeling Version:



Standing Version:





How To Do This Exercise With Bands:

This exercise is, quite honestly, not as effective when done with the bands. The stretching effects of the bands almost exactly matches the strength curve of the dumbbell raise - least resistance at the bottom, most at the top. By attaching a band to a solid object and attaching it to a dumbbell, you are basically duplicating the strength curve of the dumbbell raise but with a band. You may as well just use more weight with the dumbbell.

The only difference in the exercise would be a change in the angle of pull on the raise, which may be a good change. To accomplish that, hitch the band to a solid object then let the band pull your arm across your body at the start of the exercise.

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Band & Barbell Shoulder Press From Above and Below

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Barbell Shoulder Press (also known as the Military Press when done to the front) is one of the most common shoulder-builders done in the gym. But this exercise can have some serious strength-curve issues. The amount of weight you can use in the bottom half is not nearly what your shoulders can do when you get towards the top. Without adjusting for this, you're leaving serious gains on the table. Using the bands to adjust resistance solves this perfectly.

How To Do It:

Bands Anchored Below:

For this exercise, I've found the best (and most efficient) approach is to use the standing barbell press in the rack. There are several methods for getting the bands set up.

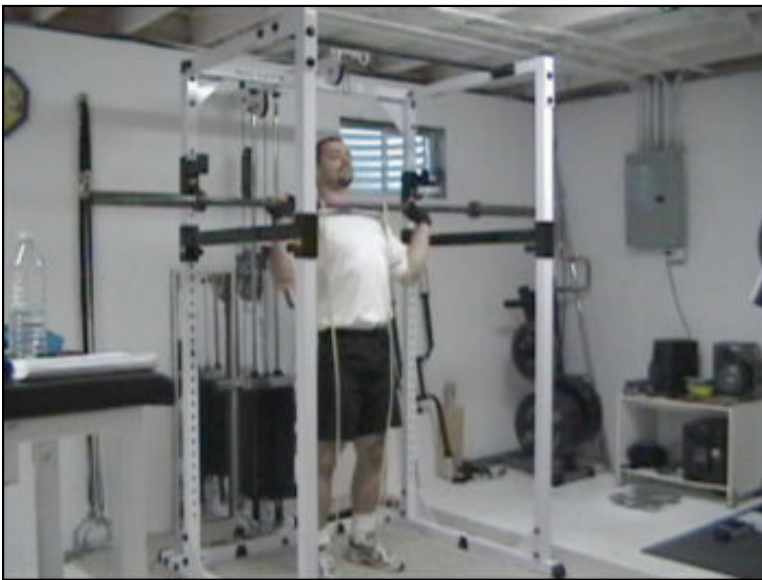
1. Step on the ends of the bands - This exercise is best done in the rack. Set the safety rails at just below shoulder height. You'll be starting the exercise from the bottom position. Hitch two bands onto the barbell about 6 inches apart. Make sure they're even on the bar so you don't get an unbalanced load. Use the smooth section in the middle as your guide.

Set a lighter weight on the bar than you would normally use and use lighter straps as you'll be stretching them a LOT. The resistance is going to get MUCH greater as you come to the top.

Stand just in front of the bar, step your feet (one at a time) into the loops of the bands and step down until your feet are on the floor. Bend your knees a bit to get the bar at shoulder level, then take your grip on the bar (a little inside of what you would use for a bench press is about right).



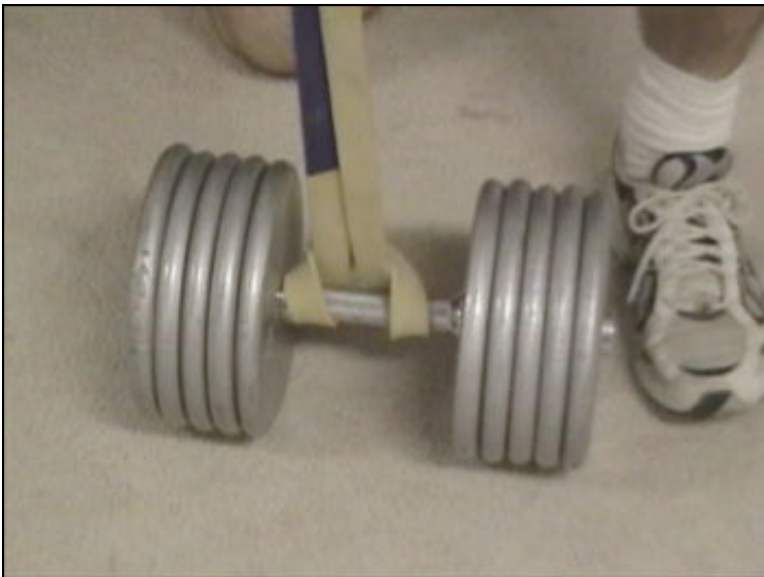
Stand up so that the bar is off the safety rails and you're in the bottom position of the exercise. Now press the bar up as powerfully as you can, pushing it up as fast as you can. The idea here is to accelerate the bar to build explosive power in your shoulders. Hold the bar at the top for a few seconds then lower slowly. Repeat the movement with another explosive rep.





2. Anchor the bands to the safety rails of the power rack - This version is very similar in concept to the version above. Set the safety rails as low as they'll go and hitch the bands to the rails instead of the bar. Set the bar on the racking pins of the power rack (set at just below shoulder height). Loop the bands around the bar, THEN add your weight plates. This keeps your feet free during the exercise. The only downside to this technique is that the safety rails are no longer near the bottom position of the bar.

3. Anchor the bands to two dumbbells - this variation is done in the seated position in the rack. Set the safety rails to just below the bottom position of your Seated Barbell Press. Set two heavy dumbbells beside the rack (one on either side) and hitch bands to them. Stretch the bands up and loop them around the bar ends. You can use a thicker set of bands for this version (thicker than the standing version) since they won't be stretching as much.





Bands Anchored Above - Reverse Band Pressing:

The Reverse Band Pressing technique is extremely useful for building strength and muscle. It doesn't have the same explosive-power developing effects as the regular band press but it more closely mimics the ideal strength curve of the exercise, reducing the resistance at the bottom and placing the full load on the shoulders as you come to the top.

This exercise will be done one of two ways - either kneeling down in the rack or sitting in a bench in the rack (similar to the pictures above). Each has their pros and cons but both are very effective and the basic setup is exactly the same.

First, hitch two bands to the side overhead crossbeams of the rack. If you have a hard time getting the bands even on the side beams rack, you can also hitch them to the front crossbeam. Make sure the bands are out to the sides as much as possible - that should keep them even. This is important for getting an even pull on the bar so that you're not getting any twisting while you lift.

Once you've got the bands hitched, put the plates on the bar then loop the ends onto the outside of the plates. THEN put the collars on the bar - this will keep the bands from moving around when you get slack in them at the top. This is the other reason why you shouldn't loop the bands inside the plates - when you get slack in the bands, they may move around on the bar, unbalancing the load.

Use the the thicker bands for this exercise - they'll give you the best match to the strength curve, helping more at the bottom then easing up to nothing at the top when they go slack.

It'll take a little experimentation to get the right weight for this exercise but note that with the height you are pressing from, you will only get significant help from the bands in approximately the bottom half of the movement. When you hit this point, the bands go slack and it's all you. If you need more help at the bottom, attach another set of small bands.

For this exercise, it may be useful to double-hitch the bands, looping it through itself one more time THEN pulling it down and taut. This will give you help over a greater part of the range of motion, and help improve the match to the strength curve of the exercise.





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Cable or Band Barbell Shrugs

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

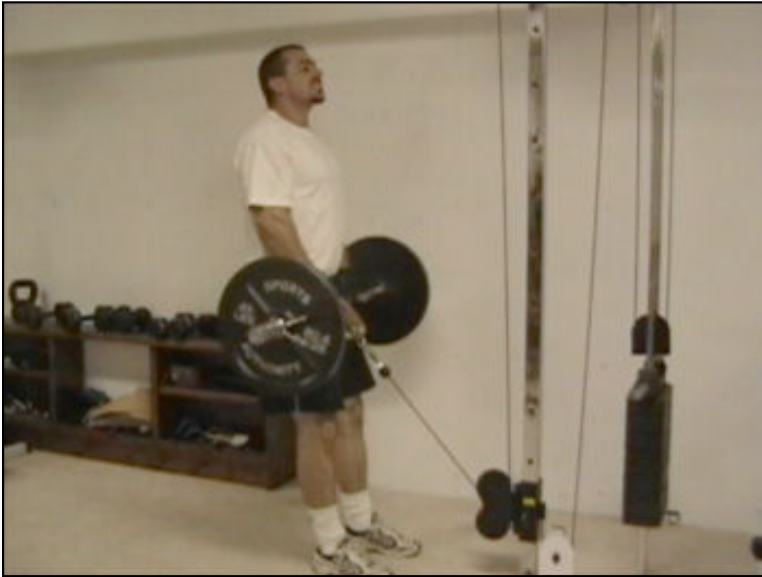
The shrug is an excellent, basic exercise for developing the trapezius muscles. But here's something you may not know about them - they respond very well to explosive movements. And what better way to train explosively than with bands! With the proper settings, you can explode up against the bands, which increases resistance as you get to the top. The cable version of the exercise allows you to work not only against vertical resistance but add a degree of diagonal resistance as well.

How To Do It:

This version will show you how to do shrugs with the cable attached. First, set a barbell on the ground in front of the low pulley. If you're lucky enough to have a rack with a pulley attached, set up the bar in the rack. Use the ankle harness or loop the cable around the bar ([How to Attach](#)). Use a moderate weight on the stack.

Grip the barbell, take a step or two back, rolling/pulling the barbell along the floor to get a better angle. Deadlift the bar to the bottom position of the shrug. Because of the pull of the cable, you'll need to be leaning back somewhat as you do these to keep your balance. Shrug as you normally would. The cable tension will activate more of the middle fibers of the traps.





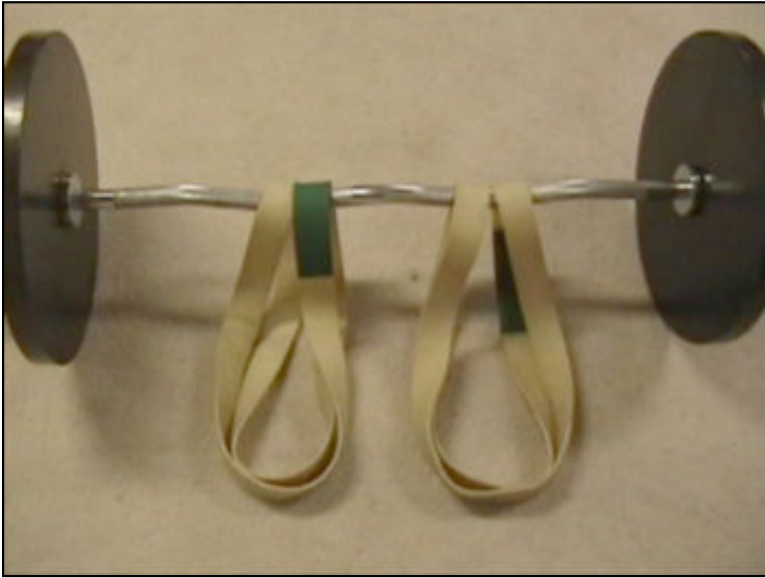
How To Do This Exercise With Bands:

You can attach the bands diagonally in a fashion similar to the cable version above. This can be done by hitching one band around the center of the bar or by placing the bar in the rack. To do these in the rack, hitch the bands to the forward uprights of the rack (at the very bottom) and do your shrugging near the back uprights to get the diagonal pull on the bands.





The vertical band version of the shrug can be done freestanding or in the rack. One of the easiest ways to go is to simply throw two bands over the bar (make sure they're even on the bar) and step on the ends. This should give you good tension on the bar.





Stepping on the bands works just fine but if you have something solid you can hitch the bands to, that will work even better - just make sure the bar is under tension the whole time. We don't want to lower the safety rails in order to hitch onto them as that would mean we'd have to deadlift that bar to the start position of the exercise, which means you won't be able to use as much weight.

My preferred method is to set the bar in position in the rack, load the weight, then set two heavy dumbbells on either side of the rack. Now I loop one end of the band over the bar end, then I string the band underneath the dumbbell. Once it's under, I pull it up and attach the other end to the bar as well. This keeps the band length short enough that you get immediate resistance when you start to shrug. You also get twice the resistance to explode up into on the shrugs this way, which is ideal! Just be sure you're using HEAVY dumbbells to loop the bands under or you'll pull them up when you shrug.





Grip the bar and get into the bottom position. Now shrug the bar up as explosively as you can! Try to touch your shoulders to your ears. The bands will keep the bar from going too fast when you hit the top and you'll really have to activate all your trap fibers to keep the bar moving explosively. The traps respond VERY strongly to this training.





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Cable/Barbell Preacher Curls

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise addresses one of the weaknesses of the Preacher Curl movement, which is the dramatic tapering off of resistance as you come to the top of the curl. At the top of the free weight Preacher Curl, you basically have no tension at all because the bones of the arms are supporting the weight. When you attach a cable to this exercise, which is constantly pulling the bar forward, you actually GET strong tension at the peak contracted position of the movement, making it a much better overall exercise for the biceps.

How To Do It:

Start by attaching the low pulley cable to the EZ Bar (as per "[How to Attach](#)"). Set the Preacher bench directly in front of the cable machine then set the bar on the Preacher Curl rack. Make sure it has some cable tension at the bottom position so you're always getting the forward pull on the bar.

Sit on the Preacher Bench, reach forward and grab the bar then curl it up to the top, squeezing hard as you curl up. You won't get the easing off of tension as you come to the top of the Preacher Curl as you normally would with the straight free weight movement. Squeeze hard at the top then lower slowly, all the way to the bottom of the rep (where you'll still have the cable pulling the bar away from you).





How To Do It With Bands:

Hitch the band to a low, solid object in front of the bench (not the bench itself, though, as it won't give you enough of an angle to get the right tension) then loop the other end around the center of the bar. Put the weight on the bar then move the bench back a bit so you get some tension in the band at the start. Curl up to the top as above.

With the band, you will get increasing resistance as you come to the top of the movement, making it a very effective technique.



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Standing Cable/Barbell Curls

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This technique combines the benefits of the barbell curl with the angle of tension of the low-pulley cable curl. When you combine the two exercises, you eliminate the range above the sticking point as a weak point. The bottom range is still underutilized with this version but is addressed with the [Single Arm Facing Away Curl](#).

How To Do It:

First, attach the low pulley cable to the EZ bar (as per "[How to Attach](#)"). Reach down and pick up the bar (use a light to moderate weight on the bar and a light weight on the cable machine). Now take a big step back. This big step changes the angle of resistance that the cable will provide. Rather than pulling it straight up and down, you'll be pulling it up and back.

Begin the curl movement. As you come towards the top 1/3 of the range of motion, you'll notice the cable curl portion kicking in much more. During the first 2/3 of the range, the cable is not actually moving very much. But as you come to the top, you're actually pulling the cable directly towards your face, dramatically increasing the tension effect on the biceps at the top. This is very useful because you get increasing resistance only AFTER the sticking point of the exercise.



How To Do This Exercise With Bands:

This exercise can also be done using a band attached to a solid object in front of you. Take a step back to get some tension on the band at the start of the movement. Perform the curl exactly as described above, bringing the barbell towards your face and squeezing hard at the top. The increasing tension in the band puts a powerful contraction on the biceps at the top.



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1 Arm Facing Away Cable/Dumbbell Curls

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise increases the tension placed on the bicep at the beginning of the curl movement, increasing the stretch component of the exercise. This means greater resistance over a greater portion of the biceps range of motion.

How To Do It:

Start by attaching the low pulley cable to a single dumbbell (as per "[How to Attach](#)"). You can attach the cable directly to the dumbbell (this is usually the easiest way to go on this exercise) or use the ankle strap on your forearm. Just note that because of the changing arm position, the strap may shift around on your forearm.

If you are attaching the cable directly to the dumbbell, when you go to grip the dumbbell, make sure the end of the dumbbell that the cable is attached to is right beside where your pinky is. The cable will run inside your arm this way though it shouldn't get in the way of the exercise.

The reason for this is that it will also give you some resisted supination tension (rotation of the hand towards a palms-up position - one of the main functions of the bicep muscle). This little extra bit of resistance can help increase the effect on the biceps as you curl up, even though you're not actually rotating the forearm.

However, the BEST way to go is to hold the single handle grip AND the dumbbell in your hand and do the exercise holding both. It can be tough to hold both in your hands, though, especially if the cable handle is a bit bigger than the length of the dumbbell handle and it doesn't fit together well. In that case, you'll need to use one of the alternate methods.

Just fyi, you won't need much weight on the cable for this one to be really effective.

- Stand facing away from the pulley, reach down and grab the dumbbell, then take a step forwards to get tension on the cable. Your feet should be staggered in a lunge position. If you're curling with your right arm, your right leg should be back. This will allow you to get better stretch on the bicep by being able to rotate your torso.
- Let the cable pull your arm backwards so it is behind your body and rotate your torso in that direction - your grip should be palm-forward through the whole movement to get the best tension on the bicep.
- Start the movement at the shoulder - imagine as though you're pushing your arm forward like you're trying to ring a doorbell with your bicep. When your hand is even with your body, THEN start curling the dumbbell up as you would in a regular dumbbell curl. Rotate your torso to the other side as well as you move to the top.
- Curl all the way up to the top, squeezing hard. Lower the dumbbell slowly, fighting against the back-pulling of the cable.
- As you start getting to the bottom of the curl, again push your bicep forward. This will put more stretch-tension on the bicep.

The position of the cable in the version put more tension on the beginning of the curl. As you come to the top, there isn't much movement of the cable so the extra tension is less, which is fine because that's where you're getting more tension with the dumbbell anyway.

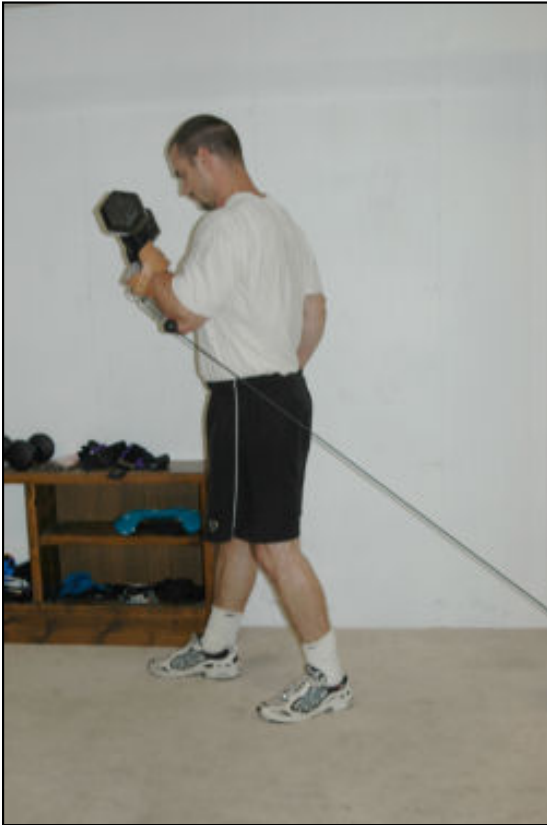
Cable Attached to Dumbbell:





Ankle Harness Version:



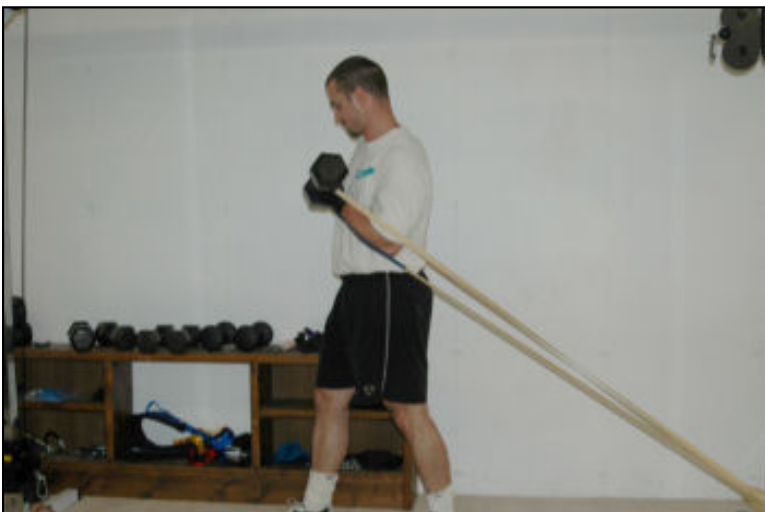


How To Do It With Bands:

To do this exercise with a band, hitch it to a low, solid object then grab the end of the band. When you have the band in your hand, THEN grip the dumbbell. This makes for a more natural movement.



Position yourself as above. Take a step forward so that your arm is being pulled behind you - it's critical that you start with an initial stretch on the band. Now begin the movement. The rest is performed exactly the same.



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Cable/Dumbbell Incline Curls

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise takes the already-great stretch position tension of the Incline Curl exercise and adds in not only additional stretching tension but outwards pulling tension AND increased tension in the contracted position of the exercise. This is a full spectrum attack on the biceps!

How To Do It:

Start by attaching the low pulley cables in a cable cross-over machine (as per "[How to Attach](#)") to a pair of dumbbells. You can also attach the cables to your wrists using the ankle harnesses.



Set an incline bench in between the cable cross-over machine but instead of placing it directly in between, set it a few feet forward of the centerline between the two cable stacks. Setting the bench forward will give the backwards-pulling tension on the biceps that we're looking for.

Get into position on the bench. If you've attached the cables to the dumbbells, go over and pick one up then go over and pick the other one up, then sit in the bench. When you pick the dumbbells up, the cables should be on the outside ends of the dumbbells for easier use. If your arms are attached via ankle harnesses, leave the dumbbells just in front of the bench. Go over and hook one harness on then go over and hook the other on. Now sit down and pick up the dumbbells and get into position.

Lean back on the incline, being sure to keep your head on the bench. Let the dumbbells stretch down to the bottom - feel the cables pulling your arms back and out as well. Now curl the dumbbells up, squeezing the biceps hard all the way to the top. You can also do this exercise one arm at a time as well.



How To Do It With Bands:

To do this exercise with bands, you'll need to hitch the bands to a solid object(s) behind the bench. Make sure the bench is far enough from the object that the bands are taut but not stretched at the start. The power rack is excellent for this purpose as you can just attach the bands to the uprights of the rack (attach them near the bottom). Now grip the ends of the bands THEN grab your dumbbells.



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Standing Vertical Band & Barbell Curls

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The standing barbell curl is one of the best overall biceps exercises you can do. But the strength curve of the exercise is not the most effective for working the biceps - the middle of the exercise (when your arms are bent 90 degrees) is the weakest point, which limits your overall resistance. By adding bands to the equation, we use just enough resistance to get by the sticking point but, since the band is getting stretched, as you come to the top where you are able to use more resistance, you GET more resistance. The only drawback here is that we still aren't increasing the resistance at the bottom of the movement - that will need to be done with other exercises.

How To Do It:

This exercise is relatively easy to set up - there are several ways you can do it.

The first way is to loop two bands around the barbell and set the other ends on the floor. Step on those ends - your bodyweight is the anchor that stretches the bands. If you want to keep the bands from moving on the bar (recommended), it's a simple step to hitch the bands onto the bar as if you were anchoring them onto the bar (with the pull-through bale hitch). This will keep the bands from shifting and upsetting the balance of the bar.

Once you've stepped on the ends, pick up the bar and begin curling. As you curl up, you'll notice the increasing resistance as you come to the top.





The other method is to hitch the bands onto a solid object near the floor. The best way to go is to set the safety rails low on the power rack and hitch the bands to the rails (you can set the bar in the racking pins of the rack in between reps). You can loop the bands either inside or outside your grip on the bar - I prefer outside as you then don't have the bands pressing against your hands and they do stay on the bar just fine.

You can also use another loaded barbell (on the ground just in front of you - use small plates on that bar to keep it low to the ground) to hitch the bands onto. With the bands hitched to something solid below, you won't have to deal with stepping on the band ends.





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Cable/Barbell Lying Tricep Extensions

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Lying Tricep Extension is an excellent exercise for hitting the long head of the triceps. It puts a great stretch on the triceps at the bottom of the movement when the barbell is down by your face. But as you get back up to the top, you lose pretty much all the resistance. If your arms are vertical, all you're doing is holding up the weight.

When you add cable resistance to the movement, you not only get the great stretch at the bottom, you also get resistance all the way to the top AND it stays on at the top! This makes for a complete tricep movement with NO rest for the triceps at any point in the range of motion.

How To Do It:

This exercise is best done using an EZ Bar. Attach the cable to the bar (as per [How To Attach](#)). The ankle harness is the easiest way to go. Load the bar with a moderate weight and put a moderate weight on the cable. When you combine the two resistances, you'll see why you don't need more!

With the EZ bar up against the low pulley, lie down on the floor a few feet from it (with your head towards the bar), then reach back overhead and grip the bar. Pull it forward a bit to get tension on the cable, then begin the Tricep Extension movement.

It's done exactly the same as you would normally do the exercise. But you'll notice the difference when you come to the top of the movement. Instead of hitting the top and having no resistance, the cable tension is going to be pulling backwards on the bar - you'll have to keep the triceps contracted in order to keep the bar in place.





The difference is much more noticeable after a few reps of this continuous tension. When you complete the set, your triceps will swell right up! Set the bar back down on the floor behind your head and you're done!

For an added bonus, you can also do a close grip bench press using the same setup once you're done with the extensions. The horizontal pulling adds a unique element to the press.





How To Do This Exercise With A Band:

This exercise can also be easily done with a band. Simply hitch the band to a solid object near floor level, loop the other end around the barbell (make sure it lines up in the very center for optimum balance) and you're set. Get yourself set up a few feet away so that you get a stretch on the band at the start. As you extend up to the top, the resistance will increase, making it an extremely effective variation - you may find it even more effective than the cable version.





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Band Parallel Bar Dips

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Parallel Bar Dip is one of the most effective tricep-building (or chest-building) exercises you can do. The muscle activation benefits of moving your body through space make this an extremely valuable exercise. But what if you can't do full reps on your own? That leaves you with a few options: the Gravitron machine that assists you, doing the exercise standing on a box, performing negative-only reps (which is an excellent way to build strength), or doing assisted dips using bands.

But what if you're very strong and can do many reps with your own bodyweight? Using bands can also be the key to adding resistance precisely targeted to the strength curve of the exercise. You can make the exercise MUCH harder using bands.

How To Do It:

Band Assisted Dips

For the band assisted dip exercise, you'll need a dip station and bands. Simple enough! The setup is simple.

Loop the ends of the bands onto the handles of the dip station. This gives you a double-band to stand on when doing the exercise. Set your hands on the handles, then set your feet on the bands, stepping down on them.





Lower yourself down into the bottom of the dip. As you lower down, the bands will stretch and take up some of your bodyweight. Now, as you push up, the bands go slacker and force you to take up more of your bodyweight during the exercise. This matches the strength curve of the exercise very well, giving you the benefits of the dip while allowing those who aren't strong enough to perform it on their own to actually do full reps on their own.

To work the triceps, keep your torso upright and keep your arms in tight beside your body. To work the chest, hunch forward a little and flare your elbows out wide.





Band Resisted Dips

Using the bands for resistance give you an excellent match to the strength curve of the dip (weakest at the bottom, strongest at the top).

You'll need two bands to perform this version (start with smaller bands first, to get an idea of how much resistance you can use) and a means to anchor the bands - for the pictures, I'm using two barbells set in the power rack (this is a great setup for dipping on) and the bands attached to two heavy dumbbells as anchors.

If you're going to anchor the bands directly to the dip stand, set one end of each band underneath each side of the dip station (if you can lift it up). Basically, you're going to use the machine itself to anchor the bands. If that's not an option, you'll need to find another way to anchor the bands - usually most dip stands have small steps for getting into position. Try using these.

To get resistance on your body, kneel down, then throw the right band over your left shoulder and the left band over your right shoulder so that the bands crisscross on your body. If you were to put the bands on same-side shoulders, they'll slide off due to the shape of the body. With the bands on opposing sides, there is NO chance of that happening.





Stand up - if your dip stand isn't bolted down, you'll need to be sure you stand up with your feet on the stand itself. Otherwise, the bands will lift the dip stand off the floor. Get yourself into position on the dip station then start dipping!





To add extra weight to the exercise, you can also use a dumbbell between your feet. Just set the dumbbell on end in the dip stand. Get into the top position of the dip (with the bands on), then dip down and pinch the dumbbell between your feet. Letting go of the dumbbell allows for drop sets to be done.

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Cable/Dumbbell Overhead Tricep Extensions

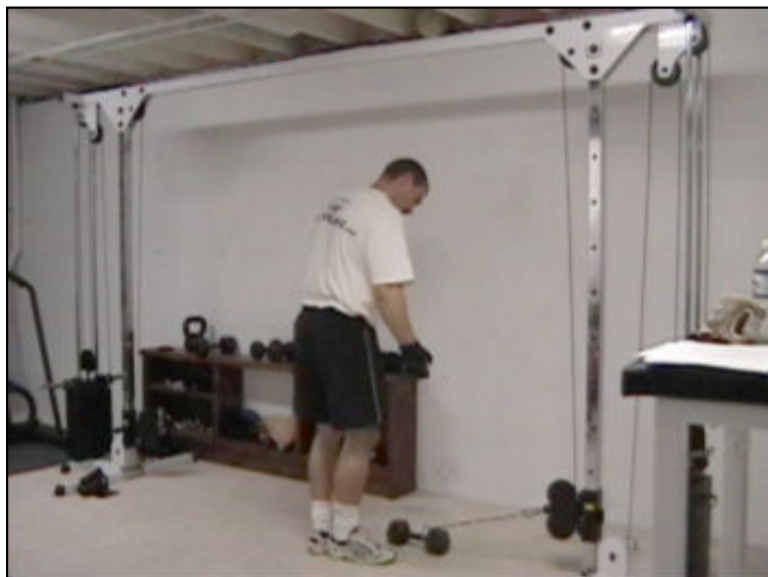
Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Dumbbell Overhead Tricep Extension offers great tension at the bottom, stretch position but basically none at the top. By adding in the cable resistance, you get complete tension over the whole range of motion. This is very similar in concept to the [Cable Lying Tricep Extension](#).

How To Do It:

First, attach the cable to a single dumbbell (as per [How to Attach](#)). If you're attaching the cable directly to the dumbbell handle, be sure when you grip it that you grip with the thumb down by the cable. That will be the best way to go for comfort and proper execution as during the exercise, the thumb will be on the downward end of the dumbbell.

The pictures illustrate the best way to get into position. Basically, stand perpendicular to the dumbbell and pick it up with an underhand curl grip. If the cable is on your right, you'll be picking it up with your right hand. Grasp it so that your thumb is by the cable. Rotate your body around and lift the weight up into the bottom position of the dumbbell tricep extension.





Perform the exercise as you normally would, leaning a little forward against the pull of the cable. The continuous tension on the tricep will be very noticeable after a few reps. Set the dumbbell down then switch hands and go again!



How To Do This Exercise With A Band:

To perform this exercise with a band, use a single band and hitch it low and onto a solid object. Set the dumbbell beside the end loop of the band. Grasp the end of the band fully in the palm of your hand then grasp the dumbbell. Bring the dumbbell up to the bottom position of the dumbbell extension then extend up as you normally would with the exercise.

With the band, you won't get much extra resistance at the bottom but you will get a LOT at the top, as you get to a stronger range of the movement.



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Band Close Grip Presses Above and Below

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The rubber band, combined with the Close Grip Barbell Bench Press, overcomes one of the biggest problems with the Close Grip Bench Press exercise: the strength curve. In a typical Close Grip Bench Press, you have a sticking point just before you're halfway up. But your muscles are capable of moving much more weight once they get past this point. So to optimally work the muscles, you need dynamically-changing resistance.

This is where the band comes in. The resistance of the band can be used to change the strength curve of the exercise, making it easier at the bottom and increasing resistance as you get to the top - exactly what the exercise needs!

Band pressing with the bands anchored below is excellent for increasing explosive power and strength. Band pressing with the bands anchored above (known as the Reverse Band Bench Press) is excellent for muscle building purposes as well as strength. These instructions are basically identical to the instructions for the Band Pressing for the chest, with the only real difference being you'll be taking a close grip on the bar.

A very useful variation to the Close Grip Press is the Decline Close Grip Press. Lying on a decline bench allows you to use more weight and puts very effective tension on the triceps. This is a very good assistance exercise for improving your bench press. It's performed exactly the same way as a flat Close Grip Bench but just on a decline bench.

How To Do It:

Bands Anchored Below:

The anchoring techniques for this exercise are exactly the same as what is available for the regular Band Bench Press.

1. Anchor with Dumbbells - Anchor the bands to heavy dumbbells (use the bale hitch on the dumbbell handles and set them on the ground beside your bench). With round dumbbells, you can set another heavy dumbbell on top on top of that dumbbell to keep it from moving. Normally, with heavy enough dumbbells, you won't need to do that.



2. Band Under Bench - Another technique you might want to try is looping a single band underneath the bench.

This particular technique should be used if you have a bench with the legs near the ends. Set the bar on the bottom safety rails (or if you're using a regular bench, set the empty bar on the bench itself). Loop one end of the band onto the bar. Pull the band underneath the bench then loop the other end underneath the end of the bar then slide it over the bar. Slide the bar back into the center of the rack and make sure the ends of the bands are even on the bar. The band should be under the bench where your chest level is. Now pull the bar up onto the racking pins (to the start position) and you're good to go!

If you have a bench that has open space near the upper area, you can just drape the band on top of the bar then pull the two hanging parts down and underneath the bench, about to where your chest will lay on the bench.

Keep in mind on either of these versions, the band tension will probably lift your bench off the ground unless it's heavy. When you go to press, sit on the bench and get it placed where you want it. THEN lay down on it.

Band placement on the bar can be used to adjust resistance - the wider the bands are set on the bar, the harder the bands will be stretched. For example, if you want more tension, set the bands outside where you grip on the bar. Your hands will keep them from sliding inwards. For lesser tension, slide both ends towards the center so they're pulling straight up and down. The band itself should contact on your traps on top of your shoulders as you press.

3. Band Under Back - If none of the above appeals to you or works for you, you can borrow a page from the dumbbell press band technique. Lay out the band and grab both ends so that the bands are resting in your palms and hooked around your thumbs (like you are about to press the bands). Now, put the band back over your head and wrap it around your upper back like you would wrap a towel when you are about to dry your back. The band should rest across your shoulder blades. The band surface should be on the top part of the forearms. Now lay back and set your hands on the bar as you normally would. This is a quick and easy way to set up the band presses.



4. Bands Under Rack - If your power rack isn't bolted down, you may also be able to slide the bands underneath the bottom frame of the rack itself. This is one of the best ways to go, if you can manage it with your setup.

Anchoring the bands below the bench means you're going to be seeing an increase in resistance as you press to the top of the movement. To really make this exercise effective, explode to the top of the exercise, pressing the bar up against the bands as fast as you can. The actual mechanics of the exercise are exactly like the regular close grip barbell bench press.

One of the reasons this works so well (aside from the increasing resistance itself) is that the bands serve to decelerate the bar so you don't have to. In normal free weight training, part of the range of motion is used by the body to slow the bar down to prevent joint injury. With the bands pulling the bar down, this deceleration is taken care of and your body is free to accelerate strongly through the whole range of motion. This means when using heavy weight, your body isn't unconsciously holding back to slow the bar down at the top, improving your lockout strength.

When performing the exercise, take a shoulder-width grip on the bar. Normally, this is just outside the smooth center portion of the Olympic bar. Don't go in any closer than that as it can increase stress to the shoulders while not significantly increasing tension on the triceps. Basically, it's not worth it.

With this anchoring-below technique, I've found it best to this exercise as a bottom-start movement. Set the safety

rails just above the bottom point of the press and start with the bar at the bottom. This is much easier than trying to unrack a bar that has maximum elastic tension on it. Starting from the bottom also helps develop explosive power in the press.

Try to push with the heels of your hands as you press up. Press the bar directly up, keeping your elbows in close to your body.



Bands Anchored Above - Reverse Band Pressing

The Reverse Band Press is extremely useful for muscle-building purposes. When you perform the Reverse Band Press, you won't get the same elastic tension on the way up (that you work against for explosive pressing). What you will get is a lot of help at the bottom of the bench, which gradually decreases as you press the bar up. When you get near the top, you're doing the majority, if not all, of the work yourself.

This is the exact perfect strength curve of the close grip bench press and it will allow you to use a heavier overall weight when pressing. Since you're at maximal tension the entire way up, you'll be doing a much more efficient pressing workout.

To set this up, you'll need to do your bench pressing in a rack. Set the flat bench in the rack and set your safety rails and racking pins at the appropriate heights as you do if you were doing a regular Close Grip Bench Press. Use the thicker bands for this as they'll match the strength curve of the exercise better.

Hitch the bands to the upper crossbeams of the rack. You can choose from two places to hitch them up - the first is the side upper crossbeams The second is the front or rear top crossbeam of the rack.

The main benefit of hitching to the side upper rails are that the bands get a straight up and down line of pull on the bar, maximizing the help they'll be able to give during the exercise. The downside is that you MUST hitch the bands exactly evenly on the side rails - if you don't, the bands will pull the bar in a rotational pattern and you will find one shoulder getting a lot of torque.

If you have a felt marker, you can measure and draw exactly even lines on your rack or, if you're in a public gym, use something else to measure (e.g. a weight plate) so that you get the same distance on both sides. Do a test rep with light weight to make sure the bands are even before beginning the real workout.

When you hitch the bands to the front or rear crossbeam, it's much easier to get an even pull on the bar as you can just hitch the bands right next to the uprights on the rack (as far wide as you can hitch them). That way, you'll know that they're even. The downside is that you don't get a direct upwards pull from the bands but an angled pull. When pressing, this will mean the amount of help the bands give you is reduced.

Once the bands are hitched to the upper crossbeam (whichever method), loop the other ends onto the barbell (after you've added the weight - you can go heavier than you normally would for the same reps when using the bands, e.g. add about 50 to 70 pounds to the bar - you'll need to play with the amount of weight you use).

You can loop the bands on the bar on the outside of the weight plates or on the inside. If you loop them on the inside of weight plates, your best bet is to move them just inside of where you grip on the barbell. That way, even if the bands lose tension at the top, your hands prevent them from sliding in. If you go inside, put the bands on the bar before you load the weight plates. Be very sure the bands don't line up with where you're racking the bar - if you rack the bar on top of the bands, you may damage the bands.

If you loop the bands on the outside of the weight plates, put the bands on THEN put the collars on the outside of the bands. This will keep the bands from shifting on the bar as well.

You're ready to press! Lie under the bar, take a shoulder-width grip on the bar, unrack it then lower it to your chest. Keep your elbows in close to your body while you're doing the exercise to maximize tricep involvement. You'll notice that it feels a LOT lighter at the bottom and you'll be able to accelerate the bar off your chest better. But as you come up, it gets harder and harder and you have to squeeze harder and harder to keep the bar moving. Lock it out then go again!

The Reverse Close Grip Band Press will help your body get used to pressing heavier weights and really help you increase your power in the lockout phase of the bench press, especially if you find that it's your triceps that are holding you back on the lockouts.



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Band Pushdowns

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The best part of the regular Pushdown exercise is the peak contraction point. But you don't actually GET maximum tension on the cable at that bottom point with the regular Pushdown. You get maximum tension at the halfway point where the elbow is bent 90 degrees.

So how do we fix that? We attach a band to the pushdown bar and increase the tension as we get to the bottom! This results in an EXTREMELY hard contraction of the triceps and matches the strength curve of the exercise much better, making it a more effective tricep movement.

How To Do It:

Your best bet is to use the high pulley in the cable cross-over machine. That way, you can throw the band over top of the cross beam and use that as the anchor for the band. If you don't have that, you'll need to find some other part of the cable machine to anchor the band on, e.g. on the lat pulldown machine, you'll probably be able to loop the band over top of the frame where the cable comes down from.

You fold the single band over top and loop the ends over the bar. This gives you double resistance with one band. You can also hitch the band to the crossbar and loop the other end onto the bar near the post where it attaches to the cable. This will give you a less resistance.



Use the straight or cambered (EZ) bar for the pushdowns. As mentioned above, first throw the band over the crossbar. Next, loop the ends of the band over the handles of the pushdown bar. Slide the ends right up until they're touching the center post of the pushdown bar. This will keep them even on the bar.

Grip the pushdown bar and do the exercise as you normally would. The main difference here is that as you push down, the resistance will get greater and greater until you get to the bottom, where it will max out from the tension on the band. At the bottom, for an extra kick, try to push your body upwards (this works if the band tension is great enough - you'll actually be able to push yourself up a bit, onto your toes, using only tricep power).

Squeeze the triceps very hard for a few seconds then lower slowly.





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Cable/Barbell Crunches

Why Is This Exercise Effective:

The Cable/Barbell Crunch combines the direct downward resistance of the barbell with the backwards-pulling resistance of the cable. As you do the crunch, you first work against the weight of the barbell then, as you curl forward, you work against the resistance of the cable. This matches the optimal strength curve of the crunch exercise.

How To Do It:

For this exercise, all you need is an EZ Bar (or any other bar) and a low-pulley. The EZ Bar is the easiest setup for this exercise as it's shorter length is easier to work with. Set a moderate weight on the bar e.g. 10's or 25's depending on your ab strength and about 20 to 40 lbs on the cable. As with all these exercises, the amount of weight you use on both the bar and the cable is something you'll need to experiment with.

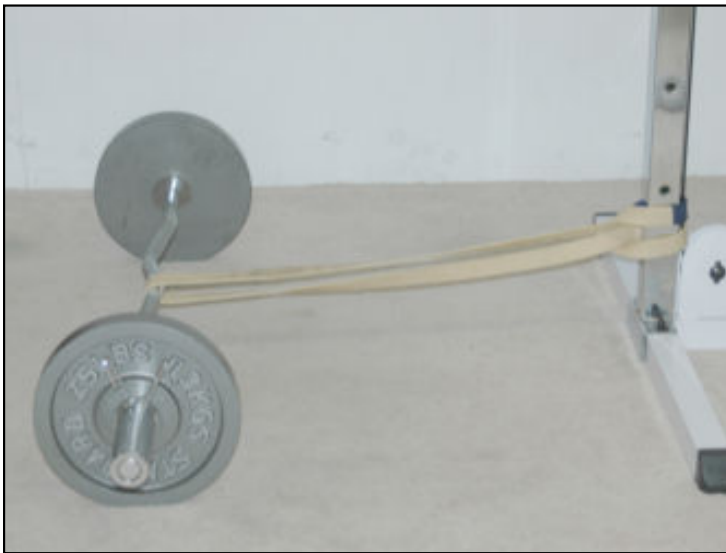
- Attach the cable to the center of the EZ Bar using one of the methods explained in the [How To Attach Cables](#) section. The ankle harness is easiest but any method will work.
- Now lie down with your feet facing away from the pulley in the regular crunch position.
- Reach back and grasp the barbell with a close overhand grip. Do a tricep extension to the top position until it is directly over your shoulders (this is the easiest way to get it into position). Your arms should be locked out in the fully-extended position. You will keep your arms locked throughout the exercise.
- This is the bottom/start position. Now do a crunch movement, pushing the bar up then curling your torso forward and pushing the bar forward of vertical.
- Squeeze hard for a few seconds then lower slowly.
- At the end of the set, use the tricep extension to lower the bar back down to the ground behind your head.





How To Do It With Bands:

To do this exercise with a band instead of a cable, hitch the band to a solid object then put the bar through the other end of the loop. Make sure it ends up in the center of the bar. It's easier to put the weight on the bar AFTER you've got the band on the bar but not absolutely necessary.



Now roll the weight away from the solid object until the band is taut. Get into position a little further up from the bar so that you have to pull it forward a bit before getting into position. This ensures you get tension on the band throughout the movement. If you feel it slacking too much at the start, shift yourself forward a little more.

Perform the exercise as described above. With this version, the band will increase in resistance as you come to the top of the crunch.



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Cable/Barbell Curl Squats

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Curl Squat is already one of the most effective core-strength-building exercises I've ever found. By adding in the additional challenge of the cable weight pulling you forward, you increase the magnitude of the stabilizing force required of the abs and increase the effectiveness of the exercise. It's a VERY challenging exercise!

How To Do It:

For this exercise, you will need to attach a barbell to a low pulley (as per "[How to Attach Cables](#)"). The EZ Curl bar is the best one to use here but you can use the Olympic bar as well. The EZ bar is shorter and easier to maneuver.

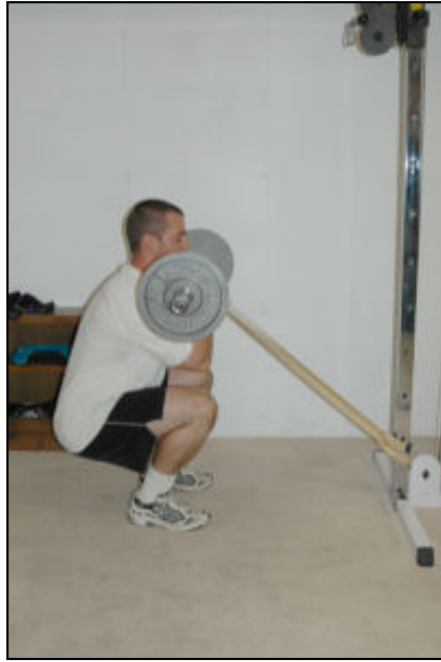
- Set a fairly light weight on the bar and a fairly light weight on the cable for the first time you do it (it's a tough one!). You can increase the weight later once you get a feel for the exercise.
- Squat down then pick up the bar and curl it to the top position of the curl movement. Hold it there.
- Now take a big step back. Sit back on your heels and prepare to be pulled forward.
- Holding the bar in that top curl position, squat down as low as you can then come back up.
- The cable will be pulling you forwards as you squat down so be sure to sit back on your heels and squeeze your abs hard (you won't really have a choice at this point!).
- When finished, curl the bar down then squat down and set the bar on the ground.



How To Do It With Bands:

Hitch the band to a solid object then slide the bar through the loop, ensuring the band is in the center. Move the bar back until the band is taut. Now put the weight on the bar. Curl it to the top position as above then take a big step back to get tension on the band. Proceed as described above, making sure you're far enough back that you

always get forward-pulling tension on the band. The execution is exactly the same.



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Hip Belt Lateral Cable/ Band Squats

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Squat is one of the most results-producing exercises you can do, no doubt about it. This is a technique you can use to change the focus of the Squat by adding the hip belt and low pulley or a band. They are used in such a way that you get lateral resistance (pulling your body forward) in addition to the up and down resistance of the squat. With the resistance pulling you forward, you must actively sit back as you squat. This increases lower thigh activation, which is ideal if you have trouble developing the lower thighs.

How To Do It:

When trying any of these variations, the first time you do it, start with a relatively light weight to get a feel for the movement and the positioning. THEN increase the weight when you're comfortable with it.

Cable/Dumbbell Squats

When doing the cable and hip belt version, unless you have a specialized setup in which you have a pulley attached to a squat rack, I would suggest using two dumbbells and doing dumbbell squats instead of barbell squats. The reason you're better off doing dumbbell squats is that it'll be too tricky getting into position with a barbell unless you have a rack/pulley combo to work with.

First, set the dumbbells on the ground a few feet from the cable. Set a moderate to heavy weight on the low pulley (it'll take some experimentation to get your ideal weight for best balance during the exercise - generally, it'll be between 50 to 100 lbs or so on the stack). Now attach the hip belt to the low pulley. If you have a chain (2 to 3 feet in length), I would recommend attaching the chain to the pulley first to extend the distance and make it easier to get into position.

Loop the hip belt around your waist. Here's a trick - clip the chain together very close in front of your abdomen. The reason for this is simple - if the chain goes direct from the ends of the belt to the cable, it'll land right on top of your thighs at the bottom of the exercise. When you clip the chain together in front, it'll line up in between the thighs at the bottom. This is not necessary to do the exercise, but it does help.

Now pick up the dumbbells and stand up. Once you've stood up with the dumbbells, NOW take a step back to get some tension on the cables. The reason we get tension on the cable AFTER picking up the dumbbells is that the extra weight of the dumbbells will help increase your own mass and make it easier to keep your balance when you step back with the cable. It is also fine to step back then pick up the dumbbells, though, if that's more comfortable for you. Either way will work just fine.

Make sure you step back enough so that the cable doesn't go slack and touch down at the bottom of the squat. Now squat! Be sure you don't go down so far that you touch the dumbbells to the ground - this is a squat, not a deadlift.

Because the cable weight is pulling you forwards, you will need to sit back as you squat. You should feel a stronger effect in the lower thighs as you squat, especially at the bottom. As you squat back up, because you're using a low pulley, the cable not only pulls forward but pulls down as well, meaning you'll be lifting more overall weight with

this approach than simply what you're carrying with the dumbbells.

This a great feature if you're doing dumbbell squats but either can't hang onto heavy dumbbells long enough to really work the thighs OR your dumbbells just don't go high enough in weight. The added cable resistance helps in both cases.



Cable/Barbell Squats

If you happen to have the specialized setup where you have a pulley machine attached to a power rack, you can do barbell squats with the hip belt technique. The execution and technique is exactly the same - the main difference being you've got a barbell on your back instead of holding dumbbells. Set the cable weight at moderate to heavy. Attach the hip belt to the cable. As in the dumbbell version, be sure to clip the chain together close to your abdomen so that the chain doesn't land on your thighs at the bottom of the exercise.

Get yourself in the hip belt, stand up, then get yourself set up under the bar. Unrack the bar, step back carefully then start squatting! The execution is basically the same as with the dumbbell version, though the balance is different because of the bar on your back.



Band Dumbbell Squats

This version can be done either with barbells or dumbbells. Basically, you will need something to hitch the band(s) onto and the weight itself.

For dumbbells, you can use a single band and perform the exercise pretty much anywhere. First, hitch the band to the solid object fairly near to the ground so that you get increasing resistance as you stand up. Set yourself inside the loop of the band and set at waist level like a belt. Step back a little to get tension, pick up the dumbbells then get into squat position and begin the exercise.

If you're doing this exercise with a barbell, you'll just need something to solid to hitch the band onto in front of the squat bar.



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Dumbbell/Machine Leg Curls

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The standard machine leg curl is an excellent exercise but it has its drawbacks, most notably it doesn't give much resistance in the bottom position of the movement. It has excellent resistance at the top, though! Now we look at the dumbbell leg curl (where you hold a dumbbell between your feet and leg curl it up). This exercise has excellent resistance at the bottom, stretch position but basically none at the top.

So we combine the two exercises and eliminate the weak points of both!

How To Do It:

First, set up the leg curl machine as you normally would (use a lot less weight the first time you do it, though). Set a dumbbell on end just below the ankle pad of the leg curl machine. This works best on machines that have a single pad that comes in from the side. If you have one that runs in the middle, you'll need to set the ankle pads up higher so that there is room for the dumbbell between your feet.

Get into a standing position in the machine as though you were just about to lay down on it. Now stand on the dumbbell plate and squeeze it between your feet hard. Keeping that squeezed hard, now lay down on the bench and bring your legs up onto the pad. Begin the leg curl exercise - you'll notice it's harder at the bottom than you're used to (because of the dumbbell). You get no rest at the top or really anywhere in the range of motion. It's a brutal exercise!

The other unique feature of it is that you have to constantly squeeze the adductors in order to keep the dumbbell between your feet. This increases the activation of the hams and includes the adductors in the movement. Very challenging!





This exercise can also be performed with ankle weights on instead of using a dumbbell between the feet. It will make the exercise somewhat easier to perform in that you won't have to worry about squeezing the dumbbell between your feet. That does also mean you won't get the same amount of adductor work out of the exercise, however.



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Cable/Barbell Stiff Legged Deadlifts

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Stiff Legged Deadlift is an extremely effective hamstring exercise. It's also an extremely good lower back exercise (the lower back works to stabilize and help extend the spine as you come up) and glute exercise (glutes help to extend the hip). With the help of the cable, we're going to make this exercise even MORE effective by adding a different angle of tension to the exercise.

How To Do It:

Start by loading a barbell with about half the weight you would normally use for the exercise. I would suggest using an EZ bar as the smaller size makes it easier to maneuver, especially in a gym with tight spaces. An Olympic bar works just fine, though, if you have room. Set the bar in front of a low pulley. Use a light to moderate weight on the pulley. Attach the cable to the bar (as per [How to Attach](#)). Now you're ready to start.

Begin by squatting down then pulling the bar back about a foot. You'll need to lean back and throw your bodyweight back a bit to counterbalance the cable pulling on the bar. Rather than immediately starting into the Stiff Legged Deadlift, first do a regular deadlift to the upright position. This is a better way to get into position rather than starting with your body bent and trying to figure out the balance.





Once you're at the top, NOW go down into the Stiff Legged Deadlift. Lean your bodyweight back to counterbalance the pulley, stretch down, then bring the bar back up. You'll notice as you come back up, that the lower back is called much more strongly into play to extend the spine back to vertical. It's getting more direct resistance with the angle of the cable. The hamstrings must also work harder against this forward-pulling resistance to get the bar up.



Repeat for as many reps as is your target - my recommendation is stick to low reps (between 3 to 6). The hamstrings respond better to low reps and this exercise puts very targeted tension on the lower back - higher reps may cause form to break down and lead to injury in the lower back.

To finish, on the last rep, set the bar down on the floor (either at the bottom of the Stiff Legged Deadlift or by doing a regular deadlift down), then control it and roll it towards the low pulley until it stops.

Note: one of my favorite techniques for use with the Stiff Legged Deadlift is to set two 25 lb plates on the ground and set the balls of the feet on top so that you get a calf stretch when doing the exercise. This stretch on the calves puts extra tension on the hamstrings. Very effective, especially if you have a hard time feeling your hamstrings working when doing this exercise.

How To Do This Exercise With Bands:

You can do this exercise very easily with bands - use the thinner bands for this exercise as you won't need a whole lot of resistance, especially as they stretch out towards the top.

First, hitch the band to a solid object in front of you, e.g. the uprights of a rack or the frame of a machine will work. Loop the band around the barbell and move it to the middle of the bar. Make sure the bar is far enough from where you've hitched the other end so that the band is taut at the bottom.

At the start, take a step back to start with a stretch on the bands. Deadlift the bar to the top position, then begin the Stiff Legged Deadlift movement. The same principles and effects apply!

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Band & Barbell Squats Above and Below

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The squat is simply one of THE most effective, total-body exercises you can do. So why not make it harder! By using bands, you can train the squat according to the specific strength curve of the squat. When you do a squat, it's MUCH harder at the bottom than it is as you get towards the top. Imagine the results you can get if you actually increase the resistance as you come to the top, maximizing the workload on the thighs.

Attaching the bands from below trains explosiveness and power in the squat. Attaching the bands from above is great for strength and muscle-building purposes as well as lockout.

Basically, the advantage is this...when doing regular squats (and with any exercise), you can only use as much weight as your body can handle in the weakest part of the range of motion. THAT is the only part that gets maximum overload. By changing the resistance curve, you can maximize muscle tension through the whole range of motion.

How To Do It:

Bands Anchored Below:

To perform this exercise, you'll need to anchor the bands down by the floor and attach them to the bar. Start with light to medium tension bands to get an idea of how the exercise works before trying heavy bands. I don't recommend attaching the bands around the safety rail of the squat rack simply because you'll have to set the safety rails VERY low in order to get proper tension. But if you have TWO sets of safety rails and you can set one low and the other where you have them for squats normally, that would work great. There are several other methods for anchoring the bands:

1. Attaching to dumbbells - Anchor the bands to heavy dumbbells - use the bale hitch on the dumbbell handles and set them on the ground beside the rack. The dumbbells should be heavy enough that they won't lift up when you lift. You can also set another heavy dumbbell on top of that dumbbell to keep it from moving, if you find that to be a problem, but generally, if you're using heavy dumbbells, they won't move.

2. Looping them under the rack frame - If your rack is not bolted down, you can try sliding the bands underneath the bottom side rails of the rack.

Anchoring the bands from below means you're going to be seeing an increase in elastic resistance as you come up to the top of the movement. To really make this exercise effective, explode to the top of the exercise, squatting the bar up against the bands as fast as you can. The actual mechanics of the exercise are exactly like the regular barbell squat. It'll be easier at the bottom and much harder as you get to the top.

One of the reasons this works so well (aside from the increasing resistance itself) is that the bands serve to decelerate the bar so you don't have to. In normal free weight training, part of the range of motion is used by the body to slow the bar down to prevent joint injury. With the bands pulling the bar down, this deceleration is taken care of and your body is free to accelerate strongly through the whole range of motion. This means when using heavy weight, your body isn't unconsciously holding back to slow the bar down at the top, improving your lockout

strength.

If you start this movement like a regular squat (at the top), unracking the bar and stepping back, the first thing you'll notice when you unrack the bar and get ready to squat is that the bar is VERY wobbly. With the bands pulling down on the bar, it makes it much harder to start from the top and get into position. Keep this in mind as you step back out of the racks.

I personally prefer to start the movement at the BOTTOM of the squat. I set the safety rails near the bottom height of my squat and start from a dead stop at the bottom. Of course, this will make it harder to get the weight moving but it will make it much easier logistically to get started as you won't have the same band-pulling tension on the bar as you would at the top. If you set the bar in the racking pins as you would do a normal squat, the moment you step backwards, the bands will start pulling you off balance. Starting at the bottom avoids this issue and will really help with explosive power as well.

As with all these band movements, it will take some experimenting to get the setup that's right for you but the results are worth it.





Bands Anchored Above - a.k.a. Reverse Band Squats:

The Reverse Band Squat is extremely useful for muscle-building purposes. When you perform the Reverse Band Squat, you won't get the same elastic tension on the way up (that you work against for explosive squatting). What you will get is a lot of help at the bottom of the squat, which gradually decreases as you squat the bar up. When you get closer to the top, you're doing all of the work yourself.

This is an excellent match to strength curve of the barbell squat and it will allow you to use a heavier overall weight when squatting. When you're at the bottom of the squat, the bands will support a good portion of the weight. In fact, the lower you squat, the more tension you'll get in the bands and the lighter the weight will feel. This is great for encouraging you to squat deep.

As you squat up, the band tension decreases until you get to about the halfway point, at which time the bands go pretty much completely slack and it's all you.

To set this up, you'll need to do your squatting in a rack. Set your safety rails and racking pins at the appropriate heights as you do if you were doing a regular squat. Use the thicker bands for this as they'll match the strength curve of the exercise better.

Hitch the bands to the upper crossbeams of the rack. You can choose from two places to hitch them up - the first is the side upper crossbeams The second is the front or rear top crossbeam of the rack.

The main benefit of hitching to the side upper rails are that the bands get a straight up and down line of pull on the bar, maximizing the help they'll be able to give during the exercise. The downside is that you **MUST** hitch the bands exactly evenly on the side rails - if you don't, the bands will pull the bar in a rotational pattern and you will find the bar starts to turn as you come up from the squat.

If you have a felt marker, you can measure and draw exactly even lines on your rack or, if you're in a public gym, use something else to measure (e.g. a weight plate) so that you get the same distance on both sides. Do a test rep with light weight to make sure the bands are even before beginning the real workout.

When you hitch the bands to the front or rear crossbeam, it's much easier to get an even pull on the bar as you can just hitch the bands right next to the uprights on the rack (as far wide as you can hitch them). That way, you'll know that they're even. The downside is that you don't get a direct upwards pull from the bands but an angled pull. When squatting, this will mean the amount of help the bands give you is reduced and it will tend to pull your body backwards (though with the squat, this can actually help force you to sit back during the exercise, which is a good thing).

Once the bands are hitched to the upper crossbeam (whichever method), loop the other ends onto the barbell (after you've added the weight - you can go heavier than you normally would for the same reps when using the bands, e.g. add about 50 to 70 pounds to the bar - you'll need to play with the amount of weight you use).

You can loop the bands on the bar outside of the weight plates or you can loop them inside. If you loop the bands on the inside, set them so that they're inside where you grip on the bar. That way, if the bands go slack, your hands will keep them from moving on the bar. If you loop the bands on the outside of the weight plates, put the bands on, THEN put the collars on the outside of the bands. This will keep the bands from shifting in either direction.

You're ready to squat! Get under the bar and set yourself up then take it off the racking pins. Step back into position then drop down into the squat. You'll notice that it feels a LOT lighter at the bottom and you'll be able to accelerate the bar out of the bottom better. But as you come up, it gets harder and harder very quickly and you have to push harder and harder to keep the bar moving. As you pass the halfway point, the weight is all yours! Lock it out then go again.

The Reverse Band Squat will help your body get used to squatting heavier weights and will really help you increase your power in the lockout phase of the squat. Since there is less resistance at the bottom, it won't do as much for building power out of the bottom. That is best done with regular band squats or box squats.





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Cable or Band Split Squats

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The Split Squat is very similar in position to the bottom position of a Lunge. The main difference with the Split Squat from the Lunge is that you don't stand up and set your feet together with each rep - you stay in the split position. This allows for a more stable position and the ability to use much more weight without the same degree of potential for knee injury (such as when you're stepping forward with a heavy weight).

Combining the Dumbbell Split Squat with a cable or band allows you to add an extra dimension of resistance to the exercise - it can be either horizontal or vertical or even diagonal, depending on how you're using the added resistance. The added resistance can also be used to more closely match the strength curve of the Split Squat.

How To Do It:

We'll start with the cable version of the Split Squat. For this, you'll need a low pulley and a hip belt/dip belt. If you have it, you can attach a long chain to the low pulley so that you don't have to be standing right on top of the pulley while doing the exercise. Set dumbbells on the floor about where you'll be doing the exercise. Hook the hip belt to the low pulley then step into it and set it around your waist. Now take a step back to get some tension on the cable.

Kneel down into the Split Squat bottom position and grasp the dumbbells. Pick them up and move into the top position of the Split Squat. The cable will be pulling you forward so be sure to sit back to keep yourself from losing your balance forward. The cable pulling you forward increases the effect of the exercise on the lower quads.





How To Do This Exercise With Bands:

There are several ways to perform this exercise with bands.

Diagonal Band Resistance:

The first is to use the bands in a similar fashion as you would with the cable above. Hitch a band to an object then step inside the band so that the band is around your lower back as you do the Split Squat. This method looks exactly like the technique above only you'll be using a band instead of the cable for resistance.

The other method is to hitch two bands to a solid object(s) then loop the other end onto the dumbbells. Step back to get some tension on the bands then pick up the dumbbells and get into the Split Squat position. The bands will pull the dumbbells forward, giving you the forward tension similar to the cable version.





Vertical Band Resistance:

You can also use a band to get vertical resistance on the Dumbbell Split Squat - as you push up into the top position, the resistance will increase. First, lay the band on the floor. Loop the ends around your two dumbbells and make sure the band is taut. The band must be taut so that you can find the centerpoint of the band easily. Step on the very center of the band with your forward foot.





Grab your dumbbells (the band ends should around the front part of the dumbbell handles) and get into the bottom Split Squat position. Explode up to the top position, trying to rise as fast as you can. The band will rapidly increase the tension as you stand up.





Barbell Split Squats:

You can also use a similar setup to your [Band Barbell Squats](#). The setup with the bands is exactly the same but rather than doing a full squat, you would do a Split Squat instead. This can be done anchored from below or in the Reverse style anchored above.

Bottom Start:

For this version, you will anchor the bands near the floor - this shows how it's done using dumbbells for anchors. Loop the bands over the ends of the bar, outside the weight plates. Set the safety rails in the rack to the bottom height of the Split Squat. You'll be doing a bottom start to make it easier to get the bar into position.

Explode strongly up to the top position. This exercise is excellent for sports-specific training, especially for sports that require explosive movements from a lunge position.





Reverse Style:

The Reverse Split Squat allows for a greater-than-normal amount of weight to be used in the exercise. As the bands stretch, they give assistance to the bottom portion of the exercise. As you come to the top and the bands go back to normal, they lose stretch and offer no help. It's perfect match for the strength curve of the exercise.





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Seated Band Leg Curls

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise, while not being strictly a dual-resistance type of exercise, is a very unique band-based exercise for the hamstrings. It mimics the Seated Leg Curl machine but with much better hamstring activation due to the instability of the bands and the increase in tension as you get to the peak of the movement. This is an excellent exercise for improving weak hamstrings.

How To Do It:

To do this exercise, you will need a rack (or two solid objects to hitch the bands to), two bands and a bench. First, hitch the bands to the rack about 4 to 5 feet off the ground. Set the bench just outside the rack.

Now, sit on the bench, grab the left band and put your left foot through the loop of the band. Here's the trick...don't pull it around your ankle. Instead, hook the band on the instep area of your shoe (where the arch of your foot is). When you hook the band around your ankle, the band tends to roll up and down, making the exercise less effective.

When you put the band under your shoe, it actually increases the activation of the hamstring by allowing you to push down against the band as you're doing the leg curl.



So what does THAT accomplish? It means you not only work the knee flexion function of the hamstring, you also work the hip extension function of the hamstring - double trouble!

So put the band on the bottom of your shoe and step down to the ground to hold it in place while you reach over and grab the right band and do the same thing. Now get yourself set on the bench - pull yourself back so that you get some tension on the bands (bend your legs a little to keep the bands in place on your feet). As long as you keep tension on the bands and keep them hooked under the arch area of your shoes, the bands will stay in place.

Do a leg curl movement from this position on the bench, attempting to bring your feet underneath you, pulling back and pushing down at the same time. You can use either an explosive movement or a steady pull - either way will work. At the peak contracted position, hold for a second and squeeze. When your hamstrings get tired from doing two legs at a time, switch to alternating one leg at a time. This will increase the neural drive to each leg and allow for more reps.

When doing this exercise, the bands (being out to the sides) will also be pulling your legs apart. This activates the adductors isometrically, in addition to working the hamstrings. To really work the adductors hard, actively to press your feet together as you do the exercise. You'll feel a great contraction in the adductors as you come to the bottom of the leg curl.



To really maximize the contraction on the hamstrings, you can also try laying back flat on the bench. This increases the extension at the hip, increasing the contraction potential of the hamstrings.



If you find your feet hit the ground or if you want to try the exercise with a straighter body position without laying back, you can also use an adjustable incline bench. Set it a couple of notches up for a slight incline. This lifts your feet up and allows you to lean back without laying all the way back.



Cable Seated Leg Curls

This exercise can also be performed using the low pulley cable machine. Hook a hip belt to the low pulley, then set the bench in front of the low pulley. Make sure the bench is far enough away that you'll get tension on the cable through the whole range of motion. The hip belt is better than the ankle harness in that you will be pushing directly against the belt with your heels, which works extremely well for the hamstrings.

Set your feet in the bench, step down then shuffle backwards a bit. Sit on the bench, lean back a bit and hold onto the bench behind you. Now curl your feet underneath you as far as you can. Squeeze hard then lower slowly. If you find your feet hit the floor, you can raise your knees up a bit to prevent that. At the bottom of the movement, you can let the legs extend fairly straight but there isn't much advantage in doing so as the resistance drops off quickly. The best part of the exercise is the contraction.



To increase the contraction, lie completely back on the bench and grasp the edges beside your head. This gives you maximum hip extension, which increases the contraction potential of the hamstrings. Perform the exercise exactly the same.



If you find your feet hit the ground, you can sit on the end of an adjustable incline bench. Set the incline a couple of notches up and sit on the end. This leaves your feet free to dangle and gives you unhindered foot movement.





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Band Leg Press

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise more closely approximates the strength curve of the Leg Press. Just like with squats, the exercise is harder at the bottom and easier at the top. With this exercise, you have a band(s) that stretches and makes the exercise more challenging at the top.

How To Do It:

Hook the band around the back rest then bring the other end forward. At the other end you can either place it under the balls of your feet or wrap it completely around the footplate/foot pads of the leg press machine. If you have a large footplate, use the technique where you set the band under your feet.

Placing the band under your feet actually increases neuromuscular activation because the bands will be shifting under your feet as you push. Wrapped around the footplate, you can concentrate more on the movement itself, which can be an advantage. When you're getting the bands into position under the feet, bring the band up and under the feet. Don't sit then bring the band over and down. It's easier the first way.





Do the press from there - the extra resistance from the bands at the top of the exercise will increase the difficulty as you press up. You'll get a much better match to the strength curve of the exercise.



To add even more resistance, you can use two or more bands. This technique is extremely useful when you're working out in a home gym and you've maxed out the weight stack on your equipment. It allows you to add a whole lot more resistance without much expense or trouble.





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Cable/Dumbbell/Machine Calf Raises

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise incorporates two vectors of resistance for the calves, activating the muscle fibers differently. This exercise can be done either attach a cable directly to the dumbbell, by attaching your ankle to the cable by way of an ankle harness, by using a hip belt and attaching the belt to the low pulley while you're wearing it, or by looping a band around your ankle, leg or midsection. There are many different variations on the basic theme of this exercise.

How To Do It:

Because of the number of different variations you can use with the exercise, it's best take some time and try all of them that you can. This way, you'll find out which one(s) work best for you and know to focus on that version.

For this exercise, you will need a solid calf block (one that won't move if you have forward or backward resistance on it - the handle of a round dumbbell won't work for this one) and a low pulley cable stack. You can use any one of the methods described above to attach yourself to the pulley. I'll go through each one individually.

1. Looping a cable onto the dumbbell - do this facing away from the pulley. Loop the cable around the dumbbell handle and clip it onto itself. Pick up the dumbbell and do a single leg calf raise on the block.



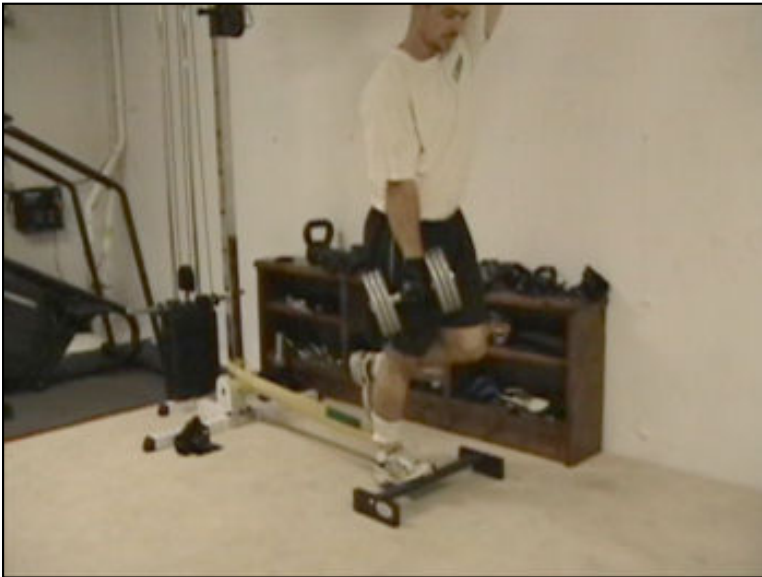


2. Attach an ankle strap to your ankle and attach to the cable machine - again, face away from the weight stack. Since the cable is not going to move much, the slight forward movement of the shin when you do the exercise will give the extra tension. Set the calf block a few feet forward so that you get resistance throughout the entire movement.





3. Attach a band - first, you'll need to hitch the band to something solid. The calf block should be set far enough away that you have to stretch the band to get to the calf block for the exercise. Otherwise, you won't get enough tension to make a difference because of the very short range of motion.





4. Loop a band around the calf raise machine frame - this version is also done facing away. Take one band and loop it around the frame of the machine so that you have two loops in front. Slip each foot into each loop then take a few steps forward until you put a good stretch on the bands. Now do the exercise, pushing not only up against the machine but against the bands away as well.





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Band/Machine Calf Raises

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

This exercise adds another element of tension to the calf raise machine. As you come to the top, the band increases the tension on the calf leading to a more intense contraction of the calf muscles. It's also an excellent way to build power in the calves, especially for increasing the vertical jump. By exploding up against the bands, you develop greater explosive power.

How To Do It:

For this exercise, you will need a calf machine and a pair of bands. Loop the bands around the shoulder pads of the calf raise machine (or any other part near the shoulder area that is solid). Loop the other ends of the bands underneath the foot plate. If you don't have anything handy to hook them onto, you can also step on them to anchor them (make sure you step on the bands with the balls of your feet).

Begin the exercise powerfully, exploding up to the top. Hold the top position for a few seconds then lower slowly. This exercise should be done explosively to maximize the effect of the band resistance as you get to the top. This explosiveness maximizes the effects on the fast twitch muscle fibers of the calves. Even if there aren't many, the fast twitch fibers do have the most potential for growth.





How To Do This Exercise On the Leg Press Machine:

This exercise can also be done on the Seated Leg Press Machine very effectively. It uses a single band for resistance though you can wrap additional bands if you need more resistance.

Hook the band around the back rest then bring the other end forward. At the other end you can either place it under the balls of your feet or wrap it completely around the footplate/foot pads of the leg press machine. If you have a large footplate that is too large for the band to fit around, use the technique where you set the band under your feet.





Placing the band under your feet actually increases neuromuscular activation in the stabilizing muscles of the calves because the bands will be shifting under your feet as you push. This gives you a very strong contraction of the calves. Wrapped around the footplate, you can concentrate more on the movement itself, which can also be an

advantage. When you're getting the bands into position under the feet, bring the band up and under the feet. Don't sit then bring the band over and down. It's easier the first way.



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One-Legged Band/Dumbbell Seated Calf Raises

Why Is This Exercise So Effective:

The combination of these two exercises is a very good one, especially considering how little equipment is actually required. This makes it an excellent option for home gym workouts. It's tough to get enough resistance using a single dumbbell for a seated calf raise. With the addition of the band, you'll get much greater tension on the calf at the top.

How To Do It:

First, you'll need to get a dumbbell and a band. Dumbbells without the weight post sticking out the end are best. Next, you'll need a calf block or some other raised surface (even the handle of another dumbbell will work). Finally, you'll need something to sit on such as a bench.

Band length is going to be critical in this exercise. Your best bet is to fold the band in half, then, with your leg straight, slip your foot in the two bands as though they were stirrups (your one foot will go through both band ends). Now stretch the band up and on top of your knee then sit down on the bench. As you bend your knee, you should get a stretch in the band.





Pick up the dumbbell you're going to use then set it on end on your knee. With your foot on the calf block, begin doing the seated calf raise exercise! Squeeze hard at the top.





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