



GOLD MEDAL BODIES

Ultimate Guide to Handstands

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Please be sure to thoroughly read the instructions for all exercises in this course, paying particular attention to all cautions and warnings shown to ensure safety.

If you experience acute injury or persistent, chronic pains, consult a licensed health practitioner. Nothing in this document can be considered a substitute for qualified medical advice.

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations and welcome to the

Gold Medal Bodies

Ultimate Guide to Handstands!

We love teaching the handstand here at **Gold Medal Bodies**. It represents the wonderful blend of strength, balance, and body control that we aspire to in our training. We also love the reactions from our clients when they achieve what they once thought was impossible!

We design programs for people that have more responsibilities than just working out then sitting around waiting for the next workout. We all have real lives and responsibilities and our training should reflect that. But this doesn't mean we should settle for less, it just means that we should be more efficient and effective in our workouts.

Ryan has refined his methods of teaching the Handstand, so that you can achieve the skill with less frustration. You'll still be working hard, but your results will come much faster.

Benefits of Handstand Training

Handstands aren't just a matter of balance, but also require great strength in your shoulders, arms, [and core](#). If you doubt this, try holding a handstand supported against a wall for 30 seconds, you'll soon appreciate how much muscle it takes to keep you from crashing down onto your head!

It's not really a natural activity to be upside down and bearing weight through our hands. Standing on our feet, even for hours, is pretty easy compared to being on your hands.

Compare the big hip joints and muscles of our low back, hips, and thighs to the shoulder joints and relatively smaller muscles of our shoulders and arms. It's pretty obvious which part of the body should be bearing our weight all day, day after day.

This is why, when done correctly, **handstands strengthen your body from head to toe**.

Obviously, your shoulders and arms will get much stronger in overhead activities, and you'll also notice some great improvements in your core strength. You'll also notice the

strength and balance you get from doing handstands transfers over to a lot of other physical activities.

Improved balance awareness is also a major benefit of handstand practice. The keys for handstand balance are in small adjustments at your fingers and wrists, and the awareness of proper shoulder and hip/leg position.

Just as bearing your weight through your hands strengthens the entire upper body, it also encourages a whole body connection. The upper body stimulation from handstand practice is tremendous.

A Quick Word on Safety

Some of you are probably thinking “I can’t do that! I’ll break my head!” And definitely, handstands can be very intimidating since there is always the possibility of crashing. But, if you follow the progressions outlined here, you’ll get there as safely and as quickly as possible.

There is no reason why you shouldn’t get the handstand, or make your current handstand better than it already is.



Ready to get started and have some fun?

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

Before you dive in and start taunting gravity, there are two things that you have to do for safe and productive handstand work—strengthen your wrists and master the “hollow body” position.

Preparing Your Wrists

If your wrists are weak, your handstand will be weak. This is also one of the most common complaints I receive from people that have tried working on handstands and other handbalancing in the past.

They just can't carry weight properly on their hands. Correctly focusing on strengthening your wrists right at the start will save you a lot of grief and time in the long run. Do the following exercises and you'll be ready to train without worrying about wrist and hand pain.

Fingers Forward

The first is with our hands flat and fingers facing forward. Make sure to keep your arms straight. Rock forward and bring your shoulders past your fingers and hold for 3 seconds. Relax, then repeat for a total of 5 reps.

Fingers Backward

Next we'll take our fingers backwards and sit back, holding for 3 seconds for 5 reps. Don't let the heels of your hands come up off of the ground.

Palms Up, Fingers Backward

For the final wrist prep, turn your hands over with palms facing up. Keep your fingers facing your knees and sit back, holding for 3 seconds for a total of 5 reps. If you have trouble keeping your arms straight, move your hands closer to your knees.

Mastering the Hollow Body

You **MUST** master the hollow body position if you want a solid handstand.

We're focusing on a gymnastic-style handstand with a straight body (this is a much better style if you're doing this for full body strength), and that requires a tight core to keep your upper and lower halves working together when you are upside down.

The most important point for the hollow body position is keeping your lower back flat on the floor the whole time.

DO NOT progress to the next level in the hold until you can successfully hold it for at least one minute with your lower back fully down on the floor. Just because you can do something for a few seconds doesn't mean you're ready to move on.

Take your time and really perfect the exercise before you move on to the next level. Do this and you'll keep improving and moving on to the next progression will be a snap.

HOLLOW BODY PROGRESSIONS:

1. Legs bent
2. Legs straight
3. Legs straight and extended
4. Arms extended

This hollow body position is very close to how you want to hold your body in the handstand, so having the strength to maintain this position on the floor can make or break your overall progress.

Note: the hollow body position can be seen at 2:24 in the video.

Remember to continue working the hollow body until you're extremely comfortable with it.



Ryan demonstrates the Straight Body Handstand

4 BASIC STEPS TO HANDSTAND MASTERY

1. Facing the wall
2. Facing away from the wall
3. L-Handstand using a wall
4. Freestanding Handstand work

Wall Work

We'll begin our handstand work with our body facing against the wall. Most people start out facing away, but I've found that my students can apply the Hollow Body position better if they face the wall at first.

Note: Wall Work can be seen at 4:20 in the video.

Handstand Facing The Wall

Climb the Wall

With your hands shoulder width apart, slowly walk your feet up the wall and walk your hands close to the wall.

Hold the Hollow Body Handstand (tight body)

With toes against the wall, focus on holding the hollow body position.

Exit the handstand by walking your feet down. A pillow or mat may be useful to decrease your fear of crashing. Soon you'll gain confidence and it won't be necessary.

If you're having trouble getting into the handstand and holding it, you're probably lacking the necessary strength in your shoulders. So rather than trying to hold the handstand, work on walking up and down the wall for 3 reps for 4 sets.

Once you can comfortably get into the handstand while facing the wall, hold for 5 to 10 seconds x 6 sets. Give yourself a good rest between sets. Once that becomes easy, add 5 seconds to each set for all of the 6 sets.

Work up to being able to hold 1 set for 60 seconds per set. Once you can perform that, it's time to move on to the next level.

Handstand Facing Away From The Wall

Facing outward is great because you can start working on popping up right into a handstand.

Work on locking out your arms and jumping slowly up in the handstand. Try not to smack your back, butt, or feet against the wall.

HERE'S THE PROGRESSION:

1. Jump to handstand
2. Hollow Body with heels on wall
3. Look down slightly
4. Slowly exit the handstand.

Once you can hold the Hollow Body handstand with feet against the wall for up to a minute, it's time to start pulling your feet away from the wall.

The L-Stand

The L-stand is awesome for gaining a lot of strength in your handstand and working on your form.

This is surprisingly difficult, and that's why I usually have my clients work on this along with the wall handstand facing out, and I have them continue to use the L-stand even when they get really good at that.

THERE ARE TWO KEY POINTS FOR THE L-STAND:

- ★ Focus on getting a 90 degree angle
- ★ Push down and don't let your shoulders collapse

You can work this the same way as your other progressions. Do 5 to 10 seconds x 6 sets, and add 5 seconds per set as you can. Work up to holding this for 1 minute per set.

The Freestanding Handstand

You have FINALLY arrived!

After hard work on each of the prior levels you are good and ready for the freestanding handstand. The freestanding handstand can be a bit difficult psychologically because there is no longer a wall to help support you if you mess up.

But don't let that stop you! Focus on what you've learned so far and kick on up there. If you make a mistake, remember that you can simply roll or turn out of it.

The sets and reps are the same as our other progressions. Start off with 5 to 10 seconds for 6 sets. Your goal should be to hold a perfect free standing handstand for a minute.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Start with hands on floor
2. Tuck up with control
3. Push away from the ground
4. Hold with a hollow body position
5. Exit the handstand - Turn out or roll if you have to bail

Most of all, have fun with it. Handstands are difficult for many people, but if you remember to make it fun, you're going to keep practicing, and that's the key to effective training.

Advanced Handbalancing

Once you've got your basic handstand nailed, you can step up to more interesting variations and advanced hand balancing moves.

Here are some advanced versions to work on once you get the freestanding handstand:

- ★ Press handstand
- ★ Lower to double arm lever
- ★ Bent arm tuck to press hand

How many of these can you do? Let us know! We'd love to hear about your progress and feature you in one of our upcoming articles!

SAFETY AND PREVENTING INJURIES

Handstand work can be dangerous and just like any other physical training, injuries are possible. But, as long as you follow what we are prescribing in this module, serious issues will be very rare.

HERE ARE A FEW POINTERS THAT BEAR REPEATING.

- ★ **Be sure to warm up.** Your wrists and shoulders take the bulk of the weight in handstand work so make sure that you spend the proper amount of time warming them up. That goes for strengthening them as well. Don't skimp on your warm up and strength work!
- ★ **Don't be stupid!** Follow this manual the way that we presented it. Don't skip to the free-standing handstand work until you can do everything else leading up to it. You are only wasting your time as well as setting yourself up for unnecessary harm.
- ★ **No drunk handstands.** Sure, handstands are a really cool party trick. Let's just be sure to show them off on the ground before we transition into keg stands.

We've written a bit about dealing with injuries and setbacks on the blog. Here's two posts you should definitely check out:

- ★ [Is it serious?](#)
- ★ [What's your problem?](#)

OUTRODUCTION

Handstand training is a wonderful activity for improving strength, balance, and body control. It's hard to think of another upper body exercise that can deliver the most benefits for the time spent.

Work diligently and don't rush through the outline we've presented here, and you'll soon be popping up into handstands everywhere you go. *Because let's face it, being able to do a handstand means you are super awesome.*

Have fun and check back at GoldMedalBodies.com for more fun and effective training methods!



Thank you. We hope to see you soon!

The GMB Team

Ryan, Jarlo, Andy, and Amber