

ABSOLUTE BODYWEIGHT CONTROL

MAKE EVERY MUSCLE FIBER OF YOUR BODY BEND TO YOUR WILL

A BASIC AND CONDENSED MISSIVE ON THE ONE-ARM HANDSTAND



WORK AND DEDICATION

Arguably, one of the most impressive feats of bodycontrol is a solid one arm-handstand. To hold this pose means that you have the ability to make every fiber of your body bend to your will. Furthermore, the amount of focus required makes the training a very powerful meditative practice, as much as it is a physical one.

This is a level that few people will reach in their lifetime, but make no mistake, the OAH (One Arm Handstand) is not a skill only reserved for circus artists. In fact, there was a time not too long ago when bodybuilders and strongmen were also adept hand balancers.

Anyone can learn the one-arm handstand. However, you can expect a lot of work, dedication, and frustration. Training for the OAH is a lifestyle choice as much as it is a hobby or passion.

PREREQUISITES

First things first- you must understand that the OAH is an advanced skill. The basics that lead up to it need to be mastered to a high standard before beginning the training. One of the most common mistakes I see in people trying to work this skill is that they are not actually ready yet. This undoubtedly leads to failure and frustration.

This is a list of basic skills that are highly valuable to have achieved prior to beginning OAH training. It's a pretty general standard, so not all the skills are required, but all are recommended and will greatly help speed up the progress towards the OAH.

Decent alignment. Though the OAH can be performed in a variety of shapes, having a solid handstand line will make it much easier to learn and control.

Mastery of two-arm balance. This includes long duration holds, understanding of balancing techniques, and the ability to manipulate positions without loss of balance. See my eBook "Balancing the Equation" for more information on how to develop a solid freestanding handstand. <http://www.yuri-mar.com/products/balancing-the-equationpdf-ebook>

A solid entry to handstand. This will save lots of frustration.

In my mind, if it takes more than one try to catch a two-arm handstand, that individual is not yet ready for one arm work.

Handstand walks. Even though the technique for walking is different than balancing or shifting to one arm balance, learning to walk is great for building up the shoulder strength you will need later on. Try walking forwards, backwards, sideways, in place, or in a circle.

Press to Handstand. This movement requires a combination of strength, flexibility, coordination, timing and awareness. Even though this is not a prerequisite for the OAH, it is highly recommended. Bonus points for being able to press from L-sit or Straddle-L.

Handstand Pushups. Also not a prerequisite for OAH, but having the strength to do this will aid the process.

Low center-of-gravity one arm balances. These can include variations of Air Baby and Crocodile. This will help a bit to feel the one arm balance before taking it all the way to OAH.

PRELIMINARY TRAINING FOR ONE-ARM HANDSTAND

When balancing on two hands, the corrections are performed in one plane, which includes two directions: forwards and backwards.

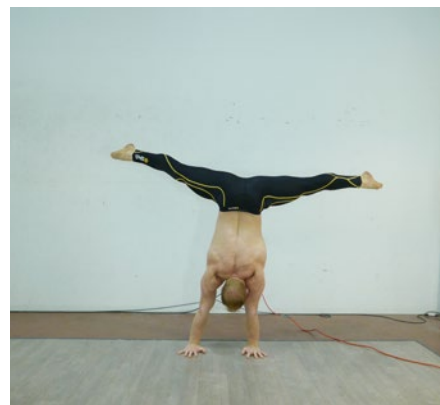
1. The first thing we need to start learning is how to manipulate the body from side to side.
2. Eventually, when actually balancing on one arm, the corrections take place in a full 360 degrees of movement.

3. Prior to learning the OAH, the forward/backward balance should be mastered so it's not an issue when side-to-side balance and movement is introduced.

Side to side Shifts

Begin with a basic handstand with arms shoulder width. The idea is to shift the body from side to side using only the shoulders.

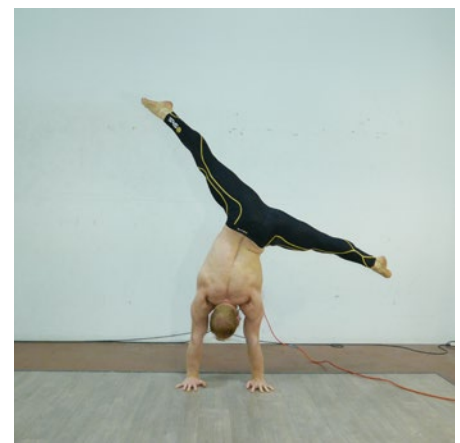
The head should move closer to one arm and the legs should stay up with minimal tilt of the body.



Side to side tilts

This time the head and shoulders stay still while the legs tilt from side to side. If working from a straddle position (which is recommended for most people learning the OAH), think of dropping one leg down to the side without allowing the body to arch, bend, or rotate.

The concept of tilting is very important for learning how to stay on one arm.



OAH WITH FINGERTIP SUPPORT

This will be the bread and butter of the training towards the one-arm handstand. Learn how to transfer to the one arm position and hold it for extended periods of time.

1. To get into this position, maintain tension in the shoulder of the arm you are shifting to. Focus on the body moving around that arm as you tilt the legs over.
2. At a certain point, you should feel that the free arm is getting lighter. Continue with the weight transfer until that arm almost comes up by itself. Lift the elbow of the arm to get up onto the fingertips.
3. Try to avoid pushing with the free arm to get up to the fingertips. This movement should be as passive as possible to keep the free arm relaxed.
4. Likewise, when holding the final pose, attempt to keep as little weight as possible on the fingers.



When the head is further from the arm, the body will need to be more tilted.

This will require more strength to hold, but many people find balancing in this position easier.



OPTIMIZING THE POSITION

To optimize the position, we will utilize both the shifting and tilting concepts.

1. The distance between the head and the shoulder of the base arm will dictate how much tilt of the body is needed to accomplish the transfer to one arm.
2. The closer the head is to the arm the more the OAH will be stacked vertically, which is more mechanically efficient, but will require more precise balance to hold.



HOW TO BALANCE IN THE OAH

This part can be a bit tricky. The feeling of balancing a one-arm handstand is completely unique. In the ideal case, the body will stay completely still while all the balance adjustments are made from the hand.

In a more realistic scenario, the whole body will be involved in keeping the center of mass over the arm. The elbow, shoulder, legs, hips, back, and free arm can all contribute to staying balanced along with the fingers and wrist of the base hand.

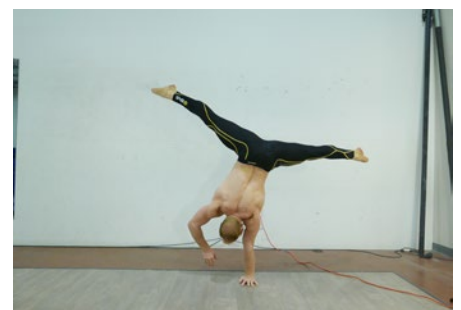
There is really not any way to simulate this feeling except for getting up on one arm and fighting to stay up. The trick is to build up the progression slowly. If you go too fast, misdirect your focus, or if a gust of wind blows in the wrong direction, it can be enough to make you fall without having experienced a shred of true balance.

Whipping the arm up really fast and praying may be enough to get a pho-

to, but you will not learn the true skill in this fashion.

ASSUMING YOU CAN ALREADY HOLD THE FINGERTIP ASSISTED OAH, WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO GENTLY AND GRADUALLY RELEASE THE FREEARM.

1. In the beginning, your fingertips should be lightly brushing the floor as you lift from the elbow. Lift the hand slowly and keep it close to the floor. Just a second of balance is enough before you come back to fingertip support.
2. Working these finger taps will allow you to start feeling the one arm balance in a progressive way, as opposed to just lifting the arm and praying.
3. As you get more confident, you will be able to lift the hand off the ground longer each time. During your time on one arm, try to feel if you have a tendency to fall or rotate in a particular direction. After this, you can make the necessary adjustments to counter it.



Working the OAH by utilizing finger taps will give you more time under tension as opposed to falling and getting back up every time. In addition, the movement of reaching the free hand back to the floor is one of the

reflexes used to save an OAH from falling.

Remember that during this drill, the majority of your focus should be on the balance, not on lifting the arm. The actual arm lift needs to be very passive. Try your best to always return to a two-arm balance before exiting the handstand.

Extending the arm

After finger taps are proficient and balances between taps are a bit longer, you can work on extending the arm out. At first, keeping the arm low will be safer, but as confidence increases you can reach it horizontally. Balancing with the arm horizontal is the first step in achieving a true one-arm handstand.



STRETCHING FOR THE OAH

Flexibility is very important for one-arm handstand development. In particular, being flexible in the shoulders and hips can help a lot with positioning.

Flexibility training can be performed during warm-up, cool-down, in between sets, or completely separate to the handstand training.

Here are a couple of exercises to help:

One Arm Hang

Hanging is a great way to use the weight of your own body to stretch out the shoulders. Hanging from one arm is a way to make it even more effective. On top of that, it provides a therapeutic complement to handstand training.

To vary the movement, you can hang with all your weight off the floor and play with scapular elevation/depression in the free arm as well as pulling the ribs in to change the stretch.

You can also do a one arm hang with the feet resting on the floor, and change the angle of the stretch, or play with rotation of the shoulder.

There is no wrong answer here, just hang and explore to see what feels good.

MiddleSplit

A wider straddle can make it easier to learn the OAH, so working on legs apart flexibility is very important here. To train your middle split, begin standing and slowly walk your feet wider and wider. It is acceptable to brace an object in front of you if needed.



To go deeper, we are going to do two types of contractions. First, try engaging the adductors to pull the legs together. Relax afterwards and let the stretch take you deeper.

Next, attempt to fire the abductors of your hips to open the legs further.



Note that I am hanging from straps, which allows me to lock my wrist in the apparatus. The wrist traction allows me to release tension in my shoulder more, which increases the stretch and therapeutic benefits. Hanging from a bar is also completely acceptable.

This should help to relax the groin and get even deeper into the stretch. Eventually we want to aim for a 180 degree separation of the legs.



Also keep in mind that for handstands, we need to be able to express this flexibility actively without a load helping to achieve the range.

In addition to middle split work, it's good to simulate the actual handstand position laying down to see the difference between your active and passive flexibility.

Lay down with your arms overhead and your back flat to the floor. See how wide apart you can pull your legs without the aid of your own weight pushing down like in the middle split. This is closer to the position you will be working with in your OAH.



MAINTAINING THE OAH

Once you are able to hold a consistent OAH to a reasonable standard, it's not over. You have to still practice regularly to maintain the skill.

It's not a move you learn once and then you permanently own it (unless you get up to a very high level). Usually even to maintain the OAH is a good amount of work.

The easiest way to maintain the skill is to practice it. Once you have the ba-

sic concepts down, you can start to be more aware of different elements of refinement.

These can include but are not limited to: stillness of the balance, subtleties of the positioning, aesthetics of the skill, and smoothness of transitions.

Handstand block walking is another way to maintain the skill and make the training more interesting. Check my YouTube video for some block walk variations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pmd6NRJ7jI>

WHERE TO GO NEXT?

The next logical step after basic one arm balance is achieved would be to work on balancing with different body positions and eventually transitioning between positions.

Keep in mind that the higher skill level you want to go to, the more work it's going to take. Here are some different one-arm handstand variations to try. (Be creative, these are only a couple of examples amongst many).



DOS AND DON'TS WHEN TRAINING OAH

Make sure your basics are rock solid. Don't be afraid to go back and review them every so often.

Proper warm-ups can make a big difference in skill acquisition. I would especially recommend taking the time to warm up the shoulders and wrists properly. Check out my shoulder and wrists sequence on **Vimeo**:

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/37606>
Wrists <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/bandedshouldersequenceShoulders>

Don't rush. The important thing to feel here is that you are always in control. If you do not feel complete control and awareness, don't try to move on to the next progression. This applies both to the real-time practice as well as the long-term progress.

Spend equal time working both the right and left arm. You will definitely have a dominant arm, but over the long term it's good to maintain symmetry.

HANDSTAND TRAINING IS MORE ABOUT FEELING AND CONTROLLING CERTAIN SENSATIONS WITHIN THE BODY RATHER THAN SETS AND REPS.

Keep a 1:1 ratio for sets with right and left arms, even if you are working different progressions for each.

Don't make a time frame or deadline for learning this. It will take as long as it needs to, and usually ends up taking longer than you expect. On top of that, there is a good chance your standards will change as you improve.

If you are set to learn the skill in a certain amount of time, you may be in it for the wrong reasons.

OAH training is very much a journey of self-exploration. Its true value lies in the process and not the end result.

-Train often and don't get discouraged. As a general rule, expect to train for the skill minimum of an hour a day, 5-6 days a week. You might have to maintain this pace for a year or longer.

Do not get discouraged.

It took me about two years from the time I started training the OAH regularly to when I was able to achieve controlled 10-second holds on a fairly regular basis.

It would have been a lot quicker had I known what I know now, but the point is to not get discouraged if it takes you a long time. Even after my balance was consistent, I still had many things to work on.

Remember that hand balancing is an art form. Circus artists train hours a

day for many years to achieve mastery in hand balancing.

Try to make every attempt to return to two arms before finishing a set. Controlled entry and exit is one way to show dominance in the movement.

Too many people just get on one arm and fall. If this happens try to fight as long as you can to stay up, but you will form better long-term habits by controlling the balance back to two arms.

Record yourself. Sometimes what you think is happening is actually quite far from the reality. Seeing yourself do the movements will give you a better idea of corrections to make in order to improve.

Watch videos. Seeing other people perform the skill can help greatly with the learning process. Just don't forget to spend more time training than you do on YouTube.

Most important: FIND A TEACHER! Hands-on correction and real-time feedback can save a lot of frustration. This is a skill that's very difficult to learn on your own and from online tutorials, but I would recommend my One Arm Handstand Steps and Preparation video to familiarize you with some of the progressive exercises.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytjlgle5GVQ>

Just the video is of course not enough, because implementation is where the

difficulty lies. Find someone who has gone through the process of learning and teaching an OAH to help you.

Strength versus Technique

This is a really important point to make, and imperative to understand before undergoing higher-level handstand training.

DO NOT THINK OF THE HANDSTAND AS A STRENGTH MOVE!!!

Doing so can greatly hinder your progress. You need to think of a handstand as a resting position. Even a one-arm handstand should not be too physically taxing if performed with good technique.

Yes, there are a lot of muscles involved in holding, balancing, and stabilizing the handstand. This includes Traps, Delts, Triceps, Forearms, Abs, Upper and Lowerback, Hips, etc.

Your physique will respond to the training, but this is only a by-product.

Anyone serious about this training needs to view it as skill work rather than strength. Strength movements can then branch out from the base skillwork.

Basic Programming

Handstand training is more about feeling and controlling certain sensations within the body rather than sets and reps. Putting in the numbers is important, but will only take you so far without understanding the concepts behind them.

If you are serious about achieving the one-arm handstand, expect to practice daily.

Try to keep in mind approximately the amount of sets it takes before you fatigue. This will be your general work capacity and will allow you to structure your training.

The bulk of your workload should consist of the skill work, but training by just jumping straight into the OAH may not give you the best results.

I would generally structure training as follows:

Warm-up: Alignment work, basic two-arm holds, leg movement, sub-maximal strength work. This should serve as calibration of the body prior to attempting one-arms.

Main Skill: This would be whatever one-arm progression you are working on. That could be weight shifts, assisted holds, finger taps, etc.

Strength/Conditioning/Endurance work: Finish the training with something that's a little more physically taxing. This could be strength movements like handstand pushups or presses.

Another option is something like two-arm endurance holds or handstand walks.

Most of the time, I still keep the work pretty sub-maximal because I need to know I can recover for the next day's training.

So, for example, I am capable of performing 30 sets of handstands

per day, I may do a session of 5 warm-up sets, 20 skills sets, and 5 strength sets. This is a very general outline so feel free to play with it. The format may also change from day to day depending on how you feel.

Final Words

This is not meant to be a definitive handstand guide by any means. There are a multitude of ways to perform and learn the skill. There are also many details here that simply cannot be put into words.

What I want to do is give people a general direction to follow, along with some realistic expectations.

Good luck in your training. Remember to enjoy every step of the process!

Article by Yuri Marmarstein

Yuri is a true master of his art and it has been an absolute privilege to be privy to some of his knowledge. The missive above is a brief condensed guide with exceptional clarity and a progressive practical approach. If you want more information, or would like to attend any of Yuri's seminars, hit him up by following the links below. And please do check out Yuri's book on 'Balancing the Equation' you can find this at <http://www.yuri-mar.com>

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