



PLANCHE

PRO 1.0



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INTRODUCTION

Hey all, Daniel Vadnal here for FitnessFAQs and I'm excited to present to you once again in written format. We will be going deep and talking extensively about the planche. The goal with Planche Pro is to provide a method for progressing from no planche experience to the straddle planche. This eBook will follow a similar format to previous FitnessFAQs training programs, including only the most relevant information for making fast progress with the planche. Some science will be included in this guide but the major focus will be on principles and practical application. Planche Pro will be easy to read and understand. Afterwards, you will have a clear understanding of all things planche. This way, after digesting all the course material, you can head straight to the park and begin improving. After all, what good is theory without the understanding of how to use it.

Planche Pro was created as a result of my decade of calisthenics experience. I have spent countless hours trialling different training approaches on myself and my clients over the years, gathering a huge amount of practical information regarding what works and what doesn't. I'm obsessed with finding the solution to planche problems as I have personally struggled in the past with the planche. I'll talk more about my planche history later so you can learn from my mistakes and save time and effort. For those of you who

don't know, I'm also a qualified physiotherapist in Australia. I've used my knowledge to identify key areas of weakness and have come up with solutions for common planche plateaus. I've spent a large amount of time discussing the planche from a real world perspective with those who have mastered the movement. I've also attended numerous workshops presented by leaders in the bodyweight fitness industry. I'm proud to say Planche Pro is filled with the most cutting-edge information, exercises and training design which works if followed consistently. The upcoming sections will explain the planche in further detail.

WHAT IS A PLANCHE?

The planche is an exercise where the entire body weight is supported on the hands, with the feet off the ground. What makes the exercise difficult is that the arms are extended straight, which requires a tremendous amount of scapula, back, arm and shoulder girdle strength to hold. Regardless of the planche exercise used, the centre of mass must be maintained over the base of support. When viewed from the side, the hands need be level with the navel to hold and maintain balance in a planche. This position is generally held statically for time and is a phenomenal display of relative body strength (how strong someone is at controlling their own bodyweight).

Anyone who has tried the planche is humbled by the difficulty of this seemingly impossible exercise. With elbows locked, most people won't be able to lift the knees to the chest and hover the feet from the ground. In a gymnastics setting, a floor planche is seen as a relatively easy position. For a static planche to count in gymnastics scoring, the exercise needs to be held for 2s. When looking at all the elements in gymnastics, the difficulty value is classified from A being easiest, to H being hardest.

*The straddle planche is a level **A** skill*

*Straddle planche to handstand is a level **B** skill*

*Full planche is a level **B** skill*

*Full planche press to handstand is a level **C***

As you can see, gymnasts are absolute specialists at controlling their bodyweight. Their attributes play a major role in this. The two all-round male gymnasts in 2008 and 2012 had an almost identical height and weight: 160cm and 55kg. We also need to consider the circumstances of an elite athlete. They have an extensive training history generally dating back to their early youth. By the time most gymnasts are in their late teens, they would have already accumulated a decade worth of bodyweight training. Combined with direct coaching, consistency and unmatched effort, it's no surprise why gymnasts are so strong at the planche. It's important we identify the genetic, environmental and circumstantial factors supporting

a gymnast so we can have realistic expectations for our own progress. The other population we see with amazing planches are those doing “street workout”.

When scrolling through social media I'd guess you have seen people involved in street workout across Europe. As a generalisation, most tend to be young, with an abundance of time on their hands. It's not unusual for those practising street workout to meet at parks and spend most of their days training for many hours. Those who do street workout and are beasts at planche tend to mostly train skills. They won't waste their time and energy training sets and reps or leg training. Most practice the planche over and over again without a systematic approach by simply training to failure, all day, every day. Clearly, it works for them and they have exceptional relative body strength, but there is a better way. Remember, the best of the best tend to be short, light and specialised in what they do. If you don't match these qualities, don't stress about your strength in relation to theirs.

You're probably thinking I'm being quite pessimistic towards the general public, including you reading this. The average person is about 15 cm taller and 20kg heavier than a gymnast or street workout specialist. This does not mean planche progress is impossible for you. What it does mean is training needs to be intelligently structured. Using a shotgun approach by training to failure or spending 3 hours a day on the

planche isn't realistic for the normal person. Fortunately for us bodyweight enthusiasts and mere mortals, the exercise can be broken down to suit everyone, including the absolute beginner.

For those with busy schedules, the Plache Pro training sessions are designed to be challenging while being time-efficient. Our mission with Planche Pro is to empower you to have the knowledge and confidence to sustainably improve your planche. If you struggle to hold a tuck planche or can't move from an advanced tuck to a straddle, Planche Pro will guide you to the next level. Once you begin to experience tangible progress with the planche, the fun has only just begun. The beauty of bodyweight fitness is the seemingly limitless exercise options and combinations which are possible as we grow. The planche can be moved in and out of with straight arms using a planche press to handstand. The planche can be made dynamic by doing pushups and much more. Hopefully this encouragement about the scope of growth with planche training excites you to tackle this challenging journey.

Planche Pro will cover a diverse range of exercises and supplementary drills to keep you growing stronger and minimising risk of injury. Our training programs have been optimised after thousands of hours of research and experimentation to force progress at the fastest rate possible. We also created a series of train-

ing programs which are enjoyable. Those who have fun during the process are more likely to put their full effort forward; legitimate effort is the absolute key for mastering the straddle planche.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATIC AND DYNAMIC EXERCISES

In the Planche Pro course you will see exercises broadly classified as either static or dynamic exercises. Static exercises are isometric positions where the joint angle is, you guessed it, held statically and motionless. Dynamic exercises are those done through a full range of motion and use movement. These include both straight arm and bent arm exercises which you will become familiar with throughout the training series. In order to master the planche, a combination of static and dynamic exercises are important for developing complete strength.

What should a static planche look like?

The static planche is the iconic position, legs hovering off the ground and body held still, defying gravity. Using proper form from the start will build good habits. When beginning a new program, it's important to keep consistent form standards. Clean form isn't an accident, it's built by actively focusing on proper technique repeated during training. Keep these points in mind while doing the planche and when reviewing footage.

- *Elbows straight*
- *Hands underneath navel*
- *Hips level with shoulders*
- *Slight hollowing of upper back with protraction*
- *Natural low back arch OR flat low back*
- *Posterior pelvic tilt*

What should a dynamic planche look like?

The dynamic planche refers to exercises which are done with motion. This can include pushup exercises or combination moves like presses with the arms straight. When the following points are met, the form is beautiful.

- *Maintain fixed posture through range*
- *Momentary pause in stretched position*
- *Full extension at lockout*

PLANCHE PROGRESSIONS

If you are reading this training guide, I imagine you have already been humbled by the difficulty of the straight arm planche. This is why a progressive approach to calisthenics is the only way to safely learn the planche. Let's talk briefly about the postural progressions from start to finish for Planche Pro.

Pseudo Planche Lean



The pseudo planche lean should not be underestimated as being an easy exercise, even though it is listed first here. The difficulty can be adjusted from a simple pushup position all the way until only the tip-toes are on the ground. Therefore, it can be made challenging for all strength levels. Beginners should lean as far forward as they can tolerate for the set and hold time required. To train the joint angle demands of harder planche holds, the pseudo planche lean needs to be increased gradually over time. This is such a great movement due to the scalability for all strength levels and will serve as a staple movement during the training program. Keep in mind, a few cms leaning forward can increase the intensity substantially.

Tuck Planche



This straight arm planche progression is the easiest, non-feet supported static hold. The feet are hovering off the ground and the body is heavily compressed, with the lower back rounded. This is a necessary starting point for developing straight arm scapula strength for future planche progressions.

Advanced Tuck Planche



When the tuck planche gets too easy, it's time to increase the forward lean and continue growing stronger. The advanced tuck is a flat back planche hold. Visually, the difference looks minimal. However, the difficulty increases significantly when moving from the tuck planche. A fair amount of forward lean is needed for the lower back to flatten out. Those who are not strong enough to do the advanced tuck planche will compensate by holding the position with hips higher than shoulders. The reason for this strange looking planche is due to not leaning far enough forward. In order to get the hips level with the shoulders, the focus should be on leaning until the lower back and hips can extend to the right position.

Frog Planche



The frog planche is an exercise FitnessFAQs designed to bridge the gap between the advanced tuck and the straddle planche. An important yet misunderstood component of the harder straddle planche progression is active hip mobility. The frog planche teaches the hips to become stronger into hip abduction. The ability to spread the legs is vital for making future planche work tolerable. By beginning to strengthen the outside of the hips with a short lever (bent knees), the straddle won't be as hard in this respect. The forward lean will be comparable to the advanced tuck planche but the lower back and pelvis component will be stressed.

Pike Straddle Planche



Having incremental progressions along the way is the most effective approach to reaching a straddle planche. A pike straddle planche is essentially a straight leg frog planche with the feet directed towards the ground. This position becomes more demanding as the hips fight to separate and extend the legs. The more flexed the hips are, the easier the exercise. The lean angle matches the amount of hip flexion; less lean is needed with a low straddle planche when the hips are flexed. As strength improves, a further lean at the shoulders is necessary for the hips to extend and the feet to be level with the shoulders.

Straddle Planche



The final progression we will be working towards in the Planche Pro program is the elusive straddle planche. The feet, shoulders and hips are all level when viewed from the side. A large, forward lean is needed in a “hips open” straddle planche when compared to a pike straddle. This comes back to the biomechanics of the planche we spoke about earlier on. The hands need to be positioned underneath the

stomach region, a challenging task with the textbook straddle planche.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO REACH A STRADDLE PLANCHE?

This question is impossible to definitively answer with a duration which covers everyone. The next section will discuss 5 individual factors which are directly responsible for the rate of planche progression.

Starting point

What is your training age? Are you completely new to bodyweight training or have you been training for a few years? Naturally those who are new will take longer to progress, as they have not established a base level of strength. Those who have already been practising the planche or at least experienced with bodyweight exercises, will be able to progress quicker due a higher starting point. Realistically, someone who is just starting the pseudo planche lean will take much longer to reach the straddle planche than someone who is already holding the advanced tuck planche due to the difference in baseline strength.

Age

The younger someone is, the quicker they will progress. This is inherent to being younger in addition to generally having less stress and more training time

than an older person. Those of you who are teenagers and are 30 or less are in the best position for gains. Less life commitments and a natural advantage for recovery is a reality for those who are under 30. Unfortunately, this is something that we can't control or change but it's important to know for expectations. Those of you following Planche Pro who are older than 50 will be experiencing sarcopenia or age-related muscle loss at a rate of 0.5–1% per year, this means gains in strength will also come at a slower rate. Two people with exactly the same lifestyle and genetic makeup, but one is 25 and one is 50, will experience progress differently.

Consistency

This sounds so basic but you'll be surprised at the number of excuses people have given me over the years. I missed a workout this week because of X or I couldn't train this entire week because of Y. If you don't consistently stick to the Planche Pro workouts consecutively for several months, don't get frustrated with a lack of progress. Individual workouts are cumulative, the body will adapt more quickly with frequent and consistent exposure. Missing workouts, substituting or skipping exercises, lowering intensity and sets or reps will result in stagnation or regression. Those who follow the plan as written, stay on track and show up with intent to work hard will progress.

Stress

This can be broken down into two categories, the first being training related. Intense workouts accumulated over time with adequate recovery, result in supercompensation and a stronger planche. We want to maximise our recoverable training stress and this will be achieved with the programming in Planche Pro. Those who have a high amount of non-training related stress will progress slower. Have a demanding job? Plenty of family commitments? Relationship problems? Arguments, concern and anxiety? This will impact the amount of training stress one can recover from. When excessively stressed, you can't train as intensely nor as often and expect to recover. From experience, those who are eating well, sleeping well and are in control of their lives will progress faster than someone overwhelmed by life — all things equal.

Height and Weight

As we mentioned earlier, body measurements have a huge impact on the rate of planche progress:

- *Shorter people progress faster than taller people*
- *Lighter people progress faster than heavier people*
- *Leaner people progress faster than those with higher body fat levels*
- *People who skip leg day will progress faster than those who train legs.*

We can't change our height, and training legs is a non-negotiable for FitnessFAQs followers. This leaves us with one factor to control: nutrition. If you genuinely want to progress fast with the planche, take nutrition and body composition seriously. It's frustrating to see people training hard but not getting the gains they should because of poor nutrition and a high body fat percentage. For someone who is carrying excess weight, the planche will be hard and progress will be slower than someone with a leaner build.

The above 5 factors will play a huge role in how someone will respond to planche training. With that said, here are some vague timelines to strive for when working towards the straddle planche. Some people may reach the following milestones much sooner or later.

Tuck Planche 10s → *3–6 months*

Advanced Tuck Planche 10s → *6–8 months*

Straddle Planche 3s → *1–2 years*

WHAT MUSCLES ARE USED IN THE PLANCHE?

To understand what muscles are used in the planche and, more importantly, why we use certain exercises, the following is the desired upper body position. The arms are locked straight with a scapula which is protracted, depressed and downwardly rotated.

Muscle roles and contraction types

The conventional planche is an isometric exercise where many muscles contract simultaneously to hold the position. Other muscle roles include agonists, antagonists, synergists, neutralisers and fixators. This upcoming section is for the reader who is a body-weight geek. I'll explain the science briefly as some people are more motivated to train when they know the "why". Feel free to skim over this section if anatomy isn't your thing.

An agonist muscle provides the major force to complete a movement and they are often called prime movers. An antagonist is a muscle which opposes the agonist, either relaxing or contracting to slow down the movement of the agonist. Synergist muscles stabilise a joint around the area which movement is happening and can also assist in contributing to the movement. The fixator in a movement is the muscle(s) that stabilises the origin of the agonist and the joint that the origin spans (moves over) in order to help the agonist function most effectively. Neutralisers prevent unwanted movements; it is crucial that these are strong for preventing the scapula from going in the opposite direction — retraction, elevation and upward rotation.

Planche Agonist

Elbow extension → *triceps*

Shoulder flexion → *anterior deltoid*

Protraction → *serratus anterior, pec minor*

Depression → *lower traps, serratus anterior, pec minor*

Downward rotation → *rhomboids, pec minor*

Planche Antagonist

Elbow extension → *biceps*

Shoulder flexion → *posterior deltoid*

Protraction → *middle traps*

Depression → *levator scapulae, upper trap*

Downward rotation → *lower levator scapulae,
serratus anterior*

Planche Fixators

Isolating specific muscles serving as fixators is a fool's errand due to the full body nature of the exercise. The muscles which place the planche agonist muscles in their optimal length for maximal force production are primarily the posterior rotator cuff and axioscapular muscles of the mid back.

Planche Neutralisers

As mentioned before, key muscles which prevent the opposite movement desired at the shoulder joint are equally important. If these muscles are not strong,

the scapula will move into retraction, elevation and upward rotation, which will result in weakness and an inability to hold the planche. This is because of the length tension relationship, the key planche muscles are no longer in a good length to produce maximum force. For example, weakness in the lower traps causes the scapula to rise upwards towards the ears, and a loss in scapula protraction. Don't worry, it's not a requirement for you to fully understand complex anatomy to progress, the exercise selection and programming takes care of this for you.

To simplify, the planche is an isometric hold including many other muscles such as the pecs and delts, which all act simultaneously. It's about strengthening the important areas to maintain the position and ensure weak links are also trained with specific exercises for rotator cuff strength and scapula stability. We want to get as strong as possible in the first 45 degrees of shoulder flexion with straight arms.

HANDS ON FLOOR VS PARALLETES?

First, before we make comparisons between the two, forget which is optimal and choose the option which is most comfortable and enjoyable for you. The style you prefer will be the one which makes you excited to train the planche. Avoid a hand placement or setup which causes pain: we need to stay healthy for long

term progress. Training the planche with hands on the floor demands greater wrist mobility compared to parallettes. The floor planche is a good option because it forces the user to take care of wrist strength, mobility and health. When doing a floor planche, a greater degree of wrist strain is felt because the wrist flexors and extensors are heavily recruited to maintain balance. The positioning of the fingertips will also shift the load in the exercise, fingers facing directly forward produces the greatest strain on the wrist complex. For those with enough mobility, this option is preferred because balance is easier due to a greater control opposing the direction of movement. Most people will need to turn the fingers out 45 degrees, with the thumbs facing straight ahead due to wrist stiffness. When the thumbs face forward balance becomes more difficult and the bicep strain increases. Most people will find thumbs facing forwards the most comfortable position. When using parallettes, push-up handles, dumbbells or dip bars, the planche is generally easier. People like to use handles because it allows the planche to be trained with minimal wrist mobility, which means the forward lean won't be uncomfortable in advanced planche progressions. The parallette planche reduces strain on the wrist joint, relies more on finger flexor/extensor activation and force output is increased due to the ability to grip maximally. These factors, coupled with balance being easier, means planche practice on parallettes will be

stronger than when done on the floor. If you're someone who has spent most of their training time with parallettes, take time when transitioning to the floor and be patient with progression. Strength will carry over faster from floor planche practice to parallettes, the reverse is a slower process because of having to develop the required wrist strength and balance. The variation you use most will feel more comfortable and be strongest. If you want planche power anywhere, regardless of environment or equipment used, go with the floor version. If you're working on wrist mobility and experience discomfort when on the floor, use parallettes.

Lastly, it's very difficult to compare the planche under different conditions. The lean angle for the same progression changes slightly from floor to parallettes. This is obvious when comparing a straight finger planche to a parallette planche, especially in the later progressions such as straddle planche. When looking to judge planche strength, floor vs floor and parallette vs parallette is the only way to be accurate.

FITNESSFAQ'S PLANCHE HISTORY

Before explaining the Planche Pro workout program, I want to share with you my training experience with the planche. The story will outline my personal shortcomings when it came to mastering the straddle planche.

I first attempted a tuck planche after seeing the exercise online in the early days of YouTube; the year was 2009. At the time I weighed 76kg at a height of 183cm/6ft tall. I remember being able to do the straight-arm tuck planche for about 15s on my first attempt. I must admit this is above average as I had already been doing bodyweight exercises and handstands for a few months prior. From 2009 all the way to 2013 I made very, very minimal progress with the planche. If I'm honest, my average hold time during this period was about 10s using an advanced tuck. My main mistake for this lack of progress was not giving the planche the respect and attention it deserves. I would do the exercise once, maybe twice per week at most. I remember also being very inconsistent and often not training the skill for a week or two at a time. My second mistake was workout design. I would always do the planche towards the middle or end of a workout. This was because my focus was on exercises where progress was easier to come by. These were exercises like handstand pushups, weighted dips and ring pushing patterns. Making progress with dynamic exercises is generally quicker and more linear for the average person. It's human nature to work on what we're good at, and I was no different. Lastly, I fell victim to the trap of constant variety. Each week I would try a different exercise instead of sticking to the basics and progressing on identical planche patterns.

Unfortunately, when it comes to training we can't improve everything at once. It has taken me many years to identify my personal stubbornness in this area. During the 4 year period since first trying the planche, my weight increased from 76kg to a peak of 95kg. I attribute this to a steady calorie surplus and progressively overloading my upper and lower body training. My calisthenics routine consisted mainly of basic exercises using added weight, including pullups, pushups, rows and dips. Once again we gravitate towards what we are good at, and when you are heavy it's much easier to move external objects and train compound calisthenics exercises. I lied to myself for many, many years that I was big and strong, a real unique snowflake in the community. In reality I was soft, had a high body fat percentage and didn't feel healthy in my own body. I wasn't happy with the way I looked, felt or the direction my training was going. I knew when I was walking up a flight of stairs and genuinely struggling to breath that I had to make a change. I knew by dropping weight and getting leaner this would fuel my motivation to train the planche properly. In 2014 I moved out of home and started my masters degree in physiotherapy. This was the perfect opportunity to take control of my nutrition and train the planche.

Over the better part of a year, I dropped down about 10kg with my weight hovering around 85kgs. I was starting to make genuine planche progress as a result

of improving my relative strength with the weight cut. It personally took me a year to be able to hold a straddle planche for 3s with clean form. Bad habits are hard to shake and I had not entirely learned from my previous training mistakes. I was still training the planche on top of simultaneously working on too many other goals. While training the planche, I was also working on weighted dips, pullups, front and back levers, handstand pushups, 90 degree pushups and the one arm chinup. I was getting frustrated with my inability to reach my goal of a 5s straddle planche. During training one day, the following thoughts crossed my mind:

How much harder can I train?

How much leaner do I need to get?

What other exercises should I be doing?

Should I train to failure?

Should I do more or less sets?

Should I do long or short planche holds?

Is the planche possible for me?

Then in 2015 I had a **freak accident** during a workout, which resulted in my longest layoff from exercise to date. On this day I was training lower body at the gym and planned to front squat 130kg for 5 sets of 3. After finishing the last rep on the last set, I was obviously tired and went to rack the bar quickly. One side of the barbell was secured in the rack, the other was not. One side of the barbell came crashing down and

forced my right wrist into hyper-extension. I heard a crack straight away and immediately felt a sharp, localised pain. I later found out by MRI, that I had experienced a microtrabecular fracture to my distal radius and scapholunate ligament sprain on my right wrist. I instantly felt like the year of strict nutrition and intense training had all been instantly taken away. I was so close to achieving my 5s straddle planche goal and was the strongest I had ever been. I was forced to avoid using my wrist for 12 weeks, no upper body training at all as any gripping of the wrist caused severe pain. This was a very dark period for me personally and was a big test of my character. What this injury did give me was time; time to think about the past. When I reflected, my training program had too many exercises, lack of direction and was being done at a maximum intensity without the necessary recovery. I also had a high amount of stress at school undergoing a full-time course load in addition to full-time employment at hospital in Sydney as a physiotherapist. At the peak of my planche progress prior to injury, I was also working hard on building FitnessFAQs. My time and energy was limited and I felt constantly overwhelmed. I came to a conclusion, finally identifying my high stress levels and ineffective training approach, and decided to change the plan once healthy. I often use this famous quote by Einstein because it speaks volumes: **“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”**

When I returned to the planche after my injury, I had to rebuild from scratch. My wrist and forearm strength required tedious daily rehab. The level of upper body strength and muscularity was pathetic compared to where it used to be at my peak. However, now I had a very clear goal and was going to achieve it for ME, no matter how difficult or long it would take. I was overwhelmed with joy when I reached my goal of a 5s straddle planche within only 8 months. All done at a weight of 85kg and height of 183cm. This struggle is why I feel so passionate about helping the followers of FitnessFAQs with their planche.

PLANCHE TRAINING MYTHS

When it comes to learning about the planche online, misinformation is abundant and this section will prove wrong commonly promoted ideas.

1. Long duration holds are non-negotiable!

When planche training information first started to be released online about a decade ago, certain guidelines were put forth. Standards such as holding a 30-60s planche before moving on to the next progression was recommended. This is absolutely overkill for harder progressions such as the advanced tuck planche and straddle variation. People following these guidelines are forever stuck on an exercise due to mismanaged intensity and constantly training with a reduced

forward lean. The idea behind long holds is time and care needs to be taken to develop the necessary tendon and ligament strength in preparation for harder movements. Although the point about connective tissue health is true, if one is sensible with load management when using shorter duration holds, injury risk will be minimised. As for building up to a maximal hold time of 60s, you would imagine people having to frequently use working sets greater than 20s to build enough endurance.

In the bodyweight community it's mutually agreed a 2s isometric is equivalent to 1 full range rep. If one is using 30s working sets of the tucked planche and does 3 sets, this is equivalent to doing 3 sets of 15 reps. In the traditional rep range sense, 15 is heading towards "endurance" work. As you can see, the training intensity would only become more endurance based when working sets are held even longer than 30s. This is why it's preferable to use a harder intensity progression, making use of a greater forward lean for less time. Generally the 8–15s hold range is great for the primary exercise as this is similar to doing 4 to 8 reps of a dynamic exercise. This is perfect for building top end strength, which is most transferable to progressing quickly with the planche. For accessory exercises such as the pseudo planche lean, holds of up to 20s are valuable for refining weak links.

2. You don't need static holds for a strong planche!

Whenever you read anything online, even if it's content made by FitnessFAQs, always think before blindly following the advice. To catch people's attention, some fitness pages will make a grand claim or state something controversial which opposes common thinking. One popular rumour being spread is static planche training is a less effective training method. The recommendation is to only use dynamic straight arm exercises for the planche. Rarely is there a situation where you will hear me completely discount a form of training. This theory was likely started by people who simply don't enjoy training static elements. The end goal for those working on the planche is to hold the static planche in the most difficult progression possible.

When aiming to reach a static exercise, one's training should focus on mainly static training. Do you think rep work will suddenly translate to a prolonged hold at end range of motion? I doubt this is anywhere near as effective from a specificity point of view. With dynamic reps the position is momentarily held, resulting in less volume at end range where it counts most. Dynamic planche work does have value especially when used in a conjunction with static work, as seen in Planche Pro.

3. Reach 60s total planche volume per training session

This belief is an oversimplification of structuring a workout for the planche, it works in some cases and not in others. When working at a lower intensity, the 60s total volume method is great. If you are doing 15s working sets and want to achieve an adequate strength training dose, 4 sets at the above time equals 60s. Now, let's say you are in an intensity training cycle and are working on the piked straddle. The working set time is only 6s for repeated efforts. This high intensity planching on the edge of your limits is tough training; 10 total sets will be required to achieve the 60s volume at such an intensity. This is where the 60s recommendation falls short, it doesn't account for working a difficult progression for a very short duration. Remember a 6s work set is equivalent to 3 full range reps; 10 sets of "3 reps" is obviously too much; something like 3-6 sets of 6s holds would be enough for building maximal strength.

4. Check out that guy's full planche, I bet his core is super strong ... brah

Myself and the guys at Calisthenic Movement always have a laugh when people believe this. I can see why people would think this as, to the untrained eye, a planche is an exercise which is visually amazing. Because there is no movement, it's hard to tell what muscles are used to hold the position. People would

associate the planche with holding a plank and think how hard their core has to work, often by people with a weak core to begin with. As there is an overall strain during a planche, it's safe to think the core muscles are holding the body in place, but this is not true. People who try the planche and then arch their lower back generally do not lack core strength: the lower back is compensating for weakness elsewhere. This weakness is generally at the shoulders as the body can't maintain the necessary forward lean. As a result, the lower back arches to ease the strain on the upper body by shifting the centre of mass forward, without any change in shoulder angle. This creates a lovely myth about the importance of core training for planche. The unaware person will then focus too much on core exercises and mismanage their time. Because of this, people avoid placing effort where it is needed, training an easier planche progression and working scapula stability and general shoulder strength. If you are strong enough to do a planche lean without arching and can hold a reverse hyperextension with legs straight for 15–20s, it's unlikely core strength is the limiting factor.

The core and hip training drills in Planche Pro are about developing body awareness and activation patterns, very important for overall planche aesthetics and tension. However, core weakness won't limit you from at least holding a planche. The degree to

which the core needs to be developed is but a fraction of the shoulder strength needed. Focus where it matters most and work on the accessory hip/core work as recommended.

5. The planche can only be done by short people, or those who don't have big legs

There is no point discounting the above point completely. Shorter people are superior to those who are taller when it comes to the planche. A shorter person has improved leverages for the planche; they don't need to lean as far forward to position their centre of mass over the base of support. This means they need to produce less torque in the same planche variation as someone who is taller. What is the result? The exercise will feel easier and can be held for longer. This is why we often see shorter people doing high level planche skills. The probability a shorter person will commit to training the planche consistently and long enough is much higher than a taller person. A tall person will feel more challenged at every planche progression and the process will take considerably longer. Most tall people can't commit to the arduous planche journey to reach at least the straddle planche, giving up well before reaching what they are capable of.

Regardless of how tall someone is, individual factors such as limb length and bodyweight distribution will affect the lean angle in a planche. Those with shorter

arms and a lighter lower body won't have to lean as far forward. A good analogy is to think of the planche like a seesaw: the heavier the legs are, the greater the forward lean.

HOW TO FOLLOW PLANCHE PRO

The training program has been designed with minimal complexity. Simplicity doesn't mean easy, and complicated doesn't always mean effective. The less you have to worry about the better, this way you can focus on what matters, doing the work and improving on previous sessions. The training programs are comprehensive for planche development, trust in the process and don't get distracted or tempted to stray by the lure of switching things up. Planche Pro is a specialisation program designed to maximise results in the planche. Therefore, the following guidelines are non-negotiable. I need to be firm on this because I can't guarantee results when modifications are made to the plan in any way. Promise yourself to stick to the plans and at least see them through for a complete training cycle.

Don't modify the plan

It's human nature to want to continue with exercises we're good at or have been doing, and stay in the comfort zone. With my other programs, **Body By Rings** and **Limitless Legs**, people often email ask-

ing if they can change or add exercises to the plan. Remember earlier the mistake of doing too much or training exercises which do not directly support the planche? Put yourself in the best position to progress by following the plan as written, without adding or removing elements. Those who choose the right intensity of exercise, including a challenging amount of sets and reps, will be too tired to even consider doing more. Someone's work ethic is questioned when they have the energy to complete dozens of different exercises in a single session. Don't be the person who goes through the motions with minimal effort. Unless an exercise modification is recommended, stick to the plan as written.

Which workout to start with?

At FitnessFAQs, our mission is to always give maximum value. With Planche Pro, we have designed two well rounded workouts to keep you improving. In total, this includes 16 weeks of programming when working through both routines from start to finish.

FitnessFAQs recommends the following order:

Program #1 → Straight Arm and Bent Arm
(*Accumulation*)

Program #2 → Straight Arm and Bent Arm
(*Intensification*)

The alternating straight arm and bent arm format is

an optimal blend of volume, intensity and training frequency per week. Working on the planche 4x per week appears to be ideal for neural improvements while dissipating training fatigue.

As for the alternating accumulation and intensification structure, it's simple to understand. We start by gradually increasing our tolerance for planche volume. In order to accomplish more volume, the intensity of each exercise is moderate in nature. This means longer duration static holds and higher rep sets during this phase of training. The goal is clear with accumulation work, we want to refine our technique with repeated exposure; this is generally easier to do when working longer holds and higher reps. As strength acquisition is about practicing the planche skill itself, an accumulation cycle is perfect for plenty of practice. After completing an accumulation cycle, we will then use the strength and increased tolerance which has been built to make further progress with the planche.

Next up we want to spend a training cycle maximising our strength output, an intensification block. Intensification is categorised by higher training intensity. This means shorter duration static holds and lower rep sets. A shift in thinking is important when switching to an intensification cycle. This period of time is about working hard for less total duration, in static movements and less reps for dynamic movements. Expect to alter exercises to make the move-

ment challenging, to meet the requirements of the set and rep range. The planche progression used or band assistance setup will need to be changed to reflect the increase in intensity.

The beauty of using an alternating accumulation and intensification approach is guaranteed, long-term progress. When returning back to an accumulation program for the second time, you will certainly be able to tolerate harder exercises for longer holds or higher reps. The same is true for intensification: being able to use less band assistance or move onto the next planche progression on certain exercises. By alternating the focus between developing capacity and top end strength, plateaus will be less common.

Deloading with Planche Pro

The concept of deloading has been written about extensively in previous FitnessFAQs programs, such as the popular muscle building eBook, [Body By Rings](#). As such, the following discussion will be concerning how and why to deload.

Most people understand hard, consistent and progressive training is needed to grow stronger. To continue to progress, a light training week is a nice duration to give the body time to recover, adapt and be ready for more punishment. This is why a deload is included after each training program in week 8. A deload is the perfect approach for maximising recovery

and keeping strength high. By cutting sets by about half, and keeping intensity the same, the skill component of each exercise is maintained but recovery is increased because of the lower training stress. Keep in mind all the fatigue produced after 7 weeks of difficult training. A week of reduced sets in each session allows the fatigue accumulated to dissipate. Ever had a period of time where no matter how hard or often you train, progress halts or reverses? This is a clear sign the body is screaming for a recovery or deload week. Due to the aggressive training progression in Planche Pro, 7 weeks of training followed by a 1 week deload is non-negotiable, do it. After the deload, your body will be recovered and ready for consistent progress in the next program cycle.

Don't stress, Planche Pro takes care of the workout structure for a deload week. Lastly, a deload is a great time to test your planche strength without affecting recovery. A max planche hold features in each deload week. Use this as an opportunity to test your unassisted planche strength or a max test with a banded planche. This will be great information for you to use for working sets when starting the upcoming training cycle.

Warm-up

The purpose of the warm-up is to prepare the mind and also the body. A warm-up should not take longer

than 15 minutes and should not be tiring. A warm-up which takes longer than 15 minutes or is difficult to do, isn't a warm-up. This blurs the lines between a warm-up and actually training. Instead, a successful warm-up primes the body to safely begin strength training. An increase in body temperature, mindful mobility to key joints and activation of the scapula and core are necessary in a warm-up. We've outlined what to include in the warm-up to be ready for planche training. Warming up gets repetitive and boring after weeks and months of doing the same thing. Simply get it done each session and use this time to focus on what's required in the session.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORKOUT PROGRAM

Workout frequency and weekly structure:

Training is 4x per week for Straight & Bent Arm programs. Below is the recommended way of structuring the training week.

Straight Arm & Bent Arm

Day	Session
Monday	Straight Arm
Tuesday	Rest*
Wednesday	Bent Arm

Thursday	Rest*
Friday	Straight Arm
Saturday	Bent Arm
Sunday	Rest*

*Rest can be a lower body workout, pulling workout, mobility session or a complete day off strength training.

Letter System

The Letters and corresponding numbers define the exercise order and rest structure. The below example will explain two situations: when exercises are supersetted together or a single exercise is done for straight sets.

Exercises listed with the same letter are to be supersetted, followed by a rest period. Exercises listed with a different letter are to be done for straight sets by themselves, following the corresponding rest period.

Letter	Exercise	Rest (mins)
A1	Exercise 1	2
A2	Exercise 2	
B1	Exercise 3	3
C1	Exercise 4	1
C2	Exercise 5	

With **A1** and **A2**, do one set of Exercise 1 and then immediately complete a set of Exercise 2. Rest for 2 minutes and repeat in this alternating fashion for the number of sets listed.

With **B1**, do one set of Exercise 3, rest for 3 minutes and repeat Exercise 3 for the total number of sets written in the program.

C1 and **C2** is another example of two exercises being supersetted. After a set of Exercise 4, move straight onto Exercise 5. After one set of each exercise is finished, rest for a minute before repeating in the same manner.

Rest system further explained

Letter	Exercise	Sets	Rest
A1	Exercise 1	6	2 / 3
A2	Exercise 2	4	

In some cases, the number of sets for two exercises being supersetted will not be the same. In the above example, the first 4 sets of Exercise 1 and 2 would be supersetted with a 2 minute rest. The forward slash (/) in the rest column describes what to do in the situation where a few sets remain for an exercise. Do a set of Exercise 1, resting for 3 minutes between the remaining sets.

Accumulation and self directed

Letter	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
A1	Exercise 1	accumulation	20 total	self-directed
B1	Exercise 2	accumulation	2 min total	self-directed

Accumulation sets are a fun way of reaching a large number of reps or hold time guided by one's personal strength level. It doesn't matter how much you do per set when starting out, reach the total range written for the day. When first starting with accumulation or when choosing a difficult exercise setup, more sets will be needed to reach the total requirement. Over time progress by reaching the rep range with fewer sets, consisting of more reps or longer hold times each set. In the rest section there is no time given between sets, instead the term self-directed is written. Rest as needed, going by feel and when recovered enough. This allows the focus to be on high quality, full range of motion training.

Intensity column

The Planche Pro workouts are designed to be followed by people at various levels in their planche journey. The intensity section is kept blank on purpose. This is where the setup of an exercise is written, allowing im-

portant training numbers to be tracked. Feel free to write down the intensity in a way which makes sense to you. What gets measured gets managed. The below section will cover a handful of examples of tracking intensity.

For the Planche, write down the progression and the band assistance if used. When using band assistance write down resistance band colour and anchor height.

Exercise	Intensity
Planche	<i>Tuck, parallettes</i>
Planche	<i>Tuck, floor, red band @ head height</i>
Planche	<i>Frog, floor</i>
Planche	<i>Pike straddle, black band @ head height</i>

For a Pseudo Planche exercises, write down the exercise setup noting cm from wall.

Exercise	Intensity
Pseudo Planche Lean	<i>Feet on floor, 60cm</i>
Pseudo Planche Pushup	<i>Feet on floor, 55cm</i>

For a Pike Pushup, write down the exercise setup.

Exercise	Intensity
Pike Pushup	<i>Floor</i>
Pike Pushup	<i>Feet hip height, parallelles</i>

For the Handstand Pushup, write down the exercise setup. Examples include reduced range of motion or freestanding variations.

Exercise	Intensity
Handstand Pushup	<i>Back-wall, 2 weight plates</i>
Handstand Pushup	<i>Chest-wall, hands on floor</i>
Handstand Pushup	<i>Freestanding, parallelles</i>

When doing the Weighted Pushup, write down the amount of weight used.

Exercise	Intensity
Weighted Pushup	<i>40kg</i>

For accessory exercises write down the band intensity or weight used.

Exercise	Intensity
Scapula Pushup	<i>Two Arms, green band</i>
Band Pull Apart	<i>Red band</i>
Whippet	<i>Red tubing</i>
Bent over W	<i>2.5kg L/R</i>

For other exercises, write the exercise progression/ setup or keep the section blank.

Reps column

Static exercises will be given a hold time or hold range in seconds. Dynamic exercises will be given a number of reps or rep range. For exercises training left and right sides, the number of reps is to be done on both sides. In the below example, do 8–10 reps on the left side and 8–10 reps on the right side. With the bird dog do so in an alternating fashion.

Exercise	Reps
Bird Dog	8 – 10 L/R

For some exercises, after all the reps are finished a static hold is added at the hardest part of the exercise. For the scapula pushup this is in protraction and depression with arms straight for 20s. For the bird dog this hold is in the extended shape, immediately after the reps are done for 10s. The static hold is to be done on both sides.

Exercise	Reps
Scapula Pushup	8 – 10 + 20s
Bird Dog	8 – 10 + 10s L/R

If tracking intensity still isn't clear, watch the video tutorials on the Planche Pro portal. The course content will walk you through everything in further detail.

PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD — HOW TO FORCE CONTINUED STRENGTH GAINS

Should sets be taken to failure?

Technical failure is the point when a static exercise can no longer be held with optimal form. When going to muscular failure, hold times or reps will drop quickly, heavily impacting the quality of the remainder of the workout. Instead, the overall superior method is to train at approximately 70–80% of maximum effort each set. The benefit of this training style is more quality sets and an increased training volume can be used per training session. Aim to leave 1 to 2 reps or a few seconds in reserve each set. This short-of-failure method is still very challenging to do, especially when repeated for multiple sets.

The approach of stopping short of technical failure has been shown to be more effective for strength than failure training. The sensible path also has injury

prevention benefits, in addition to being a more psychologically tolerable style to train in the long term.

How aggressively should sets/reps/hold time be increased?

Adjust training very gradually to get a sense of how the body responds. As non-hardcore as it may sound, we want to get away with doing the least amount of additional work to grow stronger. Try and increase 1 variable at a time for each exercise in a given workout. This promotes improvement in a sustainable manner. In the real world, this means:

- *Increased hold time*
- *1–2 more reps*
- *An extra set*
- *A slight reduction in band height with the same band intensity*
- *A lighter resistance band anchored at the same height or higher*
- *Keeping sets and reps the same but increasing intensity*
- *Increasing exercise progression and adjusting sets/reps*

There may be times where progress is only possible on one exercise or not at all. Keep in mind training has a cumulative effect and it's unrealistic to progress every single session. This is even more relevant for the

planche: it's more realistic to progress on a weekly or even bi-weekly basis. This rate of progress is still great from a long term perspective.

To summarise, start at the lower end of the set and rep range, at an intensity which you can manage. Over the weeks, work towards the higher end of the set, rep or hold range. When this gets comfortable, increase the intensity and modify the sets/reps accordingly. Repeat the process of gradually increasing sets and reps over time, making sure to adjust the training in a realistic way when possible.

Be objective

Where appropriate to ensure honest training sessions, be objective by measuring and noting down the training setup. This is a direct way to measure the exercise intensity and the difficulty can be adjusted as needed. The Planche Pro video series will show and explain how to make planche training objective for multiple key exercises. When people don't write down the environment for their planche work, the training difficulty is hard to manage between sessions. For the band assisted planche, if an identical band is used but the anchor height is different every session, it's impossible to have consistent training intensity. Another example is the pseudo planche lean, even a minor change in forward lean can make the world of difference. With planche exercises, the body

is good at choosing a comfortable range, avoiding the amount of lean needed to grow stronger. Failing to set up with previously established intensity measurements can result in an exercise which feels way too hard or easy, a common feeling for those chasing the planche. Numbers are great as you know what needs to be done to get stronger. It's also motivating to see the band assist decrease or the cm from the wall increase over time. These small victories in progression will be uplifting during the planche journey.

A few examples of being objective with planche training include noting:

- *Resistance band intensity (colour)*
- *Resistance band anchor height (ring strap # or distance in relation to body)*
- *Cm from wall for static and dynamic exercises*

Quality

At the start of everyone's planche journey, progress will come quickly and objective measurements will continue to improve on a regular basis. As those who have trained for several months or years come to understand, progress inevitably slows down. It's not unusual for weeks to go by working on the same static hold times and dynamic rep sets under identical conditions. This is where one should be mindful about the quality of each movement to establish a

sense of progression. Frustratingly, this is not always something which can be seen in person or through a training log. Although you may not be improving on paper in training variables such as sets/reps or intensity, take note of how the exercise feels. If the planche is held for the same duration and it feels easier to, say, hold protraction or reach the ideal technique, this is an improvement. If you are using less momentum and are in better control of dynamics, this is also a sign of growth. Celebrate these small personal improvements and know the work being done will eventually lead to objective gains.

Momentum and Speed

When it comes to regressing or progressing the intensity of bodyweight exercises, the manipulation of momentum is key. During dynamic planche exercises such as L-sit to planche, adjusting the speed of execution can be an overloading tool. When an exercise is performed fast at the transition point, the stretch reflex in addition to momentum will carry one through the movement more easily. This may be a necessary requirement when new to certain exercises and this is okay. Over time the exercise can be progressed in traditional ways (sets and reps) in addition to reducing momentum and speed. Using brute strength to move through an exercise is superior compared to using momentum. The eventual goal with transitional exercises is to minimise momentum. As you grow

stronger, slow down, reduce momentum and dominate the entire range of motion. Work towards controlling the movements, don't let them control you.

Train pulling

By now it will be clear how important eliminating unnecessary exercises is for planche training. Eliminate pushing exercises which are not included in the workouts to maximise the "freshness" of planche muscles. Don't go to the opposite extreme of only training the planche and neglecting all other exercises. Staying healthy and avoiding injury during planche training should be a top priority. This is why you should continue to include a few pulling exercises in your weekly schedule. As the goal with Planche Pro is to exclusively program the planche exercise and accessories, the program does not describe what pulling exercises to do. FitnessFAQs will not be able available to provide programming specifics for pulling work. Rather, the following pulling guidelines will minimise injury and support structural balance. Pulling movements should be seen as secondary goals with the planche being the main focus, after all you are looking to become a Planche Pro. If looking to include pulling exercises in the same workout as Planche Pro, do so a maximum of once to twice per week. Because planche training is so demanding, limit the pulling work on Planche Pro days to:

- *1 vertical pulling exercise*
- *1 horizontal pulling exercise*

If you would like to do a completely separate pulling workout, limit this to a maximum of two sessions per week, structured at will. Remember, it's about doing just enough pulling work to complement planche training; too much will not make the planche come quicker.

Training legs

Those wanting to train legs should do so separately to planche sessions or on rest days. The people who are already following a training program for the lower body, should continue to do so. Don't neglect leg training in the hope it will speed up planche progress. That's the easy option, which is also unbalanced. The lower body is a whole area for goals to be established and improvements to be made. A large amount of satisfaction comes when planching with a pair of big, strong legs. Achieving a straddle planche with huge legs is rare to see in the bodyweight community. If the idea of building bigger legs with bodyweight exercises sparks your interest, the FitnessFAQs **Limitless Legs** training program is perfect. Combining **Planche Pro** and **Limitless Legs** is an ideal blend of training methods which can be done anywhere without a gym or special equipment, no excuses.

Skill training

With bodyweight training people are generally interested in practicing their freestanding handstand. If the freestanding handstand is a skill you want to train, practice in the morning and do the Planche Pro workout in the evening. Otherwise, practice the handstand well short of fatigue on rest day(s) or on leg day(s). Do enough handstand practice to refine your technique but don't push into fatigue as it will be counter-productive. Keep in mind, the handstand is used as an endurance and overhead strengthening exercise; it is included in some Planche Pro workouts. Because the workout programs are specific for the planche, FitnessFAQs can't give ongoing recommendations for skill based exercises as this falls under the scope of making tweaks or additions to the program.

RESISTANCE BANDS AND PLANCHE TRAINING

Progressing from one planche exercise to the next is not a straight forward task. The increased intensity may simply be too hard. Conversely, feeling stuck training the same planche exercise for similar sets and reps is common. As described earlier, holding easy progressions for long periods will only build endurance and isn't the best way to improve. This consequently limits the options for making adjustments to exercise difficulty, especially for the static planche.

With weight training, the weight can be increased or decreased while the exercise form remains the same. With bodyweight exercises, it's difficult to incrementally make things easier or harder as our body weight is fixed.

Resistance bands are an affordable and versatile training tool for the planche. Invest in a complete resistance band set to easily adjust the intensity for planche work. We recommend buying your bands from **Rubber Banditz**. If the goal is to train in the 6–8s or 12-15s hold range we can easily use a strength of band to challenge this specific intensity.

Here is a classic situation where someone can't hold the advanced tuck planche long enough for quality working sets. A 15s tuck planche is possible, but only a 4-5s advanced tuck planche. Continuing to build time in the tuck planche will not transfer as well to the advanced tuck planche. The reason for this comes down to the forward lean. A tuck planche is easy to hold because a minimal forward lean is needed. With the advanced tuck planche a significant lean is needed for the back to be completely flat, with the hips level with the waist. This is the dilemma where training the tucked planche won't suddenly allow the person to maintain the lean needed in the advanced position. A resistance band can be used to bridge the intensity gap, increasing working set time. This way it is now possible for longer working sets using an advanced

tuck planche. With this training setup, the intensity is perfect for strength gains due to the hold time for each set and the increased forward lean. Over time the person will be able to train an advanced tuck planche using the 6–15 second range with less band assistance and eventually no band. It's nice having options for training where the intensity can be easily modified up or down with greater control over hold duration. Banded planche training is a great complement to training static holds without any assistance and is incorporated in Planche Pro extensively.

Resistance band setup and modification

Two modifications can change the amount of assistance, the first is the band strength. To track progressive overload, note the band colour in the intensity section of the training program. The second option for modifying assistance is the height the band is anchored. The higher the band is from the ground the more stretch and assistance provided. This is why it's also important to make note of the anchor height in the intensity section of the workout program. If the band is anchored at chest height one session and then above head height the next, although the band colour may be the same, the assistance will be significantly different. For the greatest accuracy and flexibility when modifying intensity, use gymnastics rings with straps. This way if the rings are anchored on the same overhead structure, the ring strap number can

be written down to accurately gauge intensity. If the ring straps don't have numbers, the alternate option is noting how high the band is anchored in relation to the body. For example, band level with head or two fists above head height. Having a clear idea of anchor height and band strength is optimal for overloading the exercise as strength improves or to give more help when fatigued.

Bands and statics

Bands are ideal for the static planche because the position is motionless. This means the band will give a relatively constant level of assistance. We don't need to know how many kgs are taken off specifically. Simply note the height of the anchor and strength of the band. When one or both decreases over time, strength gains are guaranteed. With a correct band placement, an even amount of body weight will be reduced and the ideal planche position can be held. Bands are a more reliable method for assistance than a partner physically spotting the exercise, just look at people doing bench press. The spotter is often seen practically lifting the bar each rep while yelling, "It's all you bro". The same is likely to happen when partner spotting with the planche; it's just human nature. The good news is bands are a cheap and effective option and also won't bail on a training session either.

Bands and dynamics

This is an area which causes heated debate amongst experts and training enthusiasts in the fitness industry. When it comes to bands being used for assistance, most are either for or against bands. This discussion is regarding the natural strength curve of an exercise. A strength curve explains how much force can be generated at certain joint angles and changes for pushing and pulling exercises. If we talk about a pull-up, the most challenging part of the exercise is the top. This is why resistance band assistance is a poor choice as it does not match the strength curve of the exercise. The band is giving the most assistance where it isn't needed (the bottom) and the least where it is needed more (the top). The problem in the fitness industry is black and white thinking: if band assistance is bad for the pullup then it must also be bad for pushing exercises. This is where people get carried away with a concept and don't take the time to think. During a normal pushup, the bottom is the hardest and the top is the easiest. If we use bands it will match the strength curve by assisting most when it's needed and least when it isn't.

Things get a bit more complicated when it comes to planche pushups and band assistance though. Because of the leverages and forward lean, the final 30 degrees of elbow extension (lockout) is arguably more challenging than the very bottom of a planche

pushup. For the general bodyweight practitioner with some experience, most will be able to get into the bottom of a pushup and hover their feet off the ground with minimal training. The same person attempting a full planche will fail immediately due to the straight arm challenge. This means banded planche pushups aren't an ideal match of the strength curve, frustratingly causing two scenarios to happen.

- 1. The band will give the perfect assistance at the bottom, yet not enough at the top.*

- 2. Too much assistance at the bottom and the perfect amount at the top.*

Does this mean we should not use bands in our bent arm planche work? No, the technique becomes more important for getting stronger. Training the exact movement pattern of planche pushups with assistance outweighs the shortcomings of band assistance. Through personal experimentation and discussions with experts such as Simonster (Simon Ata), banded planche pushups have merit when used correctly. The band intensity and height needs to be experimented with and then noted for overloading purposes. Finding the sweet spot of just enough assistance towards the lockout will make this method worthwhile. The biggest tip for staying challenged is to pause, completely motionless, at the bottom of each rep. This removes the body's natural stretch reflex and, more importantly, negates elastic recoil

from the band. The common mistake with dynamic banded planche training is moving fast and 'bouncing out of the hole' or the deep range of motion. Of course the exercise will be easy when using this approach because of the slingshot effect which launches the body through range.

Adding a pause with a correct band setup will minimise how easy the bottom feels and the exercise will feel more natural. Worst case scenario, banded planche pushups will strengthen the middle to top portion of the planche pushup, which is arguably the hardest part anyway. As the bottom range will be easier when using a band, it's unlikely band pushups will be best for strengthening the bottom range of motion. This is not an issue as the bottom range can be overloaded with pseudo planche pushups. Is this a perfect solution to modifying the intensity of planche pushups? Definitely not. However, at least we are able to train the planche pushup movement pattern. Remember, this is a supplementary exercise and is just one piece in the diverse planche puzzle. Don't worry, the workouts program and video tutorials apply these concepts for you.

Choosing the right setup for static planche exercises

Much confusion is associated with how long to hold planche sets during training as isometrics are still

poorly understood by the general public. The hold time and number of sets depends on the progression chosen and level of strength. Longer duration holds will use a planche exercise and setup, which makes it possible to complete the hold times written. The underlying concept is the same for higher intensity, with some slight modifications. With reduced hold times the intensity is higher, meaning a harder planche progression can potentially be used, with or without band assistance.

The Planche Pro workouts are designed to be simple to follow. Some experimentation will be necessary for properly choosing a planche progression, cm from wall or band setup to use in training. Each static hold set should be finished with minimal breakdown in technique, while being on the verge of maximum output. Keep in mind the program can build up to a large number of static sets in a single workout. This means an appropriate exercise setup is important for handling the amount of work. The first couple of sets should be not too bad; the final few sets will be on the limit of form breakdown. If you are able to work within the set and hold time range for the static exercises, you will grow stronger.

Be smart with exercise selection and setup, progress patiently and work hard.

How NOT to use bands

Based on the above paragraph people will be keen to jump into band assisted straddle or even full planches too early. In order to survive the hold times, people mistakenly use an obnoxiously heavy band to unload the body. Without going deep into the science, this is a huge waste of time. By using an extremely heavy band and skipping multiple steps, the straight arm strength and scapula stability will forever lag behind. Doing this feels good at the time. "Look everyone, I'm holding a full planche" with 40kg of band assistance. This setup isn't optimal for strength training. A foundation of strength, time and effort needs to be invested, working the initial progressions. The better approach is to use a light band on a planche progression which can be realistically held. This is the best way to use bands as it increases the amount of volume which would be otherwise impossible. The alternate option is to increase band assistance and train a planche progression one above your unassisted ability level. This is ideal for grooving strength in an increased forward lean position and being able to work within the hold duration each set. As tempting as it is to rely on a heavy band and jump into the straddle or full planche, don't. Use a light band with the progression you're currently training or a slightly heavier band with a planche one progression above the variation used in regular training.

REST PERIODS

Resting for the right amount of time is more important than most think, for maximising strength in the planche. As the position is a high intensity exercise generally held for a short period of time, the rest period must reflect this. To understand why rest periods are important, this section will describe how energy is formed and used for planche training.

The body's natural source of producing force or contracting muscles comes from a molecule called Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP). The body has a limited amount of this energy resource; ATP gets used up quickly with high intensity effort. There are two main categories for energy systems, Anaerobic and Aerobic Glycolysis. The Anaerobic systems which are most relevant for planche training include ATP-PC and Glycolytic. The ATP-PC system is for all out efforts lasting up to approximately 10s; this process does not need oxygen to generate ATP, it is anaerobic, or oxygen-independent. Due to the small stores of ATP, this system is fatigued quickly. Holding an all-out, maximal planche progression for 5s uses primarily this system. For longer duration holds or dynamic sets when exercise continues longer than a handful of seconds, the energy to regenerate ATP is increasingly derived from blood glucose and muscle glycogen stores, the glycolytic system contributes more heavily. This happens by a series of chemical

reactions to produce the energy store ATP. After a tough isometric or dynamic set, stored ATP will be depleted. Imagine doing a hard 15s planche, resting only 30s and trying again. The performance in the next set will be drastically reduced because of insufficient rest. Therefore, as we are doing high intensity strength training we want to have as much available ATP ready for our upcoming working sets. Rest periods in Planche Pro are determined by the intensity of the exercise. For the very high intensity, short duration and low rep based sets, rest will be longer. For the moderate intensity, longer duration and higher rep based sets, rest will be shorter. This is because the regeneration requirements for ATP are different. The goal is to hit the sweet spot of optimising recovery without workouts taking several hours to complete. If rest is optimal between sets, the outcome will be positive. Being well rested before the next set allows better performance and more total volume by the end of the workout. It's clear resting is important but now how long should the rest periods be?

Energy stores can decrease by approximately 50–70% during the first 5–30s of high-intensity exercise. ATP completely regenerates within three to five minutes. It will take around 3 minutes of rest to restore close to 100% of ATP stores, this is good enough for keeping workout times manageable. It's not practical to rest for 4–8 minutes between sets for an extra 1–2% ben-

efit at most. The following table combines years of research on rest periods and recovery. The percentages may change slightly for each rest interval but the underlying concept is well established.

Rest Time	% ATP Restored
30s	50
1 minute	75
1 minute 30s	87
2 minutes	93
2 minutes 30s	97
3 minutes	98.5

The importance of rest and the time needed for full recovery should be clear. To save the boredom of resting passively for 3 minutes between every set, the routines are designed to minimise downtime. Accessory exercises will be “supersets” to work on another attribute while the planche muscles are resting. An example of this would be core strength, wrist or hip mobility. As soon as a planche set is finished, move straight onto the accessory movement. After the accessory movement is finished, you will only need to rest for a minute or so, as indicated on the training program. The time taken to do the accessory exercise and shorter rest period totals around 3 minutes. As described earlier, 3 minutes is the sweet spot for ATP recovery with strength work. The arrangement of ex-

ercises and timing is the perfect combination of ATP recovery and efficiency of training for multiple strong planche sets.

The rest periods are long when accessory movements, what can I do?

Sometimes there will be periods where the number of planche sets is greater than the accessory supersets. The following section will explain what to do in this situation to optimise planche progress.

Letter	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest (Mins)
A1	Planche Pushup	5	3 - 4	2 / 3
A2	Bird Dog	3	10 - 12 + 10s L/R	

In the above example, do one set of planche pushups and then immediately go into the bird dog. After the core work, rest for 2 minutes and then repeat A1–A2 in this fashion for a total of 3 sets. For the remaining 2 sets of planche pushups, sit down and rest idle for 3 minutes before the next set. The reason for only 3 sets of core work is in relation to the dose response relationship. The 3 sets of core work is enough to get the desired outcome. The same is true for other circumstances where the number of accessory supersets does not match the total planche sets. A total of 5 sets

of core work would provide a negligible benefit over 3 sets. With this approach we're getting a good balance of being productive in most of the rest periods. For the final sets of planche work, taking 3 minute rest periods without distraction will be appreciated.

Most in the world of calisthenics are used to resting for short periods of time, which is a huge mistake for strength training. As we discussed earlier, this does NOT allow full recovery for multiple strong sets. If getting strong is the goal then rest like a strength athlete. Check out olympic lifters in a strength phase: they will sit passively and rest for at least 3–5 minutes. Resting the areas which are heavily stressed in the planche is a non-negotiable for optimal performance. A huge mistake in the calisthenics world is most people don't rest long enough between strength training rep ranges or hold durations. This reduces overall volume each session and over the course of a training cycle, rushing rest results in reduced strength gains.

To make things clear about expectations with rest periods, here is the summary:

Rest period DON'Ts

- *Upper body pushing exercises*
- *Handstand skill work*
- *Decrease rest times*
- *Scapula/Rotator Cuff exercises*

CORE TRAINING

Core exercises should always be for a specific purpose. With the planche in mind, core exercises need to teach the lower back to resist extension and also anterior tilting of the pelvis. Therefore, the exercises in Planche Pro are bracing movements. These bracing movements ingrain good motor patterns, awareness and proper technique for a lovely body shape. The mindset when doing the core exercises in the program is different to traditional ab training. It's not so much about feeling "the burn" in the abs or even the amount of reps being done each set. The most important part about core training for the planche comes down to control and speed of movement. Each rep or hold of a 'core exercise' should be done strictly without cheating. The low back and pelvis position are established and remain still during the set. Once the proper position is set, move mindfully using a controlled tempo and good breathing patterns. If you can't control the body in these simple core drills how do you expect to do so during a planche? The core exercises can get boring at times but they are essential for proper body mechanics during the planche. The goal isn't to constantly increase set time, exercise difficulty or sets and reps with core work. It's about progressively mastering the exercise with better control, reduced shaking, comfortable breathing and isometric pauses at difficult points. Adopting a quality over quantity approach and being mindful during core

training is the way to go. Only when a core exercise is mastered should progressive overload via traditional means be applied. Progress intensity, sets, reps or hold time when genuinely ready to stay challenged.

Most people are used to doing sit ups, crunches and leg raises for their core work. These exercises are good in their own right for general conditioning but won't be as specific to the bracing demands of a planche. This is why only the most relevant core based movements are included in Planche Pro. Core training is one of the less glamorous parts about planche training, but a lack of effort in this area is obvious to the astute observer.

Scapula Stability

This aspect of the training program is a vital component of what produces results. Strengthening the supporting muscles surrounding and interacting with the scapula has a direct impact on planche mastery. Simply training the planche hold is one way to do this, but is often insufficient for maximal progress. If it was this easy, everyone would train just the planche itself and we would see the average person holding a straddle with ease. This is why exercises which strengthen these weak links are scattered throughout the workouts. Without working on the smaller muscle groups in isolation, planche strength will be constantly "bottle necked". Anyone who has trained the planche in

the past will be familiar with this. If the scapula stability exercises are completed diligently, weak links will be minimised. Save the ignorant approach for those stuck with thinking from decades past.

The best information and advice has been saved to last. The following will summarise and conclude the major takeaways to apply for planche success.

FITNESSFAQS TOP 10 TIPS

Progress is rarely linear and filled with plenty of frustration and mistakes. I believe this personal struggle has made me a better coach, and provided the lessons and knowledge to create Planche Pro. I want to wrap up the eBook with 10 important strategies to follow and understand.

1 — Staying Lean and Nutrition

As I made clear on the Planche Pro website, I won't be providing a meals plan or dietary guidance. I've never claimed to be nor do I think I am an expert in nutrition. I'd prefer not to cover specific nutrition protocols as there are many opposing schools of thought. This ranges from the type of food consumed (meat vs vegan) to meal timing (intermittent fasting) to macronutrient ratios (protein, carbs, fats) and much more. Instead, I would rather focus on the principles for achieving and maintaining a lean physique and

why it is important. As body fat percentage reduces, relative strength increases. Less unnecessary fat on the body makes the planche easier to hold. It's very simple: we are doing a bodyweight exercise so any excess "baggage", aka body fat, will make the planche journey slower and more frustrating. Those thinking about training the planche while bulking should immediately reconsider. I've personally been there and done that, it's a constant uphill battle and you will always feel behind. There is nothing wrong with bulking if the goal is to build muscle, heck it's a requirement to add appreciable amounts of size. All I'm suggesting is if you want to bulk, place the planche on hold for a later time. If you want to build muscle and train at a surplus, my **Body By Rings** workout program is the way to go instead.

If you would rather weigh the same and train the planche while at caloric maintenance, this is absolutely fine. If you are an intermediate and training hard it's even possible to recomposition, getting slightly leaner at the same bodyweight. Let's say you start training the planche at 80kg and continue to weigh the same after a training cycle. When starting Planche Pro you could hold a tuck planche for 10s and a few months later, are able to do a 10s advanced tuck planche. It's clear to see the improvement in strength is neurological in nature as you are stronger at the same weight. Remaining at maintenance is a great option as it's easy

to do. You also won't get frustrated by the intensity of the planche constantly changing due to increases in your own bodyweight. I'd suggest honestly assessing body fat levels and deciding accordingly. For those visibly above 15% and truly wanting to progress fast in the planche, consider a gradual calorie deficit.

A calorie deficit is when more energy is expended than consumed on a daily basis. This can be achieved by diet, training or a combination of the two. If energy-out exceeds energy-in over multiple days and weeks, this will lead to a reduction in weight. If one trains intelligently and intensely during a cut, the inevitable decrease in muscle mass will be minimised. I'd only recommend dropping as much weight as you are willing to keep off. Fitness should be a lifestyle, I don't recommend following an approach or diet plan that can't be maintained. Quick fixes and drastic changes are not sustainable for long; if it sounds too good to be true or is too hard to follow then don't do it. For those of you who are able to reach and maintain a body fat % within the 8–12 range, kudos, you will reap the fastest progress with the planche. The feeling of planche training with a lean physique is incredible. It's highly addictive to feel a greater sense of control during the planche, this feeling will be amplified when several kilos have been dropped. To see what I mean, grab a 5kg weight and walk around with it. Now imagine this weight

distributed across the body during planche training. The planche is hard enough already, don't make it harder by being too heavy. Being leaner and working the planche will create a positive feedback loop to keep consistent because you will feel stronger and lighter during training. Besides, being leaner creates the illusion of looking bigger due to greater muscle separation — win-win. I feel this benefit makes up for the self-imposed sacrifices which come with the getting and staying lean.

Regardless of dietary plan or method, the following principles will ensure you can maintain a lean physique. This isn't anything revolutionary, the basics work, it's just difficult for most people to consistently follow.

- *Predominantly whole foods, fruit and vegetables*
- *Consume high satiety foods which are large in volume, nutritionally dense yet calorically sparing*
- *Adequate fibre intake*
- *Drink enough water*
- *Minimise unnecessary liquid calories*
- *Assess average weekly weight and adjust lifestyle accordingly*

It's important you set concrete nutrition goals before committing to the planche. It will save months of frustration and slow progress. Find your personal driving factors and determine why the planche is important

to you. These reasons will increase willpower during times of weakness when wanting to stop training or eating sensibly.

2 — Recovery

Those of you who have followed FitnessFAQs for any length of time will be aware of my focus on the big picture. The goal for anyone who trains seriously should be to maximise recovery. Firstly we must identify the need for progressively challenging planche training to get stronger. If you don't work beyond your previous ability level, you won't change. The body is very comfortable remaining in homeostasis (the same). Forcing the body into a state of discomfort and fatigue is a given and we know this. People constantly overlook the other side of the story: recovery. To start with, I couldn't care less about spending money on useless supplements to potentially, maybe get a 1% improvement. I'm not going to recommend some woo-woo new age theory spouted by a guru with no longstanding evidence. It's mainly deceit to upsell you the latest magic supplement or exclusive course. My thinking is what can we do or change which will produce the biggest results for our effort invested. Trust me, I've tried to find alternate methods for increasing recovery naturally and none, I repeat none, are as significant as sleep. If you're sipping on intra-workout BCAAs while supplementing dozens of vitamins, yet only sleeping 5 hours a day, you're an idiot.

The problem with sleep is it's difficult to package and sell, this is why you don't hear it highlighted as heavily as it ought to be. The amount of sleep each person needs is dependent on age and lifestyle, the sleep topic can be made complicated or simple. We aren't ignorant about sleep, all it takes is some individual reflection to call upon how you personally operate with varying amounts of sleep. Aim for an amount of sleep per day which you can commit to consistently. Regular sleep hygiene is optimal, do your best to sleep and wake at a similar time each day. Good quality sleep is the biggest performance enhancing method in the recovery toolbox. Neglect the importance of sleep and expect training sessions which feel difficult and progress which is slow. Make sleep an important part of your routine and personal goals will be reached.

3 — Planche Priority

If I could go back in time and give advice to my younger self, I would say: The planche is an exercise which demands attention to progress at the rate you want.

I would be looking at a younger version of myself who seems to want fast planche progress, but is unwilling to do what it takes to get there. To expand on this point further I will give a personal scenario and reflection in retrospect.

I had made the decision to reach a 5s straddle planche, the good part was the goal was specific, measurable

and realistic for me. This is much better than most people who will say “I want to improve my planche” as there is nothing tangible about this statement.

The problem lay with the approach being used to reach the 5s straddle planche. My actions at the time did not match the work and structure needed to get there.

My planche work was never done at the start of a training session. As simple as this sounds, I couldn't give full energy to the planche. This would consistently result in a sub-optimal training stimulus, no surprise progress was slow to non-existent. I expected fast planche progress by adding the planche to my existing plan. This was a mistake as a plan had to be made for the planche specifically and as the focus. Generally it's not what you should do more, rather what should you take away. It has taken me years to understand this concept and I constantly need to remind myself and my students of this reality.

I've found when it comes to the planche, this needs to be the one and only skill being trained. At the very least, serving as the primary portion of your training time when it comes to pushing movements. What I'm saying here isn't black and white, of course you can still progress with the planche while working on other pushing exercises or strength skills. The problem will be the rate of progress: it will be slower than

you would prefer. This creates a demotivating internal vibe which will turn you away from the consistency needed to improve. The biggest driver of effort is progression, if you aren't progressing you won't work hard and will be another person who doesn't unlock the planche. Dedicate several months to the planche without distraction. Give yourself an honest chance to see what you are capable of by following Planche Pro. Don't be like everyone else in the bodyweight fitness community who jumps from exercise to exercise every session.

4 — Exercise Selection

The goal is: to become a Planche Pro, you need to train like one. Nothing will improve a planche faster than training planche specific exercises. Someone who can do 100kg dips but doesn't consistently progress or train the planche, will be strong in dips but weak in the planche. Strength is highly neurological, meaning you need to teach the central nervous system to be efficient and effective with the planche. This is why the Planche Pro workouts are heavily focused on the planche with minimal non-planche accessory movements for strength. When creating Planche Pro, I had to distance myself from previous temptations. I caught myself thinking, *maybe I should include more accessory pressing exercises, these will be great for improving general pushing strength for those following.* As mentioned earlier, non-essential exercises

will cause more fatigue with minimal gain. This isn't a smart way to make use of training time and energy; it won't transfer as specifically to the planche. Straight arm and bent arm strength using the range of motion and joint angles specifically for the static or dynamic planche, that's best.

5 — Training Frequency

By this point you can call me captain obvious, I don't mind. My job is to remind you about the simple points which get overlooked when feeling overwhelmed by the what, how and why of planche training. Don't make the planche out to be this puzzle which can't be solved, it responds to the same principles ruling all exercises. To progress with the planche at an optimal speed, the exposure needs to be just right. One session a week? Not the best option as there is only so much which can be done in one go. The opposite end of the spectrum is training every day, it's impossible to improve daily this way due to minimal recovery. Planche Pro was created with the goal of maximising exercise intensity, volume and weekly training frequency to produce consistent gains.

6 — Training Intensity

Intensity for bodyweight training refers to the difficulty of the exercise in relation to a maximum hold time or maximum reps possible. The intensity in training should improve similar attributes to those which suit

the goal. If looking to improve top-end strength, using a low intensity exercise will have minimal transfer. It's frustrating to see others training the planche with the right exercises but with the wrong training intensity. A modification to exercise progression takes care of matching the training intensity to the goal. This small change to the training approach is often all that's needed to break longstanding planche plateaus.

7 — Drop the ego

I believe the ego can hold us back from wanting to use resistance bands or fundamental exercises. It's common to see people testing their strength instead of training. With the pressure of social media, every session turns into show and tell, wanting to prove something to others. A bad form planche is held for a fraction of a second and the picture or video is taken. Training a planche progression which is too hard to repeat for time and quality sets isn't training smart. It's a sign of wanting more output than the body is capable of producing. Sideline instant gratification for productive training sessions which will progressively build strength. It's not so glamorous to drop the intensity of an exercise or use a resistance band anchored around the body. Drop the ego and work with the right exercise setup to hit the sets and reps in the program. Save testing strength and social media posts for deloads or at the end of a training cycle.

8 — Weak link training

Earlier we discussed how important it is to choose exercises which mimic the planche and how they should be the priority. When this is combined with strengthening areas of weakness, magic happens. The planche is a complicated exercise and when simply doing the exercise isn't working, doing the exercise more isn't the answer. This is the reason why we see so many banana backs, sunken shoulders and bent elbow planches online. The key areas include the rotator cuff muscles and the scapula stabilisers of the mid-back. Having enough mobility in the wrists and hips is also vital for injury prevention and a comfortable planche.

9 — Motivation

The planche is by no means an easy skill. Progress is incremental and you will sometimes feel stuck despite being consistent and training hard. It can also feel like a lonely path as those around you are sticking to conventional exercises and training methods while you continue grinding in isolation. It's important to minimise reduced motivation and self-doubt. This is why from time to time when these emotions are felt, sourcing external motivation will help to keep you going. Follow people online who have similar stats to you and are strong at the planche. This will open your eyes to reality; the planche can be done. It's nice to be reminded of what is possible and should at least

minimise the self imposed limitations we tend to place on ourselves. It's crazy to see how the standard of strength and performance changes over time. I remember in the early 2000s it was breathtaking to see a bent arm planche and banana planche pushups. To those of you reading this it might sound laughable, this was honestly the pinnacle of strength at the time. Now when searching planche on social media, the standard has definitely been raised.

10 — Reflecting (training program, filming, photos)

The most powerful form of intrinsic motivation is when seeing the personal growth which has been made. Planche progress is going to be progressive and often it's difficult to feel or see the improvements happening. Being objective by reflecting on the time held during a set or number of reps is a good place to start. The easiest way to do this is comparing numbers from week to week or month to month in the training log. This way you can detach from how you feel during each training session and be reminded about the real progress over time. The biggest regret I hear people say is, "I wish I had taken more videos of my planche journey." Video is an amazing tool for self reflection and being able to self coach. The footage can be analysed intra-workout to make corrections for the upcoming set. Comparisons can also be made between weeks to see minor improvements in tech-

nique such as an increased forward lean or improved protraction. This is why it's recommended to film at least one planche set every single week. The process of setting up a phone to film takes a second and over time you will have a catalogue planche to reflect on.

This concludes my 10 most important planche tips. Make sure to put the theory into practice and incorporate the changes to your lifestyle, training and psychology. Promise yourself to make them a priority.

FINAL WORDS

That's a wrap for the Planche Pro eBook. There is a fair amount of information to soak in and re-reading the information at some stage will be useful. A second glance at the content will help to fully understand everything from a theoretical but also pragmatic point of view. Now that you are armed with a training program and comprehensive exercise videos, it's up to you to put in the work. Stay consistent, train hard, progress sensibly, and take ownership of factors within your control. At FitnessFAQs we wish you all the best with working towards and reaching the straddle planche, a feat of strength few will ever reach. How far will you take your planche journey? Only you can answer this question and prove what you are truly capable of.

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