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How to progress to handstand push ups

Some exercises just look awesome. We've all seen someone show off a move that takes unbelievable balance, concentration, and strength, appearing to bend the laws of physics and defy gravity. These are what we're calling Hero moves, the high-level maneuvers that you've watched slack-jawed on Instagram but never imagined you'd be able to pull off yourself. Good news: With the right plan, you can learn exactly what it takes to master these Hero moves. CrossFit coach and former USA National Gymnastics champ David Durante is confident that he can help you master the handstand, a classic gymnastics maneuver that takes a remarkable amount of strength, balance, and body control to pull off correctly. "I like to think of a well-rounded handstand as this triumvirate where strength, stability, and position are all worked on in their own specific needs," says Durante. After you follow his progressions and put in a ton of work, you'll be able to show off that coordination and movement mastery, too. This content is imported from Instagram. You may be able to find the same content in another format, or you may be able to find more information, at their web site. Before jumping into the progressions, Durante says that you should make sure you have the proper setup. Hand and Finger PositioningShoulder width, hands facing forward with wide spread fingertipsEyelineHead in neutral position in line with shoulder, looking at a fixed position near your thumbShoulder PositioningAngle that allows you to go to (then beyond) 180 degrees without limiting hip positionHip PositioningWork to reach hollow positionStrength FoundationOnce you know how your body should be situated, you'll need to be sure you're strong enough to pull off a proper amount of time. Build to a 15 second hold, then 15-second rest. Next, try 30 on, 30 off, 1 minute on, 1 minute off—you get the picture. Just don't move up to the next time split until you can hold for the full period. If you can't keep yourself up at all, use a wall to get used to being upside down. Breathing Upside DownFind positions to practice the same breathing pattern you do upright when you're upside down. Try to focus on breathing in a plank position, then leaning against a wall, then upside down. This content is imported from Instagram. You may be able to find the same content in another format, or you may be able to find more information, at their web site. These drills will get you prepped for the full handstand—but not all of them make you flip upside down. Arms Directly Over Head 6 reps of 10-second holdsGround Hollow Body Line6 reps of 10-second holdsPosition ProgressionsProgression 1 - Angled Wall Hold6 reps of 20 second holdsProgression 2 - 7 Position6 sets of 10-second angled hold into 10-second 7 position holdProgression 3 - 1-Leg Extension6 sets of 5-second angled hold into 5-second 7 position hold into 5-second 1-leg extensionAccessory DrillsTry these accessory drills to work on the soft tissue of your under arm and the T-spine. Prone RaiseUnderhand Grip Shoulder StretchStability FoundationDurante says the stability portion of the handstand is too often ignored. This should be addressed in two factors:Micro Stability - The ability of your fingertips to engage against the groundMacro Stability - What your shoulders are doing to support and stabilize your bodyWork on honing your stability with these drills:Single-Plate Overhead Stability DrillDouble-Plate Overhead Stability DrillBack-to-Wall Floater DrillStomach-to-Wall Floater DrillOnce you've mastered each of these progressions, you'll be ready for the real thing. When you're working up to the full movement, Durante recommends working on the progressions every day. That said, you shouldn't only focus on handstands—on some days, Durante says even 10 to 15 minutes of work can be helpful. With all of the drills and foundational moves to master, you don't necessarily have to get upside down every time, either. Hero moves are a great way to show off your hard work and athleticism—so if you can pull off the handstand, don't be shy! Share your skills with us (@menshealthmag) and Durante (@davedurante), and experiment with the places you pull off the move. If you want to learn other Hero moves, check out our explainer on the front lever above, along with the Muscleup, Pistol Squat, Superman Pushups and the L-Sit. The world can never have too many heroes. This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io Remember the day when handstand push-ups showed up in a WOD for the very first time in your CrossFit® life? You want me to do WHAT!? A push-up, upside down? And you thought push-ups were already hard enough... HSPU's can be intimidating at first. But if we take a step back and strip down the movement, get comfortable with being upside down, and work on strict HSPU's before kipping... it can become a movement that you truly learn to love. Along with most CrossFit® gymnastic movements, it's pretty crucial to develop the strict version of the HSPU before you develop the kipping version. If you try to learn kipping HSPU's first, you can end up putting a ton of stress on your cervical spine since you haven't developed the strength yet to support yourself upside on the mat. Then add the compression and explosion upwards in the movement, and it can be a bit dangerous to try prior to getting strict HSPU's first. So, how can we develop strict them? Let's walk through some HSPU drills. First, I recommend getting off the wall all together, and starting with a box. Box HSPU's are a great progression towards eventually getting on the wall. But remember, form is still super important here. Correct form: Put your feet on the edge of the box, and walk your hands in so that your torso is as vertical as possible, with your head neutral, looking forward towards the box. From there, lower down, touch your head to the floor and push back up. Scaling for this movement could mean adding a mat under your head to reduce the range of motion, or walking your hands out a bit so that you aren't quite as vertical. #2. Seated Dumbbell Press Another great drill to help you work towards strict HSPU's - that can be supersetted with box HSPU's - is a seated dumbbell press. Start sitting on the ground, with your legs straight out. Have a set of dumbbells that are a fairly challenging weight, and then do a press with them from your shoulders. Keep your core tight, and lock the dumbbells out at the top. Control the descent back to your shoulders (don't just slam them back down) and repeat. A progression for this to make it a bit harder is to add slow negatives into the seated press. Once you lock out at the top, slowly lower the dumbbells back down to your shoulders (try counting 1, 2, 3 on the way down). This mimics the same movement as if you were upside down, lowering your head to the mat, and develops that exact same strength that you need for when you move to the wall! Speaking of the wall - let's head there. #3. Handstand Holds For the first drill on the wall, I would recommend first simply kicking up and practicing handstand holds on the wall for a few seconds at a period of time (working towards longer periods as you get more comfortable) or repeating a few sets of wall kick-ups, which helps you to get more comfortable with actually getting up onto the wall. For more handstand hold progression ideas, check out our past post on handstand walks here. Once you get comfortable with being on the wall and have your bearings, we can start working on scaled HSPU's. #4. Scaled HSPU The last HSPU progression drill is to actually do strict a handstand push-up on the wall, with ab mats or pads under your head to reduce the range of motion as much or as little as you may need. Try first starting with three pads, and then reducing the amount of pads based on your comfort and strength... eventually working down to zero ab mats, which would be a strict HSPU! A key here (just like with the seated dumbbell presses) is to scale enough so that you can control the descent, and not just lower down completely uncontrolled (and likely slamming down onto your head). Remember: strict HSPU's before kipping is important, safe, and will help your strength game in the long run. Think you're ready to move on to kipping HSPU's? I'll leave you with a simple yet efficient tip to keep in mind when you're hanging out upside down against the wall. One of the most common errors I see with athletes is that they tend to lock out incorrectly when attempting HSPU's. So to simplify things, let's flip the HSPU upside down (or right side up), and think of it as a similar movement to a push press. What is one of the biggest keys to doing a push press? Pushing your head through at the top, as you lock your arms out. The exact same thing can be said when doing handstand push-ups. Push your head through as you lock out your arms; it will give you more 'lock-out power', and will also help you to stay on the wall as you kip through HSPU's. Like we mentioned in our last post, HSPU's have made an appearance in the Open the past three years running, and I wouldn't raise an eyebrow if they show up again this year. Be prepared, and start practicing HSPU's now! Try out the drills and comment below. Let me know what your favorite HSPU drills are - what works for you, or what may not. More of a visual learner? Check out our video on the HSPU progression: Comment below with any questions you might have on HSPUs - we're here to help! How can I progress to a handstand pushup?When working towards Handstand Push Ups, your progression should cover various aspects including overhead/pressing strength, handstand drills to get comfortable upside down and kipping drills. Why are handstand push ups so hard?Many people find HSPU too difficult because of what we call power to weight ratio; i.e. you're not strong enough for your own bodyweight. If this ratio is imbalanced, it will make learning HSPU really hard! Two ways you can fix it: get stronger, or get leaner (or a combination of both)! How do I get strong enough to do handstand pushups?You can do a variety of strength building exercises to become strong enough, including: all overhead pressing, handstand pushup negatives, handstand holds and planks!

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