

The **HEELS** UP Workout

Prevent injury and boost athleticism with these floating-heel exercises.

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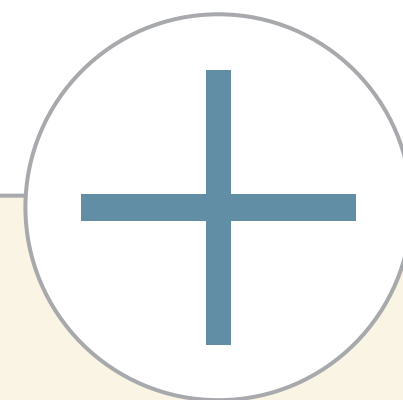
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WEEKS 1 TO 3: PREPARE

Perform the following two moves two or three times per week for three weeks. Incorporate them into your warm-up or wherever it makes sense in your routine.



**1. Floating-Heel Balance
With Toe Smash**



To see the
moves in
action,
check out
the online
version of
this article.



**2. Standing One-
Legged Calf Raise**

1. Floating-Heel Balance With Toe Smash

Perform two sets of 15 seconds per foot



- Stand with your feet parallel and shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent.
- Shift your entire weight onto your right foot, holding on to something stable for balance if needed. Raise your left foot off the floor.
- Lift your right heel off the floor and grip the floor with the toes of your right foot.
- Hold this position for 15 seconds, then repeat on the other side.

PRO TIP: Perform this move without shoes, if possible.

2. Standing One-Legged Calf Raise

Perform two or three sets of 15 to 20 reps per leg



- Stand on a step or sturdy box with the balls of both feet planted and heels hanging off the edge. Hold on to something stable for balance.
- Raise your left foot so you are balancing on the ball of your right foot only.
- Slowly lower your right heel as far as possible. This is your starting position.
- Keeping your body upright, push through the ball of your right foot and rise up as high as possible.
- Reverse the move slowly. That's one rep. Perform 15 to 20 reps per leg.

WEEKS 4 TO 20: PROGRESS & PRACTICE

After the initial three weeks of preparatory training, progress through the next four moves one at a time, spending four weeks practicing each exercise.

For each movement, perform three sets of the exercise every time you train your lower body, substituting the move for any conventional lower-body move you're already doing. (The exceptions are heavy squats and deadlifts; keep your heels on the floor for those moves.)

Each week, attempt to increase the weight, reps, or both without compromising form. Every four weeks, move to the next exercise on the list. Work your way through the progression in this manner.

Practicing this position prepares you for similar challenges outside the gym.

“Very rarely does anything happen with your heels on the ground.”

–John Rusin, DPT, a strength-and-conditioning coach and founder of the Pain-Free Performance Specialist Certification program



3. Landmine Floating-Heel Goblet Squat



4. Floating-Heel Split Squat



5. Floating-Heel Step-Up With Knee Raise



6. Floating-Heel Rear-Foot-Elevated Split Squat



To see the moves in action, check out the online version of this article.

3. Landmine Floating-Heel Goblet Squat

Perform three sets of 12 to 15 reps



- Place a pair of 25-pound weight plates on the floor near the free end of a barbell in a landmine setup.
- Lift the barbell's free end to chest height and take hold of it. Step the balls of your feet onto the barbell plates so your feet are parallel to the floor, shoulder width apart.
- Slowly lower into a deep squat. If you can, drop your heels toward the floor but not so far that they touch the floor.
- Reverse the move until you're fully upright and you've raised your heels as high as possible. Slowly lower your heels until the soles of your feet are parallel to the floor. Repeat the move for 12 to 15 reps.

4. Floating-Heel Split Squat

Perform three sets of 12 to 15 reps per leg



- Holding a dumbbell in your left hand, assume the top position of a lunge, with the ball of your right foot planted on a 25-pound plate and your right heel hovering off the edge.
- Keeping your torso upright and your right foot parallel to the floor, slowly bend at your knees and hips until your left knee is close to the floor, or as far as it's possible to descend without pain.
- Reverse the move until you're standing upright. Perform 12 to 15 reps, then repeat on the other side.
- Too easy? Perform the move holding a pair of dumbbells.

5. Floating-Heel Step-Up With Knee Raise

Perform three sets of 12 to 15 reps per leg



- Stand facing a sturdy box or bench.
- Place the ball of your right foot on the box.
- Slowly lean your weight onto the ball of your right foot and — with minimal assistance from your left foot — step up fully, raising your left knee as high as possible toward your chest.
- Slowly return to the starting position, lowering your left foot to the floor.
- Repeat for a total of 12 to 15 reps.
- Switch legs and perform the exercise with your left foot on the box.
- Too easy? Perform the move holding a pair of dumbbells.

6. Floating-Heel Rear-Foot-Elevated Split Squat

Perform three sets of 12 to 15 reps per leg



- Perform the floating-heel split squats (No. 4 above) with your back foot elevated on a knee-high bench, box, or step.
- Repeat for a total of 12 to 15 reps per side.
- Too easy? Perform the move holding a pair of dumbbells.

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