

TRAINING GUIDE

The Back Training Guide

Build a stronger, more resilient back and fix that desk-job posture

A weak back is one of the most common issues in dads who sit at a desk all day, or have physical jobs. Building it properly improves posture, reduces injury risk, and makes you look noticeably better in clothes.

This guide covers everything you need.

8 Best Exercises

Weekly
Programming

Progressive
Overload

Do's & Don'ts

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WHY BACK TRAINING MATTERS

Your back muscles counteract everything a desk job or lifting heavy does to your posture. A strong back pulls your shoulders back, protects your spine under load, and is one of the biggest visual differences between a dad who trains and one who doesn't.

VOLUME & FREQUENCY

- **FREQUENCY**

2x per week minimum, covering both vertical and horizontal pulling patterns.

- **WEEKLY SETS**

12-16 working sets across pulling movements for real, visible progress.

- **REP RANGE**

6-10 for heavier rows and pull-ups, 10-15 for lighter accessory work.

THE FOUNDATION RULE

Balance vertical pulling (pull-ups, pulldowns) with horizontal pulling (rows) every week. Most dads over-favour one and end up with an imbalanced, less resilient back.

8 BEST EXERCISES TO BUILD YOUR BACK

Pull-Up

COMPOUND

3-4 × 6-10

Vertical pulling. Essential for width and overall back development.

Lat Pulldown

COMPOUND

3 × 8-12

A great pull-up alternative that lets you control the load precisely.

Barbell Row

COMPOUND

3-4 × 6-10

Horizontal pulling builds thickness and postural strength.

Dumbbell Row

UNILATERAL

3 × 8-12 ea.

Corrects side-to-side imbalances that a barbell row can mask.

Deadlift

COMPOUND

3 × 5-8

The ultimate posterior chain builder, back included.

Seated Cable Row

COMPOUND

3 × 10-12

Great for controlled horizontal pulling with consistent tension.

Face Pull

ISOLATION

3 × 15-20

Small movement, huge impact on shoulder health and posture correction.

Straight-Arm Pulldown

ISOLATION

3 × 12-15

Isolates the lats without involving the biceps as much as other pulls.

HOW TO FIT THIS INTO YOUR WEEK

Pick the structure that matches the days you can realistically commit to, not the one you wish you had.

2-3 Days Available — Full Body

One vertical pull and one horizontal pull per session, rotating exercises to manage fatigue and joint stress.

4 Days Available — Upper/Lower

Both upper days include back work. Day 1: heavier pulling (rows, pull-ups). Day 2: higher volume (cable work, face pulls).

5-6 Days Available — Push/Pull/Legs

Back is the primary focus of your Pull day(s). Lead with the heaviest compound pull, finish with face pulls.

PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD — HOW TO ACTUALLY GET STRONGER

Doing the same weight for the same reps forever is why most people stop seeing results. Progress needs to be tracked and deliberate. Use these methods, in this order of priority.

1

Add reps first (double progression)

Work within a rep range, e.g. 8-12. Add a rep each week before adding weight. Once you hit the top of the range for all sets, increase the load.

2

Add weight

Once reps are maxed out, add a small amount of weight and drop back to the bottom of your rep range. Repeat the cycle.

3

Add sets

Increase total volume gradually across a training block — e.g. 3 sets in week 1, building to 4-5 sets by week 4.

4

Improve technique and range of motion

Better control and a fuller range at the same weight is genuinely harder and drives more progress than people realise.

5

Manipulate tempo

A slower 3-4 second lowering phase increases time under tension without touching the weight on the bar.

EXAMPLE: 4-WEEK BARBELL ROW PROGRESSION

Week	Target
1	3 × 8 @ moderate working weight
2	3 × 9 @ same weight
3	3 × 10 @ same weight
4	Add weight, reset to 3 × 8, repeat cycle

DO

- ✓ Focus on squeezing your shoulder blades together on every row. Most people rush this.
- ✓ Balance vertical and horizontal pulling across the week for complete development.
- ✓ Include face pulls weekly if you sit at a desk. This alone fixes a lot of posture issues.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't round your back on deadlifts or rows, this is where injuries happen.
- ✗ Don't use momentum to swing weight up on rows, control the movement fully.
- ✗ Don't neglect back training because it's less visible in the mirror than chest or arms.

WANT THE FULL SYSTEM, NOT JUST ONE PIECE?

This guide is one piece of the puzzle. The Fit Dad Challenge brings training, nutrition and mindset together into one 6-week programme built around a dad's actual life.

[Join the Fit Dad Challenge — £99](#)