

TRAINING GUIDE

The Hamstring Training Guide

The most under-trained muscle in a dad's routine and why that matters

Hamstrings get forgotten because they're not a mirror muscle. But weak hamstrings are one of the biggest contributors to lower back pain as you get older. This guide covers the exercises, the programming, and how to progress.

8 Best Exercises

Weekly
Programming

Progressive
Overload

Do's & Don'ts

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PT · Dad of 2

WHY HAMSTRINGS MATTER

Your hamstrings control hip extension and knee flexion and they're central to running, jumping, and simply standing up without your lower back taking the strain. A hamstring-to-quad imbalance is one of the most common causes of knee pain and hamstring strains in men over 30.

VOLUME & FREQUENCY

- **FREQUENCY**

2x per week. Once with a heavier hinge movement, once with a lighter accessory day.

- **WEEKLY SETS**

8-12 working sets is enough for most dads to see real progress without excess fatigue.

- **REP RANGE**

6-10 reps for hinge movements, 10-15 reps for curls and isolation work.

THE FOUNDATION RULE

Every hamstring session should include a proper hip hinge movement. A Romanian deadlift or good morning before any curls. The hinge pattern builds the strength; curls refine it.

8 BEST EXERCISES TO BUILD YOUR HAMSTRINGS

Romanian Deadlift

COMPOUND

3-4 × 6-10

The single best hamstring builder there is. Learn this movement properly before adding load.

Conventional Deadlift

COMPOUND

3 × 5-8

Trains the whole posterior chain including hamstrings, with real carryover strength.

Good Morning

COMPOUND

3 × 8-10

Underused but excellent for hamstring and lower back strength together.

Nordic Curl

COMPOUND

3 × 4-8

Brutally effective eccentric strengthening. Start with an assisted version.

Single-Leg RDL

UNILATERAL

3 × 8-10 ea.

Builds balance and unilateral strength. Genuinely useful for everyday movement too.

Leg Curl (machine)

ISOLATION

3 × 10-15

Direct isolation. Great for people without heavy equipment or a home gym.

Band Leg Curl

ISOLATION

3 × 12-15

A solid home-friendly substitute for a leg curl machine.

Glute-Ham Raise

COMPOUND

3 × 6-10

Advanced but highly effective if your gym has the equipment for it.

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 hinge movement per session (RDL or deadlift variation).

4 Days Available — Upper/Lower

Two leg days. Day 1: heavier hinge focus (RDL or deadlift, 6-8 reps). Day 2: higher volume (leg curls, single-leg RDL, 10-15 reps).

5-6 Days Available — Push/Pull/Legs

Hamstrings land on your Legs day(s), typically after quad-dominant work. Lead with the hinge, finish with isolation.

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 ROMANIAN DEADLIFT 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

- ✓ Keep a slight bend in the knee throughout an RDL. Locked knees is a common technical error.
- ✓ Feel the stretch, not the load, on the way down. Control matters more than speed here.
- ✓ Pair hamstring work with quad work across the week for balanced leg development.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't round your lower back to chase a heavier RDL. That defeats the purpose entirely.
- ✗ Don't ignore hamstrings just because they're not visible. They support everything else you do.
- ✗ Don't go straight to heavy weight on an RDL without mastering the hip hinge pattern first.

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](#)