

# No Weights, No Problem

By Chris White

It is a common misconception to believe that the gym is a place where you ‘lift weights’. While this is certainly true, it doesn’t have to be. Occasionally we like to prove the point that the weight we carry around on a daily basis (i.e. ourselves) is often enough to elicit a training response, especially when it’s structured in a manner similar to the one below. So, to prove our point, we wanted to give you a little sample of a bodyweight circuit we used last week in the gym that crushed even our most ‘fit’ clients. Enjoy!

## “BEWARE THE BODYWEIGHT EXERCISE”

**Warm-up:** Practice each movement to ensure understanding and proper technique.

Then:

120M Walking Lunges +  
15x Clap Push-ups +  
60s Squat Hold +  
60s High Plank +  
30x 2-count Split Jumps +  
30x 2-count Mountain Climbers +  
30m Forward Bear Crawl +  
30m Backward Bear Crawl +  
10x Burpee/Box Jump @ 24” +  
Max Ring Dips +  
500M run



2 sets, rest as needed between sets

Certain standards must be met to ensure consistency from one person to the next. An accurate comparison of performance can only be made when all participants are playing by the same set of ‘rules’. So, when performing this circuit make sure to adopt the following standards:

**Lunges**- Lunge from one step to the next without stopping in between. A proper lunge is one in which the back knee touches the floor, the front foot is flat, and the trunk remains upright through all phases of the movement.

**Clap Push-ups** – The most important aspect of any push-up is to keep the spine neutral. In other words, reaching forward with the head (“dragging the head” as we like to say), over rounding through the thoracic spine, and poor lumbar control are all signs of improper technique. Perhaps the most common fault is an inability to control the lumbar spine, secondary to either poor abdominal control or lack of pushing strength. Either way, a more controllable form of the push-up should be used if the above standard cannot be met.

**Squat Hold**- If this isometric hold is easy, chances are you’re doing something wrong. Sitting too deep into the squat takes the onus off the leg musculature as the trunk literally rests on the thighs. On the other hand, being too high doesn’t permit enough tension. Sitting with the thighs perfectly parallel to the floor with the trunk in a fully upright position is the standard for this hold. Also, the heels should be flat and the lumbar spine as neutral as possible.

**High Plank**- High planks are a test of upper body and abdominal control. Breathing in the position is a challenge with the abdominal wall under tension. Nonetheless, the spine should be neutral (identical to the push-up standard) and the hands placed directly underneath the shoulders. Common faults include shifting back away from the hands or dropping the pelvis below the level of the shoulders. Overcorrecting by raising the pelvis too high is also poor technique.

**Split Jumps**- Three things make a good split jump: 1.) both feet must leave and contact the ground simultaneously. 2.) every repetition should see the back knee touch the ground and the legs extend fully as the body is lifted from the ground. 3.) the trunk must remain vertical. As fatigue sets in a common technical fault is when the trunk flexes forward uncontrollably.

**Mountain Climbers** – This is an old military exercise. The method we like to see is a piston-like action of the legs, with the front knee reaching the elbow with the foot *off* the ground. The hands are placed under the shoulders and the spine is held relatively neutral. Inability to get the knee to the elbow

with the foot off the ground is common. If this is the case a descended version should be used.

**Bear Crawl** – What makes the bear crawl so great is that you don't have to be ultra-coordinated to do it. It is a neurologically 'dumb' exercise. Despite this it is often performed incorrectly. The most common error we see is a homo-lateral crawl pattern. That is, the right arm and right leg move forward together. This is incorrect and indicative of a possible neurological dysfunction stemming from childhood. A well-executed bear crawl involves the contra-lateral action of the right arm and left leg. As the right arm moves forward the left leg moves forward in harmony. Be careful not to let the legs get too close to the arms, as this is usually a compensation for a fatigued upper body.

**Burpee/Box Jump** – The standard rules for a burpee apply: Hands down, feet back, push-up, pop the feet back up to the hands, jump and clap above the head. The difference here is that instead of jumping and clapping, the trainee jumps onto a box. Once on the box stand fully at the top to 'finish' the movement.

**Ring Dips**- Ring dips present too much of a stabilization and strength challenge for many people. If this is the case, a standard dip bar can be used, or bands incorporated to assist in the movement. Regardless of the version used, when lowering the body the upper arm should reach parallel to the floor and full extension at the top. Anything short of this and the repetition does not count. Be careful if you have any current or previous history of shoulder pathology, as dips place tremendous stress on the biceps tendon.

If you have questions about the movement 'standards' shoot us an email to [info@goprimalfitness.com](mailto:info@goprimalfitness.com) and we'll be happy to explain. Train Hard!