

Parkour Push-ups: 25 Push-ups for the Traceur



Ben Musholt

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Any physical activity has an inherent risk of injury, including bodily death. Before beginning any exercise routine, including the exercises illustrated in this book, please seek medical clearance from a physician or other licensed medical professional. The author wishes you to have fun in your pursuit of your fitness, but please: Be safe!

Introduction

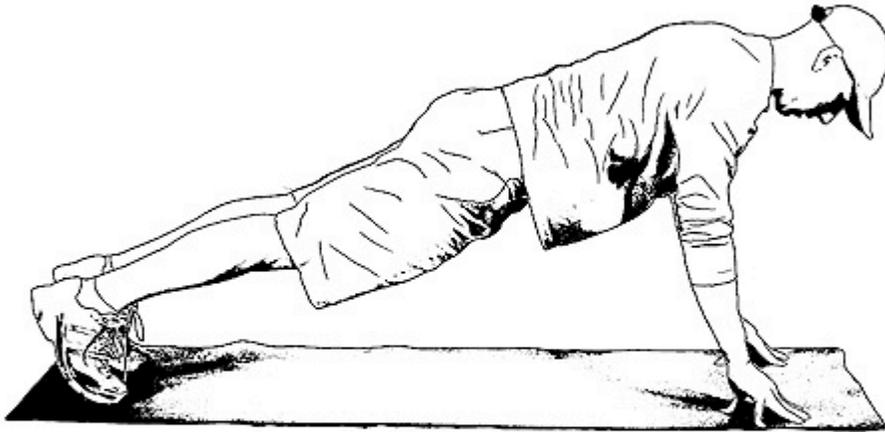
It's safe to say that everyone is already familiar with the push-up as a key movement in the pursuit of physical fitness. It is widely recognized as the "king" of body-weight exercises, for its pure simplicity, as well as the variety of different ways it can be performed. As a parkour practitioner, you're undoubtedly already incorporating push-ups into your strength and conditioning routine. The goal of *Parkour Push-ups* is to introduce you to 25 new varieties of push-ups, which should have a positive impact on your training and performance.

The rigors of being a traceur place a high degree of stress on your bones, joints, and musculature. It's essential to condition your body to the multiple jumps, sprints, rolls, and occasional crashes, that you encounter while out running. If you only ever performed an exercise in a single plane of movement, you'd never provide the type of variety that your body needs to be prepared for the unexpected ways it must move when being athletic. The 25 push-ups highlighted in this e-book will force you to try different hand positions, different angles of your torso, and even suggest some basic equipment that you can use. The different push-up positions will help condition your shoulder, elbow and wrist joints, to a variety of different stressors.

By themselves, push-ups are a great way to train upper body and core strength, but they certainly do not constitute a complete fitness regimen. To remain a healthy and strong traceur, it's critical that you also perform targeted lower body, back, and abdominal strengthening. Don't forget the need to perform dynamic warm-ups, joint mobility, and stretching as needed before and after your workouts.

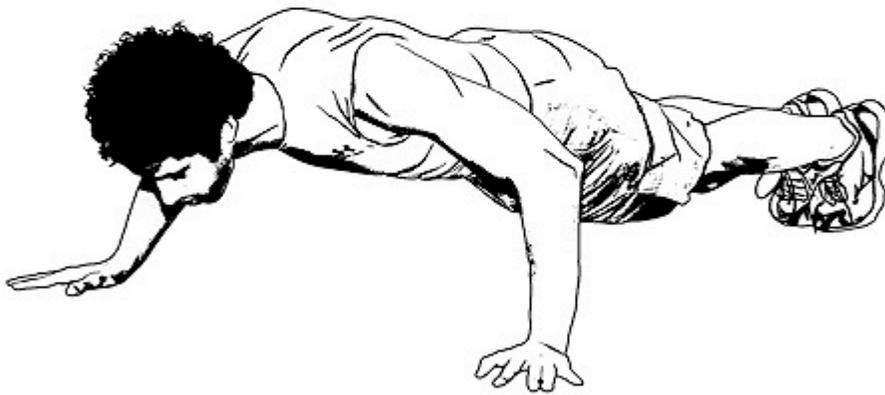
I hope you find these 25 push-up variations helpful. If you like them, be sure to look for *Parkour Conditioning*, which highlights over 150 movements for whole body strength and flexibility.

The Push-ups



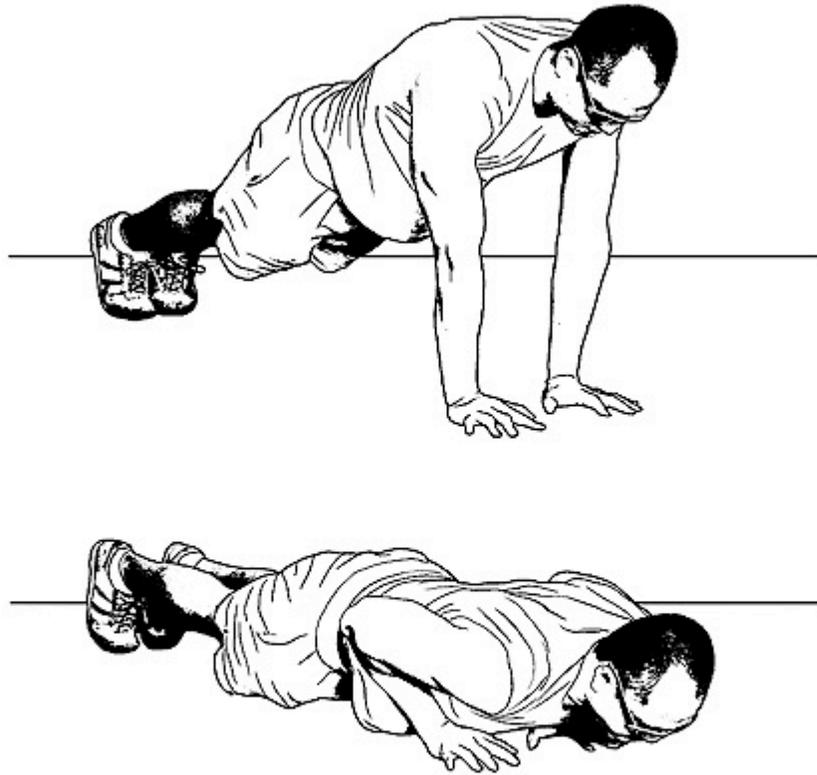
Fingertip Push-up

The fingertip push-up introduces a unique element to the push-up triad of chest, shoulder and triceps strength: finger strength. It's pretty self-explanatory, really. Instead of resting palms down on the ground, elevate your hands on extended fingers. Maintain this position through out the upward and downward cycle of the push-up. Impress your friends.



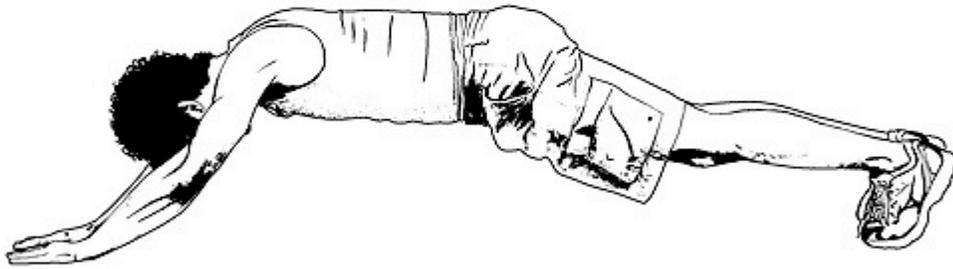
Wide Push-up

The “wide push-up” is just as the name implies — a push-up with the hands placed far apart. Assume a plank position, and then spread your arms out as far as you comfortably can. Complete the push-up by lowering your chest to the ground, then pressing back up to the plank position, while staying tight through your trunk and hips. You’ll note that you have less vertical motion with this variation, but it really works the chest, like no other!



Narrow Grip Push-up

The “narrow grip push-up” is extremely closely related to what is commonly known as a “diamond push-up”, but I think it deserves mention as a stand-alone variation. Don’t worry about inwardly rotating your hands to connect thumb and index finger. Position your hands under your chest, at approximately nipple level, with your fingertips pointed toward your head. Meet one of your new favorites!



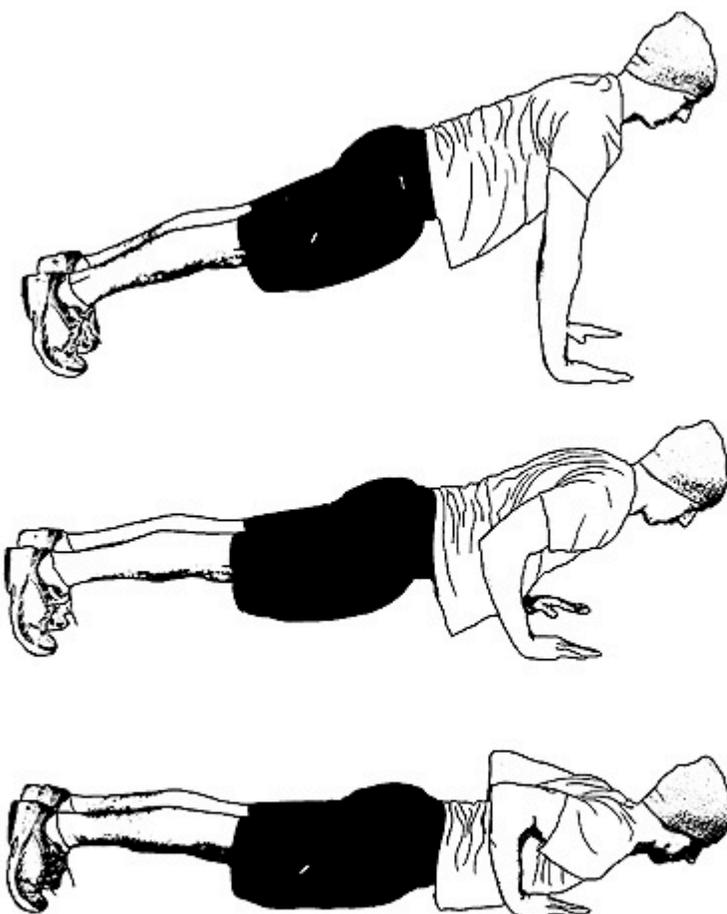
Overhead Push-up

To perform the “overhead push-up,” place your hands on the ground at a place above shoulder height and ideally higher than your head position. If you are strong enough to drop all the way down to the ground and back upwards, congratulations, you are a rare breed. These full overhead push-ups have sometimes been referred to as “Chinese push-ups.”



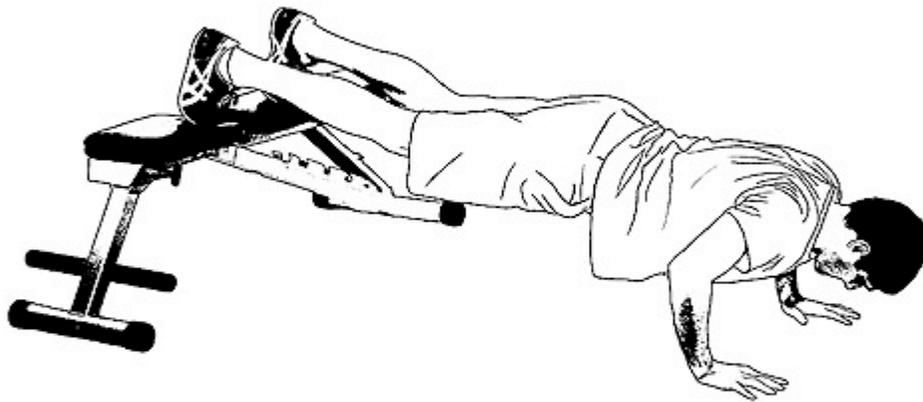
Plyo Push-up

And now: the “plyo push-up”, also sometimes affectionately referred to as “clapping push-ups.” For whatever reason, these push-ups are always a crowd favorite — a sure way to spice up a boring workout. The word “plyo” is short for “plyometric”, which is fitness speak for an explosive movement that is preceded by a quick stretch. Start by just pushing up hard and fast enough that you can lift your hands completely off the ground. Once you’ve got that mastered - add the clap. Bring your hands together to make some noise, prior to dropping back down to the starting position.



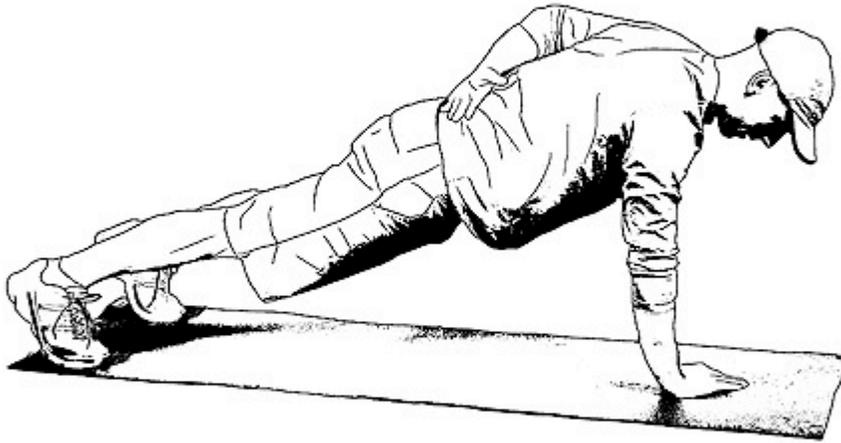
Triple Stop Push-up

“Triple stop push-up” aren’t anything fancy; you just add a pause prior to completing the bottom and top movements. Start in a plank position, lower halfway, pause, continue to the bottom, hold, push-up, pause halfway, and then finish back where you started. Easy right? Hmm. The two step lowering and raising motion sure does seem to double or triple your effort, and certainly makes you complete the push-up slower, which can be brutal by itself. I think for best effect, it’s nice to do these movements as a group, so that people can suffer together at the multiple hold points.



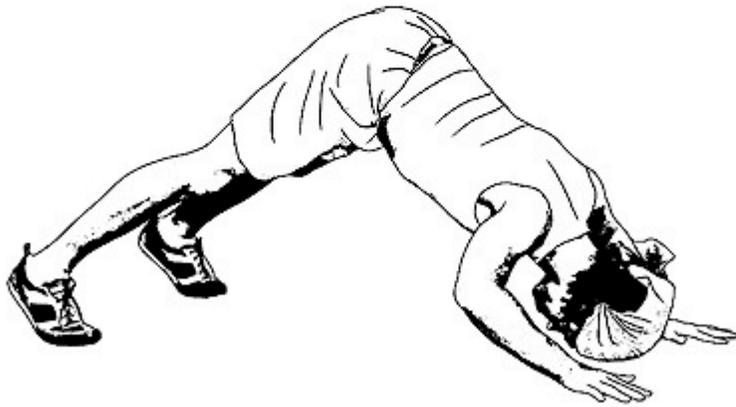
Decline Push-up

Find a park bench or stairway that you can use for this push-up. Flip things around so that your feet are supported above your chest. There you have it: the “decline push-up.” This is the first push-up variation we’ll get to that actually is beginning to place more of a percentage of one’s body-weight onto the shoulders. More body-weight means heavier and thus that these variations are harder to perform. Oh boy, now we’re starting to have fun!



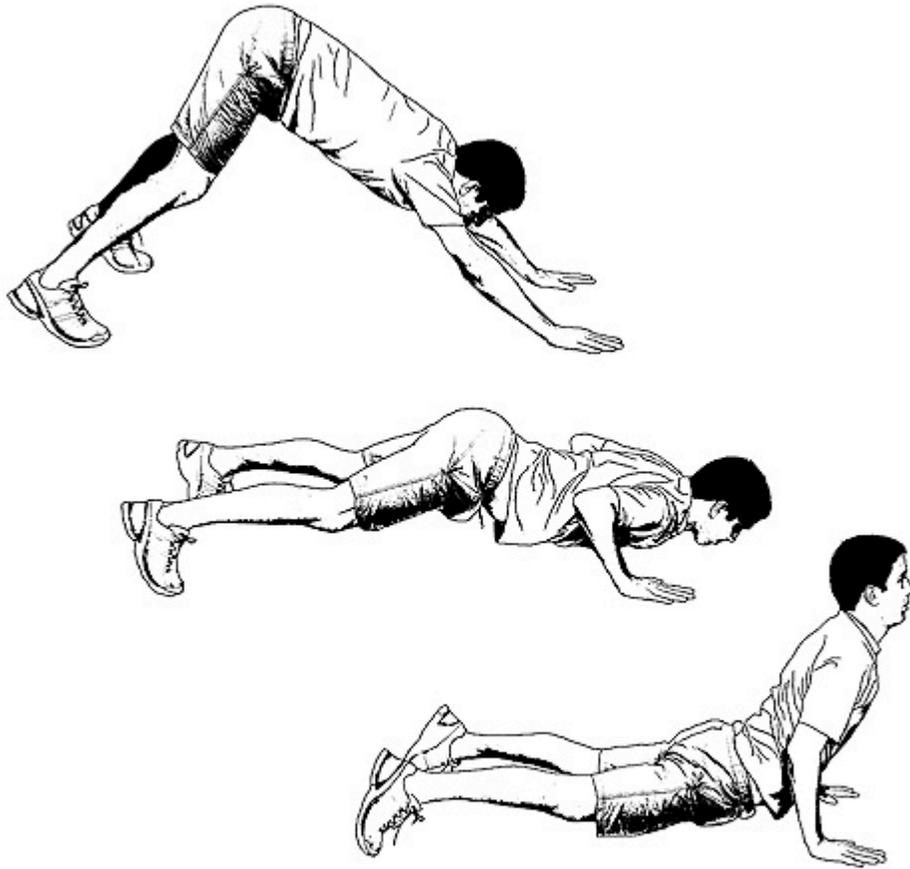
One Arm Push-up

The famed “one arm push-up” — a lot rides on this one! The ability to complete this movement separates the true body-weight athletes from the posers. So, what’s the trick? To do this variation effectively, you need to position your hand on the ground at chest level and midway between your shoulders. You’ll note that as you drop down, the hand feels quite internally rotated, and your elbow sticks out to the side more than on regular push-ups. That’s normal. Make sure to do both sides for strength symmetry!



Pike Push-up

The “pike push-up” builds on the decline push-up that was just introduced, but given the placement of your hands it begins to selectively strengthen the shoulders more so than the chest. Consider it a preliminary movement to taking the push-up completely inverted. To perform this skill, place your hands slightly higher than shoulder height, then stick your bottom in the air. Drop your head downward to the ground to a target between your hands, then push back upward along an angle. Make sure to breathe with this one!



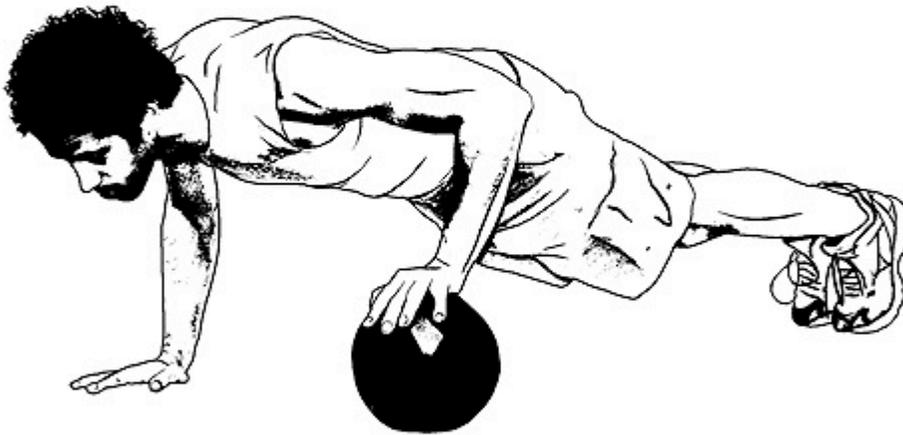
Dive Bomber Push-Up

Ahh, one of my personal favorites: the “dive bomber push-up.” This is a brutal variation because each time you do a full set you are essentially lifting your weight twice. To perform it, start in the pike push-up position illustrated earlier, then drop your chest down and between your hands. Next, you’ll keep your momentum going forward and begin to rock upward into a position they call “upward dog” in yoga practice. You’re halfway done. Finish the push-up by rocking down and backward, bringing your chest to the ground again, and then back upward to the starting pike position. You’re going to love these, I promise.



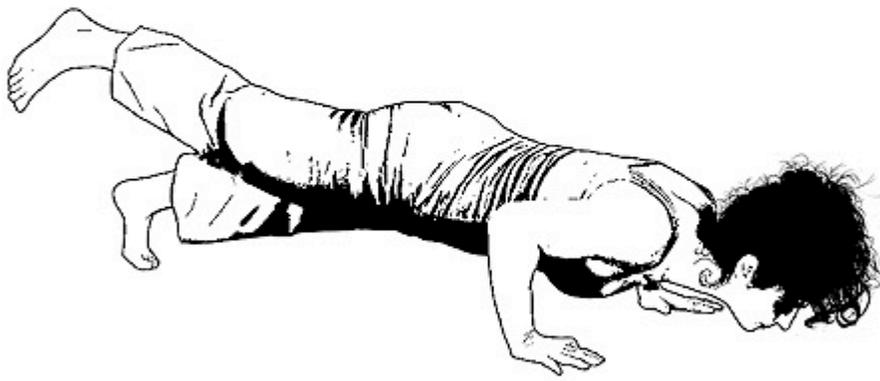
Jackknife Push-up

Now we're starting to have fun! The "jackknife push-up" is the first variation in which the body is in a truly inverted position in relation to the ground. By placing your feet on a chair or bench however, you are able to provide a degree of stability and take a fraction of the weight off, from doing a completely unsupported upside-down push-up. This movement is extremely intense on the shoulders, and you must pay attention to your fatigue level so that you don't bang your head on the ground. Other than that piece of advice, it is fairly straight-forward to perform. Assume the position shown above, then lower your head gently to the ground, and press back up to the starting position.



Uneven Push-up

To do the “uneven push-up” shown above, you’ll need a medicine ball or any other stable surface that can support a portion of your body weight. Get creative - try a few of books, a stair, or even a stack of weight plates. The goal is to have one arm elevated on a surface, with your other hand flat on the ground. By using your hands in this position, you differentially load one shoulder/chest complex more so than the other side. You need to alternate sides after a few reps, to make sure that you get an even workout, but trust me, these beauties will leave you sore the next day. They look easy, but are surprisingly challenging.



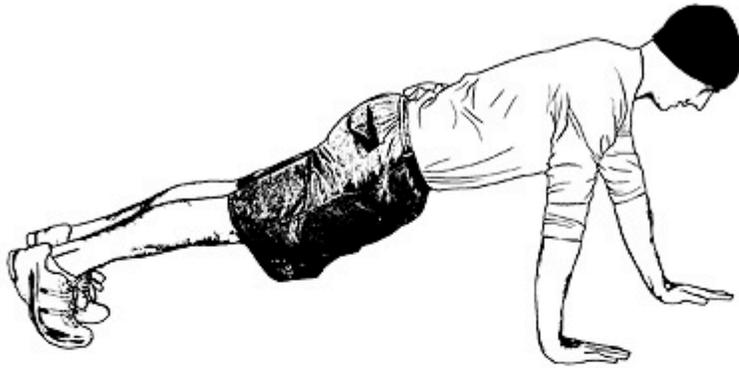
Single Leg Push-up

So far we've played with varying your hand position on the ground, and the angle of attack for your chest in relation to the ground. For this variation, all you have to do is hold one leg up behind you, in the air. Should be pretty simple, but what you'll quickly find out is that it's a bit of a balancing act, and actually makes the push-up harder than you would anticipate. Again, you'll want to switch legs after ten reps or so, to get a symmetrical workout.



Parallette Push-up

Parallettes are training tools used by gymnasts to work on upper body strength. You can make yourself a pair with PVC tubing or regular metal pipes, or you can purchase a pair online from \$50 to \$100. So, what's cool about them? Well, because you are slightly elevated off the floor surface, you can achieve a deeper degree of motion, than if you were doing a regular push-up on the ground. They are great tools to work a full range of motion, and it's guaranteed that you'll more sore than you expected afterwards.



Staggered Push-up

Next up: the “staggered push-up.” To do this push-up variation you don’t need any props, all you have to do is place your hands on the ground in a staggered alignment. Try one hand just forward of your shoulder, and the other hand just below your nipple line. You can also play with having one hand far out to the side, and the other tucked close to your body. The idea is to keep your body and musculature guessing with regards to how it has to move to perform the push-up motion. Make sure to mix things up after a few reps, so that both sides get an even workout.



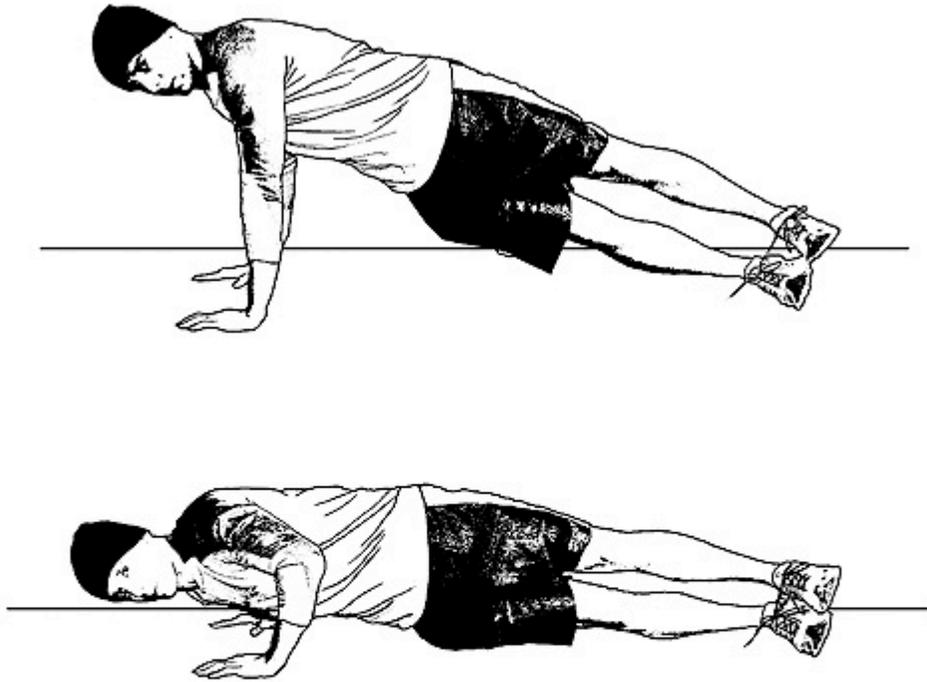
Cartwheel Push-up

To do a “cartwheel push-up” place both hands on the ground, and lift one leg up, as if you were going to kick over into a full cartwheel. Now, drop your head to the ground slowly, and press back upwards. The movement should feel like an asymmetrical pike or jackknife push-up. Switch sides after a number of reps, so that both shoulders get an even burn.



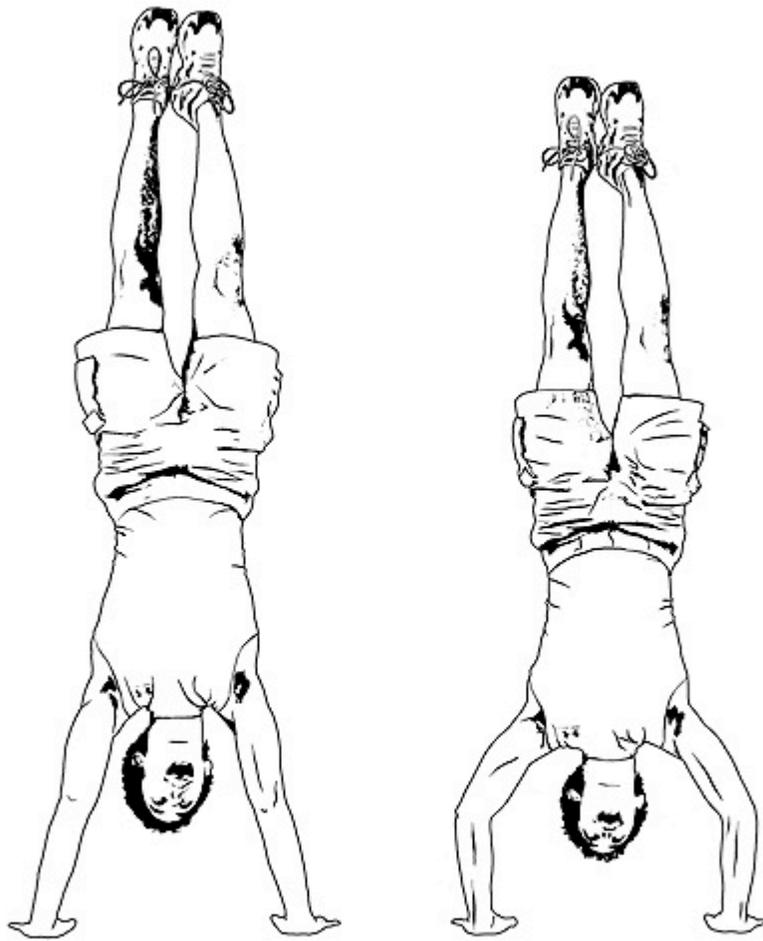
Drop Push-up

The “drop push-up” is a variation of a plyometric push-up, in which you explode upwards from the floor, to place both hands on boxes or stacks of books that are positioned on both sides of our body. From the boxes, you push-off again to drop to the ground, catching your body weight on your palms. Back and forth, up and down you go. These must be performed rapidly, and with attention to hand placement, so that you don’t slip off the box and twist a wrist.



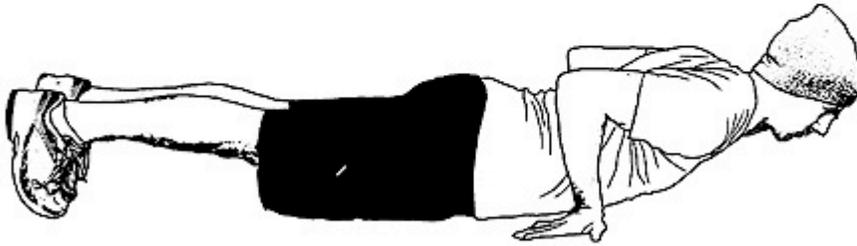
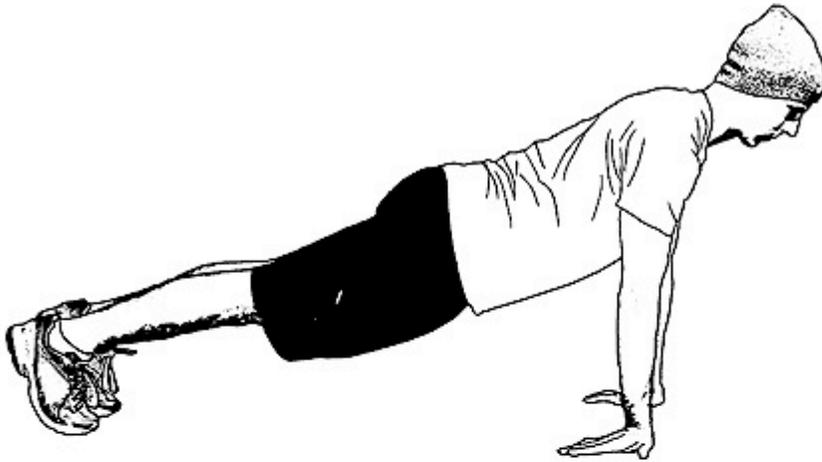
Rotated Push-up

To begin a “rotated push-up” you must assume a rotated plank position on the floor. Start off in a side plank, with one foot/leg stacked sideways on the other, and then reach your top hand to the ground into a push-up position. It’s as if your lower body is holding a side plank, while your upper body is in the push-up position. Try to keep your head rotated to the side however, through out the motion. You should feel how this movement places an uneven strain on the shoulders. Switch sides as needed.



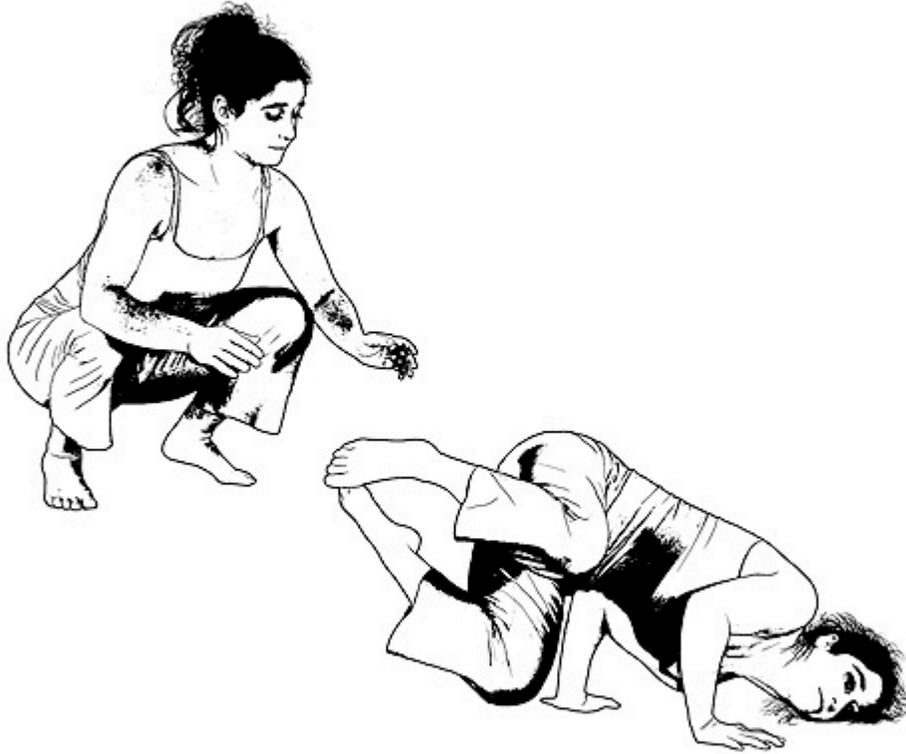
Handstand Push-up

I know you've been waiting for this one, here it is: the elusive "handstand push-up". If you've been following along so far, you should have already been introduced to a series of preliminary variations to get you strong enough for this difficult movement. Build up to a full on handstand push-up with decline push-ups, pike push-ups, and then jackknife push-ups. Once you feel confident that you can safely perform this skill, kick up to a handstand against a wall for support. Lower your head to a target between your hands, then push back up to full elbow extension. Sounds so easy, but alas... it's not!



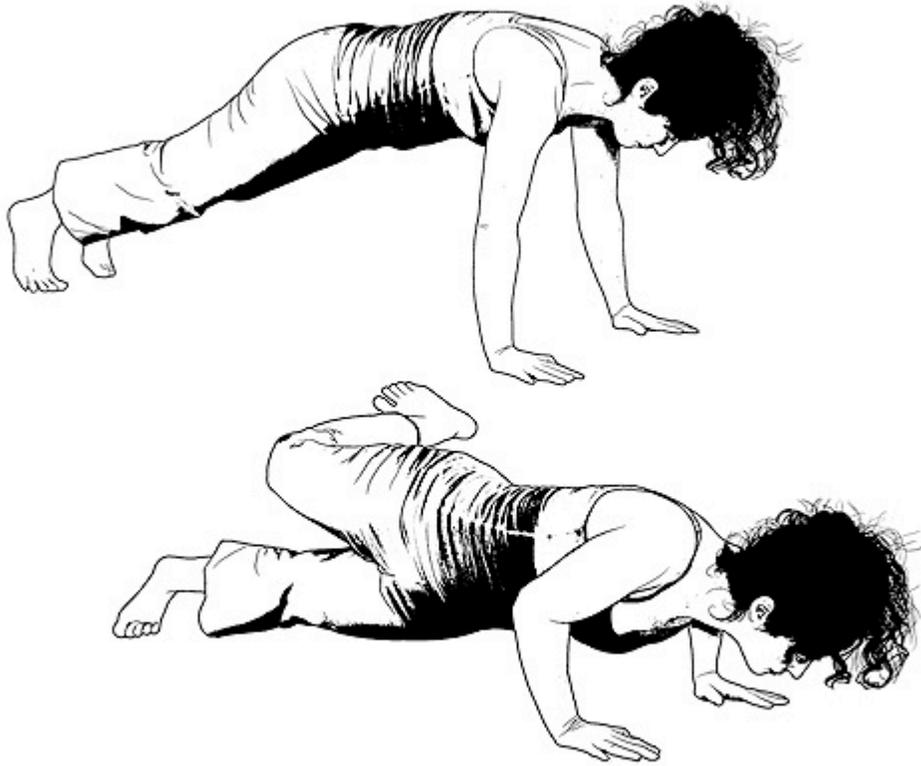
Semi-planche Push-up

Unless you've been trained as a gymnast, my guess is that you've never seen this push-up variation before. It is called a "semi-planche push-up" and entails placing your hands on the ground, with your fingers rotated backwards, pointing to your feet. You lower your chest to the ground from this position, and then return to the start. It takes some special wrist flexibility for sure, but once you get the hang of it, it's an awesome variation to spice things up.



Breakdance Push-up

The “breakdance push-up” stems from a capoeira movement, called the “queda do rins”, or “fall to the kidneys.” To complete this move, start in a low squat position then gently dive forward onto your palms, bringing one side of your body to rest on a single elbow. You push back to the squat position, then dive off to the opposite side, coming to rest on the opposite elbow. Back and forth, side-to-side these are wicked push-ups, requiring significant strength and balance.



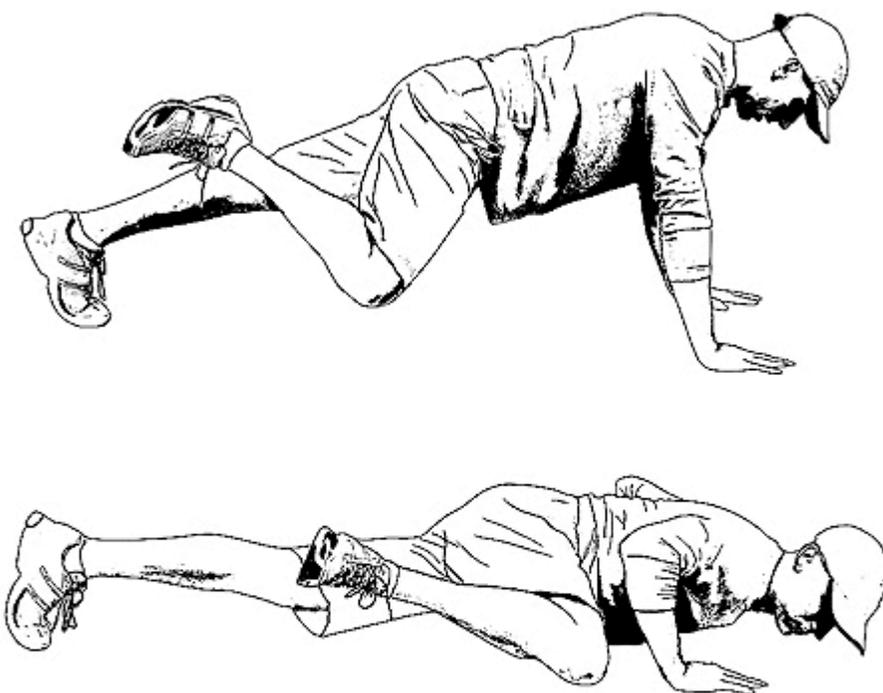
Scorpion Push-up

Let me introduce you to one of your new favorite push-up variations: the “scorpion push-up.” This push-up begins like a regular push-up, or if you like, as a single leg push-up. As you drop to the ground however, you whip one leg back and over to the side, like a scorpion’s tale. The effect of this motion is that it loads one shoulder more than the other. You can either switch legs on every movement, or do 10 repetitions and then switch sides. Love these.



“T” Push-up

Continuing in the theme of asymmetric push-up variations, here you have the “T push-up.” Start this variation in a semi side-plank position, with one arm elevated above your chest, then lower down to the ground. Push back to the “T” twist position, and repeat. Try switching sides on each repetition. If you have access to them, you can also try these push-ups while holding small dumbbells in each hand.



Spiderman Push-up

The “spiderman push-up” won’t help you climb buildings like a superhero... wait a second, maybe it will! Start in a single leg push-up position, then drop to the ground, while simultaneously bringing the knee of the elevated leg to nearly make contact with your elbow of the same side. As you drop to this bottom position, play with turning your head to that same side, for a bit of trunk rotation. I’d suggest alternating sides with each repetition, but you can certainly attempt a bunch on one side, before alternating.



Backbend Push-up

Ready for a serious challenge? Try the “backbend push-up!” Just getting into the starting position is a feat in itself. Start on your back, with your knees bent, and hands positioned up by your shoulders. Press up into a classic yoga backbend (or “wheel”) position. Hold it for a second, then allow your elbows to bend, so that you lower your head to the ground. Be gentle - don’t give yourself a head or neck injury! Press back to the full backbend position, and repeat to fatigue. It’s a good idea to keep your abdomen and glute (butt) muscles contracted, to protect your low back, which can take a lot of strain in this position.

Conclusion

You made it! Hopefully a few of 25 push-ups were ones that you hadn't seen or tried before. I'd encourage you to switch up the push-ups you do on a daily basis, rotating randomly through the list I've provided above. Don't get stuck doing the same conditioning routine daily. Challenge your body to move in unique ways all the time, after all - that's what you're doing with parkour anyway, right?

If you liked the images that you were introduced to, I'd encourage you to check out my blog: [Strength Mob](#). I post garage workouts over there about twice a week. They typically finish with a different push-up variation each session, and will often introduce you to new ways to perform barbell, kettlebell, and body-weight movements.

Likewise, as I mentioned in the introduction, you should pick-up a copy of *Parkour Conditioning*. I guarantee that you will find some leg conditioning, core strengthening, warm-up, and stretching ideas, to help to improve your parkour training.

Best of luck in your training and stay fly!