

The keys to perfect lunges and squats

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(HealthDay)—Want two moves that will effectively develop your lower body? Then add lunges and squats to your strength-training workout.

These exercises primarily use your own [body weight](#) to effectively strengthen muscles, and can be adapted for both beginners and more advanced athletes.

The **lunge** works the quads, hamstrings, glutes and, to a lesser degree, the lower leg muscles. Lunges can be done as a forward or reverse movement. The reverse is easier for beginners.

Step backward with your left foot, extending the leg behind you as you bend the right knee until the right thigh is parallel with the [floor](#) or as close as feels comfortable. Press your right heel into the floor to bring yourself back to the starting position.

When you want to progress, switch to the forward lunge. The left foot steps forward with the knee bending over the [foot](#) as you lower your right [knee](#) behind you. You can draw on your [body weight](#) or intensify results by holding hand weights.

Whatever your level, repeat only as many times as you are able to do so with correct form. For beginners, that may be as few as five lunges with each leg. Build up to three sets of 10 to 20 reps on each leg.

The **squat** targets the quads and hamstrings. Developing these muscles will help protect the knees.

Stand with feet just beyond shoulder-width apart, toes straight ahead. Tighten abs and slowly lower your butt, keeping your back in a neutral position as you bend your knees to bring thighs parallel to the floor. Beginners may be able to go down only half way. Return to the starting position to complete the rep.

Squats are typically done holding a barbell across your back, but you can start by holding a plain broomstick for some support or even with arms

straight out to the sides for balance.

Repeat only as many times as you are able to do so with correct form.
Build up to three sets of 10 to 20 reps.

As a reminder, always warm-up before strength training.

More information: The American Council on Exercise has more on [perfecting your form](#) when doing lunges and squats.

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