

FULL
BODY
PART 1

GETTING THE FITNESS LOOK

Part 1 of 5 in the **fitness** complete
body workout series

Lean & Sexy Legs

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PHOTOGRAPHY SLADE PURE STUDIOS

WE REVEAL
THE SECRETS
TO TONED AND
SEXY LEGS

Research over the last decade has lead to more and more compelling arguments for the benefits of weight training for women. Yet, contrary to these studies, the majority of women tend to be spending most of their gym time slaying themselves relentlessly on cardiovascular exercise, rather than reaping the benefits of a resistance training programme.

No other body part enhances one's overall image more than a pair of legs that show tone and definition. So, in the first of our five training feature installments we will be focusing on the body's longest limb, explaining how its muscles function and offer a few beginner, intermediate and advanced exercises to those looking to improve these womanly assets.

The legs are made up of many muscles that are used for basic activities, like walking, standing, jumping or

just getting up off the couch. As they are used so much during the day, in activities that stimulate almost all the muscles, they require a good amount of volume and many different exercises from different angles when training to stimulate the ideal training response. Understanding each muscle's function, their location and exactly what target exercises will stimulate them will greatly assist you in reaping the rewards from your training.



Get to know your body better...

Your leg workouts should incorporate exercises targeted at the three main muscle groups; **quadriceps, hamstrings and calves.**

Hamstrings

SEMITENDINOSUS

Function Extends the hip joint and bends the knee

Location Originates from the ischium and inserts on medial surface of tibia

Target exercise Lunges

SEMIMEMBRANOSUS

Function Extends the hip joint and bends knee and also some middle rotation

Location Originates at ischial tuberosity and inserts on medial condyle

Target exercise Lying Leg Curl

BICEP FEMORIS: LONG HEAD

Function Knee Flexion and Hip Extension

Location Originates from pelvis and runs down the back middle side of the thigh inserting at the fibula

Target exercise Leg Curl

BICEP FEMORIS: SHORT HEAD

Function Knee Flexion and Hip Extension

Location Upper Inner portion of the back of the thigh.

Target exercise Leg Curl

Quads:

RECTUS FEMORIS

Function Extension and flexion when hip is extended

Location Originates at hip (pelvis) and travels down the middle portion of the upper leg. Inserts at the knee

Target exercise Squat

VASTUS LATERALIS

Function Extension when hip is flexed

Location Originates 2/3 up the femur on the outer portion of the quad and inserts at the knee

Target exercise Close Stance Leg Press

VASTUS MEDIALIS

Function Extension when hip is flexed

Location Originates 1/2 up the femur on the inner portion of the quad and inserts at the patella.

Target exercise Leg Extensions

Calves

GASTROCNEMIUS

Function Plantarflexion at the ankle

Location Back portion of the lower leg from the femur to the calcaneus

Target exercise Standing Calf Raises

SOLEUS

Function Plantarflexion at the ankle

Location Back portion of the lower leg from posterior surfaces of tibia and fibula to heel bone.

Target exercise Seated Calf Raises

OUR FITNESS SPECIALIST

NICOLE SEYMOUR

"Join me in the next five issues on a voyage of discovery as I take you through the correct training technique on a variety of resistance exercises for each of your body's major muscle groups. Learn the best kept secrets used by fitness and figure cover models to achieve that lean and healthy look, ensuring you get the most from your time spent in the gym."



Focus on using these key exercises to maximise both your strength potential and the appearance of your leg and glute muscles:

squats

FORM Place feet hip width apart with toes pointing slightly outwards. Keep your knees slightly bent at all times.

MOVEMENT Keep your back, core and abdominal muscles tight and contracted. Bend your knees and drop your bum backwards and downwards. The upper part of your body should bend forward slightly, but don't arch your back.

KEY POINTS

Keep your back straight and look straight ahead. Never lock your knees at the top of the movement, always keep your knees slightly bent.



DON'TS

Do not allow your knees to extend over your toes, don't drop your head and ensure that you don't drop your chest and round your back.



TRAINING TIP

If attempting squats for the first time it is recommended that you build up a strength base performing them on a Smith machine or using a stability ball before progressing onto free weights. Proper technique should also be developed by doing body weight squats (without any weight) first.

leg press

FORM Place feet on the foot plate hip width apart. You can recognise a poor position by feeling cramped or having your knees end up in front of your eyes. Adjust the seat backwards if your bum is raised on the lower motion.

MOVEMENT Push the platform away. Stop the movement when your legs are just about straight and never allow your knees to lock out or fully extend. Ensure your heels remain flat on the foot plate. Do not use the front of the foot or toes exclusively to move the weight plate. Keep your head and back against the seat.



Ensure a full range of motion, without raising the hips from the seat. Keep your abdominal, core and back muscles tight at all times. Keep your knees in line with the feet and never allow them to bow outward or inward.

* Machines may vary from gym to gym



standing calf raises

FORM Place your foot on the edge of a step, with your toes and ball of your foot in contact with the step.

MOVEMENT Raise up onto your toe in a smooth movement. Focus on squeezing your calf muscle at the top of the movement. Avoid trying to gain additional momentum by bending and straightening your knee. Slowly lower your heel back down to the start position ensuring you get a good stretch at the end point.

Keep your knees slightly bent at all times to help minimise pressure on the lower back



If you don't have a 'Nicole' handy, use a chair or bench to stabilise. A standing calf raise machine is recommended.

seated leg curl

FORM Rest the small of your back firmly against the back rest and get your knees in line with the pivot point of the machine. Adjust the foot pad so that the top of the pad rests just below the knees and the bottom pad rests at about ankle level.

MOVEMENT Curl your legs down, focusing on only using your hamstrings to do so, ensuring you keep your back pushed into the seat. Slowly allow the legs to return back to the starting position.

Ensure you get a full range of motion and feel the muscle being worked during the entire movement. Do not swing the weight down or up. Keep it smooth and controlled at all times.

Alternative

* A lying leg curl machine may be used.

leg extensions

FORM Adjust the seat so that the small of your back rests firmly against the back rest and your knees are in line with the pivot point of the machine. Adjust the foot pad so it rests at about ankle level.

MOVEMENT Extend your legs until they are horizontal with the floor keeping your back pushed into the seat. Slowly lower your legs back to the starting position.

Ensure you get a full range of motion and feel the muscle being worked during the entire movement. Do not swing the weight up. Keep it smooth and controlled at all times.



lunges

FORM Take a large step forward. Keep your pelvis and shoulders parallel and both legs slightly bent. Keep your upper body upright and place your hands on your hips or either side of your legs.

MOVEMENT Bend both your legs and slowly lower your body down. Your back foot should lift up at the end of the movement so that only the tips of your toes are in contact with the ground. At the bottom of the movement your front leg should be bent at a 90 degree angle.



This exercise can be performed with dumbbells held either side as illustrated or at the front of the shoulders, or a barbell on the shoulders behind the neck. Ensure your front knee does not go past the tips of your toes, and that you keep tension in your knees (don't lock them).

standing cable hamstring curls

FORM Grasp the handles of the pulley machine with both hands. The foot that is attached to the pulley should be slightly off the floor.

MOVEMENT Pull the cable attachment back by contracting your hamstring until your knee is fully flexed. Return by straightening your knee to the starting position and repeat. Repeat with the opposite leg.

Keep your knees together and keep your hips from sagging or from being pulled forward.



seated calf raises

FORM This exercise is used to develop the lower section of the calf muscle (soleus). Place your feet a few inches apart on the ground. Sit up straight keeping your abdominals, back and core muscles tight and contracted at all times.

MOVEMENT Rise up on your toes as high as you can focusing on squeezing your calves at the top. Slowly lower your heels back down to the ground.

Do not lean backwards or rock during the movement as this will take the focus off the calf muscles.



stiff legged deadlift

FORM Stand with your feet shoulder width apart or slightly narrower. Keep a slight bend in your knees and bend over keeping your lower back straight. Grasp a barbell about shoulder width apart with an overhand or mixed grip.

MOVEMENT Start by lifting the bar by extending at your hips until standing upright, then complete the movement by lowering the bar to the top of your feet by bending at your hips. Keep your knees slightly bent during the descent and keep your waist straight, flexing only slightly at the bottom.

'Start with light weights and ensure correct form before adding heavier weights'

Begin with a light weight and add additional weight gradually to allow adequate adaptation. Throughout the lift keep your arms straight and knees slightly bent. Keep the bar close to your legs. Do not pause or bounce at the bottom of the lift. A full range of motion will vary from person to person. Those with less flexibility may have to bend their knees more. Those with greater flexibility may need to stand on a platform.



DONT'S

Do not round your back or drop your head and look down.

ADVANCED EXERCISES

One should only attempt advanced exercises once a solid foundation has been built up through correct strength training progression. Attention to form is key to preventing injuries.

barbell bench step up

FORM Stand facing the side of a bench. Position a bar on the back of your shoulders.

MOVEMENT Place your foot of the first leg on the bench. Stand up on the bench by extending the hip and knee of the first leg and place the other foot on the bench. Step down with the second leg by flexing the hip and knee of first leg. Return to the original starting position, repeat the first steps with the opposite leg.

Keep your torso upright during the exercise. The lead knee should point in the same direction as the foot throughout the movement. Stepping up onto the bench from a distance will emphasize the glutes, while stepping up close to the bench will emphasize the quads.



jump squat

FORM Stand with your feet at least hip width apart and place your weight on your heels, with your toes pointed slightly outwards. Bend your knees and lean forward slightly. Hold your hands together in front of your face to minimise the assistance they will provide in this exercise.

MOVEMENT Squat down low so that your buttocks are almost to the level of your knees. Lift up hard with an explosive movement and as your weight comes onto your toes, use your calf muscles to push your feet off the floor and get as much height as possible. Land on your toes before coming back down on your heels.

Ensure you are in good condition and adequately supervised before doing a full jump squat. You should be able to perform a traditional squat with 60 percent of your body weight at least five times and have good flexibility before attempting a jump squat.

single leg dead lift

FORM Stand on one leg holding light dumbbells in either hand.

MOVEMENT Keeping your back flat, lean forward at the waist and lift the free leg to the rear in line with the torso. Try to get the dumbbell to reach the ground either side of the leg. Return to the starting position.



Ensure that your back remains flat. Keep the leg that you are standing on slightly bent at all times.



A FRIENDLY WARNING:

YOUR LEGS WILL RESIST YOU! They will burn, burn and burn some more, but push through it. Remember the results are only as good as the work you put in!



jump lunge

FORM Stand upright with feet shoulder-width apart, with one foot in front of the other. Your back leg should stand directly under your body, and your forward knee should sit at a ninety degree angle. Place your hands on your hips or in front of you.

MOVEMENT Jump up off the ground and quickly switch the position of your feet in mid-air. Keep your torso straight. Land into the lunge position, your forward leg bent at ninety degrees at the knee and hip, and your back leg directly underneath your body. Bend your knees to absorb the impact, but keep your feet and knees facing straight forward. Jump back off the ground, switching your feet to your original position.

BEGINNER WORKOUT

Squats	3 Sets Of 10-12 Reps
Dumbbell Lunge	3 Sets Of 10-12 Reps Each Leg
Standing Leg Curl	3 Sets Of 10-12 Reps
Leg Extensions	3 Sets Of 15-20 Reps
Standing Calf Raises	3 Sets Of 15-20 Reps

INTERMEDIATE WORKOUT

Squats	4 Sets Of 10 - 12 Reps
Stiff legged deadlifts	3 Sets Of 10 - 12 Reps
Walking Lunges	3 Sets Of 10 - 12 Reps
Leg Press	3 Sets Of 10-12 Reps
Seated Leg Curl	3 Sets Of 10-12 Reps
Leg Extensions	3 Sets Of 15 - 20 Reps
Seated Calf Raises	4 Sets Of 15 - 20 Reps
Standing Calf Raise	4 Sets Of 15 - 20 Reps

ADVANCED WORKOUT

Jump Squats	4 Sets Of 8 - 10 Reps
Jumping lunges super setted with Leg Extensions	3 Sets Of 10 - 12 Reps (Each Leg with JL)
Single leg squat super setted with Dumbbell Step Ups	3 Sets Of 10-12 Reps Each Leg
Single leg deadlifts super setted with Seated Leg Curl	3 Sets Of 10 - 12 Reps (Each Leg with SLDL)
Seated Calf Raises	3 Sets of 2 Drop Sets Of 15 - 20 Reps Each
Standing Calf Raise	3 Sets of 2 Drop Sets Of 15 - 20 Reps Each

Your Workout

Now that you have a better understanding of what muscles your legs are comprised of, their function, location and the rep range needed to stimulate them, it's time to give you a few workouts to blast those legs.

The rep range varies depending on the exercise. I prefer using a lower rep range (10-12) with most of the compound exercises in order to help build strength and a solid foundation. I use a moderate (12-15) to high rep range

(15-20) on isolation exercises, as this helps with circulating more blood, "pumping up" the muscle to deliver more nutrients and breaks up the fascia tissue, which in turn assists with achieving the "toned" look. **f**

About Tayla

Tayla is a competitive triathlete who dedicates 20 hours of training a week to achieving her goals and maintaining her physique. This includes 3 swims, 3 bike rides and 4 runs a week, supplemented with core work and stretching. Her shapely physique is maintained with a healthy diet and proper supplementation, including extra carbs for her high activity level. Tayla represented South Africa at the World Triathlon Championships in 2006 and has recently joined the senior elite category on the local triathlon circuit. She is also a Fitness Essentials model.



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more info

