

A man is performing a handstand on railroad tracks. He is shirtless, wearing dark jeans and brown shoes. His body is perfectly vertical, with his feet pointing towards the top of the frame. The background shows a clear blue sky and a train of blue and silver railcars in the distance. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

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# PROJECT HANDSTAND

2.0

BY SIMON ATA



# DISCLAIMER

## PROJECT HANDSTAND 2.0

By using **Project Handstand 2.0**, you signify your agreement to these terms and conditions.

Prior to commencing any exercises, it is the responsibility of the reader to consult a registered health professional regarding participation in this program.

The author does not assume responsibility for any injuries or damages arising from use of the information contained herein. Use the following material at your own risk.

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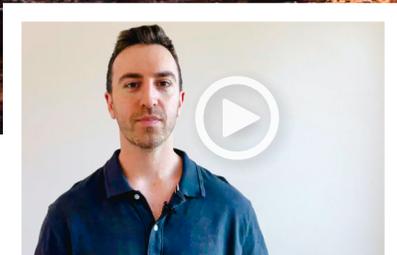
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# 01

## VIDEO ACCESS



PROJECT HANDSTAND 2.0



The concepts and exercises in this guide are accompanied by video explanations and tutorials. Each video comprehensively explains and demonstrates the related exercise or concept. Even if you are familiar with an exercise or concept, the videos should be watched as they provide key technical details that can speed progress, some of which are not described in the text.

The entire video collection is [available here](#).

I encourage you to [watch this video](#) before continuing for details about how to use this guide.



WATCH VIDEO

INTRODUCTION

# 01

## VIDEO TABLE



CLICK THUMBNAILS TO WATCH VIDEOS



INTRODUCTION: START HERE



HANDSTAND 101



ALIGNMENT



IMPROVING OVERHEAD MOBILITY



IMPROVING HAMSTRING MOBILITY



DEVELOPING CORE STRENGTH



HOW TO PRACTICE



WARM-UP



FROG STAND



PIKE WALKS



ANGLED WALL HANDSTAND



BAILING FROM A HANDSTAND



CHEST-TO-WALL HANDSTAND



BACK-TO-WALL KICK-UPS



WALL BALANCE EXERCISES



FREESTANDING HANDSTAND



CHEST-TO-WALL SCISSORS



FURTHER SHAPES, ENTRIES, AND EXERCISES

# 02

## HANDSTAND 101

PROJECT HANDSTAND 2.0



The handstand is a fundamental calisthenics element. Aside from being an impressive skill, it is a prerequisite for advanced calisthenics moves such as the handstand push-up and the 90-degree push-up.

To perform a handstand, a combination of shoulder mobility, upper body strength, and neuromuscular control is required. This guide provides a safe, scientific, and progressive blueprint to achieve a strong and technically sound handstand.



WATCH VIDEO

HANDSTAND 101

# HANDSTAND 101

## BALANCE

### TO HOLD A HANDSTAND, THESE TWO REQUIREMENTS MUST BE FULFILLED:

- #1) You must be able to support your bodyweight with your upper limbs.
- #2.) You must be able to balance. Balancing refers to the ability to keep your centre of mass over your base of support or hands.

Balancing on your hands can be likened to balancing on your feet. You are not perfectly still when standing on your feet; you are constantly making corrective adjustments to stop yourself from falling over. If you watch a toddler learning to stand, you will notice a significant degree of movement, whereas adults usually appear to be still. In both cases, the distribution of weight continuously shifts position around the base of support. When developed, the balance comes from very subtle, early corrective movements allowing one to appear still. A toddler's balance is not as refined; their reaction to falling occurs later, requiring larger corrective movements and their corrections are less precise.

Refined balance in standing is controlled by early corrective movements of the feet and ankles. If balance is challenged enough or the reaction is too slow, other mechanisms, such as hip movement, will



be used. If one is unable to maintain balance using static mechanisms, they will either fall or be forced to take a step to stay upright.

The same is true when on your hands. Initially, when balancing as a beginner, corrections will be made by bending and straightening the arms, as well as changing the position of the shoulders, back, hips, and legs. The sway will be large when you initially learn to hold a static handstand and you will fall often. As you improve, the degree of sway will decrease and you will reach a point where you maintain balance by making small adjustments with your hands and wrists. When balancing a handstand, the weight should predominantly be in the middle of your hands or slightly toward the base. Your weight will shift toward your fingertips or the heel of your hand as you begin to lose balance. To recover from falling "over" toward your back, press your fingers into the floor to push the body back to an upright position. To recover from falling "under" toward your chest, push the heel of the palm into the floor to return the body to the upright position.

# 03

## ALIGNMENT

PROJECT HANDSTAND 2.0



# 03

## ALIGNMENT

### PROJECT HANDSTAND 2.0

You may have noticed variety in the way people handstand. Some arch their back with closed shoulders, while others resemble a perfectly straight line. The arched handstand used to be commonplace decades ago including in Olympic-level gymnastics. Now, this technique is seldom seen amongst adept gymnasts and an arched back handstand is penalized in competition.

Today, the straight body handstand is the desired aesthetic among most disciplines. Learning the handstand with a straight body can develop motor control and help improve your alignment in other skills such as the back lever.

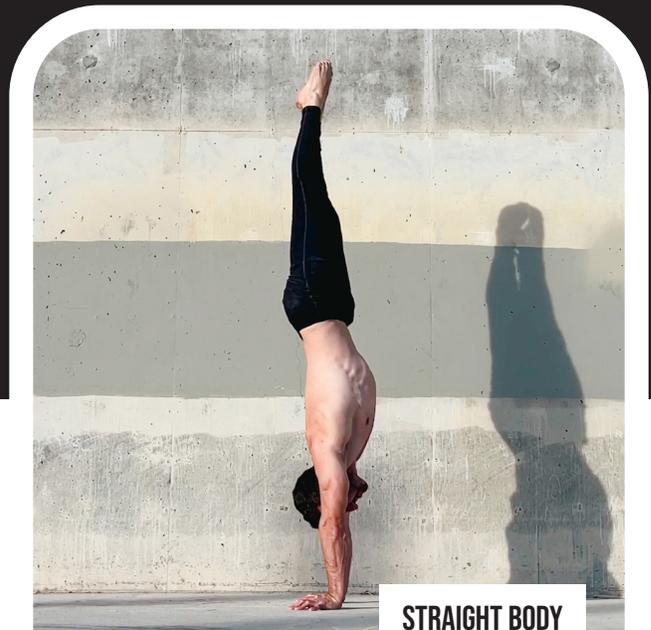
For the straight-line handstand, the hands should be positioned shoulder width apart, with straight elbows and the shoulders flexed 180 degrees. The shoulder blades should be elevated by pushing tall with the upper traps. Protracting the shoulder blades in addition to this can help prevent the ribs from flaring out, giving a hollow-chest aesthetic.

The neck should be extended so you can comfortably focus your gaze on the hands or floor between them. The rest of the spine should be made as flat as possible. Posteriorly tilting the pelvis can help minimize an arch in the lower back.

The lower limbs should be straight and together.

A simple cue to help incentivize good alignment is to make the body as tall as possible.

The video (to the right) covers handstand alignment segmentally.



 [WATCH VIDEO](#) ALIGNMENT

# 03

## ALIGNMENT

TWO KEY COMPONENTS THAT OFTEN NEED TO BE ADDRESSED TO ACHIEVE THE STRAIGHT BODY HANDSTAND ARE OVERHEAD MOBILITY AND LUMBOPELVIC CONTROL.

### OVERHEAD MOBILITY

Without 180-degrees of shoulder flexion range, you won't be able to achieve a straight-line handstand. If when standing, you cannot lift your arms above you to form a straight line, you should address this with stretches and strengthening exercises.

The following video details stretches and strengthening exercises that can be used to improve overhead mobility.

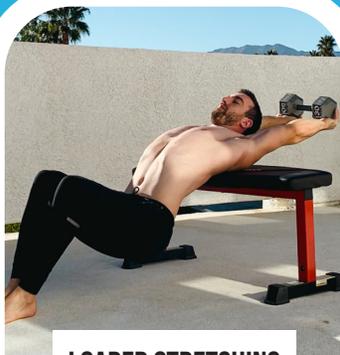
 [WATCH VIDEO](#) IMPROVING OVERHEAD MOBILITY

### STRETCHES

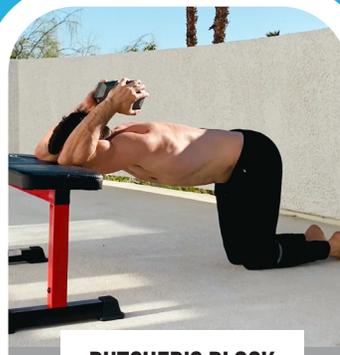
With all stretches, you should feel a stretching sensation but they should not produce pain.



PASSIVE SHOULDER  
FLEXION STRETCH



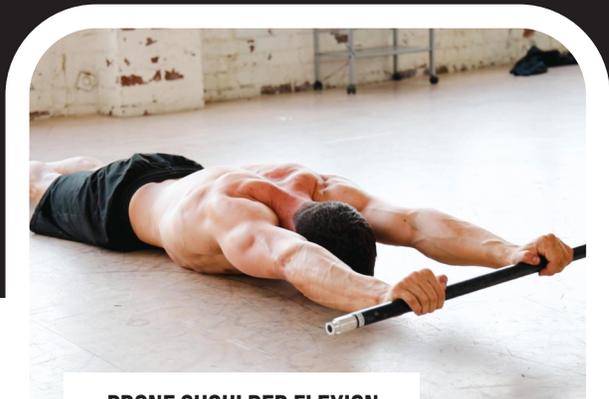
LOADED STRETCHING  
WITH STRAIGHT ARMS



BUTCHER'S BLOCK

# 03

## ALIGNMENT



PRONE SHOULDER FLEXION

### STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

With the weighted options, start light and progress the weight gradually.

 WATCH VIDEO



WALL SLIDE

### CORE CONTROL

Reasonable lumbopelvic control, or control of your lower back and pelvis, is required to flatten the spine in the handstand.

The following video details exercises to improve this ability.

 WATCH VIDEO DEVELOPING CORE STRENGTH AND CONTROL



FRONT PLANK



HOLLOW BODY HOLD

## 03

## ALIGNMENT

## TENSION



## TENSION

Tension in relevant muscles is important to maintain good alignment. For example, the upper trapezius should contract to elevate the shoulders and the glutes should contract to posteriorly tilt the pelvis and flatten the lumbar spine.

While a high level of body tension is important for certain dynamic and strength skills, you do not need to tighten your whole body in the handstand. Initially, it can be difficult to know which muscles to contract, so a whole-body tightening may be adopted in an attempt to maintain good posture. As you become more familiar and proficient with handstands, you will learn to contract only the relevant muscles. This is more energy efficient, allowing for longer duration holds and greater capacity for practice.



## UPPER TRAPEZIUS

Should contract to elevate the shoulders

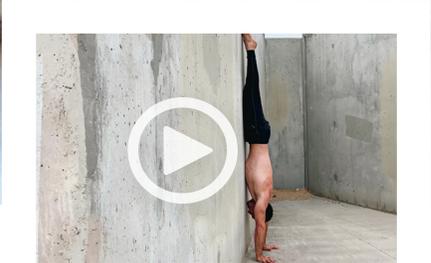


## GLUTEUS MAXIMUS

Should contract to posteriorly tilt the pelvis and flatten the lumbar spine

# 04

## HOW TO PRACTICE?



To practice for the handstand, you can follow the training programs provided or create your own routine.



WATCH VIDEO

HOW TO PRACTICE?

## 04

## HOW TO PRACTICE?

Handstand performance can be very inconsistent during training. One day you might feel like you're making incredible progress and the next day feel like you've regressed a month. Monitor your progress over a time frame of several months, rather than individual sessions.

Some people can learn to balance a handstand in as little as a few months but a consistent 60-second handstand with good alignment can often take a year or more to achieve.

The handstand is a skill largely reliant on balance and coordination and requires relatively little strength. Consequently, the way you train for the handstand should resemble the structure used when learning other skills, such as how to play an instrument or how to ride a bike. You do not need to take a strict sets and reps approach common to strength training.

Practice should be consistent and done with exercises that test the edge of your abilities. Exercises or drills that are too difficult or too easy will be largely ineffective in promoting progress. Practice should focus on exercises that are not so easy that you can perform them every time without difficulty, but not so hard that you can rarely achieve the desired goal. You should choose exercises that are challenging, but still be able to achieve the intended outcome.

Frequent repetitions of these drills with breaks for recovery should form the foundation of your practice. Like learning to ride a bike, there is no golden rule for how much one should practice, but generally more practice means more improvement, as long as the quality of training is maintained, and you can recover

from it. Practicing the handstand is more fatiguing than many other skills and therefore has greater recovery demands. Symptoms of over-training can include fatigue despite adequate sleep and nutrition, sore joints and muscles, and reduced energy when training. It is important that you listen to your body and build gradually. If you are experiencing these symptoms, reduce your training volume and build slowly as your body adapts.

How much practice each person can tolerate will be highly individual. Beginners may wish to start with 10-20 minutes every second day and gradually build from there. Many advanced hand-balancers practice for more than a few hours every day.

For best results, choose exercises that address areas of weakness and apportion your time to these accordingly. If your alignment is good but balance is your main concern, spend most of your time on the wall balance exercises. If you are confident balancing and primarily want to improve your line, address mobility limitations and work on this with directed exercises such as the chest-to-wall handstand.

For those training strength (e.g., calisthenics) and skills (e.g., handstands) concurrently, strength-dominant exercises should be trained after technique-dominant exercises so performance is not affected by fatigue. For example, if you are training the planche and handstand concurrently, planche exercises should be done after handstand practice. A great way to incorporate handstand training into a calisthenics routine is to perform handstand exercises as part of your warm-up for the calisthenics sessions.

# 04

## HOW TO PRACTICE?

### SAFETY

To ensure your safety when first learning to handstand, it is important that you feel confident with the exercises. Drills are provided in order of difficulty. Ensure you can do the previous drill before trying the next one. For example, ensure you're confident supporting your weight with pike walks before trying the angled wall handstand.

Many of the drills in this program can be adjusted to reduce or increase the difficulty. Choose a level that feels safe but challenging. For example, with the back-to-wall kick-up exercise, you may only feel confident with partial kicks up. In this case, only kick as high as you feel comfortable and gradually build to full inversions as your confidence improves.

# 05

## WARM-UP

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Before each session it's important to warm-up relevant joints and muscles. This is not only to reduce injury risk, but also to optimize performance in training, increasing your rate of progress.

The handstand is particularly strenuous on the wrists and shoulders so special attention should be given to these joints. A suggested warm-up is on the following page.

 WATCH VIDEO WARM-UP

## 05

## WARM-UP

1



2



3



## ACTIVE RANGE

- (1) Wrist circles  
**10 reps** (each direction)
- (2) Elbow circles  
**10 reps** (each direction)
- (3) Shoulder circles  
**10 reps** (each direction)

4



5



6



## GENTLE RESISTANCE

- (4) Wrist push-ups - **10 reps**
- (5) Wrist push-ups (back) - **10 reps**
- (6) Scapular push-ups - **5-10 reps**

7



8



## MOBILITY

- (7) Wrist extension mobilizations - **30 sec**
- (8) Shoulder flexion stretches  
**1-2 sets / 30-60 sec**



# 06

## PROGRESSIONS AND EXERCISES

PROJECT HANDSTAND 2.0

The following is a guide of systematic progressions toward a freestanding handstand.

## 06

## PROGRESSIONS AND EXERCISES



## FROG STAND



Use the frog stand to familiarize yourself with balancing while supporting your weight through your arms. This is significantly easier to balance than a handstand due to the lower centre of mass.

**Build toward holding for 30 seconds**



## PIKE WALKS



Pike walks will help you build upper body strength as well as confidence for inverting before progressing to wall handstand exercises.

**Build to performing pike walks with the feet elevated to hip height for at least three reps before progressing to wall handstand exercises**

## 06

## PROGRESSIONS AND EXERCISES



## ANGLED WALL HANDSTAND



For many, the biggest barrier to achieving the handstand is fear of going upside-down. The angled wall handstand can help you build strength, confidence, and lumbopelvic control before progressing to full chest-to-wall handstands.

With this exercise go as far as you feel confident, and gradually increase the angle as you progress. You can mark on the floor how far your hands were the previous session and aim to go closer each session.

Be mindful of your alignment and try to maintain a posterior pelvic tilt with a straight body position.

**Build to holding for sets of 30 seconds.**



## BAILING FROM A HANDSTAND



Prior to trying fully inverted positions, it's important that you are confident exiting or bailing from falling over in a handstand.

This can be practiced in a gradual and progressive manner against a wall.

## 06

## PROGRESSIONS AND EXERCISES



## CHEST-TO-WALL HANDSTAND



The chest-to-wall handstand is a great way to refine your alignment and build handstand endurance without the need to balance yourself freely.

Have the intention of forming a perfectly straight line with the body. Having the sternum, upper thighs, and toes touching the wall can be used to help direct good alignment. Stop sets shy of muscular failure to ensure you can exit safely.

**Build to holding for sets of 30-60 seconds.**



## BACK-TO-WALL KICK-UPS



Back-to-wall kick-ups can help you get familiar with the entry to handstand in a safe manner.

**Build to this by kicking progressively higher as you feel confident.**

## 06

## PROGRESSIONS AND EXERCISES



## WALL BALANCE EXERCISES



The wall balance exercises will help you develop the skills to balance a handstand.

The back-to-wall balance exercise will help you learn to correct your balance as you begin to fall over, while the chest-to-wall balance exercise will help you learn to correct your balance as you begin to fall under.

With these exercises, ensure you lift rather than push off the wall. This will place the burden on balance mechanisms available to you in the freestanding handstand and help you develop these skills.

Start by making your feet light on the wall, then lift off momentarily and try to increase the duration spent balancing.

**Build to performing for sets of 30 seconds with most of your time spent balancing off the wall.**

## FREESTANDING HANDSTAND



When you're confident entering and exiting the handstand and balancing off the wall, you can integrate these skills into the freestanding handstand.

If endurance is an issue, practicing wall handstands toward 60 seconds can help improve your capacity.

**Build to holding for sets of 30-60 seconds.**



# 07

## CHALLENGING YOURSELF FURTHER

PROJECT HANDSTAND 2.0

The following exercises and shapes can be used to challenge yourself beyond the straight body handstand.

## 07

## CHALLENGING YOURSELF FURTHER



## CHEST-TO-WALL SCISSORS



This exercise will add a dynamic component to your handstand and help refine the final stage of your entry.

Build to performing for sets of 3-5 reps with each leg.

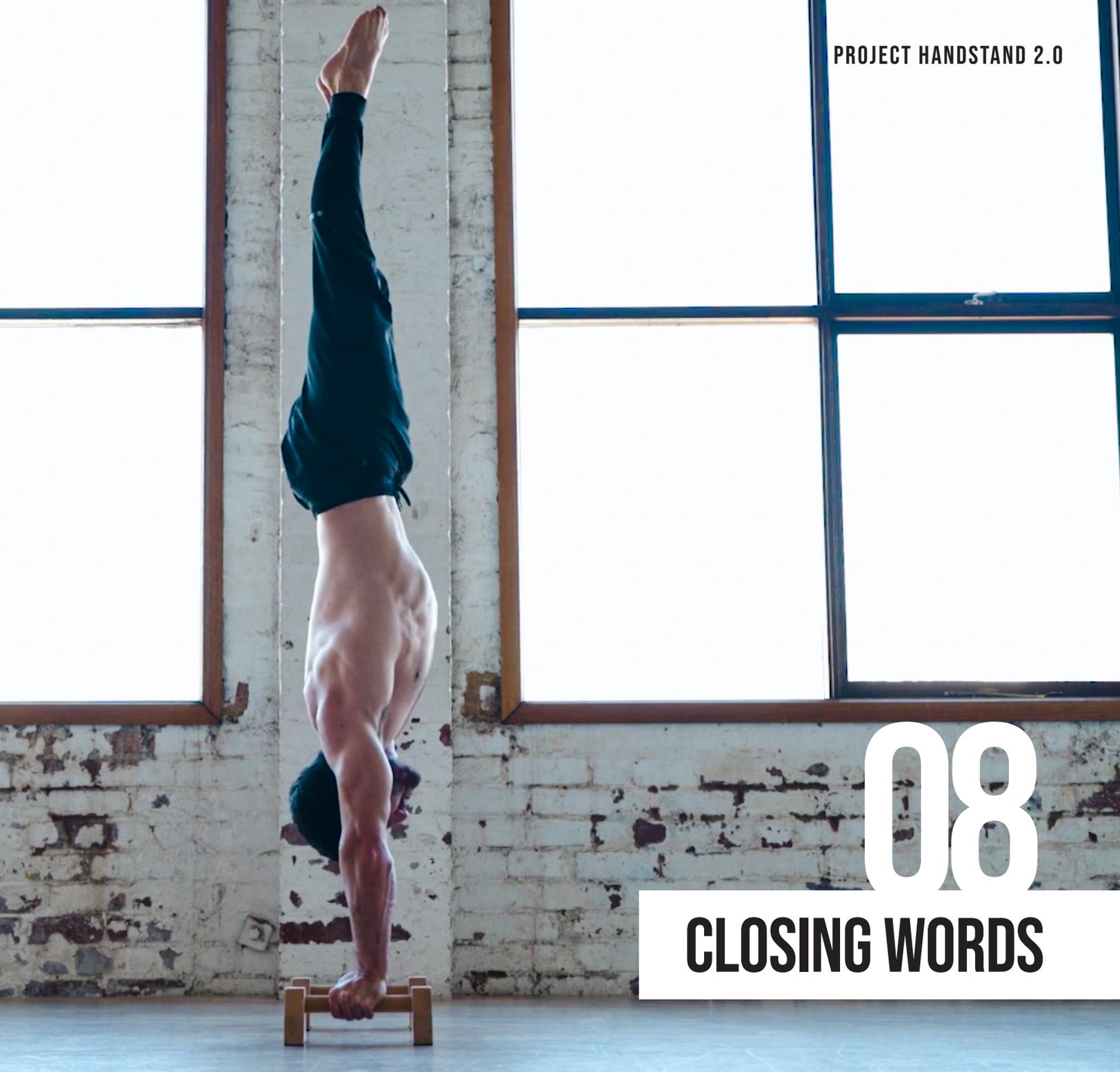


## FURTHER SHAPES, ENTRIES, AND EXERCISES



These include:

- Holding different body shapes such as tuck and straddle
- Using different head positions such as looking toward the toes
- Dynamic reps moving between the shapes outlined above
- Tuck and straddle entries to the handstand



# 08

## CLOSING WORDS

Consistency and patience are important for progressing with the handstand. Improvement is generally less linear than with conventional strength work. There are often plateaus and may be short periods of regression but with practice over time, your ability will improve. Try to enjoy the process and set small, progressive goals along the way to help keep you driven.



# 09

## WORKOUT PROGRAMS

PROJECT HANDSTAND 2.0

Along with this guide, you will have access to the following training programs:

### BEGINNER

Three sessions per week

For beginners who have never tried a handstand or are working toward handstands against a wall.

### INTERMEDIATE

Four sessions per week

For those who can do a handstand against a wall and want to improve balance to unlock the freestanding handstand.

### ADVANCED

Five sessions per week

For those who can comfortably hold a freestanding handstand and want to improve control, capacity, and alignment.

# 10 RESOURCES



## BASEBLOCKS PRODUCTS

Some of the exercises in this guide can be performed on the StrongBlocks from BaseBlocks. This product can be purchased by clicking below:

[StrongBlocks](#)

Use discount code **SIMONSTER10**



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