

ROUND #1

UPPER-BODY WORKOUT

To be fit for mixed martial arts you need powerful limbs and strong abdominals. The following moves will help you build strength and definition in your arms and sculpt a chiselled core.

DUMBBELL PUNCHES

Work the arm muscles needed for sparring

10 sets of 50 reps

Place your feet shoulder-width apart and keep your knees relaxed. Holding a 1kg dumbbell in each hand, punch one hand directly out in front of you, making sure you keep the motion controlled and steady. Repeat with the other hand. Do 10 sets of 50 punches, taking a short break in between each set.



NEUTRAL CHIN-UPS

Great for back and shoulder strength

3 sets of 8-10 reps

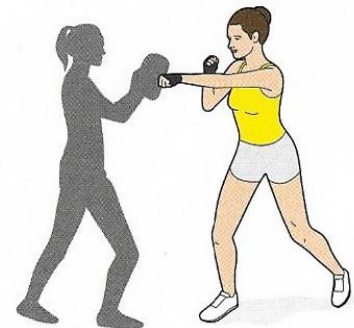
Take a neutral grip (palms facing you, as this is the grip used in Muay Thai clinch fighting) on a chin-up bar (A). Try to pull yourself up by using your upper body strength (B). If you want to make the exercise harder, add a weight into the equation by wearing a 10kg belt.

ROPE CLIMBS

Strengthen forearms, biceps and shoulders

5 sets or 5m

This exercise is best done in a gym, as many now have access to ropes. Face the rope and grab it high then wrap your right leg around the rope until it passes across your shin. Place your left foot over the top of the rope and press down – this creates a breaking action. Release the breaking foot and pull yourself as high as you can. Continue to climb, using the breaking action whenever necessary. If you're able to, climb the rope using just your arms.

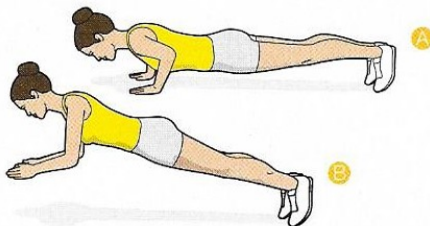


PAD WORK

The most important move for a mixed martial artist, and great for a chiselled core

3 sets of 5 minutes

Ask a friend to hold some boxing pads. Place your feet just wider than shoulder-width apart and relax your knees. Punch into the pads (left to right and right to left), concentrating on controlled movements and power. Do three lots of five-minute rounds, speeding up the boxing action for the last 30 seconds of each round. Take a one-minute rest in between rounds.



PLYO PUSH-UPS

Build core and upper-body strength – crucial for MMA

5 sets of 20 reps

Start in either a full or modified (on the knees) push-up position (A). Lower and push your body up with enough force to gently bring your hands off the floor. You may even be able to add a clap in here (B). Once your hands return to the floor, bend your arms to lower your body then immediately push back up again.

ROUND #2

LOWER-BODY WORKOUT

Speed and agility are key to success in martial arts. You also need to be confident when your weight is centred on just one leg. These six moves build strength, challenge balance and increase your stamina.

SQUATS

Work the quads, glutes and hamstrings

3 sets of 8-10 reps

Start with your feet hip-width apart (A) and lower your hips to squat down to a fairly low level (B). Keep the movement controlled and fluid – don't rush. To make the exercise harder, use a belt weight or hold a dumbbell in each hand.

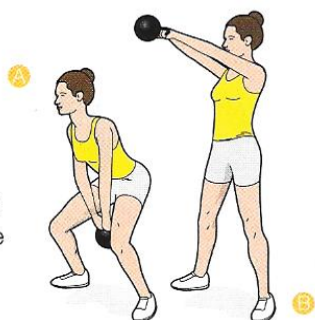


KETTLEBELL SWINGS

Work your entire body and copy a sparring action

3 sets of 8-10 reps

This exercise replicates the movements mixed martial artists use in sparring and fighting. Stand with feet hip-width apart and bend your knees to lower the kettle bell between your legs (A). Slowly bring the weight up through your legs and lift into the air in an arch (B). Lower the weight back through your legs and repeat. Increase the weight of the kettle bell you use as you begin to build confidence and strength.



PAD WORK – KICKING

Blasts loads of calories

2 sets of 20, 15, 10, 5 (each side)

Continue doing pad work, but stand a little further away from the pads. Lift your left leg up with a bent knee, extend the leg and kick the pads. Try to do set numbers – 20 right kicks, 20 left, 15 right, 15 left, 10 right, 10 left, 5 right, 5 left, then repeat the round again. Occasionally change the angle of your kicks, by asking your partner to hold the pads at a different level. This will increase your flexibility and work your legs in different ways.



HILL SPRINTS

Work your lower body and increase stamina

3 sets of 10-15 reps

Hill running builds the stamina required for MMA. Find three hills boasting different gradients or set the treadmill to a slight gradient. Sprint up the first hill for 20 seconds and walk back down. If you're on the treadmill, increase the speed for 20 seconds, then slow down for 10 seconds. Repeat 10-15 times before hitting the next hill or, treadmill runners, increasing the gradient again. Try to do 10-15 sprints on each hill (that's 30-45 sprints in total!)



BOX JUMPS

Build lower-body strength and balance

3 sets 6 reps

Stand with a box or step in front of you (A). Jump from floor level up onto the platform (B), then jump back down (backwards). Repeat. Swing your arms to keep your balance and control the movement. Increase the height of the box to make the move harder.



PAD WORK – KNEEING

Boosts leg and core strength

3 sets of 5 minutes

Ask a partner to hold some boxing pads for you. Stand quite close to the pads and lift your left foot off the floor, bending the knee and bringing it up to hit the pad. Lower your leg back to the floor and repeat. Try to do 2.5 minutes of intense kneeing with each leg.

