

The Perfect Squat

Squats are a functional compound movement, which means using more than one joint (your hip and knee joints) to complete. When done properly, this hip and knee dominant exercise strengthens all major leg muscles – quadriceps, calves, hamstrings and glutes and involves the core musculature – abdominals, erectors, thoracic spine.

Squats will increase your leg strength, strengthen the leg muscles and knees, as well as build bone density. All these benefits help you stay mobile as you get older and maintain balance.

Like its buddy the push-up, squats can be done anywhere and varied in load and tempo for more challenge. Want a full body workout? Pair squats and push ups!

You can squat pain free and properly by making sure you pay attention to:

- foot position
- depth
- chest position

Once you find your optimal foot position, depth and chest position, you should be performing a perfect squat (for your body).



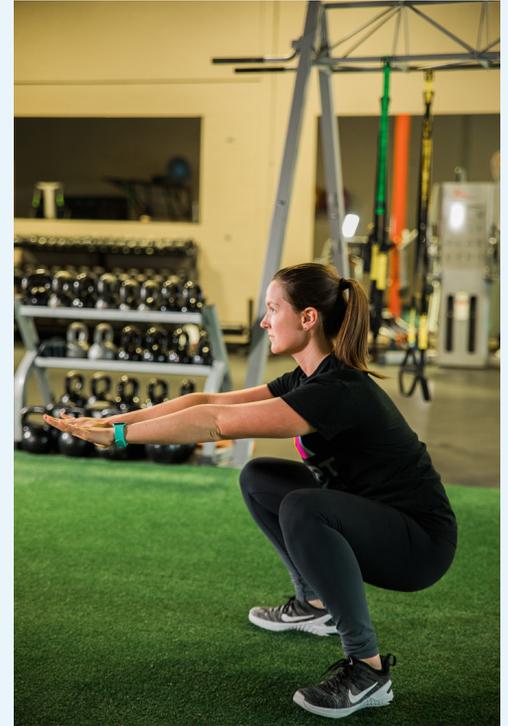
Foot Position

You can experiment with the position of the feet to see what feels good and natural. Everyone's hips are built differently, therefore your foot position will differ from your friend's.

The most common foot positions are hip width apart (feet same width as your hips) and wide stance (feet are positioned outside of the hips). You can also try pointing your toes out slightly about 10 degrees. Many find comfortable squat positions with toes slightly pointed out.

Squat Depth

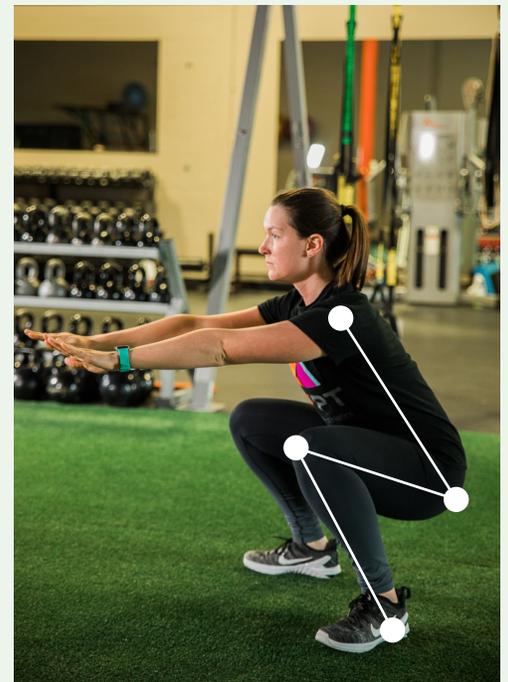
Depth of the squat will again depend on what feels good. Never squat with pain and if it doesn't feel good, don't do it. Adjust the position to try again. Some people can squat to 90 degrees and others can make below parallel (hips below knees). Find what works for you and feels good. As you progress, you will find depth comes after practice due to increased strength and mobility. In general, a proper squat depth for strength and stability would be 90 degrees (thighs parallel to the floor).



Chest Position

Chest position will always depend on length of the thighs or height, because when someone with longer thighs squats, his or her chest will always drop lower when the hips go back.

The end position of a squat should almost look like an inverted thunderbolt – shins and chest should have a similar angle. As your hips drop in the squat, your chest will naturally lower as well. Just make sure your chest is not parallel to the floor, like your thighs.

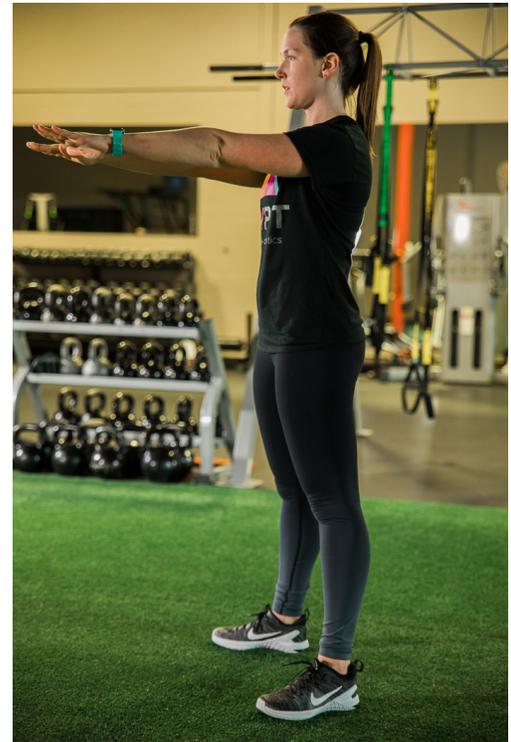


Complete Squat



Coaching Cues:

- Keep your eyes forward; don't look up – maintain a neutral neck position.
- Arms can be extended forward or across the chest if performing bodyweight squats.
- During the lowering phase, brace abs, as though someone is going to punch you in the stomach, to protect your back.
- Focus on pushing your knees out on the way down, while pushing your hips back and keeping your knees in line with the feet.
- Once in the bottom position, brace the abs again, push the knees out, and drive up through your legs (you could also think about spreading the floor apart with your feet as you drive up, for more leg muscle recruitment).
- Make sure you are pushing through your whole foot, not just your heels or balls of the feet.



Goblet Squat



Aim to perform 3-4 sets of 10-15 bodyweight squats. When you feel comfortable with your form, you can add external load, such as a dumbbell or kettlebell for a goblet squat.