

Try This Six-Week Home Workout Routine to Build Better Fitness Habits

The Wall Street Journal Fitness Challenge, a six-week program of exercises, is made for all ability levels

With the new year in full swing, follow veteran NBA sports performance coach Arnie Kander through a 6-week step-up challenge to gauge your fitness and improve over time.

By Jen Murphy

Ready to challenge yourself to feel healthier and stronger?

The Wall Street Journal is launching its first fitness challenge, a six-week program of step-up exercises designed for people of all ages and fitness levels who want to dial their workout up a notch. Developed by veteran NBA sports performance coach Arnie Kander, this six-week program doesn't require equipment and can be performed anywhere, even in small spaces.

Mr. Kander spent 25-plus years working with NBA teams, including the Minnesota Timberwolves and Detroit Pistons, for whom he still serves as a consultant. The 20-second step-up became his gold standard for measuring an athlete's baseline level of fitness. "I've probably used it 1,000 times on professional athletes," he says. It's a very simple test that tells a lot about a person's movement efficiency, balance response, coordination, reflexes, ankle flexibility and core strength.

JOIN THE WALL STREET JOURNAL FITNESS CHALLENGE

ILLUSTRATION: JON KRAUSE

Try this [six-week program of exercises](#) designed by an NBA sports performance coach for all skill levels that can be done almost anywhere, and delivered to your email inbox.

Last spring, he challenged friends. A 94-year-old woman he knows completed eight steps up and down in 20 seconds. A former professional soccer player achieved 41 steps, up and down in 20 seconds. That's about two steps per second.

For The Wall Street Journal Fitness Challenge, Mr. Kander, who lives in Boulder, Colo., enlisted local athletes including Nell Rojas, 33, an elite long-distance runner, and Lynn Hill, 60, one of the most accomplished female climbers in the world and the first person to free-climb the Nose on El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. They sampled the step-up test, a dynamic warm-up, core strength series, cool-down and six weeks of workouts designed to improve your step count.

"We've all been out of our routines and sitting more than we normally do," the 60-year-old Mr. Kander says. "Any kind of movement has benefits." At the end of the program, he says, you'll see a noticeable difference in how you walk, go up steps, sit and squat.

The fun part of the challenge is comparing your numbers with the scores of other participants, be it desk jockeys or pro athletes, by sharing your results below in the comments or by replying to the newsletter after signing up. Mr. Kander suggests taking the 20-second test at the end of each week. If you haven't seen improvement halfway through the program, or are struggling with some of the exercises, email questions to workout@wsj.com and we'll do our best to answer them.

Mr. Kander, along with our expert panel, including Andrew Jagim, director of sports medicine research at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse, Wis., Miriam Morey, a professor of medicine who specializes in exercise and aging at Duke University, and Michael Rogers, a professor in human performance studies at Wichita State University, will field questions once the challenge begins.

[Sign up for the weekly newsletter.](#) Test in by seeing how many steps you can take up and down in 20 seconds. You can use a curb, a stair step or an old-school aerobic step. Each week for six weeks you'll receive an email with a new workout aimed at improving your number of steps, as well as tips on topics including core training, recovery and staying motivated. We'll also include the songs pro athletes like soccer star Megan

Rapinoe and NFL kicker Justin Tucker and golfing great Greg Norman turn on when they need a boost.

At the program's end, you'll retake your 20-second test. Share your results below, on social media using #WSJFitnessChallenge or by email. And we'll send expert tips on how you can take your gains and apply them to a new set of functional fitness goals. Good luck!

Some Sample Steppers

We asked a handful of regular What's Your Workout readers, as well as some pro athletes, to test in early and share their scores:

Arnie Kander, 60, Boulder, Colo., 29 steps

Nell Rojas, 33, Boulder, Colo., 28 steps

Lynn Hill, 60, Boulder, Colo., 27 steps

Jen Murphy, What's Your Workout columnist, 40, Boulder, Colo., 31 steps

Owen Lynch, 17, student and son of Lynn Hill, Boulder, Colo., 40 steps

Thon Maker, 23, Cleveland Cavaliers, 29 steps

Richard Hamilton, 42, former NBA player, 30 steps

Grant Hill, 48, co-owner of the Atlanta Hawks and former NBA player, 20 steps

Jim Snizer, pro cyclist, 27, Atlanta, 35 steps

Lauren De Crescenzo, pro cyclist, 30, Atlanta, 25 steps

Trina Hosmer, 75, retiree, Stowe, Vt., 22 steps

Charlotte Milan, 45, publicist, San Francisco, 19 steps

Benoit Duboscq, 47, strength and conditioning coach, Redondo Beach, Calif., 29 steps

Elie Hirschfeld, 70, real-estate developer, New York City, 21 steps

May Selby, 49, publicist and DJ, Aspen, Colo., 22 steps

Valerie Caveney, 38, director of executive programs, [First Republic Bank](#), Sonoma, Calif., 25 steps

Braxton Browne, 3, child, Chelsea, Mich., 15 steps

Joan Klumpp, 88, retiree, Troy, Mich., 4 steps