

## 3 Best Upper Back Exercises

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The upper back is one of the most underrated muscle groups. It gives you a powerful appearance from all directions, and is the key to healthy shoulders.

The upper back is typically one of the first victims of mirror training. Mirror training is the workout program that most guys seem to be using, and it involves workout out only the body parts you can see in the mirror. This means primarily the arms, chest, and abdominals.

The issue with this type of training is not only that it makes you look bad from behind, but also that it can set you up for injuries. This type of training creates strong, tight muscles on the front of the body, and weak, loose muscles on the back. This situation can put joints in a compromised situation, especially the shoulder.

To avoid this it is important keep a balance among all of the types of work you do. One of the simplest ways to do this is to match the volume of presses you do with an equal volume of rows. So if you do 4 sets of 8 on the bench press and 3 sets of 12 on the incline bench, you have a total of 68 reps. This is now your goal volume for rows and other upper back exercises. You don't need to match this number exactly, just be somewhere in the same vicinity. This volume goal could be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as 2 different exercises for 3 sets of 12 each (72 total reps), or one exercise for 5 sets of 12 (60 total reps).

This easy technique will go a long way in preventing shoulder injuries and will improve your upper back size greatly. So let's take a look at some exercises to use with this protocol.

### Fat Man Pullups

Trainees should develop a base level of strength with bodyweight exercises before moving on to barbell and dumbbell movements, so the inverted row works well here. The simplest way to perform the exercise is to set-up a bar in the Smith machine just above waist height. You will then lie face up on the floor under the bar and reach up and grab it with both hands using an overhand grip just outside your shoulder-width. From here, raise your hips off the floor so that only your heels are on the floor. Your body should be in a straight line from head to heel. From this position squeeze the shoulder blades together and pull yourself towards the bar. Keep pulling until the bar touches your lower chest or upper abs. Lower back to the starting position and repeat.

To make the exercise more challenging, try putting your feet up on a box or wearing a weight vest. Most lifters will find these modifications unnecessary at first, as the exercise is fairly difficult already.

Start out with 4 sets of 6 to 8 reps.

### Chest Supported Rows

Free weight, cable, and bodyweight exercises should be staples of your program, but there some machines that are worthwhile as well. The chest supported row is one such machine. The exercise is fairly simple: just put your chest on the pad and grab the handles and start rowing. The key here is to stick your chest out throughout the exercises and avoid rounding your shoulders forward. You should emphasize pulling the shoulder blades together and downwards.

Do 3 sets of 12 reps.

### Cable Scarecrows

This is a great finishing exercise for the upper back that really focuses-in on some the smaller muscles of the upper back. Set-up facing a double cable stack set at waist height. Grab the left handle with your right hand, and the right handle with your left hand. Take a step back and have your arms out in front of your with your elbows straight. From this position pull your shoulder blades together and open your arms up as wide as possible. Return

to the starting position and repeat the movement for the desired number of reps.

Perform 2 to 3 sets of 12-15 reps.

And you're done! A quick and dirty upper back building workout. You can give your upper back its own session, or combine it with your biceps or chest training.

Learn more with videos and guides on how to do [Glenn Pendlay rows](#) and other exercises in the free [body building exercise instruction guide](#).

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