



# Barbell Back Squat Overview

The squat is the king of all exercises, working over 256 muscles in one movement! From bodybuilders to powerlifters to competitive athletes, the squat is a staple compound exercise and should be in every workout plan.

For powerlifters, it is known as one of the “big three” lifts which includes the squat, deadlift, and bench press. For athletes, having an explosive squat is a good indicator for on field/court performance. And for bodybuilders, the squat is a compound exercise that targets nearly every muscle of your lower body and core.

The squat directly targets the muscles of the quads, but also involves the hamstrings, glutes, back, and core as well as muscles of the shoulders and arms to a lesser degree.

Not everyone is built to perform the traditional barbell back squat and it can result in some pain for certain individuals. Over the years, several squatting variations have been developed to help everyone be able to train this critical movement pattern safely.

## **Some of the squat variations include:**

- Bodyweight Squat
- Goblet Squat
- Landmine Squat
- Front Squat
- Dumbbell Squat

- [Machine Hack Squat](#)
- [Smith Machine Squat](#)

The emphasis of the squat can be switched from the quads to the hamstrings by your foot placement. Some wear shoes with an elevated heel (or elevate their heels on plates) to focus more on the quads. Others keep a flat foot to put more pressure on the hamstrings.

At the end of the day it is important that you pick a squat variation and foot placement that works best for you and that you can perform safely.

Want to improve your squat? Try our [12 Week Super Squat Workout](#).

## **Barbell Back Squat Instructions**

1. Set up for the exercise by setting the barbell to just below shoulder height and loading the weight you want to use.
2. Stand under the bar with your feet at about shoulder width apart.
3. Position the bar so that it is resting on the muscles on the top of your back, not on the back of your neck. The bar should feel comfortable. If it doesn't, try adding some padding to the bar.
4. Now take your hands over the back and grip the bar with a wide grip for stability.
5. You should now bend at the knees and straighten your back in preparation to take the weight off the rack.
6. Keeping your back straight and eyes up, push up through the legs and take the weight off the rack.
7. Take a small step back and stabilize yourself.
8. Keeping your eyes facing forward slowly lower your body down. Don't lean forward as you come down. Your buttocks should come out and drop straight down.

9. Squat down until your thighs are parallel with the floor, and then slowly raise your body back up by pushing through your heels.
10. Do not lock the knees out when you stand up, and then repeat the movement.

## Barbell Back Squat Tips

There are many mistakes that can be made when squatting, so it's important that you have your technique down before you attempt squatting heavy weights. If you are squatting correctly, you should not feel pain in your lower back. Lower back pain is usually a sign that you are not using correct form and/or your core is weak.

### Common mistakes when squatting:

1. **Rounding the lower back:** It's crucially important that you keep a straight back when you squat! You can ensure your back is straight by keeping your eyes facing forward, chest out, shoulder blades back, and back arched. Keep your core muscles tensed throughout the movement to help hold your back in place.
2. **Pushing from the balls of your feet:** This puts unnecessary strain on joints and tendons. Always push up through your heels. Curling up your toes can help you get the technique right.
3. **Leaning forward:** This happens when your hips move up faster than your shoulders. To prevent this keep the rep timing slow and controlled and stick your buttocks out as you go down.
4. **Knees come too far forward:** When you squat down, your hips should be dropping straight down, not coming forward. Using a light weight, perfect your form standing side on to a mirror. Your knees should never track out and over your toes.
5. **Not squatting deep enough:** Using squats to their full potential requires squatting down at least until your thighs are around parallel to the floor.
6. **Knees in or out:** Don't point your knees in or out when you're lowering or pushing the weight. This puts unnecessary strain on the knee joints.
7. **Looking down:** As soon as you look down your back rounds, simple as that.