



ARE YOU FIT ENOUGH?

*EXERCISES SO YOU CAN
EXECUTE LIFESAVING TASKS*

VANCE FERRIGNO

TO VIEW AN INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO ON PERFORMING THESE EXERCISES, VISIT THIS LINK:

<https://youtu.be/g7W8ppYf0GQ>



While driving home from work one afternoon, I came upon a car overturned in a storm-runoff ditch. As one of the first cars on the scene, I pulled over as quickly as I could but was still about 70 yards beyond the crash before I could get off the road safely. I jumped out and sprinted to the overturned car.

The driver's-side window was blocked by the angle of the ditch against which it rested. The passenger side was crushed due to the vehicle having flipped several times, leaving just enough of an opening for me to get on my back and crawl in to retrieve the trapped, unconscious driver. I cut his seatbelt and dragged him out on my back. Pulling a 6-foot-4, 170-pound individual out of a car window on my back was difficult, but having trained myself to crawl in various positions and dragging things while doing so, I was able to get him out and begin CPR.

That driver turned out to be my oldest son, Anthony.

The decision to become a firearms owner, let alone a concealed carrier, comes from our desire to be able to defend ourselves and our loved ones. We commit to training with our firearms to survive violent encounters, but what we often overlook is our physical ability to handle a life-or-death situation. That's why we must build a training program that utilizes unique drills meant to replicate real-world demands, whether that involves crawling out of a burning building, lifting or dragging someone to safety, or sprinting to concealment to take up a defensive position.

Fortunately, there are easy and simple exercises you can do to ensure you're ready.

FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH

Training your body to move effectively goes beyond the traditional muscle-building exercises of the past. Muscle isolation can do wonders to transform the aesthetics of your physique, but past a certain point it has limited impact on improving your movement efficiency. Of greater value are repetitive movement patterns that train various parts of the body to work together as a unit. Each drill can improve mobility, strength, power, agility, endurance,

and corresponding reaction times and abilities all within the same pattern. These repetitions combined with load and speed are referred to as "functional strength."

Functional-strength training is designed to mimic real-life movement patterns that you perform in everyday living. It is performed in three planes of motion (tri-planar) and must overcome the forces of gravity, ground reaction and momentum. In other words, the training involves what your body does every day to live and survive. And the following movement qualities should be considered in a training plan: locomotion skills, squatting and lunging, level changes and climbing, pushing and pulling, rotational patterns, and vertimotion. Start slowly to learn the proper techniques while performing the drills listed here. Once you achieve that, you can add speed or load.

It is better to err toward going a little too easy when you start, especially if you don't exercise regularly, and then turn up the intensity as strength and mobility increase.

LOCOMOTION

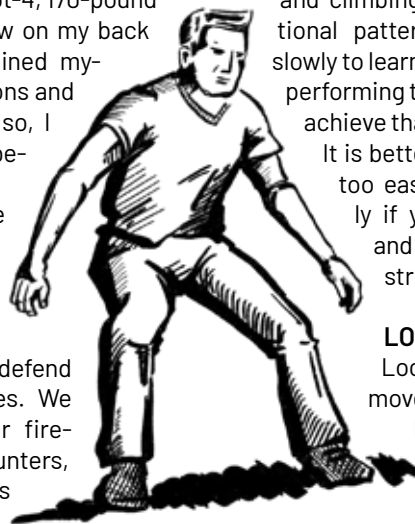
Locomotion is the ability to move from point A to a safer point B by shuffling, sprinting, or crawling forward, backward or sideways.

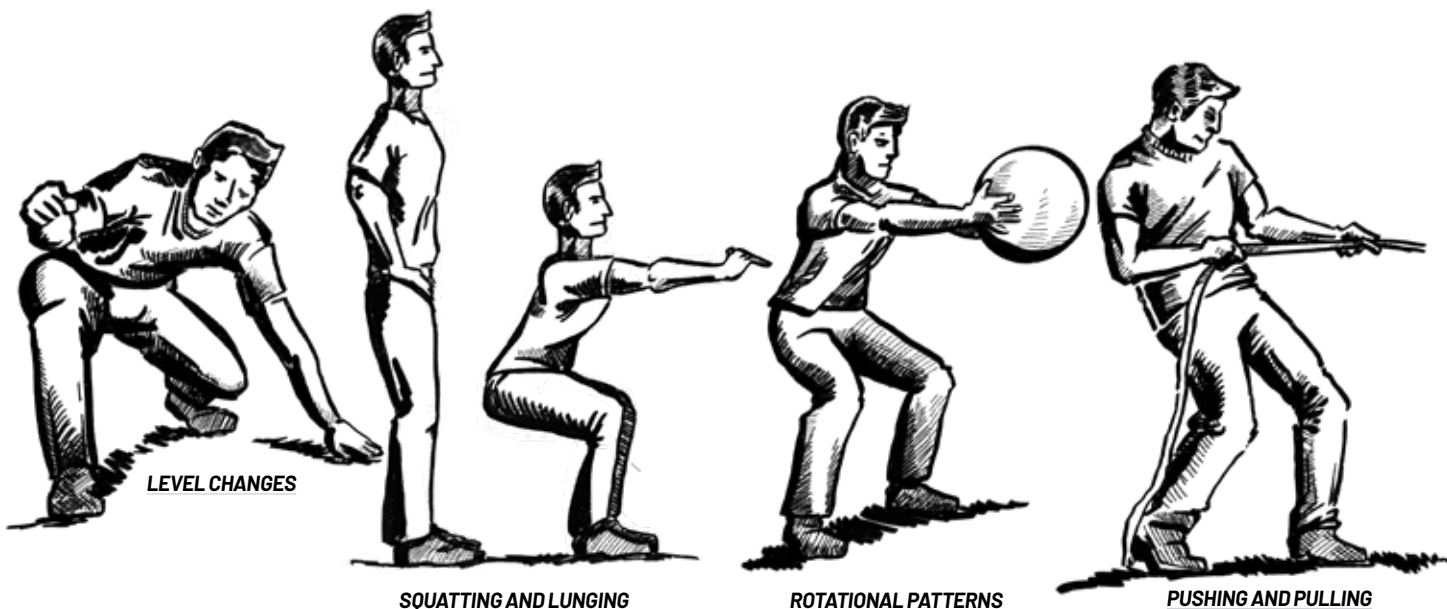
Shuffle patterns involve your feet moving forward, backward or laterally and never crossing. Two shuffling drills you can perform are:

- **Lateral:** Stand with both feet shoulder-width apart. Push off with your right foot and rapidly move laterally to your left. Your right foot should never cross over the left. Repeat for 10 to 20 yards and then quickly return to the right.
- **Backward:** Step your right foot back while pushing off the left, bringing it to center but not crossing the right. Imagine having to take a quick step back from a threat.

If you haven't sprinted in many years, perform these sprinting drills at 50 to 75 percent effort for the first few months, slowly building your speed without injuring yourself:

- **10-yard burst:** From an athletic stance, accelerate for 10 yards five to 10 times. Imagine you are rushing to get behind cover.
- **30-yard flyer:** Start with an easy run for 10 yards and then hit the gas and go as hard as you





can for 30 yards. Do this three to five times. Imagine moving slowly away from something as you are trying to determine a course of safe evasion and then accelerating to that point.

Crawling is a foundational human movement that babies use to build the core strength to stand and walk. For adults in dangerous situations, this can be a lifesaver if they need to get under cover or crawl from a smoke-filled room. To perform the cross-crawl exercise, crawl forward or backward on your hands and feet with your knees only a few inches off the ground by moving your left foot and right hand at the same time (and vice versa).

SQUATTING AND LUNGING

In order to be able to get low to the ground, duck, lift or carry someone, or transition to a crawl, you'll need to be able to squat or lunge. The hips and legs are the power source for the human system.

Your ability to get into a deep squat is an important part of keeping your body mobile and strong. It is the foundation of lower-body strength and power, which enhances running, lifting, jumping and striking.

To perform a proper squat, stand up with your feet shoulder-width apart, positioned forward to slightly turned out. Before squatting, torque your feet against the ground, creating stability in your hips. Next, initiate the squat by hinging your hips and driving your butt back, flexing your knees and slowly

lowering down as far as you can while keeping your heels planted. Prevent your feet from rotating out and knees from rotating in. Keep your chest up and your spine flat.

Although some individuals have anatomical hip-structure reasons that prevent them from getting into a full squat position, for most people it's a limitation in hip or pelvic mobility that most affects the issue. Practicing your deep-squat technique consistently while holding a door frame can compensate for lost mobility.

Lunges can be performed in a variety of angles: forward, backward, laterally and diagonally. Each angle challenges your leg, hip and pelvic musculature differently. Imagine you are standing on a compass and then lunge to any angle on that compass before returning to the starting position. When you perform a lunge, the goal should be to return to that starting position fluidly.

Once you have mastered the form, try an exercise called the "farmer's carry." With good squat form, lift two heavy dumbbells and hold your arms at your side while you carry them 20 or more yards.

LEVEL CHANGES AND CLIMBING

It's important that you can get up from the ground quickly so that you can transition to a sprint to safety, assume a defensive posture, or climb a tree or onto a car to evade an attacking dog. These two drills ensure you can:

- **Scramble up:** Lying on your belly or

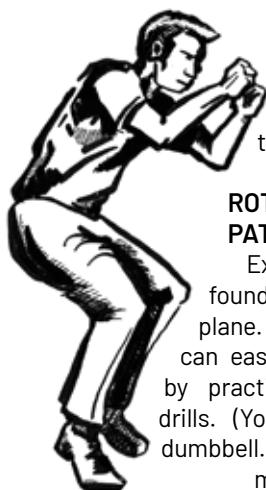
back, scramble up as fast as you can to your feet, keeping oriented to the "threat" in front of you. Perform this exercise three to five times from various positions.

- **Plyo box or fence climber:** Using a tall plyo box or fence rail, lower your center of gravity, push off the ground and use your arms to drive your body up as though trying to climb over the box or rail. Tap your foot on the top of the box or fence and then return to start. Repeat it 10 to 20 times with each leg.

PUSHING AND PULLING

The ability to powerfully throw a punch, push someone away from you, or drag someone or something all involve push or pull strength. These three exercises will build that strength:

- **Pushup variations:** Your hips and shoulders should stay in alignment throughout the pushup. Tighten your abdominal muscles and torque your hands against the ground. Descend until your chin touches the ground and return to the up position. Mix up your hand positions for variation.
- **Tug of war:** This exercise can be performed with a partner or with a cable system. Take a towel or short rope and slowly move backward while pulling it into you. If you are doing it with a partner, yield enough to allow your partner to pull through a full range of motion.
- **Physio ball wrestling:** The goal of this drill is to get the ball out of your partner's hands. Start slowly so as not to injure each other, especially if you



are considerably stronger or larger than your partner.

ROTATIONAL PATTERNS

Explosive power is found in the rotational plane. Rotational patterns can easily be implemented by practicing medicine-ball drills. (You can also use a dumbbell.) Since speed of movement is key, 4 to 10 pounds is all you need for these exercises:

- **Circles:** From an athletic stance, take the medicine ball or dumbbell and "draw" a circle as wide and as high as you can 10 times in each direction.
- **Rotational chops:** Bring the ball down to the side of your knee and swing it over the opposite shoulder 10 times in each direction.

VERTIMOTION

Vertimotion is the ability to jump, hop or leap onto or down from something, such as out of a window to escape from a burning building. To initiate a jump, your arms should swing down as your hips drop and then swing up explosively as you push off the ground. These exercises will

strengthen your ability to jump:

- **Broad jump:** Jump out as far as you can two to five times.
- **Box jumps:** Setting a box securely in front of you, jump up and softly land on it. Step off and repeat it two to five times.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Each of the drills listed here can be used as a stand-alone drill or as part of an exercise plan. All should be executed smoothly and with fluidity to establish technique and control. Remember to progress slowly — especially if you're just getting back into being active — and that the sets and reps are just guidelines. Once you've achieved proper technique, you can add speed or load to increase the demand or complexity of the drills. Once you have the various drills down, you can start combining some of them for more complexity and metabolic demand.

For further reading, see Vance A. Ferrigno, Lee E. Brown and Juan Carlos Santana; *Training for Speed, Agility and Quickness; Third Edition (2014)*.



SOURCES

Gray Institute: GrayInstitute.com

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