

Strength Training With Resistance Bands

40-Minute Routine

Equipment Needed: 1 resistance band, 1 exercise mat (optional)

Rational: Using resistance bands is a great way to build strength! Resistance bands add an extra challenge to body weight exercises, but they don't put the same sort of pressure on your joints that external weights (like dumbbells or kettlebells) do. They are also great for targeting smaller, stabilizing muscles that you may not typically work. Resistance bands are also light and portable, which makes them easy to use anywhere!

This 40-minute program consists of 12 exercises, organized into three groups.

Group 1

These first five exercises will all help you strengthen your upper body. To complete these exercises, leave the ends of your resistance band untied. As you are doing these exercises, remember to breathe and engage your core. Complete 12 repetitions of each of the following:

1. **Band Pull:** While standing, stretch out your arms straight in front of you, and hold the resistance band in the center of the band, with hands roughly 1-foot apart (the closer together your hands are, the harder this exercise gets!). Holding onto the band, pull your hands apart, keeping them at shoulder height, focusing on squeezing the shoulder blades together (this exercise helps to strengthen the upper back muscles). Remember to keep your shoulders loose and down away from your ears. Pull your arms apart, and then slowly bring them back together. This is 1 rep.
2. **Bent-Over Row:** Stand with both feet on your resistance band, about hip-width apart. Hold one end of the band in each hand by your sides, facing your palms in towards each other. Bend your knees slightly and hinge forwards at the hips (about 30 degrees). Before you begin, ensure that your back is flat, that your arms are straight, and that your hands are under your shoulders. Bend your elbows to pull the band towards your chest (make sure to keep your elbows close to your body - they should actually skim your sides as you pull the band towards your chest). Slowly straighten your arms and lower your hands back to the starting position. This is 1 rep.
3. **Upright Row:** Stand with both feet on your resistance band, about hip-width apart. Cross the resistance band in front of you (so it makes an X) and hold one end of the band with each hand. Use an overhand grip to hold the ends of the band. Lift hands to shoulder height, extending your elbows (like wings) to the side as you lift up (careful that you don't lock your knees). Slowly straighten your arms and lower your hands back to the starting position. This is 1 rep.
4. **Single Arm Triceps Extension:** Stand with your right foot about 1 foot in front of your left foot, so that your stance is staggered. Stand on one end of your band with your left foot. With your right hand, grab a hold of the other end of your resistance band and hold it behind your neck. Your right elbow should be pointing up toward the ceiling. This is the starting position for the exercise. Extend your right hand towards the ceiling until your elbow is straight. Then lower it back down to the starting position. This is 1 rep. Do all 12 of the repetitions with your right arm, and then switch sides and repeat.
5. **Bicep Curl:** Stand on the middle of your band (place your feet 1-foot apart). Hold one end of the band with each hand and face your palms forward. Start with your arms hanging in a loose position. Slowly hinge at your elbow, and curl your hands up towards your shoulders, squeezing your biceps. Keep your elbows tight to the sides of your body, and ensure that your knees are not locked, and your abdominals are engaged. Slowly lower your hands back to the starting position. This is 1 rep.

If you have time and motivation, complete another set (12 reps of each) for all 5 exercises in Group 1.

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GROUP 2

This next group of exercises will all help you strengthen your lower body. Before you begin, tie the two ends of your resistance band together. You should tie it tight enough, so you can stand with your feet hip-width apart, and your band looped around your legs without it falling down. As you are doing these exercises, remember to breathe and engage your core. Complete 12 repetitions of each of the following:

1. **Squat:** Loop your band around both of your ankles and stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart (feet slightly turned out). Bend your knees slowly and push your hips back as you lower down into a squat (during your squat, make sure your weight is in your heels - you should be able to see your toes the entire time). Keeping your core engaged, your chest lifted, and your back flat, push through your heels to stand back up to the starting position. This is 1 rep.
2. **Lateral Lunge:** Loop your band around both of your ankles. Stand up straight with your hands either clasped together in front of your chest or place them on your hips. With your right foot, take a big step (about 2 feet) out to the right. When your foot hits the ground, hinge at your hips, push your butt back, and bend your right knee to lower into a lunge. Pause for a second, and then push off your right foot to return to the starting position. This is 1 rep. Repeat this same exercise on your left leg.
3. **Lateral Walk:** Loop your band around both of your ankles. Bend your knees slowly and push your hips back as you lower down into a quarter-squat (a shallower squat than what you did in exercise #6). Take a giant step to the right with your right foot, and then follow with your left. Take 6 steps in this direction (make sure you stay in your quarter-squat). Then, step back in the reverse direction, starting each step with your left foot and then follow with your right, until you reach your starting position. Continue this movement, alternating directions each time. Repeat the 6 steps to the right, 6 to the left, twice.
4. **Hip Thruster:** Place your resistance band on the ground and stand on it (with your feet about shoulder width apart), with equal parts of the band on each side. Grab onto each end of the band and bring your hands to shoulder height (the band should come over the backs of your shoulders, and your elbows should be pointing out to the sides). This is the starting position. Hinge forward at your hips and sit your butt back into a squat (just as you did in Exercise #6). Bend your knees as much as your body allows, but not so your knees are more than parallel to the ground (your hands stay at shoulder height during the squat). Then, press through your heels to stand up straight. This is 1 rep. (Optional add-on: As you stand, press your arms overhead until they are extended fully. Keep your core engaged and squeeze your butt at the top. Slowly lower your hands back to your shoulders).

If you have time and motivation, complete another set (2 reps of each) for all 4 exercises in Group 2.



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GROUP 3

This third group of exercises are wonderful core stabilizers, so ensure that your abdominals are engaged throughout. Keep your resistance band tied together. These next three exercises will be completed on the ground. As you are doing these exercises, remember to breathe and engage your core. Complete 12 repetitions of each of the following:

1. **Lateral Leg Raise:** Lie on your right side and loop your resistance band around your ankles. Extend both of your legs out straight, stacking your left leg on top of your right. Bend your right elbow and prop your head up with your hand (you can also rest your right arm on the ground, and lay your head down on your arm, if you prefer). Place your left hand on the floor in front of your chest for support. This is the starting position. Slowly lift your leg, keeping it straight (remember to engage your core and squeeze your butt as you lift your leg). Lift your left leg up until right before you feel your lower back begin to arch (normally you are lifting your leg about 1-2 feet off the ground). Slowly lower your leg back to the starting position. This is 1 rep. Complete all reps on one side, and then move to the next side.
2. **Glute Bridge:** Lie on your back with your hands at your sides, knees bent, and your feet flat on the floor. Ensure that your feet are about hip-width apart. Loop your band around your thighs, just above your knees. This is the starting position. As you squeeze your glutes and abdominals, push through your heels to lift your hips a few inches off the floor until your body forms a straight line from your shoulders to your knees. Hold this position for a second (as you hold, make sure your knees do not collapse in or fall out to the sides - also, continue to squeeze your glutes and continue to engage your core). Slowly lower your hips to return to the starting position. This is 1 rep.
3. **Hands and Knees Glute Kick Back:** Start on your hands and knees with your resistance band looped around your left ankle and the arch of your right foot. Lift your right leg (the leg where your band is looped around the arch of your foot), and extend it out straight behind you, pushing against the resistance of your band. Try to straighten your leg as much as you can. Slowly bring your leg back to the starting position. This is 1 rep.

Complete all reps on one side, and then move to the next side.*

*You can also do the glute kick back exercise standing up. If you choose to do so, loop your resistance band around your ankles and stand with your feet together. With your hands by your sides or clasped together in front of your chest, shift all of your weight onto your left leg and place your right toes on the ground about an inch diagonally behind your left heel, so there is tension in the band. Squeeze your abdominals, tuck your pelvis under, and kick your right leg back about 6 inches, keeping your knee straight (as you kick, point your toes downwards). Return your right foot to the floor, making sure to keep tension in the band. That is 1 rep. Complete all reps on one side, and then move to the next side.

If you have time and motivation, complete another set (12 reps of each) for all 3 exercises in Group 3.

Cool down: Spend 5-10 minutes stretching and or doing some light yoga.

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