The Ultimate Upper Body Calisthenic Movement

I was always hesitant to perform the handstand push up. It was fear of getting stuck upside down and fear of not being able to kick myself into position.

Plus, I never had the opportunity to perform these while on a matted area such as a wrestling room.

Well, one day I just said screw it.

I already knew that I needed my hands approximately 1 ft. from the wall, and my body should remain as straight as possible.

The other little tricks I learned along the way are what most people don’t tell you about.

So first, let’s go over how to do the handstand push up, then we will get into the little tips to improve your strength quickly, and then we’ll get into the benefits of this awesome upper body calisthenic.

Step 1: Place your hands 1 ft. away from a wall and get into the position of a push up. Once your mentally ready to kick up, you might place your one foot forward as if you’re performing mountain climbers.
Step 2: Kick up the back leg quickly while keeping your arms locked tightly. Once your back leg kicks up your front leg should naturally follow. You want to keep your legs straight so that the edge of your heels hit the wall, as opposed to your entire foot being flat against the wall.

Step 3: You’re almost ready to start cranking out the handstand push up. Don’t try to look up as it will cause your back to arch heavily which will automatically throw your feet back towards the floor. The key is to actually keep your entire body in alignment. This means your head / neck will actually be kept neutral, you’ll be able to see everything behind you. If you’re looking up, your eyes will be on the wall which is what you don’t want to do.
Above, notice the legs straight, and the edge of my heels against the wall.

Above, going down towards the floor until your head almost touches the ground.

Continue repping out until you have 1 in the tank.
A few tips on the handstand push up:

- If you can not perform the handstand push up, then try to hold the position with your arms locked out for maximum time. This will build your strength up as well as your confidence from this position.
- Try to keep pressure OFF your fingers and on your palms. Pressure on your fingers will cause you to shift your weight away from the wall.
- When you get comfortable kicking up from the handstand push up, you can begin walking up and performing a handstand right up to the wall.
- Let your elbows travel naturally, don’t try to force them in or out, be natural.

Above, one of our wrestlers who weighs 205 lbs. kicks up into the handstand push ups by walking right up to the wall. This wrestler can perform 20 + handstand push ups!

Problem areas with the handstand push up:

- Some individuals will quickly lean towards their strong side or turn their head during the movement, forcing the weight to shift heavily to one side which is
unsafe and not smart. This is when you need a spotter on the side to remind the athlete to stay centered and you can also give a slight touch to the leg to remind the individual to keep centered.

Above, notice the lean to the left. We regularly spot this athlete by giving a slight push to the leg to keep him centered.

Depending on strength levels, we use this movement as a supplemental movement after upper body max effort work, or, it may be the max effort movement for those who can only perform 2 – 5 reps of this exercise.

I have used this exercise during my body weight circuits and during upper body workouts after heavy pressing movements. It’s amazing for shoulder and upper back strength.

Give this movement a regular try during your workouts. Every workout you should be able to add 1 or 2 reps to your best set and be prepared to get seriously strong.
Between pull ups and handstand push ups, one can develop a deadly combination of upper body calisthenic movements and all their variations.

My advice? Do this exercise along with various pull ups regularly!

For hundreds of hard core strength and conditioning articles, plus audio interrogations and special training videos, go to http://UndergroundStrengthCoach.com

If you love bodyweight training you’ll love this manual!