

BROADEN YOUR BACK

With summer nearly here, feel confident shirtless by building a broad, strong and muscular back.

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Some exercises are just better than others. When it comes to developing a thick, strong and muscular upper back, there are exercises that are not only better than others, but also ones that should be staples in any program.

The workout that follows uses three of the best and time-tested back exercises around. Our aim is to develop your back by hitting

all the relevant muscle groups from different angles in a set and rep format you are probably not used to.

Don't worry though — we've got your back! If you trust us and push yourself through the routine below, you will develop a large and well-rounded back. Don't let the high rep ranges fool you into thinking this workout is light and easy. In fact, you may need someone to help get the shirt off your back after this workout.



MICHAEL HERMANN

Michael is the founder and director of Performance Revolution, a results-guaranteed company specialising in strength training, athletic performance enhancement and nutrition. Michael began his career as a trainer and strength and conditioning coach, accruing more than 10,000 hours of practical experience. His clientele ranges from everyday people with health and body-composition goals to national-level athletes looking to enhance performance. In addition to his hands-on experience, Michael is an author and contributing writer for popular fitness magazines and blogs. He also uses his skills and experience to mentor and lecture other aspiring trainers at various Australian colleges and institutions. For more training programs and resources to help you get closer to your goals, visit www.performancerevolution.com.au

THE WORKOUT

You will begin the workout by performing a set of pull-ups (exercise A1) for as many reps possible (AMRP) and then proceed with no rest to cable face pulls (A2) for a set of 15 reps.

After completing your set of face pulls, rest for 90 seconds and then proceed to repeat the A1-A2 superset another three times for a total of four sets of each exercise.

Proceed to exercise B (the bent-over single-arm dumbbell rows) thereafter, and complete this exercise as described in the workout table below.

Let the reps dictate the weight for the first set of exercises A2 and B. For example, if you can do 25 reps for the first set of exercise B, it means the weight is too light. If you can only do 15 reps for the first set of the same exercise, it means the weight is too heavy. Once you have selected the correct weight for your first set of these two exercises, use this same weight for the recommended reps in subsequent sets.

Loads for the face pulls should generally be slightly lighter to ensure you get full muscular contraction in your middle back. Loads for the bent-over single-arm dumbbell rows, on the other hand, should be heavier and require great struggle to complete each set.

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST BETWEEN SETS
A1: Pull-up*	4	4 x AMRP	nil
A2: Cable face pull	4	15, 15, 15, AMRP	90secs
B: Supported bent-over single-arm dumbbell rows	4 each side**	20, 19, 18, 17	60secs

*Use a resistance band around your leg or have a partner assist you if you cannot perform more than 10 reps of pull-ups.

**Alternate arms and complete four sets each side with 60 seconds rest between changeovers.



Pull-up

SET-UP: Begin by hanging from the bar with a wide overhand grip.

ACTION: While focusing on drawing the elbows into the body and squeezing the shoulder blades together, pull yourself upward until the top of your chest reaches the bar. Keep the body as vertical as possible throughout the entire movement (that is, do not use the legs or 'kip' to get to the top). Lower yourself back down with control to full hang and repeat.



Cable face pull

SET-UP: With a rope attachment, position the cable between waist- and chest-height — the lower the cable is, the more engagement there will be of the upper back and traps; the higher the cable is, the more involvement of the middle back and rhomboids. Grasp the rope with either a palms-down or palms-facing grip. Pull the cable off the weight stack and adopt a solid stance. Ensure your hips and trunk are rigid throughout the entire exercise to avoid cheating.



ACTION: Driving through the elbows (rather than the hands), proceed to pull the ends of the rope apart as you draw its centre toward your forehead (don't cheat by pushing your head forward to meet the rope). Externally rotate your arms and squeeze your shoulder blades together hard as you approach the end range of movement — by this stage your wrists should be above your elbows and your knuckles should be facing the ceiling. Using the same movement path, control the cable back to the starting position until the arms are fully extended. It is important that you use a controlled tempo and do not drop your elbows throughout the movement, as this would make you adopt a row motion rather than a face pull.



Supported bent-over one-arm dumbbell rows

SET-UP: Adopt a staggered stance and support yourself on a bench using the same-side arm as the leading leg. With a flat back, adopt a 15-degree trunk angle where your shoulders are kept higher than your hips. Stretch out through your upper back as you reach to grasp the dumbbell.



ACTION: Proceed to pull the dumbbell in a straight line from directly below your chest to the lower portion of your rib cage — making sure to lightly touch the dumbbell on the rib cage at the top of each rep. Keep your hips fixed and squeeze your shoulder blade hard toward your spine at the top of the movement. Control the dumbbell back to the starting position. During this exercise, ensure you have full range of motion by completely extending the shoulder at the bottom of the movement and really pulling it up and back at the top. **MMH**

