Dip

Exercises that involve your bodyweight can be very effective for increasing strength. Moreover, there is an added advantage in that the exercises force you to "learn" how to handle and move your own bodyweight.

The dip targets your chest (lower), shoulders and triceps. To begin the exercise, grasp two handles or bars with your palms facing each other. Bend your arms such that your upper arms are roughly parallel to the floor. Lift your feet off the floor, bend your knees and cross your ankles. To do the exercise, push your body up until your arms are almost completely straight. Pause briefly in this mid-range position (your arms almost straight) and then lower your body under control to the start/finish position (your arms bent). To make the dip more challenging, you can add extra resistance around your waist or wear a weighted vest.

Chin

Another productive exercise that involves your bodyweight is the chin. In fact, it is one of the best exercises that wrestlers can do to improve the strength of their upper body.

The chin involves your upper back, biceps and forearms. To begin the exercise, grasp a chinning bar with your palms facing toward your body. Bring your body to a "dead hang" and cross your ankles. To do the exercise, pull your body up until your shoulders are near your hands. Pause briefly in this mid-range position (your arms bent) and then lower your body under control to the start/finish position (your arms straight). To make the chin more challenging, you can add extra resistance around your waist or wear a weighted vest. You can also do this exercise with an overhand grip (your palms facing away from your body).

Shoulder Shrug

It has already been noted that training the neck should be done as a precautionary measure against injury. A major muscle that influences the neck and shoulder areas is the trapezius.

The best exercise for isolating your upper trapezius is the shoulder shrug. To begin the exercise, hold dumbbells against the sides of your upper legs with your palms facing each other. Straighten your arms and spread your feet about shoulder-width apart. To do the exercise, keep your arms fairly straight and pull the dumbbells up as high as possible. Pause briefly in this mid-range position (your shoulders near your ears) and then lower the dumbbells under control to the start/finish position (your shoulders away from your ears). You can also do this exercise with a barbell and trap bar in a similar manner as described here.

Bent-Over Raise

Many individuals overtrain their anterior shoulder and overlook their posterior shoulder. This produces a muscle imbalance which is, in my opinion, one reason why shoulder problems are so common.

A great exercise for training your posterior deltoid (and lower trapezius) is the bent-over raise. To begin the exercise, place your left hand and left knee on the back pad of a bench and position your right foot on the floor at a comfortable distance from the bench. Grasp a dumbbell with your right hand and straighten your right arm. Point your right palm toward the bench. To do the exercise, keep your arm fairly straight and perpendicular to your torso and raise the dumbbell sideways until your arm is parallel to the floor. Pause briefly in this mid-range position (your arm parallel to the floor) and then lower the dumbbell under control to the start/finish position (your arm near the bench). After performing a set for the right side of your body, repeat the exercise for the left side.

Bar Hang

To be a successful wrestler, having a strong grip is absolutely essential. The bar hang is a simple yet effective exercise that involves your bodyweight.

The bar hang develops all of your gripping muscles. To begin the exercise, grasp a chinning bar with your palms facing away from your body. Bring your body to a "dead hang" and cross your ankles. To do the exercise, simply hang onto the bar for as long as possible. To make the bar hang more challenging, you can add extra resistance around your waist or wear a weighted vest.

Crunch

The sit-up has been a staple of exercise programs for decades. Done properly, it is not a bad exercise. It does have a downside, however, in that some individuals feel a strain in their hip flexors and/or lower back. An effective alternative to the sit-up is the crunch which is, essentially, an abbreviated sit-up.

The crunch involves the rectus abdominis, the muscle located on the front part of your abdomen. To begin the exercise, lie down on the floor and place the backs of your lower legs on the back pad of a bench (or a chair or stool). Position your upper legs so that they are approximately perpendicular to the floor and the angle between your upper and lower legs is about 90 degrees. Fold your arms across your chest. Raise your head off the floor and position your chin near your chest. To do the exercise, pull your torso as close to your upper legs as possible. Pause briefly in this mid-range position (your torso near your upper legs) and then lower your torso under control to the start/finish position (your torso on the floor). To make the crunch more challenging, you can hold onto extra weight (positioned across your chest) or have a spotter apply manual resistance against your shoulders.

Back Extension

Perhaps the most neglected area of the body is the lower back. Nevertheless, many individuals neglect this all-important area since it is not a "showy" muscle.

The back extension is done on a machine or a bench that is designed specifically for the exercise. With the intent here of including exercises that have little or no cost, the ensuing description involves a back-extension bench rather than a machine.

The main muscles that are used in the back extension are the erector spinae. To begin the exercise, place your feet flat on the foot platform and the backs of your lower legs against the leg pads. Position your pelvis against the hip pads so that your navel is above the edges. Allow your torso to hang straight down over the edges of the hip pads and fold your arms across your chest. To do the exercise, raise your torso until it is aligned with your upper legs. Pause briefly in this mid-range position (your torso aligned with your upper legs) and then lower your torso under control to the start/finish position (your torso near your upper legs). To make the back extension more challenging, you can hold onto extra weight or have a spotter apply manual resistance against your upper back. You can also do this exercise with a machine in a similar manner as described here.

THE LAST REP

To be clear, there is nothing magical about the 10 exercises that have been presented in this article. They are simply good exercises that address muscles that are important to wrestling and require little or no equipment.

Matt Brzycki has authored, co-authored or edited 17 books on strength and fitness including four that are devoted to wrestling. His latest book is Youth Fitness: An Action Plan for Shaping America's Kids.