

# **Knee Ability Zero: The Picture-Book**

## **INTRO**

I can still remember being 4 years old and telling my best friend I was going to save up for a Michael Jordan rookie card. I worked odd jobs, saved every penny, and at age 6 I did it: I bought a Michael Jordan rookie card for one thousand dollars. I had no interest in toys: just Jordan.

First thing after waking up each day, I raced to the couch to turn on the TV, but not to watch cartoons...

(From the 1990 video "NBA Superstars")

An F-16 Fighting Falcon appears on the screen.

Michael Jordan enters the tunnel into the arena.

The F-16 approaches the runway, then Jordan steps onto the court.

The F-16 begins accelerating for takeoff, and Jordan begins dribbling down the court.

The F-16 gets faster. Jordan gets faster! F-16 - Jordan! Back and forth they go, 'til the F-16 lifts off and Jordan soars into the air for a dunk!

Berlin's "Take My Breath Away" begins to play, and slow motion highlights of Michael Jordan ensue.

Many hours a day I practiced these dunks on my Little Tike hoop in the garage. By age 9 I was waking up at 5 a.m. to do vertical jump programs before school. Thousands of nights I dreamed of dunking like Michael Jordan. Not once did I dream of lying half-naked on an operating table as doctors used markers to draw where they were going to cut me open.

Chronic knee pain secretly dominated my life starting at age 12. I remember during a fire drill at school being worried that if a real fire broke out, I'd be the last one out. Unless I was warmed up, I couldn't even run, and I had to go up and down stairs very slowly to avoid the pain.

By 14 it was not so secret: My teammates and coaches nicknamed me "Old Man" because my knees were so stiff. I finished high school with scars on my knee, not even close to dunking a basketball, and with no college coaches interested in giving me a scholarship.

I recall the moment it hit home that my dream of being a basketball player had not succeeded. I had a real decision to make: What would I do with my life now? Would I choose a logical career and forget basketball, or would I devote my existence to figuring out how to bulletproof my knees?

I chose the latter. I began painting walls during the day to make money while I studied and experimented with how to fix my knees.

A year went by with no results. In fact, I was certain I needed another surgery when a spark of truth finally presented itself...

"The athlete whose knees can go *farthest* and *strongest* over his or her toes is the most protected."

Everything I had been taught up to this point by dozens of trainers and physical therapists was very clear: NO KNEES OVER TOES - but when I read this statement, I immediately knew it was true.

I scrambled on the internet looking for examples of this, and the first video footage I found was from Australian Strength Coach Keegan Smith, a student of Charles Poliquin. I became a student of Charles myself, and learned enough to get my knees to the point where I could play basketball with manageable pain.

At age 21, I beat the odds and signed a college basketball scholarship with an up-and-coming coach named Jeremy Shulman. He was the only coach who gave me a shot, and I repaid him by becoming the starting point guard for his team and helping him win two straight conference championships in one of the strongest community college divisions in the nation.

At age 23, I received a full-ride scholarship offer from Boston University. From unrecruited in high school to Division 1 scholarship, local kids back home were reaching out to have me train them whenever I was in town. No one had ever heard of such a story, and people wanted to know how I had pulled it off.

Little did I know, an NCAA rule allowed only 5 years of eligibility to play sports after graduating high school, and my time was up. I assembled all my medical records, and Boston University appealed the ruling, but once again I was denied. It was suggested that I get a lawyer and fight the decision in time for the start of the season, but I knew it was meant to be: My purpose was to follow the clues I learned from Charles Poliquin, and see what I could achieve with knees over toes.

Fast forward to today. At 30 years old I have the abilities I always dreamed of: I can DUNK, and not just a little bit. I've now trained many NBA players and it is still surreal for me, as a 6'1 guy who grew up unable to grab the rim, to teach 6'6"+ NBA players how to improve *their* dunks, and *physically demonstrating* the precise next dunk which would improve their game but which they cannot do yet, thanks to the system of knee training you are about to learn.

More importantly, the following formula puts the longevity of my knees in *my* hands, so now I'm looking forward to a very different future than my genetics and injury history indicated. My son turned 1 year old in September, and I've got a new dream: To still be able to dunk when *he* can dunk, too. Knee Ability gives me the tools to preserve my knees so I can be dunking in my 40s *and* help my son dunk despite genetics that wouldn't naturally get him there. The ultimate thrill is no longer dunking with studs, but having my son dunk with me.

And here's how that's going to happen.

## **KNEE ABILITY ZERO**

Knee Ability Zero is a program which requires zero weights, zero equipment, and zero special abilities to start. You can read, study the pictures, and follow right along! I will teach you how to perform each exercise with written explanations and visual demonstrations. You will do the exercise, then come back to your book and read the "Why" behind the exercise.

## **STEP 1: THE TIBIALIS RAISE**

Your tibialis anterior muscle is on the front of your lower leg. It acts both to flex your toes up, and to decelerate your foot when you walk, stop running, jump, etc., which you will see examples of when you get to the "Why" section for this exercise:



## **HOW**

Find a wall and make sure you have safe footing (no socks or slippery floor).

Put your butt against the wall, and stand out a comfortable distance, with your legs straight:



Now, without letting your knees bend, flex your toes up and hold the top position for 2 seconds before lowering back down:



To make the exercise easier, simply stand closer to the wall:



To make the exercise harder, stand farther from the wall:



Perform 25 consecutive reps, pausing 2 seconds at the top of each rep, and 2 seconds at the bottom of each rep, monitoring difficulty as you go. You may need to stand closer to the wall as your muscles burn out, or farther from the wall if you are feeling no challenge.

If you feel a significant burn by the end of the 25 reps, and no knee pain:

**YOU JUST PUT MONEY IN THE BANK FOR YOUR BODY!**

This is the beauty of Knee Ability: it is a program of pain-free ability, where our goal is never a win/lose situation, but rather degrees of *winning* only. Let's look at why that is...

**WHY**

You use your tibialis with every step you take:



When you play sports and decelerate or jump, you may put *thousands* of pounds of force into this muscle, and whatever force is not handled by the tibialis goes directly up to your knee:



Look familiar? Yet no study has ever been done on strengthening this muscle.

The tibialis is the decelerator of your foot, and your foot is your first point of contact, thus:

**YOUR TIBIALIS IS YOUR *FIRST* LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST BOTH CHRONIC AND ACUTE LOWER BODY INJURIES.**

No matter how great I got at the direct knee exercises you will learn as you continue reading, I still suffered from foot pain, Achilles pain, *nasty* shin splints, and "mystery" lower knee pains.

I recall that at my worst, my foot and lower leg pains were so bad, I would wake up in the morning and wonder, "Will today be a walking-to-the-bathroom morning, or a crawl-to-the-bathroom morning?" Sometimes the pain was too great to bear the load on my feet.

You see, coming from such weak knees, and then jacking up my knee strength so dramatically, I was capable of producing far more force than my lower leg muscles had handled throughout my life. By reverse engineering this situation, I soon realized the tibialis was the missing link in my regimen, and I was overjoyed when I found that transforming this muscle took my knees to the next level of ability!

For example, prior to the Tibialis Raise, I had achieved the ability to dunk, but only when I jumped off two feet. When I did a one-foot jump, I got nowhere near as high, and was prone to debilitating foot, shin, and knee pains, which prevented me from trying. Not long after making the Tibialis Raise a standard part of Knee Ability, I was dunking off one foot with ease. All these lower extremity pains disappeared - and *never* came back.

If you look at your body logically, the Tibialis Raise would be the first place to start, regardless of what physical issues you may be having.

Last tip: Make sure you realize your shoes' *heel height* affects the difficulty of the exercise: the higher the heel, the harder it is, and the lower the heel, the easier it is.



## **STEP 2: THE FHL (FLEXOR HALLUCIS LONGUS) CALF RAISE**

The flexor hallucis longus is a powerful muscle which runs all the way from your big toe to your mid-calf. It helps stabilize your ankle when weight is on the ball of your foot, and it is particularly important when force goes through your big toe. *Hallucis* is a Latin word meaning "of the big toe," so *flexor hallucis longus* simply means "a long muscle that flexes your big toe."





## HOW

As soon as you finish your 25 Tibialis Raises, turn around, put your hands against the wall, and back up until your ankles are under enough stretch that your heels come slightly off the ground:



Without bending your knees or hips, raise up until your weight is on your big toes:





If this is too difficult, you can stand closer to the wall, or even use assistance:



Perform 25 reps to the best of your ability, adjusting closer as necessary.

While the Tibialis Raise is likely to be very tough at first, the FHL Calf Raise is more likely to be easy, since the muscles involved are not quite as neglected as the tibialis. To perform one leg at a time, simply wrap the other leg around, which puts even more stretch into the ankle, and more difficulty into the flexor hallucis longus:



If 25 reps with two legs is easy, but with one leg is too difficult to perform without a break, simply stop at a number that challenges you, then match that number with your other leg, and return to your original leg, going back and forth until all 25 reps are complete. For example: 10 left leg, 10 right leg, 7 more left leg (total is at 17 now), 7 right leg, 5 left leg (total is at 22), 5 right leg, and finally 3 more each leg for a total of 25 each side.

### **WHY**

In doing Knee Ability, you're going to be putting stimulus into your legs which may allow you to withstand more force at your knee joint. This is a great thing! However, this means you may unwittingly be putting more force into your feet as a result. For example, let's say you can jump 20 inches high, and after a year of Knee Ability, you can jump 30 inches high. That's awesome, of course, but I do not want you to end up with foot pain, ankle pain, Achilles pain, or shin splints as a byproduct.

Also, your foot itself is the first line of defense for your knees when decelerating, as we saw with the Tibialis Raise, and in the case of the flexor hallucis longus, the same is true when landing:



We know from research that whatever force is not absorbed by the ankle, goes into the knee:



Of course we're seeking to improve your KNEE ability, but it makes most sense to also improve the areas which prevent excess knee strain in the first place, and the tibialis and flexor hallucis longus are the first of these areas.

In a traditional calf raise - which I *am* a fan of, by the way - it is simply not practical to ensure the pressure goes through the big toe, and that's why I gravitated to this FHL Calf Raise. I'm sure many coaches throughout history have used similar exercises, but I was never taught anything like it, and I wanted to use a name that would help you understand its purpose.

Also (and this is quite important relative to your *knees*): the FHL Calf Raise locks in more ankle stretch than a traditional calf raise. For your *knees'* sake, it is your ankle mobility itself that's a major player, and the FHL Calf Raise is the better tool than a regular calf raise for this job. Just ahead, you'll see how the FHL Calf Raise smoothly progresses you into Step 3:

### **BUT FIRST: STEP 2B: THE TIBIALIS RAISE... AGAIN!**

The Tibialis Raise is so important, you are going to immediately switch back around from the FHL Calf Raise and perform another 25 reps, with the same protocol you did in Step 1.

### **STEP 3: THE KOT (KNEES OVER TOES) CALF RAISE:**

The knees over toes calf raise is the first exercise in Knee Ability Zero which directly improves the ability of your knees when they are over your toes. However, it's not actually your knees that will be creating the motion: it is still your ankles that will be lifting you up and down, while your knees will simply hold your pain-free level.

By measurably addressing the ability of your *ankles* to handle whatever load your knees can, we complete a perfect foundation so that your knee gains not only result in improved knee function, but also in improved foot, ankle, Achilles, and lower leg function! While Knee Ability has the most known success stories for knees, it also has a multitude of success stories for what lies below!

Let's look at this final progression before directly addressing your knee movements themselves:

## HOW

Stand about an arm's length from the wall:



Now gradually reach your knees over your toes to a comfortable level. Ideally, this will be far enough that your heels actually lift slightly off the ground:



It is totally fine if you can't bend your knees much at first, and you are still on the route to success no matter what level you start at, because strength "radiates" 15 degrees, meaning: If you get strong at one angle, you can recover back stronger not only at that



angle, but also at another 15 degrees of bend! For example, a minimal bend such as this (below), would still be productive:



Do not criticize your current level, and realize that wherever you fall short now only means you could feel *that much better* by patiently progressing!

From your pain-free level of knee bend, simply flex your ankles up, without any motion other than your ankles. Your knees, hips, and shoulders should be as still as a statue, while your ankles lift you up and down:



Just like Tibialis and FHL Calf Raises, once it's easy to perform 25 consecutive reps with full ankle bend (to the point your heels come slightly off the ground at the bottom), you can begin rebuilding one leg at a time! This puts even more load into your ankle mobility, and into the strength of your knee to hold the position:

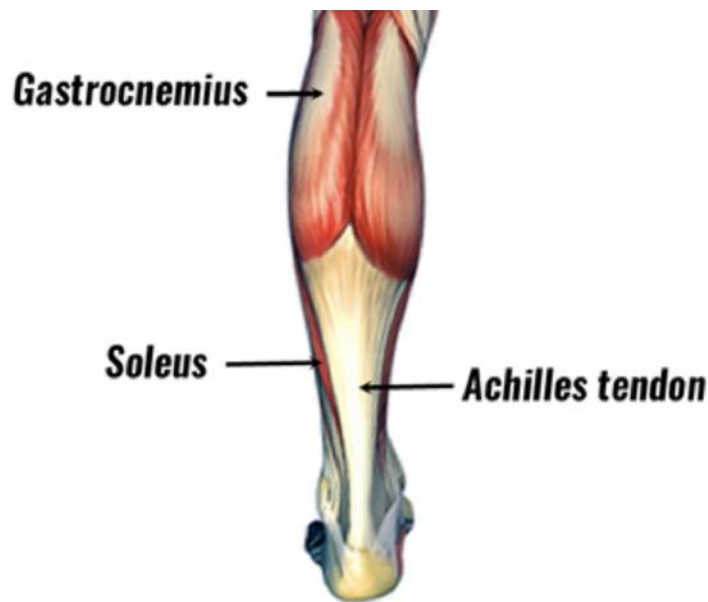


Like the Tibialis and FHL Calf Raises, if 25 in a row with two legs is easy, but with one leg is too difficult, simply count your reps on one leg until burnout, then match on the other leg, then switch back to the original leg, and so on, until you reach 25 on each side. 25 perfect single-leg reps is your long-term goal.

### WHY

I got lucky on this exercise, and unwittingly solved two problems at once:

Problem 1 was the need for a no-equipment solution for your *Achilles*. You have two calf muscles: a *gastroc* (think "belly" of the calf) and a *soleus*, which is lower and deeper:

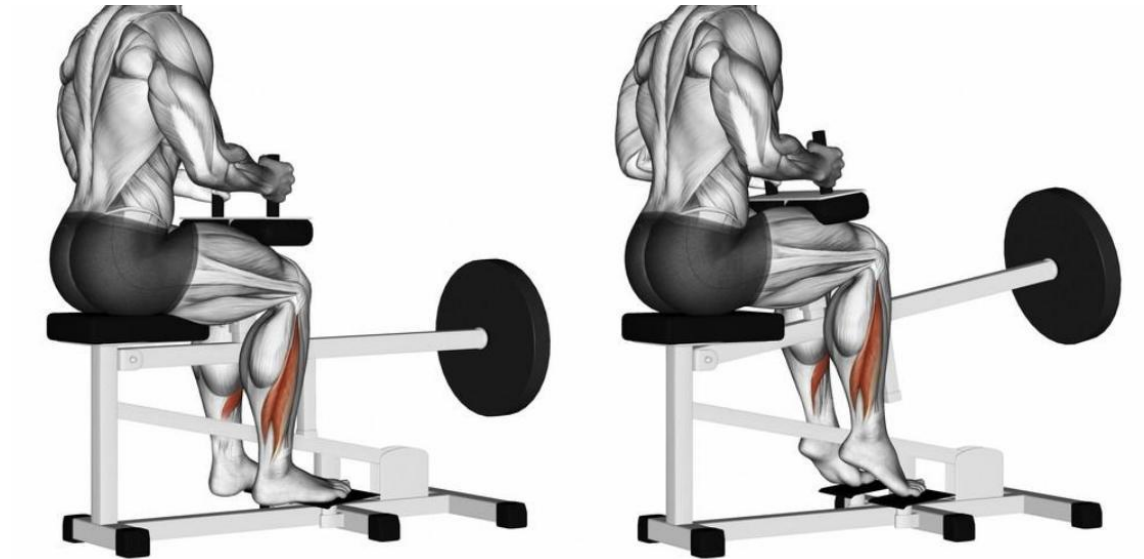


Your Achilles tendon looks pretty big, huh? Yep: It's the biggest tendon in your body! It is a very interesting phenomenon when you realize that as your muscles get smaller, your tendons get *bigger*. For example, your glutes are huge compared to your calves, but your gluteal tendons are small compared to your Achilles!

Thus: Your hips are your biggest source of *power*, while your ankles are your biggest source of *springs*. The knees are left in the middle - a perfect balance of both springs and power (or PAIN, as they are subject to ramifications from both your ankles *and* your hips - ouch!).

Your soleus is more directly related to your Achilles health than your gastroc is, *but* your soleus is not worked as much as your gastroc in a traditional standing calf raise. Fortunately, a bent-knee calf raise prioritizes your soleus and handles this issue.

For this reason, my gym used to be *full* of seated calf machines. Your gym has a row of bench presses; mine had a row of seated calf machines!



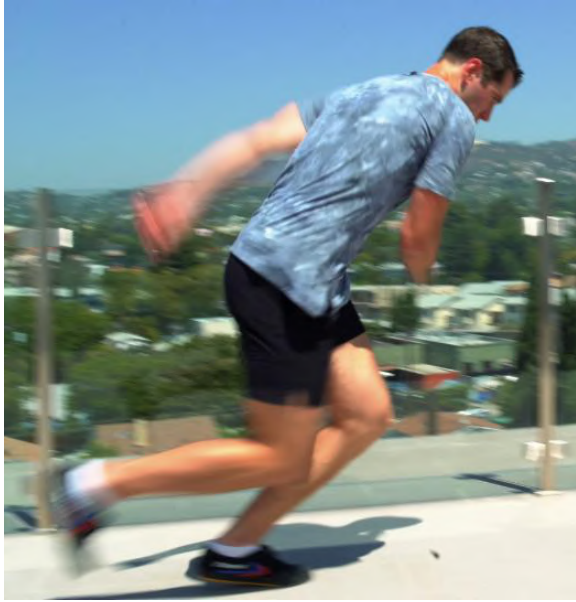
Before long my gym was overrun. I was working from 4 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week, with no days off for multiple years in a row. More people needed my help than I was capable of helping in person, so I decided to become an online coach and take more responsibility.

I quickly ran into the problem of what to do if your gym does *not* have a seated calf machine, and through much trial and error, the KOT Calf Raise was born. Little did I know at the time, I had also solved the bridge between ankle exercises and knee exercises!

In Step 4, you will directly address your knees, and in most cases this works just fine. However, the KOT Calf Raise already starts putting money in the bank toward your knee ability, so your progress will be smoother. In very sensitive cases, we have an option that strengthens the knees without even risking any painful movement, since you can monitor exactly how far you reach your toes.

Before we go on, you should know that your body relies particularly heavily on your ability in the KOT Calf Raise when putting all your weight on your leg to push off in a sprint, as well as in the rear leg just before jump takeoff, and again upon landing:





Many Achilles and knee injuries happen in these actions, and the KOT Calf Raise works against these odds!

#### **STEP 4: THE PATRICK STEP**

The farther and stronger your knees can go over your toes, the more protected you are - but how do you get there? The Patrick Step provides a safe and measurable route to put energy into this ability without ever needing to work through pain in the process!

#### **HOW**

Start with balance and/or assistance. A wall is great for balance, and PVC pipes are great for assistance, too:



Now reach the inside foot forward, and *slowly* lower the heel to the floor:



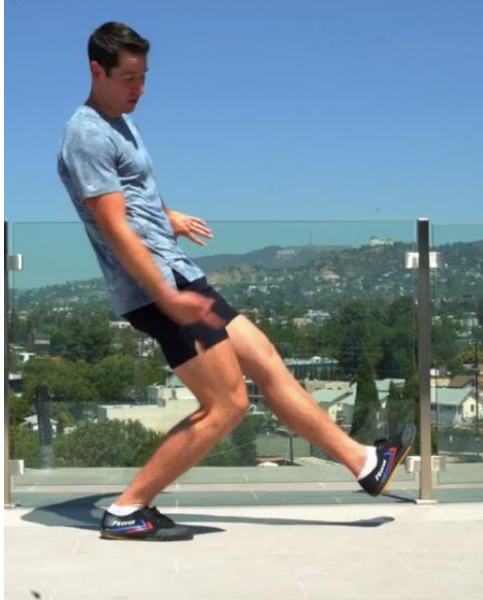
Pause fully to ensure you don't bounce in order to get momentum, and raise back up:



Understand you are *fully* in control of how much you work your knee over your toes, by how far you reach the inside heel:



Notice how the farther you reach, the more your knee has to bend! Your end goal is actually to go until your ankle cannot bend anymore *without* letting your inside heel touch the floor, thus requiring your knee to support your full weight, to full ankle bend:



Being able to perform 25 consecutive reps to full ankle bend helps prepare for the fifth movement of Knee Ability Zero, but there is no rush to get to this level, and it is *very* important to never, ever work through pain. Use the following rule:

**PAIN = DESTRUCTION**

Your body uses pain to communicate to you, and by acknowledging this two-way communication, you can actually handle the source of your pain rather than just trying to "shut up" what your body is saying to you. We will go into more detail on this in a later section of the book which addresses the following things, but realize that ice, painkillers, etc., are examples of your knee trying to talk to you, and you saying, "Shut up, Knee!" If someone in real life has a problem with you and you tell them to shut up, it may handle the problem temporarily, but has a higher likelihood of coming back to be an even bigger problem. Your knees are no different!

On the other hand, if you feel burning in your muscles on this exercise, rather than pain inside the joint, you're stimulating greater protection for your knee, giving us the following counter-rule:

**PAIN-FREE MUSCULAR BURN = CONSTRUCTION**

## **WHY**

While long-term strengthening of a reverse stepping motion itself has never been tested, we do know that there is pressure on your knee joint when your knee goes over your toes, and whatever your muscles cannot handle, must go somewhere - your knee joint itself!

So with the Patrick Step, we have a scalable way for you to put energy on this ability without ever working through pain.

My final usage tips are:

1. Always start on the non-dominant side, if you have one. Over time you may become balanced to the point that each side feels the same, but if you're aware of one side being more difficult, it's important to start on this side, paying careful attention to its ability, and



then only matching this ability on the dominant side. If you started on the dominant side, you might go farther than you can with the non-dominant side, resulting in the imbalance continuing, or perhaps working through pain in an effort to keep up.

2. While not mandatory, you may even perform an additional set of 25 reps on the weaker side, giving your body a 2:1 ratio of weaker to stronger. However, do not continue this long-term, as we don't want to create an imbalance the other way around. Keep in mind that the stronger side will only be going as far as the weaker side could, so while it will be stimulated compared to not training at all, it won't be stimulated as hard as the weaker side, so the *weaker* side will be able to catch up. This weaker-stronger-weaker approach may simply accelerate the process.

Don't worry, though, if you have an imbalance. Rather, look at this situation optimistically. Whatever you feel like now, you'll feel that much better once you're balanced, *and* you will be even more athletic as a result!

### **STEP 5: THE ATG (ASS TO GRASS) SPLIT SQUAT**

This is my personal favorite exercise, because I know if I did only this one exercise for the rest of my life, I would still live in the upper 1% of knee quality life.

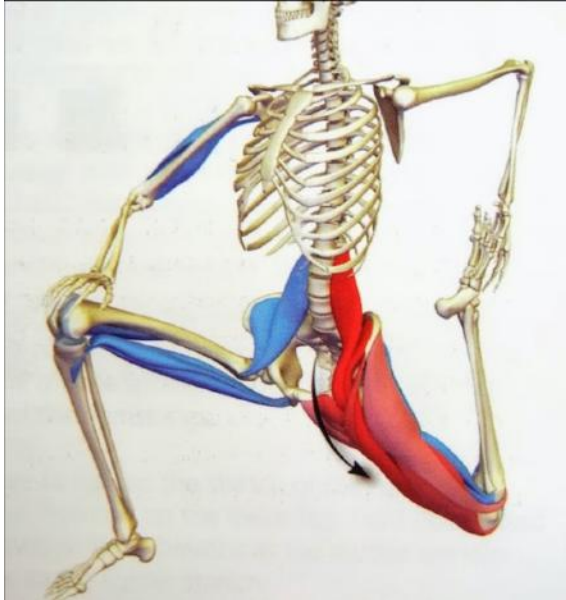
Everything you have done to this point helps prepare your ankles and knees for the ATG Split Squat, but an added factor of *hip flexor length* enters the equation, so first understand that while I want you to eventually be able to perform this exercise on flat ground, you may have to initially use a step. Notice the difference in hip flexibility:

(more hip flexor length)

(less hip flexor length)



(the hip flexors are in bright red)



With continued Patrick Step to be able to handle your full weight, plus front foot elevation to compensate for flexibility limitation, the majority of people I have coached have successfully gotten into this exercise without pain. However, there's still one final option for regression, which is using something for assistance:



If front foot elevation plus assistance still doesn't allow you to get into this exercise pain-free, it is simply too much, too soon. Continued work on the previous four exercises, plus the exercises after this step, have gotten such trainees there in relatively short time.

## HOW

The first step - no pun intended - is establishing how long your step is. People have varying leg lengths and varying degrees of flexibility - fortunately, this is not something I have ever found the need to measure. You simply play with your foot distance until you have perfect form, and eventually it won't take any thinking about.

Too close of a step does not allow enough depth, and thus prevents full coverage:



While too long of a step does not allow enough knee over toes, and thus prevents full coverage:



The right step distance allows the front hamstring to fully cover the calf, with perfectly upright torso,





with back toes still pressed - NOT rolling over,



and with back knee NOT touching the floor.



Lower down slowly, fully pause in the bottom position, rise back up without altering posture, and repeat!

Perform 5 sets of 5 reps per side, back and forth, taking up to 30 seconds between sides if you feel you need a break.

### **WHY**

Full knee bend is a desired quality, but no studies have been done on training this ability one side at a time.



In the real world, the *overwhelming majority* of us have imbalanced legs and knees, and thus receive negative ramifications from bilateral (two legs) squats: any difference between sides manifests when you squat with two legs, leaving the weaker knee vulnerable, or

worse: causing you to favor the stronger knee, and thus making the imbalance even worse!  
Enter: the ATG Split Squat.



The tighter the hip flexors, the more pulled forward we get. The modern lifestyle of excessive sitting doesn't help, and bilateral squats don't fix this, whereas ATG Split Squats do:



In fact, I maintain my splits from this exercise alone for the hip flexors, plus one stretch for the hamstrings (The Elephant Walk: Step 6 ahead):



Once you can get into good, flat ground ATG Split Squats, you're ahead of the game and have a chance to stay out of the trap forever! I advise getting this ability and never losing it! My mother is 67 years young and she has patiently worked her way to flat ground ATG Split Squats. She recently ran a half marathon and I was waiting there at the finish line, hoping she would be okay... "That was easy!" were the first words out of her mouth!

(Even Momma better have perfect form)



I've personally done over 10,000 ATG Split Squats, and I've now coached over 10,000 ATG Split Squats in-person and online. It is the gift that keeps on giving.

At this point, we have paved a route for amazing ability in our knees...





...and with pain-free knees, anti-gravity and bulletproofing goals become so much easier to achieve...

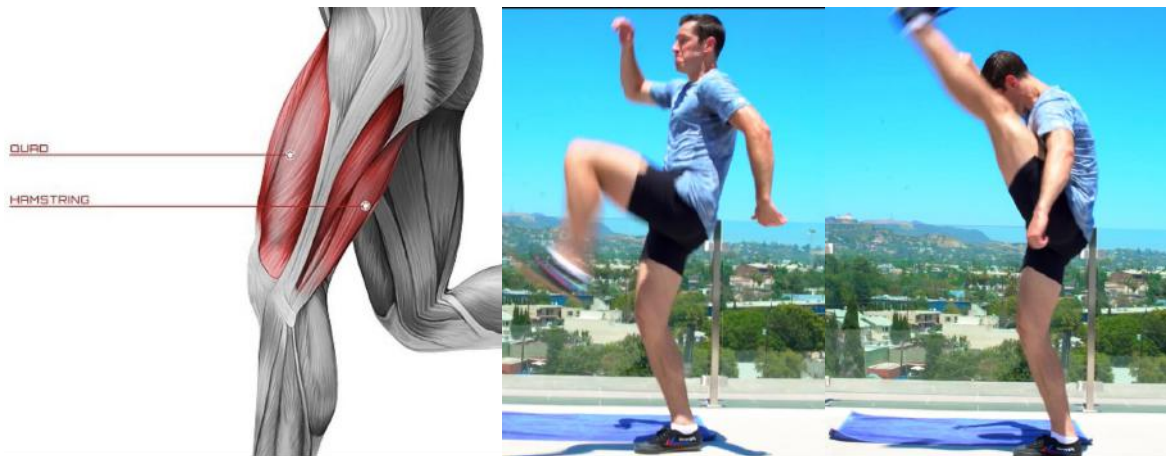




...but our training session doesn't end there!

### STEP 6: ELEPHANT WALK

This is the first of the "accessory" exercises in the Knee Ability Zero formula. Everything we have done to this point directly contributes to you being able to handle more force through your leg muscles, but you can only *use* the muscles that extend your knee (the quads) to the degree that the muscles which flex the knee (the hamstrings) can stretch:



### HOW

The test of adequately flexible hamstrings is the ability to have your palms on the floor without bending your knees:



If this position looks tough, remember that my nickname used to be "Old Man," and at the worst of my knee problems, even my toes looked like they were a mile away from me!

By starting with your hands farther out (you can even lift up on your fingertips, or use a box or step to elevate), with knees bent, and then extending one leg at a time, you can get twice the load of a regular hamstring stretch:

(Farther out, on fingertips)

(You could even lift up with a box, step, etc.)



(Extend one leg)

(Bend again)



(Extend the other leg)





When you can comfortably extend each leg, you can back up farther. Over time, this will continue all the way until your palms are on the floor, in front of your toes:



Perform 30 reps per side, being sure to keep breathing throughout the set.

### **WHY**

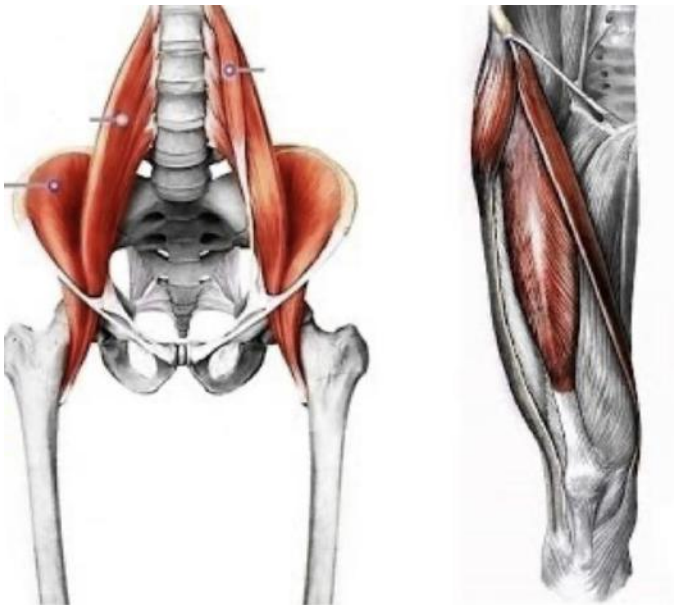
Once a foundation of Knee Ability Zero is laid, I then gradually add equipment and load in my "Dense Strength" program. This includes training your hamstring strength multiple times per week. A palms-to-floor Elephant Walk, or moving your way closer to it, helps me ensure that your hamstrings will have a nice balance of flexibility when we start addressing their strength.

### **STEP 7: L-SIT**

With greater leg power comes greater responsibility! No matter how strong your legs are, you still have to pick them back *up* when you walk, run, etc:



Your hip flexors aren't prominent "mirror-muscles," so have lost much of the attention to the "6-pack:"



As you can see, the hip flexors are made up of a number of smaller muscles, attached from the spine itself (your hip flexors are linked closely to lower back pain!) and extending all the way down your mid-thigh.

Interestingly, the hip flexors have more strength potential than your abs, and since they work along with your abs, they might just be the weak link that's holding back your core

potential! I don't do *any* traditional "core" exercises, and my abs are getting by alright. I'm a pale guy, but a good photographer, my 6-pack ain't half bad...



In my style of training, the goal is not to "neglect" your abs, but rather to train them *from the feet*, ensuring your hip flexors never lag behind!

## HOW

The measure of your hip flexors being up to par is simple: Can you hold your body off the ground?



There are three levels of progression to this point:

Level 1 is just holding one leg off the ground at a time, for a two-count:





Leaning back reduces difficulty:

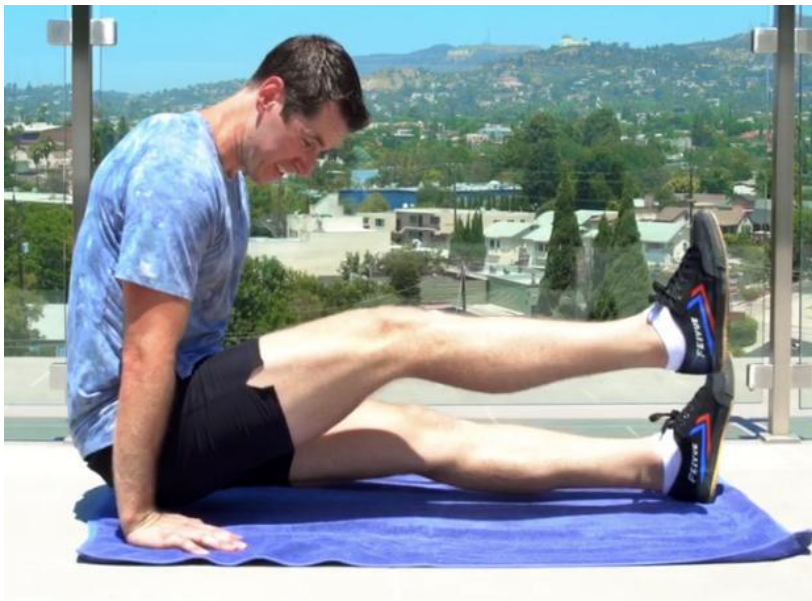


Leaning forward increases difficulty:



Set a timer and go back and forth for 60 seconds.

Level 2 is the same drill, but holding your butt off the floor as well! Also for 60 seconds:



When you go back and forth for 60 seconds with your butt off the floor, you can probably do Level 3: a full L-Sit!



At this point you are in the upper 1% of humans, but you could go even further by setting a timer and seeing how long you can hold. Holding for 30 seconds straight is getting closer to world-class, but I would not stop you from holding even longer!

Like most exercises of Knee Ability Zero, I suggest doing one set every *other* day, to ensure fullest recovery.

## WHY

Let us break this down into 3 reasons, since each is quite different:

1. In relation to your knees, we know there is success waiting for us by addressing the muscles which function to withstand force at your ankle and knee joints, but we also know that in doing so, we may experience some degree of muscle growth in these areas. I have never observed this to be excessively heavy, but this *is* weight that must be accounted for. If I'm going to make your ankles and knees stronger, I *must* make your hip flexors stronger so that your legs feel just as light, if not lighter, and are not subject to hip flexor strains due to imbalance. This brings us to point number 2:

2. The hip flexors are the biggest difference between regular humans and elite sprinters, and there is no doubt that many of my clients want to *run* faster: from competitive distance runners to NFL players with millions of dollars on the line based on their speed, to dads who just want to be able to enjoy sports with their kids without tweaking something. For me personally, even after I had the leg power to dunk, I still lacked *top-end* speed, meaning: I had powerful explosion, but once I built up to my fastest, I couldn't hold onto it for very long, and I lacked the last gear needed to be as fast as the pro basketball and football players I was training.

Fast-forward a couple years of hip flexor training, and my speed is now on par with the average NFL defensive back! In high school I famously ran a 6-second 40-yard dash. My coach thought his stopwatch was malfunctioning, and he made me run it again. After a second 6-second time, he made me take off my shoes to prove I didn't have weights in them. For the record, I really like this coach, but I think he was in shock and didn't know how to handle a 6-second 40. My speed tormented me for years, and one of my worst fears in life was a footrace, but not anymore! Now, my speed on the basketball court is one of my



greatest strengths, and I look back just amazed that out of the dozens of trainers I went to, no one ever made me confront my weak hip flexors.

Here's me at age 16...

Start of a fastbreak, right?



Think again!



I was simply slower than everyone else on the court. Now when I play, my speed is my greatest weapon! And thanks to Knee Ability, I can run and jump as hard as I want without thinking about my knees.

3. Lastly, I think of stronger hip flexors as *long-term* knee bulletproofers, because they lead to less wear and tear over the course of seasons, years, and *life*. When your hip flexors are weak, you have to *thud* harder along the ground to get from point A to B than your body was naturally designed to do. Squats, deadlifts, etc., train the ability of your hips to *extend*,



but the fastest guys I've trained also have elite hip *flexor* strength. Since hip-flexor strength isn't a commonly taught and measurable thing, like squats and deadlifts are, I've encountered countless athletes who are still *slow* despite getting as "strong" as the fast guys. Fortunately, as the hip-flexors and other key speed areas come up, I have seen over and over again that these slow athletes *can* be fast, because: If you can get strong in one area, you can get strong in another!

Conclusion: Hip extensors are *sexy* and *powerful*, but hip *flexors* are often the reason that hard-working athletes remain slow, and you're adding unnecessary long-term pain and injury to your feet, ankles, Achilles, shins, and knees to the degree that your hip flexor-to-extensor ratio is busted.

This ain't rocket science, but it IS science. You must confront the *biology* of your knees and the rest of your body if you want to maximize not only your genetic potential for anti-gravity and bulletproofing, but also your quality of life for the long haul.

If you rely on where exercise science has put its money, you are subject to its errors. It doesn't matter what the *findings* are if it's not looking fairly and accurately to begin with!

We are still humans. We are still fragile. Every day, though, we're seeing life-changing wins become the norm just by training according to physics and biology through the methods in this book. Something *can* be done about soaring pain and injury statistics, and they can and *will* come back down to more manageable levels.

## STEP 8: COUCH STRETCH

For knee tendon freedom, I highly advise achieving and maintaining the ability to have your shin and shoulders against a wall:



### HOW

For some, the ankle itself may be too tight to start against a wall, but a chair's lower seat allows you to begin. This appears to be the reason for the name "Couch" Stretch:



Always use thick padding under the knee. You may be more comfortable with even more than I'm using in the picture.

When this gets easy, you can gradually work against the wall as follows:

- 1) Start sideways in order to easily have your knee close to the wall:



- 2) Then spin around and lean forward so that you can easily slide your back foot up the wall:



3) From here, you can work your hands up your front thigh and then to your hips, thus increasing the stretch (as you are able to comfortably):



4) Your long-term goal is shoulders to wall, and from there, I want you to get comfortable actually contracting the glute on that side:

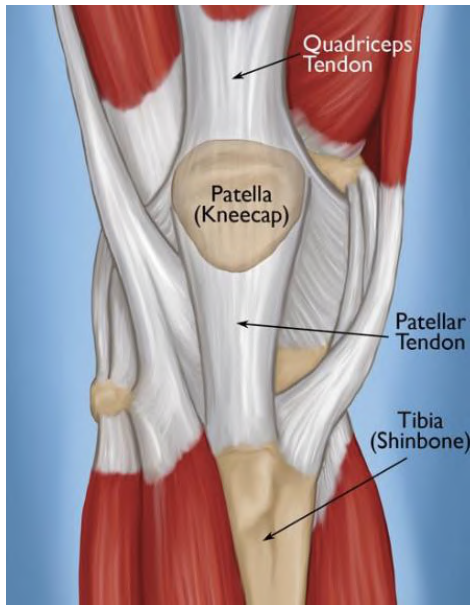


Perform 60 seconds per side, being sure to work only at a level you can relax and breathe without pain.

### **WHY**

When the quads and hip flexors are tight, they pull the kneecap upward, making you more likely to experience pain in the patellar tendon below:





Also, your quads and hip-flexors are the direct opposing muscles to your hamstrings and glutes, which you rely on heavily when you sprint and jump...



It's also worth reminding you that your ATG Split Squats a) improve your hip flexor length, and b) improve your quad strength - so the better you get at the ATG Split Squat, the more comfortable and fruitful your Couch Stretch efforts will be.

Strength and flexibility adaptation take time, so acknowledge yourself for every 1% you get better, and you will soon find yourself waking up to a different reality, without ever working through pain in the process.

That marks the end of the Knee Ability Zero formula!



Recap: 3 times per week:

Step 1: Tibialis Raise: 25 reps

Step 2: FHL Calf Raise: 25 reps

Step 2B: Tibialis Raise (again): 25 reps

Step 3: KOT Calf Raise: 25 reps

Step 4: Patrick Step: 25 reps, but you can perform an extra set if you have a weaker side, until balanced

Step 5: ATG Split Squat: 5 sets of 5 reps per side with 30 second breaks between each

Step 6: Elephant Walk: 30 reps per side

Step 7: L-Sit: 60 seconds

Step 8: Couch Stretch: 60 seconds per side

Yours in Bulletproofing,  
Ben

If you're enjoying Knee Ability Zero and want to learn the other two programs I do, check out [atgonlinecoaching.com](http://atgonlinecoaching.com)

