



*INBF Monster Mash
Figure Champ
Lisa Gonsalves*

Want to mold stunning, muscular legs, yet still maintain your feminine form? Here is a leg program that will leave you hard and lean, yet feminine-looking and bikini-ready at a moment's notice. Better still, this workout also helps you build a derriere that's simply delightful.

The program consists of eight exercises that can be performed either in one long workout or split into a two-day routine. If you do it all in one day, start out with the compound exercises while you're fresh and work your way to the smaller muscles. My legs tend to feel like limp spaghetti after a hard leg training day, so I don't want to collapse in the middle of my squat because I left them for last.

Most of the time, I suggest attempting to perform 2-4 sets of each exercise, though I like to do more sets for my weaker areas to balance out my legs in terms of strength and aesthetic appeal. You need to take a long look in the mirror from all angles and determine what parts of your lower body need extra work. This was a humbling experience for me, but seeing our weaknesses (as well as our strengths) is part of the game.

BARBELL SQUATS

Depending on your fitness level, choose a barbell with which you can successfully complete 8-10 repetitions. I generally like to select a weight I can handle for no more than 10 reps. When I can do more than 10, I increase the load. I never squat lower than a 90-degree angle at the knee, because it can be injurious for the joint.

Tip: Go down slowly and, when you are in your full squat, pause for about three seconds. Then, really push through the heels of your feet as you press up to a standing position.

LEG PRESSES

Once again, depending on your fitness level, load the leg press with enough weight so that you can successfully complete 8-10 perfect reps. Be honest with yourself and train hard. I know I have had a good set if my eyes are tearing by the time I finish!

Tip: To be safe, your tailbone should not come up off the seat at all. If it is, you are letting your legs come too close to your chest and will stress your knees and lower back unnecessarily. Also, as with the squat, press through the heels of your feet. I like to keep my feet as wide apart as I can to really stress my glutes. Go slowly and really feel every second of both the concentric and eccentric phases of the contraction. Never waste even one second of a repetition – everything counts.

HAMSTRINGS CURLS

Great hamstrings give a balanced shape to the leg. I generally train mine lying prone, working both legs at the same time. For variety, you can sometimes work one leg at a time. This is an especially good idea if you notice that one of your legs is not quite as developed as the other.

Tip: As you begin your hamstrings curl, make sure that your hips stay down and in contact with the bench pad. Also, squeeze your glutes as you curl. This will not only force you to keep your hips down, but also it makes it almost impossible to cheat. Point your feet, so your *gastrocnemius* muscles will be recruited to the fullest extent that it can. Since this is an area that I am trying to improve, I generally select a level of resistance with which I can only do 6-8 reps. I also do some extra sets.

BACK EXTENSIONS

When done with a straight spine, back extensions really work the extensors of the hips, which are the glutes and hamstrings. Keep in mind that all the muscles that support a straight back are isometrically contracting, as well. This is one of my favorite exercises for enhancing my “assets,” so to speak. Hey, a girl’s gotta keep her figure, right?

By Tara Marie Segundo, M.A.

Tip: When selecting a height adjustment for the apparatus, do so based on your own height. You want to be able to bend from the hips, not the waist. Make sure that you have the front pad low enough so that you can move freely. I like to hold a 25-lb. dumbbell in both hands right up against my chest and lower and raise myself as slowly as I can. Really squeeze your glutes as you bring your body up and keep your heels down at all times. Your feet should be firmly planted and your movements should be slow and deliberate. The more you squeeze your glutes, the more you will get out of the exercise. Just swinging your body up and down is not only a waste of time, but also flirting with disaster in terms of your lower back. Select a dumbbell weight you are only able to do for 8-10 repetitions.

HIP EXTENSIONS

You will use a cable machine and an ankle strap for this exercise. To make the exercise more effective, use a wooden block to raise yourself off the floor a few inches. By doing so, you can move your working leg more feely and concentrate on your form. Place the strap around either ankle. Stabilize your upper body by holding onto the cable apparatus frame. Slowly extend your working leg back until the glute is fully contracted, being mindful of not overarching your back. The real key to this exercise is stabilization. When lowering your leg to the starting position, do so in a slow fashion.

Tip: This is one of those exercises where less is more. Less extraneous movement in your upper body and hips will mean more isolation for your glutes and hamstrings. Use as much control of movement as you can.

HIP ADDUCTION

Sit upright on the hip adductor machine. Spread your legs as far as you are can and extend your legs so they are straight, with your feet in the air (even if the machine



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BEAUTIFUL LEGS

is designed to be used with bent knees). When you extend your legs, much of the work begins before you even begin your hip adduction, as you must hold your legs up against the pads. Squeeze your legs together and hold them in that position for a few seconds to truly milk the contraction. Slowly spread your legs apart again to really work the eccentric phase of the contraction.

Tip: When I am trying to graduate to a higher weight, I help myself somewhat by pressing with my hands as my hips adduct and my legs move toward the center. I am basically acting as my own spotter.

HIP ABDUCTION

This is done the same way as hip adductions, though your hips are abducting – i.e., spreading outward instead. Position your body in the machine with your legs straight and spread your legs. Always pause for a few seconds when your legs are in their widest position to fully engage your muscles. Slowly release your legs and return to the center position.

Tip: If you wish to manually assist yourself, place hands on the inside of your knees and slightly press your legs outward as they naturally move apart. Always keep your back straight and absolutely upright.

KNEE EXTENSIONS

I do knee extensions only in a very limited range of motion after feeling stress on my kneecaps doing a full motion range. If you are comfortable doing full knee extensions, do so. To be safe, I would use a 90-degree bend in the knee as a starting position rather than bending too much and over-stressing this delicate joint at the beginning of each extension.

Tip: Whichever starting position you choose, hold your legs in their fully

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extended finish position and really make your quads work. I generally don't lower my legs until they begin to shake from fatigue. I have had three knee surgeries and am determined to never go through that ordeal again. Hence, I am very cautious, to say the least.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Again, if you have the time and energy, these exercises can all be done in one long workout. Also remember that you shouldn't neglect your calves. Work them with both standing and seated calf raises. But if you choose to break it into two consecutive days, try following this routine:

Day one: Squats, leg presses, lunges, hip extensions, back extensions, knee extensions, hamstrings curls.

Day two: Adduction, abduction, standing and seated calf raises.

If you are not going to train on two consecutive days, you can evenly divide the exercises so you have a balance of larger muscle work mixed in with the smaller muscles. Here is a good plan to follow:

Day one: Squats, standing calf raises, lunges, seated calf raises, abduction, knee extensions.

Day two: Leg presses, hip extension, adduction, hamstring curls, back extensions. ★

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