

# 5 KEYS TO GREAT TOES TO BAR

By Performance Plus  
Programming





## THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING OUR TOES TO BAR E-BOOK.

The Toes to Bar can be one of the more frustrating skills for fitness athletes to develop. This movement requires the combination of strength, coordination, and mobility. Lacking in any one of these areas makes performing toes to bars much more difficult and will either prevent an athlete from being able to do a full Toes to Bar or rob them of energy during metcons.

Use this eBook as a guide for understanding where you need to focus your Toes to Bar practice. As you address your specific needs you should see dramatic improvements in technique and efficiency in your Toes to Bar!

A black and white photograph of three people in a gym setting. A woman on the left is smiling and high-fiving a man in the center. Another person is partially visible on the right, also high-fiving. They are all wearing athletic gear. The background shows a brick wall and gym equipment.

# ABOUT PERFORMANCE PLUS PROGRAMMING

Performance Plus Programming has a simple goal. To bring your performance to a new level by focusing on technique training with a Prehab twist. We have 30+ programs designed to help athletes of all skill levels reach their fitness goals. From your first pull-up, to increasing muscle-up volume, improving mobility, increasing strength, maximizing your endurance, and much more!

By becoming a member of Performance Plus Programming, you will get access to all of our programs which we regularly add to based on member requests. You will also have access to all the plans through our smartphone app.





# THE PERFORMANCE PLUS TEAM

## PAMELA GAGNON

Pamela Gagnon is a leader in the area of body weight strengthening movements for today's athletes and currently a Lead Coach for The Gymnastics Course. Her background as a Division I Gymnast and CrossFit Games Masters athlete has given her over 30 years of experience as an athlete & coach. She coaches athletes worldwide on how to implement strength and gymnastics skills to improve their fitness performance.



## DR. ZACHARY LONG PT, DPT, SCS

Dr. Zach is a Board Certified Sports Specialist, Level One CrossFit Trainer, NASM Performance Enhancement Specialist, and certified SFMA practitioner. He graduated with highest honors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for his undergraduate degree before earning his Doctorate at East Carolina University. Outside of the clinic, Zach can be found training and coaching at Iron Tribe Fitness in Charlotte.



# THE TOP REASONS YOU STRUGGLE WITH TOES TO BARS!

## Not enough Lat strength in the kip.

Why is Lat Strength important? The lats and shoulder muscles are the main “movers” or controllers in the kipping portion of this skill. If you do not have enough strength and just rely on your momentum you will end up under or in front of the rig during the top of the toes to bar, which will then give you a pendulum swing instead of a controlled “beat swing.” This is why many athletes have difficulty stringing the Kipping Toes to Bar together.




# The athlete does not compress into a hollow when the toes rise.

The hollow position is one of the most important positions in gymnastics skills. It creates a body position that allows the athlete to create more tension that translates into more power during gymnastics skills.



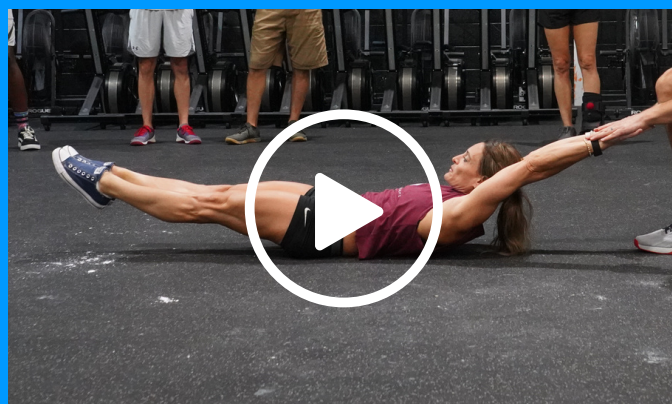




As the athlete moves into a hollow body position, the entire spine flexes and the pelvis tucks under the body. Both of these movements position the hips closer to the bar and put the hips at an angle that will make it easier to kick up and reach the bar. The posterior tilt of the pelvis also puts the hamstrings in a less tightened position so that the flexibility of the posterior chain limits Toes to Bar performance less.

Dive deeper into the hollow body position in this video that outlines what perfect form should

**Click below to see if you are approaching the hollow body with the right form.**



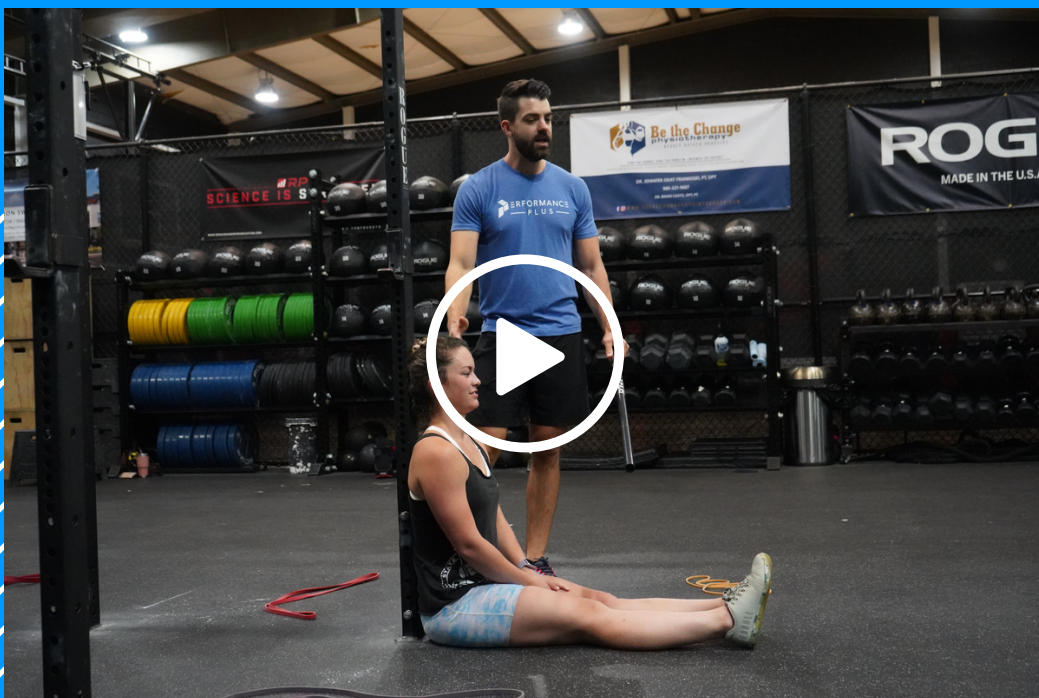


# HIP FLEXORS NEED MORE STRENGTH.

In order to rep out one or many reps in a toes to bar, the athlete will need strength in the hip flexor region to hinge the legs into the proper position. The hip flexors will pull the thigh towards the chest which in the Toes to Bar will bring the feet to the bar as the athlete also moves into the hollow tuck position.

Most commonly we see weakness of the hip flexors in a shortened position limiting Toes to Bar performance.

The following test will let you know if you have issues with the hip flexors.



# Lacking flexibility in the hamstrings.

It is no secret that many athletes have tight hamstrings. Why is this an issue with toes to bar? Flexibility, in general, makes movement much easier. If you have tight hamstrings, which flex the knee joint, it will make compression at the top of the Toes to Bar more difficult.



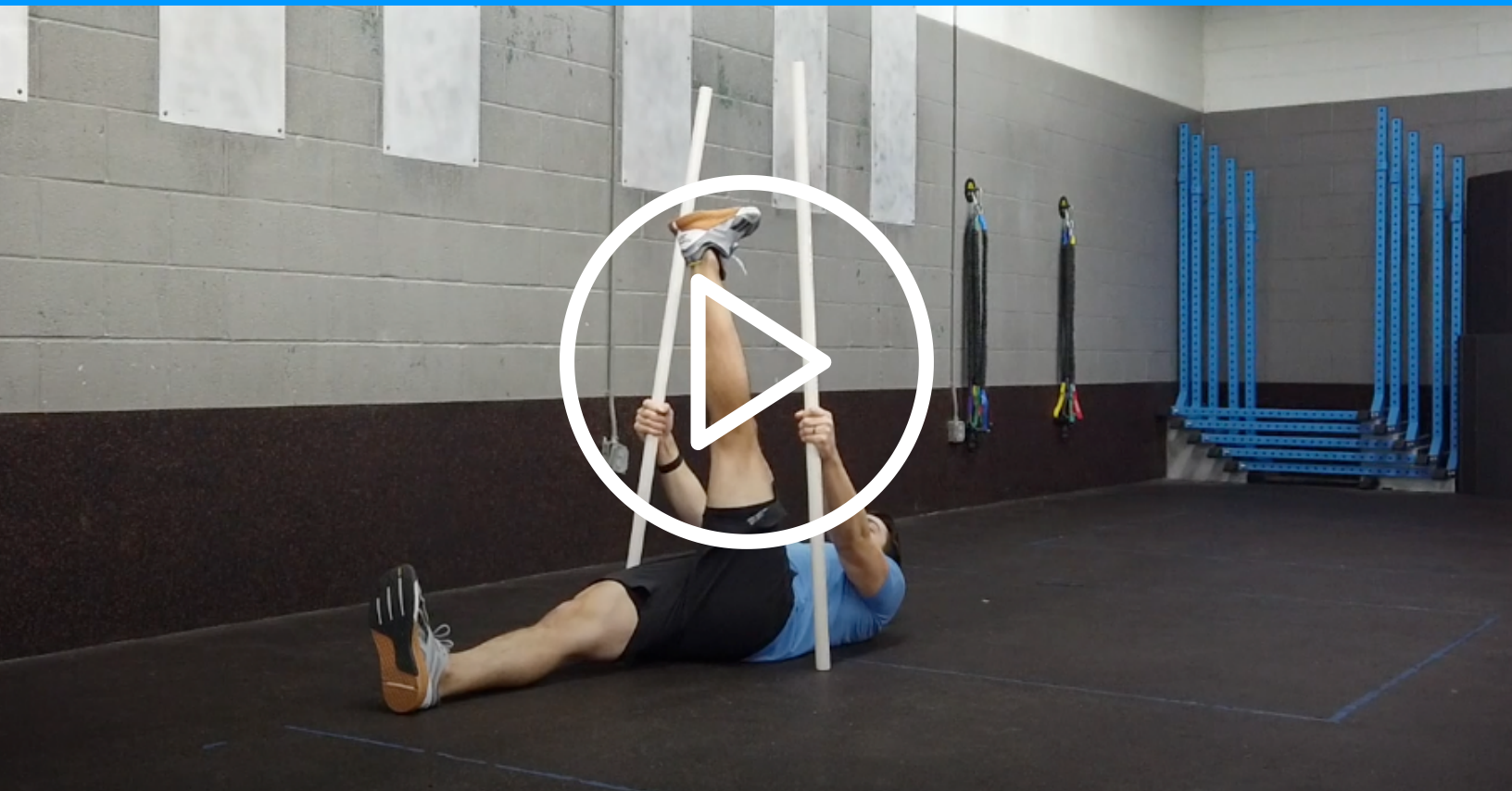


## How to assess hamstring flexibility

To assess hamstring flexibility, the athlete should lie supine with both legs straight. The athlete should then raise one leg up, while maintaining full knee extension, until the athlete feels tension in the posterior thigh.

An athlete with good flexibility should have an 80+ degree angle of their thigh at the stretching point. This athlete has an 80-90 degree angle of her thigh relative to the ground indicating good flexibility of the hamstring muscles.

### Video





# Lacking coordination/timing of skill

Let's face it, if you're not coordinated things are just more difficult. What does coordination really mean when it comes to Toes to Bar?

Coordination can apply to body awareness. Are you aware of what your body position is, are you able to create the shape necessary to move your body through space? Do you understand how to create tension while moving your body in various positions?

If you lack coordination, it will also affect the timing of certain movements within a skill.

Sequence of events in the skill is important. If you start compression too early or too late, the cadence of your swing will be off. If you don't speed up the kick at the top of the Toes to Bar and get back to global extension quickly, this too will affect your next rep.



# HERE ARE 5 DRILLS YOU SHOULD BE DOING



Once you've identified the specific problems limiting your performance of Toes to Bar you can begin to game plan how to address your weaknesses and bust through your plateaus.

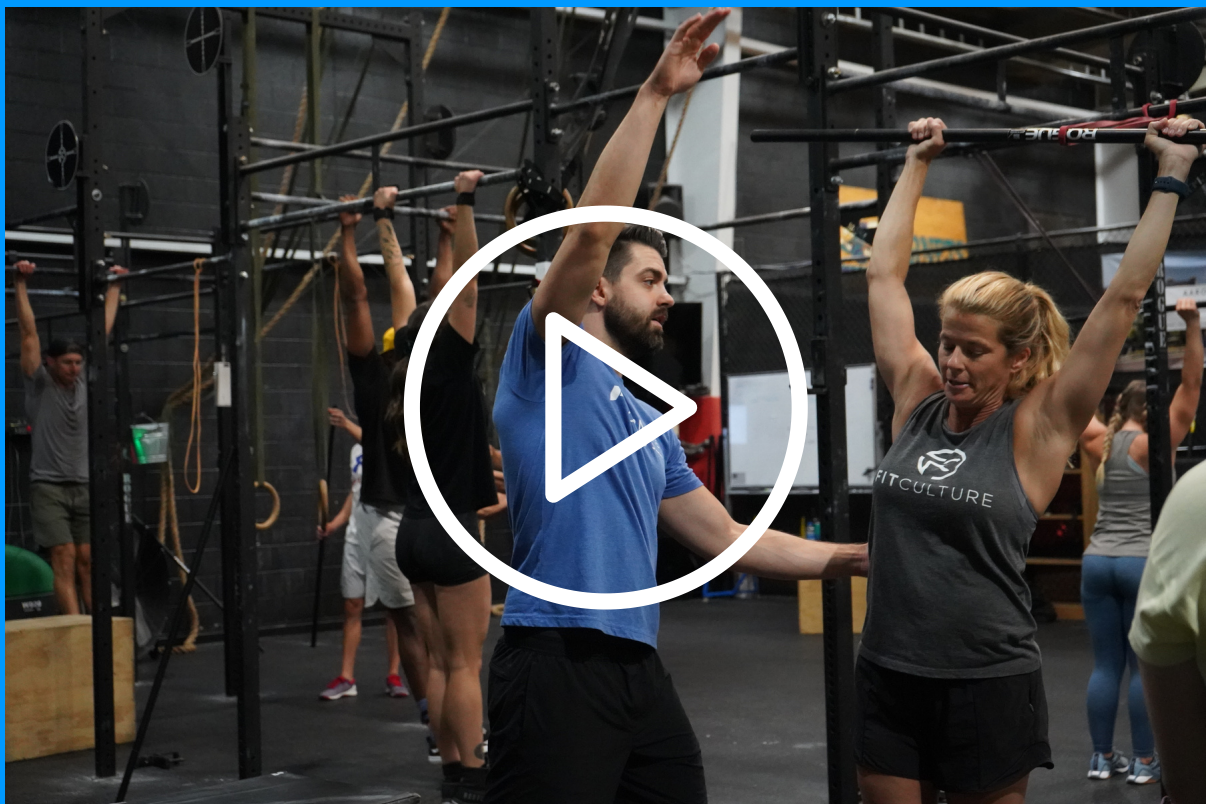
...Then you'll be a Toes to Bar master!

# DRILL #1: ARCH/HOLLOW KIPPING

This will help you build better technique for the kip in the toes to bar. The focus is on pressing down on bar as you pull ribs down and tuck pelvis under into hollow body position.

Try 4 sets x 20 reps (slow & controlled to feel the movement)

Alternate work/rest with a partner or rest 30sec between sets.





# DRILL #2: ALTERNATING LEG TTB

If you want to fire up those quads and hip flexors this strict single-leg leg raise is ideal! You may not get close to touching the toe to the bar, but what you should focus on is pulling down on the rig to control any swing and keeping leg straight and toe extended to build strength and flexibility.

Try 3 max effort sets with a 45 sec rest between each set.

(Yes, you may cramp in the quads...take a break if you do and return but raise leg a tad lower!)

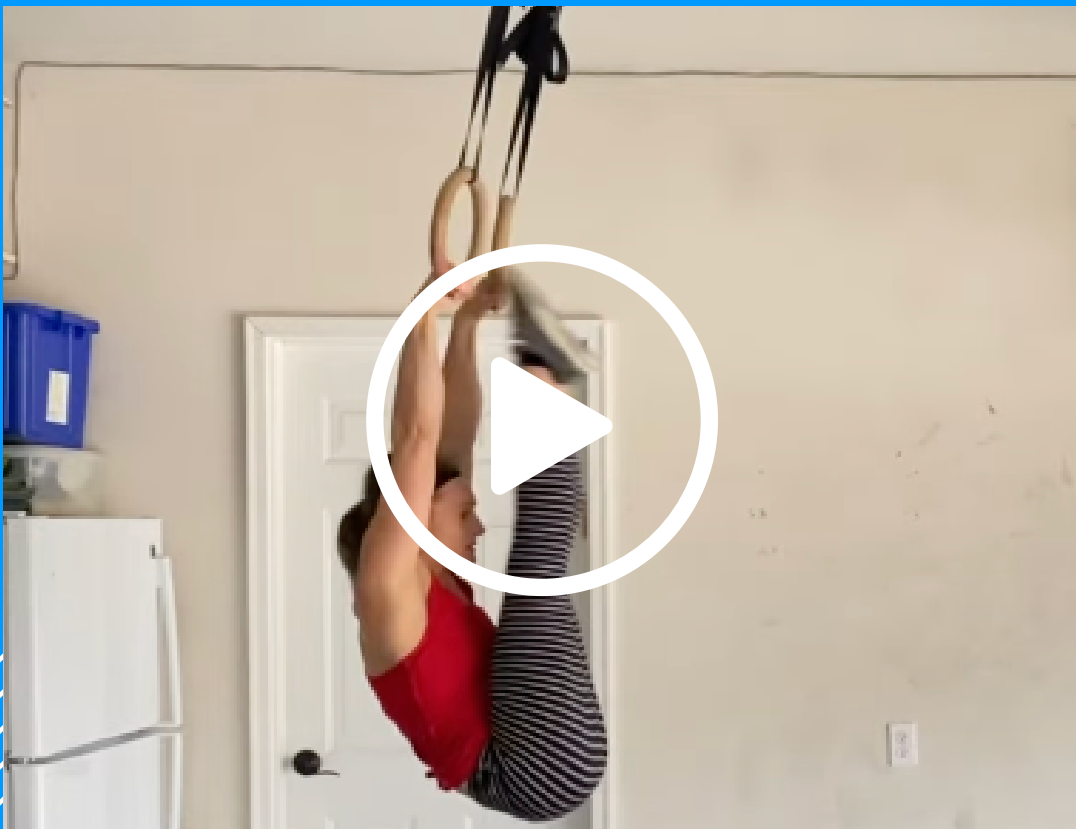


# DRILL #3: TOES TO BAR ON RINGS

This is a great drill to help work on the cadence & timing of the kip. While it is easier on rings, it's a great tool to use to get comfortable with a tight arch & hollow while pressing down on rings with palms and lats.

The key to success is not force the momentum, but follow along with the swing.

Try 20-15-10-5 Toes to Rings work/double rest (if it takes you 30 sec to finish round 1, rest 60 sec before round 2 etc...)



# DRILL #4: STALDER TTB

If you have a rig that you can use the post against your back, this is how you can do this drill. Or see if you can find a gym with “Stalder Bars.” If you didn’t think you could work Lats, Core, Hip Flexors and Quads all at the same time, you thought wrong! Here is the ultimate in toes to bar training.

Try 4 sets x 3 reps

Regular pace on the way up & 5 count concentric (lowering) of legs Can be done in L position or Tuck if you need to scale





# DRILL #5: HAMSTRING STRETCHING

If you have tight hips & not very “bendy” anything related to gymnastics is just more difficult! So get more bendy and start working towards an easier toes to bar. This article outlines some of the best movements you can be doing to improve your hamstring mobility:

**THE BEST  
HAMSTRING  
FLEXIBILITY  
MOVEMENTS**  
**THEBARBELLPHYSIO.COM**



# Ready to gain more strength & technique for Toes To Bar?

PERFORMANCE PLUS is uniquely developed to help you stay ahead of injury by focusing on prehab and bodyweight strength. Each day our experts demonstrate skills programming that will help you achieve your goals– whether you are training for a competition or just want to get stronger, our step-by-step guidance is all you need to take care of your body.

Get started on our [Toes to Bar Overhaul](#) program today!

