

Pike Pushups: The Ultimate Bodyweight Exercise for Shoulder Strength and Control

When it comes to bodyweight exercises, pushups are often the go-to movement for building upper body strength. But what if you're looking for something that goes beyond the chest and works more on shoulder development, core control, and functional strength? That's where [pike pushups](#) come in.

This often-overlooked pushup variation is not just a challenging shoulder workout—it's also a stepping stone toward mastering handstand pushups and building a rock-solid upper body. In this in-depth guide, we'll cover everything you need to know about pike pushups: what they are, how to do them properly, benefits, common mistakes, progressions, and more.

What Are Pike Pushups?

Pike pushups are a pushup variation performed with your hips elevated in a “pike” position, which resembles an inverted V. This shifts the focus from your chest (as in traditional pushups) to your shoulders and upper back. The movement mimics a vertical pressing pattern, similar to a shoulder press or handstand pushup, making it an ideal exercise for developing shoulder strength using just your bodyweight.

Unlike a standard pushup, where you're pushing horizontally, the angle of the pike pushup brings gravity into play in a whole new way. You end up pressing almost vertically, increasing the load on the deltoids and upper traps while still engaging the triceps and core for stability.

Muscles Worked During Pike Pushups

Pike pushups activate multiple muscle groups, offering a well-rounded upper body workout. Here's a breakdown:

- **Primary Muscles:**

- **Anterior Deltoids** (front of shoulders)
- **Lateral Deltoids** (side of shoulders)
- **Triceps Brachii**
- **Upper Trapezius**

- **Secondary Muscles:**

- **Core** (abdominals and obliques)
- **Serratus anterior**
- **Upper chest**
- **Lower back for stabilization**

How to Perform Pike Pushups (Step-by-Step Guide)

Mastering pike pushups requires good body control and shoulder mobility. Follow these steps to perform them correctly:

1. **Start in a standard pushup position** – hands shoulder-width apart, legs extended back, and body in a straight line.
2. **Walk your feet forward** while keeping your legs straight. Raise your hips high to form an inverted V shape.
3. **Keep your arms straight** and engage your core. Your head should be in line with your arms, looking at your feet.
4. **Bend your elbows slowly**, lowering your head towards the floor. Try to keep your elbows angled slightly inward rather than flaring out.
5. **Lower until your head nearly touches the ground**, then push back up to the starting position.



Tip: Imagine you're doing an overhead press—but upside down!

Benefits of Pike Pushups

1. Superior Shoulder Development

Because of the steep angle and vertical pressing movement, pike pushups target the shoulders more than any other bodyweight pushup variation. They are a great way to build strength and size in the deltoid muscles without using weights.

2. No Equipment Required

One of the biggest perks of pike pushups is that they require zero equipment. You can do them anywhere—at home, in a hotel room, at the park, or even in your office during a break.

3. Core Engagement

The pike position forces your core to work hard to maintain balance and alignment. Over time, this leads to improved core strength and stability.

4. Improved Flexibility and Mobility

As you practice pike pushups, you'll improve flexibility in your hamstrings, calves, and shoulders due to the positioning of the exercise.

5. Perfect Progression Toward Handstand Pushups

If your long-term goal is to master the handstand pushup, pike pushups are a necessary stepping stone. They help you learn how to press vertically, build shoulder strength, and develop the confidence to go inverted.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Even though pike pushups may seem straightforward, form matters a lot to avoid injury and maximize benefits. Here are common mistakes to avoid:

✗ Letting the elbows flare out

Always keep your elbows angled backward at about 45 degrees to protect your shoulders and keep tension in the right muscles.

✗ Dropping the head too low

Control the movement and avoid letting your head crash toward the floor. Focus on smooth and steady reps.

✗ Not keeping hips high

Lowering the hips turns the movement into more of a regular pushup. To target the shoulders effectively, your hips must stay high in the pike position.

✗ Lack of core engagement

Letting your core go slack will throw off your balance and reduce the effectiveness of the movement. Brace your abs throughout each rep.

Variations and Progressions

Once you've mastered the basic pike pushup, there are several ways to make the movement harder and continue challenging yourself:

✓ Elevated Pike Pushups

Place your feet on a box, bench, or couch to increase the load on your shoulders. This elevates your body further and mimics a more vertical press.

✓ Wall Pike Pushups

Facing a wall, perform [pike pushups](#) while walking your feet slightly up the wall for additional resistance and support.

✓ Handstand Pushups (Wall-Assisted)

Once you've built enough strength, you can start practicing handstand pushups against a wall as the final progression.

✓ Weighted Pike Pushups

Wear a weighted vest or place a small plate on your back (with caution) to add resistance.

How to Incorporate Pike Pushups Into Your Workout Routine

Whether you're a beginner or advanced athlete, pike pushups can be integrated into your routine in different ways:

➤ **Beginner Routine:**

- 3 sets of 6–8 pike pushups
- Rest 60 seconds between sets
- Superset with planks or hollow body holds

➤ **Intermediate Routine:**

- 4 sets of 8–10 reps
- Add elevated pike pushups for 2 of those sets
- Superset with resistance band shoulder raises

➤ **Advanced Routine:**

- 4–5 sets of 10–12 reps
- Include handstand pushup practice
- Use a weighted vest or elevation for added challenge

Who Should Do Pike Pushups?

Pike pushups are beneficial for:

- **Calisthenics athletes**

- **CrossFitters**
- **Gymnasts**
- **Home workout enthusiasts**
- **Anyone working toward handstand pushups**

However, those with shoulder injuries should approach with caution and consult a physical therapist or trainer.

Pike Pushups vs Regular Pushups: What's the Difference?

Feature	Pike Pushups	Regular Pushups
Main Muscles Worked	Shoulders, Triceps, Traps	Chest, Triceps, Shoulders
Body Position	Inverted V (hips high)	Plank (straight line)
Skill Level	Intermediate to Advanced	Beginner to Advanced
Core Engagement	High	Moderate
Progression for	Handstand Pushups	General upper body strength

Final Thoughts: Elevate Your Bodyweight Game with Pike Pushups

Pike pushups are more than just a variation—they're a powerful tool for building upper body strength, especially in your shoulders and core. Whether you're training at home, progressing toward handstand pushups, or simply adding variety to your workouts, this movement belongs in your routine.

With consistent practice, proper form, and gradual progression, you'll not only master pike pushups but also build the confidence and strength to take on advanced calisthenics moves.

So the next time you're hitting the mat, skip the dumbbells and drop into some **pike pushups**—your shoulders will thank you!