

# BUILD YOUR OWN HOME GYM PART 1

Strength training is a great way to keep in shape, as well as boosting your performance in the water. But what if you can't get to a gym? Make one of your own, says personal trainer **Gerald Smith**

▶▶ Strength training can be beneficial to open water swimmers for all kinds of reasons, not least muscle gain and injury prevention as we discussed last issue (see Pump It, p.28 in issue 5), but with the amount of time we need to spend in the pool, land training in the gym may not always be practical. So what's the solution? The answer is simple – train at home! All you need is the right equipment, the willpower, and a little bit of money to invest. This kind of cross training offers benefits wherever you may be on the land training spectrum. In this two-part series we will look at the equipment and exercises required for both beginners and those who are more advanced in their land training.

## CROSS TRAINING OFFERS BENEFITS WHEREVER YOU MAY BE ON THE LAND TRAINING SPECTRUM



### THE RIGHT KIT

No-one wants bulky bits of equipment cluttering their home, so all the equipment we'll be examining is small, and can be easily stored. We've selected five pieces of equipment that you'll need as a basic setup to see an increase in performance from land training. For each item we've tried to select the most-easily available and cost effective products on the market. More importantly, we've developed a swimming-specific programme to use with all five pieces of equipment. If you follow this, you should get long-lasting improvements in your performance. Here are the pieces of equipment we suggest for a beginners' strength training programme. ▶▶

### EXERCISE/RESISTANCE BANDS

**Priority rating:** ★★★★★

**Alternatives:** There isn't really anything you can use as a substitute – this is an essential piece of kit for your land training arsenal.

**Available from:** [physiosupplies.com](http://physiosupplies.com)

**Price:** £6.50

These can be used for training the upper-body muscles that are key to improving overall performance. Your triceps are used during the final push of the swimming stroke just before your arms exit the water. Some of the key exercises with bands include tricep kick-backs, which will increase your arm strength (and thereby increase your arm pull) and seated rows, which will train your arms and the muscles between your shoulder blades (essential for general shoulder health and balancing internal and external rotation for shoulder stability).



★★★★ Essential   ★★★ Recommended   ★★ Useful   ★ Optional

## SWISS BALL

**Priority rating:** ★★★★★

**Alternatives:** if you want to create an unstable surface, you could use a football to perform the plank on, or any round object that could take your body weight, but again these may not stand up to repeated use.

**Available from:** physiosupplies.com, Argos, amazon.co.uk

**Price:** £8-£20



This is the most versatile piece of equipment you can have. It can be used by itself, or in conjunction with other pieces of equipment to improve core stability and build up strength. It can also be used for more gentle exercises to rehabilitate injured muscles. This bit of kit encompasses the full range of skill, from beginner to expert – you could argue that this is the only bit of equipment you need. From

press-ups on the ball, roll-outs and one-legged squats to hamstring curls, rotations for the side of your abdominals and knee bridges – the ball covers all areas.

## RESISTANCE TUBES

**Priority rating:** ★★★★★

**Alternatives:** No real alternatives exist. Don't be tempted to use bungee cords – injury is likely!

**Available from:** physiosupplies.com

**Price:** £8.50



Very similar to exercise bands, resistance tubes are great for upper body exercise. They are probably slightly easier and more comfortable to use than exercise bands, thanks to the grips at either end. Slightly more expensive due to the more durable nature of the materials used – this also makes them more suitable for more muscular swimmers.

## AEROBIC STEP

**Priority rating:** ★★★★★

**Alternatives:** You could use a chair or low table, but they may not stand up to repeated use.

**Available from:** physiosupplies.com, Argos

**Price:** £19.99



Aerobic steps are great for adding variety to your workout and can be used for upper and lower body exercises. The step can be used to perform a variety of useful exercises, including: incline press ups with your feet on the bench, decline press ups with your hands on the bench, step-up exercises with weights, triceps dips and many more.

## MEDICINE BALL (4KG)

**Priority rating:** ★★★★★

**Alternatives:** Fill a large five-litre bottle with water three-quarters full. A large plant pot could also be used.

**Available from:** physiosupplies.com, Argos, amazon.co.uk

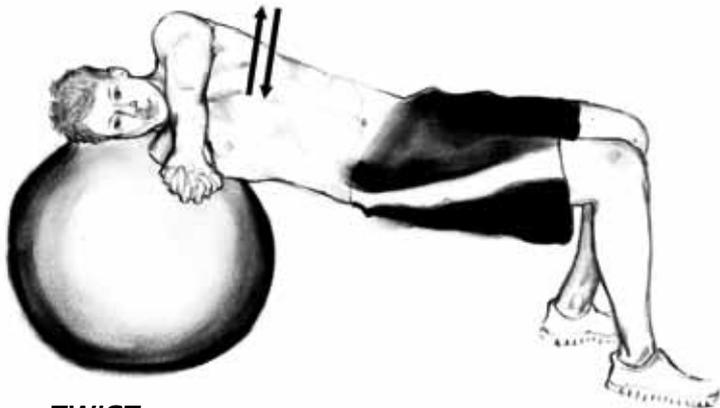
**Price:** £12.99

Medicine balls are great for both exercise and functional activity. Using fixed weight machines in gyms can limit your movement and restrict your stabiliser muscles. Functional movements with a medicine ball allow your body to work in all three dimensions, just as it does when you swim. A medicine ball can be used to perform Russian twists, wood chops, sit ups and can even be used with a partner to add another dimension to your workout.



**BASIC RESISTANCE PROGRAMME**

This exercise programme should take between 20-30 minutes; it will work the whole body – especially the muscles specific to swimming. It is best to do this programme three times a week, but it’s flexible – you decide how much time you can dedicate to this programme – even two times a week is better than none! In the next issue we will be looking at a more advanced home gym and programme. The workout will be the same duration, but the exercises will be of greater difficulty and use more advanced pieces of equipment. ●



**TWIST**

**Use:** Swiss ball

**Motion:** Lie with your upper back on the ball. Part of your head should also be in contact with the ball. Place your hands together with your arms above your chest. Start to roll your body until the side of your shoulder and your arms are on the ball. Your arms and hands should now be pointing towards the wall.

**Benefits:** This exercise is great for conditioning the oblique muscles, which are the muscles that twist your body during the swimming stroke.

**Example:** [tinyurl.com/5r8ho4m](http://tinyurl.com/5r8ho4m)

**PULL OVER**

**Use:** Step and bands

**Motion:** Place the exercise bands around a table leg or similarly heavy object and make sure the object won’t move when you start to pull. Starting with your arms behind the head, pull your arms towards your waist without bending them at the elbows.

**Sets, Repetitions and rest:** 1 sets of 15 reps, with 45 seconds rest

**Benefits:** This exercise works the muscles in your back known as the ‘lats’ (latissimus dorsi). These muscles are very important for pulling, being one of the largest muscles in the back, and are therefore absolutely essential to a good swimming stroke.

**Example:** [tinyurl.com/67suhor](http://tinyurl.com/67suhor)



**UPRIGHT ROW**

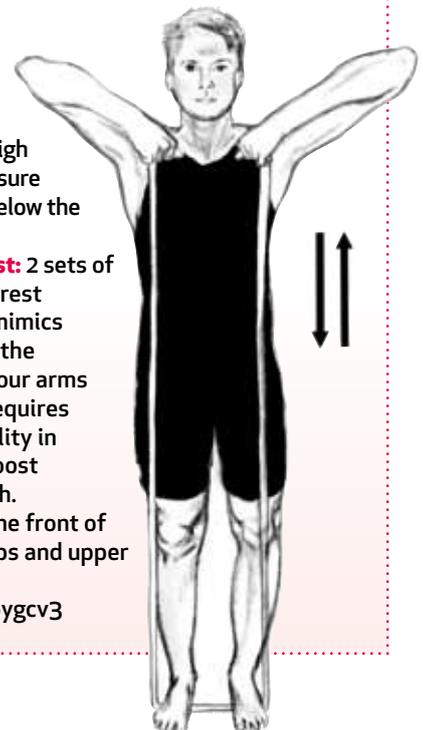
**Use:** Exercise tube

**Motion:** Place the tube under both your feet. Pull until your elbows are as high as they can go, and make sure that your wrists remain below the elbows at all times.

**Sets, Repetitions and rest:** 2 sets of 15 reps, with 45 seconds rest

**Benefits:** This exercise mimics the high elbow action of the swimming stroke once your arms are out of the water. It requires a good amount of flexibility in the shoulders and will boost your upper body strength. This exercise will work the front of the shoulders, your biceps and upper back muscles.

**Example:** [tinyurl.com/66ygcv3](http://tinyurl.com/66ygcv3)



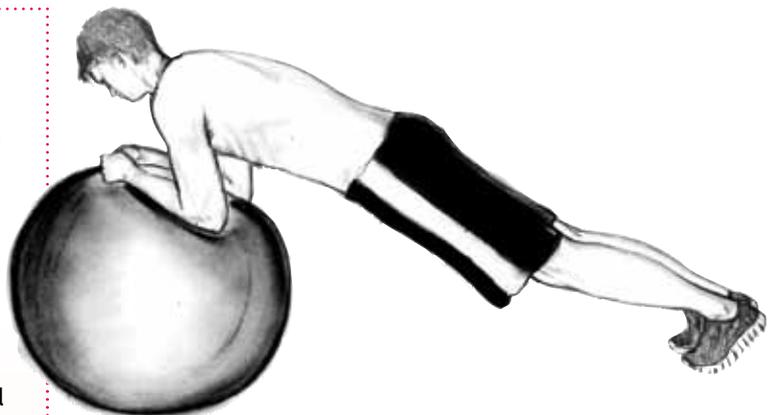
**PLANK**

**Use:** Swiss ball

**Motion:** Place your elbows on the Swiss ball and keep your hips, knees and shoulders in a straight line. Pull your belly button in, keep your head straight and keep your position as steady as you can.

**Sets:** Perform one repetition for 30 seconds at a time, for 2 sets with a 30 second rest.

**Benefits:** The plank is an exercise that works the core muscles. By performing the exercises on the Swiss ball it increases the amount of instability, which will also give you greater activation of the core muscles.



**IT’S FLEXIBLE – YOU CAN CHOOSE HOW MUCH TIME TO DEDICATE TO THE PROGRAMME**

## TRICEP PUSH DOWN

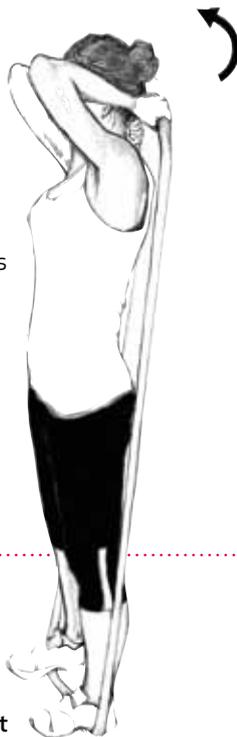
**Use:** Exercise bands

**Motion:** Attach the exercise band under your feet and start with your elbows bent and your arms above the head. Straighten your arms until the elbows are fully extended, and make sure that you maintain your elbow position as you return your arms to the start.

**Sets:** 1 set of 15 reps, with 45 seconds rest

**Benefits:** Works the back of the arms, which are important muscles to the swimming stroke because they create the final push just before your arms exit the water.

**Example:** [tinyurl.com/6a3ou6s](http://tinyurl.com/6a3ou6s)



## EXTENSION/FLEXION EXERCISE

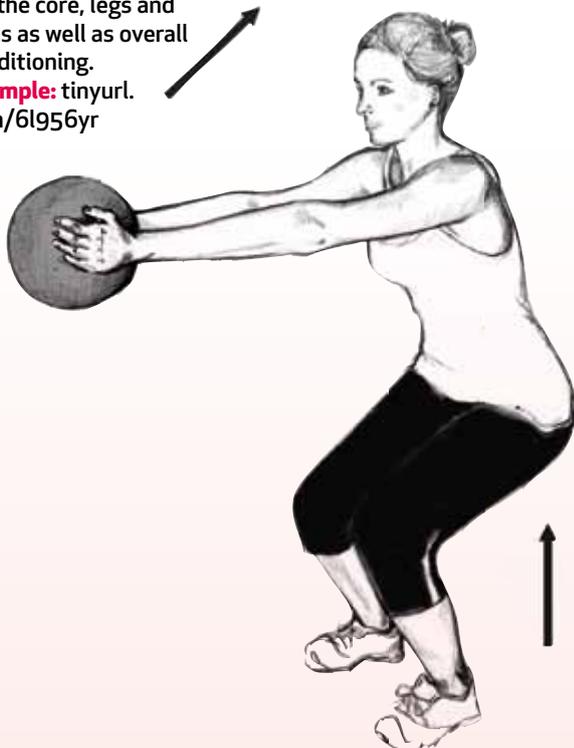
**Use:** Medicine ball

**Motion:** Stand with feet hip-width apart, knees bent, and the medicine ball in front of you. Extend your legs until you're on the balls of your feet, and the medicine ball is above your head. Please note that this exercise should be performed more explosively than in the demo video (see link below).

**Sets, Repetitions and rest:** 2 sets of 15 reps, with 45 seconds rest

**Benefits:** Although this isn't a swimming-specific exercise, it is important to understand that you need to adopt a whole-body approach to your programme. This exercise is great for the core, legs and arms as well as overall conditioning.

**Example:** [tinyurl.com/6l956yr](http://tinyurl.com/6l956yr)



Look out for part two of the home gym series in the next issue of *H2O*, out 11 December.

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in the UK

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