PURSUIT ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE
HEROICALLY CONQUER YOUR ENDURANCE SPORT

LEVEL 1

The Vertical Quadraped

The movement you just reviewed and covered here in Level 1, the Basic "Prone" Quadraped, is the predecessor to this more progressive and challenging variety of "quadraped" – an exercise that I call the Vertical Quadraped, or "VQ" for short.

What's our objective with this exercise? Simply put, it's to *train core stability and strength while balancing on a single leg.*

If you consider how we do most of the activities we do, especially running, it should be very obvious why it's important to learn what it means to be stable on a single leg, and then to train it progressively.

How will we learn and then train the VQ progressively?

To provide some context, know this:

- There are three different movements in this Restore Your Stability and Strength program that are progressed through MORE THAN one level of training. This Vertical Quadraped is one of them – the other two are the **Crab Bridge** (level 1 and level 2) and the **Continuous Plank Series**.
- Obviously, you'll want to refer to those movements for specific direction on how to perform them and progress them through various levels of training.

The Vertical Quadraped or "VQ" for short, is one of those movements that becomes *increasingly difficult as the weight you're using increases.* This makes it very easy to progress the movement from a basic level to a more advanced level.

Depending upon how good your single leg balance and proprioception is, it might even be VERY easy for you with a very light weight or no weight at all.

For this reason, we'll learn and approach the VQ, using **only a very light weight to start in Level 1.**

More information and guidance on the specific loads you will use is coming up. Keep reading!

Remember, mastering the different phases of the movement is critical for success as the weight or load rises, making the movement much more difficult to do correctly!

As our skills improve, we can then begin to use a heavier load, which is what will happen in Level 2 and then in Level 3. Refer to the notes in those sections for guidance on the amount of load to use.

Similarly, don't forget that nearly all of the information you need to perform the movement correctly and progress it will be in the instructional video. **Watch and listen carefully, and repeatedly, for many tips and suggestions on how to get the most from the exercise.**

Training core stability on a single leg is challenging! But it does have many benefits:

- You'll improve your balance, proprioception, and hip-to-core sequencing.
- Your position during this movement is vertical, which mimics the position you're in during most of your training and in sports and activities like running.
- Have you ever done an Asymmetric (or suitcase) Carry before? It's a popular exercise in some circles. This is another variation of that same philosophical approach, but takes it to a higher,

more effective and challenging level. And in my mind, it is much more practical because you don't need a large space. 😊

How do you set up the exercise before beginning?

1. Like ANY of the movements within this program, *do it barefooted to maximize proprioception and foot muscle activation.*

2. The ideal surface for this exercise is a wood floor.

3. The "support" leg will be referred to and is on the same side as the arm holding the weight. For example, if you're holding the weight in your left hand, you'll begin by standing on your left leg and extending your right leg. Got it? This simple element can be confusing. So make sure you've got a good handle on this before progressing.

4. The "supported" leg will be referred to and is the leg that is on the opposite side of the arm holding the weight. For example, if you're holding the weight in your left hand, you'll begin by standing on your left leg and extending your right leg. The right leg is your "supported" leg.

5. The exercise should be done on BOTH sides of the body.

6. Master the exercise WITHOUT load, first, before adding load. This is our Level 1 goal! 😊

7. Like all of the movements of this nature, it's **very important you practice in front of a mirror** so you can evaluate and adjust form to keep your body integrated and in a straight line.

8. When adding load, hold a kettlebell (or dumbbell) exactly as you'd carry a suitcase.

9. The most important thing is to start light and master the movement before adding more load and progressing to Level 2 and then Level 3. This is one of those movements that gets dramatically more difficult as the load goes up, so keep that in mind.

10. As you progress, your goal is to gradually increase the load, making the isometric/static hold in the Quadraped position more challenging.

There are THREE phases to the "VQ":

Phase 1: Set up the exercise correctly and establish standing, single-leg balance on the support leg. (If you need to, please refer back to **Restoration and Foundation** for more guidance on both "Small Foot" exercise and on mastering barefoot single leg balance). Your goal in phase 1 is to focus on balance, posture, and breathing.

Phase 2: Execute a smooth controlled "weight pass" from the support leg side to the supported leg side. This IS the most important part of the exercise for training core stability! (Read that again)

Phase 3: Once you've established position with the weight on the opposite side of your support leg, you'll move an arm and leg into the standing isometric quadraped position.

Here are more details on how to properly execute the VQ.

Refer to the instructional video for additional guidance!

Phase 1: Your goal is to set up the exercise correctly, establishing standing balance on the support leg. Focus on balance, posture, breathing, and focus.

1. Barefooted, stand tall with your feet approximately 6 inches apart, keep good posture, no bend in your knees, looking straight ahead.

2. Check your breathing. It should be a good diaphragmatic breath that originates in your belly, not in your chest. Connecting the breath to the movement is essential for optimal stability and control.

3. Holding the weight in your left hand, prepare for your left leg to be your support leg.

4. Remember, you will repeat these same movements on the opposite side to train both sides.

5. With your left leg as your support leg, slowly extend your right leg out in front so that your foot is approximately 6 inches off the floor, standing only on your left leg.

6. Re-check your posture and breathing.

7. You should feel active hip engagement on the support side. If you do not, put a very slight bend in that support side knee. Look to feel more hip engagement.

Phase 2: Your goal is to execute a smooth controlled "weight pass" from the support leg side to the supported leg side. THIS is where stability either happens or it doesn't. Think about it!

1. Slowly and with control, begin to transition the weight from your left arm/hand to your right.

2. As you are going through the transition, maintain balance, control and most importantly, integration between your upper and lower body throughout. *This will be increasingly difficult as the weight, which was on your support side, is moved over to the other, unsupported side.

3. If you lose your balance and are forced to “kickstand” or touch the floor with your supported foot, go back and return the weight to the left hand and restart the transition again.

4. Once you have completely transitioned the weight from the support arm to the unsupported arm, hold that position for a minimum of 3 to 5 seconds before proceeding.

5. The goal is smooth, controlled, balance and integration.

6. Important: make sure to maintain an absolute straight line right up through the center of your body connecting your trunk and legs. *A very slight weight shift may be needed toward the supported side, to ensure absolute integration.

Phase 3: Your goal now is to move an arm and leg into the standing isometric quadraped position.

1. Once you’ve established balance, you’ll slowly flex your right hip and raise your right knee to parallel and left arm straight up into the air, in one smooth, controlled motion.

2. Re-establish balance and integration.

3. Engage your back by dropping your shoulders and pinching your shoulder blades together. Create total trunk integration.

4. Hold a static position maintaining a straight vertical arm, reaching for the ceiling while also maintaining back integration, and a high knee position.

5. Aim for a minimum of 15 seconds with absolutely no movement as a starting point.

6. Repeat on the other side, e.g. with the KB in your right hand, bringing your left knee up to parallel. Proceed as outlined above.

7. The goal is to progress from a 15sec “hold,” increasing by 5 sec intervals, eventually to 1 minute or more of static hold.

8. Once you master the weight pass, and a static hold for 1 minute, you’re ready to increase the weight.

9. *Make a mental NOTE of what differences or asymmetry exist standing on the right leg vs. on the left leg.

How much weight should you use?

For this Level 1 training, your first goal should be to learn the VQ without a weight in your hand. You could practice it as though you had load in your hand – think of it as an imaginary load.

Why? Mastering the mechanics of the movements, all three phases, without weight, will make it easier at first. Your brain learns much more quickly and easily when we “chunk” skills in this manner.

Once you’ve mastered the mechanics and are very familiar with all three phases, you can then proceed to training with load.

***Level 1 Weight Targets*:**

For women: 10 to 15 pounds or 4.5 to 7 kilograms

For men: 15 to 20 pounds or 7 to 9 kilograms

How often should you do this?

As often as is feasible. When your concentration and focus wane a bit, stop. Pause for a little while, then come back to your practice.

Reminder: A "rule of thumb" about scheduling

For stability-oriented exercises (Basic Abdominal Brace and Half Front Plank w/ Reach are two examples) that are not stressful or very damaging to tissues, but require a great deal of focus to do "correctly," you can and should do them often. Frequency is extremely valuable when "brain training" and "joint training." By brain and joint training, I simply mean they're neurological in nature.

Conversely, for **strength-oriented exercises (**Side Plank is one example) that *are stressful to muscle and connective tissue* and create fatigue, more rest between sessions is required. Listen to your body. Rest and recovery are an essential component for improvement, yet at the same time, frequently practicing low-stress skills that require concentration and focus is also required to improve. Learn to know the difference and if in doubt, err on the side of caution.

Remember my friend, master each phase before moving on, as each phase builds upon what comes before. The transitions between phases are extremely important and should be smooth, controlled and effortless.

Now, watch the video and get to work! 😊