

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

Teaching the Jerk

Part 4: Skill Transfer Exercises

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In this article, we'll introduce four skill transfer exercises that develop proficiency in the four main aspects of the jerk. We assume that the basics have been established and that these exercises will be used to refine the movements and introduce the athlete to jerking heavier weight. Once an athlete can jerk proficiently with light loads, we want to develop their capacity at higher and higher loads, regardless of specific goals for Olympic style weightlifting, because it maximizes the stress and adaptation and develops the

most proficient movement possible.

The four main aspects of the jerk are 1) executing a powerful vertical dip and drive (or down and up), 2) aggressively driving the body down under the bar with the arms, 3) receiving the barbell overhead in the frontal plane, and 4) stabilizing the load overhead while standing upright. The following four skill transfer exercises develop capacity in each of those areas.

Rack Jumps

You will need a power rack for this exercise. Set a bar on the pins of the power rack at the same depth as the dip used in the jerk. Start by standing with the bar on the back, as for a back squat, and then bend at the hips and knees as in the dip of the jerk, vigorously extend the ankles, knees, and hips to aggressively jump the body upward—but come off the ground no more than half an inch or so. It is important to note that, as with jumping squats, the athlete must hold the bar down on the back of the shoulders while jumping in order to keep the bar from moving upward off the shoulders at the point of full extension. The athlete after extension (jump) is complete decelerates the downward action of the body back to the starting position with the bar on the pins in the rack.

The purpose of rack jumping is to develop strength, power, and confidence for the jerk, specifically the dip-drive portion. Once the movement is proficient, weights significantly greater than your max jerk can be used. Handling these greater weights makes normal jerk loads feel lighter and more manageable. Do about two to three reps for three to five sets.



Rack Jump



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Teaching the Jerk: Skill Transfer Exercises (continued...)

Tall jerks

Hold the barbell at or just above the forehead. Look up slightly with your head (mimicking having just gotten out of the way of the rising bar), and rise up on up your toes. With no dip whatsoever in the hips, knees, or ankles, aggressively drives your body down with your arms into the split position, receiving the barbell overhead. This drill should be practiced first with PVC before attempting even an empty bar. Once any weight is used, it is essential to resist the desire to initiate the movement with a dip-drive (stretch-shortening cycle) of any kind. Fast, aggressive movement is required for success. From the split position, the lifter should return to a full stand by stepping halfway back with the front leg, then halfway forward with the back leg.

Tall jerks help develop speed and aggression in driving the body under the bar with the arms. Light weights should be used initially, with loads very gradually increased as proficiency is developed. Do about three to five reps for three sets.



Tall jerk



Jerks balance

Using the Murray cross as described in our first jerk article in the June issue, place your feet at the 3 and 9 o'clock positions on the horizontal axis. With the bar in the front rack position (as for a regular jerk), set your back foot at either the 5 or 7 o'clock position (for left splitters or right splitters). Step two to three inches forward with the opposite foot, getting set to dip vertically into a short lunge position. Once set, inhale through your nose and expand your stomach, keeping your chest elevated. Bend at the knees and keep the torso vertical while in this short split position. Drive your body and the bar upward, keeping your back leg on the ground while stepping vigorously to the split foot position with the front leg. Visualize breaking a plane of glass with your head and front leg as they drive up and forward. The barbell will travel vertically, though. From the split position, return to standing by stepping halfway back with the front leg, then halfway forward with the back leg.

Jerks balance train proper foot placement and emphasize the sensation of driving the head forward as the bar clears the head. In a perfect jerk, the back foot lands a moment before the front foot, and the head moves under the vertical path of the bar. Light weights should be used initially, with loads very gradually increased as proficiency is developed. Do about two to three reps for three to five sets.



Jerks balance



Teaching the Jerk: Skill Transfer Exercises (continued...)

JerK supports

You'll need a power rack for jerk supports. Set the pins in the power rack about 6 to 12 inches above the head when the body is upright in an extended position. (The pins can be set higher when you're first learning this exercise.) Grip the bar as you would for a jerk, and then squat down until your arms are extended overhead, which is the receiving position for a push jerk (also known as power jerk). With your arms fully extended, stand upright into the finish position for the jerk with the feet in line horizontally. This movement can also be done from the split position, finishing in the upright, full standing position.

I love using this exercise with athletes who have great speed and power but lack overall body strength. This movement teaches them to stabilize the bar overhead in the finished position. You will be capable of handling more weight in the jerk support than you usually can in the jerk. Do about two to three reps for three to five sets.



JerK supports



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