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## The Five-Point Squat Drill

Many CrossFit Kids see the air squat, front squat and overhead squat as three very different movements. Dan Strametz presents a drill to help kids understand the relationship between the squats.

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All photos: Staff/CrossFit Kids

Getting the CrossFit Kids program into schools is one thing, but effectively running it with large classes of children—especially in classes where half the kids would rather be elsewhere—is another thing.

Time is always of the essence when training kids (7), and we are always looking to maximize the time we have to teach our young clients. This is especially so in a school setting.

### Everybody Must Squat

The squat: The foundational movement. We can't work on it enough. And because time is often so limited, the front squat and overhead squat are often trained independently of the air squat and become—in the minds of the kids—distinct movements of their own. And when kids don't see the compatibility between these different kinds of squats, the possibility for movement inconsistencies often arises.

Despite concerns regarding time constraints, when it comes to training kids, we are in no rush for them to lift heavy loads until they can consistently demonstrate excellent mechanics (1,7).

Taking things slowly in no way thwarts or delays children's strength development. Pre-adolescents make strength gains primarily through neuromuscular adaptation (e.g., motor unit activation and changes in motor unit coordination, recruitment, and firing, rather than hypertrophy) (3,6,9,10). In fact, evidence suggests that strength gains in children are best attained by focusing on higher repetitions, rather than on higher loads (e.g., 2,4,5,8).

So applying the kind of resistance training that results in hypertrophic strength development to children is—as far as we are concerned—wasted effort and time, not to mention potentially unsafe for children.

## Squat Drill ... (continued)

And from our end, time and time again at CrossFit Brand X—when we have trained children to move well consistently over time—their strength gains as adolescents are steady and fast, sometimes even astounding.

Keeping all this in mind, I came up with the five-point squat drill as a way to reinforce the points of performance of these three foundational movements in an efficient manner that allows trainers to easily spot and correct some of the most common mechanical flaws, keeps children engaged so they remain in the bottom of the squat longer than they might otherwise, and demonstrates to the kids the continuity between the air squat, the front squat, and the overhead squat.

To begin, the three squats are broken out and taught as separate movements. This allows kids to better absorb the differences in each movement. Once the kids have been introduced to the air, front and overhead squats—and this does not have to occur during the same class—the movements are brought together in the five-point squat drill.

Have kids assume the air squat starting position: heels shoulder-width apart and hands held out in front of them at eye level.



The kids then perform the following on the trainer's count:



On “one,” kids squat and remain at the bottom, hip crease below the top of the knee, hands high.



On “two,” kids bring their hands to their shoulder tops, elbows straight out, in the front rack position.



On “three,” kids raise their arms, shoulders externally rotated with their elbows locked and their palms up in the overhead squat.



On “four,” kids bring their hands back together in the air squat position.



On “five,” kids stand up in the finish position, hips and knees fully open.

At each point in the drill, the trainer has the opportunity to identify and correct form faults that are sometimes lost during focus sessions that have large classes performing repetitions, even when they do it on a trainer’s count. Kids (and their bodies) learn that the fundamental positions and dynamics of the three squats are essentially the same, and they spend more time in the bottom of a good squat.



### About the Author

*Dan Strametz is a Level 1 and CrossFit Kids trainer at CrossFit Brand X, where, among many other things, he runs the affiliate’s after-school CrossFit Kids program at the local middle school.*



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