

PLT4M Foundational Movements

The Points of Performance



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INTRODUCTION

At PLT4M, we believe in providing every student with a foundation of fitness upon which they can develop their personal fitness or performance training. To do this, we introduce the foundational human movement patterns, and cement proper mechanics before adding intensity or variation to the equation.

These are:

- The Squat
- The Press
- The Pull
- The Hinge
- The Lunge


With a strong foundation, we can expound upon our mastery of human movement by developing relative strength, mobility, and our performance capacity—in a variety of fitness categories.

These movement patterns are first introduced in PLT4M's Intro to Fitness Part 1 Program, in their most basic form—performed with just our bodyweight. Through Intro to Fitness Part 2, we expound upon our mastery of these movements, by introducing new variations and loaded objects. We'll continually revisit these movement patterns, and their variations, in subsequent programs. Having mastered the basics, students are well-positioned to continually develop their foundational movement patterns which appear in a variety of fitness and training paths.

This guide takes a closer look at the 5 foundational movements, how to execute them, and why they're important.

THE SQUAT

FOUNDATIONAL MOVEMENTS – POINTS OF PERFORMANCE



Point 1: Stance

A side-view photograph of a woman standing upright against a dark grey wall. She is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, white shorts, and black sneakers. Her hands are on her hips, and her feet are slightly wider than her hips, with toes slightly pointed outwards.

Begin with feet slightly wider than the hip, or, "shoulder width stance" with toes splayed out slightly at 11 & 1 on a clock. The entire foot remains in contact with the ground throughout the duration of the movement.



Point 2: Maintain Lumbar Curve

A side-view photograph of a woman in a squat position. She is leaning forward with her arms extended straight out in front of her, palms facing each other. Her back is arched, maintaining a neutral spine. She is wearing the same grey shirt, white shorts, and black sneakers as in the previous image.

Maintain a neutral spine throughout each repetition



Point 3: Keep Tracking Toes

A close-up side-view photograph of a woman's legs and hips in a squat position. Her knees are bent and stacked directly over her ankles. She is wearing the same grey shirt and white shorts.

Keep knees stacked directly over the ankle through the entire movement. Avoid the knees caving in!



Point 4: Depth

A side-view photograph of a woman in a deep squat position. Her hips are below her knees, and her back is parallel to the ground. She is wearing the same grey shirt, white shorts, and black sneakers.

A full range of motion squat is achieved when the hips descend below parallel (hip joint below the knee joint).

Why It's Important:

Squatting (properly) is how we are designed to sit—chairs, couches, and toilets haven't always existed. Squatting is our way of getting up and down.

Variations:

- Air Squat
- Front Squat
- Back Squat
- Goblet Squat
- Split Squat

THE PRESS

FOUNDATIONAL MOVEMENTS – POINTS OF PERFORMANCE



Point 1: Hand Placement

Begin with palms flat on the ground, fingers forward, placed just outside of the shoulders.



Point 2: Elbow Path

Shoulders should remain externally rotated, with elbows tracking back towards the rib cage, so that the upper arms create an "Arrow", not a "T" when looked at from above. No elbows flaring out to the side!



Point 3: Stable Midline

Core should remain engaged through the lift, maintaining a neutral spine—just like our plank. Hips should not sag or hit the ground, or move independent of the torso. Hips should move in time with the shoulders.



Point 4: Full ROM

The chest must hit the ground/surface at the bottom of every rep, without the thighs doing so as well. At the top, elbows should be locked out to full extension, without hips sagging. No half reps!

Why It's Important:

When done well, the press develops strict pressing strength, reinforces safe/powerful shoulder mechanics, and works midline strength & stabilization.

Variations:

- Horizontal Pressing – The Push Up, Bench Press
- Vertical Pressing – Overhead Press

THE PULL

FOUNDATIONAL MOVEMENTS – POINTS OF PERFORMANCE



Point 1: Hand Placement

Grasp the bar using an overhand grip (palms facing away from body), with the arms fully extended.



Point 2: Elbow Path & ROM

Activate the shoulders and lats, then pull the body until the chin clears the top of the bar with the elbows tracking down, then lower to a position with the arms fully extended. This is one (1) rep.



Point 3: Stable Midline

The pull-ups should be done in a smooth motion. Jerky motion, swinging the body, and kicking or bending the legs is not permitted.

Why It's Important:

The importance of pulling your own body to an object, or an object to your body, cannot be overstated. Pulling is a physiological necessity in order to optimize results and avoid injury.

Variations:

- Horizontal Pulling – The Inverted Row
- Vertical Pulling – The Pull Up



Point 1: Hip Width Stance & Soft Knee

We begin the Good Morning by establishing a hip width stance. This means our feet should be directly under our hips, not our shoulders as done while squatting.

Then, we “soften” the knee by bending it just slightly. At this point, our torso should still be vertical, shoulders stacked over the hips.



Point 2: The Hip Hinge

Once set, we can initiate the movement at our hips

WITHOUT dropping hip level or further bending the knees, we push the hips back as if reaching for a wall behind us with our butt. We should feel a stretch through the hamstrings. If we drop hip level and let the knees bend, we are replicating the squat pattern and are no longer hinging.



Point 3: Neutral Spine

As our hips push back, we are, at the same time, letting the torso lean forward. Absolutely crucial during this descent of the torso, though, is maintenance of a “neutral spine”.

Why It's Important:

A “hip hinge” is performed every time we bend over. Whether it be picking up a backpack off the floor, or preparing to jump—we are performing this primal movement pattern. Learning and training the hip hinge helps to avoid injury, improve performance, and open up your total body mobility and stability.

Variations:

- The Good Morning
- The Romanian Deadlift
- The Deadlift

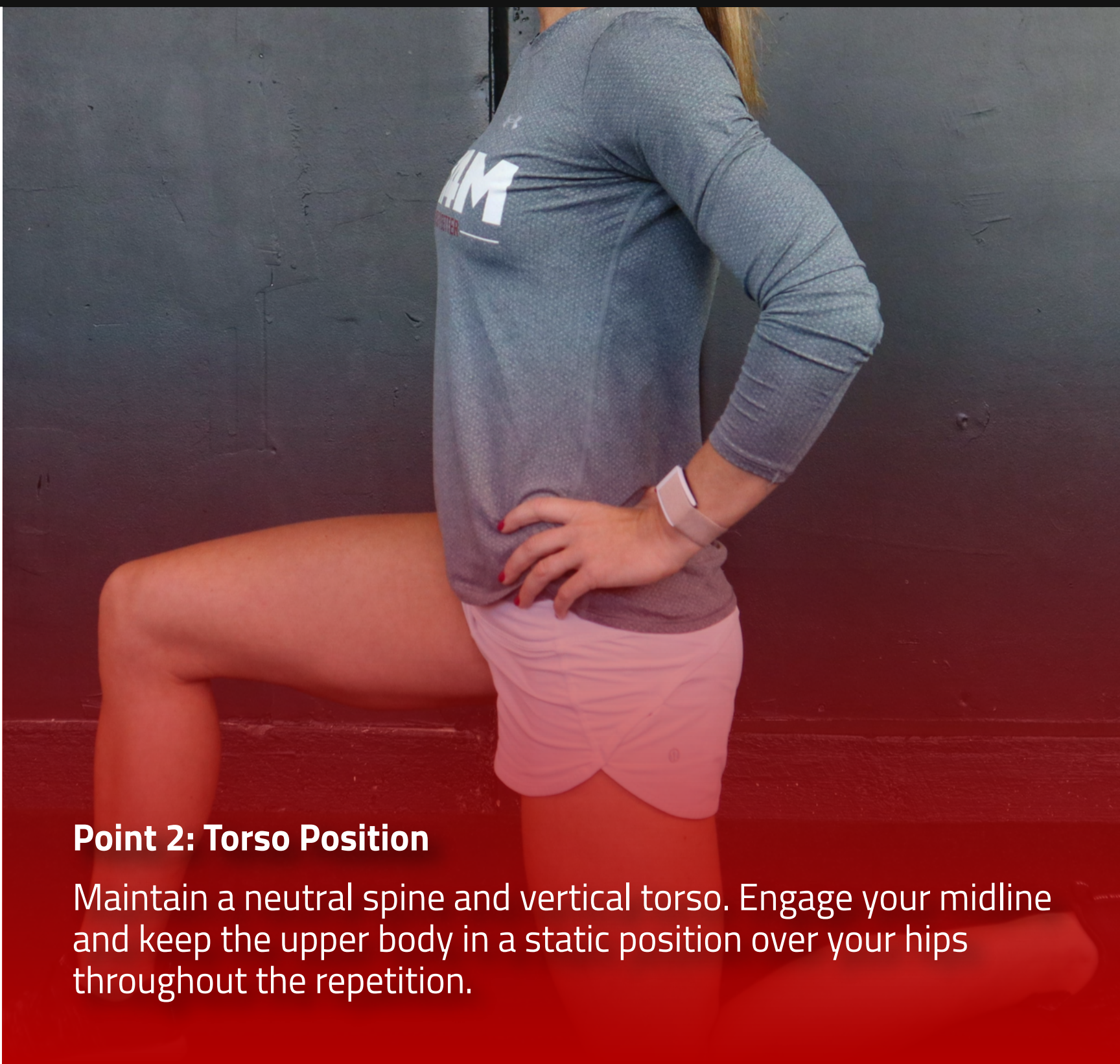
THE LUNGE

FOUNDATIONAL MOVEMENTS – POINTS OF PERFORMANCE



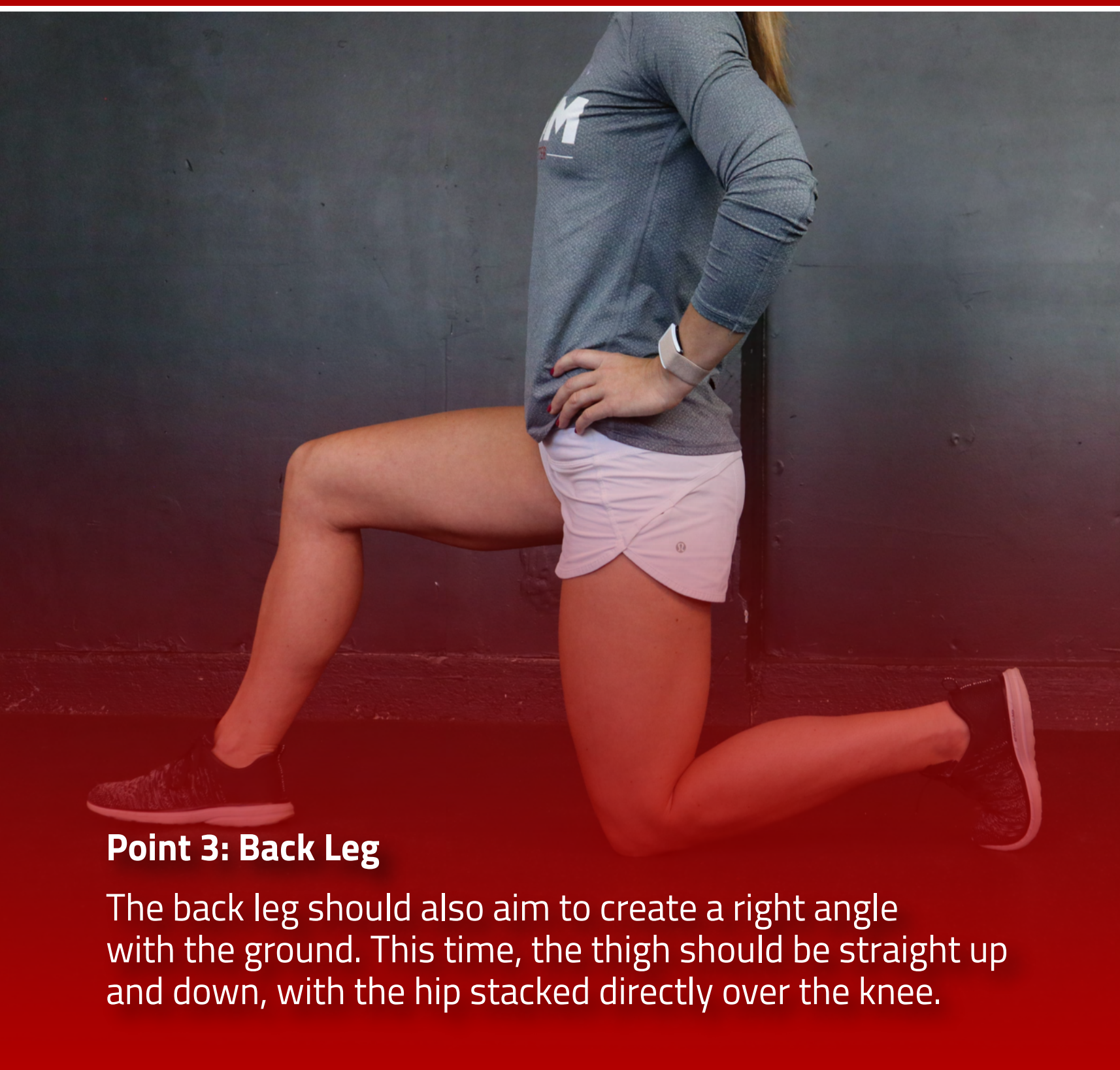
Point 1: Lead Leg

The lead, or "lunge" leg, should be stepped forward as to create a 90 degree angle of the knee in the bottom position. The lower leg should be straight up and down with the knee stacked directly over the ankle.



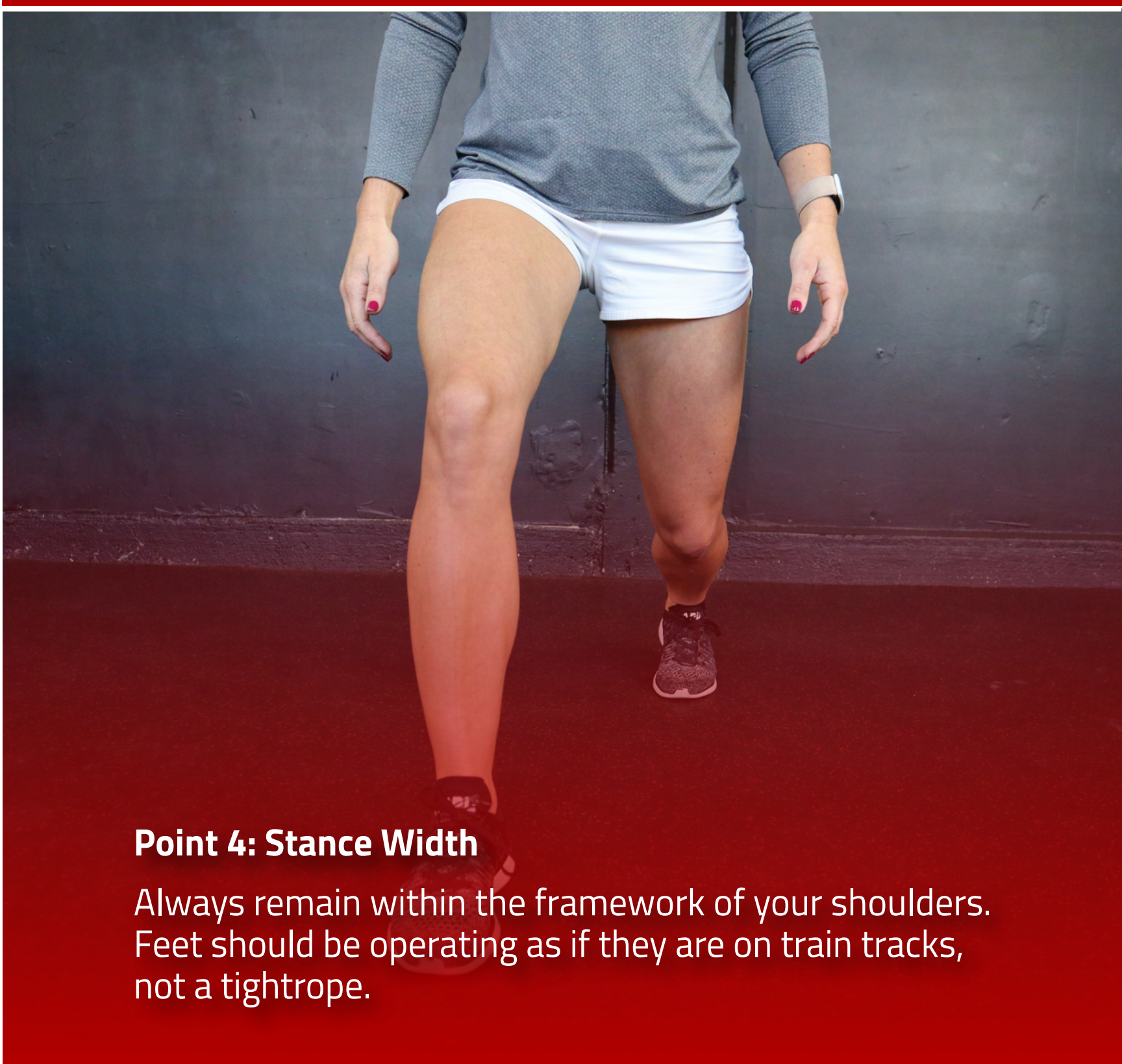
Point 2: Torso Position

Maintain a neutral spine and vertical torso. Engage your midline and keep the upper body in a static position over your hips throughout the repetition.



Point 3: Back Leg

The back leg should also aim to create a right angle with the ground. This time, the thigh should be straight up and down, with the hip stacked directly over the knee.



Point 4: Stance Width

Always remain within the framework of your shoulders. Feet should be operating as if they are on train tracks, not a tightrope.

Why It's Important:

The Lunge is the basis of your most primitive patterning, meaning it shares much in common with walking/running/carrying/etc. Training in the lunge pattern allows us to highlight and erase imbalances in a pattern we use throughout our lives.

Variations:

- Forward Lunge
- Reverse Lunge
- Walking Lunge
- Lateral Lunge
- Jumping Lunge
- Overhead Walking Lunge