PANTHER WALK

Technical points:

Begin with the feet hip width apart, lower yourself into a full squat, rock onto your toes and place your hands and knees on the ground with wrists under the shoulders, knees under the hips and back straight or in neutral position.



[Fig 23: Panther Walk]

Activate your core and lift your knees a few cm off the floor, while making sure you keep your weight distributed evenly on both feet and hands.

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[Fig 24: Panther Walk]

Place the left hand forward and the right foot forward slightly. Begin walking in a hand-opposite foot sequence while keeping knees bent, brushing the ground (i.e. right hand, left leg, left hand right leg). Knees move straight forward beneath your body and not out to the side.

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[Fig 25: Panther Walk]

Keep hips low and stable, avoiding left-right hip movement. This will force your abdominal muscles to work more to stabilise the position instead of transferring the body weight from one side to the other. Your spine should be in neutral alignment (i.e. having the natural curve in the lower back). Avoid lifting your hips in the air. If you end up with hips in the air, stop, reset and try again. Perform the exercise only as long as you can keep the form.

As you move forward do so by shifting your body weight onto your arms, rather than pushing against the ground with your feet to move – this is movement through bodyweight transfer

Take very small strides with your feet and look forwards, just in front of your hands, rather than at your knees.

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Aim for a fluid, uninterrupted movement, placing your hands and feet softly on the ground as if you want to test the ground before putting your whole bodyweight on it. Relax you arms and allow the shoulders to rotate free in the shoulder sockets as the hands and arms move forwards. Your spine shoulder be in a neutral alignment.

Imagine you are a panther out hunting and breathe as you normally would, a continuous breathing pattern.

Benefits:

Shoulder mobility, strength and stability

Hip and ankle mobility

Toning and strengthening arms and legs and your core: abdominal muscles, back, pelvis, diaphragm. The core muscles are responsible for posture.

Strengthening stability muscles in your feet, ankles, knees and hips for better balance, stability, control and general movement, reducing risk of injury

Stretching and strengthening the sole of the foot, toes and Achilles tendon, especially when performed barefoot

Mobilises wrists, particularly important if you type a lot. Reduces risks of certain repetitive stress injuries.

Common errors and/or weaknesses to be aware of:

- Placing more body weight on the arms or the legs – could be an indication of weakness in the upper or lower body. It is more common to use the legs more as they are stronger.
- Lifting the hips and knees high above the ground

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[Fig 26: Panther Walk]

- Tilting hips from side to side when walking. This could indicate weak core strength and stability. The core braces to keep the body from swaying side to side. Hips should be as stable as possible.

- Knees going out the side, although this can be a variation of the Panther Walk. In this case the knees should move forward right under the body.

- Stride is too long ending up with the knees under the chest. This will lift the hips up. However, if you have the body awareness and strength this can be a variation of the original movement.

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[Fig 27: Panther Walk]

- Strides are too short ending up stretched out too much – when learning, knees should stop roughly under the hips. Later, as the body strengthens, you can shorten or lengthen the strides to create variations and make the movement more challenging



[Fig 28: Panther Walk]

- Looking at the knees and lifting the hips up or looking too far forwards and compression the cervical spine. Neck should be straight, eyes looking just in front of the hands.

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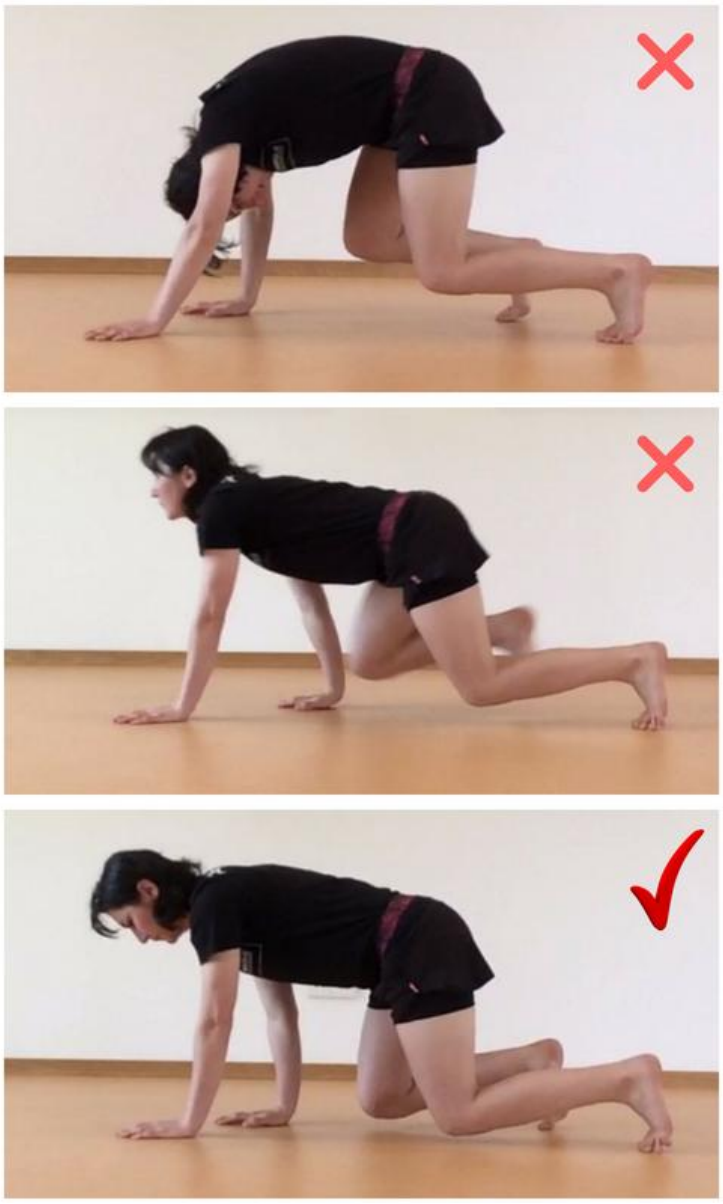

[Fig 29: Panther Walk]

- Sinking into the shoulders or bringing the shoulder blades tight together – deltoids must be activated to stabilise the shoulders and back should be straight across the shoulders as well as from top to bottom

- Straightening knees when walking. Try to keep the knees very close to the ground (without touching) at all times, even the back leg) when knees are bent the core engages to stabilise the position.

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[Fig 30: Panther Walk]

Notes:

You can perform the Panther Walk forward and backwards. You can find variation from the original movement such as moving in “hand–same foot sequence” or with knees pointing out to the side.

Panther Walk Backwards

- The same technical points as panther walk forward. The difference is that you will have to be a lot more compact to avoid pushing off with your hands. Instead, lift your hands off the ground softly and with control. Here you take even smaller steps with your feet, while arms take longer strides travelling further back all the way in front of your knees, keeping the hand-opposite leg sequence.

- The movement comes from transferring the body weight on your legs and lifting the hand off the ground (rather than pushing off).

- Look behind through your legs to see where you're going.

Progressions:

- Place a tennis ball on the lower back and try to walk without dropping the ball
- Walk uphill and downhill.

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