SPLIT SQUAT

Technical points:

With feet hip width apart and toes facing forward take a step forward with the right foot, about half of your normal stride length.



[Fig 59: Split Squat]

Keeping the body lengthened, abdominal muscles activated, looking forward and back stragith with a neutral spine, ground the right foot into the ground and slowly bend the knee, going down into a split squat. Allow the back heel to lift off the ground.

If you can't keep your front/left heel on the ground the stride is too short, move the foot forwards slightly. As the front foot is fully on the ground, most of your weight is on the front so when you will stand up you have to place most of the pressure on the front foot.

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[Fig 60: Split Squat]

Before you stand up:

Root the front tripod into the ground and push up through your heel (keeping the toes on the ground), as you stand up you will feel your glutes activating (if your back is straight).

Squeeze the thighs together to recruit the adductors and stabilise your stance (you don't actually need to touch the thighs, it is possible to tense the adductors without bringing the legs together).

Activate your core

Clench your buttocks as you come up – imagine you have a platform under your bum which lifts you up.

After activating and recruiting the correct muscles you can stand up. Then take another step forward and follow the same pattern: tripod, squeeze thighs, core, clench, stand up.

Your end position should be about the same as you start position. Indeed the end position of one movement becomes the start position of the next movement.

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[Fig 59: Split Squat]

Fig 61: Split Squat shows the full movement from right leg forward – going down – standing up – stepping with the left foot – going down – standing up.



[Fig 61: Split Squat]

Throughout the movement ensure that:

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- Your trunk is as straight as possible. If you find this difficult and you need to lean forward, it might be that your glutes or core isn't strong enough yet. Keep practicing the exercise, keeping your back straight, even if you need to lean forward, and you'll get stronger. Or practice other exercises to strengthen your core and come back to this one later.

- Your abdominal muscles are tensed throughout.

- You breathe out on the effort (i.e. when you stand up), and breath in when you lower yourself down.

- The front knee tracks the front foot (it neither collapsed in, nor pushes out).

- The movement is smooth and continuous without any jerky movements or different speeds.

Benefits:

Strengthening major stability muscles: quadriceps, glutes, adductors, abductors, core.

Strengthening small joint stability muscles in the feet, toes, ankles, knees, hips.

Strengthening the foot arch which may help avoid overpronation and certain foot, ankles and knees injuries.

Mobilising ankles, knees and hips, taking the joints through their full range of motion.

Common errors and/or weaknesses to be aware of:

- Front knee collapses inwards or pushing out to the side. This places too much strain on the knee joint and surrounding tissues. The front knee should track the foot.

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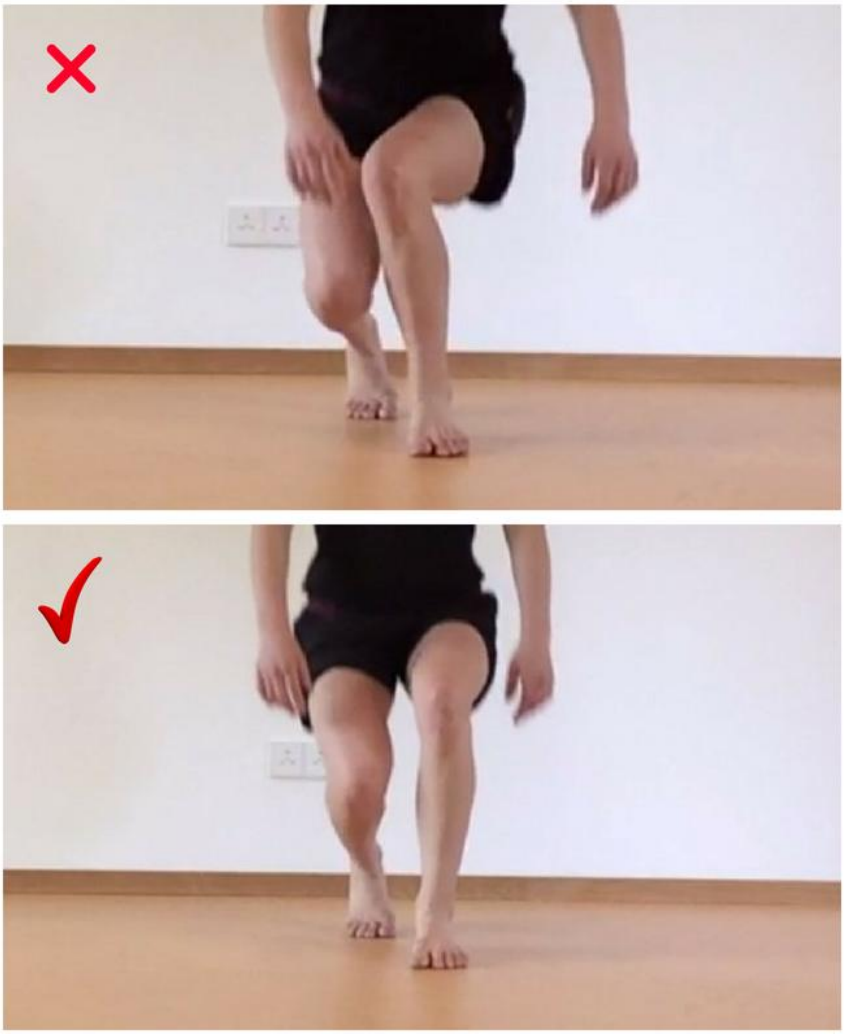

[Fig 62: Split Squat]

- Front heel lifts up. This means the front foot is too close to the body. Move the foot slightly forward and ground the tripod.

- Leaning forward. This is common with beginners in particular as they don't have the strength and cannot recruit the correct muscles; it can also happen with trained individuals who may not know how to recruit the correct muscles, are rushing or are tired but they keep going. When technique breaks down too much it is better to stop before bad habits can creep in.

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[Fig 63: Split Squat]

- Jerky movements. This may indicate muscle weakness at some point in the movement; you usually observe this at the bottom of the squat when there is a sudden drop and/or on the way up from the bottom to about half way.

- The back foot takes too much weight. The back foot is mainly for support, it only takes about 20% of the weight or less, the front foot is rooted into the ground so it is this one that should support the bulk of the weight

Notes:

Breathing is very important in this exercise, as it is in all movements. Thus it is worth repeating it. The breathing pattern for the split squat is similar to the breathing pattern when performing a press up. **Breathing out is on the effort**. When the out breath is done correctly the abdominal muscles activate (the whole core muscles activate actually).

The general rule is to **breathe out on the effort**. Always remember this because it can help you in your daily life. When the abdominal muscles need to tense breathing out will do just that.

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