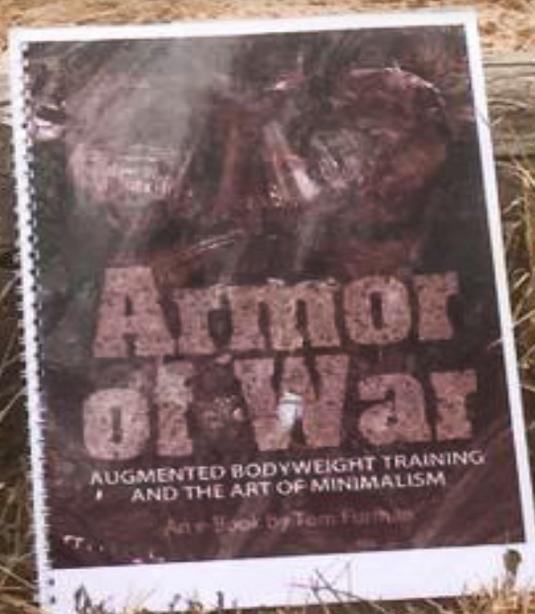


# Armor of War: Frequently Asked Questions

By Tom Furman

*Cover photo by Tim Mercer*



# Armor of War: Frequently Asked Questions

After publishing *Armor of War*, questions were asked over email, forums and social media. This free ebook is an attempt to clear up some of those questions. Perhaps filling in some gaps in communication.

If you don't have *Armor of War*, it's only \$10 and available here:  
<http://www.tomfurman.com/downloads/armor-of-war-augmented-body-weight-training/>

*"Armor of War is the best ten dollars I ever spent."*  
– James Boelter

## **Q: Why the high sets and low reps?**

**A:** As explained in the ebook, rather than endless, high repetition drills, harder exercises are performed for high sets and low reps. High sets and volume, and the harder drills add tension. The low set/single limbed aspect keeps the skill relatively fresh. Compressed rest adds to the intensity and metabolic component. The goal of *Armor of War* is TEN sets of FIVE reps. With the pushes, it is divided into push ups and dips, so it would be 5X5 for each drill. Start with 2 sets of 5 reps for push ups, and 2 sets of 5 reps for dips.

## **Q: Can I use this program as an adjunct to a running or biking program?**

**A:** I'd almost insist you do unless you are doing weight training at a gym. The advantage is training in the outdoors, with little gear, but well rounded results. It can be done anywhere. Stronger muscles will also prevent potential overuse injuries.



*"The more you know, the less you need."*

– Jean Jacques Machado,  
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Champion  
and 7th Degree Black Belt

**Q: Is it necessary to progress in the drills EXACTLY as you say?**

**A:** No. Feedback from the ebook has been good, but if you have a better way, try it, record it and have analysis of your progress.

**Q: Certain drills irritate old injuries. Can I avoid these drills?**

**A:** First rule of exercise, "do no harm". Find the drills that you can advance to without orthopedic stress. You can stop at any drill and "augment" it with added weight. Even close grip push ups with a 100lb plate on your back will be sufficient overload.

**Q: I find the one armed supine drills hard to do with 5 reps and 10 sets. Can I change it?**

**A:** Sure. Do three reps. Body proportions are different, so with 3 reps you would need 16 sets to get around the magical 50 total reps mark.

**Q: For hypertrophy would you recommend adding weight to easier variations or moving up to harder variations of the drills?**

**A:** Moving from a more leverage disadvantaged position to one requiring less skill adds stability and safety. By augmenting with external weight, you are using a more carefully gradable load. This allows for small adjustments over a long period of time. By all means use this for maximum hypertrophy.



*"The more complex the mind, the greater the need for the simplicity of play."*

*– Captain James T. Kirk*

**Q: Should I alternate horizontal pulling with vertical pulling to balance the shoulder girdle?**

**A:** A block period of 8 weeks with vertical and 8 weeks of horizontal pulling would be beneficial, especially if shoulders are a problem area.

**Q: If I want to work higher rep bodyweight work such as regular push ups and squats, how should I combine these with the AOW program?**

**A:** Do the high rep work AFTER the AOW program. On days you do AOW, try doing 2 sets of 5, augmented with an external load. Then follow with the higher rep bodyweight push ups and squats.

**Q: You recommend higher reps for the swings and good mornings, 20 - 30, how many sets would you recommend?**

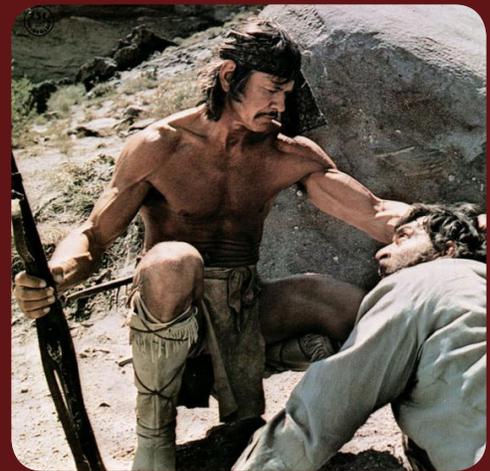
**A:** Both these drills are for posterior chain ability. The swings will make you huff and puff, but are not "pure" aerobics. [That is why you are rucking in this program]. So, 100 to 200 swings. Quit your set long before form or speed changes. Usually around 35 swings per minute is the average. You may choose Pavel-style hard swings or softer, one-armed Girevoy swings. The band work is more time under tension and 2 to 3 sets of 20-30 should suffice.

**Q: How long would you recommend holding the isometric positions you mention in the questions and answers section of the book?**

**A:** Start with shorter holds and build up. One minute is good and some claim five minutes. I'd rather you do several holds of one minute. You want to feel secure in those particular positions.

**Q: Should I ever go above five reps per set on a movement and if not, why?**

**A:** There should be no rules that are so hard and fast they can't be broken other than safety. Some trainees like to do a "pump" set after their regular work. In this case, after your work set, drop down one level to an easier drill and do a higher rep set. This may help with hypertrophy. The basis of *Armor of War*, however is high sets, low reps, progressively difficult drills and compressed rest. Sticking with 5 reps and building up the sets is specific to this program. On very difficult drills at the apex of the difficulty scale, you may choose THREE reps, that translates to 16 sets with 60 seconds rest.



*According to his roommate, actor Jack Klugman, Charles Bronson "pounded out" pushups between milk crates, rope c limbing from a rope hung in the alley, situps and running*

**Q: For 3 work weeks and 1 back off week with 50% of the volume: does volume refer to sets, reps, total days, or a combination of all of these?**

**A:** I'd simply reduce the drill you are doing to 5X5. If you were at your limit during the 3 week progression, you can drop to the simpler or easier exercise at 5X5

**Q: Is it beneficial to introduce inefficiency or instability into some of the drills using a suspension trainer?**

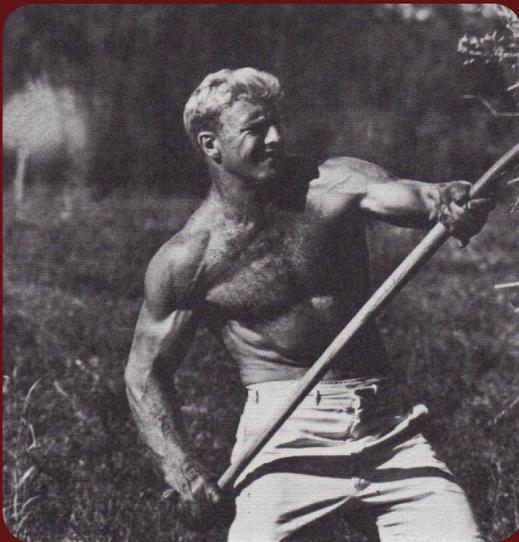
**A:** Suspension increases body tension, but reduces the load on the muscles. There is enough instability in one armed or one legged movements already. Suspension gear can make upper body drills harder and lower body drills easier as well. This is a double edged sword.

**Q: What could be some useful non-bodyweight adjuncts to the program (kettlebells, physio bands, TRX) and how can they be incorporated?**

**A:** Kettlebells can provide resistance to any drills. They can be done for posterior chain development as well. Suspension apparatus is already advocated and exploited in *Armor of War*. Physio bands can add or detract from body weight to any drill.

**Q: Are each of the push / pull / squat movements presented in progressively difficult sequence? I am having an easier time executing some of the more advanced moves like pistols over seemingly simpler moves like shrimp squats.**

**A:** They are generally set up in a progressive manner. The difference between *Armor of War* and other programs is this order is not the law. It is principle. We can break principles, but we have to live by laws. While strength and body



*"Where did Bobby Hull develop his muscle power?  
Pitching hay down on his farm"*

*– Horst Ehricht*

*Simply applying the idea of hard work, intensity, variation and rest can change a lot in terms of fitness*

leanness can be improved, bodily proportion, limb length, etc are genetic. This will be the variable between trainees. The length of thighs, arms, torso, etc. will make some drills easier and some impossible. Don't focus on what is painful. Focus on what you can do safely and progress smoothly.

**Q: Women or de-trained individuals may have problems with even the first progressive exercise. What do you recommend?**

**A:** Any drill can be made simpler and easier. I'd recommend for the very de-trained or health compromised individual to start with push ups [two handed], against the wall and slowly decrease the angle with tables, chairs, benches or fixed bars. This same process can be done with a fixed bar or suspension apparatus to slowly adjust rowing/pull ups over weeks and months to the first level of *Armor of War*. The single legged work can be adjust by height with a benches, boxes, yoga blocks. If severe weakness due to age or injury limits single leg work initially, one can do bodyweight box squats. Even using a support is valid. It's just a matter of progression, consistency and time.

**Q: I'm a competitor in GS/Kettlebell Sport. Can I use Armor of War as part of my supplemental training?**

**A:** Sure. I'd always follow the directions of your coach since specific distinctions in behavior are unique to the coach/athlete experience. If you choose to use *Armor of War*, make sure your work in Biathlon or Long Cycle is first and foremost.



*"When I played football, I was lifting weights, When it came to doing Tarzan I wanted to be really cut and trim and sculptured. I didn't lift any weights, but I did calisthenics. I did the same routine every day to get in better shape. Rather than upping the repetitions, I cut down on the time so I was doing things faster and it gave me a more sculptured look. I wanted my version of Tarzan to look like that to make it more believable when I did athletic things in those movies. I think the movies speak for themselves – I did all my own stunts."*

*– Mike Henry,  
NFL Player, Actor*

**Q: My family and I go camping quite often. How should I integrate outdoor activity with Armor of War.**

**A:** With camping there is usually climbing and rucking. I'd still do the A, B and C programs, but reduce total volume to a 5X5 format. This will keep you in target for your return to civilization.

**Q: I work very long hours doing construction jobs for periods of time. I'm too exhausted to go to a gym or take a long workout during these intense periods. How do you suggest I manage to maintain muscular balance?**

**A:** First and foremost would be sleep, recovery and smart nutrition. Hopefully you can take an easy bike ride or walk the dog for relief from stress and very light cardio. In addition, focus on a drill per day at 2 sets of 5 reps to maintain range of motion, the groove and muscular strength. Follow this drill with a stretch for the area worked, holding it 30 to 90 seconds. So that would be, Push, Pull, Squat and so on. This will help you from atrophying or losing a healthy range of motion.

**Q: Is Armor of War safe for children?**

**A:** A child should be adequately screened by a pediatrician for joint, muscular and general health issues before any exercise program. Any exercise program should be supervised by an informed adult as well. The steps stated in the earlier question about women and de-trained individuals is valid here. We all develop uniquely and our lever-ages are unique. Learning to handle one's body weight is a great place to start training. The same principles apply.



*I was doing all sorts of basic military fitness stuff: push-ups, sit-ups, climbing ropes, parallel bars, running up and down stairs. This happened every day. It got me in the best shape of my life.*

*– Aaron Eckhart,  
"I Frankenstein."*



*Heavyweight Champion Jack Dempsey said that between fights he would muck ore in the mines. Mucking ore is shoveling rock into one ton carts and then pushing them to where they are hooked up and towed out. You do this 10 hours per day. He said he enjoyed the work.*

**Q: What stretching program do you recommend to supplement *Armor of War*?**

**A:** I'd suggest *Activate!* stretching which is available as an inexpensive ebook or a DVD on my website. Simply stated, the theory and technique presented can improve ANY stretching program or stand on it's own. It's quick, simple and easy to understand as well.

**Q: How do I know when to add weight versus moving to the next harder exercise?**

**A:** There are four factors here:

1. An advanced movement hurts you due to previous injury or bad fit. Therefore stick with the one that feels healthy and add weight.
2. You advance in movements to the more difficult ones for challenge and enjoyment. No need to add weight if things are going well.
3. The next movement is REALLY hard for you. The strategy would be to drop back a move, add weight and more strength. Then progress to the next movement.
4. Pure hypertrophy is your goal. In pushing drills for example work the close grip pushup to a 100 pounds plate for 5 sets of 5. Then fixed bar dips with 75 pounds for 5 sets of 5. Stable drills that allow large increases in external loading.

**Q: This book is primarily about strength. What would you recommend for cardio while doing this program?**

**A:** I include Rucking for long, easy, endurance. Hiking with a load is an excellent tool for cardiovascular training and is adaptable to city, rural and foreign travel. If weather is an issue, step ups on a lower platform or stair walking with a light load will work too. *Armor of War* is a perfect add on for any Endurance Athlete. It requires little gear and no gym membership. It can be done indoors or out. The kettlebell swings, if available, will provide cardio as well. My program *Naked From The Waist Down*, makes use of stairs or a step. Here it is in a nutshell:

This is a simple workout that requires almost no equipment for the lower body. Hence the “naked” term. Almost everyone is familiar with stair running. Anyone in fitness can relate to bodybuilder Robbie Robinson running stairs in Venice, California as he retraced the footsteps of actor Brad Harris and many others before him. Even Jiu Jitsu legend Rickson Gracie was running stairs in the documentary, *Choke*. Of course no one can forget Sylvester Stallone in the *Rocky* movies. The image of scaling a man made hill is almost a metaphor for overcoming goals. The following workout is ridiculously simple. Some of you may have tried variants of this drill. I’m including some twists which will make it even more effective.

Start with a long flight of steps. This can be in an urban area, a beach, a park or tall building. If none of these locations are available, you can use a bench or chair. You can literally workout in a hotel room in the middle of a blizzard. Step up with your left leg to the step or bench. Do NOT explode off of your right leg but use only the strength of your left leg to accomplish this. Bring your right leg even with your left and perform a full body weight squat as smoothly as possible. If you are using a chair, you would probably be wise to step down and THEN perform the squat. Now repeat this process with the right leg. This is not about speed, it is about precision. So you will follow the pattern of step/squat, step/squat.

If you are using a staircase, you will have a long walk to the top. If you are using a bench, you have to go by the numbers. Something like 50 steps per leg/100 squat total.

The variables are these-

1. Take the steps two at a time or use a higher bench.
2. Add ankle weights. This will load the hip flexors on the front of the thigh.
3. Add a weight vest or backpack with added weight.



*Clint Walker, “The most physically impressive big man I have ever seen. What a natural body!”*

*– Vince Gironda,  
The Iron Guru*



4. Carry an EZ curl bar [padded] in the “Zercher” position in the crook of your arms.

5. Carry dumbbells or kettlebells in a “Farmer’s Walk” style.

6. Wear a mouthpiece and breathe through your nose only.

This workout is simple, effective and a powerful lower body conditioner. It will help you look better when you are naked from the waist down.”

**Q: How can I address shoulder issues that affect my range of motion?**

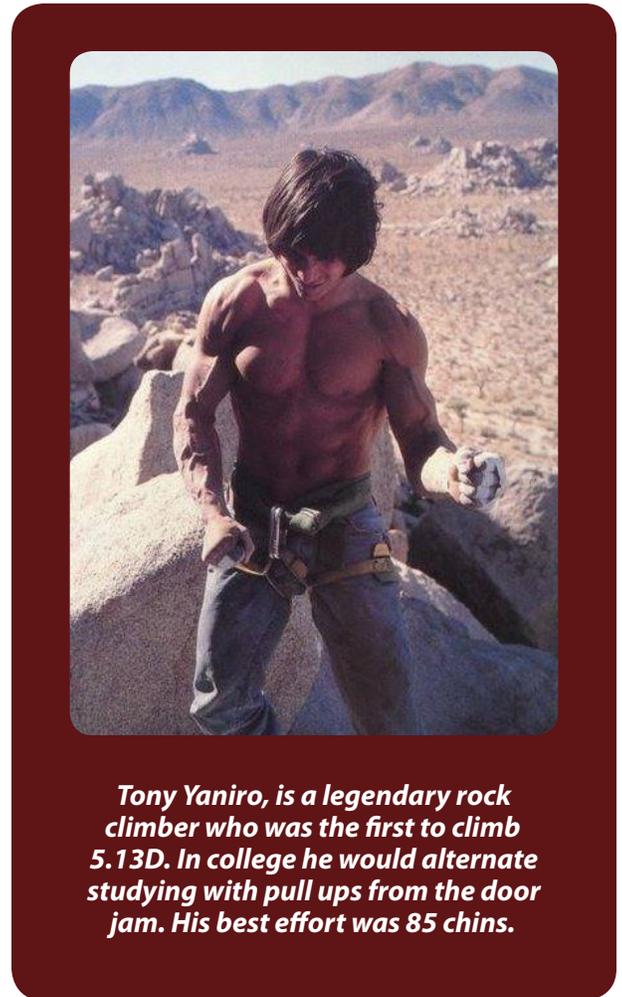
**A:** The key is address “turn arounds”. This is where you start or stop a repetition in either the contracted or stretched position. If an injury or compromised range of motion are part of your physiology, you need to move into and out of these positions with an almost imperceptible speed. A very slow speed of movement is indicated. Given this will increase time under tension, you can reduce the target repetitions from FIVE to THREE.

**Q: Can I alternate Push/Pull moves?**

**A:** Certainly. You can also alternate upper and lower body. This would result in more systemic versus local stimulation. It can be done to compress the time element too.

**Q: What do you recommend for solo neck training?**

**A:** Using a neck harness or manual resistance. Adaptations to neck bridging vary widely and prescribing them is more art than science. Simply stated, they increase risk of injury in some cases.



*Tony Yaniro, is a legendary rock climber who was the first to climb 5.13D. In college he would alternate studying with pull ups from the door jam. His best effort was 85 chins.*



*In Tarzan Goes to India, Jock Mahoney dives out of a biplane into the water. On the Merv Griffin show, Merv asked Mahoney what he did to stay in such fantastic shape. The self-effacing Jock told Griffin that growing up he'd done like every other kid in America had done at that time and that was he had sent off for the Charles Atlas course. Mahoney explained to the talk show host that the course consisted of more than self-resistance exercise, and that it included exercises where you moved your own bodyweight like pushups, situps and deep knee bends. Mahoney went on to say he'd gotten in such remarkable shape by doing the Charles Atlas exercises, but just doing more.*

**Q: Is there a possibility of an Armor of War App?**

**A:** Yes. I'm currently searching for an App development group to make this happen, mainly for convenience. I'm also outlining "Armor Hard-Core" for developing the stabilizing muscles of the spine and hips.

**Q: You seem to suggest that Armor of War can be when traveling. Do you really think so?**

**A:** Rather than answer the question, I'll let my friend and owner of Armor of War, Tim Mercer, answer.

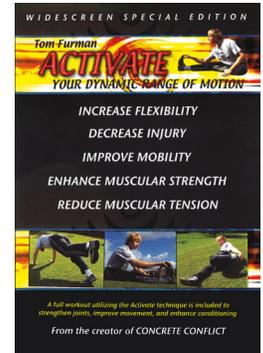
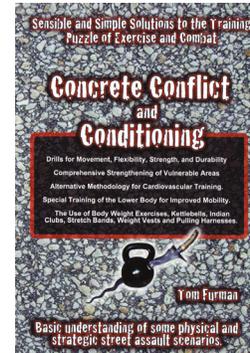
"One man who has helped me immensely with his no equipment, no nonsense ethos is Tom Furman. I've used his routines over the last few years on trips to Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan & now Africa." – *Tim Mercer, Athi River, Kenya, Africa.*



**Tom Furman** has been involved in martial arts and conditioning since 1972. With an early background in wrestling and a student of the methods of the York Barbell Club, Tom immediately separated fact from fiction growing up outside Pittsburgh. Eleven members of his family were combat veterans, the most famous one being “Uncle Charlie” Charles Bronson.

Tom’s down to earth training methods are derived from his decades long practice of martial arts and his study of exercise science. The application of force, improvement of movement and durability rank high on his list of priorities when training. He gives credit to hundreds of hours of seminars, training sessions, and ‘backyard’ work-

outs, including training time with many martial arts legends. He also credits his incredibly gifted training partners who came from varied backgrounds such as Exercise Physiologists, Airborne Rangers, Bounty Hunters, Boxing Trainers and Coast Guard Rescue Divers.



Tom is the creator of the popular DVD “Concrete Conflict & Conditioning” which integrates strength, movement, and physical combat. He also created another DVD called “Activate Your Dynamic Range of Motion” which introduces Tom’s excellent program of flexibility. Tom was one of the first American trainers to become RKC certified for Kettlebell Training in the US, and is quoted twice in “The Naked Warrior” by Pavel Tsatsouline, the founder of RKC. Tom has done workshops with Kettlebell legends Mike Mahler and Steve Cotter.

To connect with Tom and to learn more, visit:

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I hope this eBook has been informative and entertaining. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at:

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