EXERCISE CLASSIFICATION

To assist in the safe, effective prescription and execution of exercise, each exercise in this guide is classified as follows:

- Skill Classification – exercises suitable for different skill levels
- Precautions Classification – exercises that may have a safety concern for some individuals

SKILLS CLASSIFICATION

Beginner (1)
Someone who is new to exercise or exercises infrequently. Beginner exercises tend to be supported, stable, and using positions, movement patterns and equipment that are easier to control.

Intermediate (2)
Someone who has gained six-plus months of strength training and has a good level of skill, strength and stability. Intermediate exercises require good control, stability, mobility and balance.

Advanced (3)
Someone who has years of experience and the ability to perform complex exercises. Advanced exercises require a high degree of skill including balance, stability, control, and more demanding and precise muscle recruitment patterns.

NB: some exercises e.g. the squat can be all three classifications but what differs is the resistance, load and range.

PRECAUTIONS CLASSIFICATION

Unstable (U)
These exercises are more unstable and require caution for beginners and those with limited mobility, visual impairment or balance challenges. Machine-based exercises are a more suitable choice for these clients.

Joint Compromise (J)
These exercises can place the joint into a position of compromise, either:

a) a position of dislocation,
b) a position of impingement,
c) increased load through shearing forces between joints, and may require alternative exercise.

Isolated Exercise (I)
These exercises stress a single joint and muscle group in relative isolation. For workout efficiency and to enhance functionality, a compound exercise may be more effective.

Blood Pressure (BP)
These exercises cause an upward or downward shift in BP and may not be suitable for those with pre-existing BP conditions.
UPPER BODY

CHEST ‘PUSHING’ EXERCISES
Target muscles – pectoralis major (isolated exercises), pectoralis major and triceps brachii (compound exercises)

VERTICAL CHEST PRESS
Classification 1, BP
1. Position seat so that handles are in line with mid-sternum (mid-chest)
2. Assume seated set-up posture using the assistance of machine levers to push handles forward (machine dependant) and ensure hands and elbows are level with the mid-sternum
3. With arms extended, check that the elbows are soft (avoid locking out the elbows)
4. Bring the hands towards the body so that the elbows go slightly behind the shoulder and trunk line
5. Keep neck neutral and wrists neutral
6. Extend and return to the starting position

FREE WEIGHT BENCH PRESS
Classification 2 (BB), 2,3 (DB), BP
1. When using the rack, adjust uprights for your arm length and know how to unrack/rack the bar
2. Assume supine set-up posture, eyes under the bar, spine neutral and shoulders down
3. For barbell, start with the arms straight above chest with hands gripping the bar approximately 1 ½ times shoulder width (dumbbells will start closer together)
4. Keep hands and elbows level with the mid-sternum
5. Lower the weight so that the elbows go slightly below the shoulder and trunk line – keep the hands in a vertical line above the elbows
6. Lift the weight ensuring elbows stay soft on extension
7. During the lowering and lifting phases, keep hands and elbows in line with mid-sternum and wrists neutral
INCLINE BENCH PRESS
Classification 2,3, BP
1. Assume supine set-up posture on the inclined bench keeping spine neutral
2. Lift dumbbells straight above shoulders/chest in a vertical line
3. Lower the dumbbells so that the elbows go slightly below the shoulder and trunk line
4. Lift the weight ensuring elbows stay soft on extension
5. During the lowering and lifting phases, keep hands and elbows in line with mid-sternum and wrists neutral

CLOSE GRIP BENCH PRESS
Classification 2,3, BP
1. Assume supine set-up posture and check spine neutral and shoulders down
2. Start with the arms straight above chest with hands shoulder width apart
3. Lower the weight to the trunk line keeping elbows close to the body
4. Lift the weight ensuring elbows stay soft on extension
5. Keep wrists neutral
FORWARD DIP
Classification 2, 3, BP, J
1. Grip the handles, arms straight and assume the upper body position of standing posture to support body weight
2. Lean slightly forwards then bend the elbows, keeping them close to the trunk, and lower the body
3. Keep shoulders down and go no lower than 90 degrees at the elbow joints
4. Extend the elbows to lift the body up keeping elbows close to the body
5. Keep elbows soft on extension and shoulders down

DB CHEST FLY
Classification 2, I, J
1. Assume supine set-up posture and hold dumbbells in a hammer grip
2. Start with the arms above chest with a slight elbow bend and palms facing each other
3. Lower the arms to the side in line with the mid-sternum until the elbows are level with the trunk always maintaining a slight elbow bend
4. Lift the arms back to the start position keeping elbows slightly bent (think ‘tight hug’)

PUSH UP
Classification 1, 2, BP
1. Assume prone set-up posture, on hands and knees or toes pending ability
2. Hands are positioned slightly wider than shoulder width (approx 1 ½ times) and in line with the mid-sternum; look down at the floor
3. Lower the body towards the floor as low as good form allows, maintaining a stable body and neutral spine with abs activated
4. Lift the body keeping the elbows soft on extension

▲ Push-up on knees
BACK ‘PULLING’ EXERCISES
Target muscles – latissimus dorsi and biceps brachii (compound exercises)

NB: depending on the joint actions employed, the posterior deltoid, mid trapezius and rhomboids may also be target muscles.

SEATED ROW – CLOSE GRIP
Classification 1
1. Adjust the chest pad so that the handles can be reached and adjust the seat so that arms, on holding the handles, are just below shoulder height
2. Assume seated set-up posture
3. With arms extended, hold the handles in a close semi-supinated grip then pull elbows towards the lower ribs and gently squeeze the shoulder blades
4. Keep spine neutral and elbows close to the body
5. Release and allow the shoulders to naturally move slightly forwards before starting the next repetition

SEATED ROW – WIDE GRIP
Classification 1
1. Repeat tips 1 and 2 above
2. With arms extended, hold the handles in a wide overhand grip then pull elbows backwards and squeeze the shoulder blades together
3. Keep spine neutral and sternum stable
4. Release and allow the shoulders to naturally move slightly forwards before starting the next repetition

BENT OVER ROW
Classification 2,3, BP
1. Assume bent-over set-up posture, hands slightly wider than shoulder width
2. Pull the elbows past the lower ribs and gently squeeze the shoulder blades
3. Keep spine neutral and elbows close to the body
4. Return to the starting position

ONE ARM DB ROW
Classification 2,3
1. Assume bent-over with bench set-up posture
2. Lift the DB keeping the elbow close to the body and pull the elbow past the lower ribs; allow a slight rotation of the trunk while maintaining neutral spine
3. Lower the DB and allow the shoulder to go through a controlled full range of motion
**LAT PULLDOWN – CLOSE GRIP**  
Classification 1,2,3, BP  
1. Adjust the machine to secure thighs under knee pads with feet aligned under the knees  
2. Assume seated set-up posture  
3. Hold the bar in an underhand grip with hands about shoulder width apart and shoulders down  
4. Pull elbows towards ribs so that the bar is about chin/neck depth  
5. Return to the starting position

**LAT PULLDOWN – WIDE GRIP**  
Classification 1,2,3, BP  
1. Adjust the machine to secure thighs under knee pads with feet aligned under the knees  
2. Assume seated set-up posture  
3. Hold the bar (or handles) in an overhand grip, hands about 1 ½ times shoulder width and keep shoulders down  
4. Pull elbows towards ribs so that the bar is about chin/neck depth  
5. Return to the starting position

For beginners, keep the trunk more upright. For a more challenging variation, lean back at the hip joints up to 45 degrees.

**CHIN-UP**  
Classification 2, 3, BP  
1. Assume standing set-up posture  
2. Arms up, holding the bar with hands shoulder width apart in an underhand grip and support body weight  
3. Pull body up, bringing the chin slightly higher than the bar, maintaining a straight and still body (no swinging)  
4. Return to the starting position by lowering the body in a controlled manner

**DB REVERSE FLY**  
Classification 2,3, BP  
1. Assume prone or bent-over set-up posture  
2. Arms down with elbows slightly bent  
3. Lift the DBs out to the side, maintaining slight elbow bend and gently squeeze the shoulder blades  
4. Return to the starting position, maintaining slight elbow bend
SHOULDER EXERCISES
Target muscles – deltoid, depending on the joint actions employed, the trapezius and triceps may also be involved.

DB SHOULDER PRESS
Classification 1, 2, BP
1. Assume standing set-up posture
2. Hands at shoulder level and height and slightly forward of the body
3. Lift DBs in a vertical line to finish overhead keeping the elbows soft on extension
4. Return to the starting position

BB UPRIGHT ROW
Classification 1, J
1. Assume standing set-up posture
2. Overhand grip on bar with hands shoulder width
3. Lead with the elbows to pull bar upward, take elbows to slightly higher than shoulders with the bar remaining lower than the shoulders
4. Return to the starting position

DB FRONT RAISE
Classification 1, J, I
1. Assume standing set-up posture
2. Hands shoulder width apart in front of thighs
3. Raise arms in front of body to shoulder height, maintaining slight elbow bend
4. Return to the starting position

DB LATERAL RAISE
Classification 1, J, I
1. Assume standing set-up posture
2. Arms down in front of thighs with palms facing inwards, hands shoulder width apart
3. Raise arms out to side to shoulder height, maintaining slight elbow bend
4. Return to the starting position
ARM EXERCISES
Target muscles – triceps or biceps

TRICEP PUSHDOWN
Classification 1, I
1. Assume standing set-up posture
2. Holding the bar, hands shoulder width apart in an overhand grip
3. Push down on bar towards thighs, keep elbows close to the side of the body and soft
4. Check a neutral wrist position is maintained
5. Return to the starting position

DB OVERHEAD TRICEP EXTENSION
Classification 2,3, BP, J, I
1. Assume standing or seated set-up posture
2. Arms start overhead
3. Bend elbows to lower the weight behind the head, maintaining little or no elbow lateral movement
4. Return to the starting position

BB SUPINE TRICEP EXTENSION
Classification 1,2, I
1. Assume supine set-up posture
2. Arms start above the chest holding the bar in an overhand grip, hands shoulder width apart
3. Bend elbows to lower the weight behind the head or hairline with little or no lateral movement of the elbow
4. Return to the starting position

DB TRICEP KICKBACK
Classification 1, I
1. Assume bent-over set-up posture
2. Weight in hand, elbow bent and ‘locked’ into the side of the body
3. Extend the elbow, maintaining a stationary shoulder
4. Return to the starting position
BENCH TRICEP DIP
Classification 2, J
1. Assume the set-up position of seated posture on a wide bench so that you can comfortably place your hands underneath your shoulders
2. With fingers positioned forwards, move trunk forwards so that the buttocks are off the bench and body weight is being supported by the upper body
3. Keep the spine neutral and shoulders down
4. Lower the body; the elbows will bend and point backwards (pending form, elbows can bend to 90 degrees)
5. Extend the elbows to lift the body up keeping elbows close to the body and buttocks close to the bench
6. Keep elbows soft on extension and shoulders down

NB: the forward dip targets the pectoralis major due to the forward position of the body. In the bench tricep dip, the body is more vertical and as a result, targets the triceps.

NB: people often incorrectly assume that the body weight tricep dip is a beginner exercise – the client needs good strength and shoulder stability to perform well.

BB BICEP CURL
Classification 1, I
1. Assume standing set-up posture
2. Arms down in front of thighs, activate the lats to help ‘tuck’ the elbows into the side of the body
3. Bend the elbows to curl the bar towards the shoulder, maintaining a static posture
4. Lower the bar to return to the starting position