

The Reset Workout

A simple strength plan you can do at home — with a chair, a pair of dumbbells and some floor space.

By Caroline Grey, Founder of Craft Your Body

Why this workout works

Exercise is about energy expenditure, but not all movement builds your body. Daily activity — walking, housework, taking the stairs — adds up (that's NEAT), but it does not protect muscle and bone the way strength training does. After 35, and especially through midlife, strength training becomes one of the most important things you can do for your body.

This workout uses the major movement patterns: squat, lunge, hinge, push, pull and core. Do it 2–3 times a week with at least one rest day between sessions. Complete 2–3 rounds of all eight exercises, resting 30–60 seconds between each.

What you need

- A sturdy chair without wheels, pushed against a wall
- A pair of dumbbells or one kettlebell (or tins/water bottles to start)
- Floor space to lie down with arms and legs extended
- Comfortable clothing and a non-slip surface

The exercises

1. Chair Squat or Goblet Squat

Targets: quads, glutes, hamstrings and core

Reps: 10–12

Tip: Keep your chest lifted and your knees tracking in line with your toes. Use the chair as a guide for depth without sitting back.

2. Reverse Lunge

Targets: quads, glutes, hamstrings and balance

Reps: 8–10 each leg

Tip: Hold the back of the chair lightly if balance is tricky. Keep your torso upright and avoid leaning forwards.

3. Glute Bridge

Targets: glutes, hamstrings, lower back and core

Reps: 12–15

Tip: Add a dumbbell across your hips, or lift one foot for a single-leg bridge to make it harder.

4. Seated Dumbbell Shoulder Press

Targets: shoulders, upper back and triceps

Reps: 10–12

Tip: Keep your core engaged and avoid arching your lower back as you press the weights overhead.

5. Standing Dumbbell Row

Targets: upper back, lats and biceps

Reps: 10–12

Tip: Pull from your back, not your arms. Keep your neck long and your back flat throughout.

6. Press-Up

Targets: chest, shoulders, triceps and core

Reps: 6–12 with good form

Tip: Use the chair seat or your knees to make it easier. The higher your hands, the lighter the movement.

7. Dead Bug

Targets: deep core muscles and spinal stability

Reps: 8–10 each side

Tip: Keep your lower back gently pressed into the floor. Reduce the range if your back arches.

8. Plank

Targets: core, shoulders and glutes

Reps: 20–45 seconds

Tip: Do not hold your breath. Keep your body in a straight line from head to heels, or from hips to shoulders if on your knees.

Make it work for you

- Start with two sessions a week. Consistency matters more than intensity.
- Warm up for five minutes first — march on the spot, circle your shoulders and gently move your spine.
- Track reps, weights and how you feel. Progress is measurable even when it is not visible.
- Keep daily movement happening on top — walks, stairs, housework and gardening all count.

This is a long game, especially in midlife — but it is one of the best investments you can make in how your body feels, functions and ages.

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