



M E T H O D

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When you turn to the side do you disappear? Do your pants fall off without a belt? Not enough junk in the trunk? If you know what everyone else knows then you know that no one wants a pancake butt. Everyone wants round, firm glutes. But what can you do about it? Not everyone has the booty gene; and implants are just gross. Well there is help, even for the most posteriorly challenged.

First let's define our terms. What we think of as the butt is really the gluteus group. This is comprised of three muscles (on each side). First is the gluteus minimus--the most minimal in appearance. Next is the gluteus medius--the outermost part of the hip that's not bone. And finally there's the gluteus maximus--the part that really makes the shape of the rear end.

All three gluteal muscles can and should be developed but our efforts are going to concentrate on the minimus and the maximus. Over-development of the gluteus medius will only serve to broaden the hips, and I don't know too many people who want broader hips. This is why I steer people away from the abductor machine in the gym--all it can do is build up your medius. Don't fall for the canard that this machine will "work your outer thighs." The outer thigh is comprised of the vastus lateralis which is part of the quadriceps group. Work your quads effectively and your "outer thigh" will be just fine.

Everyone knows squats will fill out the back of your jeans. But what's the best way to do them for maximal glute development? One pervasive and persistent gym myth is that ballet squats (usually done on a Smith machine) will emphasize the glutes. There's little evidence to support this belief. In a ballet squat the feet point out as much as 90 degrees. Look unnatural? It is. And it places great stress (lateral stress and hyperflexion) in the knees. Further you're starting the movement with the femur (thigh bone) externally rotated. It's the glute's job to externally rotate the femur. If it's already rotated what's the glute going to do? Nothing. You're shortening the muscle for the duration of the movement and a muscle that is shortened does not contract effectively.

Now, any squat done deeply enough will work the glutes at least a bit and the ballet squat will let you go pretty deep. But it's not worth it. Better, try a feet-together stance on your squat (often it's best to learn this on a Smith machine first). With feet (and knees) together the femur is in neutral rotation. As you go down it actually becomes internally rotated thus stretching the glute. Stretched muscles are activated most. Again, the deeper you can go on this the more glute involvement there is. Even a normal-width squat, if taken deeply enough, will hit the glutes good and hard.

The above info on squats applies to any leg press movement you're partial to as well. Place your feet together and high on the platform and go deep. But the most important step is to press almost entirely with your heels all the way down and all the way up. Using the heels makes the exercise so much more effective that you'll probably have to go down in weight. Remember my first maxim: that which makes the exercise harder makes it better.

The undisputed reigning champ of glute exercises, of course, is the lunge. The lunge is essentially a one-legged squat. The advantage is that it allows you to go deeper than you can on the squat. You will often see people doing walking lunges up and down the gym. Aside from annoying everyone else in the gym they are cheating each gluteus maximus of its rightful share of the work. There are two problems with the walking lunge. One, it encourages you to push off with the trailing leg thus lessening the work of the forward leg (which should be doing the vast majority of the work). Two, it allows the leg to rest between each rep while the other leg performs its rep. To fatigue a muscle efficiently it should be allowed no rest between reps. Walking lunges are a great over-all conditioning movement; but for best glute development do stationary lunges one leg at a time. Hold dumbbells in your hands or place a barbell on your back. Step forward and do the reps through a full range of motion but without returning to a normal standing position. When that leg is fatigued switch to the other.

The above exercises are the best for directly affecting glute development. But don't forget your hamstrings. Hamstring work adds depth and shape to the legs. It also works the glutes a bit and the tie-in of the two muscle groups accentuates both.

No more doubling-bagging the workout pants for you. With these simple exercises, performed regularly and hard, glutes will spring up where none existed. You'll look great no matter what your predisposition: boxers, briefs or thong.