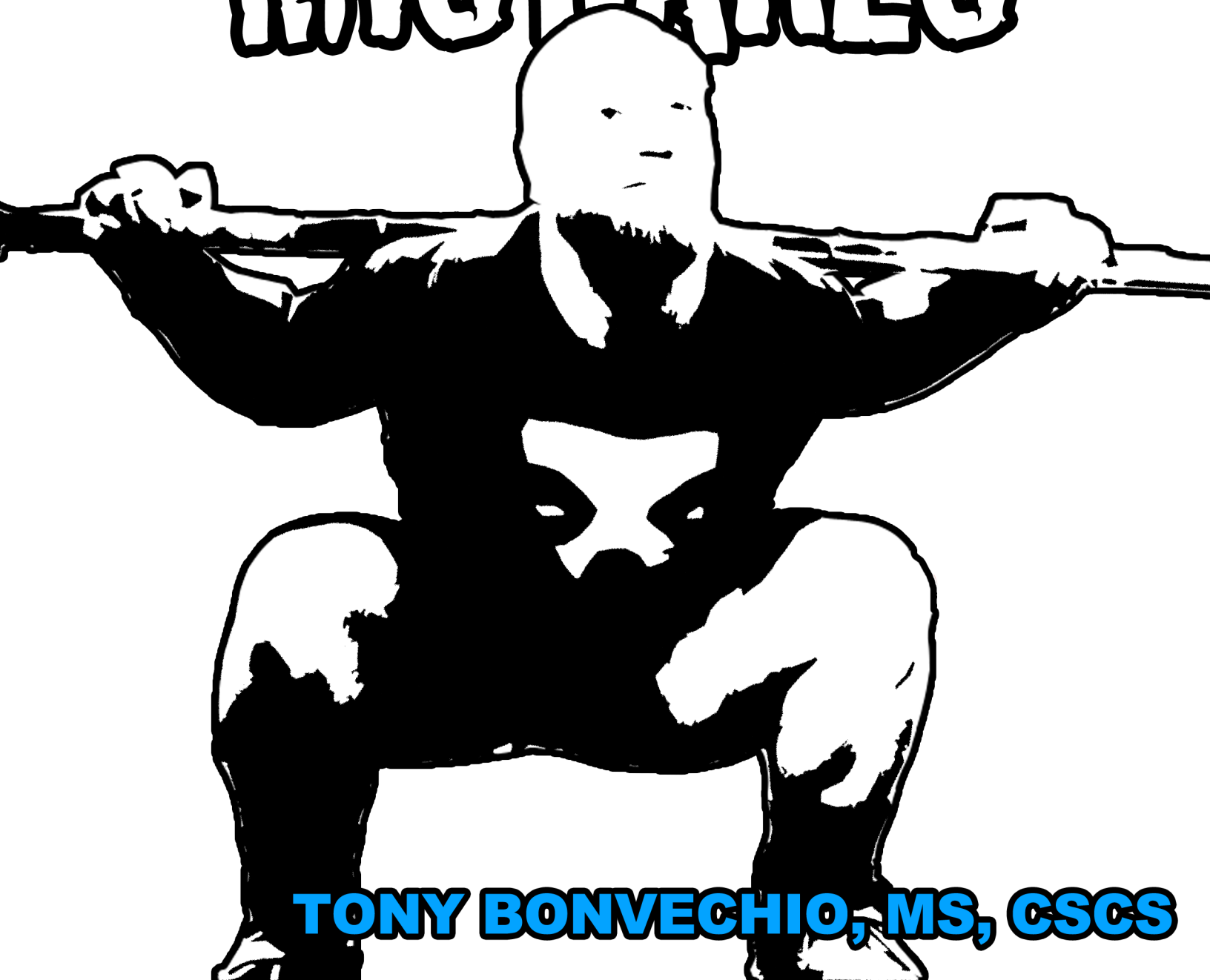
TOP 10 SQUAT MISTAKES



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INTRODUCTION

Fate is a funny thing. In fact, fate tried to make me a great powerlifter from a young age. The first gym class I ever took in high school was “Power and Olympic Lifting” and my teacher was a fantastic strength and conditioning coach. He taught us the ins and outs of the squat, bench press, deadlift, clean & jerk and snatch... and I hated every second of it.

I had just broken my ankle in my first-ever high school football scrimmage. I was hopping around campus on crutches, drawing unwanted attention to my already-nervous self. As if I wasn’t sweating enough already from the nervousness of being an awkward teenager at a brand new school, my pits were soaked from limping around with a bum ankle in the August heat. Add the extra pressure of being surrounded by intimidating upper classmen - big, burly football players and wrestlers who lifted what seemed like monstrous weights at the time - and I dreaded going to class each week.

Despite my injury (and lousy attitude), my coach helped me as best as he could. I spent most classes bench pressing and moping around on the pec deck machine (maybe that’s where I originally got my love for benching...). I finally got my boot off during the last week of the semester, just in time for our final exam: a mock powerlifting meet. Thinking I’d gotten off the hook and wouldn’t have to participate, my heart dropped when my teacher told me I’d be squatting that day.

With fear in my heart and sweat pouring from my armpits, I approached the bar. My hands shook and my knees trembled as I got into position. I closed my eyes and prayed that I wouldn’t snap in half as I sat down and stood back up with... 135 pounds. As a 170-pound athletic kid, my 1 rep max squat was 135 pounds. It would be nearly half a decade before I squatted again.

Fast forward to my freshman year of college. I’d finally developed a love for lifting after discovering that getting bigger and stronger was my only shot at getting any playing time on my college baseball team. Over several months, I’d put on some muscle and my strength levels shot up, but the workout routine our coach gave us only had leg presses, no squats. The internet told me I needed to do squats if I wanted to get huge, so I gave them a try.

After several years of trial and error, I developed a deep love for squats - pun 100 percent intended. First came 225, then 315, and then 405. I hit my first 500-pound squat in my third powerlifting meet in 2011. My squat climbed slowly but surely, until I hit my first 600-pound squat (and my first triple bodyweight squat) in 2019, just hours before my wife went into labor with our first child. Talk about cutting it close!

Along the way, I made just about every mistake in the book: squatting high, squatting too heavy, squatting with poor technique... the list goes on. And that’s why you’re reading this book in the first place: to learn from my mistakes so you can avoid them on your own journey to a better squat.

MISTAKE #1: OVERARCHING THE BACK

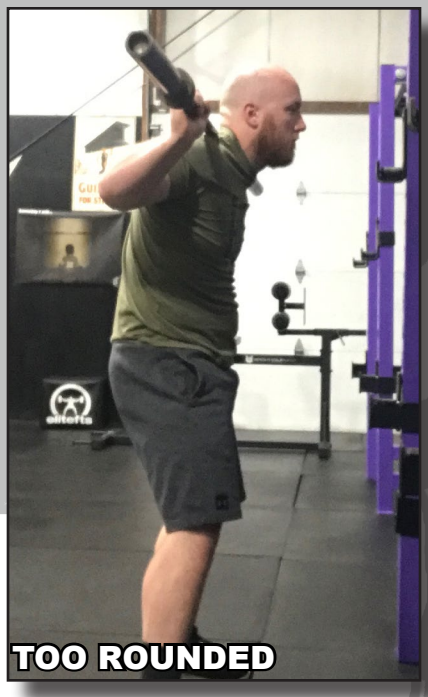
When I was first learning to powerlift, I read every article and watched every video I could find from the top powerlifting coaches and gyms in the world. Many of these coaches and lifters were preaching the importance of a “tight back” while squatting. “ARCH, ARCH, ARCH!” they would scream as their lifters handled several hundred or even a thousand pounds on their backs.

I took the arch cue as gospel, but I couldn’t help but notice two things about all these lifters: 1) they all wore squat suits, which were made of multiple layers of polyester to provide extra support, and 2) none of them squatted deep. In fact, most of them squatted embarrassingly high by the standard powerlifting rulebook, which requires that the crease of the hip pass below the top of the knee in order for the squat to count.

Now it turns out that the number one squat mistake I see is excessive arching of the back – specifically the lower back – in an attempt to keep the chest up and prevent falling forward. This makes sense in theory, because when you arch your back at the START of the squat, your chest does indeed lift up. However, the combination of aggressive lumbar extension and anterior pelvic tilt actually makes the squat fall apart on the way DOWN and leads to just about every other squat technique flaw you can think of. Chest falling forward, knees caving in, hips shooting back; all these issues can be traced back to arching the back.

Here’s the thing about arching the back excessively: it completely disengages the abdominal (or “core”) muscles that hold the pelvis in place. Why does a lack of core bracing make your squat turn to shit? Because your abs actually help hold your pelvis in place, which helps keep your femur (thigh bone) snug in your acetabulum (hip socket).

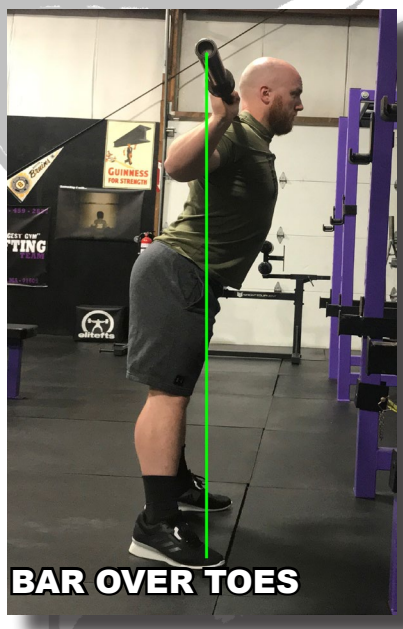
Imagine that your pelvis is a bowl full of water. When your abs are engaged by stacking your rib cage right on top of your pelvis (imagine you’re in your swimsuit at the beach and the sexiest person you know is walking by… quick, flex your abs!), it holds that bowl steady so no water can pour out. However, when you arch your back, it tips your bowl forward and dumps out all the water.

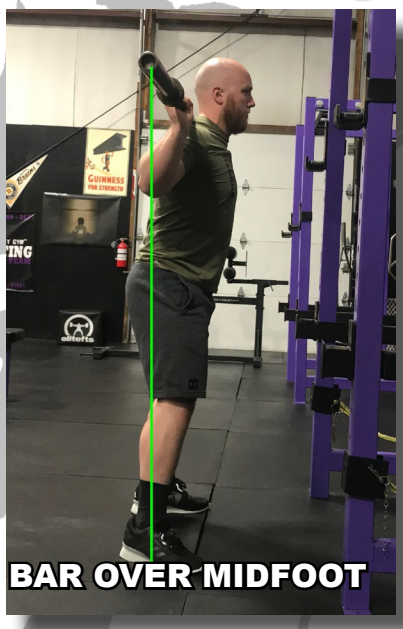


When you dump out the water, it changes the position of your acetabulum in relation to the head of your femur. When this happens, your hip mobility is drastically reduced, leaving you with two options: squat high (the option taken by most of these gigantic powerlifters I idolized) or keep squatting down, only to run into further issues. As you squat down, your hips and knees flex (bend) at the same time. The more your hips flex, the more your hips must internally rotate. If you arch your back, your pelvis tips forward (dumping out the water), which closes down the space within the acetabulum that your femur can move. Imagine taking a four-lane highway and closing it down to one lane during rush hour, except that traffic is still humming along at 70 miles an hour. What's going to happen? Someone's going to crash into someone else. In this case, your femur is going to crash into the structures surrounding it, leading to a nasty "pinching" feeling called impingement. Repeatedly pushing through hip impingement can lead to injuries down the line, some of which can require surgery to fix that can permanently restrict your hip mobility.

One way your body avoids this impingement is by subconsciously rounding the lower back (officially called lumbar flexion but simply known in powerlifting circles as "butt wink") once you squat below parallel. This automatically makes more room for the femur to rotate within the acetabulum, but at the expense of your lower back. Would you say it's safe to round your lower back while deadlifting? Certainly not, and it's not very safe to do so while squatting either. Will a couple butt winks land you in a wheel chair? No, but months and months and years and years of squatting with an arched back which leads to repetitive butt wink can certainly wear you down and lead to injury.

Finally, overarching your lower back naturally shifts your weight forward onto the balls of your feet. Don't believe me? Stand up and try it. Arch your lower back, stick your booty out and take notice of where the majority of your bodyweight shifts in terms of your feet. I can promise you that your weight is no longer balanced in the middle of your foot. We know letting the heels come up while squatting is a big no-no, and overarching the lower back puts you several steps closer to this technical flaw.





So how do we avoid this situation? Simply use the abs to hold the ribs, pelvis and lower back in a NEUTRAL position. Not arched, not rounded, but stacked right on top of each other like a beer keg. The cue I like to use is to slightly tuck your belt buckle up toward your nose. Your lower back naturally has a subtle arch to it, and by just barely removing that arch, your abs will turn on and be in a position to hold your pelvis in place. This subtle tilt, along with proper breathing mechanics, will let your hips move nicely so you can squat deep without crumbling into a pile of bones under heavy weights.

MISTAKE #2: GRIPPING TOO WIDE OR TOO NARROW

Grip position on the bar will affect how tight you can get your upper back. Considering that your back is what directly supports the bar, this is pretty damn important.

In general, the narrower your grip on the bar, the tighter you can pinch your shoulder blades together and squeeze the bar into your back. However, you have to find the sweet spot. If you place your hands TOO narrow, you won't be able to keep your wrists on top of your elbows, which is the ideal position. Sure, you'll feel really tight, but your elbows will flare back, putting undue stress on your wrists and elbows. If you place your hands too wide, it'll be difficult to squeeze your shoulder blades together and you'll run the risk of the bar rolling around on your back.

As a general rule, choose the narrowest grip possible where you can still keep a neutral wrist position: a straight line from your wrist to your elbow. In this position, you should be able to squeeze your lats tight as if you were doing a behind-the-neck lat pulldown. If your elbows are pointed too far back, you won't be able to get this same level of lat engagement.

MISTAKE #3: CHEST BREATHING

Circling back to the first mistake, proper breathing solidifies your core position and helps you stay tight throughout the lift. Would you rather drive on fully inflated tires or a set of floppy, leaky tires? The answer is obvious, and correct breathing inflates your "tire" (your core) to the proper pressure so you can drive full speed ahead.

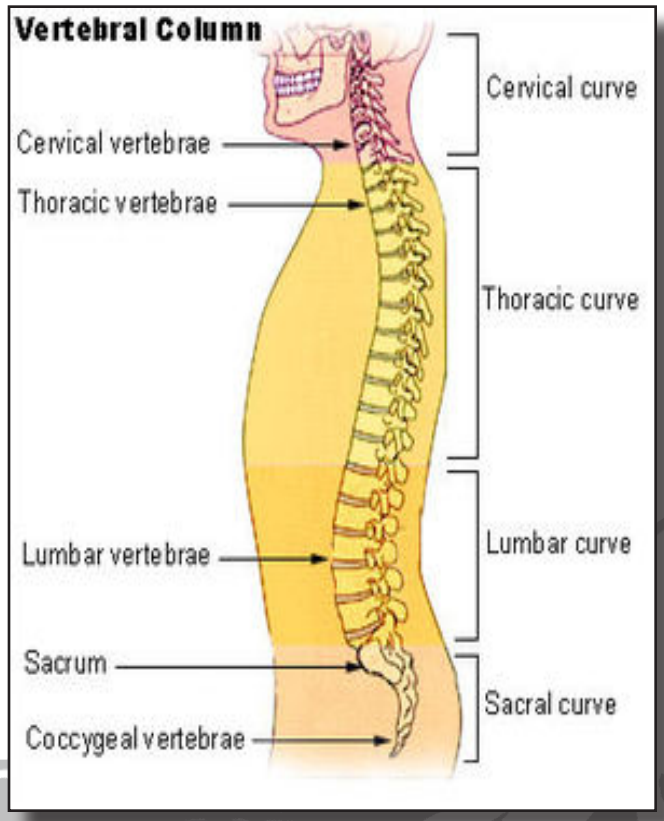
Many lifters breathe incorrectly while squatting by drawing most of their breath into their chest. By breathing into their chest, they shrug the shoulders (which reduces upper back tightness, see mistake #2) and lift the ribcage (which disengages the core, see mistake #1). This does very little to enhance core stiffness and will lead to weakness throughout the lift.

Rather, you should breathe into your entire midsection, from front to back. Called circumferential breathing, this takes advantage of ALL your abdominal muscles, including the vastly underrated obliques as well as your diaphragm. This turns your spine into an extremely sturdy column by increasing intra-abdominal pressure, which locks the spine and pelvis in place so the hips can move freely.

It's easy to feel the difference between correct and incorrect breathing if you're wearing a belt. Wear the belt around your natural waist and tighten it until it's one notch shy of as tight as possible. If you breathe into your chest, the belt will stay the same level of tightness or even loosen up a bit. If you breathe into your stomach, sides and lower back, the belt will get even tighter.

MISTAKE #4: LOOKING TOO FAR UP OR TOO FAR DOWN

Similar to the “arch!” cue of yesteryear, old school powerlifting coaches can be heard shouting “head up, head up!” from the mountaintops. The old wives’ tale is that where the head goes, the body goes, so if your head is up, you’ll stand up with the bar under heavy squats. If only it were that simple.



HEAD UP, ROUNDED SHOULDERS

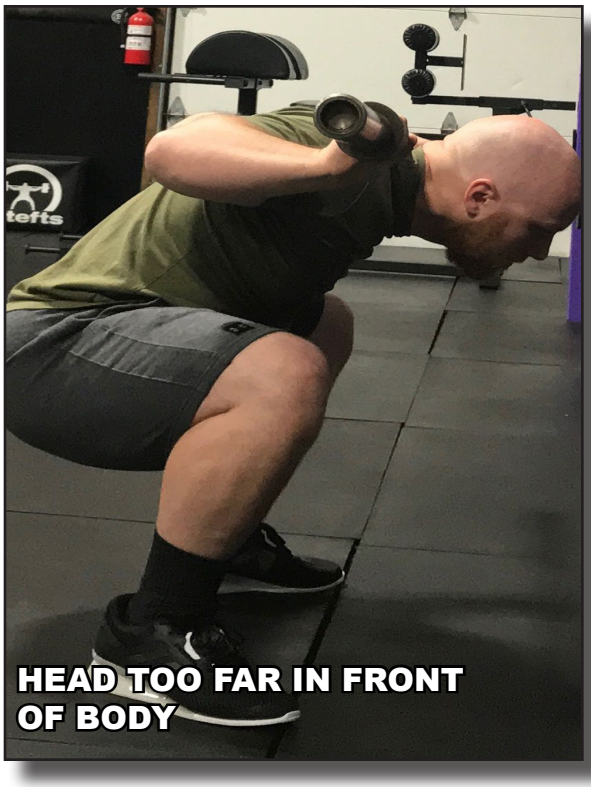
Looking nearly straight up while squatting holds the cervical spine (i.e. the neck) in near end-range extension. Does this ring a bell? Ah, yes, mistake #1, overarching the back. Cranking the head up is similar to aggressively arching the back in that there are implications elsewhere throughout the body.

The stability you gain by looking straight up results in a compromised thoracic spine (upper back) and shoulder position, and for many lifters (but not all) can trickle down to a loss of core and pelvic position too. Let’s talk specifically about the t-spine and shoulders.

The spine naturally has certain amounts of extension (i.e. arching) and flexion (i.e. rounding) at certain segments. For example, the cervical spine is naturally a bit extended, while the t-spine has subtle flexion throughout, and finally the lumbar spine naturally sits in a bit of extension. So when we talk about maintaining a “neutral spine”, we’re talking about spinal alignment that’s close to this natural curve. It doesn’t have to be perfect because “neutral” is a RANGE, not one precise position.

However, when you drastically change the alignment of one segment of the spine, the other segments are going to want to shift to maintain balance. So wrenching your neck up into end-range extension is going to cause the t-spine to want to flex, which is the OPPOSITE of “chest up”, and to compensate for that, the lumbar spine will want to hyperextend as a last-ditch effort to prevent your body from curling into a ball with a heavy bar on your back. What’s more, because the shoulder blades sit on the ribcage (which is connected to the t-spine), looking up aggressively can also cause your shoulder blades to tip forward, effectively un-pinching your scaps and robbing you of precious upper back tension. It looks something like this.

Just like looking straight up is typically a bad idea, looking straight down rarely works either. The human head weighs a lot – 10 or more pounds if you're an adult. If the goal of squatting is to keep the weight over the middle of your foot (as discussed in mistake #1), letting your 10-pound head hang out in front of your center of mass isn't going to help with this. In my experience, "where the head goes, the body goes" applies more so in this situation, as I've seen many lifters who look straight down also shift forward far too much as they hit the bottom of their squat, like this.


HEAD TOO FAR IN FRONT OF BODY

The simple solution is to adopt a more neutral head position that allows the spine to stay aligned and the bar to remain over the center of the feet throughout the lift. In fact, using a hard "double chin" position can engage the upper back and traps to a greater degree to secure the bar in place. From here, it doesn't matter where your eyes look; they can gaze up, down or straight ahead. The point is to use the muscles of the neck and upper back to lock the rest of the spine firmly in place.

MISTAKE #5: PULLING THE ELBOWS DOWN TOO MUCH

Your torso angle will typically mimic your elbow angle, so if your elbows are pointed backward, you'll probably lean forward too much. Conversely, if your elbows are pointed straight down, you'll probably stay nice and tall throughout your squat. More specifically, the wrists and elbows should line up, with the forearms as vertical as possible.


PACKED NECK, CHEST UP

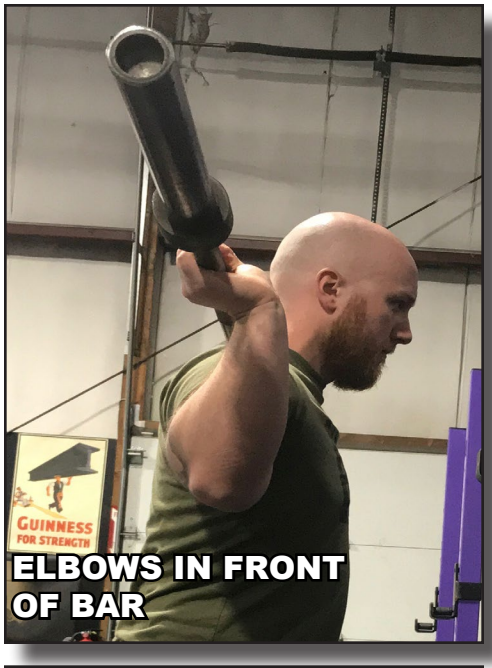
The ability to actually do this will be limited by your shoulder mobility, bar placement on the back and hand position. However, forcefully pulling the elbows under the bar during the squat actually leads to a host of other technique issues.

That's because simply pulling the elbows down underneath the bar doesn't actually do anything to increase upper back tightness. Many lifters think they're "engaging the lats" by swinging the elbows down, but the lat tension we want during the squat doesn't come from the arms, but rather from the shoulder blades. You should be pinching your shoulder blades as tight as possible, as if trying to crack a walnut between your scaps. Many lifters also like to pull their shoulder blades into their back pockets, as if trying to bend the bar into a rainbow shape across their traps. THIS engages the lats, not swinging the elbows under the bar.

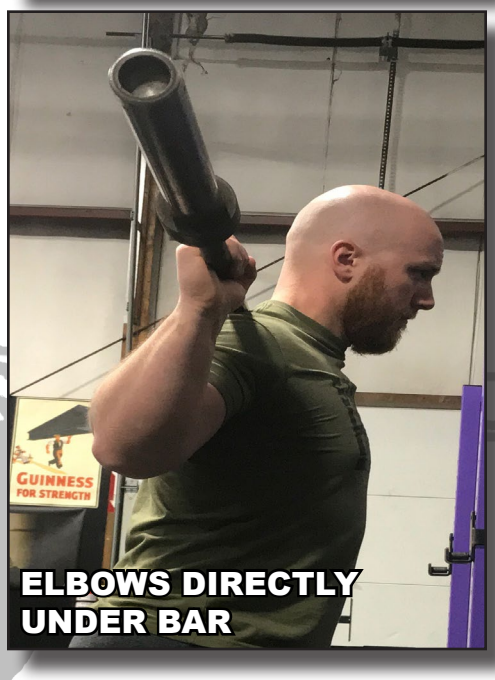
Some more mobile lifters who adopt a higher bar position on the back can actually swing the elbows in FRONT of the bar. This is a huge mistake because it means you have virtually zero upper back

tension holding the bar in place. The bar is almost guaranteed to roll backward under heavy loads, which can lead to missed lifts or even injury.

In fact, trying TOO hard to pull the elbows down will likely cause what's called valgus stress at the elbow, which can lead to elbow and/or shoulder pain. If you're unable to get your elbows at least somewhat under the bar, it's likely due to two things: 1) your grip is too narrow, or 2) the bar is too low on your back. Simply widening your grip and/or raising the position of the bar on your back will make it much easier to get your forearms vertical.



ELBOWS IN FRONT OF BAR



ELBOWS DIRECTLY UNDER BAR

MISTAKE #6: DISRESPECTING THE WALKOUT

Most lifters understand that a proper setup can make or break your squat. Taking the time to get the bar exactly where you want it on your back, getting your feet set, taking a big breath and bracing your core; these are givens for any experienced lifter. However, I still see countless people piss away their setup with a sloppy walkout.

The walkout is simply the act of unracking the bar and stepping backward to get into position to squat. The lack of respect for the walkout among even well-seasoned lifters makes me rage. Hasn't anyone ever listened to Pantera? "Re! 'Spect! Walk!" OK, maybe they weren't singing about squats, but the point stands: if you are deliberate about perfecting your walkout, you're going to stay tighter, have more control over the bar and ultimately squat heavier weights.

The first step to a proper walkout is a firm unrack. Stand up with the bar out of the rack by firmly locking the knees, NOT by arching the lower back. And whatever you do, be patient and don't scurry backward right away. Unrack the bar, wait a second to make sure you have control, and THEN take your first step backward. I see so many lifters start stepping back at the same time they unrack the bar, which causes the bar to tip and tilt and often times makes the bar and/or plates hit the rack or hooks, which can be jarring under heavy weights.

Next, decide if you're going to do a two-step or three-step walkout. Both options start the same: take one firm step backward with whichever leg you choose. Make sure your foot lands almost exactly where you want it to be once you're ready to squat; not too far back, too wide or too narrow. DON'T allow the bar to twist as you step back.

Once your first foot is planted, take a firm step back with the other foot. If you're doing a two-step walkout, you'll want your second foot to land exactly in your squat stance. By the time your second foot lands, it's show time and your feet should be in your preferred width and rotation (i.e. toes out, toes straight ahead, etc.). If you're doing a three-step walkout, you'll perform a centering step after your second foot lands. This simply means that you'll move one of your feet in or out in order to get in your exact squat stance. Don't tap dance around and move both feet in or out several times. Every step you take is going to inadvertently lose precious tension, so limit your steps to three at the very most.

MISTAKE #7: USING TOO WIDE OF A STANCE

Stance width ultimately comes down to personal preference, but I often see lifters use too wide of a stance in an attempt to cut down the range of motion and mimic the stance of much bigger, stronger lifters. Here's the thing: very few lifters are built to squat effectively with an ultra-wide stance. So that 300-pound behemoth you saw on Instagram squatting a grand using a stance wider than the Grand Canyon? Yeah, you probably aren't built to squat like him. Unless you've got the right leverages and hip anatomy, a more moderate stance is likely the better option.

The first problem with an ultra-wide stance is that most people don't have the right hip structure or the level of mobility it takes to squat below parallel while maintaining proper technique. Remember my ramblings about pelvic position during Mistake #1? You see, the wider you stand, the harder it is to hold your pelvis and lower back in a neutral position. When the hips externally rotate (i.e. turning your feet out) and abduct (i.e. moving your feet further away from each other), you'll often automatically get extension at the lower back and anterior tilt at the pelvis, leading to that arched back stripper booty position we want to avoid. What's more, in order to squat below parallel, your hips must INTERNALLY rotate a bit, and it's really hard for your hips to internally rotate if you're standing in a position that's excessive externally rotated. What usually ends up happening? You either 1) squat high, 2) lean forward too much or 3) let the knees and ankles cave in to allow you to squat lower.

The third situation is your body's way of saying, "OK pal, if you're going to put us in a shitty position where our hips can't internally rotate, we're gonna get that range of motion anyways. We'll just steal that motion from the hips and give it to the knees and ankles." Then you get a squat that looks like this:

Simply moving the feet in a bit narrower will let you squat below parallel while keeping the knees and hips aligned with the feet.

The second major problem with an ultra-wide stance is that it's hard to push with your legs. Old-school thinking tells us that a wide stance squat is more hip dominant and that you'll get more power from your glutes and hamstrings, but research and a basic understanding of biomechanics tells us that the quads are still the primary movers during the squat, regardless of stance width. And if we can't get a good push from our quads, we're not going to squat very well.

To prove this point, let's look at a vertical jump. While a jump and a squat are not exactly the same, they're still trying to accomplish a similar task: produce a ton of force while simultaneously extending the knees and hips (the jump also extends the ankles, but that's beside the point here).

If I asked you to jump as high as possible, how would you stand? Probably pretty narrow, somewhere around hip width or slightly wider. That's because this is the most efficient stance to PUSH through the ground. Now, what if you tried to jump using an ultra-wide stance? You probably couldn't hop over a credit card. A wider stance makes it harder to actively drive through the floor and generate enough force to jump.

And while you probably couldn't squat the most weight with your vertical jump stance, the point stands that somewhere BETWEEN your vertical jump stance and an ultra-wide stance is probably the best combination of producing force with the legs while reducing the range of motion.

MISTAKE #8: IGNORING THE FEET

When it comes to squat cues for the lower body, the knees get all the love. "Knees out" is perhaps the most common coaching phrase in squat history, and yes, we want the knees to stay lined up over the middle of the foot. But what if I told you keeping the knees out didn't actually occur at the knees?

"Knees out" (or rather, not letting the knees cave in) actually occurs by creating and maintaining external rotation torque at the hips. In plain English, the muscles that externally rotate the hips (primarily the glutes) work to actively hold the femur (upper leg bone) in a consistent position. As you squat down, you must maintain that torque at the hip, and if you relax the glutes, your knees will travel the past of least resistance and cave in.

If you're into feet as much as former New York Jets coach Rex Ryan, you're in luck. While this torque occurs at the hips, it's actually the FEET that work best to create it. Turns out a much better cue than "knees out" is "spread the floor" or "screw your feet into the floor". By focusing on how your feet are interacting with the floor, you'll do a better job of keeping your knees out and firing the muscles most important for moving the bar while squatting.

Regardless of stance width or foot position (i.e. toes straight ahead or turned out), you should be actively trying to twist/turn your feet into the floor while maintain an "active" foot. An active foot means that you have even pressure throughout the entire foot and you maintain the natural arch of your foot. You should NOT have all the weight on your heels or toes, and you should NOT have all the weight on the inside or outside of your foot. Check out the difference in appearance between an "active" and "inactive" foot:

While most lifters should squat with shoes on (preferably a heel-elevated squat shoe or a flat-soled shoe with a rugged exterior), practicing some bodyweight squats or light goblet squats in bare feet can help you feel what it means to squat with active feet. My favorite cue for teaching active feet is simply, "Make your feet as big as possible." You don't want to grab the ground or scrunch your feet, but rather spread your toes out wide and maintain even pressure on the ground throughout your entire foot.

Look at how an active vs. inactive foot affects knee position during the squat:

Creating an active foot plus screwing your feet into the floor as you squat will lead to proper knee and hip position while unlocking the massive power of your glutes to help squat bigger weights.

MISTAKE #9: INCONSISTENT DEPTH

How low should you squat? If you're a powerlifter, the rules of the sport say you have to break parallel, meaning that the crease of the hip must pass below the top of the knee joint. So in order for your squat to count in competition, you must squat AT LEAST that low, and all your squats in training should reflect that.

If you're NOT a powerlifter, how low should you squat? In my professional opinion, you should squat as low as your anatomy allows while keeping good technique. If your hip structure, current mobility levels (or lack thereof) and/or a preexisting injury don't allow you to squat that low, then don't squat that low. And perhaps pick a different exercise.

Bottom line: squatting deeper typically carries greater benefits than NOT squatting deeper when it comes to building muscle and gaining strength. Plus, if you're a powerlifter and you bury all your squats (without sacrificing technique, of course), then you never run the risk of having a squat disqualified because you didn't squat low enough.

So why the diatribe about squat depth? Because many lifters are inconsistent when it comes to their squat depth. Some people squat deep when the weights are lighter, but chicken out and squat high as the weights get heavy. Others squat shallow in training, only to say, "Meh, I'll sink it on meet day when it really counts." Sure you will, buddy… sure you will.

Newsflash: great squatters have great technique and consistent depth on every rep, whether it's light or heavy, in training or in competition. Practice like you play. If you're changing your technique based on the above circumstances, chances are you're lying to yourself. That squat that you cut high in training, just so you could get the weight? Yeah, you're not really that strong. You say you'll squat below parallel on meet day? Probably not, so don't get mad when your squat gets disqualified by the judges.

We have a rule at The Strength House: squat to proper depth or you get the box of shame. Well, it's not really a box of shame, but rather a box to AVOID shame in the future, the shame of squatting high in competition, which is a shame that stings like no other. If one of our coaches catches you squatting high, we'll put a box under your rear end that you must touch to ensure you're going deep enough. I recommend that you do the same if your squat depth is inconsistent.

MISTAKE #10: INCONSISTENT TEMPO

As I improve as a coach, I find myself sounding like a cranky old man yelling at cars driving past my house: "SLOW DOWN!" That's because the majority of lifters tend to lower down too quickly when they squat.

They say success leaves clues, and when you watch most of the best squatters in the world (guys like Ed Coan, Ray Williams and Andrey Malanichev, and ladies like Stefi Cohen, CC Holcomb and Kristy Hawkins) utilize a smooth, controlled tempo. They don't divebomb as fast as possible, nor do they descend like oozing molasses, but rather somewhere in between. It would behoove most lifters to emulate this approach.

Why does it matter how fast or slow you descend with the bar? It matters two-fold: 1) your descent speed must allow you to keep proper technique, and 2) allow to you take as much advantage of the stretch reflex at the bottom as possible. Regarding technique, most lifters simply can't keep proper technique (see every previous point in this book) if they lower down too fast. You're much more likely to keep all your body parts in the right place at the right time if you descend under control. Regarding the stretch reflex, if you lower down SO slowly you may be robbing yourself of a bit of "bounce" out the hole that can help you on the way back up.

However, this mistake isn't about "too fast" or "too slow", but rather inconsistent tempo. By that I mean I often see lifters change their preferred tempo as weights get heavier. Most commonly, lifters who

utilize a smooth tempo with light or moderate weights suddenly slow WAY down once the weight gets heavy. They're so worried about the weight on their back that they forget to be aggressive and trust their approach. These lifters usually get stuck at the very bottom of the lift because they throw away any stretch reflex they're used to getting. On the other hand, I also see many lifters who normally lower down under control throw that control out the window and free fall once the weight gets heavy, just praying that the bounce will carry them through to lockout. These lifters might make it a few inches out of the hole before crumbling to pieces, that is, if the bar doesn't staple them to the floor on the way down due to a lack of control.

Whatever your approach might be – slow, fast, or somewhere in between – be consistent. Regardless of what weight is on the bar, use the same descent speed and prioritize your technique. Think of lowering into your squat like changing gears in a car (people still drive stick shifts, right?); you can't just slam from first to fifth gear. You need to ease into your acceleration. Squatting should be the same. You start in park (i.e. your setup), then gradually lower down under control while picking up subtle speed. Once you're almost all the way down, slam into fifth gear and punch the gas as you drive out of the hole.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Tony and I am obsessed with strength training.

I'm a strength and conditioning coach and co-owner of The Strength House, the premiere strength training gym in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Previously, I spent three years coaching at Cressey Sports Performance in Hudson, Massachusetts, and worked as a personal trainer in Providence, Rhode Island.

I'm a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) through the National Strength and Conditioning Association and earned my Master's degree in exercise science from Adelphi University in 2013.

I've worked with people of all shapes, sizes and abilities. I've helped professional baseball players, record-setting powerlifters, marathon runners, TV producers, Ivy League professors and more.

I'm also an avid writer, and my articles have appeared on various websites such as STACK, Testosterone Nation, MyFitnessPal and Bodybuilding.com.

Prior to my coaching career, I played baseball at Saint Michael's College, a small Division II school in Vermont, where I played catcher and led the team in home runs and slugging percentage as a senior.

My most recent athletic endeavors have been in the world of powerlifting. I have recorded personal bests of a 570 squat, 405 bench press and 575 deadlift to achieve elite status in the 198-pound weight class. I continue to train and compete in powerlifting as my competitive outlet.

When I'm not training others or myself, I enjoy drinking craft beer, writing, playing guitar and listening to heavy metal music at ear-shattering volume. Most importantly, I enjoy spending time with my wonderful wife, Emily, my daughter, Clara, my dog, Eddie, and my cat, Aggie.

Good luck and lift heavy!

Tony