

Useful Assistance Exercises

exaggeration of the correct form, with lots of attention paid to getting the hips back, the knees out to the sides, and enough forward lean to stay in balance with this extreme hips-back position. As you approach the box, slow down so that you don't slap the box with your butt. The purpose here is to load the box carefully, to avoid compressing the back. Pause for a second or two and drive the hips straight up hard. **Do not exhale at the bottom.** Air is support, and if you ever in your life need support, it will be at the bottom of a box squat. This exercise can be used for varying numbers of reps and sets, depending on the effect desired. The box can be varied in height from several inches below parallel to an inch or two, no more, above. The deep versions use light weights, as mentioned earlier, and the high box version can be done with weights greatly exceeding a 1RM squat (this alone should indicate how important it is to squat below parallel; high squats are much easier to do with lots more weight because they are not a full range-of-motion exercise, and yes, an inch or two *does* make this much difference).

A version of this exercise, known as the “rocking box squat” (developed at Westside Barbell in Culver City, California in the 1960s) has the weight leaving the feet briefly as you rock back very slightly, coming back onto the feet and driving the hips up hard off the box. Louie Simmons at the modern Westside Barbell has mastered the use of this exercise and others like it. But this should be kept in mind: **box squats are an advanced exercise with a huge potential for injury if done by inexperienced or physically unprepared trainees.** The risk of spinal compression between the box and the bar is very high, and high school coaches should know better than to allow it. Please do not do them if you are not prepared, and this statement most definitely constitutes a disclaimer.

The other way to do partial squats is inside the power rack with the pins set at a height that produces the desired depth when the bar on your back touches the pins at the bottom. There are, fascinatingly enough, two ways to do these. The easy way is to set the pins at the desired depth, set up the hooks inside the rack, take the bar out of the hooks, squat down and either bounce the bar off the pins (the easy way) or dead stop on them and then come up (the better way). This permits you to get tight and store some elastic energy on the way down to the bottom. The hard way is to load the bar on the pins, squat down under it and get in position *at the bottom*, and then squat the bar up from what is most assuredly a *very* dead stop. This is really a challenge at the lower reaches of depth, and is hard with even light

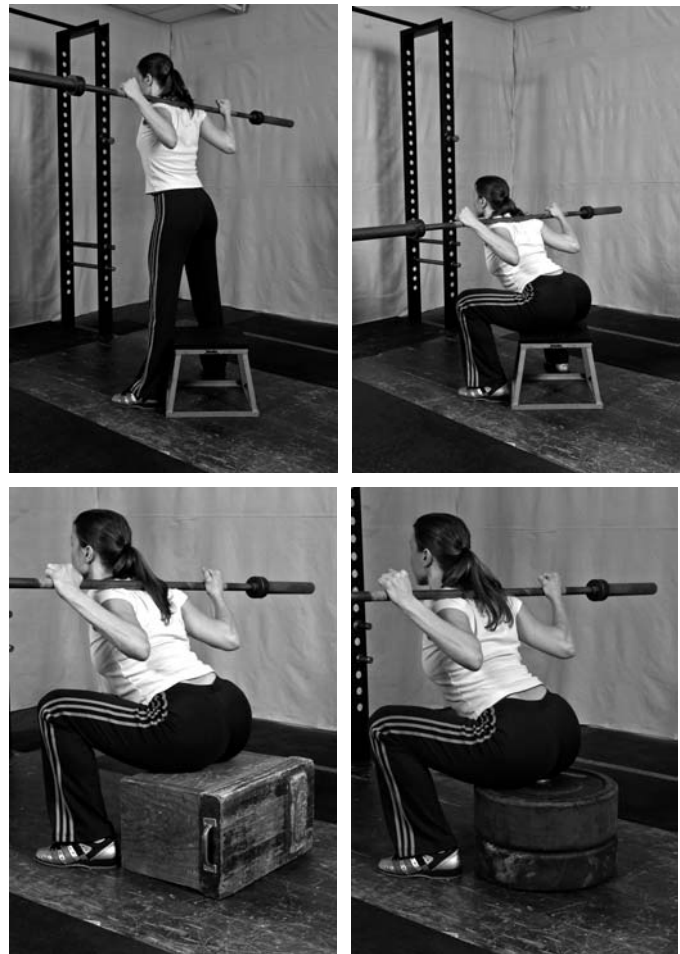


Figure 7-6. Box squats can be done with different equipment. Use what you have, as long as it is sturdy.