From Couch Potato to Couch Commando: 
4 Simple Moves With a Sofa

By Kelly K. James, ACE-CPT

FESS UP—how much time do you spend on your couch? Or maybe it’s your favorite recliner that calls your name. Chances are it’s more than you may think—we lounge a lot during our free time. According to the American Time Use Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Dept. of Labor), the average adult spends 2 hours and 47 minutes watching television and another 25 minutes using the computer for leisure.

That’s a lot of sitting, but if you feel like a couch potato, take heart—that comfy sofa can double as a piece of exercise equipment. Next time you’re lounging, uproot yourself with these four simple, yet effective, moves. With these, you might find yourself growing from a couch potato to a couch commando.

Start with doing each of these exercises once and build up to doing each three times, or simply do one set of all four the next time a series of commercials comes on. You may find that your active time on the couch makes you stronger—and fitter—than you were before!
COUCH MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS

This full-body move will get your heart rate up and targets your shoulders, arms, core (mid-section) and legs.

A. Start by standing about a few feet away from a couch. Lean forward and place your hands on the seat of the couch shoulder-distance apart. Walk your feet back until your body is in a straight line.

B. Engage your core (imagine pulling your navel toward your spine). Bring your right foot forward and set it on the ground. Your right leg should now be at about a 90-degree angle.

C. Keeping your midsection tight, switch the legs by jumping the left foot forward and bringing the right foot back. Alternate jumping the legs forward and back in a controlled fashion. Alternate 8 to 12 times.

MAKE IT EASIER

Keeping your midsection tight, slowly alternate bringing the knee of your extended leg to your chest in place of jumping.

MAKE IT CHALLENGING

Move your legs more quickly.
Couch Bridges
This move targets your glutes (buttock muscles) and hamstrings, the muscles on the backs of your legs.

A. Lie on your back and bring your legs up on the couch seat at midcalf length. Keep your arms at your sides.

B. Engage your core (imagine drawing your navel toward your spine) and lift your bottom up off the ground so that your body makes a straight line (a bridge). Squeeze your glutes and keep your core tight. Breathe normally as you count to 10.

C. Lower back down.
That’s 1 rep. Do 8 to 12.

Hold for a shorter count, or perform a basic bridge pose without the couch, keeping your knees bent and feet flat on the ground.

While still holding your bridge, lift one leg in the air. Switch legs in a controlled manner.

John Rascie, Tops Staff
COUCH FLUTTER KICKS

This simple move targets your core muscles.

A. Sit on the couch with your feet on the ground, hands next to your sides.
B. Lean back a little as you lift your feet off the ground, holding onto the couch for balance, with your legs straight and toes pointed.
C. Engage your core (imagine drawing your navel toward your spine) as you kick your legs like you would if you were swimming, while keeping your legs straight and toes pointed. Do 10 to 20 kicks total, breathing normally.

That’s 1 rep. Do 8 to 12.

Kick more quickly, or do fewer reps.

Kick more slowly, or do more reps.

Featuring
Maggie Thorison,
TOPS Wellness Manager
& TOPS WI 1535
Milwaukee member
Couch Dips

This move targets your shoulders and triceps, the muscles along the backs of the arms.

A. Sit on the couch with your hands next to your body, with your knees bent and feet on the ground.
B. Walk your feet out until your bottom slides off the couch, but still touches the cushion.
C. Now, bend your arms to lower your bottom just a few inches toward the floor and then press back up. Avoid “hunching” by keeping your shoulders down and away from your ears.

That’s 1 rep. Do 8 to 12.

Keep your feet closer to the couch when you walk them, or decrease the distance you dip.

Move your feet farther away from the couch, while still keeping your back in a straight line and bottom touching the edge of the couch. Avoid “hunching” by keeping your shoulders down and away from your ears.

The information presented is educational and may not suit an individual’s particular health situation. Always check with a licensed healthcare professional before beginning a new exercise program.

Kelly K. James has been an ACE-certified personal trainer since 2007 and is the author of books including Small Changes, Big Results: A 12-Week Action Plan to a Better Life (with Ellie Krieger, RD). She’s also a successful “loser,” having maintained a 45-pound weight loss for 25 years.