

# Grip Training to Palm a Basketball

Jedd Johnson

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# Grip Training to Palm a Basketball

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Let's do this!

# Introduction

Who the heck is Jedd Johnson?

Hello there. My name is Jedd Johnson. These days I am most known for my love of Grip Training and performing feats of Grip Strength, but back in the day, I was just like you, an aspiring basketball player. In Middle School, I remember wanting to score 20+ points per game and get double-digit rebounds but most of all I wanted to DUNK.

At the time, guys like Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Dominique Wilkens, and Shawn Kemp were some of the big names in the NBA and I had video tapes of all of them. I used to record highlight reels of them onto VHS tapes with footage of them jumping through the roof, leaping from the free-throw line, and throwing down tomahawk dunks.

Man, I wanted to dunk so bad. I just wanted to stuff one through the rim right in the guy's face who was guarding me.

In those days, a couple nights a week they would have Open Gym. The Middle School and High School basketball coaches would open the gym and we could go in and shoot around, play pick-up games, and show off.

I still remember the one night. I was about 14 and I was already 5' 10". Over and over I was running and trying to get rim for my friends to see. Then, out of nowhere, the High School Varsity Coach, Coach Sheridan, approached me and told me that he was confident that if I continued to work hard, then by my Sophomore year I would be dunking.

I actually ended up doing it for the first time in a live game in a JV game my Freshman year. I got lucky and stole a ball near mid-court and got a clean breakaway. I remember like it was yesterday. I had such momentum coming off the steal that it seemed like I only took two dribbles, then went into my two steps. I only wanted to lay it up, but I got HUGE spring when I went for the lay-in that I found myself up above the rim and slammed it home with authority. The ball went through the net, hit the floor and bounced way up in the air.

There are not a lot of feelings that can compare to the first time you dunk a basketball in a live game. It's something that I will remember all my life, and I know you will too when you do it.

All the best in your training, on the court, and in the air,

Jedd

# Palming the Ball

It Ain't No Joke, if You Want to Jam

Is palming the ball necessary if you want to dunk?

The short answer is NO.

But, if you can't palm the ball, then that means you are going to have to go above and beyond in order to dunk. Not being able to palm the ball means you'll probably have to be able to do one of the following things instead.

## **1. Cup It in Your Wrist**

If you can't palm the ball, then one-handed dunks become that much harder to do. Cupping the ball in the wrist is the next option. This technique will allow you to hold the ball very tightly though, and you will probably get the ball knocked loose less often this way.

The big downside to cupping the ball, however, is that you will have to jump at least 6 inches higher than normal in order to get the ball over the rim.

## **2. Jam with Two Hands**

The next best option is to just hold the ball with both hands as you elevate. This makes for an even stronger shot and more power on the dunk. Unfortunately, getting the ball up with both hands on it requires more vertical leap as well.

If you don't have serious hops yet, then the two-handed jam might not be for you.

## **3. Jump Extra High and \*HOPE\* You Don't Lose Your Grip**

There have been people who could just plain leap so high they didn't need to palm the ball. With just some bracing with the off-hand during the leaping phase, they could brace the ball in their palm, go airborne, and guide the ball through the rim.

Of course, if there are defenders anywhere nearby, it is going to be a very risky move to try to dunk in this way, because just a fingertip's contact on the ball and you will lose control of it. It'd be better to just lay it in at that rate, and where's the fun in that?

With all this considered, it's time to start strengthening the hands to get a grip on the ball so that when the opportunity comes to throw down the thunder, you are successful instead of having the ball float away from you and just glance off the rim and go out of bounds.

# Grip Strength

What it is and how it will help you dunk

Palming a basketball is not just about having big hands. Even if you have big hands and long fingers, if they are weak, you still won't be able to palm the ball, making it harder to dunk. With that in mind, it is important to understand the basics of developing Grip Strength.

So what exactly is Grip Strength? Grip Strength is the combined strength of the fingers, thumbs, hands, wrists and forearms. That's right, believe it or not, many of the muscles that run up through the fingers begin way back by the elbow. This is important to know so that when you train to strengthen your hands, you do it right and in a balanced way, so you can keep your progress going and avoid imbalances which can lead to injury.

When it comes to palming a basketball, thumb and finger strength are the most important parts of the grip to develop, especially strength in the tips of the fingers and thumbs.

What many people do not realize is that when palming a basketball the main digits that are doing the work are the thumb and the ring finger. Even though the ring finger is one of the weakest fingers on the hand, its positioning on the hand makes it a great counterpart to partner with the thumb when palming the ball.

So, when we work the various techniques for strengthening the hands, you always want to keep in mind that the thumb and ring fingers need to be the focal points. That way, when you finish your drills and move toward ball-specific work, you get the best carryover possible.



# Overview of The Program

## The Aspects and How They Will Help You

This program has a few different parts. Each part has a special purpose.

### **Part I: Muscle Control and Mobility**

As mentioned before, palming a basketball is mainly accomplished by the thumb and ring finger working together. Even more important though, is the ability of the end of the finger to flex on its own. For some, this is a very difficult task to perform because they do not have very good finger dexterity. With the right drills, however, this skill develops quickly.

Mobility is the ability of the body to create strength in a variety of joint angles. Think about it this way - if your fingers can move very freely, then they are flexible. However, if you have no strength in the extreme positions, then your mobility needs work. With the right Mobility exercises, you can make your fingers and fingertips strong enough to create the force needed in the extreme spread positions involved in palming a basketball.

These drills will also serve to warm your hands up very well. Rushing into the grip training is a mistake because your fingers won't be limbered up, so we must make sure to get some blood flowing with light drills prior to doing exercising.

Also, it is a fact that the hands are one of the body parts that are most intensely hard-wired to the nervous system. By doing some light mobility drills, we can better engage the CNS and prime it to fire. This will help bring about progress much faster.

### **Part II: Full Sized Ball Drills**

In order to palm the ball, you need to work with the ball, so each day you train, you will spend some time with the full-sized ball in your hand. There are many drills that you will perform that will mimic the act of palming the ball. These include Supported Drills, Flat Ball Squeezes, and Anti Gravity Drills

### **Part III: Small Ball Training**

With Small Ball Training, you will be using balls smaller than the men's basketball to acclimate your hands to wide-open position of palming a basketball. Because palming involves such a high degree of emphasis on strengthening the fingertips, there is a learning curve involved. Starting out with a smaller ball allows you to gain the awareness your fingers need to palm a ball.

The more stages from the smallest balls you have to the full-sized basketball, the better. This gives you more options to train with. Possible balls to use include:

Also, by changing the amount of air inside the ball, you can make it easier or harder to palm. Anytime the jump from one ball to the next seems to steep, you can let a little air out of the bigger ball and train on it when it is flatter.

For some, just letting the air out of a full-sized men's ball and working up from there will be enough to work up to palming it.

#### **Part IV: Stretching**

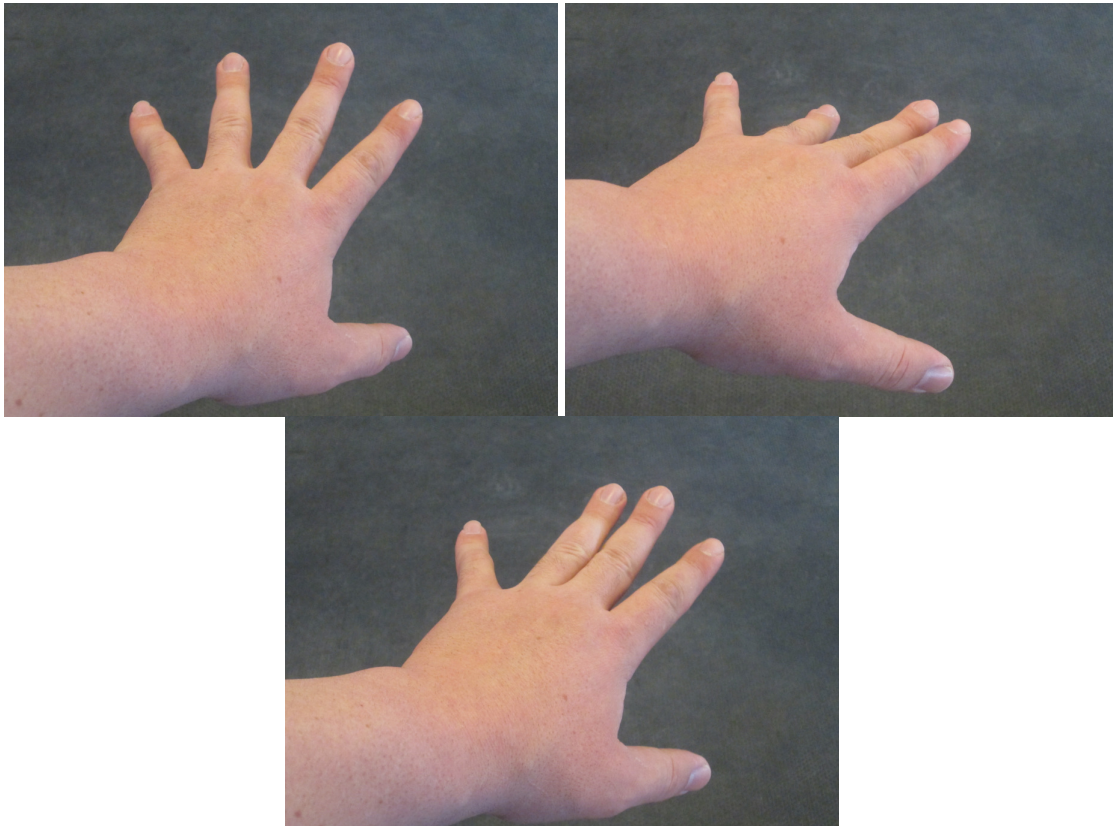
Although the movements that are done within the program are not very hard on the hands, it is still extremely important to stretch out the hands thoroughly after each day of training. By stretching, you will reduce the chance that your hands get sore, plus you will be increasing the flexibility and range of motion of the thumb and fingers, which is a big key to progressing towards palming the basketball.

# The Drills

A Look at How to Perform Each Drill in the Program

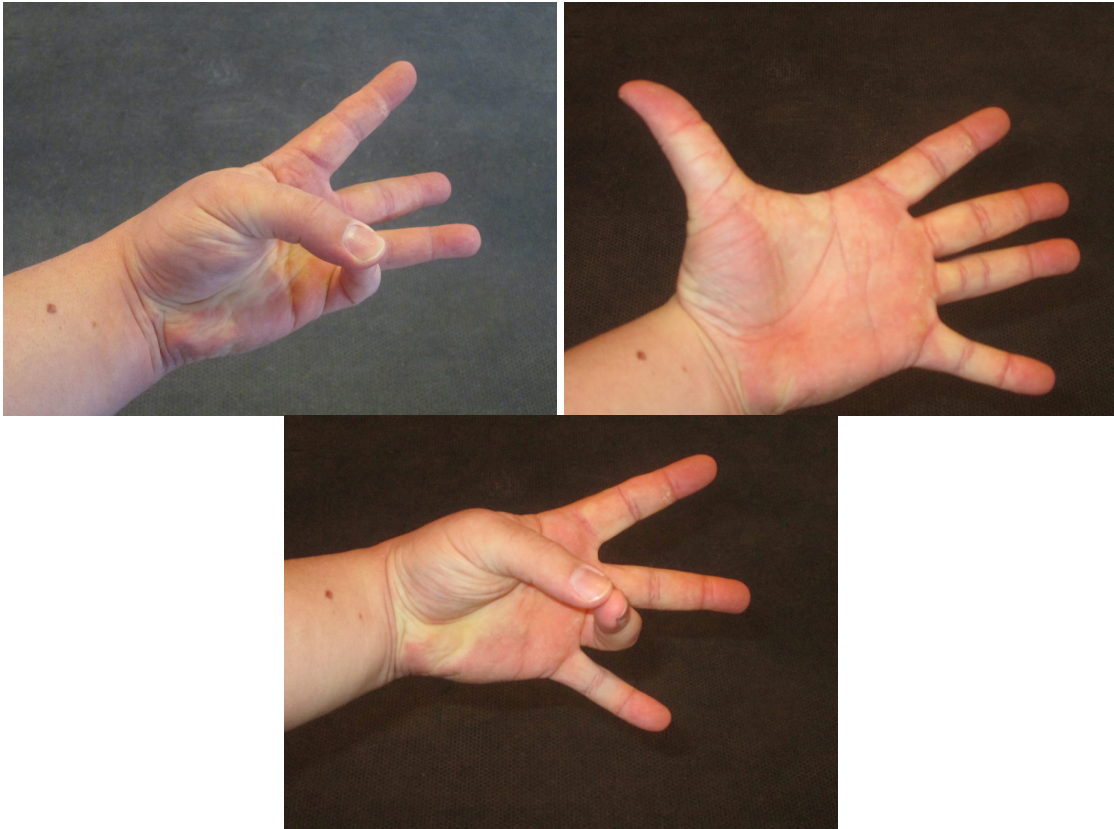
## **Muscle Control & Mobility**

### **Finger Circles**



Open the hand up all the way. Rotate the thumb in large, slow, and controlled circles, focusing on moving just the thumb and no other fingers. Perform 10 circles in each direction, then move on to each finger. Remember to aim for ZERO movement from any other fingers in order to develop your muscle control.

## Finger Touches



Start with your hand open. Reach your thumb across your palm and touch the tip of the pinky. Press together for a one-count and then violently open the hand back up all the way, to the starting position. Move on, touching the thumb to the ring finger, then middle finger, then pointer. After each touch, open the hand back up violently. Run through five times on each hand.

## Ball Hand Spreads



Hold the full-sized ball in one hand and place the other hand on top. Try to reach the thumbs and fingers out as far as possible, as if you were going to palm it. Keep the hand in this position for 5 seconds. Repeat 3 to 5 times with each hand



# Strengthening (Men's Ball)

## Thumb + Ring Squeezes



Stretch the hand out across the ball, as if you were going to palm it. Once in position, squeeze the ball with the tip of the thumb and the ring finger.

## Palming Attempts with Off-Hand Assistance



Hold the ball in one hand and spread the other hand out over the surface of the ball. Take the supporting hand away from the ball for an instant and try to maintain contact between your hand and the ball. Perform 5 to 10 reps per hand.

## Flat Ball Squeezes



Let some air out of a full-sized ball, dig it deep into your hand with the fingers and thumb spread and squeeze it with appreciable force in an isometric hold for 5 to 10 seconds. This drill will strengthen all of the fingers and the thumbs and help you bridge your way from gripping small balls up to full-sized balls. When you reach the point where you can readily hold the flat ball for 10 seconds with both hands, put a couple more pumps into the ball to increase the challenge level a bit more.

## Anti-Gravity Attempts

Begin with one hand on the top and one hand on the bottom at waste level. Use the bottom hand to propel the ball upwards, near head level as shown below.



As the off-hand comes off the ball, try to keep the ball in the air with your top hand as long as possible. Once the ball reaches about waist height, catch it with the off-hand again. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



## Small Ball Work

When performing Small Ball work, keep two things in mind. First, this is success based training. That means that the ball should be small enough, especially the first few weeks, for you to be able to hold onto it, lift it, and move it around. It is not about failing to hold the ball or getting frustrated.

Below is a progression of several types of balls that are smaller than a Men's Basketball. When you start, feel free to use something that is very comfortable in your hand. Then, as you progress, work up to larger balls. The progression is below.

### **Progression:**

Softball => Volleyball => Soccer Ball => Girl's Ball => Flat Ball => Men's Ball

As you can see, the Softball is all the way on the left because it is the smallest ball. It will most likely not be difficult at all for you to work with it, but it will get you started. Remember, this part of the workout is based on successful lifts, holds, and movements.

Training this way will give you Time Under Tension working with balls that get gradually larger and larger, and get you to your goal of palming a basketball.

These drills can be done with one ball at a time, or with the ball in one hand and then switching over to the other hand.

### **Hold for Time (low)**



With this drill you hold the ball for 20 seconds straight at waist-height.

### **Hold for Time (high)**



With this drill you hold the ball for 20 seconds at chest or shoulder height.

### **Hold with Movement**



The next step is to hold the ball while moving it back and forth across the body for 20 seconds.

## Hand to Hand Rotations

Start out holding the ball with both hands. Take one hand off, rotating it so the palm points to the ground, then rotate it back up. Now, switch the ball over to the other hand, rotate the palm toward the floor and then back up to the first hand.



This drill is performed for either a set number of repetitions (if both hands are not the same strength and endurance levels) or for time (if the hands are balanced in strength and endurance).



### **Bounce and Catch Same Hand**

Hold the ball in one hand and bounce it down to the floor, and catch it in the other hand by palming it. Perform the set number of repetitions and then switch to the other hand.



### **Bounce and Catch Opposite Hand**

Bounce the ball down to the ground and catch it with the other hand in a palm position. perform for the set number of repetitions and then switch to the other hand.



# Stretching

At the end of each training session, it is important to stretch out the fingers, thumbs and hands very well. Although the weights you are working with in these drills are not extremely heavy, you are still putting your hands through a substantial amount of work volume. This can be enough to cause cramping in the fingers from time to time, which we want to prevent, but it is even more important to stretch in order to keep the muscles, tendons, and joints as loose and mobile as possible.

## Thumb Peel



Hook the index and middle finger over the thumb and peel it open, stretching the muscles within the thumb pad. Hold for 3 sets of 10 seconds.

## **Pinky Peel**



Hook the fingers of one hand over the pinky of the opposite hand and peel it back, stretching out the muscles of the pinky pad. Hold for 3 sets of 10 seconds.

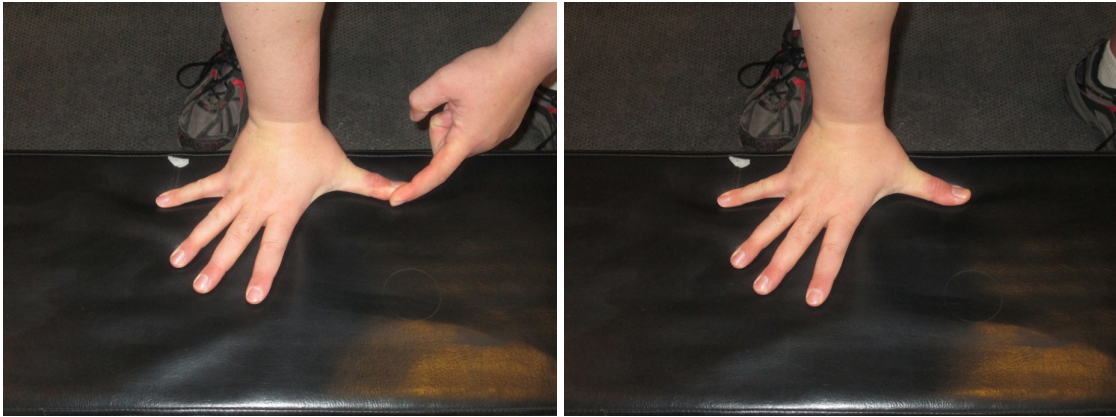
## **Flexor Stretch**



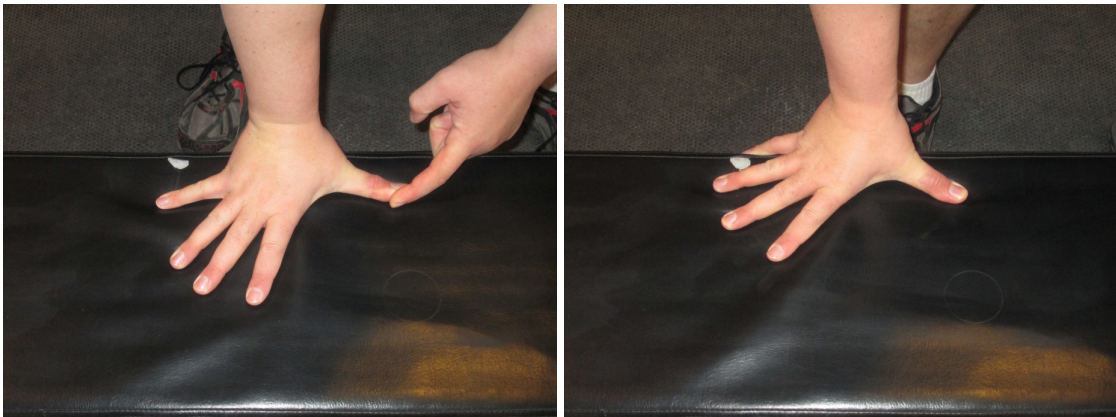
With this stretch, you will relax all of the flexor muscles (muscles that close the hand). Many of these muscles run the length of the forearm as well, so you should feel it not only in the hand, but in the wrist and parts of the forearm.



## 180 Stretch



Using a table or bench, gently stretch the hands out trying to work the thumb into a nearly straight line (180-degree angle) with each finger. Start by trying to reach this pose with the thumb and pinky. Hold for 10 seconds. Then, try to work into the 180 position with the thumb and ring finger.



Follow suit with a 180 attempt for the thumb and middle as well as the thumb and index. Do 10 seconds holds for each thumb and finger combination on each hand.

# The Program

Let's do this!

The following is a 6-week program that you can do 3 times a week in your house, garage, or even at your gym or strength training area. As you've seen, there are no really specialized pieces of equipment, except the ball, which you already have, and possibly some smaller balls from other sports. keep in mind that if you don't have the other balls, you can simply let some air out of a men's basketball in order to make it easier to hold onto.

Also, these workouts should only take about 10 minutes apiece, and can be done at the end of a practice, workout, or whenever you have the free time.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that just because the workouts are short, does not mean they can be skipped or less than full effort and attention can be put forth during them. If you want to progress steadily, you must go all-out and you must be consistent.

## **Week 1 Workout**

Perform 3 times this Week

### **Warm-up / Mobility**

Finger Circles: 5 each direction with each finger

Finger Touches: 5 times touching each finger starting with pinky and working to index

Hand Spread: Spread a hand over the ball as wide as possible. Hold 10 seconds.

Perform 2 times on each hand.

### **Strengthening - Full Size**

Thumb & Ring Squeeze: 3 sets of 3-second holds per hand

Flat Ball Squeezes: 3 sets of 3-second holds per hand

### **Small Ball Work**

Hold for Time Low: 1 set of 10-second hold per hand

Hand to Hand Rotations: 2 sets of 10 passes between hands

### **Stretching**

180: One (1) 10-second hold at or near 180 degrees for each thumb/finger combination

Thumb Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Pinky Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Flexor Stretch: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand



## **Week 2 Workout**

Perform 3 Times this Week

### **Warm-up / Mobility**

Finger Circles: 5 each direction with each finger

Finger Touches: 5 times touching each finger starting with pinky and working to index

Hand Spread: Spread a hand over the ball as wide as possible. Hold 10 seconds.

Perform 2 times on each hand.

### **Strengthening - Full Size**

Anti-Gravity Attempts: 3 sets of 5 attempts per hand

Thumb & Ring Squeeze: 2 sets of 3-second holds per hand

Flat Ball Squeezes: 2 sets of 3-second holds per hand

### **Small Ball Work**

Hold for Time High: 1 set of 10-second hold per hand

Hand to Hand Rotations: 2 sets of 10 passes between hands

### **Stretching**

180: One (1) 10-second hold at or near 180 degrees for each thumb/finger combination

Thumb Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Pinky Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Flexor Stretch: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

### **Week 3 Workout**

Perform 3 Times this Week

#### **Warm-up / Mobility**

Finger Circles: 5 each direction with each finger

Finger Touches: 5 times touching each finger starting with pinky and working to index

Hand Spread: Spread a hand over the ball as wide as possible. Hold 10 seconds.

Perform 2 times on each hand.

#### **Strengthening - Full Size**

Anti-Gravity Attempts: 5 sets of 3 attempts per hand

Thumb & Ring Squeeze: 1 sets of 5-second holds per hand

Flat Ball Squeezes: 1 sets of 5-second holds per hand

#### **Small Ball Work**

Hold with Movement: 1 set of 10-seconds under motion per hand

Hand to Hand Rotations: 2 sets of 10 passes between hands

#### **Stretching**

180: One (1) 10-second hold at or near 180 degrees for each thumb/finger combination

Thumb Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Pinky Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Flexor Stretch: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

## **Week 4 Workout**

Perform 3 Times this Week

### **Warm-up / Mobility**

Finger Circles: 5 each direction with each finger

Finger Touches: 5 times touching each finger starting with pinky and working to index

Hand Spread: Spread a hand over the ball as wide as possible. Hold 10 seconds.

Perform 2 times on each hand.

### **Strengthening - Full Size**

Supported Palming Attempts: 5 sets of 5 attempts

Thumb & Ring Squeeze: 1 sets of 5-second holds per hand

Flat Ball Squeezes: 3 sets of 3-second holds per hand

### **Small Ball Work**

Hold with Movement: 1 set of 10-seconds under motion per hand

Bounce to Catch Same Hand: 2 sets of 5 bounce-to-catch attempts

### **Stretching**

180: One (1) 10-second hold at or near 180 degrees for each thumb/finger combination

Thumb Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Pinky Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Flexor Stretch: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

## **Week 5 Workout**

Perform 3 Times this Week

### **Warm-up / Mobility**

Finger Circles: 5 each direction with each finger

Finger Touches: 5 times touching each finger starting with pinky and working to index

Hand Spread: Spread a hand over the ball as wide as possible. Hold 10 seconds.

Perform 2 times on each hand.

### **Strengthening - Full Size**

Supported Palming Attempts: 5 sets of 5 attempts

Thumb & Ring Squeeze: 1 sets of 5-second holds per hand

### **Small Ball Work**

Hold with Movement: 2 set of 10-seconds under motion per hand

Bounce to Catch Other Hand: 2 sets of 5 bounce-to-catch attempts

### **Stretching**

180: One (1) 10-second hold at or near 180 degrees for each thumb/finger combination

Thumb Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Pinky Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Flexor Stretch: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

## **Week 6 Workout**

Perform 3 Times this Week

### **Warm-up / Mobility**

Finger Circles: 5 each direction with each finger

Finger Touches: 5 times touching each finger starting with pinky and working to index

Hand Spread: Spread a hand over the ball as wide as possible. Hold 10 seconds.

Perform 2 times on each hand.

### **Strengthening - Full Size**

Supported Palming Attempts: 5 sets of 5 attempts

Thumb & Ring Squeeze: 2 sets of 5-second holds per hand

Flat Ball Squeezes: 3 sets of 3-second holds per hand

### **Small Ball Work**

Hold with Movement: 1 set of 10-seconds under motion per hand

Bounce to Catch Opposite Hand: 2 sets of 5 bounce-to-catch attempts

### **Stretching**

180: One (1) 10-second hold at or near 180 degrees for each thumb/finger combination

Thumb Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Pinky Peel: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

Flexor Stretch: 1 set of 30 seconds per hand

# Special Bonus!

I wish you the best of luck with your training toward palming a basketball

If you follow these guidelines consistently, I know you will see great progress.

I can't wait to hear when you get it!

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at [jedd.diesel@gmail.com](mailto:jedd.diesel@gmail.com) or contact me through my website: <http://www.dieselcrew.com>

**In addition, I have two free gifts I'd like to send you called the Diesel Files.**

They are two PDF documents you can download to your computer or mobile device. One is called "Quick Wins for Full Body Strength" and the other is "Quick Wins for Grip Strength."

You can download them here: <http://www.dieselcrew.com/diesel-files-giveaway.htm>

