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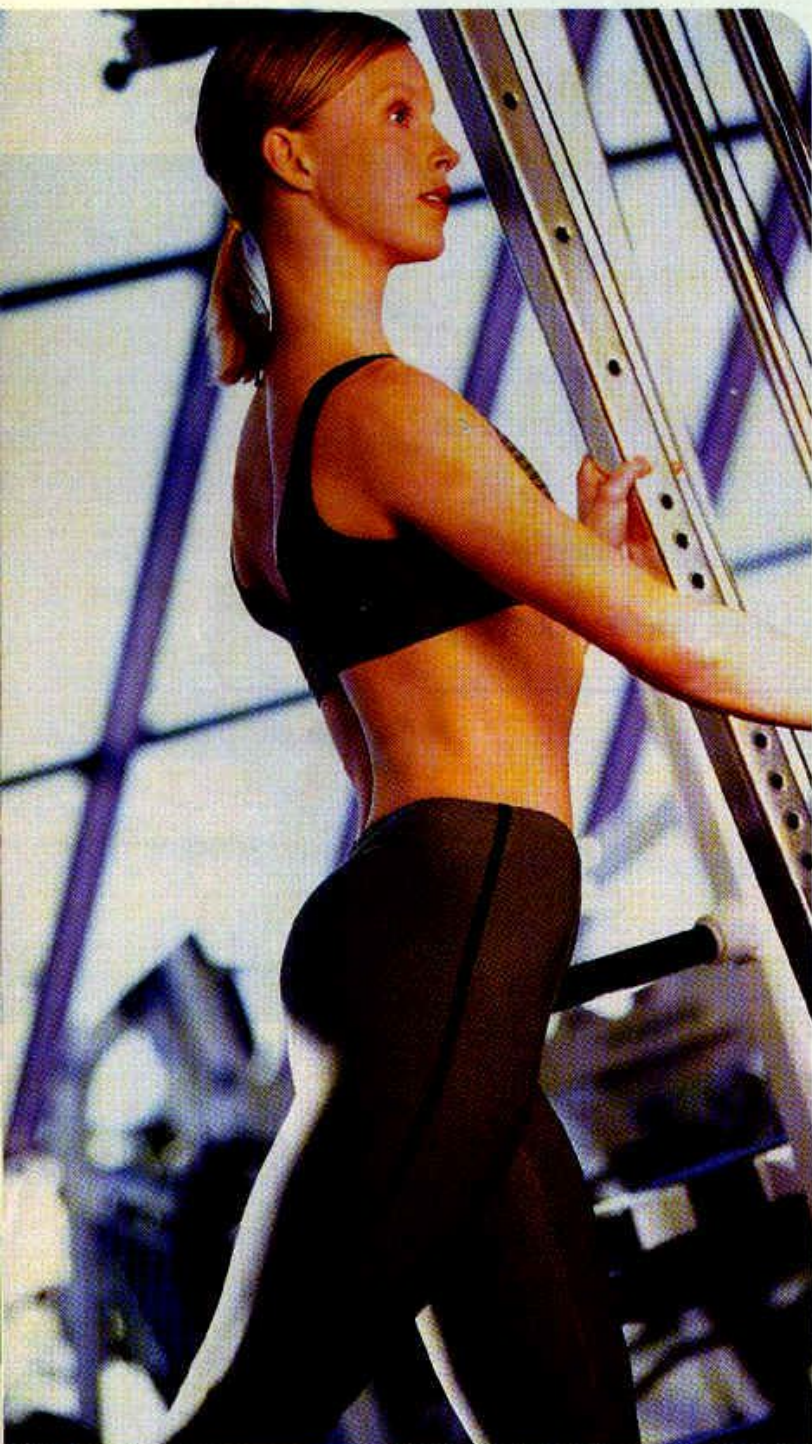
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glutes & hamstrings

When firming your rear, less is more. **By Elena Rover**



When it comes to training your lower body, it's tempting to stick with time-efficient multimuscle exercises — like leg presses, lunges and squats — to work your quads, glutes and hamstrings. But for a really good boost (to your butt, especially) you need to add in a few super-targeted moves done with resistance to effectively train the muscle group. The key to efficiency is to perform these exercises with the right amount of weight and proper form, says Janis Saffell, owner of Fitness Express International, a fitness-consulting company based in Miami.

It's important to take extra time to isolate and train the glutes because, for most of us, they aren't challenged enough during everyday activity. When training this area, people often use improper form, which leads to the quads, abs or lower back doing most of the work, leaving nothing for the glutes and hamstrings, she says.

To prevent this, Saffell has designed three exercises that target both the hamstrings and the buttocks, but each has a slightly different focus. Both the standing leg extension and prone hip extension are done with legs straight and focus more on the buttocks and upper fibers of the hamstrings. The incline hamstring curl targets the hamstrings more while the buttocks isometrically contract and help to stabilize the pelvis against the bench.

When you do these exercises, don't rush the movement. "If you do it too fast, you're using momentum, not your muscles," Saffell says. She suggests you work through the full range of motion and do as many reps as you can without sacrificing form and alignment. If you can finish your reps without challenging your muscles, add more weight.



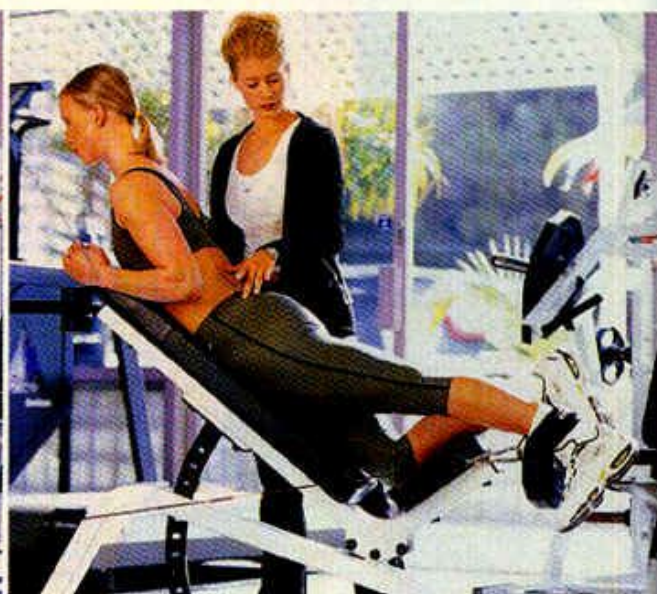
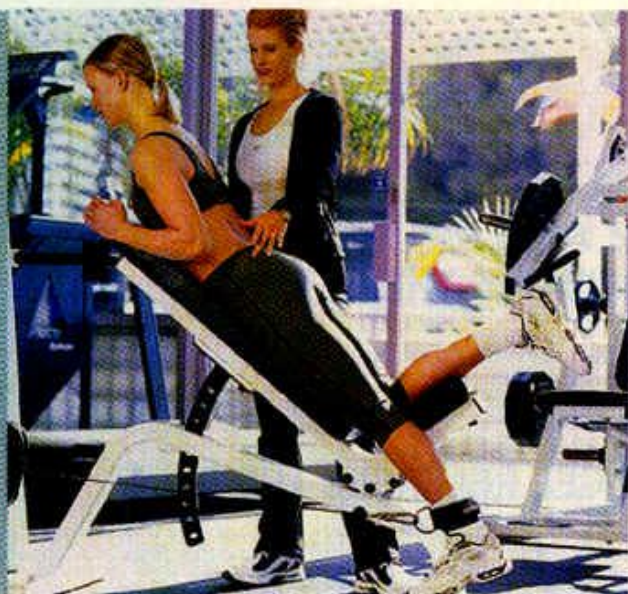
Trainer Janis Saffell says you can effectively isolate your glutes and hamstrings in 10 minutes each. The order in which you do the exercises in this workout isn't crucial. "If you're also doing quadriceps, you can do either one first; just make sure to do a good warm-up," she says. Stair climbing and bike riding are ideal: They warm up the entire lower body for the isolation work to come. "And stretch when you're done [working out], especially the hamstrings," she says.

PHOTOGRAPHY: RONI RAMDS; Hair and makeup: Mauricio Lemus/Beauty & Photo; Styling: Kathryn Rosenbaum

READER MODEL Kristin Rostek, 26, mountain bikes twice a week for two hours, does Spinning twice a week and strength trains four times each week. The former dance student likes to do a variety of activities. "It's exciting to try different things. It's a chance to branch out and learn new skills," says Rostek, a personal trainer.

[SAFFELL ON FORM]

Keep hips square throughout the movement and do not allow your back muscles to do any work.



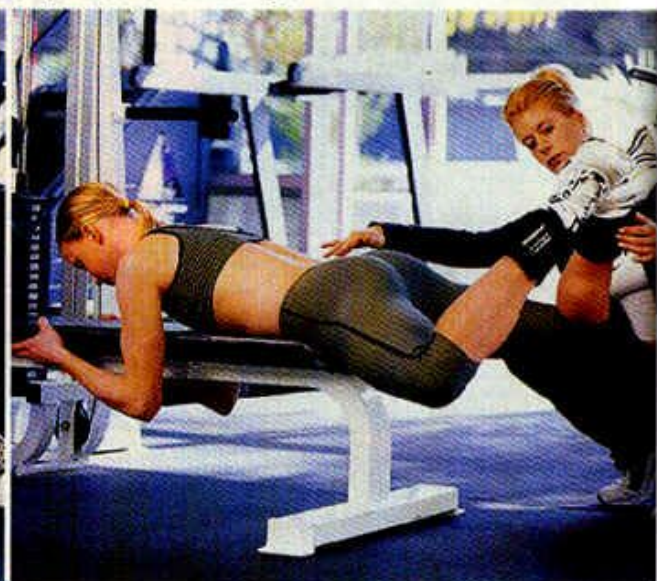
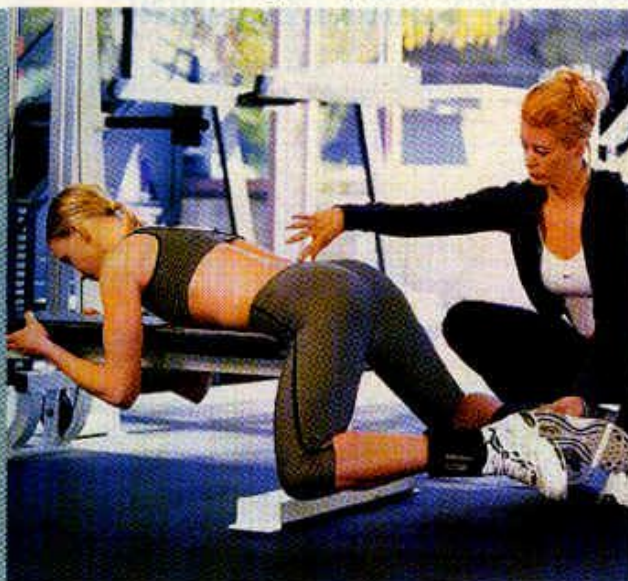
[STANDING HIP EXTENSION]

1 Set an incline bench at a 45-degree angle. Place the top to the left of a low cable pulley, with the seat facing away from the machine. Attach an ankle cuff to your left ankle and then to the pulley. Kneel with your right knee on the bench, thigh, hips and torso pressed against the back of the seat. Let your left leg hang down from your hip, foot off the floor. Contract

your abdominals; press shoulders down and back. Keeping your left leg straight but not locked, use only your glutes to extend it behind you as high as you can without lifting your hips or torso off the bench. Bring leg back to starting position. Do reps, then move bench and repeat with the right leg. Strengthens the glutes and hamstrings.

[SAFFELL ON FORM]

Relax your upper body; don't use arms to help lift your legs. Use your buttocks and not your back.

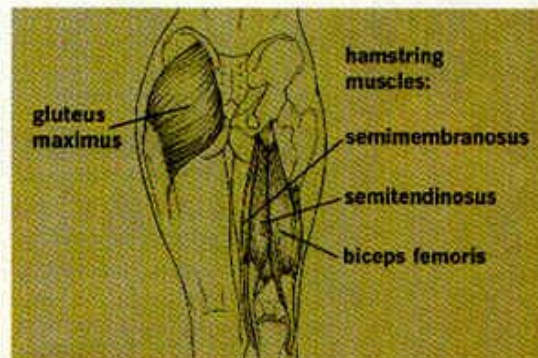


[PRONE HIP EXTENSION]

2 Attach a weight to each ankle, then lie with your hips on the edge of a flat bench, knees on the floor (if you're too short, your knees can just hang down), lower legs in the air, heels together and knees separated. Hold the bench with your arms extended. Look down so head,

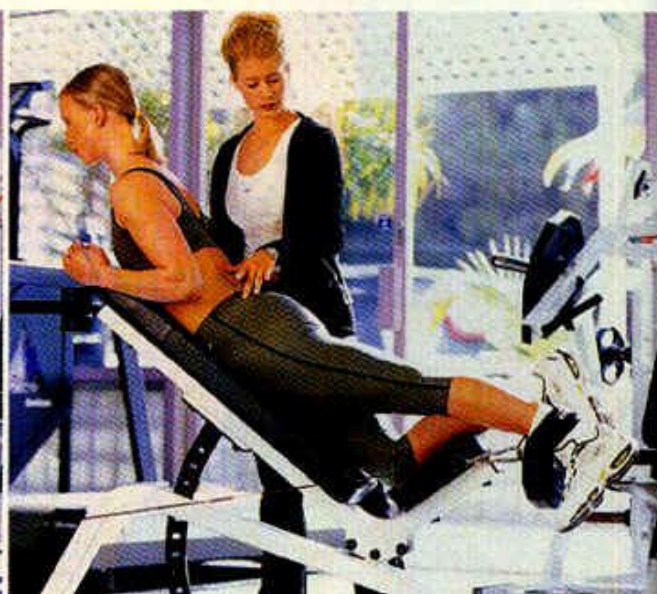
neck, spine and hips are aligned and neutral. Contract abs to help maintain torso stability and lift knees off floor by contracting glutes until your thighs are at hip height. Slowly lower legs to starting position and repeat. Strengthens glutes.

MUSCLE MECHANICS The gluteus maximus is the largest buttock muscle and originates in three spots: the outer edge of your pelvis, the lower part of your spine and the sacrum, the bony structure at the base of your spine. It attaches to the rear of the thighbone and is responsible for rotating it outward and for hip extension, or lifting your leg behind you. The three hamstring muscles (semimembranosus, semitendinosus and biceps femoris), located on the rear of your thigh, work with the gluteus maximus to extend hips and also to flex your knees. (moves continued on page 48)



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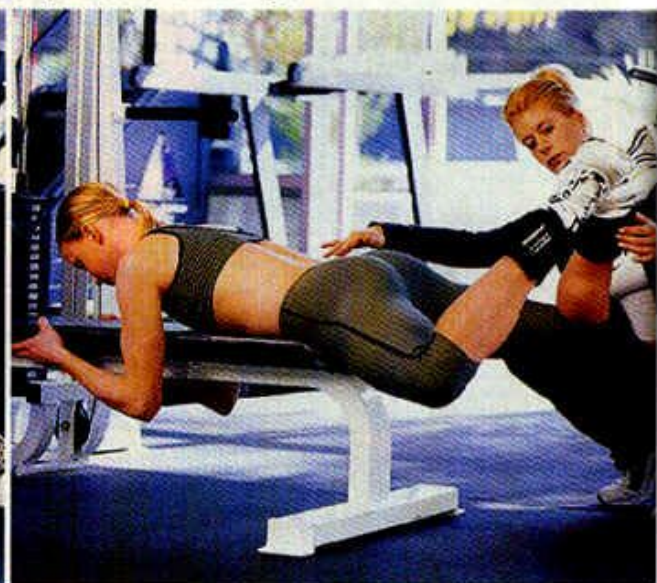
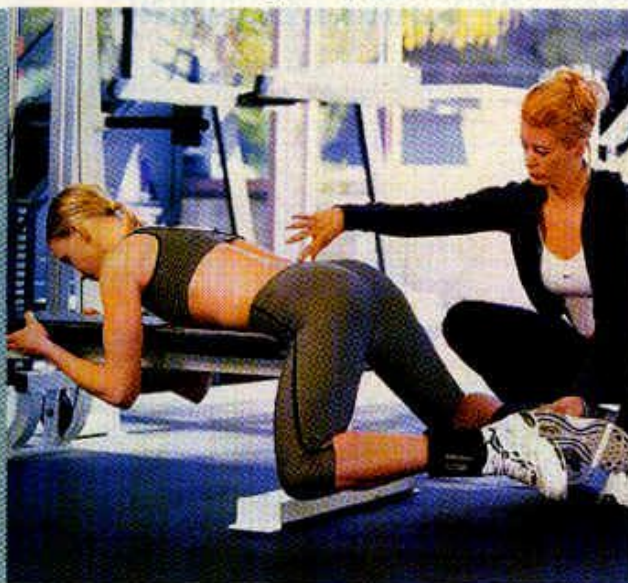
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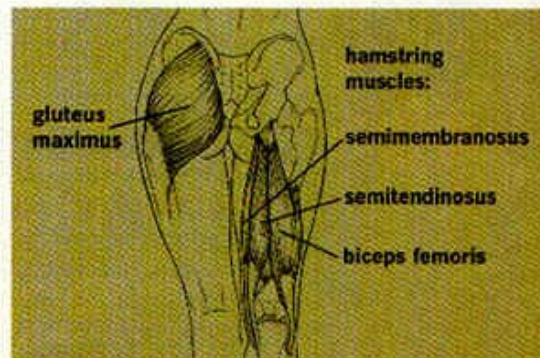


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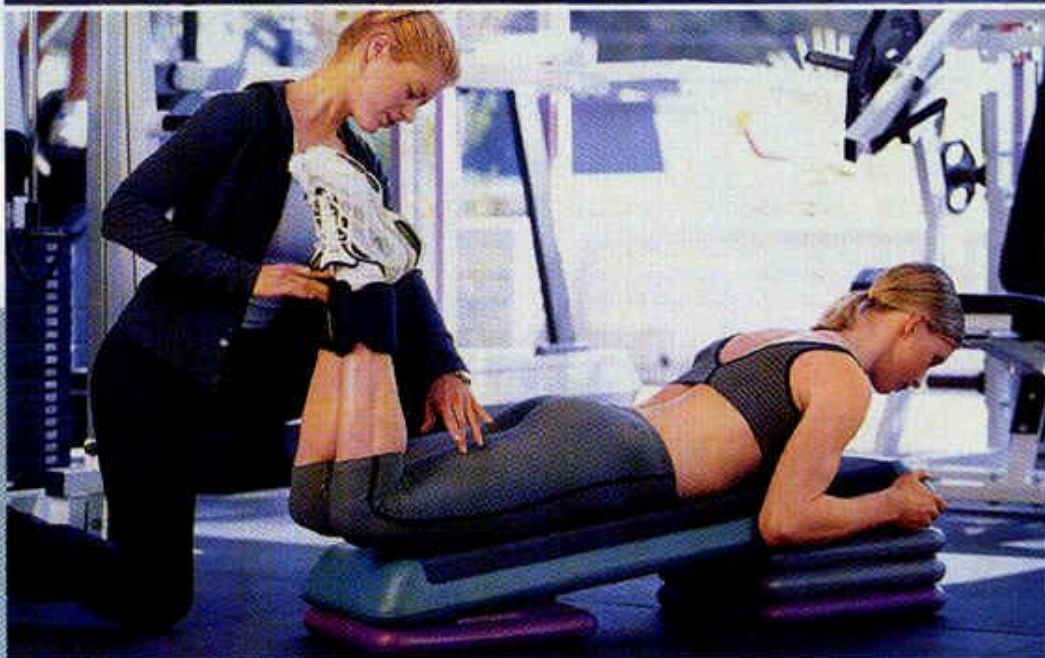
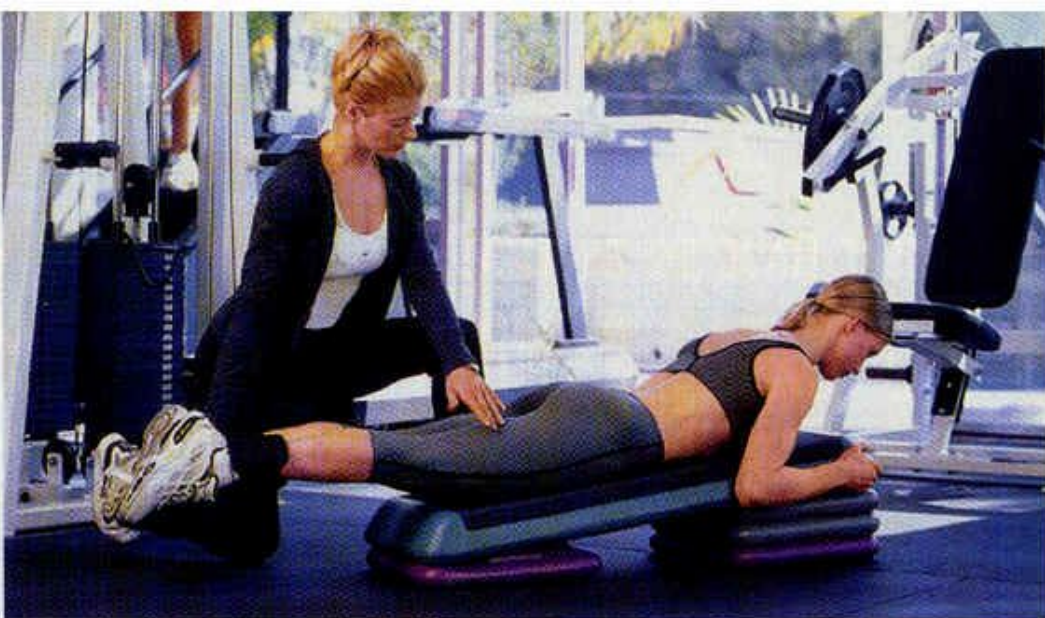




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[SAFFELL ON FORM]

Keep your hips firmly pressed against the platform to protect your back and ensure hamstring isolation.



3 **[INCLINE HAMSTRING CURL]**
 Attach an ankle weight to each leg. Adjust a step platform to an incline. Lie on it, head at the high end, chin over the edge, arms wrapped around for support. Extend your legs, heels together, toes relaxed. Contract your abs to bring spine to a neutral position, then contract

your buttocks (lifting your thighs slightly) as you bend knees, curling heels in toward your buttocks. Slowly lower legs to starting position; repeat. Move on to a leg curl machine to progress, using heavier weights as you get stronger. *Strengthens hamstrings.*

WORKOUT SCHEDULE

EXERCISE	STANDING HIP EXTENSION	PRONE HIP EXTENSION	INCLINE HAMSTRING CURL
WEIGHT RANGE	5-20 POUNDS	0-5 POUNDS PER LEG	3-5 POUNDS PER LEG
REPS	10-12	10-12	10-12
SETS	1-3	1-3	1-3

Janis' Tips on proper form



- * If you have lower-back problems, perform the prone hip extension one leg at a time.
- * Don't hold onto the bench too tightly while performing the exercises. The bench is there only to offer stability throughout the motion.
- * Avoid locking your knees when you do the exercises. Keep the abdominals contracted and your pelvis in a neutral position.

Elena Rover is a senior editor at Ladies' Home Journal.