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Reps: 4 sets of 8 to 10 repsWhy: Farmer's CarryWhy: Farmer carries are some of the best bang for your buck exercises you can do, so it should come as no surprise that your traps stand to benefit from a few loaded laps around the gym. Make sure to keep your shoulders and back engaged throughout, since slouching will kill your back and core gains. How to Do It: Hold a weight (dumbbells or kettlebells will do) in each hand at your sides, engage your core and back, holding a strong, upright posture. Take even, measured steps, controlling the weight and maintaining your posture for either a set time or distance.Sets and Reps: Start with 3 to 4 sets of 20 to 30 repsFace PullWhy: Get your face in on the action with this underrated trap move. The face pull can be performed with a cable machine or even a resistance band, if you're focused on mastering the form to help bulletproof your back and shoulders. "The face pull hits lower traps when done right," says Men's Health fitness director Ebenezer Samuel, C.S.C.S., "which is actually super-critical and useful to shoulder health."How to Do It: Set the cable machine or resistance band at a roughly eye-level height. Grab the cable rope handles or the ends of the band in each hand in an underhand grip. Squeeze your shoulder blades to pull toward your face, keeping your elbows high and resisting the urge to lean forward. Pause to squeeze once you pull back as far as you can, then control the cable/bands back to the starting position. Sets and Reps: 3 to 4 sets of 8 to 10 repsIncline Dumbbell RowWhy: This beastly back exercise gets you off your feet and removes your ability to use body English to cheat, making it a much tougher contraction at the top of the lift. You'll rest your chest on the bench, but make sure to keep your position one of workno slouching off or resting your forehead on the pad.How to Do It: Get into position on the incline bench, facing forward with your chest resting on the bench, holding a pair of weights in your hands. Keep your torso active, squeezing your glutes and abs almost as if you were standing up. From there, engage your midback and drive with your upper arm to pull the weights up. Pause at the top, squeeze, and control the weight back down. Sets and Reps: 3 sets of 8 to 10 repsEZ Bar Incline RowWhy: Put yourself in the same position as the previous exercise and swap the implement so that you can use even more weight to build up your back muscles. This is also a safer position for your low back than other heavyweight rows, since you'll be supported by the bench.How to Do It: Sit on an incline bench facing forward, so you can rest your chest against the pad.Use a supinated (or underhand) grip to grabbing the EZ bar. Engage your glutes and abs, then squeeze your shoulder blades to create tension.Pull the weight up to the bench. Think about driving the EZ bar straight through the bench as quickly and explosively as possible.Return the bar to the ground without allowing it to slam on the floor.Pause between each rep to reset your position.Sets and Reps: 3 to 4 sets of 6 to 8 repsDumbbell Military PressWhy: This classic exercise is standard shoulder builderbut you'll nail your traps, too. Working with dumbbells gives you an opportunity to work in more shoulder-safe positions, especially because you'll be less inclined to try to lift more weight than you're able to handle by stacking plates on a barbell.How to Do It: Grab a pair of dumbbells and raise them to your shoulders. Brace your core and glutes to set a firm foundationthe biggest mistake you want to avoid if rounding your back under the weight. Make sure to keep your ribs from flaring. Once you're ready to press, make sure that you're not lifting straight up. You want to move in the scapular plane about a few degrees in front of your torso (to keep your rotator cuffs safe) so rotate your elbows out slightly. Squeeze your shoulder blades, then press the weight up. Lower back down in the same plane, controlling the weight down.Sets and Reps: 3 sets of 10 to 12 repsDumbbell SnatchWhy: You typically don't think of explosive moves like snatches as back exercises, but posterior muscles like the traps are absolutely essential to proper form. You'll get your whole body engaged to do the dumbbell snatch right, especially as you get the weight up above your head.How to Do It: Start with the dumbbell on the ground in front of you between your legs with your feet wider than shoulder-width apart. Bend at the knees and hinge at the hips and grab the weight an overhand grip. Sit back on your heels, then explode upwards to stand, driving the weight up close to your body. Pull the dumbbell up as if you're zipping a coat, then pull slightly back and land under the weight overhead. Lower the dumbbell to your shoulder slowly to finish the move.Sets and Reps: 3 sets of 3 to 5 repsDumbbell Upright RowWhy: This exercise variation presents a safer alternative to the barbell upright row, an exercise that was popular for old school bodybuilders but presents a major risk to your shoulder joints. By swapping for dumbbells, limiting the range of motion, and adding a squeeze at the top, you can break free of that fixed position and limit your risk of injury while you barbell shrug. The dumbbell or kettlebell shrug places less stress on your shoulder joints. That's because your shoulders don't have to rotate to hold a barbell. This keeps them more stable as you perform the movement.How to Do It: Grab a pair of weights and let them hang at arms length next to your sides, your palms facing each other. Shrug your shoulders, pull back (think horizontal pull) and squeeze your shoulders for the row.Only lift the weights to a position parallel to your shoulders.Lower the weights back to the starting position with control. Sets and Reps: 3 to 4 sets of 10 to 12 repsRack PullWhy: You won't just work the traps with the rack pull you'll also have your strength and form for other compound lifts. By taking the weight off the ground, you can focus more on the pull without the full range of motion and lower back stress of a standard deadlift.How to Do It: Set up a rack or boxes so the barbell is elevated above your shins. Grab the bar at around shoulder-width with an overhand grip. Hinge at the waist and push your hips back and feet through the floor, pulling the bar up and keeping your back straight. Pause for a count at the top, then control the weight back down into place.Sets and Reps: 3 to 5 sets of 3 to 5 repsBarbell DeadliftWhy: Yes, we've featured other deadlift variations in this list, and those will be better for working with heavier weights. But don't sleep on the most common version of the compound exercise. Think of the standard barbell deadlift as a big bang for your buck exerciseyou'll hit the traps while you're also working the other muscles on the posterior chain. How to Do It: Step up to the loaded barbell, starting with your feet about shoulder-width apart (this might vary by your anatomy and personal preference with experience), with your feet under the bar. Your shins should be close to or actually touching the bar.Push your butt back and hinge at the waist to bend down to grab the bar on either side of your legs. Grasp it in both hands using an overhand grip.Make sure your hips are lower than your shoulders. Squeeze your shoulder blades together to set your lats, then engage your core. Keep your neck in a neutral position; don't look up.Push your feet through the floor and pull the weight up, keeping the bar close to your body. Squeeze your glutes at the top of the list, but don't lean back.Sets and Reps: 3 to 4 sets of 6 to 8 repsDumbbell/Kettlebell Shrug Why: Compared to the barbell shrug, the dumbbell or kettlebell shrug places less stress on your shoulder joints. That's because your shoulders don't have to rotate to hold a barbell. This keeps them more stable as you perform the movement.How to Do It: Grab a pair of weights and let them hang at arms length next to your sides, your palms facing each other. Shrug your shoulders straight up as high as you can. Imagine that you're trying to touch your shoulders to your ears without moving any other parts of your body. Pause in the top position, then slowly lower the weights back to the start. Sets and Reps: 3 sets of 8 to 10 repsBarbell Row Why: Rowing exercises target your middle and lower traps and rhomboids, muscles that help keep your shoulder blades from moving as you lift a weight. That's important because unstable shoulders can limit your strength in exercises for your chest and your arms. Your upper traps, rear deltsoids, and rotator cuff muscles will also assist in the rowing movement.How to Do It: Grab the barbell with an overhand grip that's just beyond shoulder width, and hold it at arms length. Bend at your hips and knees and lower your torso until its almost parallel to the floor. Keep your back naturally arched.Pull the bar to your upper abs and squeeze your shoulder blades toward each other.Pause, then slowly lower the bar back to the starting position.Sets and Reps: 3 sets of 8 to 10 repsSeated Cable RowWhy: Another row, another opportunity to work your big back muscles with a pull. Yes, this variation is going to hammer your lats and rhomboidsbut the trapezius will get some action, too. Take a wider grip for more traps engagement.How to Do It:Take a seat on the machine with your feet on the holders, a little wider than shoulder width. Drive the heels, and squeeze the glutes. Grab onto the handle.Lean slightly forward and round out the upper back. Think about pulling the shoulder blades apart as much as possible.Aim to get a good stretch through the lats. As you row, pull the shoulder blades down, back, and together just as you did in the beginner version. Row the handle bar in, landing just above your belly button.You should finish in the same position as the beginner row: perpendicular with the floor, spine straight, with the shoulder blades squeezed together.Sets and Reps: 3 to 4 sets of 10 to 15 repsDumbbell Lateral Raise Why: Your middle deltoid may be the hardest working muscle during this movement, but your upper traps are working, too. This is a delt move at heart, but your traps assist in raising the weight and act as stabilizers. Just make sure that you don't move with your arms totally at your sides;you want to work in the scapular plane here (i.e., 20 to 30 degrees in front of your torso).How to Do It: Grab a pair of dumbbells and let them hang at arms length next to your sides. Stand tall, with your feet shoulder-width apart. Turn your arms so that your palms are facing forward, and bend your elbows slightly.Without changing the bend in your elbows, raise your arms to your sides and slightly in front of your torso (in the scapular plane, remember) until they're at shoulder level. As your arms get close to parallel with the ground, think about turning your thumbs slightly upwards to the ceiling;you're biasing your shoulders into external rotation by doing this, which is safer for your rotator cuffs. Your arms should form a T with your body. Pause for 1 second at the top of the movement, then slowly lower the weights back to the starting position. Sets and Reps: 3 sets of 12 to 15 repsPullupWhy: The classic bodyweight staple is a back-builder, and you'll use your lats, traps, and other muscles to haul yourself up to the bar. Use a wider grip to hit the traps more directly. How to Do It: Grab the pullup bar with a tight overhand grip. Squeeze your shoulder blades, abs, and glutes to create full-body tension before you start doing reps, almost like a hanging pluck. Pull yourself up to the bar, pausing briefly at the top. Lower your arms all the way down to hang at the bottom before the next rep. Sets and Reps: 3 to 4 sets of 6 to 10 repsWhat is the Traps Muscle?The traps (a.k.a. the trapezius or trapezoid muscle) is the large, quadrilateral-shaped muscle that takes up a large portion of your upper back, stretching from the occipital bone of your skull to the lower thoracic vertebrae of the spine and out to your scapula (shoulder blades).SEBASTIAN KAULLITZKI/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY/Getty ImagesGiven this position, well-developed traps can be important for both your posture and in developing the top of the highly sought-after V-taper physique. The trapezius is actually composed of three distinct parts, all named based on their position: the superior (a.k.a. upper or descending) trapezius, the middle (a.k.a. transverse) trapezius, and the inferior (a.k.a. ascending or lower) trapezius.What Does Your Traps Muscle Do?Each section of the traps has a function. The superior traps support your arms and raise your shoulder blades, the middle traps are essential for scapular retraction, while the inferior traps are responsible for scapular depression and rotation. These movements are all essential for moving your upper body, and in the ways that you engage with the world around you. Shrugging your shoulders, raising your arms, and other movements use your traps, so training them to be as strong as they will be will help you out in more than just the big back department.Benefits of Training Your Traps MusclePostureAestheticsFunctionAs noted above, a well-developed trapezius muscle can contribute to good posture. The muscle is also key to the top of the V-taper torso shape, a common aesthetic goal for guys. Training your traps will also pay off in spades for your strength exercises like deadlifts, and strong traps are key for the muscle's functions of supporting your arms and scapular retraction, depression, and rotation.You've likely heard that you need to shrug, shrug, shrug to grow your traps. You can do that, but you won't achieve the gains you're going for through shrugs alone. You might even find that you're doing more work than necessaryif you follow a balanced training plan, you likely already give the muscles plenty of attention through other exercises (think deadlifts and overhead pressing, where the traps are a key secondary mover). You can (and should) target the traps directly, but it's more important to be strategic about how to avoid junk volume.Brett Williams, NASMSenior EditorBrett Williams, NASM-CPT, PES, a senior editor at Men's Health, is a certified trainer and former pro football player and tech reporter. You can find his work elsewhere at Mashable, Thrillist, and other outlets. Want to build amazing traps with a resistance band? Dont worry. Im here to help you out. After training hundreds of clients, I assure you that resistance bands build trap faster and as effectively as traditional weights. Bandsprovide continuous tension,which helps in deeper muscle fibre recruitment and more growth (at the upper, lower, and middle traps) stimulation with less joint stress. This quick show you my top 9 resistance band trap exercises and PRO TIPS. Use Our Free Calculator To Know Your Calories Requirement To Gain Muscle Mass 5 Best Resistance Band Trap Exercises Some of the best resistance band traps to add to your workout routine include: 1. Resistance Band Face Pull The resistance band face pull is a highly effective exercise that primarily targets the rear deltsoids, traps, and the muscles around the scapula. 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