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A Better Way to Teach Barbell Glute Bridges and Back Extensions

By: Bret Contreras

I wrote an article titled, [Why Do I Anterior Pelvic Tilt?](#) It discussed the reasons why lifters rotate their pelvises anteriorly during hip extension exercise (or core stability exercises requiring anti-extension lumbar strength and stability). While weak abdominals can be a culprit, when it comes to hip extension exercises, usually weak gluteals are to blame. I mentioned several exercises that can help improve pelvic posture during heavy resistance training, including the hip thrust, American deadlift, and RKC plank.

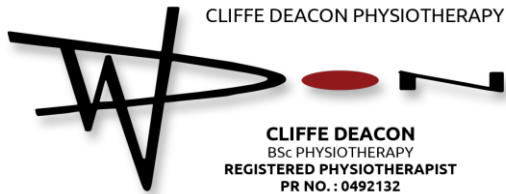
It's important that you perform the exercises properly. Doing them improperly will not help correct excessive anterior pelvic tilt during exercise, but doing them with good form will indeed. Two other exercises that can help with strengthening the glutes at end-range hip extension and with the posterior pelvic tilting mechanism are the barbell glute bridge and the back extension.

Lately I've been teaching these exercises differently. Do not let the lumbar position fool you – you're taking the back out of the equation here and focusing on hip motion. More specifically, you're silencing the erectors and making the glutes and hamstrings do the work. Having experimented with this on clients, I now believe that teaching the exercises in this manner yields the quickest results.

If you perform the movements for 1-2 months according to how I demonstrate in the videos, it will most likely change the way your lumbopelvic-hip complex functions for the better. Your glutes will strengthen, you will learn to not over-rely on the hamstrings, your erectors will learn to chill out, and you will start to feel the glutes pushing the hips upward in a glute bridge and erecting the torso in a back extension. Equally as important, you won't feel your back doing the work – it'll be all hips!

Description: These days, when I teach people how to bb glute bridge, I have them posterior pelvic tilt and flatten out their lumbar spine. This prevents anterior pelvic tilt and lumbar hyperextension, it shuts down erectors and forces all of the burden onto the hip extensors (primarily glutes). Give it a try for a month or two and then resume normal bridging form, you'll use more pure hip extension without accompanying pelvic or lumbar motion.

Description: I realize that this is not going to look as functional, but just trust me on this one. By rounding the spine and posteriorly tilting the pelvis, you take the erectors out of play so that the glutes and hamstrings perform the movement. You want to pure hip extension with some posterior pelvic tilt when you do back extensions, NOT anterior pelvic tilt. The vast majority of individuals do these with excessive anterior pelvic tilt which involves too much erector and hamstring activity and not enough glute activity. Do back extensions this way for a month or two and then resume normal back extension form – it will cure excessive APT and strengthen the glutes so you can do the movement properly.



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Give these a try for 1-2 months and then go back to normal form. I suspect that your mechanics will greatly improve and you'll be relying on glutes for terminal hip extension with no compensatory pelvic motion, thereby protecting the spine. Shout out to Dr. Conrad Stalheim who gave me the idea in [THIS](#) guest post.

When you perform barbell glute bridges and back extensions properly, you feel the glutes doing all the work. Most feel erectors and hammies because their glutes aren't strong. But when they're strong, you rely on them, and you feel them big time!

