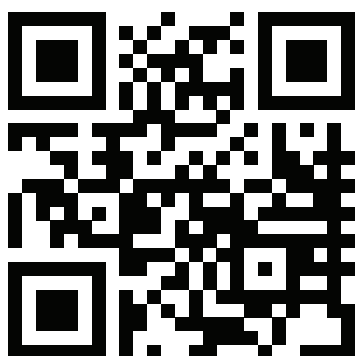


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# Finger Board Training.

By Beastmaker co-founder Ned Feehally



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# Introduction.

First let's take a look at the basics. Your fingers are what attach you to the wall. As long as you can hold on, you have a chance of doing the next move. If you can't hold on, you have no chance!

For most people, finger strength is always the limiting factor of how hard they can climb. Their fingers let them down way before anything else does. This means that a huge amount of their training should be focused towards getting stronger fingers. Your fingers can never be too strong! FACT.

Bouldering is a great way to train the fingers if you choose your problems and angles appropriately. Climbing on steep boards with small holds is guaranteed to make your fingers work hard, and consequently adapt and become stronger. However, if you want to make the fastest improvements in finger strength it's all about the fingerboard. Fingerboards allow you to isolate grip positions and train them to their maximum without any other factors getting in the way. When you are simply hanging off your fingers you are not going to be limited at all by body strength, technique, feet popping off etc. meaning you are training your fingers and your fingers only.

This gets covered over and over again, but I will cover it here for completeness. There are 3 main grip types: full crimp, half crimp and open hand. The full crimp is when your thumb is wrapped over your fingers. I never train with my thumb on (as it tends to tear the skin on the sides of my index fingers) but I save it for special occasions (when I want to climb hard)! Instead I train in the half crimped position. This has 2 forms, pinkie straight and pinkie bent (both with the other 3 fingers bent). I find that for maximum crimp strength, I have to train with pinkie bent. Whether you crimp with a bent pinkie finger or not comes down to the difference in length between your ring finger and your pinkie. If they are of similar length it is more natural for your pinkie to bend when crimping, otherwise it will remain straight. The open handed grip, with fingers totally straight, is used on slopers and pockets. It is often neglected by people but is a very useful strength to have as it allows you to catch holds at full stretch and/or at speed, before reeling them into a crimp position.

Climbers tend to favour a particular grip type, so they naturally develop a bias towards holding holds in a certain way. In order to become a well-balanced climber capable of climbing everything in your path it is worth ironing out these discrepancies in your fingers.

The literature suggests that training the fingers in one position will strengthen them for that position only (plus or minus a 15 degree angle either way). This means that to train for crimps you need to crimp, and to train for slopers and pockets, you must hang open handed. Strength gains for one grip type will not necessarily transfer to another grip type, so train them all (prioritising the weaker areas).

There is still an old-school attitude floating about that crimping is dangerous and shouldn't be trained. Well, this is rubbish. Crimping is the strongest way to hold small edges (which make up the majority of handholds) so needs to be trained. If you are careful you can easily make vast improvements in crimp strength without getting any sign of injuries, and this means you are at a reduced risk of injuring your fingers when out climbing as you are prepared for hard crimping.

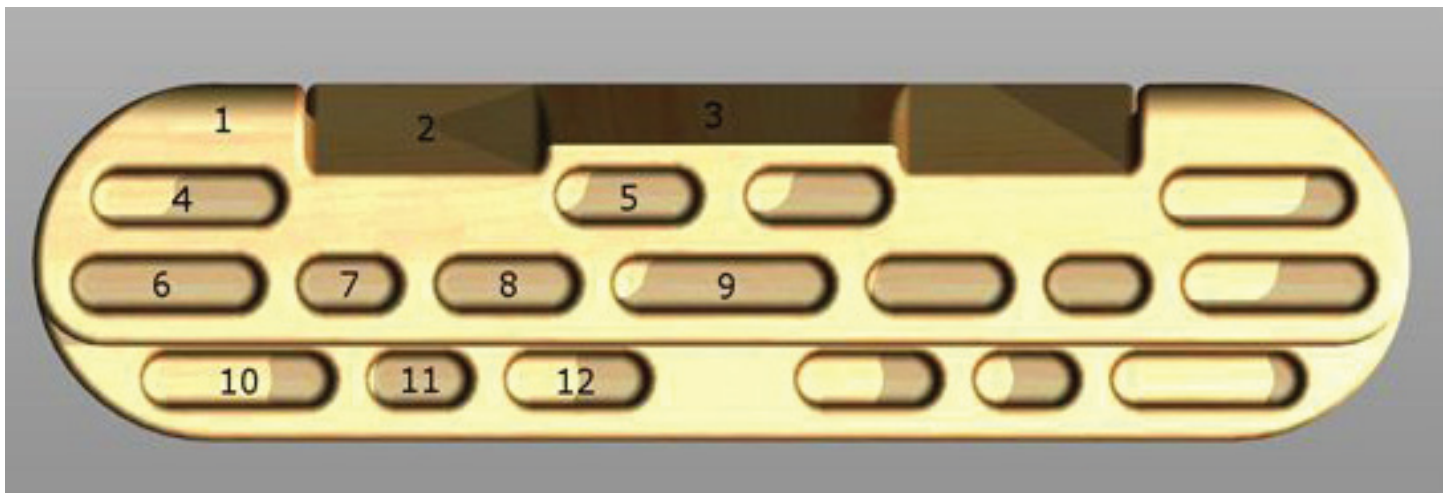
# Warming up.

This is applicable to any intense finger training, or any training in general, come to think about it...

**Warm up on the climbing wall/fingerboard for at least 15mins.** Take your time with the warm up. If you start training without fully warming up you are at a much greater risk of injury. Your fingers take longer to warm up than your big muscle groups (due to a limited blood supply) so be careful. Finger injuries are very nasty and take a long time to heal. You should do everything you can to avoid them.

## Beginner: up to 6C

Are you new to climbing or just new to training? This simple plan is fast and easy to follow and modify, without being overly complex. It will provide you with a good base to start with, which you can build on over time as you get used to it/improve/get more keen/want to burn your mates off etc. **I recommend you use the Beastmaker 1000 for this plan.**



1. LARGE INCUT JUG
2. 35 DEG SLOPER
3. 20 DEG SLOPER
4. SMALL EDGE / CRIMP

5. DEEP 3 FINGER POCKET
6. LARGE FLAT EDGE
7. DEEP 2 FINGER POCKET
8. 3 FINGER POCKET

9. LARGE FLAT EDGE
10. MEDIUM SIZED EDGE
11. SHALLOW 2 FINGER POCKET
12. SHALLOW 3 FINGER POCKET

## So what should you do?

Each hold has a corresponding hold on the other side of the fingerboard. Each hang is done with left hand on the numbered hold and the right hand on the corresponding hold on the right of the fingerboard.

Each set of hangs is done with the following format: Hang the hold for 7 seconds then rest for 3 seconds. This is one rep. Repeat it 6 times. A set of this kind will therefore last one minute, as shown in the table:

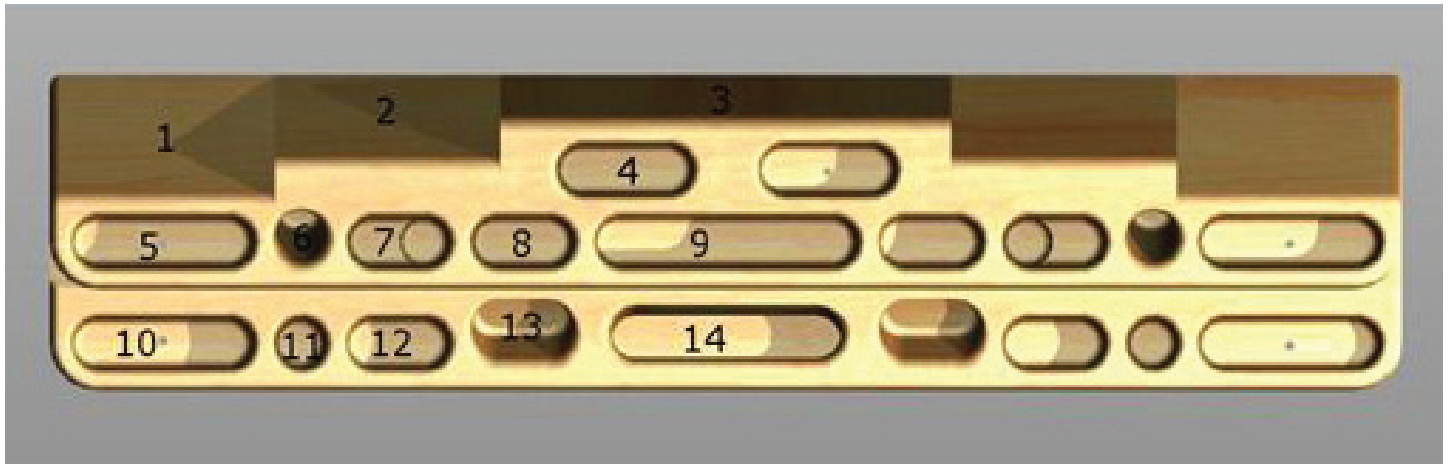
Time on/off	Overall time
7 seconds hang	0-7 seconds
3 seconds rest	7-10 seconds
7 seconds hang	10-17 seconds
3 seconds rest	17-20 seconds
7 seconds hang	20-27 seconds
3 seconds rest	27-30 seconds
7 seconds hang	30-37 seconds
3 seconds rest	37-40 seconds
7 seconds hang	40-47 seconds
3 seconds rest	47- 50 seconds
7 seconds hang	50-57 seconds

- 1) Warm up on the climbing wall/fingerboard for at least 15 mins. Take your time with the warm up.
- 2) 4 finger open handed hang on either hold 6 or hold 10 (2 handed hang using hold 6 or 10 for the left hand and the corresponding hold for the right hand). This is an open handed hang so keep your index and pinkie fingers straight and don't put your thumb over your fingers (i.e. the crimp position). Complete the set of 6 hangs using the table as detailed above. Take 3 mins rest.
- 3) 3 finger open handed hang on either hold 8 or hold 12. Complete the set of 6 hangs using the table as detailed above. Take 3 mins rest.
- 4) 4 finger hang on slopers (hold 2). Complete the set of 6 hangs using the table as detailed above. Take 3 mins rest. To make these easier either pinch below the sloper with your thumb or nestle your index fingers into the edge of the inner sloper for extra grip.

This workout is short (12 mins) but very intense due to the repeated hangs and limited rest periods. If you feel strong/psyched repeat this up to 3 times with 10 mins rest between each.

# Intermediate: 6C-7C

As with the beginners plan, the idea of this is to provide a basic training plan which can be added to and tweaked over time to focus on your individual needs. **I recommend you use the Beastmaker 2000 for this plan.**



- |                         |                              |                             |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. 45 DEG SLOPER        | 6. DEEP MONO                 | 11. SHALLOW MONO            |
| 2. 35 DEG SLOPER        | 7. DEEP BACK 2 FINGER POCKET | 12. SHALLOW 2 FINGER POCKET |
| 3. 20 DEG SLOPER        | 8. DEEP 2 FINGER POCKET      | 13. SLOPING 2 FINGER POCKET |
| 4. DEEP 2 FINGER POCKET | 9. LARGE FLAT EDGE           | 14. INCUT EDGE              |
| 5. LARGE FLAT EDGE      | 10. SMALL EDGE               |                             |

## So what should you do?

Each hold has a corresponding hold on the other side of the fingerboard. Each hang is done with left hand on the numbered hold and the right hand on the corresponding hold on the right of the fingerboard.

Each set of hangs is done with the following format: Hang the hold for 7 seconds then rest for 3 seconds. This is one rep. Repeat it 6 times. A set of this kind will therefore last one minute, as shown in the table on the next page.

During each individual 7 second hang lock the arms at 1 of 3 different angles (see below). This is because sometimes it is easier to hang a hold with the arms at a certain angle, and instead of just hanging at this "easy" angle, it is good to mix it up. You don't climb with your arms always in the same position!

Hang 1 - arms at 140 degrees - just off being straight

Hang 2 - arms at 90 degree lock

Hang 3 - arms at full lock

Hang 4 - arms at 140degrees

Hang 5 - arms at 90 degrees

Hang 6 - arms at full lock

Time on/off	Overall time
7 seconds hang	0-7 seconds
3 seconds rest	7-10 seconds
7 seconds hang	10-17 seconds
3 seconds rest	17-20 seconds
7 seconds hang	20-27 seconds
3 seconds rest	27-30 seconds
7 seconds hang	30-37 seconds
3 seconds rest	37-40 seconds
7 seconds hang	40-47 seconds
3 seconds rest	47- 50 seconds
7 seconds hang	50-57 seconds

After at least a 15 min warm up...

- 1) Front 2 (index and middle fingers) pocket hang on either hold 7, 8 or 12 (or play around with combinations of these holds). Remember to vary the angle of lock in your arms with each hang. 2 to 3 mins rest.
- 2) 4 finger open handed hang on hold 10. 2 to 3 mins rest.
- 3) Middle 2 (middle and ring finger) pocket hang on either hold 7, 8 or 12 (or play around with combinations of these holds). 2 to 3 mins rest.
- 4) 4 finger sloper hang on hold 1 or 2 or a combination of both. No thumbs on the holds below! 2 to 3 mins rest.
- 5) 3 finger open handed hang on either hold 5 or hold 10. 2 to 3 mins rest.
- 6) 4 finger crimped hang on hold 5 or hold 10.

After completing all these exercises take a 10 min rest and the whole lot again and depending on how you feel (still psyched? still got energy?), repeat it a 3rd time.

Remember, this is meant to be hard! Make sure you give it everything.

# Progression.

You can use these in combination or on their own to vary the intensity of each exercise, allowing a lot of adjustment to the difficulty. This helps you to avoid getting stuck on a training plateau. When progress slows down, mix it up and try something different. The chances are this will shock your body into improving again.

## To make the exercises harder you can:

- Use a smaller hold.
- Hold the hold further out, so you're hanging onto less of it, making a smaller hold.
- Reduce your rest times (i.e. from 3 mins down to 2 mins rest between sets).
- Add some weight - start with a couple of kgs (held between the feet or in a rucksack or weight belt).
- Hang with one hand in a similar, but worse hold, and alternate hands between hangs so each hand has hung 3 times off a smaller hold and 3 times off a larger hold.

## To make exercises easier you can:

- Reduce hanging time and increase resting time for each hang. Instead of 7 sec hang and 3 sec rest, hang for 6 sec and rest for 4, or hang for 5 and rest for 5.
- Use a bigger hold.
- Put a foot on the wall/a chair in front of the fingerboard to take some weight off your hands.
- Hang with one hand in a larger hold, and alternate hands between hangs so each hand has hung 3 times off a smaller hold and 3 times off a larger hold.
- Use a pulley system to take some of your weight. The weight can be adjusted as you improve until eventually you need no assistance.
- (Sloper specific) Hang slopers with the assistance of a thumb pinching underneath the hold.
- (Sloper specific) Nestle the index fingers into the grooves created between the slopers.