

## Exercises for Abdominals (and Core)

### “The Plank”



The plank exercise is a great way to build endurance in both the abs and back, as well as stabilizer muscles. To do it right:

1. Lie face down on mat resting on the forearms, palms flat on the floor.
2. Push off the floor, raising up onto toes and resting on the elbows.
3. Keep your back flat, in a straight line from head to heels.
4. Tilt your pelvis and contract your abdominals to prevent your rear end from sticking up in the air.
5. Hold for 20 to 60 seconds, lower and repeat for 3-5 reps.

### “The Bicycle”



The Bicycle exercise is the best move to target the rectus abdominis (i.e., the 'six pack') and the obliques (the waist). To do this exercise correctly:

1. Lie face up on the floor and lace your fingers behind your head.
2. Bring the knees in towards the chest and lift the shoulder blades off the ground without pulling on the neck.
3. Straight the left leg out to about a 45-degree angle while simultaneously turning the upper body to the right, bringing the left elbow towards the right knee.
4. Switch sides, bringing the right elbow towards the left knee.
5. Continue alternating sides in a 'pedaling' motion for 12-16 reps.

### **“Reverse Crunch”**



In a full verticle crunch, you really work the abs by involving both the upper and lower body. To do it right:

1. Lie on your back and extend the legs up towards the ceiling.
2. Place hands behind your head (lightly cupping it) and contract the abs to lift the shoulder blades off the floor.
3. At the same time, press the heels towards the ceiling, creating a 'u' shape with the torso.
4. Lower down and repeat for 12-16 reps.

### **“Exercise Ball Crunch”**



The exercise ball is an excellent tool to strengthen the abs and for working the rectus abdominis. To do it right:

1. Lie face-up with the ball resting under your mid/lower back.
2. Cross your arms over the chest or place them behind your head.
3. Contract your abs to lift your torso off the ball, pulling the bottom of your ribcage down toward your hips.
4. As you curl up, keep the ball stable (i.e., you shouldn't roll).
5. Lower back down, getting a stretch in the abs, and repeat for 12-16 reps.

## “Super Man”



### Starting Position

Lie facedown on the floor, legs together and straight, arms straight and extended above your head. Keep your head/neck in a neutral position.

### Action

Keeping limbs straight (but not locked) and torso stationary, simultaneously lift your arms and legs up toward the ceiling to form a gentle curve with your body. Hold for a slow 30 counts.

### Special Instructions

Don't hold your breath! Try to keep breathing steady and even. Make it easier: Hold for fewer counts and don't raise legs/arms quite as high. Change it up: Lower to the ground to complete one rep and do a 2-3 sets.

***Muscles Worked:*** Lower back

## “Swimming”



### Starting Position

Lie facedown, arms and legs outstretched a few inches above floor, head in line with spine.

### Action

Raise left arm and right leg off floor. Lower and repeat with right arm/left leg. Return to start and repeat the series.

### Special Instructions

Don't lower arms or legs completely until the end of the set. Don't hold your breath.

***Muscles Worked:*** Lower back