

# Abdominal Exercise progression: Strength vs Speed!

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This article aims to take you through a range of abdominal exercises that target both lumbar flexion and abdominal stability aspects of core strength.

From a previous Blog Article (What is the function of the core when performing hip flexion activities?) – I highlighted that the main role of the core is to:

***"Stabilise the lumbar spine. It is not the strength of the core that is most important, it is the speed with which these muscles contract in reaction to a force displacing the lumbar spine that is key."***

I believe the best approach to achieving this functional strength goal is to firstly strengthen the core under controlled conditions (lumbar flexion exercises), followed by isometric/controlled concentric/eccentric hip flexion/lumbar stability exercises, finally followed by increasingly dynamic movements that improve the core's capacity to control the core during these rapid movements.

**Lumbar flexion activities** aim to develop a reasonable level of core strength, prior to undertaking more advanced exercises – these can include;



*Reach for the Sky + variations*



*Fish out of Water Lateral Crunches*



*Cable Crunches + Variations*



*1-Leg / 2-Leg Situp Reaches*



*Swiss Ball Crunches + Variations*



*Reverse Situps + Variations*

The next group of **Abdominal Stability exercises** better represent how the core needs to function for maximum day to day activity protection. These abdominal stability exercises can be performed isometrically moving to a more dynamic concentric/eccentric movement pattern (which is the ultimate goal).

Exercises can be graded from easy to highly advanced, and all parties interested in developing their core appropriately should slowly work through these graded levels until they are able to perform the highest level activities with control.

## ABDOMINAL STABILITY EXERCISES - EASY



- Laying on back, knees bent to 90 degrees, contracting core.
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- Laying on back, knees bent to 90 degrees, contracting core, lifting 1 leg off the ground whilst maintaining neutral pelvic positioning.
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- Laying on back, knees bent to 90 degrees, contracting core (obliques/IB), lift one leg then the other in a gallop fashion – the highest load is when both legs are off the ground for a fraction of a second –focus on pelvic stability (strong core) when you lift the second leg off the ground).

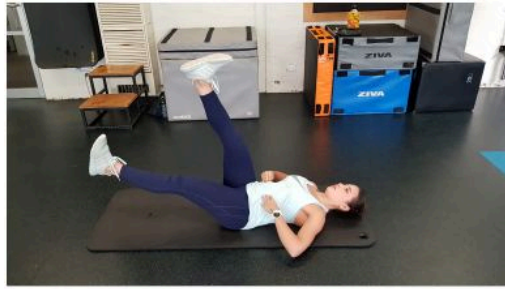
## ABDOMINAL STABILITY EXERCISES - MEDIUM



- Plank on elbows – holding body still for 30+ seconds
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- Plank on elbows – slowly move 1 leg, 1 arm off the ground holding the body completely still.
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- Plank on hands – increase the speed of the movement whilst keeping the core stable/still.



## ABDOMINAL STABILITY EXERCISES - HARD



- Laying on back, legs 90 degrees in air, 1 leg at a time.
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- Laying on back, legs 90 degrees in air, lowering 1 leg then slowly lowering the second leg until you cannot keep a neutral spine position.
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- Laying on back, legs 90 degrees in air, lowering both legs at the same time (most advanced).

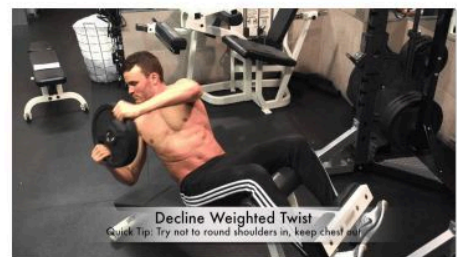


- Roman Chair - Hanging leg Raises



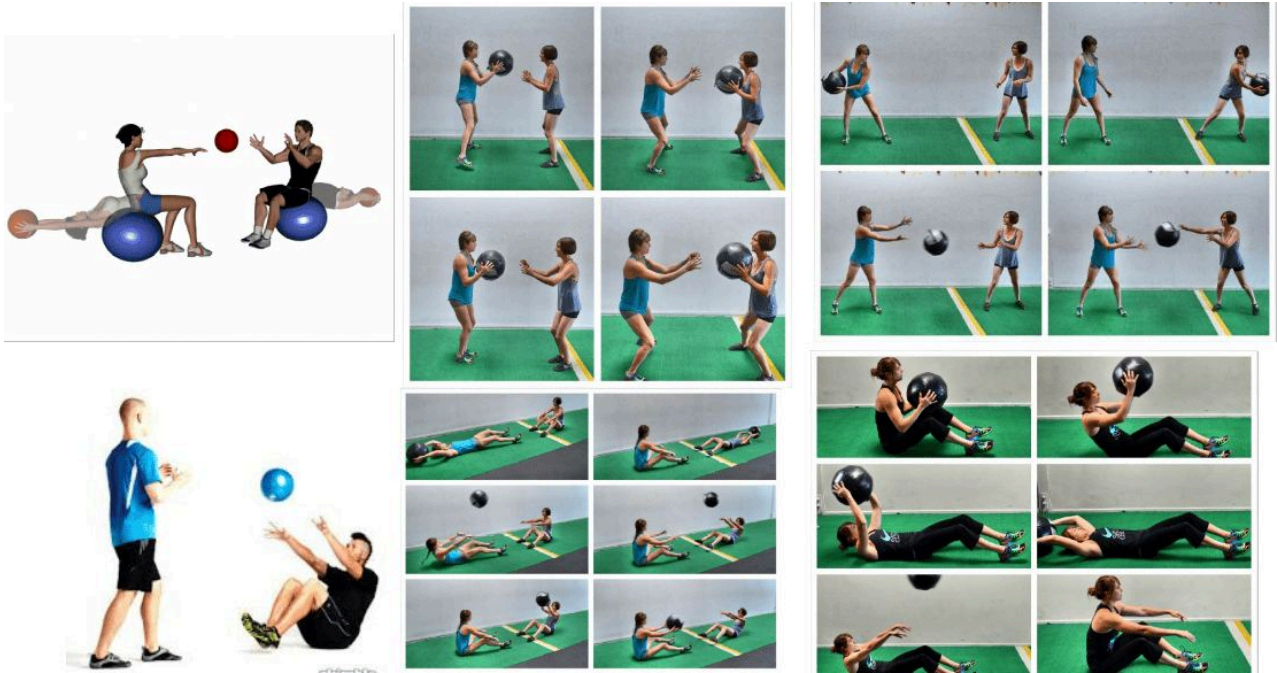
- Incline Situps or floor situps with legs supported

- Russian twists (floor, box, with weight). Controlled Acc/Dec.



## ABDOMINAL STABILITY EXERCISES - ADVANCED

These exercises include a fast/dynamic component – having to speed up or slow down the core during flexion/extension/rotation activities.



All these advanced core bracing/stability exercises will cause lower back pain/irritation/inflammation if your core is not capable of supporting the dynamic nature of these movements.

This is why it is so important for any client to start with the basic core exercises, learning how to control the core before jumping into these more advanced exercises.

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