

How to perform an abdominal strength test

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Abdominal Strength Testing

For years there has been a standard abdominal strength test as part of fitness testing routines worldwide.

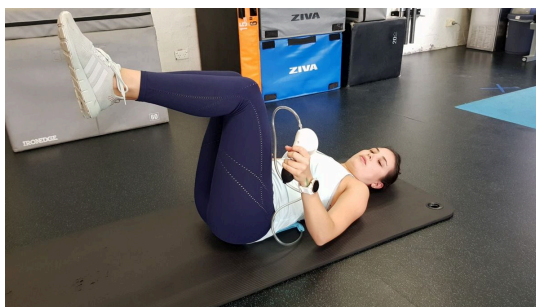


This test included variations on the 7-stage situp test – with the following exercise action required:

“The subject lies on their back, with their knees at right angles and feet flat on the floor. The subject then attempts to perform one complete sit-up for each level in the prescribed manner.”

From an earlier posted article [“The Situp and why you can’t sit all the way up?”](#) this test takes no account for your body shape and as such, you could have great abdominals but not be able to pass stage 1 of this test whilst a person with a slight upper body and heavy legs even with poor abdominals may be able to complete stage 7.

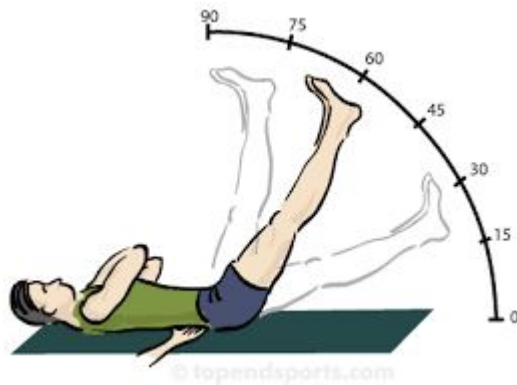
So what to do?



I have previously introduced a testing protocol using a biofeedback abdominal device.

This test requires you to maintain a neutral pelvic/lumbar position whilst you lower your legs as close to the ground as you can.

This test is a great indicator of core strength. Many clients are so surprised when they attempt this test thinking that with all the situps and leg raises they have completed that they will be great on this test only to find that most clients can’t even reach a 45° angle before their pelvis starts rotating.



Now you don't need access to one of these biofeedback devices, your hands are just as good in allowing you to conduct this test by yourself.

A way of achieving this test is to start in the same position (either knees bent or knees straight – straight it harder) and place one hand under the lower back (many clients place both hands under their butt – this is not what should do – you should place your hand under the small of your back).

From this position you then press down on your hand until you can't easily pull your hand out from under your back. Don't rotate to one side to increase the pressure on your hand. Keep your pelvis straight.

You then maintain this tension (keeping pressure on your hand) and then start lowering your legs **SLOWLY** until you are unable to keep adequate pressure on your hand and it can slide out from under your lower back.

At this point, approximate the angle you lowered your legs to (see above image for angles achieved) and this is a very good representation of how good your core is in stabilising the pelvis (and in turn your lower back).

Once you have your angle – you are then in a better position to determine the most appropriate core exercises for your level of strength.

Check out this Youtube clip on the use of the [Abdominal Biofeedback Unit](#).

Angle Performance

90°-65° - *Low core stability* - you should limit exercises that require using your hip flexors (limit leg lowers, hip flexor activities (Roman chair) & any supported situp activities (incline situps).

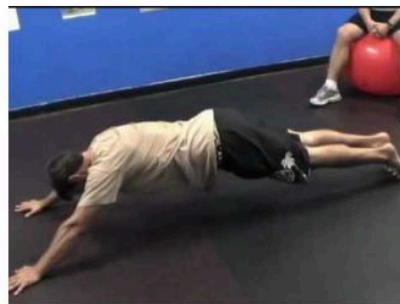
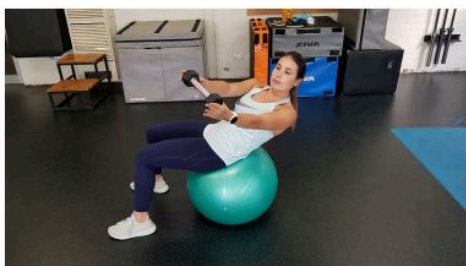
Stick to crunches, planks and certain swiss ball varieties.



65°-35° - You have "Average" core stability – this will allow you to safely include some hip flexion activities (eg roman chair, controlled leg lowers) but you should restrain from performing any extended core loading movements (see <35° exercises)



<35° - Your core is strong and you can handle most advanced core strength activities (Russian twists & variations, Prone reach or rollout movements, advanced medicine/Swiss ball core loading movements).



The goal of every serious gym user should be to get their core to <35° strength levels. This will maximise the protection of your core and ensure you get the most out of your strength routines over the long term.

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