

7 EXERCISES TO IMPROVE YOUR CORE STRENGTH AND WORKOUT RESULTS

You've been told you need to increase your core strength to reduce back pain or to lift heavier at the gym. But, you're a bit confused because you are hitting your ab exercises regularly am I right? Well, you're not alone. Most people think of their core strength as the abs they see or dream to see. But your core is actually the muscles around your waist front and back. Which means your sides too! And, in some fitness modalities they consider your center to be all the muscles around your shoulders, hips and the muscles in between on the front and the back.

So, even if you are hitting those sit ups, russian twists and bottom lifts your core is still left being undertrained. Here are 7 exercises that will work your core front to back, side to side and have you seeing better results more quickly in your workouts.

1

Roll Up: Laying on your back, legs tight together, arms reach up for the ceiling. Lift your head and chest off the mat. You'll feel your upper abs and obliques kick in. Continue to roll up and over (key word over) your legs. If your legs lift off the mat, hold, squeeze your outer hips more and press your heels down. This will help you engage more transverse abdominis, lower abs and more. Once rounded over your legs begin to roll back down. Keeping your legs reaching away as you do. Repeat 3-5x.



[click image for video](#)



GOAL: Engage all your abdominals while opening your backside.



[click image for video](#)

2

Double Leg Stretch: Laying on your back bend your knees into your chest and lift your head and chest up. Hugging your heels together and your toes and knees slightly part, place your hands on your ankles. Keeping your head and chest curled off the floor reach your arms overhead and your legs out to the diagonal ideally in line with your eyes (or higher if needing a modification). Circle the arms around, bend your knees in and then repeat 3-5x.



GOAL: Challenge core stability with arms and legs.

3

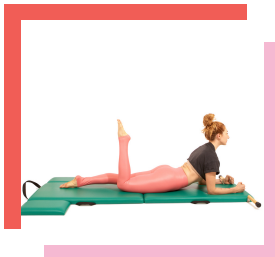
Swan: Laying on your stomach place your hands underneath your shoulder, if possible hug your legs together and press the tops of your feet down. If needed can separate legs slightly. Make sure legs are parallel or have a feeling of internal rotation in the thighs. Reach your tailbone for your heels and your pubic bone for the floor. This will lengthen your lower back and challenge your entire core to work instead of just your lower back. Pressing your hands down and energetically back pull your head and chest forward to go up. Feel your upper back muscles engage and your abs pull away from gravity. Really try to keep the upper abs engaged (use the strength of the first two exercises). Lower your chest and repeat 3-5x.



click image for video



GOAL: Work your back muscles while your abs fight gravity



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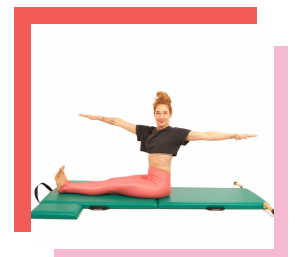
Single Leg Kick: Prop yourself up on your forearms, lift your chest forward and up, continue to reach your tailbone down and your pubic bone to the mat. Feel your hip bones in the front pull up to engage your lower abdominals away from gravity. Kick your right foot to your seat 2x. Straighten the leg and press it down. Repeat on the Left. Then continue for 3-5 sets. If your hips go side to side you've lost your core connections. If your chest is bouncing with each kick you've lost your core connections. Also, feel your hips and quads stretch open. This will help you have more access to your core instead of your quads/hip flexors taking over.



GOAL: Continue to strengthen the back body while challenging your abs against gravity. And, added bonus of opening the front of the hips to have more access to strengthening your core

5

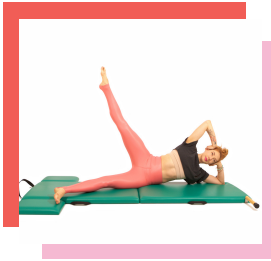
Spine Twist: Sit tall with legs outstretched and squeezing together (if not possible try turning out your legs and squeezing your heels and outer hips. This should help your lower abs and core lift out of your hip flexors. If that still doesn't work sit up on a yoga block or something slightly elevated. If that still doesn't let you sit tall skip this one and do more of #4 so you can open your hips and strengthen your core to add this one in. With your legs hugging tight together reach your arms wide to the sides. Without moving your hips twist your upper body to the right. Hold, twist a little deeper and a little deeper. Ultimately 3 attempts to twist as much as you can before you unwind. Come back to center and repeat on the other side. Then repeat on both sides 2-3 more times.



click image for video



GOAL: Challenge your core to sit tall and then work your obliques



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6

Side Kicks: Laying your side prop your head up on your hand. Make sure your elbow is in line with your shoulder and your shoulders with your hips. Then place both legs straight and to the front of you. Flex your bottom foot and press it down. Your bottom waist needs to lift away from gravity. The more your top leg reaches past your bottom leg the longer both sides are and best for doing this exercise. Your top arm can rest in front of your or more advanced place it behind your head. Take the top leg and without changing your waist and chest kick that straight leg forward, bring it slightly back and kick again. Then reach your straight leg back, slightly forward and then back some more. Again, all while keeping your chest still. Repeat 3-5x then switch sides.


 **GOAL: Strengthen and challenge your waist. Your core must stabilize against the weight of a kicking leg**

7

Rolling Like a Ball: Sitting just behind your tailbone bring your knees into your chest. Hug your heels together and your toes and knees slightly apart. Place your hands on your ankles and lift your feet two inches off the ground. Lift tall and then curl your head and chest forward as if you were curling your head and chest off the ground for #1 and #2. Without changing the shape of your spine rock back to your shoulders and then roll back up without letting your feet touch the floor. Yep, they cannot touch. Gotta use your "air breaks" aka your core. Repeat 3-5x. Take it up a level and try to balance with your hips up for 2 seconds before rolling up.



click image for video

 **Goal: Challenge to keep your entire core contracted while rocking and rolling. Plus great way to finish this mini core challenge.**

All of these should take about 7 min or less. When you are learning them it may take you 10-15 min. But as you learn the movements you'll get faster. Then it's about focusing on the connections.

Add this in as part of your warm up routine or cool down to prep you for your next time working out.

I know as you do this you will feel your entire core being challenged. And then you can bring that awareness to every squat, lunge, press or pull up you do.

Let us know how these felt! And if you have questions you can reach out to me on IG @lesley.logan

XX~LL