



# ABDOMINAL WORKOUT GUIDE

**MUSCLE  
& FITNESS**

**ABS ARE AN INCREDIBLY POPULAR** bodypart among those who train, and there's little doubt why: everyone wants that six-pack. Here's how you can get started on the way to yours.

➤➤ This routine is built to work your lower abs first, followed by your upper-ab region and finally the sides of your midsection, known as the obliques. Lower abs come first because they're usually the weakest part of most people's midsections.

➤➤ More is not necessarily better; don't overextend yourself in your first few sessions by adding sets or reps.

## SCISSOR KICK

**START:** Lie on your back with your arms by your sides, palms facing down, legs extended with a slight bend in your knees.

**MOVE:** Lift your heels off the floor about 6 inches, then make small, rapid, alternating up-and-down scissor-like motions as you lift each leg about 45 degrees into the air and lower each until your heel is a few inches off the floor. While the pace of the scissor motion is fairly rapid, take about two seconds total to complete the full upward and downward movements.

# #79

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Scissor Kick	2	10-15
Curl-Up	2	10-15
Side Jackknife	2	10-15



## CURL-UP

**START:** Lie on your back with your feet flat on the floor and knees bent about 60 degrees. Position your arms next to your hips, palms down.

**MOVE:** Curl your torso up, sliding your hands toward your feet as your shoulder blades lift off the floor. Slowly return to the start position. To decrease difficulty, keep your hands close to the floor. If that's still too tough, rest your hands on the floor.



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## SIDE JACKKNIFE

**START:** Lie on your right side, keeping your left leg over your right one, bending your knees slightly. Place your right hand in a comfortable position; rest your left hand behind your head.

**MOVE:** As you pull with your obliques, bring your torso and left leg together. Hold the contraction briefly and lower slowly. Do reps to both sides to complete one set. **Tip:** Try holding your floor-side hand on your obliques to feel them contract; this keeps your mind on the muscle action.

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## YOU CAN GET A GOOD AB WORKOUT

in 15 minutes; the key is to squeeze as much intensity as you can into that time. This high-impact regime does just that.

➤➤ In the knees-down variation of the Swiss-ball roll out, do the same exercise shown, but with both knees on the floor.

➤➤ Six-time Ms. Olympia Cory Everson (shown in these photos with trainer Jeff Page) uses these moves in her own workout she recommends training your core (abs and lower back) twice per week.

# #80

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Swiss-Ball Roll Out*	3	20
Ball Passing	2	20
Cycling with Ball	2-3	20**
Standing Rotation	2	20**

\* Beginners should use the knees-down variation.  
\*\* Per side.



## SWISS-BALL ROLL OUT

**START:** Kneel in front of the ball, resting your forearms on it, fingers interlaced. Then lift up your knees to extend your legs behind you.

**MOVE:** Without arching or rounding your lower back, move your arms in front of you to roll the ball forward, forcing virtually all the muscles of your torso to work, including the deep core muscles, abs and obliques. Pause momentarily and then roll the ball back in towards your body.





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## BALL PASSING

**START:** Lie on your back with your legs and arms extended; hold a Swiss ball in your hands.

**MOVE:** Raise the ball overhead with your arms while simultaneously bringing your legs toward it. When your hands and feet meet, pass the ball from the former to the latter. Without pausing, lower your arms and legs back down. Continue in alternating fashion.

## CYCLING WITH BALL

**START:** Begin in the jackknife position used for the V-up and hold a medicine ball against your chest.

**MOVE:** As you extend one knee, flex the other to bring your kneecap toward your body while you bring the ball over to that side. Reverse knee positions, shifting the ball over to that side to "meet" the opposing knee. Continue in alternating fashion.



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**A**

## STANDING ROTATION

**START:** Stand straight, knees slightly bent, holding a medicine ball with both hands in front of your forehead. Your training partner assumes the same position behind you, without a ball.

**MOVE:** Keeping your lower body in place, rotate your torso to one side and pass



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the ball high to your partner, who has simultaneously rotated in that same direction. Then rotate in the other direction and receive the ball back from your partner, this time in a lower position (hands at your waist rather than shoulder level). Continue passing and receiving the ball in this fashion for the desired number of reps. Then do the same number of reps beginning with the ball high on the other side.

## WHETHER YOUR "HOME" IS ALONG

a stretch of beautiful beaches, or in a slightly less spectacular locale, the same truth applies — you can do these moves almost anywhere, meaning you have no excuse to miss any more ab workouts.

➡➡ This is a circuit, which means you go from exercise to exercise with no rest in-between. So you'll do 20 hip thrusts followed immediately by 20 straight-leg crunches, and then the reverse crunch and crossover in short order. Rest 30 seconds and repeat the sequence again twice.

# #81

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Hip Thrust	3	20
Straight-Leg Crunch	3	20
Reverse Crunch	3	20
Crossover Crunch	3	20 per side

Do all four exercises as a circuit with no rest between movements. After you finish the circuit, rest 30 seconds and repeat two more times.



## REVERSE CRUNCH

**START:** Lie face-up on the ground with your hands extended at your sides, feet up and thighs perpendicular to the ground.

**MOVE:** Slowly bring your knees toward your chest, lifting your hips and glutes off the ground, and try to maintain the bend in your knees throughout the movement. Return under control.





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## STRAIGHT-LEG CRUNCH

**START:** Lie face up on the ground with your legs straight up in the air, which requires your lower abs to work isometrically. Cup your hands behind your head.

**MOVE:** Curl up as high as you can to bring your shoulder blades up, simultaneously pressing your lower back into the ground. Don't pull on your head in an effort to go higher.



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## HIP THRUST

**START:** Lie face-up on the ground with your arms spread slightly, palms down to provide balance. Lift your legs to nearly perpendicular to the ground.

**MOVE:** Raise your hips and glutes straight up off the ground by using your abdominals — imagine trying to touch the ceiling with the soles of your shoes — then lower your hips back to the start position.

## CROSSOVER CRUNCH

**START:** Lie face-up on the ground, knees bent about 60 degrees and feet flat. Cross your left ankle over your right knee. Cup your hands behind your head.

**MOVE:** Curl up as high as you can, bringing your shoulder blades off the ground, simultaneously trying to bring your right elbow across your body toward your left knee. Do all your reps for one side before switching to the other.



## 2002 NPC USA MIDDLEWEIGHT

champ Stan McQuay has the abs every man envies: ripped and deeply etched, a flawless example of what a midsection can look like with good training and a solid diet (and good genetics, of course). Try his strategy and see how far you can go.

➤ Although not shown here, Stan recommends using wrist straps to help maintain your grip on the hanging leg raise.

➤ Stan works his abdominals five days a week, at the end of his workouts.

# #82

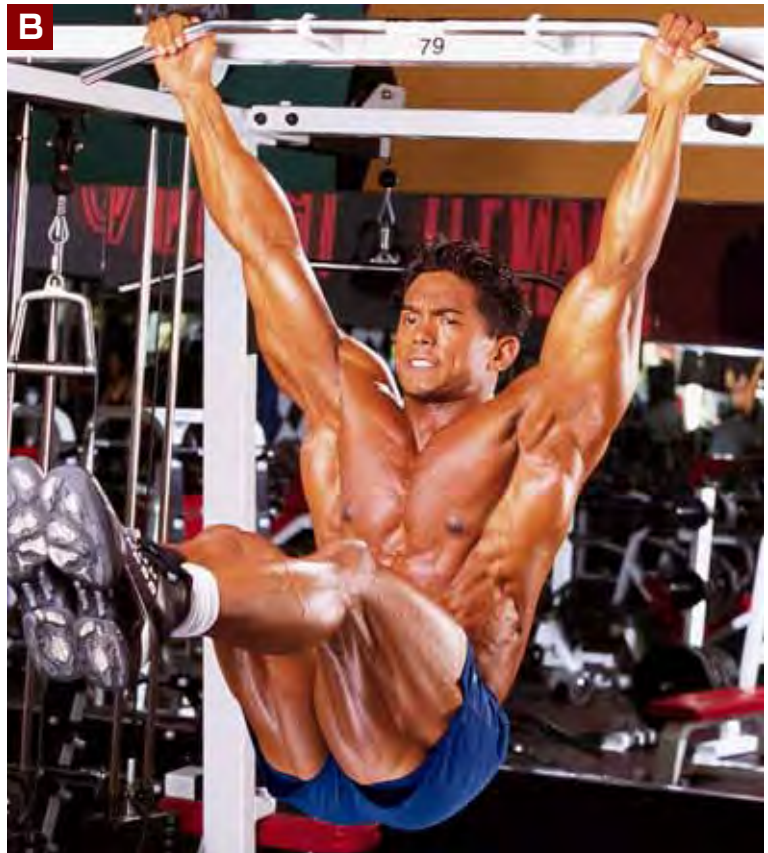
EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Hanging Leg Raise	4	20
Crunch	4	20-30
V-Up on Bench	3	20-30
Standing Oblique Cable Crunch	3	20 per side



## HANGING LEG RAISE

**START:** Hang vertically from a chin-up bar with your knees slightly bent.

**MOVE:** Slowly lift your legs until they come past parallel to the floor, your body forming an "L". Hold for a count at the top before slowly lowering your legs back to the start and moving into the next rep. To keep from swinging, don't drop your legs all the way back down.



## CRUNCH

**START:** Lie on the floor with your knees bent, feet and lower back flat.

**MOVE:** With your hands cupped loosely behind your neck, contract through your abs to lift your shoulders and upper back off the floor. Hold the top for one count before slowly lowering back to the start, making the negative portion of the rep as slow and deliberate as the positive portion.



## V-UP ON BENCH

**START:** Sit in the middle of a bench with your hands grasping the edges and your feet off the ground.

**MOVE:** Bring your knees into your chest while keeping your back straight and abs tight, simultaneously curling your upper body forward to form a "V". Return your legs and torso to the start position and repeat for reps.



"Hit all three sections of your abs every time you train," Stan advises.

## STANDING OBLIQUE CABLE CRUNCH

**START:** Attach a D-handle to the upper pulley, standing a few feet away with your right side and arm facing the weight stack. Grip the handle with your right hand, palm up, and bring it toward your temple, firmly holding it in this relative position throughout.

**MOVE:** Contract through your obliques, pulling down through your ribcage and serratus muscle, pausing a moment at the peak contraction before slowly returning to the start. At the top, you can hyperextend slightly to get a good stretch through your side before beginning the next repetition.



## GOOD LOOKS AND ABS LIKE THESEP

Some dudes have all the flippin' luck. Amateur bodybuilder and aspiring fitness model Mike Vrabel obviously has been paying his dues in the gym. Sure, you can hate him, but it can't hurt to take his advice in the meantime, right?

➤➤ "If abs are what you want, work them first," Mike says. "When I'm trying to shape my abs and really bring them out, that's what I do."

➤➤ Focus on making each repetition perfect — 20 great reps are better than 100 poorly executed ones.

# #83

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Leg Raise	3	20
Hanging Knee Raise	3	20
Decline Crunch	3	15-25
Twisting Crunch	3	30

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## LEG RAISE

**START:** Mike likes to hit the lower portion of his abs up front in his routine, so he performs this movement first. Lie down, head on the floor, and place your hands under your glutes to stabilise your torso.

**MOVE:** Begin the movement with your legs extended about 6 inches above the floor. "With my knees soft [not locked out], I raise my legs up toward the ceiling, then lower them slowly to the start position." Mike stresses feeling the negative on the downward motion, and keeping tension on the muscle every inch of the way. "It's not a major ab builder, but it's a great warm up for my next exercise, hanging knee raises, which also focus on my lower abs."



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**"Get to the point where you feel that burn — and then push to get maybe five more reps after that," Mike says.**



## HANGING KNEE RAISE

**START:** For this move, set your elbows within the hanging sleeves and begin with your torso completely straight and knees slightly bent.

**MOVE:** Lift your legs, bending your knees on the way up while slightly rounding your lower back and bringing your glutes forward. When your quads reach a point just above perpendicular to your torso, pause, then lower your legs.



## DECLINE CRUNCH

**START:** Mike likes to lie flat and stretch out his abs before beginning the movement. "My hands are behind my head, my elbows pointed out. Keep a loose grip behind your head and focus on holding your elbows out so you don't use your hands to jerk your neck up, which people tend to do when their ab muscles are fatigued. I stay focused on keeping my neck aligned with my spine throughout the movement."

**MOVE:** Raise your torso just short of sitting up to maintain stress on your abs, pause briefly, then slowly lower your torso about three-quarters of the way down before starting the next rep.



## TWISTING CRUNCH

**START:** Lie on your back, knees bent, arms extended a few inches off the floor alongside your hips.

**MOVE:** Raise your left shoulder blade off the floor as you reach with your left arm across your torso to your right knee, return to the start and do the same for the opposite side. Continue alternating, right side, then left, until you complete the set.

## WINNING HIS PRO CARD AT THE

2003 NPC USA Championships in Las Vegas, Richard Jones is looking to make a big impact in the IFBB ranks. With great symmetry and a cut-to-the-bone six-pack, you'd be wise to not bet against him.

➤➤ This is Richard's pre-contest ab workout he pairs it with cardio in the morning.

➤➤ Off-season, he drops the rope crunch and bumps up his repetitions.

# #84

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Ab Wheel	4	To failure
Rope Crunch	4	25
Hanging Leg Raise	4	20-25
Seated Knee-Up	4	10



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## AB WHEEL

**START:** "This is a hard exercise, so I get it out of the way first," Richard says. "I don't count reps on this." Centre the ab wheel about 4-6 inches in front of your knees, which are slightly apart. Your arms should be straight down from your shoulders, elbows slightly bent.

**MOVE:** Slowly roll the wheel out in front of you. "Don't go too far out the first time until you build some strength in your abs and auxiliary muscles: your back and triceps," Richard cautions. "I get a nice stretch all the way out; my torso ends up probably 2-3 inches off the floor."



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## ROPE CRUNCH

**START:** Facing the cable station on your knees, grasp the ends of the rope and bring your hands down to the top of your head, where they remain fixed throughout the movement.

**MOVE:** Bring your elbows toward your knees, squeezing your abs as you exhale, and return under control to the start. "I try to keep my hips stable because I want to focus on contracting and stretching my abs. I don't want to incorporate my lower back, lats or triceps," Richard says.





## HANGING LEG RAISE

**START:** "These are tough, but they hit the whole abdominal wall, with emphasis on the lower-ab region," Richard points out. Place your hands roughly shoulder-width apart on the bar and hang in a vertical position, torso erect.

**MOVE:** Contract your abs while lifting your straightened legs up to horizontal, then slowly lower your legs until your body returns to vertical before beginning the next rep. "I perform every rep this way — slowly and with control. The faster you perform it, the more momentum builds, which lessens the tension on the abs," he adds.

## SEATED KNEE-UP

**START:** "At this point my abs are pretty fried, so I don't need a whole lot of reps," Richard explains. Sit crosswise, glutes slightly off the bench, hands gripping it just outside your hips. Lean back and raise your legs off the floor, knees slightly bent, to start.

**MOVE:** After leaning your torso forward while bringing your knees toward your chest, crunch your abs at the top, then slowly return to the start position.



**"For a nice set of abs, you don't need to build them, you need to burn them," Richard says.**

## MORE WORKOUTS TO TRY:

**#85)** This workout is built to be paired with #86 and #87 for a three-times per week ab thrash. Each is quick and can be tacked onto the beginning or end of another body part routine.

**#86)** This routine can also be used in conjunction with a full ab routine, if your lower abs are weak or lagging. For instance, do your regular ab workout on Monday, then come back later in the week with this.

**#87)** These moves, or any ab exercise that involves a twisting motion, will work your obliques, which are along each side of your “six-pack” muscles.

**#88)** If you want a flat midsection, stick to body weight exercises. If you want a contoured middle, complete with plateaus and deep ridges like you see on bodybuilders, try this resistance-based routine that kicks up your strength levels in the process.

**#89)** Bored with your routine? A circuit can be a great way to break out of a training rut.

**#90)** If you’re in fat-burning mode, try this high-rep workout.

**#91)** If the gym’s closing in five minutes, here’s your chance to fit abs in before the doors are locked.

## #85 UPPER AB EMPHASIS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
V-Up	3	12-15
Decline Crunch	3	12-15
Swiss-Ball Crunch	3	12-15

## #86 LOWER AB EMPHASIS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Reverse Crunch on Incline Board*	3	12-15
Hanging Leg Raise†	3	12-15
Hip Thrust	3	12-15

\* Lie on an incline board so your head is above your feet, hold on to the bench with both hands and perform reverse crunches.

† You can also use a vertical bench.

## #87 OBLIQUE EMPHASIS

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Hanging Knee Raise To Side	3	12-15
Crossover Crunch	3	12-15
Side Jackknife	3	12*

\* Per side.



## #88 POWER & STRENGTH

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Rope Cable Crunch	3	12-15
Weighted Decline Crunch*	3	10-12
Swiss-Ball Roll Out	3	15-20
Standing Oblique Cable Crunch	2	12-15

\* Hold a weight plate to your chest while repping.

## #89 4-MOVE CIRCUIT

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Incline-Bench Leg Raise*	4	15
Crunch	4	15
Decline Twisting Crunch†	4	15
Reverse Crunch	4	15

\* Lie on an incline board so your head is above your feet, hold the bench with both hands, and perform leg raises.

† Combine the decline and twisting crunch in **MIKE'S** workout.

## #90 HIGH DEFINITION

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Hanging Leg Raise (compound set with)	3	12-15
Hanging Knee Raise	3	12-15
Twisting Straight-Leg Crunch (compound set with)	3	20-30
Hip Thrust	3	20-30

## #91 5-MINUTE

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS
Tri-Set:		
Seated Knee-Up	3	20
Arms-Overhead Crunch*	3	20
Cycling with Ball	3	15†

Move from exercise to exercise with no rest in-between; rest 30 seconds between tri-sets. \* This is a crunch with your arms straight up (upper arms alongside your head). † Per side.