

# best exercises for abs and sides

## The Ultimate Guide to the Best Exercises for Abs and Sides

**best exercises for abs and sides** are a cornerstone of a well-rounded fitness regimen, contributing not only to aesthetic appeal but also to core strength, improved posture, and reduced risk of back pain. Achieving a sculpted midsection requires a strategic approach that targets both the rectus abdominis (the "six-pack" muscles) and the obliques (responsible for your sides and rotational movements). This comprehensive guide delves into the most effective exercises, breaks down their benefits, and offers insights into incorporating them into your routine for optimal results. We will explore foundational movements, advanced variations, and the importance of consistency in building a strong and defined core.

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## Understanding Your Core Muscles

Your core is a complex network of muscles that extend beyond just your abdominal area. It includes the rectus abdominis, obliques (internal and external), transverse abdominis, erector spinae, multifidus, and even the diaphragm and pelvic floor. A strong core is crucial for almost every movement you make, from lifting heavy objects to maintaining balance during a simple walk. When we talk about the best exercises for abs and sides, we are primarily focusing on those that effectively engage these key musculature groups.

The rectus abdominis, often referred to as the "six-pack" muscles, are responsible for flexing the spine forward, such as during a crunch. The obliques, located on the sides of your torso, are essential for lateral flexion (bending to the side) and rotation of the torso. A balanced approach that works all these muscles is vital for a functional and aesthetically pleasing core. Neglecting certain areas can lead to imbalances and potential injury.

## Foundational Abs Exercises

These fundamental movements are the building blocks for developing a strong and defined abdominal region. They are accessible to most fitness levels and can be modified to increase or decrease difficulty.

## **Crunches**

Crunches are a classic for a reason. They directly target the rectus abdominis by shortening the distance between the rib cage and the pelvis. To perform a standard crunch, lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place your hands lightly behind your head or across your chest. Engage your abdominal muscles to lift your head and shoulders off the floor, focusing on squeezing your abs at the top of the movement. Avoid pulling on your neck. Lower slowly and with control.

## **Leg Raises**

Leg raises are excellent for targeting the lower portion of the rectus abdominis and the hip flexors. Lie on your back with your legs extended straight. You can place your hands under your glutes for lower back support if needed. Keeping your legs as straight as possible, lift them towards the ceiling until your hips are slightly off the ground. Lower your legs slowly, stopping just before they touch the floor to maintain tension in your abs. This exercise is particularly effective for building that foundational strength.

## **Plank**

The plank is a full-body exercise that heavily engages the transverse abdominis, the deep core muscle responsible for stabilizing the spine. Get into a push-up position, but rest on your forearms instead of your hands. Ensure your body forms a straight line from your head to your heels. Keep your core tight and avoid letting your hips sag or rise too high. Hold this position for as long as you can maintain good form, aiming for progressively longer durations.

## **Effective Side Body and Oblique Exercises**

Developing your obliques is key to a trim waistline and a strong, stable torso. These exercises focus on rotational and lateral movements.

## **Russian Twists**

Russian twists are highly effective for targeting the external and internal obliques. Sit on the floor with your knees bent and feet lifted slightly off the ground for an added challenge. Lean back slightly, keeping your back straight. Clasp your hands together or hold a weight (like a medicine ball or dumbbell). Twist your torso from side to side, tapping your hands (or the weight) towards the floor on each side. Focus on controlled rotation through your midsection.

## **Side Planks**

Similar to the standard plank, the side plank primarily targets the obliques, along with the gluteus medius and other stabilizing muscles. Lie on your side, propping yourself up on your forearm. Your elbow should be directly beneath your shoulder. Stack your feet or place one in front of the other for stability. Lift your hips off the ground, creating a straight line from your head to your feet. Engage your obliques to hold this position. Perform on both sides.

## **Bicycle Crunches**

Bicycle crunches provide a dynamic workout for both the rectus abdominis and the obliques. Lie on your back with your hands behind your head and your knees bent. Bring your right elbow towards your left knee while simultaneously extending your right leg. Switch sides, bringing your left elbow towards your right knee and extending your left leg. This mimics a pedaling motion and emphasizes the twisting action of the obliques.

## **Advanced Core Strengthening Techniques**

Once you've mastered the foundational exercises, consider incorporating these more challenging movements to further sculpt your abs and sides.

### **Hanging Leg Raises (or Knee Raises)**

For an advanced approach to lower abs, hanging leg raises are excellent. Hang from a pull-up bar with your legs extended. Engage your core to lift your legs towards your chest, keeping them as straight as possible. Lower slowly. If full leg raises are too difficult, start with knee raises, bringing your knees towards your chest.

### **Ab Wheel Rollouts**

The ab wheel is a powerful tool for oblique and deep core activation. Kneel on the floor and hold the ab wheel with both hands. Keeping your core tight and back straight, slowly roll the wheel forward, extending your body. Go as far as you can without arching your back. Use your core muscles to pull yourself back to the starting position. This requires significant core strength and control.

## Wood Chops

This exercise mimics the motion of chopping wood and is fantastic for the obliques and the entire core. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, holding a dumbbell or cable handle with both hands. Start with the weight down by one side of your knee. Rotate your torso and lift the weight diagonally across your body to the opposite shoulder, as if swinging an axe. Control the movement on the way down. Perform on both sides.

## Integrating Abs and Side Exercises into Your Routine

Consistency is paramount when it comes to seeing results from your ab and side workouts. Aim to include core exercises in your routine at least 3-4 times per week. You can dedicate specific days to core training or integrate a few exercises into your existing workouts.

Consider the following integration strategies:

- **Full Core Workout:** Dedicate one or two days a week to a comprehensive core session, performing 3-4 exercises for abs and 2-3 for sides.
- **Supersets:** Pair an abdominal exercise with an oblique exercise and perform them back-to-back with minimal rest.
- **Finisher Exercises:** Add 1-2 core exercises to the end of your strength training or cardio sessions to ensure your core is consistently worked.
- **Active Recovery:** Light core work, like planks and bird-dogs, can be beneficial on rest days to promote blood flow and muscle recovery.

When structuring your workout, aim for 3-4 sets of each exercise, with repetitions ranging from 10-20 depending on the exercise's intensity and your fitness level. Focus on controlled movements and proper form over speed or quantity.

## Tips for Maximizing Your Core Workout

To get the most out of your efforts targeting the best exercises for abs and sides, consider these crucial tips:

- **Prioritize Form:** Always focus on quality of movement. Poor form can lead to

injuries and less effective muscle engagement. Watch videos and consider seeking guidance from a fitness professional if you're unsure.

- **Mind-Muscle Connection:** Actively think about the muscles you are working. Squeeze your abs and obliques at the peak of each movement.
- **Progressive Overload:** As you get stronger, gradually increase the difficulty. This can involve adding more repetitions, sets, weight, or choosing more challenging variations of the exercises.
- **Listen to Your Body:** Rest and recovery are just as important as the workouts themselves. Don't push through sharp pain.
- **Breathing Technique:** Exhale during the exertion phase of the exercise (when you are contracting your muscles) and inhale during the relaxation phase. This helps engage your core more effectively.
- **Balanced Nutrition:** Remember that visible abs are also dependent on low body fat percentage. A healthy diet plays a significant role in revealing your hard-earned core muscles.

By consistently applying these principles and incorporating a variety of effective exercises, you can build a strong, functional, and aesthetically pleasing core.

## **Q: What are the best exercises for abs and sides for beginners?**

A: For beginners, the best exercises for abs and sides focus on mastering fundamental movements with proper form. These include basic crunches, lying leg raises, and the standard plank for the abs. For the sides, beginners can start with static side planks and controlled Russian twists with no weight. The key is to build a strong foundation and understand the muscle activation before progressing to more complex variations.

## **Q: How often should I do exercises for abs and sides?**

A: You can effectively target your abs and sides 3-4 times per week. It's important to allow for rest days to let your muscles recover and rebuild. You can either dedicate specific core training days or sprinkle a few exercises into your existing strength or cardio workouts.

## **Q: Can I get a six-pack by only doing abs exercises?**

A: While exercises for abs and sides are crucial for building muscle definition, a visible "six-pack" is largely determined by your body fat percentage. To reveal your abdominal muscles, you need to reduce overall body fat through a combination of a healthy diet and

regular cardiovascular exercise, alongside your strength training.

## **Q: What is the difference between exercises for abs and exercises for sides?**

A: Exercises for abs primarily target the rectus abdominis, the muscles responsible for flexing the spine (like in crunches). Exercises for sides focus on the obliques, which are involved in rotating and laterally flexing the torso. A comprehensive core routine will include exercises for both muscle groups.

## **Q: Are Russian twists effective for targeting the sides?**

A: Yes, Russian twists are highly effective for targeting the oblique muscles, which make up the sides of your torso. By twisting your torso from side to side, you actively engage these muscles, helping to strengthen and define your waistline.

## **Q: How can I make my abs exercises more challenging?**

A: To make your abs exercises more challenging, you can increase the repetitions, add more sets, incorporate resistance by holding weights (dumbbells, medicine balls), slow down the tempo of your movements to increase time under tension, or progress to more advanced variations like hanging leg raises or ab wheel rollouts.

## **Q: Is it possible to spot-reduce fat from my stomach and sides?**

A: Unfortunately, spot reduction is a myth. You cannot target fat loss from specific areas of your body. Fat loss occurs systemically through a calorie deficit. While exercises for abs and sides build muscle, they don't directly burn fat from that area. A balanced approach of diet and overall exercise is necessary for reducing body fat.

## **Q: What muscles are worked during a plank?**

A: A plank is a fantastic exercise that engages a wide range of core muscles, not just the rectus abdominis. It primarily targets the transverse abdominis (deep stabilizing muscles), rectus abdominis, obliques, erector spinae (lower back muscles), shoulders, glutes, and quadriceps.

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**best exercises for abs and sides: The Best Abdominal Exercises You've Never Heard Of (Enhanced Edition)** Ben Greenfield, Nick Nilsson, 2012-02-17

**best exercises for abs and sides: Fastest ABS Workout** Piotr Koczewski, 2019-07-24  
"Fastest ABS Workout" is a revolutionary, previously unknown approach to body building. The exercises I show in this book will let you shape your abs to form a visible 6-pack, 8-pack or even 10-pack a lot faster than with traditional sit-ups, and a lot easier than with sophisticated gym workout plans. Based on over 10 years of experience with abdominal muscles training, having found no other guidebook to meet my expectations, I developed my own exercise system which - much to my surprise but also to great satisfaction - has let me reach results ten times more spectacular, causing quick fat burning with simultaneous muscle growth. I decided to share my experiences, observations, thoughts and tips with other people who want to get rid of their spare tires and get desirable abs sculpture, but who also - just like me - don't like and don't have the time to endlessly and thoughtlessly repeat boring exercises in the blind hope of finally getting "some" results "some" day. Unlike many other guidebooks regarding the same topic, my book focuses primarily on actions and results in order to minimize the time spent on reading and exercising while maximizing the effects of this effort. That's why I tried to include only the most important information, purposely omitting the majority of unnecessary scientific knowledge that other books often overwhelm their readers with. At the same time, I dispel a lot of popular myths and widely spread, yet incorrect or even harmful beliefs regarding abdominal muscles training. I strived to make my book as easy reading as possible - and to make picking up exercises and starting your training just as easy and fast. To achieve that, I used simple language that anyone can understand, minimizing the written content while boosting it with original images to properly demonstrate the exercises. My book all by itself is the best embodiment of its message: "Fastest ABS Workout" is slim and not too wordy, visually appealing, easy to read, and effective, bringing you unexpectedly impressive results in half the time - or even faster - than your previous exercises. What's more, it is the first book to give you great motivation while leaving you with a lot of free time aside of the exercises. For there is so much more important and pleasurable things to do every day - but it's so much better to do them being in good shape, good health and good mood thanks to regular and effective workout! One of the main problems - and the most frequent excuses - distracting you from starting any kind of physical workout, and making it hard to maintain your training routine once even started, is lack of time. I know first hand that it can constitute a serious drawback, because I found it difficult myself to allocate the time for regular workout. Because of this time management issue, I developed exercises for myself that focus on the duration of holding certain body position rather than on number of repeats. Thanks to this, I was able to shorten the workout time from dozens to just a couple of minutes every day while getting the same or even better results significantly faster. Did you know that you can exercise your abs while sitting on your couch and watching TV? Have you ever thought about effective abdominal exercises based on seconds and not the number of repetitions? Did you know that spending just a few minutes before bedtime is enough to maintain the abdominal muscle sculpture throughout the year? Have you ever thought about exercises that don't require any special

instruments, just a stopwatch? Do you know how to start exercising individual muscle parts of the abdomen, starting from scratch? Do you know one exercise that lets you carve up three groups of abdominal muscles at the same time? Did you know that there is such a thing as 10-pack abs? Do you know that you can accelerate the hypertrophy of the abdominal muscles using only exercises, without taking any supplements? Have you ever checked the efficiency of your abdominal muscles by doing a stress test? Are you ready for a training that lets you forget about outdated and boring diet tips, counting calories, avoiding fat, and keeping track of endless numbers of series and repetitions? Thanks to my exercises, you will be able to save time which can be used, for example, for pleasure. The book contains 42 exercises for all abdominal muscle parts, grouped into chapters. I invite you to read about new abs exercises that will change your belly.

**best exercises for abs and sides:** The Total Fitness Manual Gold's Gym, 2017-01-03 Transform your body in just 12 weeks. Take the challenge--Cover.

**best exercises for abs and sides:** *Train for Strength* The Experts at Gold's Gym, 2018-12-15 Readers learn about the importance of resistance training, which increases strength and endurance while working on your muscles and making them larger. After studying the three main methods of resistance training, which are free weights, resistance machines, and individual body weight, readers are taught how to pick the best practice for their individual needs and goals and are given sample exercises. This book also teaches students the science behind weight lifting and explains the function of different muscles so that students are able to understand what parts of their bodies they're training. This text ends with a focus on yoga and stretching to increase flexibility, a key component of strength.

**best exercises for abs and sides:** **The Women's Health Big Book of Exercises** Adam Campbell, 2016-10-25 Revised edition includes 100 new exercises! The Women's Health Big Book of Exercises is the essential workout guide for anyone who wants a better body. As the most comprehensive collection of exercises ever written specifically for women, this book is a body-shaping power tool for both beginners and longtime fitness buffs alike. This book contains hundreds of useful tips, the latest findings in exercise science, and cutting-edge workouts from the world's top trainers. Backed by the authority of Women's Health magazine, this updated and revised edition features 100 new exercises in 20 workouts designed by BJ Gaddour, the Fitness Director of Men's Health magazine, and 1,350 photographs, showing movements for every muscle and training plan to match every fitness goal.

**best exercises for abs and sides:** **Men's Health Best: Weight-Free Workout** Joe Kita, 2005-09-17 A concise exercise manual explains how men can put together an effective workout program containing all the exercises needed to promote whole-body fitness and maximum flexibility. Original. 15,000 first printing.

**best exercises for abs and sides:** Dash Diet Oliver Gart, Are you looking for a diet that will improve your health, help you lose weight, and isn't too restrictive or complicated? Or do you want to be free from the biggest risk factor for heart attack, stroke, and hypertension? Hypertension remains unrecognized in about half of all those affected and thus unchecked massive damage in the body. If you want tasty and light recipes to ensure you live well and healthy, lose weight and stop high blood pressure, cholesterol drops, and your energy increases then the Dash diet cookbook and meal plan are your go-to. The Dash Diet Cookbook and Dash Diet Plan are just what the dietician ordered. Not only does this cookbook fully explain how and why the DASH Diet works, but it also makes starting out as simple as can be. The sole reason for having a dash diet is to reduce the blood pressure of hypertensive people and not as wrongly assumed for weight loss. Having too much weight causes high blood pressure, a desirable side effect of being obese. The Dash diet is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat and nonfat dairy, lean meats, fish, beans, and nuts, DASH is grounded in healthy eating principles that lower blood pressure; reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer; and support reaching and maintaining a healthy weight. The good news is that The DASH (Diet to Stop Hypertension) diet is a medical recommendation required for patients diagnosed with hypertension or prehypertension, as it has been shown to lower blood



pressure and cholesterol without medication. The Dash diet cookbook and meal plan plus a quick guide for familiarizing yourself with DASH diet basics-make beginning your new diet easy and smooth. You will also find over 100 recipes in all covering all your favorite recipes to include Southwest Tofu Scramble, Balsamic-Roasted Chicken Breasts, and Pan-Seared Scallops. The Dash Diet Cookbook and Dash Diet Plan detail to include: How to lose weight with a dash diet Dash Diet Exercise, Dash Diet Shopping, Handling Barriers and Slides in the Dash Diet, and How to Start a Dash Diet Detailed DASH diet food list and DASH approved snacks Meal planning with different calorie ranges A simple tool to personalize your DASH diet action plan and ensure success Tips for eating while running Cholesterol decreases and blood pressure returns to normal Advice on healthy weight loss and exercise for all lifestyles. DASH foods, shopping smarter, setting up your kitchen, planning meals, and getting fit and active 30-day meal plan it's easy to eat right with meal plans-shopping lists included-that will take you from breakfast to dinner for an entire week. Over 100 simple, tasty recipes From Strawberry Yogurt Smoothies and Loaded Baked Sweet Potatoes to Honey-Mustard Chicken and Steak Tacos, discover healthy foods you'll absolutely love.

**best exercises for abs and sides: Muscles Without Tears** Rustam Khakimov, 2015-11-04 This book is crystal clear about exercise, and has detailed information for any athlete at any level. Any person will find this book extremely helpful and beneficial. This book takes a person to the right destination without confusion. A person who wants to build muscles, will find all the programs he or she needs. Those programs are easy to understand and easy to learn. It answers all the necessary questions a person might have regarding weight loss, diet, and bodybuilding.

**best exercises for abs and sides: Working Mother** , 1997-03 The magazine that helps career moms balance their personal and professional lives.

**best exercises for abs and sides: Pump Up Your Workout** Steve Shipside, 2008 An experienced fitness instructor explains how to eliminate the routine of gym workouts by getting rid of exercise boredom, with helpful tips on how to continue to motivate oneself to lose weight, tone the body, increase energy and stamina, and more. Original.

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**best exercises for abs and sides: The Ageless Body** Peta Bee, Sarah Schenker, 2015-12-31 Discover the new goals and new rules that are the route to a healthier, better looking and better functioning body... for life! From Gwen Stefani and Cameron Diaz to Jennifer Aniston and Naomi Watts, a new breed of 40 and 50 plus women are redefining not just what an ageless body looks like, but what's entailed in achieving it. A dramatic shift in body expectations in the last few years means that, despite being plagued by a slowing metabolism and a naturally-occurring loss of muscle mass, pre- and post-menopausal women can realistically aim for the healthy, well-functioning body they crave as well as a physique that looks good with a flat stomach and sculpted arms. Peta Bee and Dr Sarah Schenker are the living embodiment of this new breed of woman: both in their forties with children, both with hectic careers and social lives. And both with the same bodies they had in their 30s. What matters, they have discovered through self-experimentation and trawling the scientific literature, is how you go about holding back the years. And the rules - for both exercise and diet - have changed.

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**best exercises for abs and sides:** *Ultimate Abs* Gareth Sapstead, 2022 *Ultimate Abs* provides a science-based approach to abdominal training designed to help you finally achieve that long elusive six-pack. This practical guide features 130 of the most effective exercises, a host of ready-to-use programs, and proven strategies for achieving and maintaining results.

**best exercises for abs and sides:** *Muscle Exercises Encyclopedia* Oscar Moran, Isabel Arechabala, 2012 Provides exercises based on empirical know-how and scientific research and all the basic and numerous less common exercises with comments and illustrations.

**best exercises for abs and sides:** *The Big Book of Abs* Muscle & Fitness, 2007-10-01 In this guidebook to health, the editors of *Muscle & Fitness* magazine provide a five week plan as well as tips and strategies to get—and stay—motivated in obtaining well defined and toned abs. There are more than 70 workout routines presented with full-color photos to guide readers in the best possible way to achieve the goal of that tight “six-pack.” Throughout all the fitness routines there are informative tips and fast facts to make sure readers are performing the exercise in the safest and most effective manner. Additionally, to complete the workout program, instruction in nutrition to ensure one's body is getting the proper mix of protein or carbohydrates just when it needs them is included.

**best exercises for abs and sides:** *Ab Workouts for Hardgainers* Michael Weston, 2013-06-25 *Ab Workouts for Hardgainers* Ab Exercises Series Are you embarrassed to be seen in your bathing trunks at the beach? Do you cringe at the thought of looking at yourself naked in the mirror? Have you tried just about everything to put on weight and build some muscle but nothing's worked? *Ab Workouts for Hardgainers* provides diet guidelines and exercises for abs to help you put on/define some muscle. Get your body toned and your self-esteem back on a positive track. Scroll up to the top of this page. Click on the cover on the left-hand side to “Look Inside this Book”. Click on the link on the right side of the page to purchase. Or, just borrow it for free. Whichever you choose, we hope it helps. Other information about *Ab Workouts for Hardgainers* Genre = health and fitness/ab exercises Tabs = Ab exercises, six pack abs, abs workouts, workouts for abs, stomach exercises, exercises for abs, workout routines Here's an excerpt from *Ab Workouts for Hardgainers*: “What's The Best Abdominal Routine?” There is no single best abdominal routine. There are, however, a number of exercises that specifically target the abdominal muscles and that are geared towards helping you get those 6 pack abs that everybody wants. Ideally, your personal trainer will choose the best abdominal routine for you that will target your specific problem areas. S/he will also be able to expertly direct you and teach the significance of preciseness of execution once you become familiar with the basic movements. The best abdominal routine design will also include a customized meal-plan/dietary-recommendations-plan that stresses high quality proteins, composite carbohydrates, and healthy fats that will greatly assist you in maintaining your intense training

program. Simple Abdominal Exercises Your best abdominal routine will consist of exercises recommended by strength and fitness professionals because their experience with numerous people over many years has shown them what works and what doesn't. So according to the professionals, the best abdominal routine starts with (1) Swiss Ball Ab Crunches followed by (2) Inverse Crunches and then ending with (3) Ab Crunches. These are to be done in 3 sets of 12 – 15 reps. Crunches help tone your muscles – but someone who's overweight has to lose the weight before they can see their muscles. This is the challenge of sticking with a fat-loss diet. Even if you're not planning to go after 6 pack abs, strengthening your abdominal muscles is still important because strong abs reduce the risk of lower back injuries, help decrease low back pain if your back is already injured, and help to tone your whole torso. From a trainer's point of view, the most efficient and best abdominal routine consists of: (1) ab crunches that bend the upper abdominal muscles and serve as the base for the whole workout, (2) inverse crunches that tone the lower abs, and (3) side folds that work on exercising the sidelong oblique muscles. Also, the American Council on Exercise declared Bicycle Crunches to be among the best abdominal exercises because it uses every muscle in the abs to develop a well-built torso. Exercising, eating well, and developing 6 pack abs is no mean deed. Uncovering those 6 pack abs needs constant checking of what, how much, and when one eats. Discipline and patience are definitely necessary. However, it must be repeated that even the best abdominal routine may not make the splashboard abs you're hoping to see if you have a slow metabolism. But there are ways to quicken your metabolism such as (1) healthy snacking between meals, (2) eating low glycemic index carbohydrates, (3) aerobic or cardio exercises, (4) drinking adequate water to stay perked up, (5) lifting weights, and (6) checking your food consumption. If you're able to strengthen your abdominal muscles, reduce your belly fat, and use a proven program that's already proven its effectiveness with others, your chances of developing those 6 pack abs is greatly increased. --- End of Excerpt ---

**best exercises for abs and sides:** *Aesthetic Physique* Israel McCorkle, 2024-11-05 Israel McCorkle Presents Achieving a world-class physique is within reach with *Aesthetic Physique: The International Dream Body*. Designed by a prominent figure in the fitness and modeling industries, this book brings you the ultimate guide to building an aesthetic, lean, and muscular body. McCorkle shares the precise training routines. Overview: Shredding Fat While Preserving Muscle Targeted Muscles: V-Cut Abs V-Taper Shoulders Chest Maintaining A Small Waist Bigger Upper Body, Smaller Lower Body

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