

Health & Fitness

7 steps to sensational abs

Claudel Kuek of PowerMoves Pilates n Dance reveals seven key exercises for abs of steel!

Pilates focuses on strengthening your “core”, stabilising and lengthening your torso and the surrounding muscles to improve posture and maintain equilibrium. By doing the following exercises you won’t only achieve abdominal muscles to be proud of, you’ll also enjoy improved mobility and stability, increased breathing capacity, proper joint and muscle alignment and overall balance and symmetry.

1 The Hundred Lie with your arms by your sides, legs extended. Pull your bellybutton in towards the spine as you lift your shoulder blades off the mat, bringing your chin to your chest. Pulse your arms up and down for 100 counts – inhaling for five counts, exhaling for five counts.

2 Lower Abdominal Lift Lie with your arms by your sides and legs extended towards the ceiling, toes pointed. Contract your belly muscles and exhale to slowly lift your hips straight off the mat by a few inches. Lower slowly and start to inhale. Do this with control and without rocking the hips for 10 repetitions.

3 Criss Cross Lie with your knees bent and fingers laced behind your head. Lift your shoulder blades off the mat and exhale, twisting your right shoulder towards your left knee as you extend your right leg. Pause as you inhale, then exhale and twist to the other side. Work up to 15 repetitions on each side.

4 Roll Up Lie with your legs straight and arms extended over your head – but not touching the floor. Pull your bellybutton in towards your spine. Exhale as you bring your arms overhead, lifting your shoulder blades off the mat and curling all the way up until your arms are parallel to your legs. Exhale as you slowly uncurl back to the starting position. Repeat 10 times.

5 Swimming Lie face down with your legs and arms extended. Inhale and slowly lift your right arm and left leg off the mat as high as you can – extending both limbs fully in opposite directions. Hold for one count and then lower and exhale, repeating on the opposite side and working up to 12 repetitions on each side.

6 Plank Lie face down with your legs extended, resting your forearms on the mat shoulder-width apart, hands in fists. Tighten abs, tuck toes under and lift your hips off the mat so your body forms a straight line from head to heels. Breathe normally and hold for 30 seconds, then lower before repeating three more times.

7 Standing Side Crunch Stand with your feet at slightly more than shoulder-width apart, knees soft, elbows bent and hands in fists by your shoulders. Tighten your abs and exhale as you lower your torso to the left, then to the right, in one continuous movement – keeping your lower body very still throughout. Inhale as you come back to an upright starting position and work up to 30 repetitions on each side.

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