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11 Ab Exercises to Get You Bikini-Ready

By Kirsten Ballard in [FITNESS](#)

Posted May 24 2014 - 9:00am

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Summer means bikinis, beaches and bronze skin. It also means giving up unlimited access to your free campus gym (that hopefully you used), which is sort of a catch-22. Luckily, you can get [beach-ready](#) at home; just grab your iPod, a [good workout outfit](#) and a yoga mat and donate 20 minutes three times a week to a great core with the following moves! Complete the circuit once through. The sets are done in repetitions of 32, which calculates roughly into 64 pulses of music.

1. Traditional Crunch



Begin the workout with 32 traditional crunches. Proper form is achieved by having your legs in a 90-degree right angle, your arms behind your head and your fingers placed lightly on your head. When crunching up, imagine lifting your face toward the ceiling instead of trying to pull yourself to a seated position; this will help target your abdominals and lessen the strain on your neck. If you continue to strain your neck, press your tongue to the roof of your mouth as you crunch, which makes it more difficult to lift with your neck instead of your abs. Crunches should be done by lifting your upper body instead of just your neck.

2. Oblique Blaster



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Next, target your obliques, the muscles that run along your side and are often blamed for the “muffin top.” Eliminate your love handles by first crossing your right leg over your left leg with your right ankle over your left knee. Twisting your core toward your right leg, lift up for 32 reps, trying to touch your left elbow to your right knee. To avoid neck strain, imagine a tennis ball is under your chin and keep that distance throughout the entire crunch. If you can’t feel the burn along your side, place your right arm out in a T shape to further isolate your side muscles. Repeat on the other side.

3. Table Top



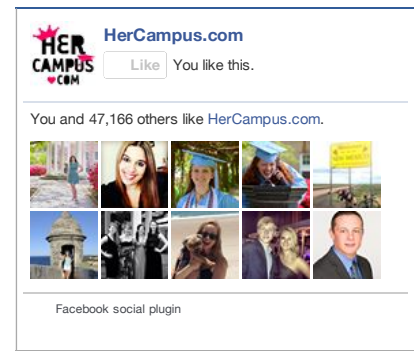
Remaining on your back, raise your legs to a 90-degree angle and crunch up for 32 reps, remembering to fully lower to the mat between each rep. Again, focus on raising your face to the ceiling instead of up and out. This move will target your upper abdominals.

4. Vertical Leg Crunch



For the next 32 reps, straighten your legs above you (or as far as you can). Repeat proper form with your hands lightly behind your head. This move will target your upper abdominals and inner core muscles.

5. Reverse Crunch



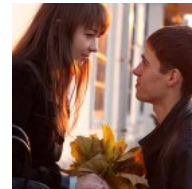
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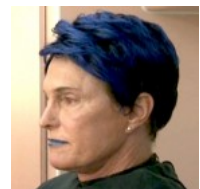
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Give your upper abs a rest with the reverse crunch, which targets the belly pooch and lower abdominals. Place your hands under your bum with your legs still straight in the air and thrust your hips upward so that your bottom comes four to six inches off the ground. Do not use momentum to keep you going between sets; fully settle back onto your hands between each thrust. Repeat for 32 reps.

6. Frog-Leg Crunch



To continue working your lower stomach, return your legs to the mat in a butterfly position with your feet pressed together and your legs splayed out to the side (as close to the mat as comfortable). Crunch up (using the tennis ball trick) for 32 reps.

7. Kayakers



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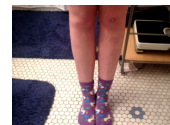
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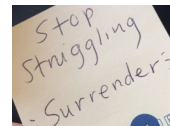
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STEP 1



STEP 2



You get to sit up for this one! Sit with your legs bent at a 90-degree angle, reclined slightly (the further you lean back, the harder the move is). To begin “kayaking,” twist your torso and tap the ground first on the left side and then on the right in rapid but controlled motion. Repeat for 32 counts, and then amp up the intensity for 32 more counts by lifting your feet off the ground. You should feel it in your hips and obliques. Move into **child's pose** after completing this move for a brief relief.

8. Ankle Taps



Returning to the mat on your back with your legs bent at a 90-degree angle, lay your feet flat on the floor. Swivel your torso to the right, reaching with your right hand toward your right ankle, then tap it and return to starting position. Repeat on left side. Alternate until you complete 32 taps on each side.

9. Leg Lifts



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This move is all about control. Lying on your back with hands to your side (or under your bum to make it easier) and your legs flat, hover your feet above the mat. Slowly raise your legs up, keeping them straight, till your waist and legs make a 90-degree angle. Return to hovering above the mat—do not touch the floor—and repeat 16 times.

10. Standard Plank



This stagnant move is achieved by getting onto your elbows and toes, creating a straight line with your body. This move will make your deep abdominals quake the longer you hold it. Aim for three intervals of 30 seconds, resting 15 seconds between rounds. Proper form requires looking down at the mat, not up at the wall or dropping your head to your chest. If you cannot hold the plank for the full 30 seconds, do not just drop the mat in defeat; instead, lower your knees to the mat while keeping a straight line from your head to your knees (not a 90-degree angle) to lessen the intensity. The inner abdominals are the strong muscles that hold your food baby in and help show off all your hard work. While you cannot see directly them, it is very important to build a strong core from the

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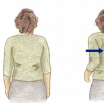
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For every front core muscle, there is a corresponding back muscle. It's absolutely imperative to work your back as well as work your core, otherwise you'll constantly hunch over and have chronic back problems! So flip over on your stomach and show your back some love. Lying prone with your arms outstretched, raise your arms and legs five inches off the ground, hold for five seconds and repeat. Arms should remain straight the entire exercise. Repeat 32 times.




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And you're done! Settle into **child's pose** and revel in your hard work. Make sure to stretch gently and thoroughly after the workout. Repeat this circuit three times a week and you'll likely see subtle results in **two to four weeks** with real progress after six weeks. A strong core will not only look great, but will also give you improved posture, strength and energy.

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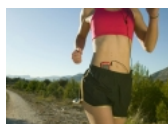
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