



## [The Best Abdominal Exercises You've Never Heard Of](#)

### **5 Exercise Sample eBook**

This sample version "The Best Abdominal Exercises You've Never Heard Of" contains 5 exercises. Be sure to give all of these exercises a try to get an idea of just how powerful these exercises really are! And remember, this is just a small sample of the full 77 you'll get in the main book! If you have any questions about any of these exercises, please let me know! ([betteru@fitstep.com](mailto:betteru@fitstep.com)).

**Nick Nilsson**

Author of "[The Best Abdominal Exercises You've Never Heard Of](#)"

### **The Exercises**

[Cross-Bench Crunches](#)  
[Cable Gripping Trunk Twists](#)  
[The Ab Ripper](#)  
[Pinchy Sit-Ups](#)  
[Swiss Ball Roll-Ups](#)

## **Please Note:**

Any exercise program contains an element of risk. Be aware that the exercises in the book are not familiar to you and, even though every attempt has been made to ensure safe instruction, how and if you decide to execute the exercises is ultimately your responsibility. The information found in this program does not constitute medical advice and should not be taken as such. Consult your physician before taking part in any exercise program. **By reading the information in this book you hereby agree to the [Terms and Conditions of use](#).**

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# **Cross-Bench Stretched Crunches**

## **Why Is This Exercise So Effective?**

This exercise is perfect for hitting the other half of the range of motion that floor crunches miss. This is the range where your spine is flexed backwards and your abdominals are in a stretched position.

Traditional crunches that are done with your back flat on the floor don't allow for maximum spinal flexion, thereby limiting the useful range of motion of the exercise.

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## **How To Do It:**

- A flat bench is used for this exercise.
- Your body will be perpendicular to the bench during the movement.
- Lie down across the bench with your lower back completely supported and your feet on the ground. Your upper body will be hanging over the edge from the mid-back up.
- Hold your arms so that your elbows are pointing forward over your face and your hands are near the top of your head.



- Arch down backwards (don't go too far - just get a good stretch) then crunch back up.
- You can hold weight in your hands once you get stronger but be careful with your back - make sure it is always supported.
- With any stretched crunch, don't cradle your hands behind your head. Your neck flexibility will then limit how much stretch you can put on your abs. Hold your hands over your head at arm's length for the best stretch.

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## Common Errors:

### 1. Stretching too far

Do not stretch so far back down or you will risk injury to your back. If you can see the floor directly behind you, you have gone too far. Only do this exercise if your lower back is not injured or sensitive. The stretch position can be hard on the back if it is in a weakened state.

### 2. Going too fast

This exercise should be done slowly and deliberately. Done at a slow pace, it is quite safe for the back. Done quickly and using excessive momentum, it can be very dangerous to the back.

### 3. Improper position on the bench

The placement of your body on the bench is critical to the safety and effectiveness of this exercise. Your lower back from the area just above your waistband to your midback should be supported on the bench.

- Placing your upper back on the bench will limit your stretch and decrease the tension on your abs, but it will make the exercise easier on your lower back.
  - Placing your glutes on the bench will send too much of your upper body over the edge of the bench, putting pressure on your lower back and throwing off your balance. This imbalance may cause you to tip over backwards.
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## **Tricks:**

### **1. The Swiss Ball Crunch**

If you have access to a Swiss Ball you can do stretched crunches on that instead of a bench.

- The execution is the same but it is much easier on your lower back and has the added bonus of making you stabilize yourself during the movement.
- Don't anchor your feet when you do this exercise as that will decrease the valuable instability and activate the hip flexors.
- You can roll the ball back for a bigger stretch, forward to make it easier, or to the sides to work the obliques. Practice rolling around a little while crunching to get a feel for how ball movement affects abdominal involvement.

An excellent variation of the Swiss Ball Crunch is the Small Ball Crunch. This is done using a much smaller, inflatable ball, e.g. around 16 to 24 inches in diameter. The smaller ball increases the instability of the exercise, forces your abs to support more of your bodyweight and increases the amount of stretch placed on the abs.

Most children's toy stores or sporting goods stores have small, inflatable balls. Look for one that has thick rubber as you will be resting much of your bodyweight on it. Test it in the store before you bring it home.

### **2. How to add resistance**

The simplest way to add resistance is to hold a weight plate or a dumbbell. Hold the weight either close behind your head with your arms bent (harder) or on your chest (easier).

Holding the weights this way will minimize shoulder and lower back stress. You may wish to have someone hand you the weight but you will normally not be using so much weight that you'll need someone to hand it to you.



Using a low pulley cable can be even better for adding resistance because you will get tension as you are moving horizontally, not just vertically. Set your bench up so that your head is pointing to the low pulley then reach back and grasp it. Start very light when first using the cable.

There is more tension at the fully contracted position with cables. Because of this, continue the movement all the way up until your upper body is almost vertical.

- Use a bar, rope, two handles, or grip on the sides of a single handle.
- Get a good stretch and suck in your gut. At the stretch position, take a deep breath to expand your rib cage. Drop your hips down then crunch up and over the bench.
- At the top, only your lower back should be in contact with the bench and you will look like you're nearly in a sitting position (though you'll be squatting). Squeeze hard at the top then breathe in and out a few times while squeezing to really get a burn going.





A good way to spot yourself on this variation is a technique I call Body Ratcheting.

- When you get to the sticking point, raise your legs off the ground like a leg raise, lock your arms and abs, then allow the momentum of your legs dropping to carry the weight to the next point. You can continue this all the way through the movement. The only limit here is how much your abs can take.
- You can also change the force curve of this exercise by moving the bench further away or closer to the stack.

### **3. Self-spotting**

- You can spot yourself by holding a weight plate or dumbbell.
- Hold the weight over head or in front of your chest during the stretch phase.
- Holding the weight will make it harder at the stretch but it will allow you to give yourself forced reps as you come to the contraction.
- Bring the weight overhead in a pullover movement and hold it in front of you as a counterbalance. This lets gravity help you crunch up.
- Move the weight back overhead when you go back down to the stretch position.

### **4. Feet up**

A very advanced variation of this movement entails keeping your feet off the ground for the duration of the movement. This should only be attempted by advanced trainers with both strong abdominal and lower back muscles.

- Balance is the key issue in this variation and will require a lot of practice to get right.
- You should place yourself slightly higher on the bench because your legs are no longer balancing on the ground.
- This will vary according to your own personal weight distribution but a good rule of the thumb is that the front edge of the bench should be about 1 to 2 inches below your waistband.



- As far as the movement goes, you should raise your legs up towards your chest slightly as you crunch your upper body up.
- This will counterbalance your changing weight distribution. If you don't raise your legs, you will tip forward.
- Keep your abs tight throughout the exercise and don't stretch back quite as far as with the feet-on-the-ground version. A little below horizontal is fine.
- Above all, take this one slowly and be careful!



### **5. Feet up and holding weights - most advanced**

Once you've mastered the above variation, you're ready to add some resistance to the exercise. This is a very challenging variation of the exercise and will take your abdominal strength and balance to the limits.



This movement does take practice and will require an idea of how much weight to use and where to position yourself on the bench. To give you a frame of reference, I've done this exercise very effectively using 20 lbs held between my feet and 35 lbs held on my chest. This weight ratio seems to balance the distances the weights are at from your pivot point in the middle quite effectively. If you were using a 5 lb dumbbell between your feet, trying using a 10 lb dumbbell on your chest.

Now when you do the exercise, as above, do your crunch up and leg raise at same time, taking care not to let the dumbbell slip from between your feet. Your abs will be screaming for mercy with all the movement itself as well as all the supporting and balancing required to even hold the weights in position.

If you find the weights slipping or your abs failing, move the weight you're holding over your chest directly over your stomach rather than dropping the weight between your feet first. If you drop the weight between your feet first, you may fall backwards because of the extra weight on your chest - that's why you're better off moving that first.

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## **Cable Gripping Trunk Twists**

### **Why Is This Exercise So Effective?**

This trunk rotation exercise not only places the regular tension of the cable trunk rotation on the abs, but by gripping the cable partway through the exercise, it adds another element of tension to it, doubling its effectiveness.

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### **How To Do It:**

This is a variation of an exercise you may already be familiar with. The exercise this variation is based on is commonly known as a "Cable Torso Rotation." This variation takes this basic concept and adds a unique twist that literally doubles the effectiveness of the exercise.

This movement is done on a cable machine. If you have access to a machine that has an adjustable height pulley, this is the best option. If not, it will also work on either a high or low pulley. The movement itself is exactly the same regardless of where you pull from. I will go into more detail about how to do the low and high pulley versions in the "Tricks" section below.

Set the pulley to about bellybutton height (or use either the high or low pulley) and attach a single cable handle to it.

Use a fairly light weight to start so that you get an idea of how the movement is performed and what resistance you'll need.

Stand perpendicular to the pulley with your left side towards the pulley. Grasp the handle with your right hand and take a step to the right. Plant your feet a little wider than shoulder width apart and get ready to rotate. The movement itself is very similar to a baseball swing, making it a very effective sports-training movement not only for baseball but for any sport that requires a powerful transfer of force from lower body to upper body.

At the start of the movement, your right arm will be held across your chest with your left arm at your side. Initiate the movement by rotating your torso to the right. Be sure to keep your elbow slightly bent and locked into position. If you allow the elbow to bend, you will turn the movement into a side row, lessening the effect on the obliques. Keep that arm stiff and fairly straight!

When you start this rotation, begin bringing the cable around in front of your body by pulling on the cable handle with your right arm. Your right arm will come away from your body as you rotate, placing more torque on the obliques.

Here comes the trick that doubles the workload on the abs...

As you start to approach the midpoint of the rotation (though you can also do this more towards the beginning of the movement very effectively as well), grasp the CABLE about 6 inches from the cable clip with your left hand. Do not grasp the handle itself with the left hand - it's important that you wrap your left hand around the actual cable for this to work. Read on...

In a normal cable rotation exercise, after you go past the halfway point of the rotation, the tension on the abs will start decreasing. The peak tension is at the halfway point. We're going to fix that!





Once you've passed the halfway point of the rotation, continue pulling the handle with your right hand but now start **PUSHING** forward and away from your body on the cable itself with your left hand. As a visual, think of the string games that kids play such as the Cat's Cradle.

What you're essentially doing is creating a new fulcrum for the tension of the cable to go through. Instead of losing some tension around the arc as you normally would, you now have direct tension on the abs again and in a different way than in the regular rotation exercise. This not only works the obliques on the pulling side with the pulling motion, it also works the obliques on the pushing side with a strong pushing motion.

The effect on the abs with this double movement is tremendous! The next day you should have a very strong feeling of tightness (and possibly soreness) in the upper/side ab area.

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## **Common Errors:**

### **1. Not pushing forward with the hand gripping on the cable itself**

It's **CRITICAL** with this exercise to push forward as you come around the midpoint of the exercise. This push is what adds the tension to the other side of the abs and makes this a more complete core movement. First, the one side pulls then the exercise smoothly transitions with the other side also pushing.

### **2. Not using enough weight**

If you find you're easily completing each rep without feeling a strong tightness in your abdominal area, you are most likely not using enough weight. This exercise should not be easy to perform.

### **3. Using too much momentum in a bad way**

As I'll explain in the "Tricks" section below, using some momentum in a targeted fashion can actually increase the power and effectiveness of this exercise. The only time momentum can be bad is if you use it with too light of weight and it then takes tension off the core muscles, making the exercise less effective.

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## **Tricks:**

### **1. Don't be shy to use power and momentum with this one**

After working this exercise for awhile and building up your core rotational strength with it, don't be shy to step powerfully into this exercise like a strong baseball swing to be able to use the most weight possible. This exercise doesn't need to be a delicate, carefully-controlled movement - the body can handle this force when you build up to it. Take the golf swing, baseball swing and hockey slapshot for examples of this. You can build tremendous power and rotational stabilizing strength this way and get your body used to rotating with powerful force.

To do this, start in a standing position, fairly close to the weight stack. Grip the handle in one hand and be ready to grip right away on the cable with the other - you can grip pretty much as soon as you start the movement when you're using heavier weight. Take a big step to the side then throw your bodyweight to the side, taking the weight with it. Explode with your rotation, gripping the cable right away and rotating as powerfully as you can. Don't lower it so it's completely out of control, but you also don't need to worry about focusing too much on the negative (lowering phase) of this movement. The real power of the exercise is in the explosiveness at the beginning and through the middle, not on the way down.

### **2. High pulley cable gripping trunk rotations**

If you don't have access to a pulley that is adjustable in height, using the high pulley is an option. Even if you do have an adjustable pulley, you can definitely benefit from doing this exercise from a high pulley. It will hit the muscles in a different fashion than simply doing the exercise with the cable at waist level (which is a more direct line of pull for the midsection muscles). The execution is basically the same, however it does transform the exercise into more of a crunching movement along with the rotational aspect of it. As you come down and around, push down towards the floor with the hand that is gripping on the cable. This will really hit the upper side abdominal area hard.



### **3. Low pulley cable gripping trunk rotations**

As with the high pulley version, this version is effective even if you do have an adjustable-height pulley. With the high pulley, the exercise is more of a crunch/pulling movement. With the low pulley version, the exercise is more similar to a lateral raise/pushing movement, which really hits the muscles in a different way. You will find that it even works your shoulders somewhat as you do it.



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## The "Ab Ripper"

### Why Is This Exercise So Effective?

There are several reasons why this exercise is extremely effective, not to mention challenging.

- **It works all the major muscle groups in your upper body** in one movement. The bench press half of the exercise works the chest, anterior delts and triceps. The pulldown half works the back, biceps, and posterior delts. The combination of the two movements works the entire abdominal region. It is extremely demanding to perform.
- This exercise takes advantage of a concept that can best be described as **contralateral antagonistic muscle activation**. In layman's terms, this means that when you work a certain muscle, e.g. the chest, the antagonistic or opposing muscle on the other side of your body (i.e. the back) will be a little stronger. This

increase in strength can be as much as 5% or more.

- It also places a **tremendous stabilizing requirement on the abs** during the movement due to the directly opposing forces placed on the body during the rep. One side of your body is pushing while one side is pulling. All the stress of these two opposing movements must be transferred through the core muscles of your abdominal region. In order to not let yourself get wrung out like a wet towel, you've got to squeeze your abs for all you're worth.

This movement is incredibly effective for martial artists, boxers and baseball players for developing explosive rotational power. In fact, it is effective for essentially any sport that has a rotational power component, which is most sports.

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## How To Do It:

Essentially, this exercise is half flat dumbbell bench press and half one-arm pulldown. You will be pressing the dumbbell at the same time as you are doing a one-arm pulldown. The technique is fairly straightforward but the effects are amazing.



Start by setting a flat bench perpendicular to and directly underneath a high pulley. You will be lying on the bench with only your upper back on the bench, e.g. if you were to stretch your arms out to the sides, they would be resting mostly on the bench to either side of you.

This orientation of the bench is very important for stability. If you set the bench normally and lie on it lengthwise, you're going to have a much harder time stabilizing your lower body when doing the exercise. Also, keeping your lower body off the bench will allow you the necessary freedom of movement to shift your legs and adjust your bodyweight positioning to perform the exercise most effectively.

- Attach a single handle to the high pulley and get yourself one moderate weight dumbbell. Start with a dumbbell that is about half of what you would use for a regular set of 8 reps on the flat dumbbell bench press. Set the pulldown weight to about 20 to 30 pounds more than this. You can adjust your weights upward as you become more familiar with and stronger at the exercise. Your first set will be a learning experience!
- Start by sitting on the bench with the dumbbell on end on your thigh, grasped in your left hand. Reach up and grasp the handle with your right hand. Make sure your right shoulder is directly under the pulley for the best line of pull. Here's how to get into position to start...

- Drop your rear end forward off the bench. At the same time move your left arm back to rest on the bench (you can kick the dumbbell up and back by raising your left thigh if you're using a heavier dumbbell).
- When you've done this movement, your upper back and upper left arm should be resting on the bench and the dumbbell should be balanced as though you were in the bottom position of the dumbbell bench press. You should have the handle in your right hand with your arm fully extended and stretched directly up.

### **Now it's time to rip those abs!**

- Tighten your abs up and do a rowing/pulldown movement with your right arm while simultaneously doing a bench press rep with your left arm. No secrets to this part! Just push hard and pull hard. Be absolutely sure to clench those abs as hard as you can at the start and all the way through to the negative (lowering) phase of the movement.
- You may find it necessary to shift your feet around in order to stay balanced in the movement. This is normal. Your body will find the proper placement for balance if you let it do its thing naturally. Occasionally, I've even found it necessary to kick one leg up in the air in order to stay balanced (this normally occurs at the start of the rep when you are about to push up/pull down).
- At the bottom of the movement, don't allow your upper arm to rest on the bench. We want to keep maximum tension on the abs throughout the exercise.

Be aware that it will take a few reps to become coordinated with this movement. It's not very common to be pulling and pushing forcefully at the same time, and it can feel awkward at first! You will feel tremendous tension across your entire abdominal region, unlike anything that you've ever experienced before. It will feel as though someone is trying to wring you like a wet towel.

Do a full set of 6 to 8 reps with your arms in this position then do one of two things...either immediately switch sides and do the pulldown with your left and press with your right, or take a rest and do the opposite sides as a separate set. Either way will work. Taking a brief rest between sets will allow your abdominal region a little time to recover from the stress of the movement.

To complete the set, set the dumbbell on end on your thigh, then use your legs to push yourself back up as you pull on the handle to help pull yourself back up to the sitting position on the bench.

Once you've got a handle on how to do the movement, you can start increasing the weights you're using to really push your core strength. As long as you keep the proper ratio of weight between the pulldown and the press (the pulldown weight a little more than the press weight), you can work up to some pretty big weights. As an example, I've gone as high as a 120 lb. dumbbell on the press and 150 lbs. on the pulldown.

My recommendation...don't increase the weight the first time you do this exercise. Stick with your starting weight and do it for 4 sets (2 sets on each side). This is a dimension of tension that your body will most likely NEVER have experienced before and I can promise that you WILL feel this the next day (and probably for several days after!), no matter how much abdominal training you've done in your life.

## **Inverse "Ab Rippers"**

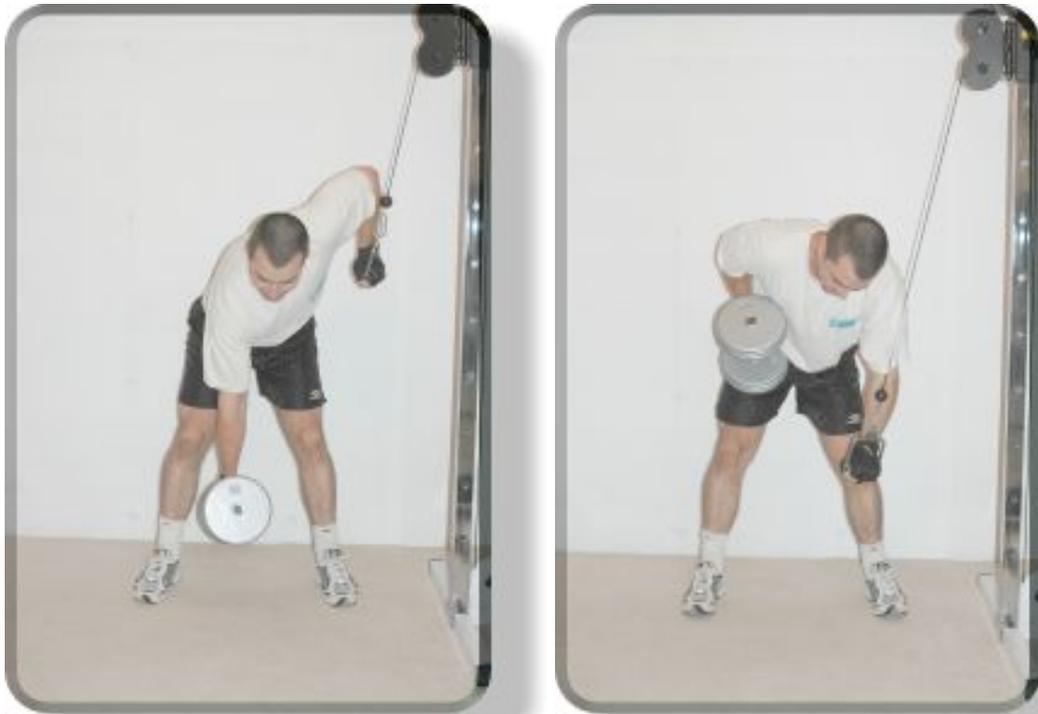
You've done the exercise lying down...now it's time to reverse the roles. This unique variation is exactly the same in concept -- push with one side and pull with the other. The only difference is the orientation of your body.

Instead of lying flat on a bench and pressing and pulling down, you're going to be doing a standing one-arm dumbbell row for your back and a one-arm cable-crossover/pressdown movement for your chest. This puts a whole new type of stress on the body - I would suggest working with the lying version first before attempting this one. This is a more

advanced variation of the exercise.

I would suggest trying a standing one-arm dumbbell row just by itself so that you have an idea of the mechanics and body position of the exercise. It's **CRITICAL** that you maintain a tight lower back with an arch throughout this exercise. Rounding the back over puts a lot of stress on the lower back area and, combined with the stress on the core when doing the full exercise, it could lead to injury if you're not careful or comfortable with the movement.

- You will need a dumbbell that is about 20 pounds heavier than the weight you have on the pulley. Use a single handle attached to the high pulley for this exercise.
- Stand sideways to the high pulley, grasp the handle then get it into position as though you were about to do a downward press with it (similar to a starting position for a cable cross-over).
- Now bend down and pick up the dumbbell in the other hand. Use your knees and keep your back tight and arched.
- You will be doing the row in between your legs for best stability.
- Row the dumbbell up while at the same time, pushing/pressing the cable handle down towards the floor.
- You will feel a **STRONG** twisting sensation through your entire abdominal area. Keep your abs tight, lower the weights and repeat!



This exercise puts your abs in a more strongly contracted position than when lying flat, giving the exercise a very different feel. Also, since your core is now also responsible for stabilizing and supporting the body in a bent-over position, it's going to be very strongly challenged. Keep a strict eye on your form for both halves of the exercise.

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## **Common Errors:**

### **1. Improper bench placement**

Be sure that you place the bench perpendicular underneath the handle so that you keep your lower body free to move. If you place the bench lengthwise, you're going to have a hard time stabilizing yourself.

## **2. Using too much weight too soon**

Start with a light to moderate weight until you get an idea of what your abdominals are capable of. This exercise places a tremendous shearing force on the midsection and your abs must be strong enough to hold tight and prevent the stress from going to the lower back.

## **3. Not squeezing the abs hard enough**

It is essential that you squeeze the abs hard from the moment you start the rep. Pulling and pushing with force at the same time sends a lot of stress through your abdominal area. You must be ready for it or you won't even be able to start the weight moving! Be sure to keep your abs as tight as you can on the negative as well. If you lose tension on the negative, the weights are going to come crashing down.

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## **Tricks:**

### **1. Explode**

You can develop tremendous explosive power through your abdominal core muscles by starting each rep with a powerful thrust. Start by clenching your abs as hard as you can. Think about exploding up with one arm and down with the other then do it! The explosion should start with a sharp abdominal contraction and follow through to your limbs.

### **2. Squeeze your chest and back muscles hard at the top of the movement**

Don't hit the top and take a rest. Squeeze everything hard. If you need to, you can take a rest at the bottom of the movement.

### **3. Pause between reps**

You can make your explosion even more effective by releasing the tension in your upper body between reps. Rest your upper arm on the bench, let your pulldown arm hang and stretch, and let your abs unclench. This releases all the elastic tension in your muscles forcing your body to start from scratch between reps.

### **4. Don't pause between reps**

Doing the reps in a continuous fashion places a tremendous amount of tension on the abs at the turnaround point at the bottom of the rep. Changing the direction of the pull/push must be done starting from the abs. Clench them hard!

### **5. Swiss Ball Push-Pulls**

Instead of using a bench, this exercise can also be done on a Swiss Ball (the large inflatable exercise ball).

The mechanics of this version are essentially the same, the major difference being decreased stability. Stick to moderate weights when doing this variation as you will have a very hard time stabilizing yourself and doing the exercise effectively with heavier weights.

The Swiss Ball does allow increased range of motion for both the press and the pulldown because your arm won't be contacting the bench at the bottom.

At the start of the movement, when you are getting the dumbbell into position, you are going to have to rest it on your chest while you reach up to grasp the pulldown handle.



## **6. Cable Cross-Over Standing Push Pulls**

This exercise can also be done using the regular cable cross-over machine. It's best done with an adjustable-height pulley but, if you don't have that, it can also be done kneeling down using the low pulley. The resistance won't be quite as direct but still very effective.

First, stand facing away from one pulley and towards the other. Reach behind you then use the other hand to help get it into position in front of you as though doing a one-arm chest press movement. Now reach forward and grasp the other handle in front of you. Leave your arm extended.

Now, at the same time, push with the one arm and pull back with the other. The effect is very similar to the free weight version, though it may not be as strong of a cross-tension on the abs.

With this version, focus on the rotation in the core rather than the push or pull itself. This is where the real work gets done by the abs.





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## **Pinchy Sit-Ups**

### **Why Is This Exercise So Effective?**

Similar in concept to a Janda Sit-Up, the Pinchy Sit-Up increases the tension on the abs by activating other muscle groups during the movement.

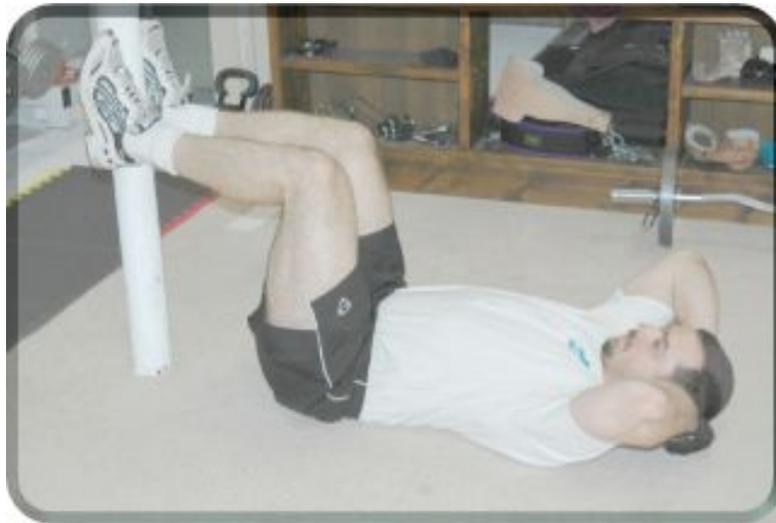
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### **How To Do It:**

This exercise is done similar to a regular sit-up but instead of your feet being hooked under something, you'll be setting them on either side of a pole (for example) or other solid vertical surface that you can squeeze between your feet (such as a table leg, a door or even someone's actual leg will work).

Lay on your back with your legs bent about 90 degrees both at the hips and the knees. Shift yourself closer or further away from your object to get the proper orientation. Now set your feet on either side of the object and squeeze your feet together **HARD** to anchor yourself, pinching the object between your feet. Don't hook your feet around it - just pinch the object directly on the sides.

Now start by doing a crunch. When you get to the top of the standard crunch, continue on and roll up into a full sit-up. Hold that position for a few seconds, squeeze the abs hard then lower slowly. Be sure to squeeze your feet together hard during the entire movement to anchor yourself and activate the adductor muscles. This adductor activation helps diminish hip flexor activation and send more stress onto the abs for the exercise. This basically looks like a two-part movement - the crunch then the sit-up.





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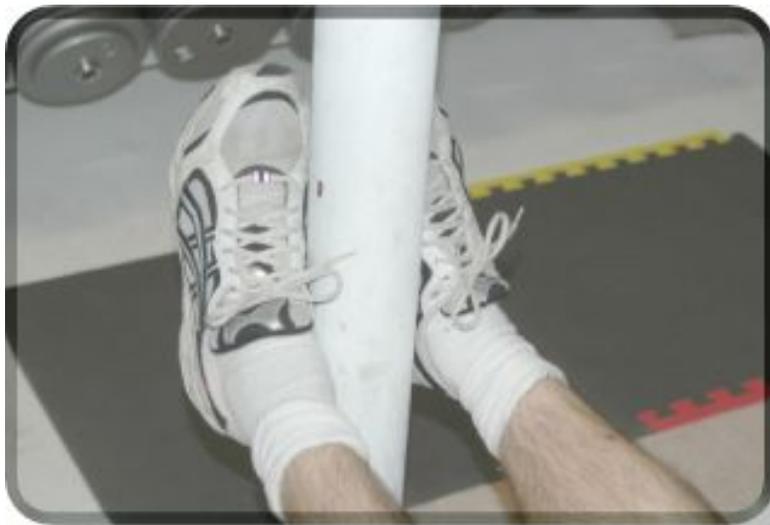
## **Common Errors:**

### **1. Hooking your toes around**

Be sure you don't mistakenly hook your toes around the pole or object. The temptation is there but that will activate the hip flexors, which we don't want to do.



**Right**



**Wrong**

## **2. Coming up all at once**

For maximum abdominal contraction, make sure you're working this as a two-part movement, coming up to the full crunch position THEN the sit-up.

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## **Tricks:**

### **1. Changing and adding resistance**

This exercise can be done with weight or without - start without. You can also use arm position to spot yourself - the exercise is harder with your arms behind your head, easier with them in front. If you use a dumbbell for resistance, hold it in front of you, not behind the head to prevent lower back stress.

### **2. Self-spotting**

When you start to fatigue, grasp behind your knees and use your arms to pull yourself up to the full sit-up position then release at the top and lower slowly. This gets the body into most contracted position for the abs even when your abs are fatigued.

### **3. Small Ball Pinchy Sit-Ups**

Set a small ball a few feet from the pole. Lay with your lower back arched over the ball and put your hands on the floor to stabilize while you get into position (the small ball allows your hands to be on floor - it's also not as far to go if you fall over). Now pinch your feet on pole strongly then lift your hands off the floor. Do a full sit-up while on the ball, using foot pressure on the pole to stabilize yourself on it. Set your hands on ground if you feel yourself tipping over.



# Swiss Ball Roll-Ups

## Why Is This Exercise So Effective?

This exercise targets the lower abs in a very dynamic fashion, forcing them to work not only for movement but for stabilization as well. It's a double-shot that will make your lower abs burn!

The Swiss Ball Roll-Up is done using a decline bench (or decline sit-up bench) and a Swiss ball. By combining the angle with the rolling action of the ball and a pull-in movement, you can strongly target the lower abs with no back stress.

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## How To Do It:

Move the bench in front of something solid, like a rack, machine or solid vertical post. The high end of the bench should be up against the solid object as this is what you'll be holding onto during the exercise. The higher the angle of the bench, the harder this exercise is so when you first try it start with a fairly low angle on the bench.

Place the ball on the bench, about halfway up it. Exactly where you set the ball to start will depend on the bench length and your height. This will take a little trial and error to get comfortable with. When you see how the exercise is done, it will give you a better idea of where you need to place it to start.

Rest your elbows on the knee pads at the top of the bench and grab onto that solid object in front of it. The ball should be contacting your thighs, arms slightly bent, and body straight. The point in time when you set your thighs on the bench and take your feet off the ground is when you'll be most unstable with this exercise. Hang on tight and set your thighs fairly wide on the ball the first time you do it. This will give you more control over the ball until you get used to the movement and get into position for it.

Now for the work...

Using abdominal power, roll the ball up the decline bench, bringing your knees up into your chest. The ball will roll down your legs as you pull your knees up and in. This results in an extremely strong contraction in the lower abs and abs in general, so squeeze very hard and hold it for a few seconds. You can also bend at the shoulders while doing this exercise. Remember, you're going to be very unstable on the ball while you're doing this exercise so hold on tight! If the ball rolls off the bench, just put it back on and start again.





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## **Common Errors:**

### **1. Setting the ball in the wrong place on the bench to start**

If the placement of the ball is too far off, you will either not be able to do the movement at all or it will be awkward or too short. Play around with positioning to get a good idea of where to place it. A good technique is to stand at the bottom of the decline bench and hold the ball in front of your thighs. Let your body drop forward while holding the ball so that it lands on the bench with you on top. Now grab hold of the post. This should give you a good indication of where to place it.

### **2. Placing your thighs too close together on the ball**

This makes the exercise more unstable and more difficult. When the thighs are close together, you are less able to use muscle power to maneuver the ball on the bench, making it more likely that the ball will roll off to one side.

### **3. Not squeezing the abs at the top**

The best part of this exercise is the top of the movement where your abs are tight and your knees are up into your chest. Squeeze the abs hard here!

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## **Tricks:**

### **1. On your toes**

As you roll up and in, try coming up all the way on your toes for maximum difficulty (both in tension on the abs and in difficulty keeping your balance on the ball). Your body will be far more unstable when the surface area contacting the ball is reduced down to only your toes.

## **2. Side to side**

If you've got strong abs, upper body strength and good balance, you can try moving the ball from side to side when you've got it held at the top of the movement. This makes the exercise very tricky and very unstable but it can add a strong contraction to your side abs.

## **3. Use your forearms to help**

Placing your forearms under the ankle pads will make this exercise easier by allowing your lats to help with the movement.



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