

# Top 10 Most Effective Ab Exercises

Courtesy to [Paige Waehner](#), About.com

## Bicycle Exercise



Bicycle Exercise for Abs

Want to know the most effective ab exercises? The following ab exercises are the results of the American Council on Exercise's [study](#) to determine the most effective ab exercises. While ab exercises won't spot reduce fat from the belly, strong abs are important for keeping your body healthy and protecting your spine. For more about flat abs, visit my [Abs Page](#) for articles, workouts, FAQs and more.

The Bicycle exercise is the best move to target the rectus abdominis (i.e., the 'six pack') and the obliques (the waist), according to a study done by the American Council on Exercise. To do this exercise correctly:

1. Lie face up on the floor and lace your fingers behind your head.
2. Bring the knees in towards the chest and lift the shoulder blades off the ground without pulling on the neck.
3. Straighten the left leg out while simultaneously turning the upper body to the right, bringing the left elbow towards the right knee.
4. Switch sides, bringing the right elbow towards the left knee.
5. Continue alternating sides in a 'pedaling' motion for 12-16 reps.

## Captain's Chair Leg Raise



*Paige Waehner*

The captain's chair leg raise is the second most effective move for the rectus abdominis as well as the obliques. You can do a variety of exercises on the captain's chair, which is a rack with padded arms that allows your legs to hang free and can be found in most health clubs and gyms. The key to keeping this move safe and effective is, first, to avoid swinging the legs or using momentum to bring the legs up. Second, keeping the knees bent will help you focus more on the abdominals and less on the hip flexors. To do it right:

1. Stand on chair and grip handholds to stabilize your upper body.
2. Press your back against the pad and contract the abs to raise the legs and lift knees towards your chest.
3. Don't arch the back or swing the legs up.
4. Slowly lower back down and repeat for 1-3 sets of 12-16 reps

## **5. Exercise Ball Crunch**

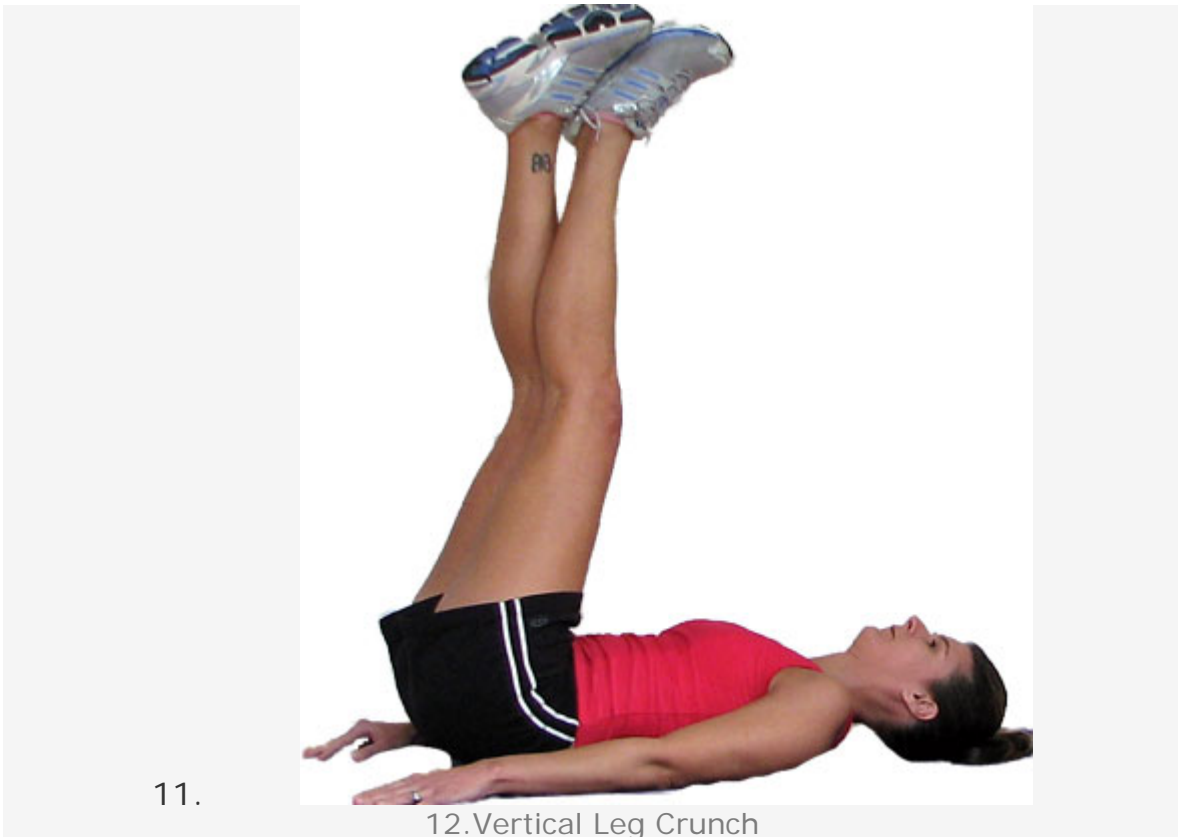


6.

7. Exercise Ball Crunch

8. The exercise ball is an excellent tool to strengthen the abs and comes out number three for working the rectus abdominis. To do it right:
9.
  1. Lie face-up with the ball resting under your mid/lower back.
  2. Cross your arms over the chest or place them behind your head.
  3. Contract your abs to lift your torso off the ball, pulling the bottom of your ribcage down toward your hips.
  4. As you curl up, keep the ball stable (i.e., you shouldn't roll).
  5. Lower back down, getting a stretch in the abs, and repeat for 12-16 reps.

## **10. Vertical Leg Crunch**



12. Vertical Leg Crunch

13. The vertical leg crunch is another effective move for the rectus abdominis and the obliques. To do it right:
14. 1. Lie face up on the floor and extend the legs straight up with knees crossed.  
 2. Contract the abs to lift the shoulder blades off the floor, as though reaching your chest towards your feet.  
 3. Keep the legs in a fixed position and imagine bringing your belly button towards your spine at the top of the movement.  
 4. Lower and repeat for 12-16 reps.

### **15. Torso Track**

16. The Torso Track is a tough exercise because it can hurt your back if you're not careful.
17. 1. Grip the handles of the Torso Track and pull the abs in without holding your breath (as though bracing them).  
 2. Exhale and glide forward as far as you comfortably can. If you collapse in the middle and feel it in your back, you've gone too far.  
 3. Contract the abs to pull your body back.  
 4. Add tension by using more tension chords.

### **18. Long Arm Crunch**



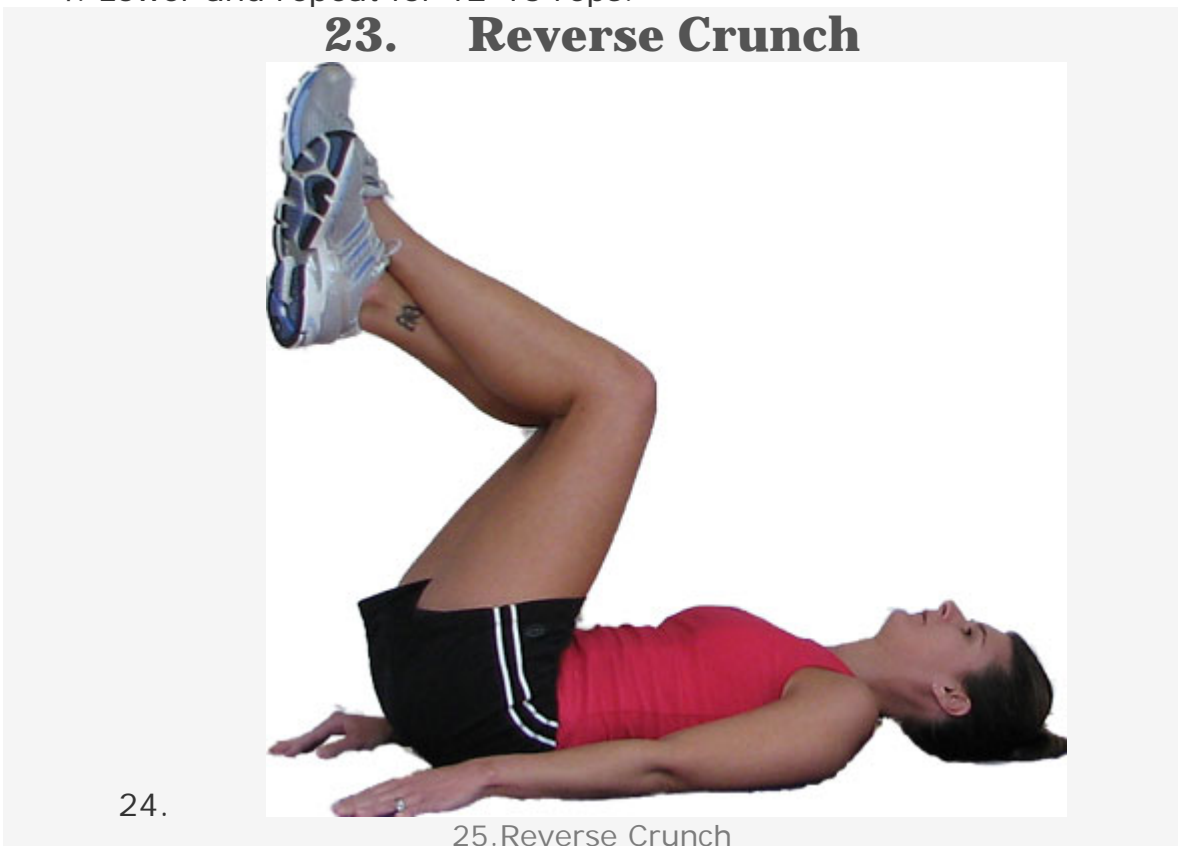
19.

20. Long Arm Crunch

21. This move, ranked 6th in the ACE study, emphasizes the upper part of the abs. To do it right:

22. 1. Lie on a mat and extend the arms straight out behind the head with hands clasped, keeping the arms next to the ears.
2. Contract the abs and lift the shoulder blades off the floor.
3. Keep the arms straight and avoid straining the neck. If you feel neck pain, take one hand behind the head while keeping the other arm extended.
4. Lower and repeat for 12-16 reps.

### 23. Reverse Crunch



24.

25. Reverse Crunch

26. It may seem like the reverse crunch is for the lower abs but, remember, the rectus abdominis is one long muscle, so you can't separate upper from lower. To do this move right:

- 27.
1. Lie on the floor and place hands on the floor or behind the head.
  2. Bring the knees in towards the chest until they're bent to 90 degrees, with feet together or crossed.
  3. Contract the abs to curl the hips off the floor, reaching the legs up towards the ceiling.
  4. Lower and repeat for 12-16 reps.
  5. It's a very small movement, so try to use your abs to lift your hips rather than swinging your legs and creating momentum.

## 28. Full Vertical Crunch



29.

30. Full Reverse Crunch

31. In a full vertical crunch, you really work the abs by involving both the upper and lower body. To do it right:
- 32.
1. Lie on your back and extend the legs up towards the ceiling.
  2. Place hands behind your head (lightly cupping it) and contract the abs to lift the shoulder blades off the floor.
  3. At the same time, press the heels towards the ceiling, creating a 'u' shape with the torso.
  4. Lower down and repeat for 12-16 reps.

## 33. Ab Rocker

34. The Ab Rocker (or roller) is number 9 for targeting the rectus abdominis. To do it right:

35.        1. Sit on the Ab Rocker and grab the bars in each hand.  
             2. Contract the abs and rock forward, originating the movement from the abs rather than using momentum.  
             3. Release and repeat for 1-3 sets of 12-16 reps.  
             4. Go slowly to reduce momentum. Try to focus on the abs rather than pushing with the arms.

### **36. Plank on Elbows and Toes**



37.

38. Plank

39.        The plank exercise ranked number 10 in the ACE study and is a great way to build endurance in both the abs and back, as well as stabilizer muscles. To do it right:
40.        1. Lie face down on mat resting on the forearms, palms flat on the floor.  
             2. Push off the floor, raising up onto toes and resting on the elbows.  
             3. Keep your back flat, in a straight line from head to heels.  
             4. Tilt your pelvis and contract your abdominals to prevent your rear end from sticking up in the air.  
             5. Hold for 20 to 60 seconds, lower and repeat for 3-5 reps.