

Hugo Rivera's Ab Routines



Now that you know the 7 principles for achieving washboard abs, you can start implementing them in your routines. Here are some routines based on your experience level:

Beginner's Ab Workout Plan

I will start by presenting a beginner abdominals routine. At this level, only one routine is presented that can be applied to both bodybuilders and figure competitors alike. The reason for this is because at this level there is not much differentiation between the two, by virtue of the fact that there won't be any weights used or any high intensity techniques.

The goal of this phase is to create a nice mind to muscle connection and to increase one's strength baseline.

Also, notice that for the beginner's routine, there are no specific amount of repetitions prescribed. The reason for this is because we just want you to focus on the feel and execution of the exercise at this time; not on the amount of reps.

Beginning ab workout plan for both men and women alike.

Weeks 1-3

MONDAY

Lying Leg Raises – 2 sets to failure
Swiss Ball Crunches – 2 sets to failure
Crunches To Side – 2 sets to failure
TVA training – 2 sets of 30 second vacuum contractions

Notes:

- Lying Leg Raises can be performed on any flat surface.
- The Crunches To Side can be performed on a Swiss ball by lying sideways on top of it, placing your hands behind your head with the legs scissored so that one leg is on front of the other one (this is for better stability) and then lifting your body sideways off the ball.

WEDNESDAY

Knee-Ins – 2 sets to failure
Partial Sit-Ups – 2 sets to failure
Lateral Bridge – 2 sets to failure
TVA training – 2 sets of 30 second vacuum contractions

Notes:

- On the Partial Sit-Ups, just lift your torso from the floor till you create a 30-degree angle between the floor surface and your torso. To perform a Lateral Bridge, lie on one of your

right side on a flat surface with your left shoulder, hips and knees stacked directly over each other. The right forearms will be on the ground perpendicular to the torso. The movement is performed by lifting your torso and legs off the surface while using the right forearm for support. When you hit failure then you repeat with the other side.

FRIDAY

Modified V-Ups – 3 sets to failure
Bicycle Crunches – 3 sets to failure
TVA training – 2 sets of 30 second vacuum contractions

Notes:

- The Modified V-Ups are performed with the hands behind the torso holding to the bench or a flat surface in order to provide stability. The typical V-Up does not allow for that.

General Training Notes (Applies To All Routines):

- Rest 30 seconds to 1 minute between sets.
- If a superset is noted, then there will be no rest till you perform all of the exercises listed. At that time, then you can rest 1 minute before the next superset.
- If a modified superset is prescribed, then you perform the first exercise, rest 1-1/2 minutes (90 seconds), perform the second one, rest 1-1/2 minutes (90 seconds) and then start over.
- Use a slow tempo of 2-seconds up, 1-second contraction and 2-seconds down unless otherwise noted. The goal is to really focus on the form and on the muscle being worked not on the amount of repetitions that can be performed.
- These routines can be performed at the beginning or end of your weight training workouts, though typically we prefer to work abs alone before doing cardio. This, in our opinion, is the optimal time to work them.

Weeks 4-6

MONDAY

Swiss Ball Crunches – 3 sets to failure
Lying Leg Raises – 3 sets to failure
Crunches To Side – 3 sets to failure
TVA training – 3 sets of 30 second vacuum contractions

WEDNESDAY

Knee-Ins – 3 sets to failure
Partial Sit-Ups – 3 sets to failure
Side Bends – 3 sets to failure
TVA training – 3 sets of 30 second vacuum contractions

FRIDAY

Bicycle Crunches – 3 sets to failure
Modified V-Ups – 3 sets to failure
Crunches with Rotation – 3 sets to failure
TVA training – 3 sets of 30 second vacuum contractions

Intermediate Abs Workout Plan

After 6 weeks at the beginning level, it is time to step up on the intensity ladder by a notch. At the Intermediate level, there will be slight differences between a bodybuilding ab workout program and a figure based one; mainly the fact that the bodybuilding program will emphasize the use of weight and lower repetitions in order to create thicker looking abs and deeper grooves in between them.

The Figure program on the other hand will emphasize a more slender looking waistline with less thickness; thus higher repetitions are used.

Use these programs for 6-8 weeks and then move on to the Advanced Routines.

Note on TVA Training:

At this level, you can perform some TVA training by executing 5 sets of 30 second vacuum contractions every day. Also, whenever you perform the exercises, make sure to bring your belly button in as far as possible. This also works the TVA and helps keep the waistline small.

Intermediate Abs Workout Plan For Bodybuilders

Train your abs three time a week or even every other day by alternating between Workouts (A) and (B):

WORKOUT (A)

Superset:

Swiss Ball Leg Raises (hanging) – 4 sets of 10-15 reps
Swiss Ball Crunches with Side Rotation – 4 sets of 20-25 per side
Swiss Ball Crunches – 4 sets of 10-15 reps

Notes:

- As you get stronger on the Swiss ball leg raises, start adding small amounts of weight in between your feet.
- As you get stronger on the Swiss ball crunches, start adding small amounts of resistance by holding a plate or a medicine ball right in front of you or behind your head as you get more advanced.
- Refrain from using a large resistance (if any) for the Swiss Ball with Side Rotations exercise.
- Keep a controlled pace at all times and focus on the contraction.

WORKOUT (B)

Superset:

Knee-Ins – 3 sets of 10-15 reps
Leg Lifts on Decline Bench – 3 sets of 10-15 reps
Side Crunches on Bench – 3 sets of 20-25 per side
Rope Crunches – 3 sets of 10-15 reps

Intermediate Ab Workout Plan For Figure

Train your abs three time a week or even every other day by alternating between Workouts (A) and (B):

WORKOUT (A)

V-Ups – 4 sets of 15-25 reps
Reverse Crunches – 4 sets of 15-25 per side
Bicycle Crunches – 4 sets of 15-25 reps

WORKOUT (B)

Roman Chair Leg Raises – 3 sets of 15-25 reps
Leg Lifts on Decline Bench – 3 sets of 15-25 per side
Swiss Ball Crunches – 3 sets of 15-25 reps
Swiss Ball Crunches with Side Rotation – 3 sets of 15-25 reps

Notes:

For all leg raises exercises, ensure that you bring your legs up until you hit the 90-degree angle between your torso and the legs.

Advanced Abs Bodybuilding Workout Plan

The Advanced routines make use of the toughest exercises and also the best techniques for increasing intensity. The bodybuilding program uses a periodization approach where one workout session is done using mainly high reps to target the slow twitch oxidative muscle fibers of the abs, the second sessions targets an even split of fast and slow twitch fibers and the final session just concentrates on the fast twitch fibers. Again, remember that the goal of the bodybuilding program is to create thicker looking abs and deeper grooves in between them.

The figure programs will use a slight amount of resistance in order to strengthen the abs but using high repetitions in order to keep the slender look. Some resistance is needed at the advanced level as there is still a need to create some depth in between the muscles of the abdominal wall.

Note on TVA Training: At this level you can train the TVA unconsciously by attempting to keep the waist line tucked in at all times at least whenever you stand. Believe it or not that works well. You can also continue to do the 5 sets of Vacuums but increase the time under tension to 60 seconds. Also, whenever you perform the exercises, make sure to bring your belly button in as far as possible. This also works the TVA.

Advanced Ab Workout Plan For Bodybuilders

Train your abs three times a week or even every other day by alternating between Workouts (A), (B), and (C):

WORKOUT (A)

Superset:

Bicycle Crunches – 4 sets of 50-100 reps
Crunches on Flat Bench – 4 sets of 50-100 reps
Leg Raises on Flat Bench – 4 sets to failure

Notes:

- All of these exercises will be performed in a sequence on a flat surface such as a bench.
- For the leg raises, bring your legs up until you create a 90-degree angle between the legs and the torso. For this exercise, just concentrate on form and feel and do as many reps as you can.

WORKOUT (B)

Superset:

Hanging Leg Raises – 3 sets of 10-15 reps
Hanging Knee-Ups (to the side) – 3 sets of 10-15 reps

Superset:

Swiss Ball Crunches with Side Rotation holding Medicine Ball in your hands – 3 sets of 20-25 per side
Weighted Swiss Ball Crunches – 3 sets of 8-10 reps

Single Set:

Bicycle Crunches – 3 sets of 25-45 reps per side

Notes:

- For the Swiss Ball exercise with Side Rotations hold a medicine ball in front of you with your arms extended (arms will create a 90-degree angle with the torso). 2. For the weighted crunches, you can hold the medicine ball with your arms extended over your head (in this case, both the arms and the torso create a straight line).

WORKOUT (C)

Modified Superset:

Weighted Knee-Ins – 3 sets of 6-8 reps
Weighted Swiss Ball Crunches – 3 sets of 6-8 reps

Modified Superset:

Weighted V-Ups – 3 sets of 6-8 reps
Rope Crunches – 3 sets of 6-8 reps

Notes:

- Weighted Knee-Ins and Weighted V-Ups will use a dumbbell in between your feet. Just be sure to start out light with the dumbbells as you do not want to incur an injury due to too much weight. Many times, a small 5-lb dumbbell will do the job. For the more advanced up to 25-lbs.
- To make the weighted knee-ins even more challenging, try also

holding a medicine ball in your hands in addition to a dumbbell in between your feet. This is a super advanced form of this exercise as when you perform it in this manner you won't be able to use your arms behind you to stabilize your torso.

- Remember that in a modified superset you perform the first exercise, rest 90 seconds, perform the second one, rest 90 seconds and then start over.

Advanced Abs Workout Plan For Figure

Train your abs three times a week or even every other day by alternating between Workouts (A) and (B):

WORKOUT (A)

Hanging Leg Raises with weight – 4 sets of 15-25 reps
Jackknife – 4 sets of 15-25 per side
Knee-In while holding up a medicine ball – 4 sets of 15-25 reps
Knee-Ins with side rotation while holding up a medicine ball – 4 sets of 15-25 per side

Notes:

- Limit weight on the Hanging Leg Raises to 5-lbs.
- To perform the Jackknife you will need a Swiss ball. Begin by getting into a push-up position with your feet and lower legs resting on a Swiss ball and your hands on the floor at shoulder width. Pulling in your belly button towards your spine, bring your legs towards your chest as you exhale by bending your knees and lifting your hips into the air. Hold the top position for a second and then straighten your legs again thus bringing them to the starting position.
- The Knee-In with the Medicine Ball is performed by holding a medicine ball at arms length in front of you (a 90-degree angle is created by the arms and the torso). Note that this version of the exercise, does not allow for the hands to hold your torso up as in the usual knee-ins where you place your hands behind and hold to the bench or the floor, thus making the exercise easier. This version will require some practice, but the torso will get strong enough and you will be able to perform it in no time.
- The Knee-Ins with Side Rotations are performed just as the exercise before it with the difference that in every repetition you will twist the torso from one side to the next.

WORKOUT (B)

Decline Bench Leg Raise Superset:

4 sets of 10 reps Regular Leg Raises
4 sets of 10 reps Scissor Leg Raises
4 sets of 10-second Static Contraction

Reverse Crunches on Decline Bench (Keep Feet off bench) – 3 sets of 15-25 per side

Rope Crunches with Double Impact Technique – 3 sets of 15-25 reps