

Plank

Working your Core (please begin on the knees and elbows first until stable for 1 minute)



Why?

The plank is one of the most specific forms of core training for runners and walkers. This exercise not only turns on all of the relevant core muscles, but turns them on at the right length and directions specific to running and walking, to counter torque the massive rotational forces of the legs and hips. The reduction of excessive rotation and lateral shifting prevents energy leaks that decrease turnover/cadence, thereby increasing speed and endurance.

How?

- Brace* your core
- Either on your knees or toes, hold a position on your elbows with your shoulders lowered towards your feet.
- Keep a straight line between hips, knees/ankles and shoulders
- Slowly lift one knee/leg up keeping your pelvis level.
- Don't let your hips sag and stop if any discomfort is felt in the lower back.
- Hold for 5-30 seconds
- Alternate legs
- Repeat with one arm at a time

Advanced: Lift the opposite arm and leg together (be sure you can support yourself and be able to do one arm and one leg separately for 1 minute each before trying this version).

Explanation:

By lifting one leg, that side of the body becomes a dead weight and wants to twist the body to the floor. This exercise simulates when the leg drives back in running and walking, helping to counteract these forces.

Sets:	2
Reps:	10
Hold:	15 seconds – 1 minute
Frequency:	After or between runs/exercise

Dynamic Alternatives:**

Speedwork, strides, bounding, two legged hopping forward.

***Brace (your core muscles):**

Recent research shows that the common advice to pull in your belly button limits the full bracing capacity of your core muscles. Although pulling your belly button in activates a very important core muscle, it does so at the expense of several other key core muscles. This is why power lifters keep their stomachs out so their spines do not buckle during maximum lifts. Preferably, try to “bear down” as if you are going to be punched in the stomach for full core activation. For more research, please see Dr. Stuart McGill’s work at: <http://www.ahs.uwaterloo.ca/kin/people/StuMcGill.html>.

****Dynamic Alternatives:**

- ***Bounding:** Leaping as high and as far forward as possible by driving the knee up and pushing off. It should feel as though you are trying to stay in the air as long as possible. Start with 10 steps, 2-3 sets and progress to 20 steps. An advanced version would be bounding up an incline/hill. For a video demonstration go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnhMpLONbtY&feature=related>
- **Strides:** Slightly exaggerated stride length when running fast. Slowly accelerate and decelerate over 60 -100 metres, 4-8 times.
- **Speedwork:** A variety of intervals of faster and slower running. General guidelines are faster intervals of 30 seconds to 5 minutes followed by recovery of half the time of the interval.