

## Score with Core Strength

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Core conditioning is vital for general fitness and balance, let alone optimal sport performance. The "core" actually consists of many different muscles that stabilize the spine and pelvis and run the entire length of the torso. A strong core gives you:

- **More effective, controlled movement**
- **Increased protection and "bracing" for your back**
- **Less Fatigue**
- **A more stable platform for sports movement**
- **Improved posture and balance**

Because the muscles of the trunk and torso stabilize the spine from the pelvis to the neck and shoulders, they allow powerful movements of the arms and legs. All powerful movements originate from the center of the body out, and never from the limbs alone. The more stable the core, the most powerful and controlled the extremities can move. Whether you are bicycling, playing golf, shooting baskets, or playing tennis the core needs to stabilize first. In skiing, for example, good core stability ensures the effort you put into your skis translates into the movement you want. With a weak core, the force you are attempting to place into the skis will be dissipated in your body vs. into creating an effective change of direction.

Participating in a core fitness program, including mat work, balance activities, and sport specific agility exercises, two to three times per week will enhance your sport performance. Core conditioning exercise programs need to target all the muscle groups of the trunk and torso and are most effective when the torso works as a solid unit and both front and back muscles contract at the same time, multiple joint movements are performed, and stabilization of the spine is monitored.



Body weight exercises are an easy and cost effective way to develop core strength. Other exercises that develop core strength include exercises on a stability ball, work with medicine balls and wobble boards, and Pilate's and Yoga exercise programs. To get optimal results choose exercises for your core that get muscles working together at the same time and focus on quality of movement rather than quantity. Body position and alignment are crucial when performing core strengthening exercises. When starting out, take it slow and learn how to properly perform each exercise.

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