



FIT2PADDLE 5-DAY CORE CHALLENGE

DAY 2

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

In DAY 1 you either refreshed yourself on three basic STABILITY exercises — or perhaps you tried them for the first time. If you had any trouble with them, or don't feel like you have complete mastery yet, repeat them again in DAY 2. There's no shame in leaving the exercises in this document for such time when you feel confident that you have mastered the basics. In fact, I highly recommend it!

If you are moving forward to DAY 2 exercises, the same principles apply as on DAY 1. Make sure you are warmed up (either by doing the warmup sequence from DAY 1 or from a workout). Take your time to do each exercise slowly, and with control. If you rush through it you'll be cheating yourself and risking injury. If an exercise SEEMS too easy, just SLOW IT DOWN.

BRACING and HOLLOWING EXERCISES

Generally speaking, core exercises fall into two categories: bracing movements and hollowing movements. **Bracing** involves pushing your abdomen out, as if preparing for a punch to the belly. Try it now. Stand tall, push your belly button *away* from your spine, and feel your abdomen tighten and brace. It's not just pooching out belly. Place your fingers 2-3" to the side of your belly button, and push in. Now, contract your muscles and try to push your hand out. That's bracing. Bracing activates your *entire* core, stabilizes the spine from all angles and directions, and is key for all major movements like squats, lunges, and pushups.

Hollowing on the other hand, involves drawing your belly button in *toward* your spine. If you exhale deeply, and draw your abdomen in and tighten (imagine trying to zip up a pair of jeans that are a wee bit tight) that's the feeling of hollowing. (Yes, you can keep breathing while hollowing!) Hollowing primarily activates one major muscle of the core, the transverse abdominis, which plays an important role in trunk flexion, extension as well as protecting your organs.

[TIP: if you're new to the concept of bracing, try it next time you paddle and you will notice an immediate difference in your ability to move water. For real! Actively brace next time you squat (loaded or not), lunge, suitcase carry, etc. and see how much better the movement feels.]



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Do 3 sets of 30" on, 30" off each of:

(B = bracing. H = hollowing)

- Pushup (B)
- Superman (H)
- Mountain climber (B)
- Plank (B)
- Hollow body hold (H)

Do the exercises in the order given. No additional rest between rounds unless you are dying. Then take an extra 30". If you experience ANY pain, stop that exercise immediately.

Stretch when you're done (see DAY 1).

Exercise descriptions are not in the order you should do them. They are in an order that worked best for formatting and space.

HOLLOW BODY HOLD (H)

LEVEL I

- Lie supine (face up) on the floor, arms extended above your head. Hollow (draw in) your core and lift your head, arms, and shoulder blades off the floor. Keep your biceps at your ears. If this is too difficult at first, try bending your knees and putting your feet flat on the floor..

LEVEL II

- Lie supine (face up) on the floor, arms extended above your head. Hollow (draw in) your core and lift your head, arms, shoulder blades and legs off the floor. Keeping your biceps at your ears, your body should look like a shallow bowl. Hold for 30" and release. [If you can't hold this for 30", don't force it – or you will break form and risk injury to your lower back. Break it up into smaller chunks and work your way up to it as your core gets stronger.]

LEVEL III

- Same as Level II, but now rock back and forth gently, without changing the position or angle of your arms or legs, keeping your core hollowed.

LEVEL IV

Same as Level III, but do a 360° circle AS you rock. Once you complete the circle, rock back in the other direction.



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PLANK (B)

LEVEL I

- Start in standard plank position (on your hands rather than forearms), brace your core, and create a straight line down your entire spine, from head to heel. Be careful not to let the hips sag, or the butt rise. If you're not used to doing planks, you can let your butt rise a *little* bit, but not more than a few inches. If you can't do 30" in one shot, break it up into sets of 5 or 10" until you can :)

LEVEL II

- *Forearm plank:* Support yourself on your elbows/forearms, keeping your upper arms perpendicular to the floor
- *Up/down plank:* Alternate between a forearm and standard plank: from starting position drop your elbows to the floor one at a time, gently and with control, and then push yourself back up again, also one at a time.

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LEVEL III

- *Active plank:* In a forearm plank, imagine your feet and forearms are on opposite sides of a divide. Now, try and create maximum tension by trying to draw (without sawing) your elbows and toes closer together (as if you're trying to close the gap). This can also be done on your hands, but it's not quite as effective.
- *Sawing plank:* In an active plank, slowly rock forward and back. This can also be done on your hands while creating maximum tension from your toes to your hands.

LEVEL IV

- *Extended/walking plank:* In a standard plank, walk your hands as far forward as you can without sacrificing your form, and back to starting position. Then walk your feet back, again without losing form, and return to starting position. As this becomes easier, see if you can hold the extended position for a few seconds before walking back to starting position.
- *Sideways walking plank:* In a standard plank, walk your hands and feet to the left, then to the right, without sacrificing your form.

LEVEL V

- *Stability ball plank:* support either your hands, forearms, or feet on a stability ball. To further challenge yourself, try to make small circles with the ball, first in one direction, then the other.



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PUSH-UP

Think of the pushup as a vertically moving plank. Start in a standard plank position (on your hands rather than forearms), rotate your pinkie fingers slightly out (this will lessen the strain on your shoulders and prevent elbow flare), brace your core, and create a straight line down your entire spine, from head to heel. The only thing that should change as you lower and raise your body is the bend in your arms.

LEVEL I

- *Knee pushups:* If you're just starting out and pushups are too difficult on your toes, do them on your knees. Take extra care to maintain that straight spine — no arching your back or elevating your bum higher than your head.
- *Incline pushups:* Use a bench, kitchen counter, or even a set of stairs to elevate your upper body.

LEVEL II

- *Decline pushups:* elevate your feet on a stair or bench.

LEVEL III

- *Hand-release pushups (HRPUs):* lower your body all the way to the floor, then lift your hands off the floor (doesn't have to be much, even just a hair is fine). Then push yourself back up to starting position. Be sure not to let your hips and torso kip, arch, or sag. HRPUs can also be done on the knees.

LEVEL IV

- *Tempo pushups:* This is a great way to increase your pushup strength! Lower down to a count of three, push back up to a count of one. Or lower down to a count of one, and push back up to a count of three. Mix it up! If you're trying this for the first time, or find yourself getting fatigued quickly, drop to your knees on the push-up phase (maintaining that straight spine from head to heel!).
- *Weighted pushups:* wear a weighted vest, balance a weight plate on your back, or loop a resistance band around your back and under your hands to add some resistance.

LEVEL V

- *Dynamic pushups:* From the down phase of the pushup, push up with enough force to momentarily lift your hands off the ground. There may not even BE any space to being with, you may just feel your contact with the ground lessen slightly. Build your way up to full release, and then go for a clap if you dare!



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MOUNTAIN CLIMBER (B)

LEVEL I

- Start in a standard plank position with a braced core. Your butt may rise a little, but it shouldn't go above your head. Slowly bring your right knee forward and directly under you, toward your right elbow. Keep your right foot off the floor and your core engaged throughout. Return to start and repeat on the left.

LEVEL II

- *Add speed:* run or jump your mountain climbers instead of walking them.

LEVEL III

- *Spiderman:* lift your leg out to the side (similar to a fire hydrant exercise), and aim your knee to the outside of your elbow. As you get stronger and more flexible, try bringing your knee all the way up to your shoulder.
- *Cross-body/oblique:* aim your knee to the opposite elbow, without swinging your hips side-to-side.

LEVEL IV

- *Same side crunch:* as you bring your right leg forward, bring your right elbow back to meet your knee. You'll have to tilt sideways just a bit to balance.

LEVEL V

- *Hands wide:* Instead of having your hands directly under your shoulders, walk them out further/ as far as you can to the side. The wider you go, the more your butt will rise: aim to have it no more than just at or slightly above your head at fullest arm extension.
- *Hands forward:* instead of having your hands under your shoulders, walk them forward as far as you can without compromising your basic form. Your butt will rise above your head for this one.



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SUPERMAN (H)

LEVEL I

- Lie prone (face down) on the floor, legs straight, arms at your sides. Hollow (draw in) your core, squeeze your glutes, and lift your chest off the floor, reaching your fingers back toward your feet. Hold at the top for a count of 1-2.

LEVEL II

- Same as Level I, but also lifting your feet (and knees) off the floor. Hold at the top for a count of 1-2.

LEVEL III

- This time lie prone with your arms extended forward. Hollow your core and lift your arms and legs simultaneously, keeping your biceps at your ears. Hold at the top for a count of 1-2.

LEVEL IV

- As you lift up, bend your arms and pull your elbows back, as if you were trying to touch them, activating a contraction of the lats.

LEVEL V

- Same as Level III but with a light (2-3lbs max) dumbbell in each hand, palms facing down. At the top of the superman (with arms and legs raised), keeping your arms straight, bring your arms back and try to touch your hands together behind you. *I recommend you try this without the dumbbells first.*