Exercise 101: Crunches

by Michael Wood, BS, PTA

En Español (Spanish Version)

Name of Exercise—Crunch
Type of Exercise—Single-joint
Muscles used—Abdominal muscles

Starting Position:

![Image of starting position]

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- Lie face up on an exercise mat.
- Bend your legs at the knees with your feet flat on the ground.
- Place your hands behind your ears, but do not clasp your hands together.

Upward Movement:

- Tighten your abdominal muscles to prepare. (Think about pulling your belly button towards your back.)
- Breathe out. Lift your head and shoulders until your shoulder blades are just off the floor.
- Keep your neck straight and your chin up. Avoid tucking your head and neck into your chest.
- Your elbows should remain out to the sides.

Downward Movement:

- Lower your shoulders down in a controlled manner while keeping your lower legs in position.
- Inhale while moving down.

Trainer Tip:

As a beginner, it is important to perform a posterior pelvic tilt prior to performing the crunch. To do this, press your lower back into the floor while curling your pelvis slightly upward. This will help you engage the right muscles.

Modifications:

There are a few modifications that can make the exercise more challenging:

- Bring your feet off the floor. Make a right angle at your hip and bend your knees so your lower legs are parallel to the floor.
- Do the exercise while balancing on an exercise ball.

Warnings:

Avoid pulling up or jerking on your head with your hands. This could cause injury to the neck. Keep your hands light on your head and concentrate on using your abdominal muscles to do the crunch. Make sure to maintain correct technique even as you fatigue.
REFERENCES:


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