

Exercise of the Week – Week 4

Plank

Standard Plank



Planking is a simple but effective bodyweight exercise. Holding the body (light as a feather) stiff as a board develops strength primarily in the core—the muscles that connect the upper and lower body—as well as the shoulders, arms, and glutes.

This static exercise—meaning the body stays in one position for the entirety of the move—requires no equipment and can be performed just about anywhere.

1. Plant the hands directly under the shoulders (slightly wider than shoulder-width apart) like you're about to do a push-up.
2. Ground the toes into the floor and squeeze the glutes to stabilize the body. Your legs should be working in the move too; careful not to lock or hyperextend your knees.
3. Neutralize the neck and spine by looking at a spot on the floor about a foot beyond the hands. Your head should be in line with your back.
4. Hold the position for 20 seconds. As you get more comfortable with the move, hold your plank for as long as possible without compromising form or breath.

Forearm Plank



This variation, also one of the most common ways to perform a plank, is slightly easier than holding the body up with just the hands. Place the forearms on the ground with the elbows aligned below the shoulders, and arms parallel to the body at about shoulder-width distance. If flat palms bother your wrists, clasp your hands together. (Note: Any of the following plank variations can be performed with straight arms or in a forearm position.)

Knee Plank



This plank is noticeably easier to hold than the traditional straight-arm plank, making it great for beginners because it allows them to concentrate on form. By resting the knees on the ground, there's less stress on the lower back. Rest your knees on a rolled up mat or towel if they feel uncomfortable on the floor.