

THE BOOK OF ABZ



COTY6

THE BOOK OF ABZ

The A.M. & P.M. Abs Program

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who is Cory Gregory?	4
Achievements	5
My Abdominal Game Plan	6-7
Misconceptions and Training Methodologies	8-12
The AM/PM Abs Training Program	13-17
The Exercise Library	18-26
The Stick Twist	27
The Vacuum	28
Reverse and 45 Degree Hyper	29
The Good Morning	30
Just Use 1 Wheel	31
Abbing Nightly	32-33
Cory Gregory's 2-Step Plan to Granite Abs	34-36
Thank You	37
Welcome to CoryG	38
Follow Me	39
Business & Biceps Podcast	40
Max Effort Build a Stack	41
Old School Gym	42-43

WHO IS CORY GREGORY?

Cory Gregory is a serial fitness entrepreneur, leader in the nutrition industry and a top training expert. As a way to save money for college, Cory worked as an underground coal miner until he opened his first gym at the age of 20. Quickly, Cory earned the reputation as an industry expert in both personal training and nutrition, and now co-owns the famous Old School Gym outside of Columbus, OH with Dustin Myers. Cory co-founded one of the fastest growing sports nutrition brands ever called MusclePharm. Most recently, Cory has developed and co-founded a new sports nutrition brand that is direct to consumer, called Max Effort Muscle. He also runs an online programming and nutrition site at corygfitness.com, which has members in over 50 countries. Alongside managing partner of Max Effort Muscle, John Fosco and Cory started one of the fastest growing podcasts named Business & Biceps. The podcast has now surpassed 1 million total downloads.



Cory has competed in more than 30 powerlifting competitions, with best lifts including 550 squat and 575 lb. deadlift at a bodyweight of 198 lbs. Also a 540 squat and deadlift at a bodyweight of 181 lbs. Cory has also competed in 14 drug-free bodybuilding events, and has graced the cover of 11 fitness magazines. He has his exercise specialist certificate from Columbus State, plus is also a certified NESTA nutrition coach, certified by Westside Barbell, and also holds a CrossFit Level 1 Trainer Certificate. On top of these accolades, Cory was recently added to Arnold Schwarzenegger's fitness advisory board. Learning from and being mentored by some of the biggest names in training and nutrition, including Arnold, Bill Philips, Louie Simmons, Dr. Eric Serrano, Dr. Mauro DiPasquale and John Broz, has allowed Cory to reach the level of success he has to this point.

Achievements

Reebok Master Trainer & Athlete

Co-Owner Old School Gym

Owner of Corygfitness.com (Members in 50 countries worldwide)

Author The #MindsetManual

Author of Entrepreneur or Wantrepreneur

Co-Founded Activ8media (Consulting company)

Co-Founded MaxEffortMuscle

Co-Founded MusclePharm®

Certified Exercise Specialist

Certified NESTA Nutrition Coach

Certified Westside Barbell

Level 1 Cross Fit Trainer

Arnold Schwarzenegger Fitness Advisory Board

MY ABDOMINAL GAME PLAN



My ab mission statement: To make my abs so thick, so I can put my finger between the ridges when I am lean. It's always been a goal of mine to have picture perfect abs that look like they were carved out of stone.

Some have them genetically, but I can assure you that it did not start out that way for me. For those that had to work for their abs, they know that at a basic level: abs = discipline. Discipline of diet, training, conditioning, etc. are all going to play considerable parts when it comes to development.

I was not a naturally ripped kid growing up. I had a little more body fat at the time, and I am more insulin sensitive than most people. My core idea is to make my abs as dense as possible, so that even at a higher body fat percentage, my abs will still show to some extent. I have played around with this concept and style of training for years, and I have found this to be most effective.

My go-to ab exercises include ab wheels, weighted crunches BEHIND the head, and heavy ab cable pulldowns. Another includes strict weighted and non-weighted toes to bar. The goal is to make my abs look better than most people the majority of the time. I can do this because of how deep my lines are.

The conventional way to train your abs is to do countless unweighted ab crunches, bicycles, etc. Think of it this way: are you going to do a thousand bicep curls with a three pound dumbbell, or are you going to do 10-15 reps with a 30 lb. dumbbell?

When it comes time to cut down to 8% body fat, I'll end up looking like a total freak show because of the thickness that has compounded in training. I stick out like a sore thumb next to most guys on stage because although we could be the same body fat percentage, my abs are popping out. Brick check!



TRAINING MISCONCEPTIONS

Now that we've covered my abdominal game plan, we can transition into common misconceptions and training methodologies out there in the gym world.

Just like with most things in training, diet etc., there isn't one single way to do something. Over the years I've tested, re-tested and used myself as a personal experiment. My goal is to find out what works and what doesn't work for me. From this practical experience, I can bring what I learn to my training group, and then eventually to a larger crowd once it has been proven over and over again.

It is crucial that you track your progress as you go because you may have a better stimulus with one exercise over another. Maybe ab wheels are giving you the training stimulus that you need to sculpt some bricks, or maybe it's heavy ab cable pulldowns. By tracking progress, we can optimize our training and hone in on what's going to give us the best results.



#1 - DON'T NEGLECT YOUR LOWER BACK!

It is imperative that you are hitting your lower back and posterior chain just as much as you hit your abs. This is particularly common in the modern gym world with people racking up as many reps as possible. This eventually will create an imbalance over the long term.

When I started going to Westside Barbell, I discovered how weak my abs really were. Aesthetically they looked fantastic, but I was training higher unweighted reps, resulting in them becoming weak. I was leaving a ton on the table for my potential with the power lifts.

Since properly utilizing my lower back with GHDs, Good Mornings, and other hamstring work, I've been able to balance out both sides (anterior and posterior). I know this because I use myself as the guinea pig, as well as track all results and progress. Training your lower back and core to look great AND be functional will translate directly into gains across the board.



#2 - THE OBLIQUES

Frank Zane, three-time Mr. Olympia, is one of the best bodybuilders of all time. I've always idolized Frank's attention to symmetry and proportion, and I believe in many ways our physiques are similar. Frank has one of the smallest waistlines ever, so when it came to oblique training, I definitely sought out his guidance.

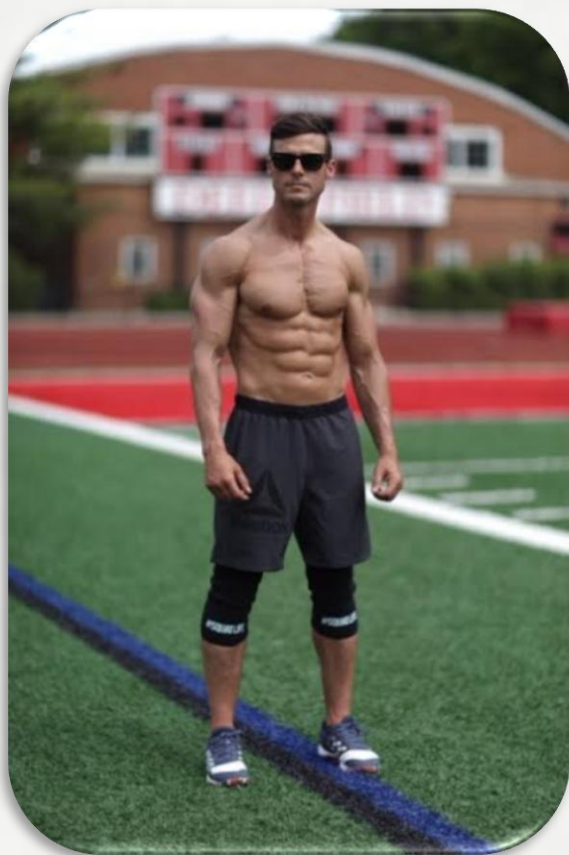


I decided to reach out to Frank through an online consultation, to discuss the obliques specifically. Here is what he told me: "I never trained my obliques with weight because I didn't want my waistline to get thicker." No wonder he was so tight around the waistline.

Bodybuilding is an illusion. If your waist looks smaller, the upper body will look enormous on stage. Implementing hundreds of stick twists and vacuum holds, conditions the obliques while keeping the extra mass off. These high reps will tighten that region up substantially. In addition, my conditioning, diet and supplementation play a vital part in keeping the extra body fat off my obliques.

Train your obliques to go away, not to get thicker.

#3 - THE BODY FAT MISCONCEPTION



The body fat misconception in relation with the abs has plagued many minds. It may seem like common sense, yet I hear the same thing time and time again. This is the misconception of how people fail to realize that your body fat level has to be low enough to even see your abs!

My philosophy is to train them to be thicker, which will leave you with deeper ridges for separation. When you are at a higher body fat percentage, you can still see them to some extent because of how thick they are. We've achieved this through doing various weighted ab

exercises. Through personal experience, I can sit around 12% body fat and still see my abs. When it comes time to get down to the single digits, I look freaky because of this style of training.

What about the lower abs? Many people complain that their lower abs won't come in, but in reality they simply are not lean enough yet. To be blunt, your body fat percentage needs to be at least sub 8% for them to show fully. Many people suggest that they are doing the wrong type of training for their abs, but they most likely aren't being strict enough with their diet to shed the remaining body fat.

You must drop your ego here, and focus your energy on becoming leaner. Your conditioning, diet and supplementation are going to collaboratively work together to achieve the abs you want.

#4 - PERFORMANCE VS. AESTHETIC

Why should you worry about training for performance, as well as aesthetics? By training your abs this way, you get the best of all worlds: increases in strength, performance and appearance of your abs. Below, I will go through my main weighted ab exercises, explaining why they are important.

The toes to bar. This movement boosts ab strength for deadlifters off the ground, helps create stability in the bottom of a squat, and gives you a faster stride when your knees are coming into your chest.

Next, in my opinion, ab wheels are the best exercise for powerlifting and performance. As you initiate the movement, rolling the wheel out forces you to brace your entire core, similar to when you press into the belt during squatting. From here, we have weighted crunches, which will strengthen your upper abs and solidify your core. This will be especially helpful when locking into a belt.



Training your abs this way will make them tremendously thick, giving you the aesthetic look on the outside, while instilling the proper biomechanics of bracing your core for weightlifting.

THE AM/PM ABS

TRAINING PROGRAM

AM/PM abs has been one of my most significant training discoveries thus far. I believe that I have found the most effective ab plan, and I have been executing this plan for the last several months.

AM/PM abs has given me the opportunity to earn one of the best midsections in the business, due to the work and time that I have invested. One of the greatest benefits of this plan is that it will make you look great aesthetically, as well as boost your performance in the gym. When I say this, I'm speaking for my training group as well, not just me. By hitting various angles throughout, we can keep the body constantly guessing, which in turn gives us the thickness that we want to obtain.



CONSISTENCY. This concept cannot be emphasized enough. I don't do anything special, I just don't miss. You need to apply this principle to your ab training, because it will pay off. If you always hit your AM/PM abs, coupled with the lower back training for the next 3-6 months, you will be amazed on what happens to your midsection.

My abdominal region has continued to tighten up, as well as stick out over time. I have re-dedicated myself to the Ab Wheel, discovered the single Ab Wheel, used toes to bar as a warm-up in workouts, hit different angles for Weighted Crunches, honed in my technique on Ab Cable Crunches, and finally have established a true mind/muscle connection.

I've went through different phases where my physique looks great, but I have never looked this great for this long. I am still improving to this day, and my body is looking freaky no matter what day of the week it is. When I'm on stage hitting poses, they ALL LOOK BETTER because of the prevalence of my abs. By developing a small waist, everything will naturally look even better.

In this outline, we will cover the AM/PM protocol starting with an Advanced Level, down to a Beginner Level. We've also added different things I have done in the past, and you are certainly capable of sprinkling these into your ab training.

We are aiming to give your overall physique a polished, granite look by making them THICK n NASTY!!



AM - ABZ

AB WHEELS - 4 Sets

SUPER ADVANCED - Ab Wheels - 25 reps with 1 Wheel

ADVANCED - Ab Wheels - 25 reps with 2 Wheels

INTERMEDIATE - Half Ab Wheels - 25 reps

BEGINNER - Planks - Hold for 30-60 seconds

AB CABLE CRUNCH - 4 Sets

ADVANCED - Heavy Weighted Ab Cable Crunch - 8-12 reps

****Aim for Body weight****

**INTERMEDIATE - Moderate Weighted
Ab Cable Crunch -**

12-15 reps

**BEGINNER - Light Weighted Ab Cable
Crunch - 15-20 reps**



AM - LOWER BACK

BACK EXTENSIONS - 4 Sets



**ADVANCED - Back Extensions
- 20 reps with 45 lb. plate**

**INTERMEDIATE - Back
Extensions - 20 reps with NO
WEIGHT**

**BEGINNER - Supermans - 20
reps**

GHD - 4 Sets

ADVANCED - Weighted GHD - 5 reps with 25-45 lb. plate

INTERMEDIATE - GHD - 10 reps with NO WEIGHT

BEGINNER - Supermans - 20 reps

****ADD ONS - TOES TO BAR - 4 SETS**

SUPER ADVANCED - Toes to Bar w/ Ankle Weights - 10 reps

ADVANCED - Regular Toes to Bar - 10-15 reps

INTERMEDIATE - Leg Raises - 10-15 reps

BEGINNER - Knee-ups - 10-15 reps

PM - ABZ

WEIGHTED CRUNCHES - 4 Sets

**ADVANCED - Weighted Crunches - 25
reps w/ 25-50 lb. plate (Hips Ups)**

**INTERMEDIATE - Weighted Crunches -
25 reps w/ 10-25 lb. plate**

**BEGINNER - Regular Crunch - 25 reps
NO WEIGHT**



****ADD ONS****

LEG LIFTS - 4-5 Sets

ADVANCED - Ankle Weighted Leg Lifts - 20 reps

INTERMEDIATE/BEGINNER - Leg Lifts NO WEIGHT - 20 reps

WEIGHTED REVERSE CRUNCH - 4-5 Sets

ADVANCED - Ankle Weighted Reverse Crunch - 20 reps

**INTERMEDIATE/BEGINNER - Reverse Crunch NO WEIGHT -
20 reps**

STICK TWIST - 1 Set of 250 reps

VACUUM - 5 sets of 30 seconds

ADVANCED - WEIGHTED TOES TO BAR

Start off with using 5-10 lb. ankle weights PER ankle. You can perform this movement hanging in straps or from a pull-up bar. The toes will start behind the line of the body, as you bring your hips through as you lift your legs to touch the bar overhead. From here, it is important to control the eccentric (lowering) phase of the lift.



ADVANCED - REGULAR TOES TO BAR

You can perform this movement hanging in straps or from a pull-up bar. The toes will start behind the line of the body, as you bring your hips through as you lift your legs to touch the bar overhead. From here, it is important to control the eccentric (lowering) phase of the lift.



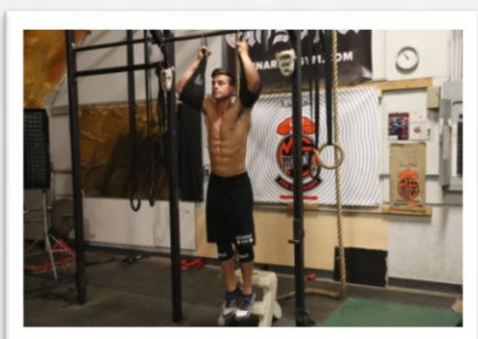
INTERMEDIATE - STRAIGHT LEG RAISE

The straight leg raise is going to start with the same exact position as the toes to bar. The toes begin behind the line of your body, while pushing your stomach out. From here, keep your legs as straight as possible as you raise them out in front of you to chest height. When you get to chest level, lower your legs back to the starting position while controlling the descent.



BEGINNER - KNEE-UP

The knee-up is going to have the same exact starting position as the other movements above. From here, you are going to bring your knees to your chest and squeeze your abs. Again, once you get to the top of the rep, control the lowering back to the starting position.



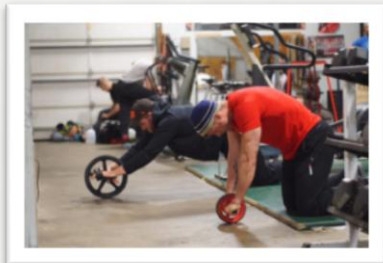
ADVANCED - AB WHEELS

The movement starts with a rounded back. This helps to not overextend your lower back when in the bottom of the rep. Roll forward while squeezing and bracing your core to keep your spine straight. Continue until parallel to the ground, and return to the starting position.



INTERMEDIATE - HALFWAY AB WHEELS

Begin with a rounded back. This helps to not overextend your lower back when in the bottom of the rep. Roll forward while squeezing and bracing your core to keep your spine straight. Stop halfway down, and return back up.



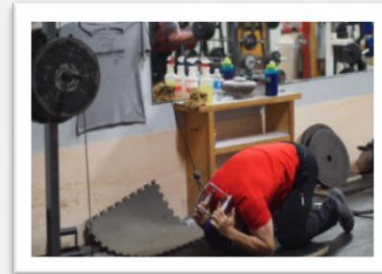
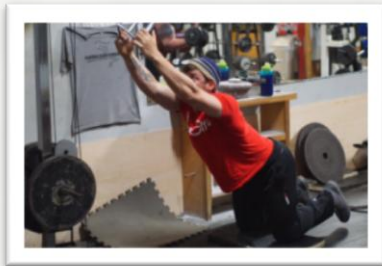
BEGINNER - PLANK HOLDS (2 OPTIONS)

The movement starts in a push-up position on your hands or forearms. Squeeze your belly and butt to stay tight. This allows a great abdominal contraction.



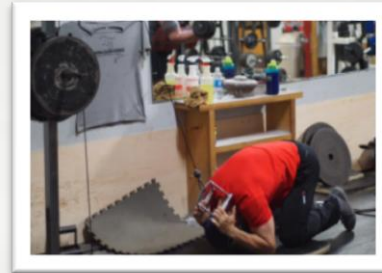
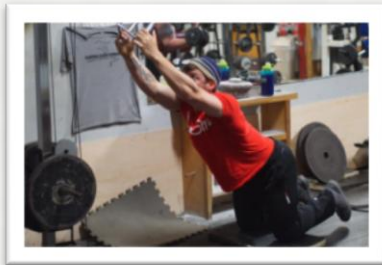
ADVANCED - HEAVY CABLE CRUNCH

Using a v-bar/rope handle, start on your knees, and look up to create an arch in your back to stretch the abs. Descend towards your knees, finishing with your head and elbows touching the ground. Control the rep the entire way up.



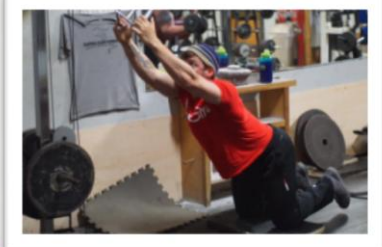
INTERMEDIATE - MODERATE WEIGHT CABLE CRUNCH

Using a v-bar/rope handle, start on your knees, and look up to create an arch in your back to stretch the abs. Descend towards your knees, finishing with your head and elbows touching the ground. Control the rep the entire way up.



BEGINNER - LIGHT CABLE CRUNCH

Using a v-bar/rope handle, start on your knees, and look up to create an arch in your back to stretch the abs. Descend towards your knees, finishing with your head and elbows touching the ground. Control the rep the entire way up.



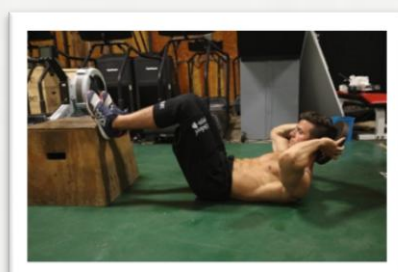
ADVANCED - HEAVY WEIGHTED CRUNCH

Feet up, hold a 35 lb. plate behind your head. Proceed to lift your shoulders off the ground, while contracting your upper abs.



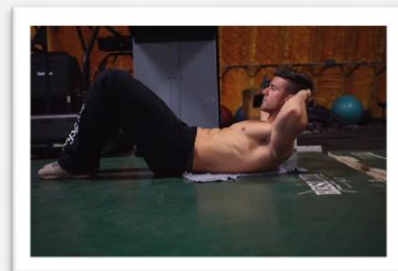
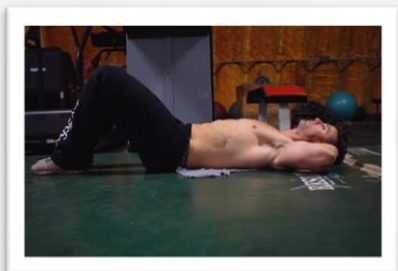
INTERMEDIATE - WEIGHTED CRUNCH

Feet up, holding a 10-25 lb. plate behind your head. Proceed to lift your shoulders off the ground, while contracting your upper abs.



BEGINNER - REGULAR CRUNCH

Feet up, no weight, with hands behind your head. Proceed to lift your shoulders off the ground, while contracting your upper abs.



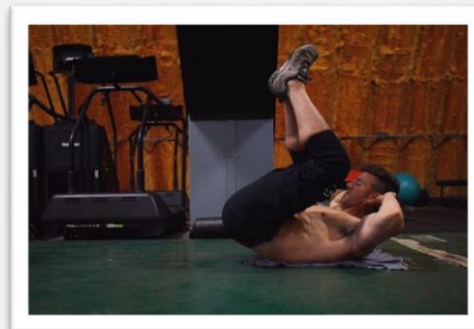
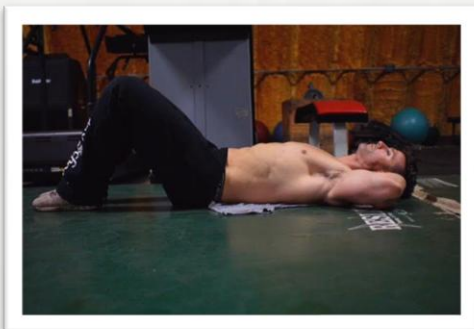
ADVANCED - WEIGHTED REVERSE CRUNCH

Wearing ankle weights, start at the end of your bed/bench. With your lower back slightly off the ground, bring your knees into your chest and contract.



INTERMEDIATE/BEGINNER - REVERSE CRUNCH

Start at the end of your bed/bench. With your lower back slightly off the ground, bring your knees into your chest and contract.



ADVANCED - WEIGHTED LEG LIFTS

Start by adding ankle weights. Lay on your back with your arms at your sides, with straight legs. Lift legs off the ground and back down.



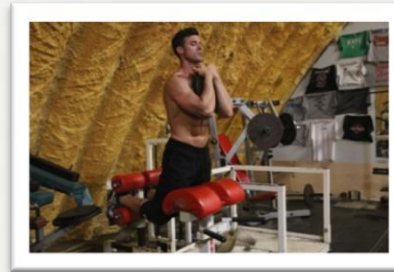
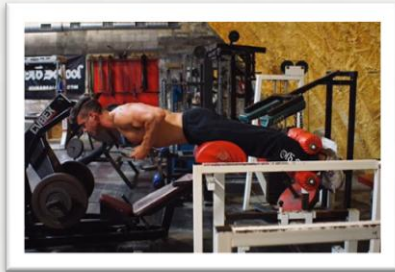
INTERMEDIATE/BEGINNER - LEG LIFTS

Lay on your back with your arms at your sides, with straight legs. Lift legs off the ground and back down.



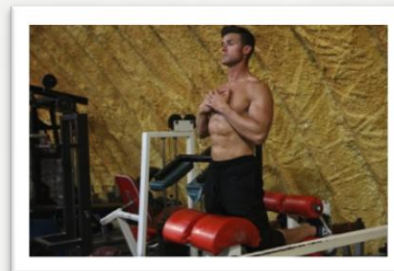
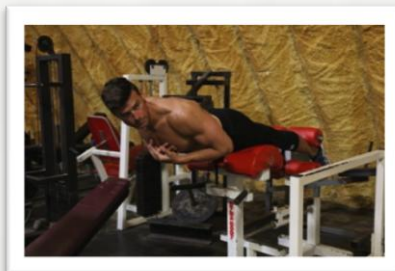
ADVANCED - WEIGHTED GHD

Start parallel to the floor holding a weight to your chest. Pull yourself up into a full hamstring curl by pressing your knees into the GHD pad. The ending point should look like a kneeling position.



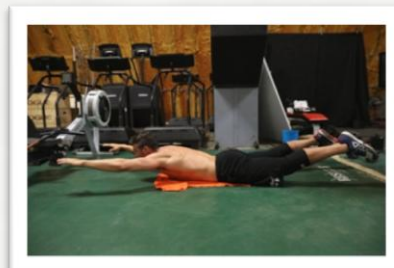
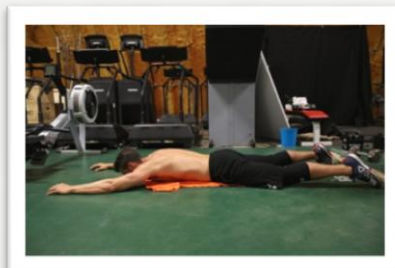
INTERMEDIATE/BEGINNER - GHD

Start parallel to the floor. Pull yourself up into a full hamstring curl by pressing your knees into the GHD pad. The ending point should look like a kneeling position.



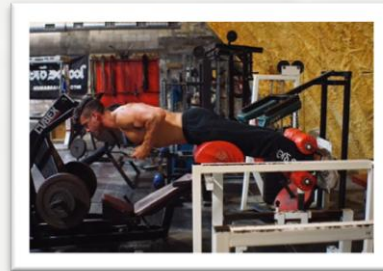
BEGINNER - SUPERMAN

Superman's are a great place to start strengthening your lower back. Lay on your belly; lift both arms and legs simultaneously, while squeezing your glutes (butt) and lower back.



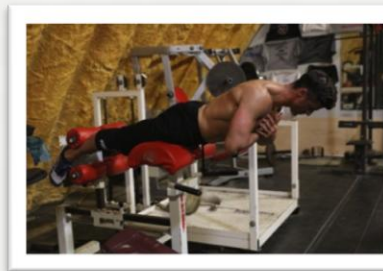
ADVANCED - WEIGHTED BACK EXTENSION

Start at a 45 degree angle on the GHD, holding a weight to your chest. From here, squeeze your glutes as you rise up to parallel to the floor.



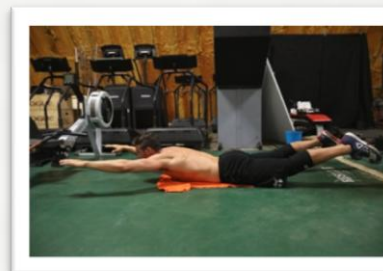
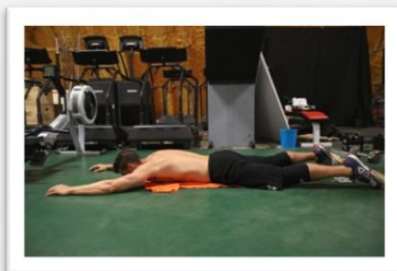
INTERMEDIATE - BACK EXTENSION

Start at a 45 degree angle on the GHD. From here, squeeze your glutes as you rise up to parallel to the floor.



BEGINNER - SUPERMAN

Superman's are a great place to start strengthening your lower back. Lay on your belly; lift both arms and legs simultaneously, while squeezing your glutes (butt) and lower back.



STICK TWIST



The phantom ab exercise. Many argue that this exercise doesn't work, yet it was one of the staples of the Golden Era bodybuilders. Frank Zane, one of the best bodybuilders of all-time, recorded countless reps of this movement to keep his waistline slim. Doing stick twists allowed them to condition their obliques, without adding thickness to their waist. Bodybuilding is an illusion. When a bodybuilder can sculpt a small waist, the upper body is able to be magnified to the judges and audience.

Properly executing a stick twist starts with keeping your hips and head in line. Next, bring your elbows across the midline, going each direction. The tempo and speed of this movement are one of the main keys. There must be a mind/muscle connection with you and your obliques. Why do you think Tiger Woods has such a small waist? The numerous shots and the twisting motion that goes into a golf swing, has shaped his waistline substantially.



Stick twists can also be performed standing or sitting down. Seated stick twists will be less difficult because it helps you keep your hips in line. You can progress into a standing variation to increase the difficulty. Start with sets of 50 reps, and increase the speed and tempo as you get more experienced.



VACUUM

The vacuum is one of the lost arts when it comes to abdominal exercises. Someone may have abs showing, but are having an issue with pulling their stomach in. Over time, the transverse abdominis muscle (runs behind the abdominal wall) gets weak.



I discovered the vacuum with the help of the 1970 bodybuilders because this was common practice during double bicep posing. There are some pictures of Arnold back in the day implementing the vacuum exercise into his training, and when I started to apply what I was learning, I discovered that I was actually pretty good at this exercise.

You can practice this movement with ease by holding your belly button in as far as you can under your ribcage. I call this 'drop it to your spine.' By holding for just 30 seconds at a time, this exercise will give you a whole new weird kind of burn. If you are unable to do this movement standing up, then get your elbows bent over a bench, and suck in your belly button to your spine for the same hold.



The vacuum gives you the ability to do some unique poses, work a muscle that you may not have known you had, and give you a smaller, tighter waistline.



REVERSE HYPER AND 45 DEGREE HYPER

The reverse hyper is a unique piece of equipment that Westside Barbell's legendary Louie Simmons developed after breaking his back. The bottom position of the movement assists with deloading the spine, as well as creating traction.

Most people do not have the ability to do a reverse hyper because most gyms simply don't have one. They are a bit more specialized, and if you are fortunate enough to have a gym that has one, then it is a great tool to add to the arsenal. The reverse hyper does a fantastic job balancing out the abdominal work we do, as well as keeping your spine healthy over the long term.



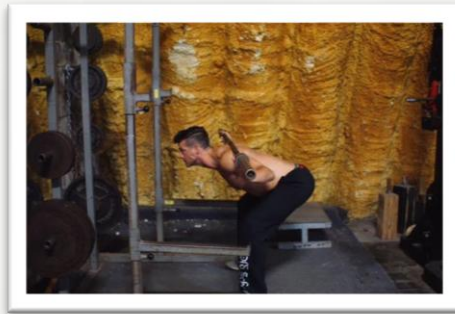
The 45-degree hyper is one of the lower back mainstay exercises that has existed in the gym setting for quite some time. It's usually one of those accessory movements that people skip that they shouldn't. This exercise will help establish balance in your ab program and keep your lower back strong.

The starting position is parallel to the floor. Next, descend down to a right angle, and then return back to the starting position. The 45 degree hyper is basic and effective, and when done consistently, can produce a rock solid lower back. Do not skip these!

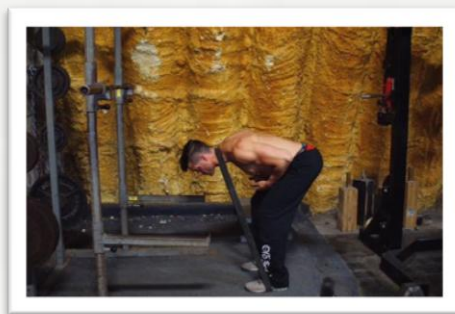
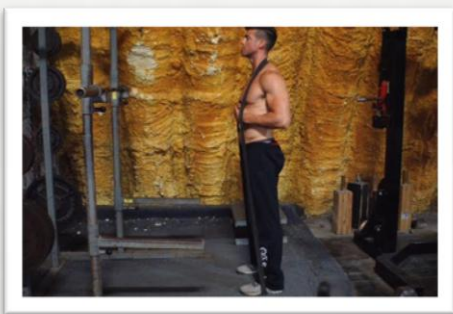


GOOD MORNINGS

Good mornings are one of my favorites, but most of the gym population is terrified of it. If you do dial these in with proper form, they can take your strength to a new level.



One major key is to start in a low bar position on your back. You will then hinge from your hips to bend over into a right angle. It's important to keep your chest up as you descend into the bottom of the rep, and as you come back up to the start. It can be intimidating to see that much weight on the bar, but if done properly you will not have an issue.



Another variation of this exercise would be the band good morning. This is a good starting point if the barbell good morning is foreign to you. You will start by stepping into a jump-stretch band with both feet and looping it around your head to the base of your neck. From here, you will follow the same steps as above.

JUST USE 1 WHEEL

When I was at Men's Health last week, I was looking through their gym for an ab wheel. What I found instead was whole new variation right in front of my eyes. Try taking 1 wheel off! It's way harder to stabilize, and gives you another variation to shock your body with. Most of the ab wheels out there on the market have two wheels. In fact, everyone that has one that I have ever seen has a double wheel, or a very thick single wheel.



However, the one that I encountered at Men's Health only had one skinny single wheel. I ended up using this single wheel variation with my ab training that day, and I left the gym that day with my abs in shock from the change. I was like "Damn, this is kind of hard. I instantly got real pumped



to share this variation with everyone out there. So once I got back to OSG I decided to throw this in the mix for my variable for ab wheels.

Single wheel, double wheel and finally the big wheel. At these different angles, you are producing different stimulus for your abdomen. Once again, the reason why it is harder is because it's way less stable, and it helps get us closer to our goal of abs so crazy, that they make people uncomfortable when you are around. The goal is to produce a thickness to where it looks like they were carved out of stone haha... Ok ok I know, but that's really what I am after.

ABBING NIGHTLY

It doesn't take a keen observer to know that abs are one of those muscle groups people just can't get enough of when it comes to training, improving and getting dialed in.



It's been that way for a long time and I'm definitely in the group who is always impressed when I see someone who has a peeled midsection and is rocking thick abs. Since I first started training and did my first crunch, that's something I've strived to achieve. I wanted them when I was a competitive athlete, and I sure as hell wanted them in my pursuit to being a big-time magazine cover guy one day. Without them, you're going nowhere in that industry, so I knew I had to dial them in, make them a strength, and make them stand out.

Well, I guess you could say it has been mission accomplished. I have been featured on three magazine covers available all over the world and I've been fortunate enough to set up five more for 2014.

Much of this has to do with having a peeled-in midsection and thick abs that stand out from other people. I've worked hard to turn them into a definite strength - and obviously diet is hugely critical as well - but I wanted to pass on a simple Ab routine I do each night before I go to bed. It's been highly beneficial to me and it's something you can easily implement each night.

My beautiful wife came up with the perfect name, too, as she'll always ask, "Honey, are you 'Abbing' tonight?" That usually means, yes, I'll be on the floor for 10-20 minutes trying to get those abs straight nasty. I'm also the weirdo that has the following lying beside his bed: a 25-pound plate, an ab wheel and a broomstick. But the payoff is worth it, so with those tools in hand, let's get to my nightly "Abbing" routine, which includes 300-500 total reps nightly.

Abbing Nightly Tri-Set (300-500 reps total)

Regular Crunches (with feet elevated on bed) - 25 reps

Weighted Crunches (25-pound plate behind my head, feet elevated on bed) - 25 reps

Ab Wheel - 10 reps

***Repeat for 5-10 sets**

It's pretty straightforward but it's also highly effective. My stomach and abs always seem to show and stand out, even when my body fat reaches a bit higher level, and that's because my abs are really thick from all the weighted work I do each night. It's worth mentioning that I train my lower back every day after my #Upearlytotrain workout also, and that's made a big difference, too.



We train it for volume as well and it usually looks something like this:

Roman Chair - 3 sets of 30-50 reps

GHD Raises - 3-4 sets of max reps (really works the lower posterior chain)

I up the intensity with my nightly ab routine as I get closer to my meet or photo shoot, but those are the basics. It can definitely help, and if done consistently it can pay major dividends in making your midsection a strong point.

A consistent approach is a great plan of attack, and before long you'll have abs that will draw attention - all with just a little work before bed. Happy Abbing!

CORY GREGORY'S TWO-STEP PLAN

TO GRANITE ABS

Endless reps of endless exercises won't build the abs you crave. Follow this routine of classic moves until you own it, and then take it to the next level. This is all the core training you'll need for years!

When I started my fitness journey in 1999, I gave myself two clear goals: own a gym, and be on the cover of fitness magazines. While both are in the same general spectrum, achieving them is vastly different in a number of ways. But both started with a clear vision.



If you want to know what my vision of a gym was, all you need to do is look around Old School Gym, the facility I opened in 2003. It's exactly what I wanted, and I've built my own best-ever physique there—and helped plenty of other athletes do the same.

My vision of a magazine wasn't quite so vivid, but certain parts of the photo were in crystal-clear focus. If I wanted to be on the cover of any fitness magazine, I knew I sure as hell needed great—not just good, but great—abs. It was absolutely a must that they stand out as the centerpiece of the layout.

I visualized myself on a magazine cover with deep grooves in my stomach, giving off an almost granite look. Back then, I would always joke about one day needing a hammer to sculpt a set of abs, emphasizing the thick look I was after. Now, when I say "thick abs," don't get that confused with a bloated midsection. I still wanted to be lean and ripped with a small waist, much like the bodybuilders from the golden era. But if I could create a thickness in my abs that really made them pop, it would be the best of both worlds.

It didn't happen overnight, but I eventually got those cover-ready abs. Here's the exact plan I used to build them!

GO HEAVY FOR DEFINITION

We've all seen plenty of people using high reps and no weight to train abs, but I knew right away that this wasn't the path to go down. Sure, I needed to pound the reps, but unless I used weight or some sort of resistance, I knew I could never achieve the thickness and look I was after.

Think of it this way: If you want big biceps, you don't simply pump your arms 300 times with nothing in your hand and expect them to grow. You may find yourself on a YouTube fail video, but good luck getting big arms. If you want your arms to grow, a dumbbell or barbell—preferably a heavy one—is an absolute must.

I took the same approach with my abs from day one when I set the goal of being on a magazine cover. And while my implement of choice wasn't a "weight," it definitely felt like one. I started off with the dreaded-and underappreciated-ab wheel, which by itself can build an extremely strong-looking stomach if used properly. I remember my mom doing these with a rolling pin and using great form, and that image has stuck with me ever since. I then added in knee-ups, which progressed to weighted knee-ups, and continuously harder variations. After that, I turned to heavy rope pull-downs, giving me a solid base from which to begin.

That was my beginning routine, but there was one element missing. My lower back often gave me trouble, and I now know it's because I didn't add in any lower-back work to balance out all the ab work I was doing. Add in some back extensions, and the result is the following ab routine that finally helped me dial in my abs for the first time.



Perform these four exercises as a circuit, and do it at least 3-5 times per week. Stick with it long enough to get to the point that you could nail these reps any day of the week if you wanted to. You don't have to do it every day, but you should feel like you could. You will see changes, and then it'll be a time to challenge your abs differently.

THE LAST AB ROUTINE YOU'LL EVER NEED

After I mastered that workout and my diet, the years flew by and the magazine covers started rolling in. I was very pleased with the shape my abs started to take, and my program grew along with them. I could definitely notice thickness, but over time, I kept adjusting my training to make sure those deep grooves in my abs really stood out when it was time to get in front of the camera. This is the plan I still use to this day, and it's worked well for a long time. I've added weighted crunches, placing the weight behind my head, and advanced past knee-ups to weighted toes-to-bar to really bring out my lower abs. I perform this workout 3-5 times a week in the morning, then finish off with more weighted crunches before bed.

Building—and then maintaining—awesome abs isn't rocket science. It's just hard work that you have to learn to do almost without thinking. If you want deep, thick grooves in a ripped set of abs, giving you that sculpted-from-stone look, this is how you do it.



Thank You!

I want to thank you for the ongoing support throughout my career. Starting with just a dream back in the Valley, I put in the countless hours to achieve what I set out to. It definitely hasn't been easy at times, but trusting in the process has been worth it.

Put simply, I could not have done what I've done so far without the support and love from my wife, family and friends. I try not to take you guys for granted, and I appreciate everything you have done for me.



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