



If you ever wanted to experience a heated “discussion” where there might never be complete agreement or one single “right” answer, get a bunch of fitness experts (coaches, trainers, physical therapists, you name it) around a table and ask them each to describe exactly what the “core” is. Holy smokes, talk about fireworks!

They’d all have their own opinion and passionately swear by it. There would even be those who would say the “core” doesn’t exist – that it can’t be defined anatomically.

So let’s begin our discussion of this exercise, the **Basic Abdominal Brace** by acknowledging that the “core” can (and will probably always) be defined differently *depending upon the point of view of the person defining it*.

My hope is that by the time you get through reading everything and practicing and progressing this exercise, your own experience combined with the theory and science I’m presenting, will come together and make complete sense to you. I’m confident that will happen!

Simply put, the **Basic Abdominal Brace** is the simplest way I know to learn what it means to create core stability – and in the process, help you learn how to protect your spine AND thus transfer more power to your arms and legs. And how to do it at a basic fundamental level.

It works as a great starting point.

It’s been tested over and over with the work I have done in our Pursuit Athletic Performance gait analysis lab with literally hundreds and hundreds of athletes. And I’ve personally guided dozens of runners and triathletes whom I’ve coached 1 on 1, with this exercise.

What is the simplest and most important concept to know right now?

To provide a basis for understanding and to keep things simple, let's start with this basic concept: **the core is your FOUNDATION as an athlete.** The “core” (which I also will occasionally refer to as your “trunk”) gives your body an “anchor” for your arms and legs – so they can do their thing. When functioning well, the stiffness and support it provides allows for the efficient *transfer of energy* through your body.

Stability starts with *stillness*.

This exercise, in essence, teaches you how to create stillness in your core, which for our purposes is measured by the degree of movement (or lack thereof) of your low-back, when performing the exercise.

It doesn't get any simpler than this, as there's no gravity acting upon your body such as when you're standing or moving in some other way.

And because you're only lifting your leg and then extending it, the load placed upon your core (trunk) is small. **Hence, this is the beginning – the easiest and best way to learn how to create a stable core. Again, a great starting point.**

In my more advanced program, “**Restore: The Core Program,**” I review how to use the **Biopressure Feedback Stabilizer**, which is a great way for you to take this exercise to the next level, with objective feedback from the stabilizer. For our purposes right now though, your hands will suffice.

This is the beginning, my friend. Master this. Make it unconscious. And automatic. Get so good at doing this perfectly that you don't even have to think about it.

Everything else we'll do from this point takes off from here. Onward we go!

Looking ahead: What about breathing?

When you are first learning how to do this – and certainly as your practice evolves, it is very common to find that the **easiest path** to achieving – and then holding a neutral position – is by *holding your breath*.

While it's common to experience this, IT'S NOT where you want to be long term, especially if you expect to be able to hold a safe and stable spinal position through increasingly challenging dynamic exercises in this program, and out in your chosen sport!

For those of us who have spent a lifetime of quasi-panicked chest breathing, the challenge is even greater.

YOUR GOAL as you improve your ability to get into and hold a neutral spine position is to breathe diaphragmatically, NOT up in your chest with shallow chest breathing.

So how do you improve?

1. Begin by incorporating the work you are doing in the Basic Three-Dimensional Breathing Practice, which is the last movement practice in Circuit 1.
2. Combine your improving breathing skills – with your improving ability to create – and then maintain – a stiff, neutral spine position.
3. Maintain these basic skills throughout your training – especially as the exercises and skills become more dynamic and challenging!