



**THE  
ATHLETIC-AESTHETIC  
PHYSIQUE**

BY ALAIN GONZALEZ

**ATHLETE ABS**



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# PART 1 - ATHLETE ABS: INTRO

Depending on who you ask, ab exercises are either crucial to the development of a six pack; or a complete waste of time. When the topic of "how to get a six pack" comes up, you often hear everything from "just get low enough body fat" to "follow this specialized, 30-minute ab routine three times per week."

Toss in the noise from the functional fitness crowd and the 'strength guys' who claim it's dumb or unmasculine to worry about abs and that you should just squat, press, and deadlift and 'be a real man', and the quest for a six pack become a muddled mess of confusion.

With competing and contradictory information like this, it's difficult to know what is actually *true*.

What is the secret to a six pack?

The truth is, there is no secret, but there are some things you must know, and do, if you want to build a beach-worthy six pack.

But... first things first....

Why should you listen to me?

Throughout this guide I may suggest some things that contradict what you have heard elsewhere and you may be tempted to think, "why should I believe you?"

Well, for starters, I have a six pack and I built it using the principles outlined in this guide.



See: Most would say I have at least decent abs.

With that out of the way, let's move on to the important stuff...

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE WITH **THE ATHLETIC-AESTHETIC PROGRAM**

It's actually really simple: if you choose to use one of the ab routines included within this guide, simply "substitute" it for any ab work already included in the *Athletic-Aesthetic* workouts. In other words, you don't want to "stack" the programs.

Simply omit the direct ab work included in the *Athletic-Aesthetic* workouts if you choose to follow one of the plans in this program. When should you use these specialized ab routines? Any time you have an occasion coming up where you want your abs to look their best, like a beach vacation, or just summer in general.

## **PART 2:** **HOW TO BUILD A SIX PACK : IN FOUR SIMPLE STEPS**

While the title above may sound a little like a clickbait, "hype-filled" article you might find on BuzzFeed, getting a six pack really isn't all that complicated: it just requires that you know the specific 'parts' that contribute to the whole.

The four steps outlined below should remove some of the confusion surrounding how you actually get a six pack and are essential to understand before delving into an actual ab routine.

### **STEP**

## **1 GET LEAN**

The first step you must take in order to get a six pack is to get lean. This may seem obvious, but you will never have good ab definition, especially in the lower abs, until you get lean enough to at least see an outline of your abs at rest, without flexing.

I have found this to be a better indicator of "lean enough" than trying to estimate body fat percentage, merely because there is no convenient way to reliably test body fat on a recurring basis.

So, before you do anything else, like trying to invent a new exercise that targets the lower abs, or start a 'specialized ab routine', you need to lose enough fat so that you are able to see an outline of your abs at rest.

I see a lot of guys making the mistake of thinking direct ab work is the first step to getting a six pack, and while that will help create fully developed abs, it won't do much good if you have a layer or two (or three) of fat covering your abdomen from pounding 24 beers over the weekend.

This doesn't necessarily mean that you shouldn't do any direct ab work if you have some fat to lose - that will help build a more dense look to your abs once you lose the fat - but it's important to note that unless you are lean, doing ab exercises alone won't solve the problem.

## STEP

# 2 WORK THE ABS

You might read “work the abs” above and think: “Yeah - obviously...” yet aside from getting lean enough to actually see your abs, this is one of the most significant factors in building fully developed abs.

So what exactly do I mean by “work the abs”?

I mean - you have to do your best to focus on getting your abs to control and direct the movement *rather than the surrounding muscles of your core like the hip flexors and glutes.*

Have you ever seen someone doing hanging leg raises and they are just wildly kicking their legs up in a frantic motion? They may get a lot of reps in, but more than likely their hip flexors are commanding the movement and their abs are doing little to contribute.

I often tell people to do ‘basic’ ab exercises and get a response of “that’s too easy” or “only 10 reps? I can do 30.”

There are a lot of very difficult ab exercises that many consider ‘easy’ because they are doing them wrong and not even working their abs.

Just like I suggest for your regular workouts - the goal of ab exercises is to focus on isolating the abs and creating maximum tension.

Going through the motions and letting your hip flexors initiate and command movement is a sure way to feel like you are doing a lot; but I can pretty much guarantee you won’t see the kind of ab development you want.

This is something you absolutely cannot overlook: with every ab exercise you do, make sure you are focusing on the abs and doing every possible to limit contribution from your hip flexors or utilizing momentum to get in more reps: quality over quantity.

## STEP

# 3 BUILD MUSCLE

While I in no way buy into the idea that compound lifts provide enough stimulus to have a well defined six pack, I do think building a good amount of muscle will contribute to your abdominal development.

More than anything, someone who has been training for a few years and gotten stronger will have more dense looking abs than someone who is weaker and just relies on ab exercises alone.

As long as you are following a good workout that focuses on building muscle and gaining strength, then this will take care of itself over time.

Once again, this is a piece of the puzzle - guys who have been training for a while and have improved muscle mass overall almost always have more density in their abs than a guy who does not have consistent workout experience and is just lean.

The other consideration here is that there are muscles not typically associated with “abs” that will contribute to the overall look of your six pack. Lats that are well developed, for example, are essential for creating the tapered ‘V’ look.

## STEP

# 4 FOLLOW AN EFFECTIVE AB ROUTINE

This is honestly where most people run into issues: they either- neglect direct ab work altogether, feeling it is

- a waste of time. Or,
- they focus on ‘specialized ab routines’ created by a competitive bodybuilder that take longer than their regular workouts and are hardly sustainable over any kind of long term duration.

Further more, specialized ab routines really aren’t necessary for a normal guy trying to get to 10-12% bodyfat and look great when he takes off his shirt, and are more suitable for the competitive bodybuilder who is trying to get to the lowest body fat possible and bring out every tiny detail in their physique.

You don’t need to be at the extreme level of leanness as a competitive bodybuilder in order to have a well defined six pack - nor would you want to.

The kind of condition those guys are in for a competition is not sustainable or realistic for everyday life: we want a look that can be maintained (like those in the pictures of myself and clients above) - which doesn’t require or necessitate the extreme approach used in bodybuilding.

So what makes an ab routine “effective”?

First, it needs to be something that aligns with your goal: as discussed above, if you are not trying to get to 6% bodyfat and compete on a bodybuilding stage, ab specialization programs that require 30 minutes of direct ab work multiple times per week probably aren’t what you need or want.



The look you are trying to achieve and your approach to ab training is much different if you are a normal guy that just wants to look awesome at the beach as compared to a bodybuilder preparing for competition.

In addition to having an ab workout that aligns with your specific goals, it is important to take injury prevention into consideration.

Dr. Stuart McGill, one of the leading experts on core training has said that repeated spinal flexion (think: crunches) is the single most significant cause in lower back problems. So, knowing this and creating an ab routine that is not only effective, but also safe, is important.

I don't know about you, but as much as I enjoy having good abs, I'd rather not be hobbling around with a lower back injury to get them. Luckily, with the right approach you can have the six pack and avoid back problems.

Finally, an effective ab routine should address the various aspects of your abdominal muscles so that you build balanced, fully developed abdominals.

## PART 3

# THE MTM AB ROUTINES

Well... you didn't think I was going to leave you hangin', did you?

Below, you will find three different ab routines designed to help you get dense, well-defined abs with the all-coveted 'V Taper.'

Remember: While the routines below are great for ab development, you need to also consider and address the first 2 "steps" to a six pack outlined above:

1. Getting lean enough
2. Following a good workout program that will develop proportional muscle mass overall.

All of the Ab routines below are meant to be added to your current workout program. I recommend you either do these at the end of your regular workouts or do them on 'off' days where you don't have a regular workout scheduled - whatever works best for your schedule.





# MTM BEGINNER AB ROUTINE

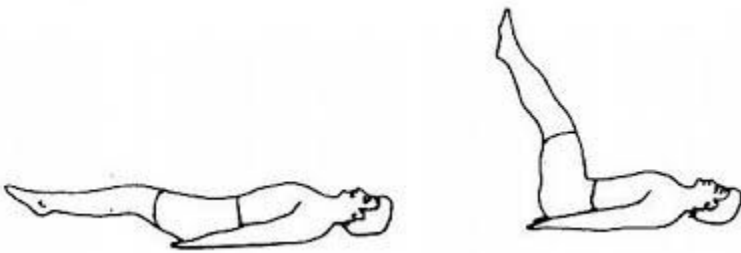
If you are relatively new to working out, if it's been awhile since you've done any direct ab work, or if you have *never* done any direct ab work - this is the routine you should start with.

I know that most people see "beginner" and think they should skip straight to intermediate or advanced and their results will be better: this is faulty thinking and will increase the likelihood of injury.

Perform the following ab routine 2 times per week, preferably not on back-to-back days.

After following this routine for around 8 weeks, or until you feel like progress to the intermediate routine.

## 1. LYING LEG RAISE 3-4 SETS OF 10-15 REPS



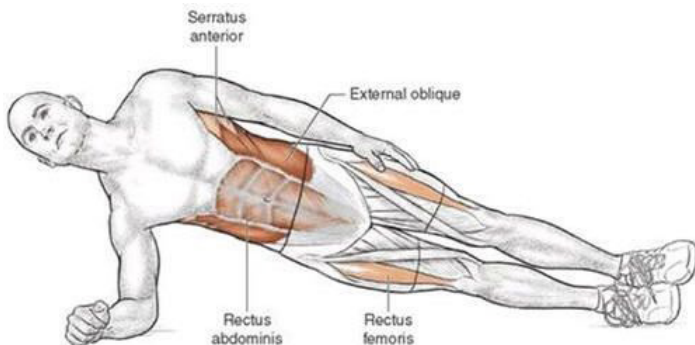
For the lying leg raise, lay on your back as the picture on the left shows and slowly lower your legs down to where your feet just avoid touching the ground, reverse the movement and bring your legs back up to around 90-degrees.

The movement should be slow and controlled and you need to focus on activating the abs to initiate the legs moving upward rather than letting your hip flexors take over.

I do NOT recommend adding weight to these (by holding a weight using your feet) until you become very proficient at these and have been doing them for a while and 4-5 sets of 20 without weights is incredibly easy.

**Injury prevention tip:** Place your hands below your lower back and stop lowering your legs at the point where your lower back starts to arch. As you practice this movement and get stronger, this should improve and you may be able to progressively go lower.

## 2. SIDE PLANK 3 SETS TO FAILURE



The side plank is one of those 'basic' exercises that people consider too easy: however if you actually maintain perfect positioning throughout the set; this is a very challenging exercise.

"To failure" indicates that you should stop the set when your form starts to fail, not when you fall to the ground. When your hips start to drop and you are unable to maintain a straight, neutral line from your head to your toes - the set should stop.

### 3. FRONT PLANKS 3 SETS TO FAILURE

YES



NO



Similar to side planks, front planks are a challenging exercise if performed correctly. The picture on the left demonstrate proper form vs. form that may lead to injury. Once again, "To failure" means when your form starts to break down - you should be stopping sets before your lower back starts to sag. The goal with front planks is maximum tension in your abs the whole set and *pulling* your abs in.

# MTM INTERMEDIATE ABS ROUTINE

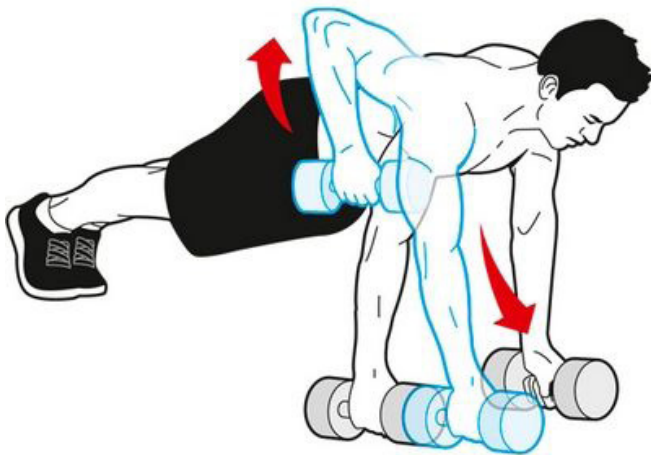
After you have followed the beginner routine for 8 weeks or so and mastered those exercises, you can move on to a more challenging routine.

## 1. HANGING BENT KNEE RAISE: 3-4 SETS OF 5-15 REPS X 60 SECONDS REST.



The key with hanging bent knee raise is to avoid too much momentum. The goal is controlled movement initiated with the abs.

## 2. RENEGADE ROW: 3-4 SETS OF 10 REPS X 60 SECONDS REST



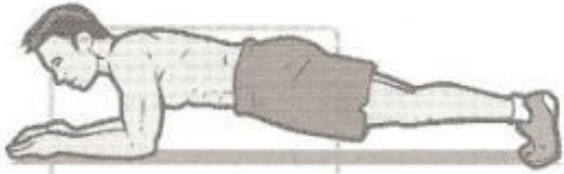
Renegade rows are great for increasing the density of your abs.

The key with renegade rows is to make sure you don't rush the transition of setting one weight down and shifting to the other side: so, as you set one dumbbell down, pause, and shift your weight to the other side and then pull up on that side.

Performing the exercise this way will drastically increase the amount of tension in your abs and helps engage the lats and serratus a bit to help with the "side abs" look.

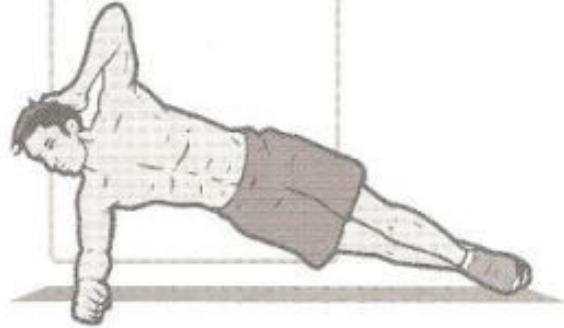
**Note:** 5 reps means you should pull the weight up 5 times on each side.

### 3. PLANK & SIDE PLANK COMBO: 2-3 SETS TO FAILURE



For the plank and side plank combo, you will start by doing a regular front plank to failure (once again - stop before your lower back starts to sag and form is compromised), and then progress straight into a side plank on each side for as long as possible.

Rest 60 seconds and repeat for 2-3 total sets.





# MTM ADVANCED AB ROUTINE

Once you have progressed through the beginner and intermediate routine, next up is the advanced protocol.

For the advanced routine, you will have two separate workouts that should be followed in an A-B-A format: meaning you will do workout A for your first workout of the week, then workout B, then back to workout A for your third Ab workout of the week.

You will start the next week with workout B, then workout A for your second Ab workout of the week, and finally workout B again for your third Ab workout of the week.

You simply repeat this A-B-A, B-A-B format for 4-8 weeks. You can follow this routine longer than the others and still see results because there is more variety built in with the two separate workouts.

## WORKOUT A

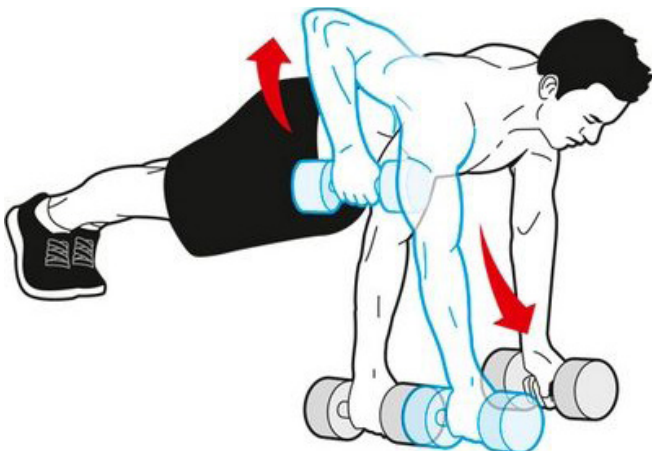
### 1. HANGING BENT KNEE RAISES: 3-4 X 10-20 REPS X 60 SECONDS REST.



You can also perform these hanging from a pullup bar with arms straight, but using the method in the picture to the left is better for your shoulders.

Once again, movement must be slow and controlled and tension initiated on the abs *not* the hip flexors.

### 2. RENEGADE ROW: 3-4 SETS OF 5 REPS X 60 SECOND REST



Renegade rows are great for increasing the density of your abs.

The key with renegade rows is to make sure you don't rush the transition of setting one weight down and shifting to the other side: so, as you set one dumbbell down, pause, and shift your weight to the other side and then pull up on that side.



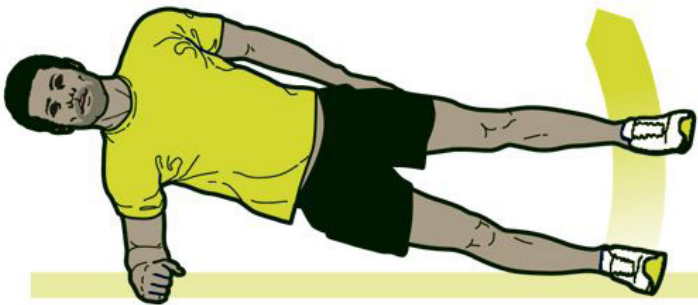
Performing the exercise this way will drastically increase the amount of tension in your abs and helps engage the lats and serratus a bit to help with the "side abs" look.

**Note:** 5 reps means you should pull the weight up 5 times on each side.

### 3. SIDE PLANK W/ LEG RAISE: 3-4 SETS OF 5- 10 REPS (EACH SIDE) X 60 SECONDS REST.

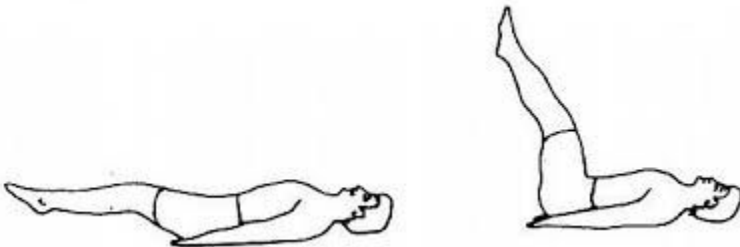
Adding the leg raise to the side plank makes this a VERY difficult exercise, especially when you focus on good form and make sure that you are avoiding momentum.

Your goal should be to work up to 10 reps on each side.



## WORKOUT B

### 1. LYING LEG RAISE 3-4 SETS OF 10-15 REPS



For the lying leg raise, lay on your back as the picture on the left shows and slowly lower your legs down to where your feet just avoid touching the ground, reverse the movement and bring your legs back up to around 90-degrees.

The movement should be slow and controlled and you need to focus on activating the abs to initiate the legs moving upward rather than letting your hip flexors take over.

You can add weight to these for the advanced workout, but you **MUST** make sure that you use proper form and avoid any arching of your lower back.

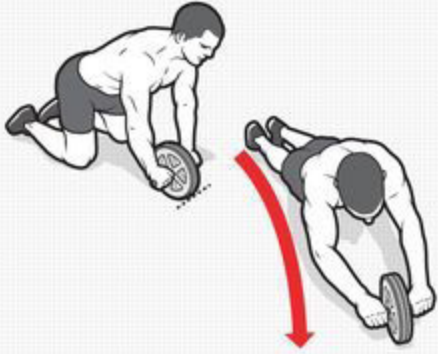
**Injury prevention tip:** Place your hands below your lower back and stop lowering your legs at the point where your lower back starts to arch. As you practice this movement and get stronger, this should improve and you may be able to progressively go lower.

## 2. AB ROLLOUT: 2-3 SETS OF 8-12 REPS X 60 SECONDS REST.

This exercise can be performed with an ab wheel as shown in the picture, or with a barbell.

Keep abs completely tight and tensed throughout the entire movement and focus on 'pulling' back with the abs rather than letting the lats take over.

Once again, this is an advanced movement and to prevent injury you must ensure proper form. Do NOT roll out farther than you can handle (if your lower back starts to cave at all, you've gone too far).



## 3. SWINGING SIDE-TO-SIDE KNEE RAISE: 1-2 SETS OF AS MANY REPS AS POSSIBLE X 60 SECONDS REST.

In a dip station as shown, or hanging from pullup bar, raise your legs first to the right, lower and raise to the left - repeat for as many reps as possible.



# PART 4: CLOSING THOUGHTS

My hope is that the information I have provided today will help simplify your pursuit of a six pack.

If you follow the steps outlined above and make sure you take care of those important aspects of getting well defined abs, you will be well on the way to your goal.

Remember: using the specialize ab plans included in this guide with the Rebuild program is simple...

- If you choose to use one of the routines here, use it in place of the direct ab work included in the Rebuild Workouts (usually the last exercise performed on a given workout day).

If you have any questions about this, feel free to ask about it in the Rebuild Private Facebook group.

