

Swim Training Outside The Pool



Abs

All of your power in the water comes from core strength. The kick starts at your hip flexors and gluteus while your arm stroke uses lats (latissimus dorsi), upper back and pectorals. Strong abdominal and oblique muscles are critical for good hip and body rotation through the water. There are some swimming-specific core exercises that can be mixed in with other crunches and sit-ups.

Supermans are performed by lying flat on your stomach with your arms stretched out over your head. Slowly lift your legs, head and arms. Pause about six inches off the ground (you should look like Superman in-flight) and then slowly lower everything. Pause again before repeating. Do two to three sets of 10 to 15 lifts. You should feel this in your lower back.

Side crunches are often overlooked. This exercise can be performed on a medicine ball by lying on my side and bracing my feet against the bottom of a wall. First, lock your hands behind your head, face completely sideways, and crunch your top elbow toward the wall. After just 20 reps, switch to the other side, sometimes pausing in the middle to perform a quick set of regular medicine ball crunches. Do two to three sets of 15 reps on each side.

Plank hold is a stability exercise for your whole core. The proper position looks a little like push-up-position by balancing on your toes with a strong, flat back. Keep both forearms on the ground; they should form a triangle under your face, with hands clasped under your forehead. Use a stopwatch or the second hand on a wall clock and try to hold yourself up for 30 to 45 seconds. As your core becomes stronger, try for 60 to 75 seconds. Do two plank holds each session.

Flutter kicks are great for strengthening your hip flexors. If you ever do a long or hard kicking set in the pool, you should feel these little guys screaming afterward! These are the same muscles used in the up-pedal stroke on your bike. Lie on your back, with your hands under your butt cheeks for support. Lift your head and shoulders off the ground; look down towards your feet. Lift your legs 5 to 7 inches off the ground, point your toes and flutter kick (just like freestyle kick in the pool). Do this set for 30 to 60 seconds, two sets per gym session.

Shoulders

Three way is basically three similar exercises combined into one session. Use small hand weights, between four and seven pounds or resistance bands. Start by holding the weights at your sides and perform all lifts with straight arms to shoulder height. First, lift your arms out to the sides (90 degrees), palms down. Lower slowly. Then, lift your arms in front of you, shoulder width apart (10 degrees), with palms facing each other. Lower slowly. Finally, lift your arms at 45 degrees, palms facing away from each other. Lower slowly. Do two sets of 12 to 15 lifts.

Overhead press: With slightly heavier weights, between 10 and 15 pounds, perform two sets of 10 to 12 reps of this exercise. Because the position of your arms is very important, I recommend standing in front of a mirror. Start with the weights next to your head, palms facing the mirror, shoulders and elbows at 90 degrees. Press the weights straight up with extended arms and lower them slowly to the start position. Next rotate your shoulders around in front of your face (keep elbows at 90-degree angles), turn your palms toward your face, and tap the ends of the weights together. Return to the start position and repeat.

Up-out-in-down is pretty self-explanatory. Use medium to light dumbbells for this exercise (5 to 10 pounds) and start with your arms at your sides, palms facing your hips. Lift the dumbbells straight up in front of your body to shoulder height. Spread your arms out to the side of your body (keep them at shoulder height), bring them back in together and then lower them back down to your sides. Repeat this motion 10 times, rest, then do a second set.

Rowing is a great strength exercise to prevent “swimmer’s slouch.” Multisport athletes tend to swim a lot of freestyle, resulting in overdevelopment of the chest muscles. You can counter this slouch by working the trapezius muscles with a rowing machine or just some dumbbells and a bench. Think about pinching your shoulder blades together each time. Do two sets of 10 to 12 reps.

Legs

Lunges are really great for working on your glutes. First you want to stand with feet together holding a medium to heavy weight. Slowly lower your body into a

lunge position, keeping the front knee and back knee at 90 degree angles. Keeping the weight in your heels, push back up (slowly!) to starting position. Remember to never lock your knees at the top and never let your knee bend past your toes. Keep torso tight and upright (i.e., don't hunch!) Do this exercise 1 or 2 times per week, 2-3 sets of 12 to 16 reps with light to medium weight.

Wall Squats will hit a couple of major muscle groups in your legs, the quads, hamstrings and glutes. This is a great exercise that can benefit beyond the pool. Stand against a wall, with your legs extended out. Your feet should be about 2' away from the wall. Inhale, then exhale and allow your abs to fall toward your back. Your gaze is straight in front of you, knees slightly bent and chin is slightly tucked. Try to keep the back of your head touching the wall. As you exhale, bend your knees to slide your back down the wall. Ideally, you will come to a level almost as low as sitting. But let the presence of any pain guide you as to how far down you go. Remain with comfortable knees. Also, check to see that your knees do not come any more forward than your ankles. Try to line them up with the area between the big toe and the 2nd toe. This will protect them from injury. Hold the position for 15-30 seconds. Breathe evenly. If this position feels challenging to your muscles, pay attention to your breath -- that should help you get through your 15-30 seconds. Eventually, you can work up to holding the position for 1-2 minutes. Move slowly back to the start position. If you want to advance this exercise you can put your arms in a streamline position above your head and hold while you are in the squat position.