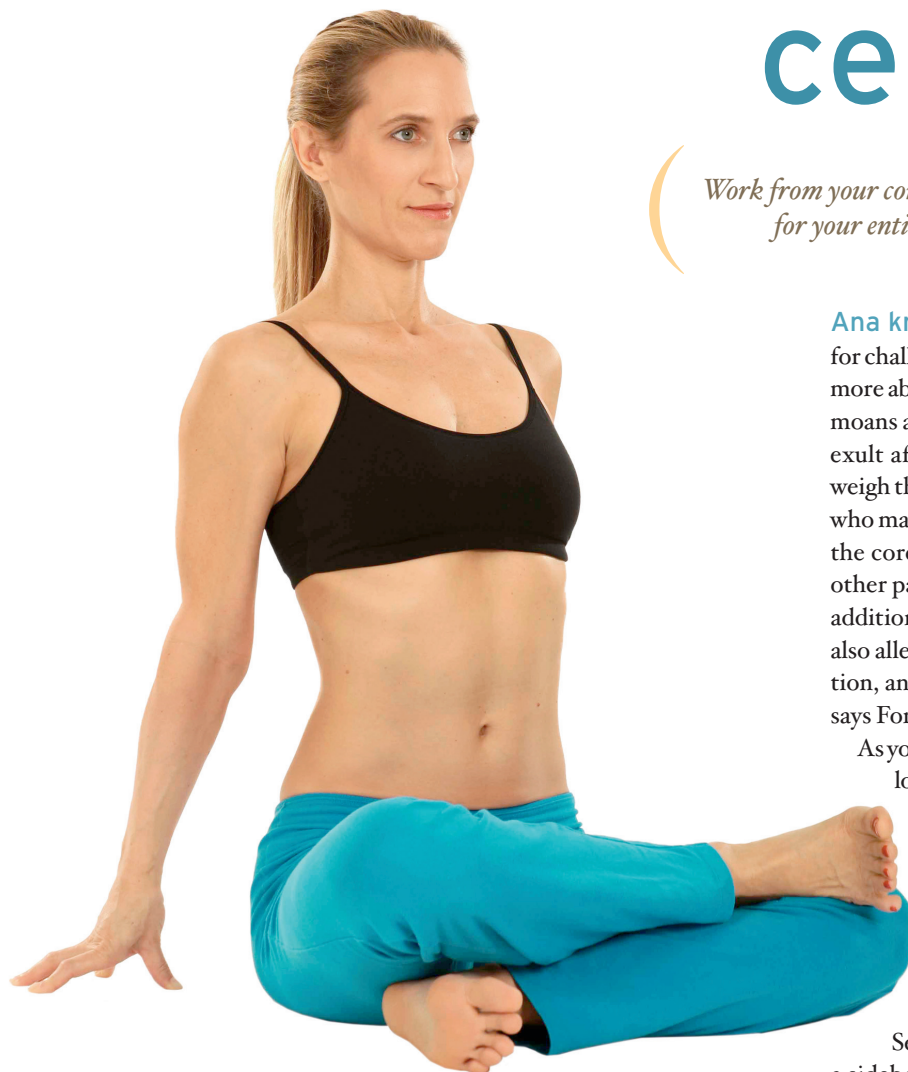


ab-solutely centered!

*Work from your core to find strength
for your entire practice.*



Ana knows abs! Indeed, Ana Forrest is known for challenging students and putting them through more ab work than most other teachers. You'll hear moans and groans during her classes, but students exult after the work is done. "The benefits outweigh the difficulty," says the Forrest Yoga founder, who maintains that **solid abs are essential**. "If the core is weak, abs aren't doing their work and other parts of the body are adversely affected." In addition to toning the abs, the following poses can also alleviate back pain, aid digestion and elimination, and stimulate circulation to internal organs, says Forrest, who created the sequence.

As you work, keep these things in mind: Press the low ribs, low back, and top rim of the sacrum firmly into the floor. To avoid bruising, use sufficient padding—a blanket or a folded-over mat. Keep your feet active, relax your neck, and breathe deeply. You might feel sore the next day, but that's OK. "Congratulations," says Forrest, "you used your muscles in a new way." Do Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose) or a sidebend between poses to release ab muscles. Over time, says Forrest, you'll notice benefits that go beyond the physical. "You'll feel strong, steady, centered, and ready to deal with life's challenges. You'll have less anxiety, clearer thinking, and more energy. You'll feel calm and centered."

So when ab work seems unappealing, do a little anyway. The work will build more than just your core: You'll strengthen your practice, center yourself, and hone your life skills. **DIANE ANDERSON**

{ If you're pregnant, skip ab work altogether. }

to begin

Breathe Sit in Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle Pose) and place your hands behind you on the floor. Lift your chest, relax your chin down, and slide your shoulder blades down your back. Inhale and hold the breath for 10 to 15 seconds. Exhale and hold for 5 to 10 seconds as you pull your abdominal muscles back and up, flaring the ribs into Uddiyana

Bandha (Upward Abdominal Lock). Do a few rounds.

to finish

Continue Your body heats up with abdominal work, so your practice can go many directions from here.

Rest Close your practice by hanging in Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend) before Savasana (Corpse Pose).



1 Seated Sidebend

Bring your feet together in Baddha Konasana. Take 4 breaths with each arm position. First, place your left hand straight out on the floor one foot from your left hip. Inhale and stretch your right arm up over your ear, root your right sitting bone, and lean left. Exhale, pulling the left shoulder away from the left ear. Inhale and stretch your right ribs. Exhale. Relax your neck. Now, stretch your right arm to the right until the fingertips are one foot above the floor, and breathe for 4 breaths. Bring your torso back to center and use your left hand to gently guide your head up, rather than yanking your neck. Repeat on the other side.

2 Elbow to Knee

Lie on your back and bend your knees to 90 degrees. Clasp your hands under your head. Inhale and lift your head and shoulders up. Hold your inhalation as you curl your tailbone up. As you exhale, reach both elbows toward your right knee and straighten your left leg. At the end of your exhalation, pull your belly in. Keep your head up as you inhale back to center, and bend both knees. Hold your inhalation and lift your tailbone. Exhale and reach both elbows toward your left knee; straighten the right leg. Beginners, do 5 repetitions per side; intermediates, do 8 to 10.

3 Abs with a Mat

Roll up a mat, lie back, and place the mat between your legs. Clasp your hands behind your head and lift your legs. Inhale, press the low back into floor, hold the breath, lift your tailbone, and squeeze the mat. Exhale, curl your head and shoulders up, lift your tailbone again, squeeze the mat, and pull your belly in. Inhale and slowly lower your head and pelvis. Beginners, do 3 to 5 times; intermediates, do 5 to 10.

4 Straddle Lifting Through

Clasp your hands behind your head. Inhale and lift your legs up. Exhale and let your legs open to a wide straddle. Inhale and lift your head and shoulders. Exhale, curl your tailbone

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up, and pull your belly in. Inhale and keep your head up. Beginners, repeat the curl 3 to 5 times; intermediates, do 8 to 10. Release by bringing your legs together and down.

5 Frog Lifting Through

Clasp your hands behind your head. Inhale and lift your legs so your shins are parallel to the floor. Exhale as you separate the legs into Frog position, with knees bent at 90 degrees and feet flexed. Inhale and curl your head and shoulders up. Exhale and pull your belly in. Inhale, release the pelvis down, keeping the head up, and repeat. Beginners, do 3 to 5 reps; intermediates, do 8 to 10.

6 Twisted Root

Cross your left thigh over the right; bring the left ankle under the right calf—your legs in Garudasana (Eagle Pose). Bring your feet up, thighs above the low belly, and bend both knees. Clasp your hands behind your head, inhale, and curl your head and shoulders up. Exhale, curl your tailbone, squeeze your thighs and sitting bones toward each other, lift your knees up, and pull your belly in. Inhale and lower your pelvis, but keep your head up. Repeat 3 times.

7 Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose)

Lie on your back and place your feet on the floor, with your heels below your knees. Keep your feet hip-distance



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apart. Exhale, tilt the tailbone up, lift your pelvis, then pull the ribs up. Inhale and lift the chest toward your face. Exhale and press down through the feet. Tilt the tailbone up more. Relax your neck, face, eyes, and brain. Beginners, hold for 5 to 8 breaths; intermediates, for 10 to 15. To release, place your upper back on the floor, then your middle back, and finally your low back. Keep tucking your tailbone up as you gradually lower your spine.

8 Dolphin

Come onto your forearms and knees. Inhale and broaden your upper back. Exhale and wrap your shoulder blades toward your armpits, activating your back, chest, and armpit muscles. Inhale and curl your toes under; exhale and straighten your legs. Inhale, press your forearms into the floor, and lift the weight of the torso out of the shoulders. Exhale, reach your heels down toward the floor, and relax your neck. The head is off the floor. Beginners, do 5 to 8 breaths; intermediates, do 10 to 15. Release to Child's Pose.

9 Agni Sari in Horse Stance

Stand with your feet 3 feet apart and bend your knees. Press the heel of your hands into the crease of your thighs. Exhale through your mouth, hold the breath out, and bring your chin toward your chest. Pull your belly back from the roots of your pelvis into Uddiyana Bandha. Relax your belly but hold the breath. Continue: pull the belly in and relax it, repeating until you must inhale. That's one round. Beginners, do 2 to 3 rounds; intermediates, 4 to 6.



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cut out and save!