

8 Core Exercises for Cyclists



CORE EXERCISE #1: BOXER BALL CRUNCH

What It Works: Transverse abdominus, obliques, lower back

- A. Lie with the middle of your back on a stability ball, your knees bent 90 degrees and your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands behind your head, but don't pull on your neck.
- B. Squeezing your belly button toward your spine, lift your upper back off the ball. Keeping your shoulders off the ball, trace a clockwise oval with your torso. Apply pressure with your lower back to keep the ball still through the entire motion. After 15 clockwise ovals, trace 15 counterclockwise.

Why It Works: Despite the straightforward motion of the bike, your body moves in three directions: forward as you head down the road, vertically as your legs pedal up and down, and laterally as your hips and upper body rock side to side. "This fluid, circular exercise builds control," and that helps you minimize lateral torsion and wasted motion.

CORE EXERCISE #2: POWER BRIDGE

What It Works: Hip flexors, glutes, lower back

- A. Lying on your back, bend your knees and place your heels near your glutes. Arms are at your sides, palms down.
- B. In one smooth motion, squeeze your glutes, raise your hips off the floor and push up from your heels to form a straight line from shoulders to knees; toes come off the floor slightly. Hold for two seconds. Keeping your toes raised, lower yourself three-quarters of the way to complete one rep. Do 20 repetitions.

Why It Works: In addition to stretching the hip flexors, often extremely stiff in cyclists, the bridge strengthens the link between your lower back and glutes.

CORE EXERCISE #3: HIP EXTENSION

What It Works: Lower back, hamstrings, glutes

- A. Lying with your hips and stomach on the stability ball, put your hands on the floor directly under your shoulders, and extend your legs with toes resting on the floor.
- B. With a straight spine and shoulder blades back, as if you're trying to make them touch, lift both legs off the floor, keeping them straight. If possible, raise them slightly higher than parallel to the floor. Hold for two seconds and lower. Do 20 reps.

Why It Works: This movement builds backside strength, for added efficiency on the second half of the pedal stroke.

CORE EXERCISE #4: PLANK

What It Works: Transverse abdominus, upper and lower back

- A. Lying on your stomach, place your elbows under your shoulders with forearms and hands on the floor.
- B. Lift your hips off the floor, keeping your back straight and abs tight, and rest on your toes. Aim for 60 seconds.

Why It Works: The plank builds the strength and muscular endurance you need to ride powerfully in the drops or in an aero position long after others have surrendered to the top of the handlebar.

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CORE EXERCISE #5: TRANSVERSE PLANK

What It Works: Transverse abdominus and obliques

A. Lie on your right side, with your right elbow under your shoulder, forearm in front for stability, and stack your left foot on your right. Raise your left arm over your head.

B. In one motion, lift your hips to create a straight line down your left side. Lower your hips a few inches off the floor; do 10 to 15 reps, then switch sides.

Why It Works: Strong obliques improve your stability in the saddle, letting you take on hairpin corners with more control and speed.

CORE EXERCISE #6: SCISSORS KICK

What It Works: Transverse abdominus, hip flexors, inner and outer thighs

A. Lying on your back with legs straight, place both hands palms down under your lower back.

B. Pushing your elbows down into the floor and pulling your belly button toward your spine, raise your shoulders off the floor and look toward the ceiling.

Raise your legs 4 inches off the ground and scissor them: left leg over right, then right over left. That's one rep. Work up to 100.

Why It Works: A comprehensive movement that connects key cycling muscles, the kick also builds inner-thigh muscles, which help you achieve hip, knee and forefoot alignment for a proper and efficient pedal stroke.

CORE EXERCISE #7: CATAPULT

What It Works: Entire core

A. Sitting with a slight bend in your knees, press your heels against the floor. Extend arms to the front at shoulder height, palms facing each other.

B. With a straight spine and upward gaze, inhale deeply, then exhale and slowly lower your torso to the floor over five counts as you inhale. Arms are overhead.

C. In one smooth movement, leading with the arms, exhale and explode back to the starting position. Do 20 reps.

Why It Works: Contrary to its name, the catapult encourages supreme body control.

CORE EXERCISE #8: BOAT POSE

What It Works: Transverse abdominus, lower back

A. Sit, resting both hands lightly behind you, and lean back until your torso is at a 45-degree angle.

B. Keeping your legs together, lift them off the floor as you extend arms forward at shoulder height. Abs are tight, as thighs and torso form a 90-degree angle. If your hamstrings are tight, you'll need to bend your knees a little. Work up to holding for 60 seconds.

Why It Works: As with the plank, boat pose builds the lower-back stability and core strength needed to remain bent over the handlebar for hours, or to blast up hills without compromising power or speed.