

The core basics workout

The following low-load sequence will activate your key core muscles. It is ideal to perform as a warm-up to switch on the muscles before your run, or you can do it first thing in the morning to set you up for the day. Because the “load” of these exercises is low, it is fine to do them every day.

1 Setting the core

Purpose: This is the most important of all the core exercises, as it builds the foundation for a strong core and teaches you how to “set” or “engage” the right muscles.

Starting position: Get down on hands and knees with hands below shoulders and knees below hips. Have your spine in a neutral position – neither arched nor rounded – and let the tummy relax and hang down.

Exercise: To engage the core, pull the pelvic floor muscles “up and in,” and then draw up the lower part of the tummy, keeping everything else perfectly still. Hold for 10 seconds, breathing freely. Repeat 10 times.

Tip Contracting the pelvic floor should feel as though you are stopping yourself going to the toilet.

2 Bent-knee fallout

Purpose: This works on the hip stabilizers, aiding pelvic alignment in running.

Starting position: Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor. Relax the ribs and engage the transversus abdominis (TA) by drawing in the lower tummy **(a)**.

Exercise: Let one knee fall slowly out to the side, while keeping the pelvis still and maintaining the TA contraction **(b)**. Don’t allow the pelvis to rotate with the leg. Repeat 10 times and then swap legs.

Tip Place hands on the pelvic bones to detect any unwanted movement.

SARAH'S CASEBOOK

I ran a 10-mile race – it was the farthest I’d ever run at that pace. At 8 miles, my right leg was much more tired and achy than my left as a result of my core muscles being weaker on that side. If I were very brave, I’d include a picture here, showing how that side collapses, but it isn’t a pretty sight! You’ll have to take my word for it, and I’ll be working on my core exercises . . .



a



b

