

Fitness Ball Exercises

Fitness balls are an excellent way to build body strength, especially core strength. The unstable ball is continually working your muscles as you adjust to hold position (just like a kayak).

Choose any three of the following exercises and do them four times a week. Set aside a specific time and days for your workout. Get in to a routine and stick to it—exercise only builds strength when it is done regularly. When you have mastered the exercises, choose another three.

For each exercise, do two sets of 12–15 repetitions. Take a one minute break between sets.

The exercises, photographs and text are taken from the Askmen website, which also includes video of each exercise. http://au.askmen.com/top_10/fitness_top_ten/36_fitness_list.html.

1. Seated wall roll



For: Quadriceps, hamstrings and buttock

Stand with your back to a wall, feet shoulder-width apart, and place the ball between the wall and your lower back. Squat, letting the ball roll along your back, until you are in a "sitting" position with your knees forming a 45-degree angle. Return to starting position.

2. Superman



For: Lower, middle and upper back, and buttocks

Lie with your stomach on the ball and your body at a 45-degree angle with the floor, balancing yourself with the tips of your toes. Stretch your arms out in front of you on either side of your head as if you're flying, and maintain the position.

3. Balanced push-ups



For: Pecs, shoulders, triceps, and abs

Place your hands on top of the ball and your body at a 45-degree angle with the floor, balancing yourself on the tips of your toes. Bend at the elbows and lower your upper body to a few inches from the ball, then push yourself back up to the starting position

4. Opposite limb extension



For: Lower back, buttocks and hamstrings

Lie with your stomach on the fitness ball and stabilize yourself with your toes and hands. While looking down at the floor, extend your left arm and your right leg simultaneously, hold for two seconds, and return to starting position. Repeat with the opposite arm and leg combination.

5. Abdominal rolls



For: Abs

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Place the ball on your thighs, near your knees, and your hands on top of ball. Lift your shoulder blades off the floor, roll the ball to the top of your knees, pause, then go back to starting position.

6. Bent knee bridge



For: Buttocks and hamstrings

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your heels resting on top of the fitness ball. Spread your arms out to your sides. Lift your butt off the floor while squeezing it, and push your hips toward the ceiling. Pause at the top of the movement, then go back to the starting position.

7. Elevated push-ups



For: Pecs, shoulders, triceps, and abs

Place the front of your knees on the ball and your hands flat on the floor (your whole body should be parallel to the floor). Look down at the floor and lower your face to within a few inches of it, then push back up to the starting position.

8. Basic crunches



For: Abs

With your feet flat on the floor, place your lower back on the ball and keep your upper body and thighs parallel to the floor. Do crunches as usual; use your abs to lift only your shoulders and upper back off the fitness ball.

9. Core crunchers



For: Abs and core muscles

Many of the best fitness ball exercises involve the core. For this one, get on your knees, bend at the waist and rest your elbows on the ball. Squeezing your abs, roll the ball forward until your upper body and thighs form a straight line. Roll back to starting position.

10. Trunk extension



For: Lower back

Get down on your knees and drape your upper body over the top of the ball, with your arms lightly hugging the back of the ball or with your hands behind your head. Lift your chest off the fitness ball until your spine is straight or slightly extended. Return to starting position.
