

# INTRODUCTION

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## Let's define your core.

Hey, I'm Lily – a female fitness coach helping women stop guessing with their training. If you've landed here, there's a good chance you've been doing ab workouts for months (or years) and still feel like nothing's really changed.

I've been there. I spent years doing endless crunches, training abs every single session, and seeing almost no difference. The truth is simple – your abs are a muscle like any other, and they need *progressive overload* to grow. If you want them more visible, they need to be stronger *and* your body fat has to sit in a place where you can actually see them.

This isn't just a vanity thing either. A strong core powers every compound lift, every daily task, every time you pick something heavy off the floor. I used to struggle with RDLs because my core wasn't engaging properly – fixing that changed the rest of my training too.

Inside this guide you've got four things: the circuit I come back to every week, the one diet switch that moved the needle, the weekly split that actually works, and the mindset rule I fall back on. Save it, screenshot it, run it for four weeks.

— **Lily**



# THE MISTAKES

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## Why it's not working yet.

Before we get into what *to* do, here are the five things I see women get wrong with core training more than anything else. If you recognise yourself in any of these – good. That's exactly where the fix is.

- » **Just ten sit-ups and done.** Doing a handful of crunches at the end of a session and calling it core work.

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- » **A completely different plan every week.** Switching circuits constantly and never actually progressing anything from one week to the next.

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- » **Not pushing close to failure.** Coasting through sets without ever adding weight or reps over time – no progressive overload, no progress.

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- » **Forgetting diet.** You can train your core perfectly, but you can't out-crunch a body fat problem. The muscle underneath has to be there, and it has to be visible.

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- » **Training abs a lot but with no direction.** More volume won't save a plan that doesn't have a focus area. Upper, lower, and stability all need to be in the mix.

It's really easy to get abs wrong. Most of the women in my DMs aren't lazy – they're just doing five random things instead of one structured thing. Fix the structure and everything else falls into place.

A good plan also has a mixture of exercises. Upper abs, lower abs, and core stability. The circuit on the next page covers all three in under ten minutes, which is why it works where random crunches don't.

# THE CIRCUIT

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## The one I run every week.

This is the circuit I tag onto the end of a full-body session. It hits all three areas – upper abs, lower abs, and core stability – in under ten minutes. Quick, efficient, no messing about.

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**3 ROUNDS** · 45S REST · 8–10 MINS TOTAL

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- » **V-up** – 12 reps. Arms and legs meet over the middle. Slow and controlled, no jerking off the floor. Upper abs focus.

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- » **Hanging leg raise** – 10 reps. No swinging. Sub in a lying leg raise if you can't control the tempo.

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- » **Weighted decline sit-up** – 12 reps. Plate on the chest, pause at the top. Where progressive overload lives.

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- » **Side plank with reach-through** – 10 per side. Obliques and stability. Keep the hips stacked.

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- » **Dead bug** – 8 per side. Slow and deliberate, lower back pressed flat the whole time.

If you're a beginner, drop the weighted sit-up to bodyweight and take reps down to 8. The goal is to finish with clean form, not survive it. Add reps first, then weight.

# THE SWITCH & THE WEEK

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## The one change that moved the needle.



If I had to pick one thing that changed how my core actually looked more than any other, it's **hitting protein at every meal**. Not tracking macros on and off. Not "eating clean". Actually hitting a number, every day, spread across three or four meals.

You can train your core perfectly, but if the muscle underneath isn't there, there's nothing to define. Protein keeps that muscle on your frame, especially in a deficit.

A rough start — *1.8g per kg of bodyweight, daily*, across three or four meals. The shift that made this sustainable for me was **front-loading breakfast**. Thirty grams in before 9am and the rest of the day feels easy.

## How often I actually train core.

Probably less than you'd think. I train full body mostly, and core gets bolted onto the end of those sessions — never as its own standalone workout. Here's a week I'd genuinely run —

- » **Mon** — Full body + core finisher (lower-ab focus, 8 mins)

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- » **Tue** — Walk or rest, no direct core

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- » **Wed** — Full body + core finisher (oblique focus, 8 mins)

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- » **Thu** — Walk or rest, no direct core

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- » **Fri** — Full body + the full Definition Protocol circuit

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- » **Sat** — Active recovery, no direct core

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- » **Sun** — Rest

Three full-body sessions, two finishers and one full circuit. Under 40 minutes on core across the week. Less done with intention beats more done randomly — every single time.

# THE RULE

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## The mindset I fall back on.

You will never out-train a scattered approach. Every time I've made real progress with my body, it's been because I stuck to something boring for long enough to actually see it work. The plan doesn't need to be perfect — it needs to be yours for long enough to matter.

**CONSISTENCY IS THE SHORTCUT. THERE ISN'T A FASTER ONE.**

Pick the plan. Follow the plan. Don't change it for four weeks. Then — and only then — decide if it's working for you. That's the rule I come back to every single time I feel the urge to chase the next shiny thing. You already know what to do. This is the permission slip to stop second-guessing it.

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WHAT'S NEXT

## The AB Diaries.

You've got the protocol. If you want the full playbook — ten circuits, video demos, a four-week structure, and the nutrition layer that ties it all together — *The AB Diaries* drops soon. Same method as *The Cutting Diaries*. Tried, tested, and it works.

Join the waitlist at [hardestthingfirst.com](https://hardestthingfirst.com)

