

CORE-TO-CORNERSTONE

A simple yet effective 90-day base core program designed to strengthen your anterior and posterior midline — transforming it from a potential liability into a foundational cornerstone of your physique and performance.

FORGE LIMITS INTO LEVERAGE

A Note Before You Begin: This program is built on gradual, progressive volume. Start at the beginning and progress in order — do not skip ahead based on your current fitness. The early stages build the work capacity and tissue tolerance the later tiers demand, particularly for high-volume GHD Sit-Ups. Athletes who begin too far along forfeit that adaptation and increase their risk of excessive soreness or injury. Earn every Tier.

Where To Start: Tier 1 assumes you can complete Day-1 as written. Look at it before you begin. If Day-1 is within your capacity, start there and progress in order. If it isn't — common even for strong, fit athletes new to these movements — you can still benefit from this program: implement the KettleBell DeadLift and Abmat Sit-Up couplet on its own, building your capacity on those two movements until you're ready to take on Day-1 in full.

Coming Soon: An Onramp and a set of Bridge Tiers are in active development — a structured path to build the base needed to enter Tier 1. Both will be added to this program and made available at no cost before the end of 2026.

(This is coaching guidance, not medical advice — consult a physician before beginning any new training program.)

DAYS & TIER	GHD SIT-UP	HIP/BACK-EXTENSION	TOES-TO-BAR	REVERSE-HYPER	ABMAT SIT-UP	KETTLEBELL DEADLIFT
1-6 (T1)	10-8-6-4-2 (30r)	10-8-6-4-2 (30r)	6-5-4-3-2-1 (21r)	6-5-4-3-2-1 (21r)	30-20-10 (60r)	30-20-10 (60r)
7-12 (T2)	10-10-10 (30r)	10-10-10 (30r)	7-7-7 (21r)	7-7-7 (21r)	20-20-20 (60r)	20-20-20 (60r)
13-18 (T3)	11-9-7-5-3-1 (36r)	11-9-7-5-3-1 (36r)	7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (28r)	7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (28r)	36-27-18-9 (90r)	36-27-18-9 (90r)
19-24 (T4)	9-9-9-9 (36r)	9-9-9-9 (36r)	7-7-7-7 (28r)	7-7-7-7 (28r)	30-30-30 (90r)	30-30-30 (90r)
25-30 (T5)	12-10-8-6-4-2 (42r)	12-10-8-6-4-2 (42r)	8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (36r)	8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (36r)	48-36-24-12 (120r)	48-36-24-12 (120r)
31-36 (T6)	7-7-7-7-7-7 (42r)	7-7-7-7-7-7 (42r)	9-9-9-9 (36r)	9-9-9-9 (36r)	30-30-30-30 (120r)	30-30-30-30 (120r)
37-42 (T7)	13-11-9-7-5-3 (48r)	13-11-9-7-5-3 (48r)	9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (45r)	9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (45r)	50-40-30-20-10 (150r)	50-40-30-20-10 (150r)
43-48 (T8)	8-8-8-8-8-8 (48r)	8-8-8-8-8-8 (48r)	9-9-9-9-9 (45r)	9-9-9-9-9 (45r)	30-30-30-30-30 (150r)	30-30-30-30-30 (150r)
49-54 (T9)	14-12-10-8-6-4 (54r)	14-12-10-8-6-4 (54r)	6-5-4-3-2-1 (21r)*	6-5-4-3-2-1 (21r) + #	40-30-20-10 (100r)**	40-30-20-10 (100r) + #
55-60 (T10)	9-9-9-9-9-9 (54r)	9-9-9-9-9-9 (54r)	7-7-7 (21r)*	7-7-7 (21r) + #	25-25-25-25 (100r)**	25-25-25-25 (100r) + #
61-66 (T11)	15-13-11-9-7-5 (60r)	15-13-11-9-7-5 (60r)	7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (28r)*	7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (28r) + #	45-35-25-15-5 (125r)**	45-35-25-15-5 (125r) + #
67-72 (T12)	10-10-10-10-10-10 (60r)	10-10-10-10-10-10 (60r)	7-7-7-7 (28r)*	7-7-7-7 (28r) + #	25-25-25-25-25 (125r)**	25-25-25-25-25 (125r) + #
73-78 (T13)	16-14-12-10-8-6 (66r)	16-14-12-10-8-6 (66r)	8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (36r)*	8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (36r) + #	50-40-30-20-10 (150r)**	50-40-30-20-10 (150r) + #
79-84 (T14)	11-11-11-11-11-11 (66r)	11-11-11-11-11-11 (66r)	9-9-9-9 (36r)*	9-9-9-9 (36r) + #	30-30-30-30-30 (150r)**	30-30-30-30-30 (150r) + #
85-90 (T15)	21-18-15-12 (66r)	21-18-15-12 (66r)	9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (45r)*	9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (45r) + #	60-50-40 (150r)**	60-50-40 (150r) + #

* Strict Toes-To-Bar replaces Kipping Toes-To-Bar (explained below)

** Boxer-Style AbMat Sit-Ups replace standard AbMat Sit-Ups (explained below)

+ # Increase to a heavier weight for all remaining tiers (explained below)

"r" = total reps — NOTE: Start at Tier 1. Progress in order. Earn every Tier.

Chart Legend & Progression Notes

- * → **Strict Toes-to-Bar** replaces Kipping Toes-to-Bar (*explained below*).
- ** → **Boxer-Style AbMat Sit-Up variation** replaces standard AbMat Sit-Ups (*explained below*).
- +# → **Increase to a heavier weight** for all remaining tiers (*explained below*).
- "r" = **Total Reps** for that exercise.
- **NOTE:** Start at Tier 1. Progress in order. Earn every Tier.
- **Note:** When a movement becomes more difficult — whether through a harder variation (such as Strict Toes-to-Bar) or increased load (such as the heavier Reverse-Hyper) — volume resets to a lower starting point and rebuilds from there. Increased difficulty is balanced by reduced volume, then progressed forward. This is intentional — not an error.

Program Structure & Flow

The **Core-To-Cornerstone** program is structured around a **6-day training split**, cycling through **three core-focused couplets**.

How It Works:

- ✓ Each **6-day training split** consists of **three couplets** (two movements per session).
- ✓ Each **couplet** is **performed twice per cycle**, alternating daily.
- ✓ Each **couplet** consists of **one Anterior movement** and **one Posterior movement**, (*i.e.; one movement that **closes the midline axis**, and one movement that **opens the midline axis***).

Weekly Breakdown:

- **Day 1 & 4:** GHD Sit-Ups & Hip/Back-Extensions
 - **Day 2 & 5:** Toes-To-Bar & Reverse Hyperextensions
 - **Day 3 & 6:** AbMat Sit-Ups & Kettlebell Deadlifts
- ✓ After each **6-day cycle**, you **advance to the next tier**, where volume is either **redistributed or increased**, following the structured progression outlined below.

Tier Progression & Volume Distribution

Each **6-day cycle** follows a **structured tiered progression** over **90 days**:

- ✓ **Total volume increases only every other tier** (*odd-numbered tiers*).
- ✓ **Even-numbered tiers maintain the same total volume** as the previous tier but **redistribute reps** from a **descending rep scheme** to a **constant rep scheme**.

Rep Scheme Alternation:

- ✓ **Odd-numbered tiers** (*Tiers 1, 3, 5, etc.*) → **Descending rep scheme** (e.g., 10-8-6-4-2 = 30 reps).
- ✓ **Even-numbered tiers** (*Tiers 2, 4, 6, etc.*) → **Constant rep scheme** with the **same total volume** as the preceding **odd tier** (e.g., 10-10-10 = 30 reps).
- This **structured alternation continues** throughout **all 15 tiers** to ensure **gradual adaptation** while reinforcing **midline endurance, strength, and muscular engagement**.

At Day 49 (Tier 9), the program shifts:

- ✓ **Progressive overload is introduced** for the **second and third couplets**, while the **first couplet maintains its structured volume progression**.
- ✓ **Anterior core movements** (*closing the midline*) become **more challenging in execution**.
- ✓ **Posterior chain movements** (*opening the midline*) increase **loading demands**.
- Each movement is strategically progressed to **reinforce core integrity, strength, and resilience**, while maintaining **balance between anterior and posterior chain development**.

Movement Breakdown & Scaling Options

Each movement serves a **specific function** within the program. Below are **detailed explanations, progressions, modifications, and alternative exercises** if access to specific equipment is limited.

First Couplet Movements

GHD Sit-Ups & Hip/Back-Extensions

• GHD Sit-Ups

✓ **Primary Goal:** Build **anterior midline endurance** through controlled full-range flexion.

✓ **Progression:** Volume gradually increases across tiers. **No external loading is added.**

Scaling Options:

- **Too intense?** → Substitute with **Jackknife Sit-Ups**.
- **No GHD available?** → Substitute with **V-Ups**.

• Hip/Back Extensions

✓ **Primary Goal:** Strengthen the **posterior chain**, focusing on **spinal stabilization and endurance**.

✓ **Progression:** Volume gradually increases across tiers. **No external loading is added.**

Variation Options:

- **Hip Extensions** (*hinging at the hip*).
- **Back Extensions** (*increased lumbar engagement*).
- **Hip-&-Back Extensions** (*blended movement*).

Scaling Options:

- **No GHD available?** → Substitute with **standing empty-bar Good Mornings**.

Second Couplet Movements

Toes-To-Bar & Reverse Hyperextensions

- **Toes-to-Bar**

✓ **Primary Goal:** Develop **dynamic core strength** and **hanging midline control**.

✓ **Progression:**

- **Days 1-48 (Tiers 1-8):** Kipping allowed.
- **Days 49-90 (Tiers 9-15):** Strict toes-to-bar introduced.
- **Advanced Options:** Slow eccentric lowering (hard), strict straight-leg-raises (harder), or both together (hardest).

Scaling Options:

- **Too difficult?** → Substitute **Toes-to-Post** or **Alternating-Toes-to-Bar** — both are more effective than Knee Raises.

- **Reverse Hyperextensions**

✓ **Primary Goal:** Lower back decompression, glute/hamstring activation, and posterior chain endurance.

✓ **Progression:**

- Choose a manageable starting weight (e.g., 90 lbs for men, 65 lbs for women).
- **Days 1-48 (Tiers 1-8):** Maintain **same weight**.
- **Days 49-90 (Tiers 9-15):** Increase weight progressively.

Scaling Options:

- **No Reverse Hyper?** → Substitute with:
 - **GHD Reverse Hip/Back Extensions**
 - **Standing Good Mornings** (for unweighted variation)
 - *If performing **unweighted**, follow **Hip/Back Extension rep schemes**.*

Third Couplet Movements

AbMat Sit-Ups & Kettlebell Deadlifts

- **AbMat Sit-Ups**

✓ **Primary Goal:** Controlled **midline flexion** with progressive difficulty modifications.

✓ **Progression:**

- **Days 1-48 (Tiers 1-8):** Kipping allowed.
- **Days 49-90 (Tiers 9-15):** Transition to **Boxer-Style Sit-Ups** (*hands near temples*).

Scaling Guidelines:

- **Avoid anchoring feet** under an object—this shifts emphasis to **hip flexors**, which are already taxed by **GHD Sit-Ups** in the next rotation.
- **Upscaling:** Superman = harder — Boxer-Style = hardest
- **Downscaling:** Arm-Throw = easier — Band-Assisted = easiest

- **Kettlebell Deadlifts**

✓ **Primary Goal:** Build **hip-hinge strength** and reinforce **spinal stability**.

✓ **Progression:**

- **Days 1-48 (Tiers 1-8):** Suggested starting weights:
 - **Men:** 53 lbs / 44 lbs (Masters)
 - **Women:** 35 lbs / 26 lbs (Masters)
- **Days 49-90 (Tiers 9-15):** Increase weight. Suggested Rx weights:
 - **Men:** 70/53 lbs or 88/62 lbs
 - **Women:** 53/35 lbs or 62/44 lbs

Scaling Options:

- **Upscaling:** No Heavier Kettlebell? → Increase difficulty with Deficit DeadLifts (*standing on bumper plates to increase range of motion*), or heavier KB, or both.
- **Downscaling:** Use a lighter kettlebell, an elevated kettlebell position, or both.

New Printable Check-Off Sheet Now Included

Based on client feedback from athletes who've already implemented this program and seen strong results, I've created a **printable check-off sheet** included on the next page. This sheet simplifies progress tracking and ensures you'll always know exactly where to pick up next:

- **90 individual boxes** — one for each day in the program. Check off a box as you complete that day's prescribed workout.
- Each box lists the **exact sets and reps** for that day.
- The sheet is organized into **six columns** (one for each day in the 6-day training cycle) and **15 rows** (one for each tier in the program). Each column is titled with the two exercises in that day's prescribed workout.
- Light **color-coding** highlights the different days, making it even easier to follow.

This tool is designed to keep you on track, simplify your daily training, and make completing the program both efficient and motivating. (Check-Off Sheet is on the next page.)

Summary

This 90-day progression system is designed to fortify core integrity, enhance structural resilience, and drive measurable progress across multiple domains of fitness.

Whether your goal is peak athletic performance, injury prevention, rehab or prehab, Core-To-Cornerstone provides the structured foundation to build a strong, resilient midline.

NOTE: If you find this program useful and think it could help someone you know, you're welcome to share it freely. My intention in creating this program, after all, is genuinely to help as many people as possible.

✓-Off Sheet	GHD-SIT-UP & BACK/HIP-EXT	TOES-TO-BAR & REVERSE-HYPER	ABMAT-SIT-UP & KB-DEADLIFT	GHD-SIT-UP & BACK/HIP-EXT	TOES-TO-BAR & REVERSE-HYPER	ABMAT-SIT-UP & KB-DEADLIFT
TIER 1	Day-1 (30 reps) 10-8-6-4-2	Day-2 (21 reps) 6-5-4-3-2-1	Day-3 (60 reps) 30-20-10	Day-4 (30 reps) 10-8-6-4-2	Day-5 (21 reps) 6-5-4-3-2-1	Day-6 (60 reps) 30-20-10
TIER 2	Day-7 (30 reps) 10-10-10	Day-8 (21 reps) 7-7-7	Day-9 (60 reps) 20-20-20	Day-10 (30 reps) 10-10-10	Day-11 (21 reps) 7-7-7	Day-12 (60 reps) 20-20-20
TIER 3	Day-13 (36 reps) 11-9-7-5-3-1	Day-14 (28 reps) 7-6-5-4-3-2-1	Day-15 (90 reps) 36-27-18-9	Day-16 (36 reps) 11-9-7-5-3-1	Day-17 (28 reps) 7-6-5-4-3-2-1	Day-18 (90 reps) 36-27-18-9
TIER 4	Day-19 (36 reps) 9-9-9-9	Day-20 (28 reps) 7-7-7-7	Day-21 (90 reps) 30-30-30	Day-22 (36 reps) 9-9-9-9	Day-23 (28 reps) 7-7-7-7	Day-24 (90 reps) 30-30-30
TIER 5	Day-25 (42 reps) 12-10-8-6-4-2	Day-26 (36 reps) 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1	Day-27 (120 reps) 48-36-24-12	Day-28 (42 reps) 12-10-8-6-4-2	Day-29 (36 reps) 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1	Day-30 (120 reps) 48-36-24-12
TIER 6	Day-31 (42 reps) 7-7-7-7-7-7	Day-32 (36 reps) 9-9-9-9	Day-33 (120 reps) 30-30-30-30	Day-34 (42 reps) 7-7-7-7-7-7	Day-35 (36 reps) 9-9-9-9	Day-36 (120 reps) 30-30-30-30
TIER 7	Day-37 (48 reps) 13-11-9-7-5-3	Day-38 (45 reps) 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1	Day-39 (150 reps) 50-40-30-20-10	Day-40 (48 reps) 13-11-9-7-5-3	Day-41 (45 reps) 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1	Day-42 (150 reps) 50-40-30-20-10
TIER 8	Day-43 (48 reps) 8-8-8-8-8-8	Day-44 (45 reps) 9-9-9-9-9	Day-45 (150 reps) 30-30-30-30-30	Day-46 (48 reps) 8-8-8-8-8-8	Day-47 (45 reps) 9-9-9-9-9	Day-48 (150 reps) 30-30-30-30-30
TIER 9	Day-49 (54 reps) 14-12-10-8-6-4	Day-50 (21 reps) 6-5-4-3-2-1 */+/#	Day-51 (100 reps) 40-30-20-10 **/+/#	Day-52 (54 reps) 14-12-10-8-6-4	Day-53 (21 reps) 6-5-4-3-2-1 */+/#	Day-54 (100 reps) 40-30-20-10 **/+/#
TIER 10	Day-55 (54 reps) 9-9-9-9-9-9	Day-56 (21 reps) 7-7-7 */+/#	Day-57 (100 reps) 25-25-25-25 **/+/#	Day-58 (54 reps) 9-9-9-9-9-9	Day-59 (21 reps) 7-7-7 */+/#	Day-60 (100 reps) 25-25-25-25 **/+/#
TIER 11	Day-61 (60 reps) 15-13-11-9-7-5	Day-62 (28 reps) 7-6-5-4-3-2-1 */+/#	Day-63 (125 reps) 45-35-25-15-5 **/+/#	Day-64 (60 reps) 15-13-11-9-7-5	Day-65 (28 reps) 7-6-5-4-3-2-1 */+/#	Day-66 (125 reps) 45-35-25-15-5 **/+/#
TIER 12	Day-67 (60 reps) 10-10-10-10-10-10	Day-68 (28 reps) 7-7-7-7 */+/#	Day-69 (125 reps) 25-25-25-25-25 **/+/#	Day-70 (60 reps) 10-10-10-10-10-10	Day-71 (28 reps) 7-7-7-7 */+/#	Day-72 (125 reps) 25-25-25-25-25 **/+/#
TIER 13	Day-73 (66 reps) 16-14-12-10-8-6	Day-74 (36 reps) 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 */+/#	Day-75 (150 reps) 50-40-30-20-10 **/+/#	Day-76 (66 reps) 16-14-12-10-8-6	Day-77 (36 reps) 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 */+/#	Day-78 (150 reps) 50-40-30-20-10 **/+/#
TIER 14	Day-79 (66 reps) 11-11-11-11-11-11	Day-80 (36 reps) 9-9-9-9 */+/#	Day-81 (150 reps) 30-30-30-30-30 **/+/#	Day-82 (66 reps) 11-11-11-11-11-11	Day-83 (36 reps) 9-9-9-9 */+/#	Day-84 (150 reps) 30-30-30-30-30 **/+/#
TIER 15	Day-85 (66 reps) 21-18-15-12	Day-86 (45 reps) 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 */+/#	Day-87 (150 reps) 60-50-40 **/+/#	Day-88 (66 reps) 21-18-15-12	Day-89 (45 reps) 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 */+/#	Day-90 (150 reps) 60-50-40 **/+/#

Finished the Program and Hungry for More?

You can **immediately extend it** to 22 Tiers (132 Days Total) and **keep your momentum going** by repeating Tiers 9–15 with **these adjustments**:

1. **Reverse the Odd-numbered Tiers:** Change the set/rep scheme from Descending to Ascending. This simple adjustment is easy to apply yet delivers a meaningfully greater challenge.
2. **Level up the Even-numbered Tiers:** Take the total reps and divide them into fewer, larger sets. For example, Day 84 in Tier 14 prescribes 5×30 (150 reps total). You could instead perform 3×50 or 2×75. *(Works for all Even-numbered tiers in 9–15, except Days 56 & 59 in Tier 10 and Days 69 & 72 in Tier 12, which can't be evenly divided into larger sets.)* This adjustment will also provide a meaningfully greater challenge.

These tweaks extend the program immediately, keeping it both challenging and engaging.

The Work Ahead

You now have everything you need: ninety days of structured progression, the scaling options to meet you wherever you're starting, and a check-off sheet to keep you on track. The work is laid out. What's left is showing up for it.

Core integrity isn't built in a session or a week — it's built in the accumulated honesty of doing the work, day after day, tier after tier. Start at the beginning. Earn each tier. Trust the progression.

Build Your Cornerstone.

A Personal Note From Jason Highbarger

I built the foundation of this program roughly two decades ago. The primary impetus of its inception was in direct response to seeing so many athletes over the years with low-back injuries — unable to train or participate in the sports they loved. The aftermath was always the same — friends and people I care about, emotionally devastated. Whether I knew them well or not, I always felt for them, wishing I could heal them in some way.

Their suffering was not only painful to witness, but to experience. If you've ever suffered a severe back injury, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Physically, mentally, emotionally — the effects are crushing. And I could personally relate.

I suffered a devastating low-back injury myself — a ruptured L-5. It came not through training or "CrossFit," but from basic physical labor — helping a best friend on a roofing job, grunt-work removing tiling after his uncle had to fire a couple guys for drinking on the job.

I had no medical insurance and no desire for back surgery even if I did, so I rehabbed the injury myself — to the point where I was able to do "touch-&-go" DeadLifts at 225 lbs for sets of 40–48 reps (never quite got 50, heh). Not a great physical feat compared to CrossFit Games athletes these days, but absolutely a staggering improvement over not being able to DeadLift an empty bar.

That injury — and my recovery from it — also helped shape this program.

In the years since, I've watched it do the same for countless others — getting them back to the things they thought they'd lost.

While I've certainly had many clients over the years ask me to make them some kind of core program, "summer abs" n' all, there is nothing about this program or its design that caters to those requests.

I built this purely to serve as BOTH a rehab and prehab tool — something to help people recover from devastating injuries that keep them from the activities they love, and to provide a legitimate structure to help as many people as possible safeguard themselves from ever suffering a similar injury.

It's why I make it as accessible as possible — no barriers to entry whatsoever — and why I encourage people to share it freely. Maybe it can help someone you know.

Core-To-Cornerstone exists for one reason.

To help people.

 Find Us On:

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