



Just because you bang out 50 crunches a day doesn't mean your abs are as strong as they should be: "The role of the entire core is to stabilize the spine while your arms and legs move," says celebrity trainer Valerie Waters, who has sculpted the bodies of A-listers such as Jennifer Garner and Kate Beckinsale. "Crunches flex your spine instead." Here's a better way to measure core strength.

**The Test: Walk Outs**

Get onto your hands and knees, palms flat on the floor, knees bent 90 degrees, and back flat (a). Slowly walk your hands away from your body, keeping your arms straight and your core and glutes engaged (b). Extend as far as you can, hold for 20 seconds, then slowly

walk your hands back to the starting position, maintaining proper form and control. If you fall, drop your hips, or lose form at any point, retry the test.

**Make Over Your Middle**

If you fall below average, focus on doing a plank until you can hold it for 30 seconds: Get into a modified push up position with your forearms on the floor and your legs extended straight behind you. Your body should form a straight line from your shoulders to your feet. Engage your core and glutes and hold this pose. Or balance on something unstable—a stability ball, a BOSU trainer, a Valslide during any exercise. Your core will have to work even harder to keep you steady.

	Excellent	Good	Below Average
<b>MEASURE UP</b> If your thighs are...			
Nearly parallel to the ground	✓		
Less than 45 degrees to the ground		✓	
More than 45 degrees to the ground and/or you're unable to hold the position for 20 seconds			✓

