

# How to Do a Butterfly Sit Ups (and Variations) for a Strong Core

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Regular sit-ups can get pretty boring and repetitive—plus, they require some extra effort from your hip flexors and thighs. If you'd like a change of pace, look no further than the butterfly sit-up, which really lets your abs, or rectus abdominis muscle, take center stage instead.[1]

## Things You'll Need

- ☐ Yoga mat
- ☐ Rolled-up towel

### Method 1

## Method 1 of 2: Basic Butterfly Sit-up



**1 Sit on the floor and press your feet together.** Find a comfortable place where you can sit and work out, like a yoga mat or padded gym floor. Press the soles of your feet together, keeping your knees bent to the sides, like butterfly wings.[2]

- With traditional sit-ups or crunches, your feet are usually planted on the ground to start. With butterfly sit-ups, your feet are pressed together at the soles.
- Your heels will be at least 1 ft (12 in) or so in front of your hips.
- If you're not able to press your feet together quite yet, practice stretching and opening up your hips every day so you become more flexible. The more flexible you are, the easier the exercise will be.[3]



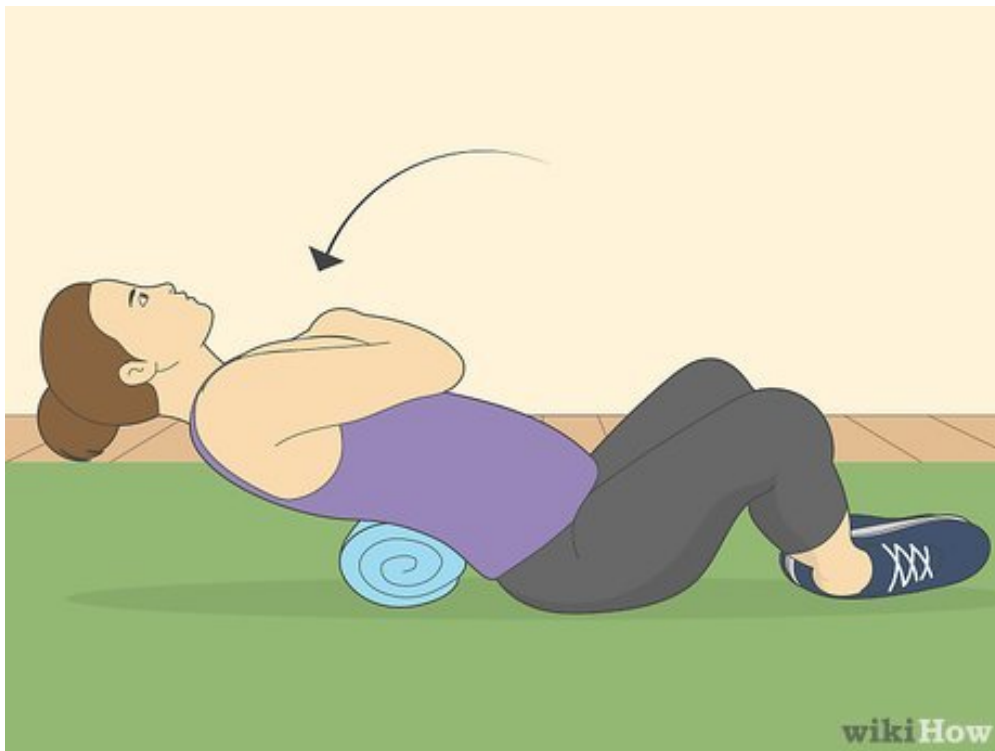
**2 Place a rolled up towel behind you to support your back.** Butterfly sit-ups can be a bit strange at first, and may be tough on your back. Roll up a gym towel and set it directly behind you, so your lower back stays supported during the exercise.<sup>[4]</sup>

- Any type of pad works for this, as long as it cushions your back in the process.



**3 Cross your arms across your chest.** Bring your right hand to your left shoulder and your left hand to your right shoulder, creating an “X” with your arms. Hold your arms in place for the entire sit-up.<sup>[5]</sup>

- This arm position is a little easier for beginners—this way, you don’t have to worry about your arms.

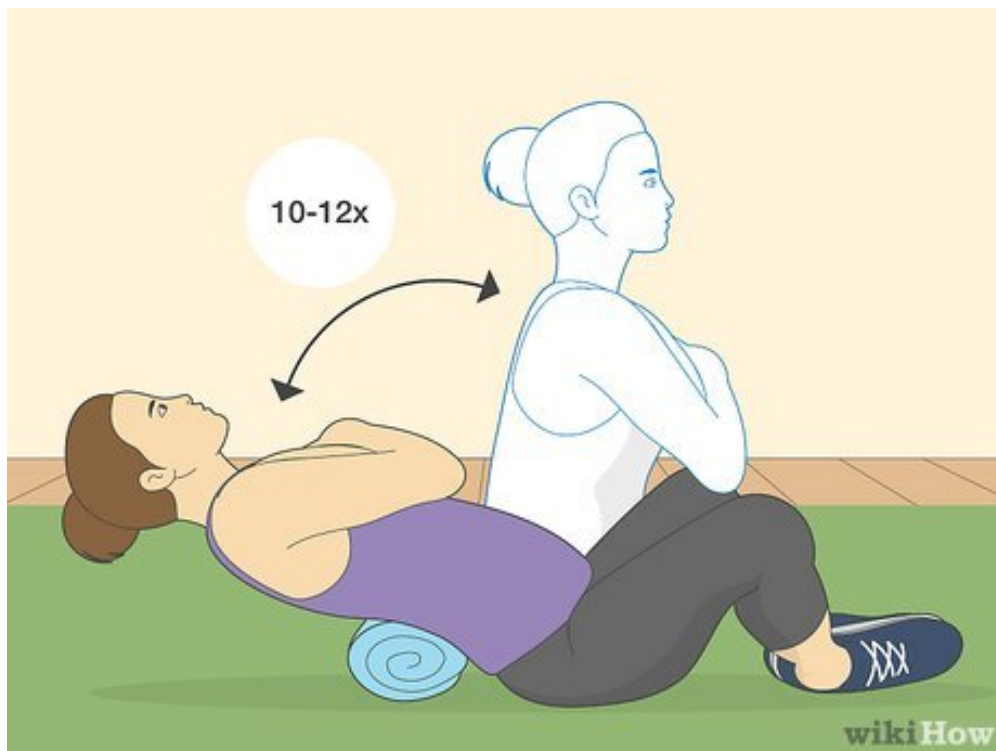


**4 Lean backward until your back touches the ground.** Pretend you're doing an ordinary sit-up, leaning yourself down to the floor and onto your towel.<sup>[6]</sup> Don't worry if you can't completely lay down—just lean your torso as far back as you can.<sup>[7]</sup>



**5 Tighten your abdominal muscles and sit up to finish the rep.** Lift yourself back up to your starting position. Lengthen your spine as you sit up, keeping your lower back slightly curved. Keep your feet pressed together as you complete the rep.<sup>[8]</sup>

- Some people prefer to lean forward when they finish a rep, while others don't straighten their back all the way.



**6 Do 2-3 sets of 10-12 reps.** Perform 10 butterfly sit-ups at a time, giving yourself 30-40 seconds between each set. Start with 2 sets if you're a beginner, then gradually work your way up to 3 sets.<sup>[9]</sup>

Method  
2

## Method 2 of 2: Variations



**1 Do a butterfly sit-up with your arms out straight.** Lie on your back with your legs in the butterfly position, extending your arms straight above your head. Tighten your core muscles and lift yourself up, swinging your arms forward while you sit up. Follow your body's momentum as you sit up, guiding your arms forward until you touch your toes. Then, lie back down with your arms extended above your head.<sup>[10]</sup>

- The exercise is a little more challenging when you keep your arms straight.<sup>[11]</sup>



**2 Lift a medicine ball during your workout.** Sit in the butterfly position and hold a medicine ball with both hands. Lie down with your back flat on the ground, bringing the medicine ball up and over your head. Sit up, tightening your abdominals as you swing the medicine ball over your head and in front of your feet.<sup>[12]</sup>

- Choose a medicine ball that you comfortably lift for multiple reps. You don't want to strain yourself!<sup>[13]</sup>
- You can also lift a dumbbell instead of a medicine ball.<sup>[14]</sup>



**3 Try basic sit-ups with a resistance band if butterfly sit-ups are too challenging.** Wrap a long, stretchy resistance band around your feet and grip the loose ends with your hands. Hold onto the band while you do your sit-ups—it'll make it a little easier for you to lift yourself up during the exercise.<sup>[15]</sup>



**Expert Q&A**

### Question

#### How can I improve my butterfly sit-ups?



**Souad Gharib**  
Exercise & Wellness  
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Expert Answer

Practice each day, stretch, and open out your hips. Also, try workouts like sit-ups to help build your core.

Helpful 0 Not Helpful 0



### Tips

- The butterfly position is all about flexibility. If you're pretty flexible, pull your feet a little bit closer to your hips.[16]
- Butterfly sit-ups help you bring your upper body closer to your pelvis, which you can't really do with normal sit-ups.[17]

### References

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## About This Article



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