

PREP YOUR BODY FOR: YARD WORK!

By Larkin Barnett • Modeled by Miami City Ballet Soloists Didier Bramaz and Callie Manning

Need extra motivation to get to work? Chores are a great practical opportunity to keep your core activated! But it's a smart idea to train for tasks like mowing the lawn and shoveling snow. If you're unprepared for these vigorous repetitive activities,

you may suffer aches, pain, fatigue, overuse syndromes or injury.

Heavy snowdrifts and yard work require strength training and proper technique for putting your back—arms, legs, hips and abs—into them. Keep “chore-specific” muscles in

fighting form with the following squats, rows, twists and movements, which target the back and gluteal muscles. You can do these prop and mat moves anywhere—even at your indoor workstation—two to three times per week.

SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE: SQUATS AND ROWS

PROPS: chair; resistance band

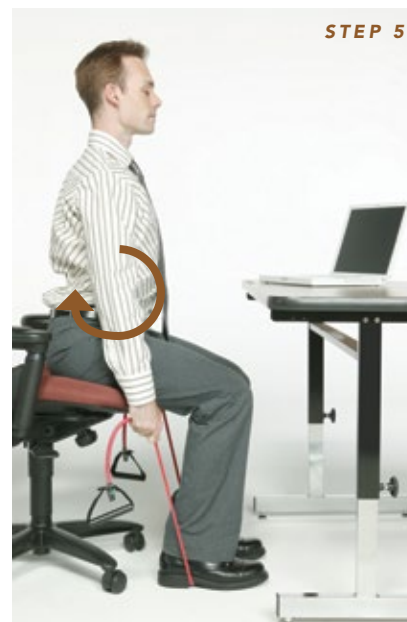
PURPOSE: squats strengthen the glutes, abs and legs; seated rows increase strength in the upper, middle and lower back, as well as the secondary stabilizers of the shoulders and upper arms

SETUP: Sit tall at the front of the chair.

1. Inhale to prepare. Exhale, and contracting your abs and glutes, rise from the chair with your pelvis tipped backward, then come to a standing position. Inhale, then exhale, returning to the chair by tipping your pelvis backward, engaging your deep abdominals and glutes throughout. Do 5–8 reps.

2. Place the band securely underneath the arches of your feet, holding onto the ends. “Walk” your hands down the band until it is taut.

3. Inhale to prepare. Exhale, contracting your abs while stacking



your hips, ribs, chest and head like building blocks. Sit tall on top of your sit bones; rock from side to side to feel these bones.

4. Press the soles of your feet into the floor, imagining that they are growing roots into the earth; feel this strong connection to the ground through your feet and legs. Inhale, then exhale, stretching your body toward the ceiling, away from your feet.

5. Inhale to prepare. Exhale, contracting your thighs, gluteal, back and deep abdominal muscles. Inhale, then take slow, powerful exhales, moving your elbows upward and then backward into a rowing motion. Do 10 reps.

TIPS: Concentrate on engaging your glutes and entire core throughout the squat to improve overall stability and balance. Contract your deep abdominals, glutes and legs throughout the rows for proper posture and overall body strength.

VARIATION: Perform the squats with the band, and the rows without it.

BOW ON ALL FOURS

PROP: none

PURPOSE: improves balance; recruits all the muscles that encircle the body; strengthens the back body when focusing on activating the hamstrings, glutes and back; calls on the core to maintain spine stability in flexion and neutral

SETUP: Kneel on all fours, with your hands underneath your shoulders, knees underneath your hips and spine in neutral. Keep your elbows straight, but not locked, and your head level, eyes focused directly in between your hands.

1. Inhale to prepare. Exhale, contracting your abs as you curl your back into spine flexion (like a cat arching its back), bringing your right knee toward your chest.

2. Inhale to prepare. Exhale, straightening your right leg behind you, returning to a neutral spine position. Repeat on your other side. Do 3–5 reps.

TIP: Keep your legs, glutes and abdominal muscles engaged throughout.

VARIATION 1: Same as above, but keep your gesture leg bent at a 90 degree angle, foot pointed toward the ceiling, while moving it backward.

VARIATION 2: Inhale, then exhale, contracting your abs as you curl your back into spine flexion, bringing your opposite arm and leg toward your navel. Inhale, then exhale, tightening your abs to support your back in neutral; extend your opposite arm and leg. Repeat on your other side. Do 3–5 reps.



CRISS-CROSS

PROP: none

PURPOSE: slow upper-trunk rotations with a gently elongated spine target the waist; improves range of motion and strengthens the core muscles

SETUP: Lie on your back, with your legs in a tabletop position. Lift your upper body, with your hands stacked behind your head without interlocking your fingers, elbows wide.

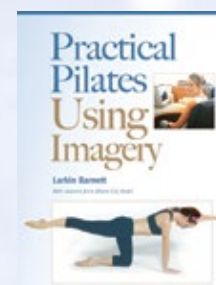
1. Straighten your right leg at a 45 degree angle. Inhale, twisting from your waistline, as you bring your right elbow toward your left knee. Exhale, holding for 3 counts as you deepen your abdominal contraction.

2. Inhale, repeating step 1 to your other side. Do 3–5 sets.

TIPS: Feel your abdominals contract to support your spine and keep your hips quiet. Each time you twist, visualize a corkscrew spiraling, and look at your back elbow. Picture tucking your shirt into trousers to organize your shoulder girdle.



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Exercises taken from Larkin Barnett's Practical Pilates Using Imagery, (chockfull of moves to integrate into chores, errands, desk work and traveling for busy schedules, as well as matwork), 2nd Edition, © 2009, Lorenz Educational Press. Available at www.pilates.com and www.amazon.com. Photography by Ray Graham.