Two Different Side Plank – Prone Plank Progressions

Two different planking progressions form the cornerstone of PAP strength/functional training and integration. This document provides specific training tips and guidelines for how to perform these progressions correctly. Please DO refer to the instructional videos located in the “Level 2” strength training area.

**Two different progressions:** One progression is referred to as a *Moving Plank progression* because it involves movement of the body throughout. The movement is represented by a lifting of the upper leg (side plank) and reaching (half front plank). The second version is known as a *Continuous Plank progression*, which is more static and will definitely challenge your endurance.

These two progressions are quite different. *You may find one version easier than the other; you may find one side harder than the other.* In your own practice, focus on and work on the weaker side first, and the weaker progression first, with “extra” skills practice outside of what is programmed for you in the plan if that is required for you to master these movements and progress them.

**Moving Plank Progression:**

Refer to the instructional video for specific direction on how to approach the MOVING plank. This progression utilizes the HALF FRONT plank position. The movement involves raising the upper leg (side plank) and achieving a reach of each arm (half front plank). At all times, form is king. Do only as many reps as you can do, perfectly. Here are some additional notes on this progression, the MOVING plank.

**Notes for the MOVING Progression:**
1. **Transitioning from side to prone to side:** You may reset as you transition. Do move smartly from the side to prone position, and back to the side. While you do not need to remain elevated, you don’t want to dawdle.

2. **Prone Plank:** We feel the half front plank is a great place to start with this moving plank. If you have the strength to do it with the full plank, then you may progress to it, but very often form deteriorates if we haven’t yet developed the strength and stability to progress from the Half, to the Full Prone position. Remember, form is king. Bad reps develop compensation, poor stability and inadequate strength, which will never serve you well.

3. **Movement:** The movement involved is raising the upper leg in side plank position, and reaching with the arm in prone position.

Make sure your trunk/core remains still and rock solid during these movements. This cannot be emphasized enough. Look for lateral shift of your trunk (right to left or left to right) as well as one or the other hip dropping. Don’t seek an “almost” perfect movement – demand absolutely perfect movement. You may ask why? Because you’re training your brain and nervous system, where the circuits get grooved and with practice, you’re going to make what you do, permanent.

**Aim for 3-6 reps of each over the course of 8-10 seconds, before changing position.** The key element to this progression is that you should be moving in some way, throughout. It is NOT about endurance or stamina in a static position, as is the other series.

4. **Form:** Perfect form is key, of course. Like anything, this can be done much more easily, poorly. (Go back and read that sentence again). One of the key differences with this series is that it forces you to learn how to turn stability on and off quickly and repeatedly. That is absolutely a reflection of athleticism and normal human movement. Its dynamic, as our movement is.

5. **Squeeze / tighten your glutes:** One of the biggest challenges for folks who are working on developing their planks is to keep the glutes firing and ENGAGED. When in that half front plank or side plank, feel like you are pinching a coin between your butt cheeks throughout the entire progression.
Keep the butt engaged and strong and develop stability in the right way as a result.

6. **How hard?:** You will want to approach this at YOUR LEVEL, with the goal of improving on a consistent basis as you embark on the plan. Start where you are, and get better. ALL OF THESE MOVEMENTS are skills. Practice them as such. Read that again: strength and stability are a skill!!

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**The descending SIDE PLANK and PRONE PLANK continuous progression:**

As with the moving plank, reference the instructional video for specific directions. This descending progression can be an ideal way to blast through a plateau. Let’s see how this can happen by using an example: let’s say you’ve reached a 90 second (") side plank and can’t seem to reach our Pursuit Athletic Performance goal of 2.5 minutes on each side. How can you change things up and make some gains, blasting that plateau? This progression may help. Here’s how:

Take ~ 75% of your BEST maximum effort and use that duration as your baseline starting point for the descending progression outlined below. Similarly, as you descend in duration, subtract approximately 10 to 15” from each rep as you move downward in duration.

For example, using our previous example of a best MAX effort of 90”, you would subtract ~25% from 90” (about 20”), leaving you with 70”. Use this 70” duration as your starting point and proceed, descending in duration as you alternate side plank and prone plank in this manner:

1. Side plank, right side: 70”
2. Prone plank: 60”
3. Side plank, left side: 70”
4. Prone plank: 60”
5. Side plank, right side: 50”
6. Prone plank: 45”
7. Side plank, left side: 50”
8. Prone plank: 45”
9. Side plank, right side: 40”
10. Prone plank: 45”
11. Side plank, left side: 40”
12. Prone plank: 45”
13. Side plank, right side: 30”
14. Prone plank: 30”
15. Side plank, left side: 30”
16. Prone plank:?

Notes for the continuous descending progression:

7. Transitioning from side to prone to side: Do NOT rest between transitions by lowering your body to the floor. Stay elevated, and move smartly from the side to prone position, and back to the side. The goal is to transition quickly but with care, without resting.

8. Prone Plank: if you feel you don’t have the strength to maintain a true full front plank position (caterpillar type isometric contractions of anterior/posterior muscle, with focus on drawing toes and elbows together tightly!), then you may “peel back” to a static front plank, or the HALF front plank. Make it your goal to use the full front plank for the entire set.

9. Prone Plank – More: One of the most common issues with the prone plank, is elevated hips /butt, due to tight hip flexors. Keep an absolutely straight body line from shoulder, to hips, to ankles. USE your hip flexors and SQUEEZE your glutes, to PULL your pelvis down into neutral.

10. Prone Plank – More: On the very last rep, make it your goal to hold this for as long as you can, without losing form. Don’t get hurt! Over time, you may find you can extend this, making new gains in strength and stability!

11. Side Plank: form is, as always, ABSOLUTELY King! Regularly check your form as you move into each rep. Hips forward, perfect alignment, lengthening your body like a taught, tight rope.
If you have any questions on the above topics, check in on the forum and ask!
We are here to help! Be great!