

# **Dowel-Band Training for the Trunk**

By Dave Schmitz

Are you tired of training your trunk the traditional (and most of the time ineffective) way??? To better understand why traditional trunk training does not work, I will let you in on the secret of what your trunk muscles really do and how they actual function. Then you can decide if you want to begin incorporating one of my favorite trunk training programs.

The abdominal muscles, especially the obliques and transverse abdominus (sometimes called the deep abdominals) do not respond to exercises that artificially cause them to contract like sit-ups, crunches, incline sit-ups, straight leg raises or abdominal machines. Why??? Because they are muscles like any other muscles in that they respond to what your legs and arms are doing. Think about it..... What attaches your upper extremities to your lower extremities??? Answer – Your trunk!! Well, most all activities and movements we perform are on our feet and therefore require our upper and lower extremities to communicate in order for us to complete the movement. If you really want to train your trunk you need to be:

1. Standing
2. Challenging your upper and lower extremities in some fashion by making both region move simultaneously, or one region performing an isometric hold while the other is actively moving.
3. Trunk muscles function like any other muscles, they must load before they can explode. Your training must lengthen the muscles first.

Remember also the functional responsibility of the lower abdominals is to maintain your center of gravity (which essentially is located by drawing a circle around your trunk at the level of your navel) over your base of support which is typically your feet.

Therefore if I am lying down, doing a sit-up, my base of support is my back. How tough is it to maintain that position vs. standing on your feet and swinging your arms that maybe have a weight in them. Hopefully you get my point.

## **Six Packs are overrated**

The big Rectus Abdominus muscle, which is the big “six – pack” muscle and the one you feel tighten when you do a traditional crunch or sit-up, is not attached to your low back. Therefore it can not control your low back or your center of gravity like the lower abdominal muscles, which are attached to the low back.

Bottom line.... Train the lower abdominal (external obliques, internal obliques and transverse abdominus) and you will get the type of abdominal area that not only functions well but will look great as well.

### **You Lower Abdominals are wired for sound**

The lower abdominals are neurologically wired up on a feed-forward system. This allows the lower abdominals to actually activate prior to movement being initiated. This is an awesome system, because it allows you to create a stiff trunk prior to performing any movement regardless of intensity. Great way to protect the low back.

### **Dowels and Bands Rock the Trunk**

Take a simple flexband and attach it to the end of a 5 foot dowel. Now position the dowel so you can do a simple chest press. Make sure the pushing arm is inside the band attachment. As you push out you will notice your feet digging in which transfers a force up to the trunk causing it to also activate. Without both of these regions working together, you are unable to push with any significant power.

Imagine what happens if you move you're pushing hand further away from where the band is attached to the dowel. Give it a try and let me know.

### **The following Dowel – Band drills will get your trunk reacting**

Make sure you follow these recommendations:

1. You must have tension on the band when it is in the pre-push position
2. Make sure you push straight out, not across your body
3. The band should be aligned just to outside of the pushing shoulder
4. Move your hand further away from the band's attachment onto the dowel for more tension
5. Make sure you use a flat band and you loop the band onto the dowel to avoid slipping off
6. Rotate your hand attachment as you perform the shoulder or above head movement

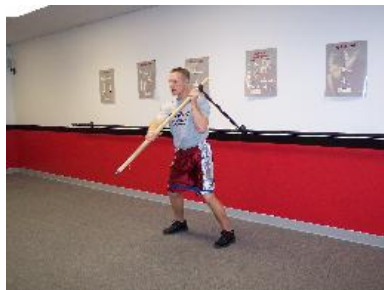
Single Arm Chest Press



Single Arm Lateral – Rotational Chest Press



Single Arm Overhead Press



Single Arm Shoulder Press



Here is why this Challenges your trunk:

1. With the resistance of the band being outside your center of gravity (navel area), it causes your trunk to have to react to the off-set resistance.
2. The elastic nature of the band speeds up the return movement which forces your trunk and lower torso to stabilize to protect your low back and keep it from rotating to far. Therefore arms & legs are working simultaneously.
3. Lastly the trunk is lengthened on the opposite side of the movement which will load those trunk muscles prior to you doing the movement. Therefore don't be surprised when you feel the trunk muscles on the opposite side of the movement working harder.

Let your trunk rock with dowel-band training.

Dave Schmitz  
aka "The Official Band Man"

About the author

Dave Schmitz is a Physical Therapist and Performance Enhancement specialist who owns PERFORMAX – Performance Training. He has spent the last 10 years developing innovative functionally based training using resistance bands.

For More information on dowel-band training or resistance band training tips, drills, techniques, or workouts check out [www.functional-training-with-resistance-bands.com](http://www.functional-training-with-resistance-bands.com) or contact Dave Schmitz at [dave@functional-training-with-resistance-bands.com](mailto:dave@functional-training-with-resistance-bands.com)