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GEAR

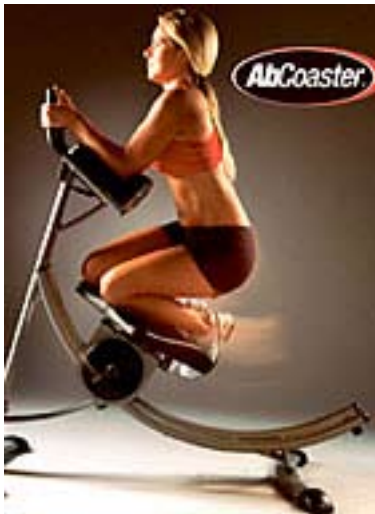
Crunch time: New ways to work your abs

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In the beginning, there was the sit-up. It begat the tubular ab rocker, which reduced neck stress and ensured proper back posture. That, in turn, begat a slew of high-performance ab devices including punching bags, weight plates and a roller-coaster seat replicating the movement of an inchworm. The result: six-packs of epic proportions.

Up, up and away

Ab Coaster: Innovative machine with stationary handles and movable seat that slides on smooth, curved rails; feels like a hybrid of an ab crunch and a hanging leg raise.



Sleek-looking and deceptively fun, it tricks you into a tough, effective ab workout. In a kneeling position, you swoop forward and upward with carnival-like excitement, contracting your abs and pulling up your hips and knees. It feels like an easy version of a hanging leg raise for about 10 seconds, then reality sets in: This is no ride in the park. Doing 60 seconds straight should earn you a medal. If it's not hard enough, sit with your butt back on your heels to get a deeper burn, or add your own weight plates on the pegs under the seat. Just 10 extra pounds adds significant difficulty. Seat angles sideways to hit the obliques. Safe for neck and back, which are not involved in the movement. Easy assembly, with tools included.

Price: \$399 home model; \$1,495 commercial. (866) 219-5335; www.abcoaster.com.