**How to Do the Basic Plank**

1. Start by laying on your stomach on the ground or on an exercise mat. Position your elbows so that they are directly under your shoulder, and bent at a 90 degree angle. Place your palms flat on the floor and keep your forearms parallel to each other.
2. Curl your toes under so that you place the weight on the balls of your feet.
3. Engage your abdominals to lift your hips off the ground, keeping a straight line from the crown of your head to your knees. You should be in a modified plank on your knees (pictured below).
4. Engage your glutes, quadriceps and abs even more to lift your knees off the ground so that you are now in a straight line from head to feet.
5. Hold this position for 20 seconds. As you get more comfortable and stronger, hold this position for as long as possible without compromising form. Remember to breathe naturally.

**Plank Tips from Head to Toe**

* Keep your neck neutral and focus on a point that is about 12 inches in front of you. Be sure not to look too far in front and crank your neck forward. That being said; also make sure that your head does not “hang” down. You should not be looking at your stomach or belly button. The crown of your head should be reaching forward, and your neck should be lengthened.
* Keep your shoulders away from your ears, but make sure they are engaged. Feel as if you’re drawing your shoulders down your back, creating space between your ears and your shoulders. Don’t allow the shoulders to “wing” out, but instead, feel as if there is a flat space between your shoulders, You should be able to hold a glass of water between your shoulders.
* Engage your chest, pressing your palms and your forearms into the floor, as if you were trying to press it away from you. This will help engage your biceps and triceps as well.
* Scoop your pubic bone towards your belly button, then lengthen your lower back and engage your abs, and especially your lower abs. This should create a lengthening feeling in your lower back and prevent injury and stress to your lower back.
* Squeeze your glutes together, and tighten your quadriceps (the front of your legs). Your legs should be fully engaged (similar to how you should feel at the top of a squat position). Make sure your hips don’t drop or sag towards the floor. Keeping your legs properly engaged will also help prevent discomfort in your lower back.
* Keep your toes grounded and your weight in the balls of your feet. Your feet should be flexed with your toes reaching towards your head. You should not feel as if you are in a “tip-toe” position. Reach your heels award from you as if you were reaching the crown of your head and your heels in opposite directions.
* As soon as you begin to feel your form is suffering, lower out of the plank. You’re going for *quality* not quantity.