

# Eyes on the Prize

## Creative goal setting leads to retention.

Every aspect of your class is an opportunity to guarantee participants have a reason to return. In my willPower & grace™ class, I take a goal-oriented team approach to challenging core exercises like Plank. Clearly marked improvement lines give students something to strive for, praise each other for and chat about in the locker room.

When setting goals, add the following components over time so that your exercises don't get stale:

- Periodize in advance. For example: "Here's the game plan: You should be able to do a 3-minute Plank by March, a 4-minute Plank by July and a 5-minute Plank by December. Are you with us?"
- Give homework. "Accomplishing these goals will not be easy if I see you only once a week! Practice Plank three times a week minimum . . . and that includes on your vacations!"
- Offer levels 1, 2 and 3 so that newcomers feel welcome and veterans are challenged.
- Set monthly goals. For example: "The first week of every month, push yourself to hold the move an extra 30 seconds. Do your best—and tell me when

you make it!"

- Offer awards as incentives. They don't have to be expensive. The "Plank Hall of Fame" is great recognition. You can also offer a special bandana for students who reach the level 3 goal.

### TEACHING PLANK

Introduce a goal-setting exercise like Plank after you have brought participants' heart rates down through a progressive reduction in activity.

#### Plank

Begin on all fours, palms down, hands beneath shoulders, knees under hips. Push up and back until body is in a straight line from shoulder to heel. Engage abdominals and gluteals. Breathing is fluid and deep.

Give students three position choices:

- on hands, palms down
- on knuckles, wrists straight
- on elbows and forearms, palms up so that student will not push into palms

If students need to take a rest, they can resume the hands-and-knees position. The ultimate goal, however, is to stay in Plank for the allotted amount of time. Set the first goal at 1 minute, conditioning students to challenge themselves mentally as well as physically. Once you begin to reach 2 1/2 or 3 minutes, assign a "Plank song," something recognizable that people can sing

along to. Your goal may be to make it through the entire song. Favorites in my class include "Harder to Breathe" by Maroon 5, "Just a Ride" by Jem and "American Girl" by Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers.

Stay more or less consistent from week to week. Most participants will find 3 minutes fairly attainable after they've practiced. You may want to set a monthly goal—for example, to shoot for a 5-minute Plank the first Wednesday of each month. Don't forget to bring a stopwatch and offer a countdown.

Some people may try to leave during this segment because they think that it's not applicable to them or that the goal is completely unattainable. Explain that this is a team approach to success. Therefore, for each person who leaves, the group must do 10 push-ups. No one will dare leave early!

*Stacey Lei Krauss is an international educator with 10 years of dance training and 15 years' experience in the fitness industry. In addition to creating her signature class, willPower & grace (now available on video), she is the chief operating officer of Sunshine Fitness Resources in Boulder, Colorado. For more information, visit [www.willPowerproductions.info](http://www.willPowerproductions.info).*

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