

Balanced Body Education®



Mat 1

PILATES INSTRUCTOR TRAINING MANUAL



MAT 1

PILATES MAT FOUNDATIONS

A DETAILED GUIDE FOR TEACHING PILATES

A Balanced Body Education Product

Created By

Nora St. John

2026 Digital Edition

Balanced Body Inc, Sacramento California

NOT FOR PRINT

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This Manual is intended to be used as part of a Pilates teacher training program or for clients who are working under the supervision of a trained Pilates teacher. If you are using this manual to learn these Pilates exercises and you are not under the supervision of a trained Pilates teacher please keep in mind that the material presented is physically challenging and Balanced Body is not liable for any injuries caused by attempting these exercises without proper supervision. Balanced Body highly recommends that you get a thorough evaluation from a qualified health or fitness professional and work with a trained Pilates teacher in order to receive the maximum benefit from these exercises.

2026 Edition

Edited by Joy Puleo

Published by:

Balanced Body Inc.
Sacramento, California, USA

Toll-free from U.S. and Canada: 1-800-745-2837

Toll-free from UK: 00-800-7220-0008

From other locations: +1 916-388-2838

Email: education@pilates.com

© 2007 Balanced Body Education LLC. All Rights Reserved.
May not be reproduced in whole or in part. For information on getting permission for reprints or excerpts, contact education@pilates.com

NOT FOR PRINT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Balanced Body Education

3 What is Pilates?

6 Pilates Principles

EXERCISE GROUP 1

Supine Trunk Integration

7 Pilates Essentials

11 The Hundred

13 Single Leg Stretch

14 Double Leg Stretch

EXERCISE GROUP 2

Seated Spinal Mobility

15 Pilates Essentials

17 Spine Stretch Forward

18 Spine Stretch Side

19 Saw

EXERCISE GROUP 3

Limb Differentiation and Lumbopelvic Control

23 Essentials

25 Single Leg Circles

27 Single Straight Leg Stretch

28 Double Straight Leg Stretch

29 Criss Cross

EXERCISE GROUP 4

Prone Extension

31 Pilates Essentials

33 Swan

35 Single Leg Kick

36 Double Leg Kick

38 Swimming

EXERCISE GROUP 5

Lateral Line

39 Pilates Essentials

41 Side Leg Series

45 Banana

EXERCISE GROUP 6

Rolling to Planks

47 Pilates Essentials

49 Roll Up

51 Rolling Like a Ball

52 Open Leg Rocker

53 Seal

55 Push Ups

SAMPLE PROGRAMMING AND ESSAYS

57 Sample class programming, video sequences
- check QR code regularly as new sequences
are continually added.

59 Sample class programming, written.

63 Becoming a Teacher

67 Teaching group classes

BALANCED BODY EDUCATION

THE INSPIRATION OF NORA ST. JOHN

BALANCED BODY EDUCATION

The Balanced Body Pilates Instructor Training Program was developed by Nora St. John, MS. She began practicing Pilates Mat in 1979 as part of her dance training and was introduced to the apparatus in 1988 after a foot injury led her to St. Francis Memorial Hospital's Center for Sports Medicine in San Francisco. She apprenticed with Patrice Whiteside and Elizabeth Larkam and began teaching in 1989. To further deepen her understanding of the Pilates method, she studied with Michele Larsson, Eve Gentry, Romana Kryzanowska, Carola Trier, Marie-José Blom, Alan Herdman, Karen Clippinger, Kathy Grant, Lolita San Miguel, and many others. Nora holds degrees in Biology, Dance, and Traditional Chinese Medicine, and she is certified in Pilates, Oriental Bodywork, and the Franklin Method.

The Balanced Body program combines the full bodied, athletic choreography of the original work with innovations and insights from a contemporary understanding of anatomy, biomechanics and movement science.

Nora's eleven years at St. Francis Memorial Hospital's Center for Sports Medicine reflect her expertise in applying Pilates for orthopedic rehabilitation and in preparing athletes and dancers for high-level performance.

She continues to influence Pilates education through her program, Balanced Body Advanced Movement Principles, designed for experienced instructors working with injuries and imbalances.

Nora's commitment has always been to improve the quality of Pilates teachers through education. Balanced Body continues to support her legacy by maintaining her focus on quality teaching backed by stellar resources and the strength of the Balanced Body brand.

NORA'S CREDITS AND GRATITUDE

The Balanced Body® Pilates Instructor Training Program come from many sources and many experiences. The following are a small subset of the people and places who have influenced this course.

The University of California, Santa Cruz Dance and Biology Departments for providing a foundation in movement education and the anatomy and biomechanics that support it.

The Academy of Chinese Culture and Health Sciences for helping me see the body as a whole and learning how to observe the person in front of me with an open and curious mind.

All of the teachers in the Dancemedicine division of the Center for Sports Medicine at St. Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco and Walnut Creek. Particularly Diana Herold, Mercy Sidbury and Naomi Leiserson all of whom provided regular conversation regarding the fine points of movement, anatomy, pathology, psychology and the human experience.

My mentors and teachers Karen Clippinger, Marie-Jose Blom, Jean Claude West, Robert Schleip, Thomas Myers, Eric Franklin and many more for inspiring and clarifying my understanding of the body.

Balanced Body, especially Ken Endelman who took a leap of faith in allowing me to shape the Balanced Body Education program.

Joy Puleo, my co-creator and poetic interpreter of all things movement for writing, editing, organizing and structuring this project along with Portia Page, a perpetual source of support and guidance.

Our beautiful models: Naomi Leiserson, Lizbeth Garcia, Viktor Uygan, Caleb Rhodes, Christine Crooks, LaBriec Ochsner, Tonya Amos, Donald Martin, Cameron Turner and Teresa Ellis who make everything look graceful, easy and clear.

The marketing department at Balanced Body for providing design and support and for putting the finishing touches on everything.



Nora teaching Advanced Movement Principles at the Balanced Body Studio in Sacramento, CA.

NOT FOR PRINT

BALANCED BODY EDUCATION

WELCOME TO BALANCED BODY PILATES INSTRUCTOR TRAINING PROGRAM!

Welcome to the Balanced Body Pilates Instructor Training Program!

WHO IS BALANCED BODY

Balanced Body is your partner in mind body fitness. We work with the best Educators in Pilates and related disciplines to provide learning opportunities that are stimulating, personal and deeply rooted in the art and science of movement.

ORGANIZATION AND REQUIREMENTS

The coursework for each of our programs is organized in a modular, step by step, format with each course building toward the program completion. Each individual course presents a scope of Pilates experiential and practical work. A program is not complete until all required coursework, practice, observation, and teaching hours are completed.

Upon completion of these requirements, you will be eligible to sit for the final written and practical test. Upon successful completion of both parts (written and practical) of the final test, Balanced Body certifies you as a qualified Pilates Instructor for the program/achievement level of your choice.

Pilates Teacher Training Course Offerings

Initial Course

Movement Principles with Pilates Essentials

Mat Courses

Mat 1, Mat 2, Mat 3

Reformer Courses

Reformer 1, Reformer 2, Reformer 3

Apparatus Courses

Trapeze Table, Chair, Barrels or Apparatus 1, Apparatus 2, Apparatus 3

The Apparatus courses can be taken as individual Trapeze Table, Chair and Barrels courses. They are also taught as Apparatus 1, Apparatus 2, Apparatus 3 where portions of each apparatus is taught within the course.

Classroom Hours

Every course includes lectures, workouts, exercise demonstrations and practice teaching. Students are expected to learn and practice the exercises, practice teaching the exercises and understand the principles and history of the Pilates method.

Personal Practice

Once you enter the program, begin logging your Pilates classes and personal training sessions. Developing and maintaining a personal Pilates practice is an essential part of becoming an effective and inspiring instructor. Throughout your coursework, your Educator will provide recommendations to help you focus your practice.

Observation Hours

Observation hours may be completed by watching experienced instructors teach group classes, semi-private sessions, or private sessions, either live or on video. These hours provide a chance to develop verbal and manual cueing skills, practice understanding class sequencing, and observe how instructors adapt to meet the needs of individuals and groups.

Teaching Hours

Teaching hours include any Pilates teaching: either as an employee within a studio, fitness facility, or clinic, or as a student teacher for family and friends.

*Continually check our website, CLARA (your digital learning resource), and with your Educator for guidance on how best to fulfill the hour requirements.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND COSTS

Anatomy

A basic understanding of anatomy provides a strong foundation for an effective Pilates instructor and is required for completion of our Reformer and Comprehensive programs. It is highly recommended for our Mat program. It can be fulfilled by taking an approved course from other providers or by taking our Balanced Body Anatomy in Three Dimensions course.

Final Test

After completing all coursework and hours, students must pass a final written and practical exam to qualify as a Balanced Body Instructor. Exam requirements, resources, and the application are available in CLARA (your digital learning resource) and from your Educator.

Additional Costs

All published prices for Balanced Body Courses include the course and materials fee only. The cost of personal sessions and any costs associated with completion of observation and teaching hours are not included and are the responsibility of the student. Successful completion of this program does not guarantee employment.

OUR INSTRUCTOR TRAINING PROGRAMS

Balanced Body offers a full range of Pilates instructor training programs. Our program/achievement offerings include:

Comprehensive Pilates Training

- The industry gold standard for Pilates training.
- This training level includes our signature Movement Principles with Pilates Essentials course, all Mat, Reformer and Apparatus coursework. Anatomy is required.

Additional personal practice, observation and teaching hours required.*

Mat and Reformer Training

- If looking for an in depth training which focuses on the foundations of Pilates, this is an excellent program.
- This training level includes our signature Movement Principles with Pilates Essentials course, all Mat, and Reformer coursework. Anatomy is required.

Additional personal practice, observation and teaching hours required.*

Reformer only training

- This program is solely for Reformer focused training.
- This training level includes our signature Movement Principles with Pilates Essentials course, all Reformer coursework. Anatomy is required.

Additional personal practice, observation and teaching hours required.*

Mat only training

- For Mat only, this is where you start.
- This training level includes our signature Movement Principles with Pilates Essentials course, all Mat coursework.

Additional personal practice, observation and teaching hours required.*

WHY BALANCED BODY

Why Balanced Body? Because we teach Pilates! Because we care about growing the global Pilates community. Because we believe every client deserves an exceptional Pilates experience. Because we know the instructor is at the heart of that experience.

The Balanced Body Pilates instructor training program honors the traditional Pilates exercises while also integrating contemporary applications and client-centered training recommendations specific to the person, or group. Our recommendations are updated regularly to reflect advances in movement science and best practice.

Our curriculum meets international standards and prepares you to sit for the National Pilates Certification Program (NPCP) exam. The NPCP is an internationally recognized third party credential.

As one of the most recognized Pilates training programs in the world, Balanced Body is proud to support a global network of Educators who are experienced, caring and passionate teachers committed to your success.

Our mission is simple: to provide you with the highest quality Pilates education experience possible. This empowers you with the necessary tools to provide your clients with the highest quality Pilates training possible. We believe that the quality of instruction is one of the factors that has made Pilates successful, and it is the quality of instruction that will continue to grow Pilates as a mind body practice for every body.

CONTACT US

If you need information regarding additional training certificates of completion, continuing education or anything related to the Pilates teacher training, reach out to our customer care team at:

Balanced Body Education

Toll free: (800) PILATES (745-2837)

International: +1 (916) 386-6234

E-mail: education@pilates.com

www.pilates.com

NOT FOR PRINT

WHAT IS PILATES?

FROM CONTROLOGY TO CONTEMPORARY

Pilates is an exercise system developed by Joseph Pilates to strengthen muscles, increase flexibility and improve overall health. Exercises are performed on a mat and on specially designed equipment. The Pilates system includes exercises for every part of the body and applications for every kind of activity. Created in the early part of the 20th century, Pilates was so far ahead of its time that it did not begin to achieve popular recognition until the first few years of the 21st century. Over 10 million people are now practicing Pilates in the United States and the numbers are growing every year.

WHY IS PILATES SO POPULAR?

Pilates focuses on engaging the mind and body together to create exercises that involve the whole person. Every exercise is performed with attention to the breath, proper form and efficient movement patterns. Pilates strengthens the core, improves balance, increases coordination and decreases stress. The exercises are relatively safe, low impact and appropriate for anyone from 10 to 100. Pilates focuses on learning to move better so the benefits are felt in everyday life.

Pilates is used in fitness centers, private studios, rehabilitation clinics and hospitals to improve the health and well being of clients from the recently injured to the super fit. As more and more people participate, Pilates continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of anyone wanting to improve their ability to move with strength, ease and grace.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JOSEPH H. PILATES

Joseph Hubertus Pilates was born in Germany around 1883. He had rheumatic fever, asthma and rickets as a child and was plagued by a weak respiratory system. In order to improve his own health he began exploring ways to strengthen his body and his mind. Early on, Joe became intrigued by the classical notion of the ideal man who combined a well trained body with an equally well trained intellect. In pursuit of this goal he participated in boxing, fencing, wrestling and gymnastics with his father and brother. Germany was a fertile ground for these explorations at the turn of the 20th century with many ground breaking leaders in movement science, dance and psychology working there.

Joe was in England touring with a boxer when World War I broke out. He was held as a resident alien in an internment camp on the Isle of Man for the duration of the war. While in the camp he took it upon himself to lead his fellow detainees in a daily exercise program. According to Joe, when the influenza epidemic of 1918–1919 broke out, none of the inmates who followed his regimen got sick.

Joe's success with his group of inmates brought him to the attention of the camp leaders and he was given the job of an orderly at a hospital for wounded soldiers. He was put in charge of 30 patients and worked with them every day to exercise whatever they could move. This was in the days when western medicine was in its infancy and there were few treatments to offer patients other than surgery and morphine. Nursing during this time usually meant extended bed rest which led to muscular atrophy, loss of aerobic capacity and a weakened immune system. Joe's exercises helped his patients to get better faster and helped them to fend off the secondary infections that killed so many people in similar circumstances.

Working as an orderly also led to the development of Joe's first piece of exercise equipment. Manually working out 30 patients every day was exhausting so Joe came up with the idea of attaching springs to the patient's bed frames and thus the first Cadillac was born! Now the patients could exercise themselves under Joe's supervision.

After Joe was released from the camps and returned to Germany, he was approached by the "brown shirts" (who were to become the Nazi party) to train their police force. Joe didn't want to have anything to do with them, so he left Germany on a boat for America and met his soon-to-be-wife Clara on the passage over. Clara was a nurse who became a true partner for Joe, working beside him in the studio everyday and taking care of any clients Joe didn't want to work with.

When Joe and Clara arrived in New York in 1926, they rented a small studio in the same building as the New York City Ballet on 8th Ave. and started teaching what Joe named "Contrology." Joe worked with clients from all walks of life but he made an especially strong impression on the dance community working with Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, George Balanchine and many others who sent their dancers to Joe's for rehabilitation following injuries.

Joe was an inventor who was always working on developing new exercise equipment. He designed the Universal Reformer, the Wunda Chair, the Cadillac, the Ladder Barrel, the Spine Corrector and many other wonderful inventions during his lifetime. He made many of the machines himself and often designed them to fit a particular client. Many of Joe's original machines are still working today.

Joe had a dream of introducing his vision of mind-body fitness into every aspect of life, from elementary schools to military training, and, had he not been so far ahead of his time, it might have happened. Instead, he taught a small group of devoted teachers and students, a few of whom went on to continue the work and keep it alive until the rest of the world caught up with his revolutionary thinking. Joe spent many years talking to anyone who would listen about his work, but did not receive much recognition during his lifetime.

Joe's studio was destroyed by fire in 1967 and he died soon after that from complications of smoke inhalation. His wife Clara carried on the work until her death in 1977.

Amongst the primary teachers who carried on Joe's work after his death was **Romana Kryzanowska**, a ballet dancer who worked very closely with Joe and taught at his studio for many years. She started one of the first teacher training programs in the country and has trained hundreds of instructors to teach the work as Joe taught it to her. She was associated with the Pilates Guild for many years and passed away in 2013.

Eve Gentry was a well known modern dancer who worked with Joe and Clara as a student and teacher for over 20 years before moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico and opening a studio there. Joe helped to rehabilitate Eve after a radical mastectomy and helped her to regain the full use of her arm and torso. Eve died in 1994. Her work is carried on by Michele Larsson through Core Dynamics.

Ron Fletcher was a Martha Graham dancer who worked with Joe and Clara very late in their lives. Ron credits Clara with inspiring him to develop his unique work on the Step Barrel/Spine Corrector and to open a studio in Los Angeles on Rodeo Drive. Ron was the first teacher to bring Pilates to the West Coast and to introduce it to many famous actors and actresses. His work incorporated a more "dancerly" style and more complicated choreography into the original exercises. He died in 2019 and his work is carried on by the Ron Fletcher Program of Study.

Carola Trier trained with Joe and opened her own studio in New York where she taught until her death in 2000. Her work is carried on by several senior students including Jillian Hessel in Los Angeles and Deborah Lessen in New York.

Kathleen Stanford Grant originally came to Joe with a knee injury she sustained as a dancer. She was one of only two students to be certified by Joe to teach Pilates. After dancing and choreographing for many years she started teaching at New York University where she taught a Mat class to the students and ran a small studio until her death in 2010.

Lolita San Miguel is a well known dancer and choreographer who was certified by Joe while she was dancing in New York. She moved to Puerto Rico and founded the Ballet Concierto de Puerto Rico, one of the island's premier dance companies where she incorporated Pilates into the training program for her dancers. Ms. San Miguel teaches Pilates workshops nationally and internationally and has produced several DVDs.

Mary Bowen was a comedian performing in New York when she first started working with Joe. She now combines Psyche and Pilates in her current life as a Jungian psychoanalyst and Pilates instructor at her studio in Northampton, MA and her office in Killingworth, CT. She has taken at least one Pilates session a week for over 50 years and continues to deepen her own understanding of the balance between mind and body.

Pilates has now become a household word thanks to the work of all of these first generation teachers and many others who kept the method alive after the death of Mr. Pilates. Without them, we would not have the wonderful exercise system we have today. We are grateful to all of them.

CONTROLOGY AS A METHOD

Contrology is the methodology developed by Joseph H. Pilates. Classical Pilates practitioners today practice Contrology on equipment that is constructed to look and feel similar to the original equipment and adhere closely to the order and original intention of the exercises.

CONTEMPORARY PILATES

Contemporary Pilates is practiced on equipment that has been designed with the materials available to us today and through the lens of many practitioners and leaders in the industry who have evolved the practice to include rehabilitation applications and fitness protocols. Contemporary Pilates offers the best of Contrology with the added benefit of time, of evolution of science and practice, and industry wide growth.

NOT FOR PRINT

PILATES PRINCIPLES

THE PRINCIPLES OF JOSEPH H. PILATES

"Physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness. Our interpretation of physical fitness is the attainment and maintenance of a uniformly developed body with a sound mind fully capable of naturally, easily, and satisfactorily performing our many and varied daily tasks with spontaneous zest and pleasure. To achieve the highest accomplishments within the scope of our capabilities in all walks of life, we must constantly strive to acquire strong, healthy bodies and develop our minds to the limit of our ability". — **Joseph Hubertus Pilates**

1) BREATHING

"Breathing is the first act of life, and the last. Our very life depends on it."

The breath is the essential link between the mind and the body. It draws our wandering mind back into our bodies and back to the task at hand. It is the foundation of our existence and the rhythm that accompanies us from birth to death. In Pilates the breath is integrated into every movement in order to focus our awareness on what we are doing, to improve the flow of oxygen through our bodies and to improve the capacity of our lungs.

2) CONCENTRATION

"... and always keep your mind wholly concentrated on the purpose of the exercises as you perform them."

To concentrate is to pay attention to what you are doing. To be present with and in control of the task at hand. Without concentration the exercises lose their form and their purpose. When teaching it is important to have a client do only as many repetitions as they can without losing their concentration. As Joe often said, "It is better to do five repetitions perfectly than 20 without paying attention."

3) CONTROL

To be in control is to understand and maintain the proper form, alignment and effort during an entire exercise. Pilates exercises are never done without engaging the mind to control the movements and the efforts that the body is making.

4) CENTERING

In Pilates all movement radiates outward from the center. Developing a strong, stable and flexible center is one of the defining features of this form of exercise.

5) PRECISION

Precision is the ability to perform exercises with optimum alignment, unconscious control and just the right amount of effort. Precision is the end product of concentration, control, centering and practice.

6) BALANCED MUSCLE DEVELOPMENT

"However, there is another important reason for consistently exercising all our muscles; namely, that each muscle may cooperatively and loyally aid in the uniform development of all our muscles."

Understanding, developing and maintaining correct alignment and form is essential to Pilates and over time will lead to balanced muscle development. With practice these principles become second nature and lead to improved posture, increased comfort and enhanced physical abilities.

7) RHYTHM/FLOW

All movements in Pilates are done with a sense of rhythm and flow. Flow creates smooth, graceful and functional movements. It decreases the amount of stress placed on our joints and develops movement patterns that integrate our body into a smoothly flowing whole.

8) WHOLE BODY MOVEMENT

Pilates is fundamentally about integration: integrating movement into a flowing whole body experience, integrating the mind and body to create clarity and purpose, integrating mind, body and spirit to create a life of balance.

9) RELAXATION

To be healthy in body and mind it is important to understand the balance between effort and relaxation. In Pilates we learn to use just the amount of effort needed to complete the exercise correctly, no more, no less. Learning to release unnecessary tension in our bodies helps us to find ease and flow in movement and in the rest of our lives.

NOT FOR PRINT

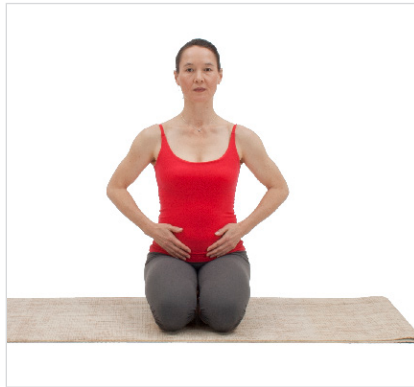
PILATES ESSENTIALS

EXERCISE GROUP 1 | TRUNK INTEGRATION

The Hundred and the series of five are all challenging core exercises that incorporate the whole body. The skills, strength, and flexibility needed to reach the full potential of these exercises lies in the foundational roots of the pre-Pilates essentials. These small movements fine tune the movement relationships of the spine with movements of the head, rib cage and pelvis. Through these relationships, the forces move to and from the core through the upper quadrant and the lower quadrant creating ease, economy and efficiency in whole body movement patterns.

BREATHING

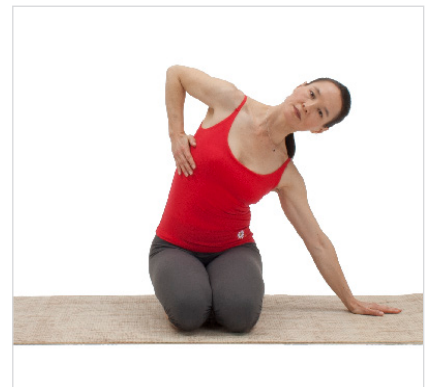
Breathing is essential to all forms of exercise. Joseph Pilates himself believed all of his exercises supported healthy breathing and thus a healthy body and individual. Here are but a few breath patterns to experience and practice.



Diaphragmatic Breathing



Posterolateral Breathing



One Lung Breathing

Sniffing and Percussive Breathing

This opening sequence of exercises are well served with Sniffing and Percussive breathing. Sniffing breathing is staccato breaths in and out through the nose. Percussive is in and out through the mouth. Often it is sniff in for several counts and percuss out for several counts. Notice how the diaphragm, part of your core inner unit, reacts to the short and forceful breaths. Do you think it impacts your pelvic floor as well?

Head, Rib Cage and the Pelvis

Engaging the Core, Supporting the Spine

There are three primary centers of weight. The head, thorax/rib cage, and pelvis. The head sits on top of the spine at C1 (Atlas) and C2 (Axis). Most of our head movements occur at this C1 and C2 juncture. The eyes are also intimately connected to our head movements. Being able to actively and passively move the head, the cervical spine, and into the rib cage is invaluable to ease of movement in our active and computer driven world..

THE WHEELS OF THE HEAD, THORAX AND PELVIS

Sit comfortably and find where the head, thorax and pelvis float and relate to each other, one over the other. You will notice when they do the spine lengthens and the body aligns with gravity. The shoulders relax and there may be a gentle feeling of lift up through the front of the body, including the abdominals, and down the back as if in a shower and water was flowing down the back of the body. From here, with eyes either opened or closed...

Head Rocking, Rotation, Nose Circles

Imagine your head as a wheel and explore three simple movements of the head in the sagittal (flexion and extension) and transverse (rotational) planes of motion.

- ▶ **Sagittal Motion:** Nodding. Gently nod 'yes' from C1 and C2.
- ▶ **Transverse Motion:** Rotation. Rotate the head in one direction and then the other. What happens when your eyes lead the rotation, do you go farther??
- ▶ **Sagittal and Rotational:** Circles. Drawing small circles with your nose.

FEELING THE WEIGHT OF THE HEAD

Finding Axial Length through the Crown and Opposition though the seat

Now that you have a sense for how the head sits on top of the spine, find the top most center of your head, your crown, and lengthen it toward the ceiling. What do you feel in your core? Can you feel more grounded in your seat and through your sitting bones. If you had a crown, wear it well while sitting on your throne proudly.

HEAD WHEEL SUPINE

Lifting the head

Lie supine and simply un-weight your head. It will feel heavy. From the un-weighted position, turn the head wheel to look toward your knees and between your thighs. See if your gaze can be parallel to the floor.

NOT FOR PRINT

PILATES ESSENTIALS

EXERCISE GROUP | TRUNK INTEGRATION

RIB CAGE/THORACIC WHEEL

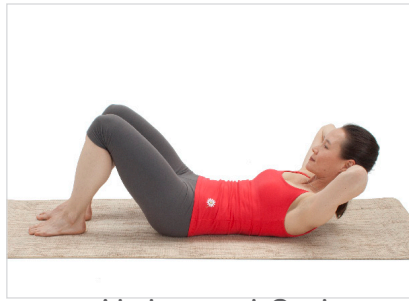
Ab Curl

Next level, place hands behind your head and allow the weight of your head to be in your hands. Elbows are in your peripheral vision, and may even be narrower. Float and spine the head wheel until the shoulders lift off the mat. This is your thoracic/rib cage wheel moving in coordination with the head. As you move, the cervical and thoracic spine move from neutral to flexion.

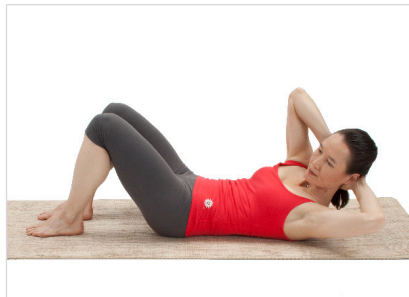
Can you feel your core engage to support the head and rib cage as they move?

Oblique Curl

Add a cross body rotation. As you rotate, what abdominal muscles are engaging? How does the inner and outer unit coordinate this movement?



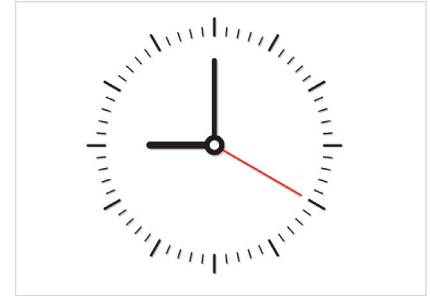
Abdominal Curl



Oblique Abdominal Curl

THE PELVIC CLOCK, IMPRINT AND SUPINE

Imagine the face of clock on your abdomen. When you move from the pelvis toward 12 o'clock the pelvis spills posteriorly. What about when you move toward 6 o'clock or 3 and 9?



Notice, as the pelvis moves the gentle support of the abdominals and the way the lumbar spine responds.

Specifically, as we discuss the Hundred and Series of 5, the 12 o'clock position, sometimes referred to as imprinting may be a strategy .for lumbar support against the weight of the legs. How might imprinting help you support the lumbar spine in the full version of The Hundred?

Lumbopelvic Stability is dynamic control under tension

What are the muscles of the inner unit and how do they help support stability of the lumbar spine when stability against a load, (i.e. in supine the descending legs), is needed.

THE PELVIC WHEEL AND DYNAMIC LUMBOPELVIC STABILITY

Lets bring the pelvis into focus. When stable or still, the inner unit of the abdominal cylinder helps to dynamically support the spine and the pelvic placement.

Finding Neutral

A neutral pelvis is relative to the individual. In the 'ideal' it is when the musculature around the lower spine, pelvis and legs are aligned such that there is balanced support relative to gravity.

Fingertip Abdominals

Lie supine and place your fingers just inside your ASIS. Exhale as if you were trying to draw your fingertips closer together. Can you feel a gentle activation of the abdominals under your fingertips?

All Fours Abdominals

Similar to Fingertip abdominals, only now your are in all fours position. Allow your belly to 'let go'. Create a hug, or gently draw in an up from the pull of gravity, just enough to support your spine. What are you feeling? Most likely you can feel your transversus abdominus directly but the whole of the inner unit is active.

Femur Fold/Knee Fold - Passive

Lie supine, knees bent, feet on the floor. Bring one knee into the chest. The lower leg is completely passive. Press down into the floor with one leg, and bring the other femur toward your chest. This opposition of push/pull you will see time and again in Pilates. The femur is the lever and movement is driven from the femur rolling in, down, and back into the hip socket.

Femur Fold/Knee Fold/Marching to Toe Taps

Same as above only the lower leg is more active. You will notice more core and lower leg activation. The progression: one leg at a time; alternating legs; reciprocal movements (as one leg lowers the other lifts); Toe Taps (starting with legs lifted repeat all the movement options.)

Leg Slide

Slide one leg out along the floor. As you extend, lengthen out of the hip and maintain the pelvis position. Slide back.

Once you have the leg slide with the pelvis maintaining its balanced neutral position, try it with the pelvis imprinted and notice how this changes the feeling in the leg, pelvis, hips.



Abdominal Curl with Rib Cage Arms

STARTING POSITION

Lie on your back (supine) with your arms at your sides, your knees bent, your feet flat on the floor and your heels in line with your sit bones (ischial tuberosities).

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

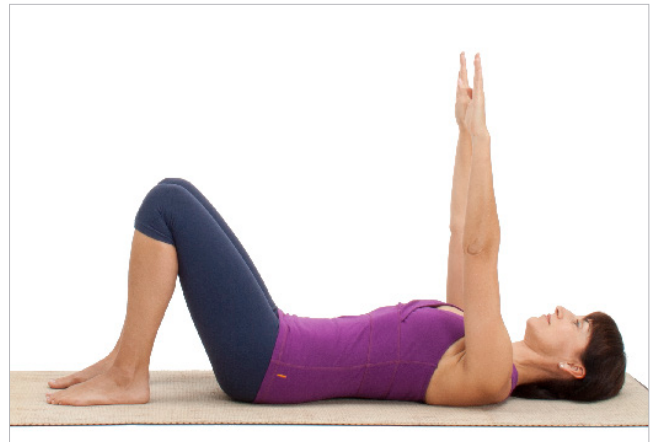
Inhale: Reach the arms toward the ceiling.

Exhale: Lower the arms and roll the head and upper body off the mat. Roll up only as far as the bottom tip of the shoulder blades.

Inhale: Pulse the arms for 5 counts keeping the torso quiet and the arms straight.

Exhale: Pulse the arms for 5 counts.

Continue to inhale and exhale as you pulse the arms for up to 10 sets (100 pulses).



1. Starting position. Lie supine with the knees bent, feet on the floor and the hands reaching toward the ceiling.



2. Lower the arms toward the hips and lift the head and torso off the mat.

NOT FOR PRINT

THE HUNDRED - NEUTRAL

EXERCISE GROUP 1 | ALL LEVELS | 10 SETS

STARTING POSITION

Lie on your back with your arms up toward the ceiling and legs in tabletop. The pelvis and low back stay within a relative neutral zone throughout the exercise.

BREATH

Traditional breathing in the Hundred uses an inhale for five counts and exhale for five counts. Alternatively a sniffing or percussive breath can be used.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Roll the head and body up from the floor as you lower the arms.
 - Roll up only as far as the bottom tip of the shoulder blades.
 - Depending on strength and flexibility, legs may remain in tabletop, or straightened toward the ceiling, or straightened and lowered toward the mat as far as you can without changing the position of the lower back.
- ▶ Pulse the arms continuously, 5 breaths in and 5 breaths out until you reach 10 sets (100 pulses).

THE HUNDRED AND PELVIC PLACEMENT

Neutral

Find a balanced pelvic placement by exploring the pelvic clock, and find an easeful balance through the hips and lumbar spine in relationship to the pelvis. This is your neutral position.

Imprint

As you lift the legs, notice if the pelvis wobbles, shifts, or if your low back feels uncomfortable. If this happens, imprint by gently tilting the pelvis posteriorly—only as much as needed to support the weight of your legs and the work of the exercise.

Supported Neutral

If your lower spine arches in a way that causes discomfort, place a rolled towel under the lumbar spine. This provides both support and feedback, helping you maintain a more comfortable position.

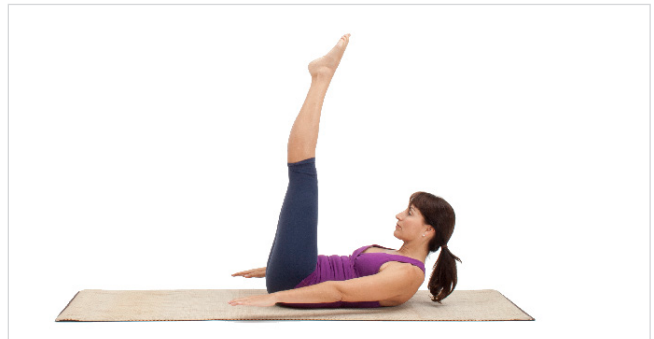
The neutral pelvic position can serve as a modification for individuals who do not achieve the traditional version, presented on next page, or for whom spinal lumbar flexion is contraindicated.



Neutral Starting position. Legs in Tabletop, arms reach toward the ceiling.



Roll into an abdominal curl and reach arms alongside the body.



Legs straight to ceiling.



Lower the legs toward the mat without changing the position of the spine and lower back.

THE HUNDRED TRADITIONAL

EXERCISE GROUP 1 | INTERMEDIATE | 10 SETS

TRADITIONAL VERSION

Begin with the legs stretched long along the floor. As the head floats and curls off the mat, lower the arms and allow the legs to lift just enough to establish a strong connection through the center. Keep the feet low to the ground lifting them only as much as can be supported with control. Use caution with clients who have weak lower abdominals or unstable lower backs.

From the traditional Hundred's starting position, pulse the arms continuously, 5 breaths in and 5 breaths out until you reach 10 sets (100 pulses).



Start with the legs on the floor and lift them up to eye height as the upper body lifts and the arms reach.

IMPRINT

Imprinting will deeply activate the core to support the weight of the legs lifting off the ground. The posterior orientation of the pelvis will also gently activate the back body, in particular the glutes which will also help support the long leg levers.

MODIFICATIONS

Barely Bent Knee Version

Bend the knees slightly and place the feet on the floor. As the upper body curls off the mat, the legs, with bent knees, float off the floor. The barely bent knees shortens the lever. Some people find this an entry to doing The Hundred with long legs.

Single Extended Leg

From the traditional starting position, as the as the upper body curls and the arms lower, hover one leg off the floor.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Warm up the body.
- ▶ Breath deeply and fully into the lungs and torso.
- ▶ Increase abdominal strength
- ▶ Teach stability of the torso and lower back.
- ▶ Teach how to lift the head and torso in abdominal exercises.

PRECAUTIONS

For neck and shoulder injuries: Support the head, neck and upper body with a wedge pillow or towels. Or create a neck hammock by placing a towel under the base of the skull and hold the head up with your hands.

For low back injuries: Work with an imprinted spine or use a supported neutral position of the low back. Use one of the leg position modifications to keep the stress out of the back.

Avoid with osteoporosis.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ When coming from above, lower the legs only as far as the torso can support them.
 - Place your hands behind your waist and see how far you can lower the legs before your waist lifts off your hands
 - Place a cushion under the back and lower the legs only as far as the back can stay on the cushion.
- ▶ Imagine your head and rib cage are wheels and sequentially roll up into an abdominal curl.
- ▶ As the upper body curls, encourage the lowest ribs to find the mat. You may feel a strong engagement of the core.
- ▶ Keep the torso steady as the arms pulse.
 - Imagine you have a cup of hot coffee on your abdomen. Don't spill it!..
- ▶ Keep the elbows and wrists straight as you pulse.
 - Imagine you are slapping water.
 - Imagine your arms are hinged only at your shoulder.
- ▶ Breathe smoothly and steadily to maximize lung capacity.

NOT FOR PRINT

SINGLE LEG STRETCH

EXERCISE GROUP 1 | BEGINNER | 6 - 8 SETS

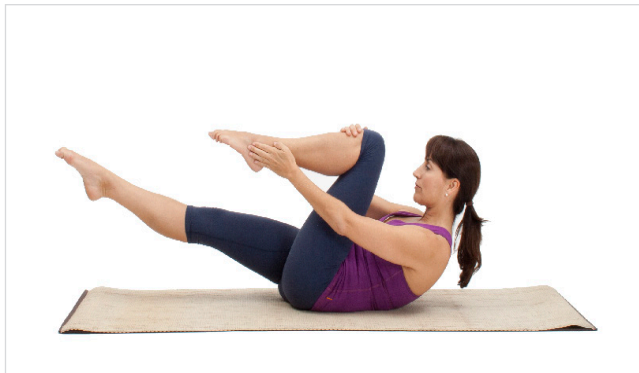


STARTING POSITION

Sit on the mat with both legs pulled into the chest. Begin to roll back placing the inside hand on the knee and the outside hand on the ankle. The free leg straightens at the level of the eyes or to a height that allows the low back to remain stable. Both feet are pointed. The head remains lifted throughout and eye gaze is parallel to the floor or in line with the toes of the straight leg.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ Draw one knee in as the other extends.
- ▶ Switch legs for six to eight sets.



After curling your torso off the mat, place your outside hand on the ankle of the bent leg and your inside hand on the shin just below the knee. Use your hands to draw the knee toward your chest, keeping it aligned with the hip, as the opposite leg extends

BREATH

Single Leg Stretch is an oppositional moment pattern. As one leg draws in the other reaches long. The breathing will help to facilitate this two way stretch. Just like The Hundred, there are different ways to use breath.

- ▶ Every switch of the legs can be one breath
- ▶ Sniffing two beat exhale as leg draws in with a big inhale as legs switch

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Sink into the abdominals as you bring the leg in, keep the elbows wide and the back steady. Avoid rocking and rolling as the upper body, torso, head, neck and shoulders remain nice and stable as the legs move. Legs should be level with the eyes and with minimal strain in the neck and shoulders.

MODIFICATION

Lower body only

Support the head, neck and upper body with a wedge pillow or towels and work the lower body only.

CHALLENGES

Lower the straightened leg as close to the ground as possible as the bent leg is drawn in to the torso as close as possible without the pelvis, torso and head placement being compromised.

TRANSITION

Bring both legs into the chest with the hands on the ankles for **Double Leg Stretch**.



Switch the leg and hand positions while keeping the upper body lifted and steady.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the shoulders blades organized on the back and the elbows wide, the torso is still throughout.
- ▶ Move the legs and the arms only.
- ▶ Draw the abdominals in deeper in with every repetition.
 - Don't let the abdominals rise!

PURPOSE

- ▶ Develop pelvic stability and core control.
- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals.

PRECAUTIONS

For neck and shoulder injuries: Use the modifications listed above.

For low back injuries: Work with an imprinted spine or use a supported neutral position of the low back.

Caution with osteoporosis.

DOUBLE LEG STRETCH

EXERCISE GROUP 1 | INTERMEDIATE | 3 - 6 REPS

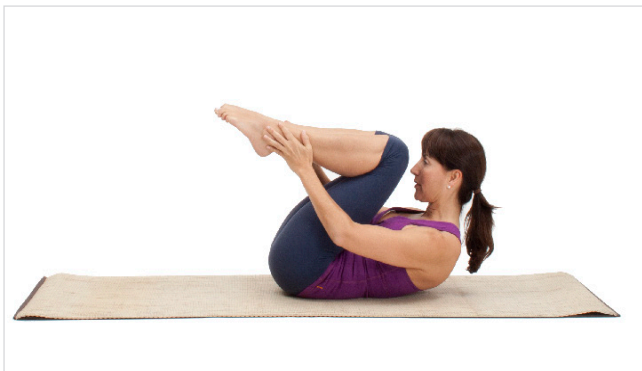


STARTING POSITION

Lie supine on your back with the head and upper body rounded off the mat, both knees in to the chest and the hands on the ankles. If you are starting from the Single Leg Stretch simply pull both legs in toward the chest. The back is in imprint or supported neutral until you can keep the back absolutely still as the legs lower.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

- ▶ From the starting position, reach the legs out straight and the arms overhead without changing the upper body or lower back.
- ▶ Sweep the arms around as the legs draw into the chest.



Knees drawn into the chest with the upper body lifted and the hands on the ankles.

BREATH

Double Leg Stretch is a challenging exercise where breath supports control and connection. Though it may feel counter intuitive, try exploring exhaling as the legs draw in and inhaling as they lengthen out.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Lower the legs as far as you can without changing the pelvis and lower back position. The lower spine may be neutral or imprinted as needed. Keep torso and head still as the arms and legs move.

MODIFICATION

Beginning version

Support the head with the hands and reach the elbows toward the knees to begin. Open the elbows out to the side as the legs reach up toward the ceiling.

TRADITIONAL VERSION

Joe's starting position

Begin lying on your back with your hands at your sides and the legs flat on the floor. Inhale as you lift the feet off the floor and reach the hands toward the feet. Exhale and draw the knees into the chest with the hands on the shins.

TRANSITIONS

Pull both legs into the chest and roll up to a sitting position for **Spine Stretch Forward** or for **Open Leg Rocker**.

Or reach one leg straight toward the ceiling and clasp both hands behind it for **Single Straight Leg Stretch**.



Reach the arms overhead and the legs out straight while maintaining the low back position.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Draw the abdominals in more deeply with each repetition. Keep the abdominal wall drawing inward as the legs lengthen.
- ▶ Maintain the position of the low back, head and upper body throughout the exercise. Torso remains still.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Develop pelvic stability and core control.
- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals.

PRECAUTIONS

For neck and shoulder injuries: Support the head, neck and upper body with a wedge pillow or towels.

For low back injuries: Work with an imprinted spine, use a supported neutral position of the low back and don't lower the legs too far.

Avoid with osteoporosis.

NOT FOR PRINT

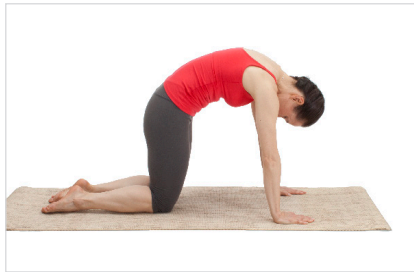
PILATES ESSENTIALS

EXERCISE GROUP 2 | SPINAL MOBILITY - SPINAL SEQUENCING, STRENGTH AND MOBILITY

This next series of exercises focuses on rolling and flexion. In Pilates, rolling and flexion exercises support breath, promote openness through the back body, build core strength, and integrate the head, thorax, and pelvis in flexion and, in the case of Cow, in extension.

ALL THE MANY CATS

Cat is a staple spinal flexion exercise. Marry it with Cow and you have integration of spinal flexion into extension. Here, lets focus on the flexion into neutral. Lets explore Cat and the many ways it can inform spinal sequencing.



Cat/Cow



Neutral



Cow

Discrete initiation

- ▶ Initiate from the pelvis and flex lumbar spine only.
- ▶ Initiate from the pelvis and flex lumbar spine into the thorax/rib cage and let the head follow in reply.
- ▶ Initiate from the head only and let the head wheel turn under.
- ▶ Initiate from the head and let the thorax/rib cage follow and the pelvis reply.

Head and Tail moving together

Initiate from head and tail together. In full flexion, draw heel of the hands toward the knees and notice the internal lift of the abdominals. Many round back exercises (Rolling Like a Ball, Roll Over and their related exercises involve this internal lift).

Adding the Cow/Spinal Extension

Finally, add your Cow, commit to full articulation of the spine from flexion into extension. Play with the different initiations as above through the full movements. Let it be free, do not judge and note your sensations.

SPINE STRETCH FORWARD

EXERCISE GROUP 2 | BEGINNER | 4 - 8 REPS



STARTING POSITION

Sit up with your legs straight and open to shoulder-width apart. Reach your arms forward so they are level with the bottom of your sternum, and find length through your spine as you sit tall on the center of your sitting bones.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

- ▶ **Inhale** and reach the arms forward and round the back until you are looking at the mat.
 - This is a seated Cat, avoid collapsing in the forward flexion.
 - Allow the shoulder blades to slide up and over the rib cage as the arms reach forward without letting them come all the way up to the ears.
- ▶ **Exhale** as you line the spine back up over the hips.

Reverse the breathing by exhaling to roll forward and inhaling to roll back up. Notice how it changes the stretch in the back.

OPTIMUM FORM

Keep both sitting bones anchored and maintain a neutral pelvis as you roll forward to stretch through the mid and upper back. For a full spinal stretch, think of moving toward 12 o'clock as you gently flex through the lumbar spine, allowing the weight to shift to the back edge of the sitting bones. Keep the arms reaching forward, maintaining length through the spine, and avoid lifting the shoulders.

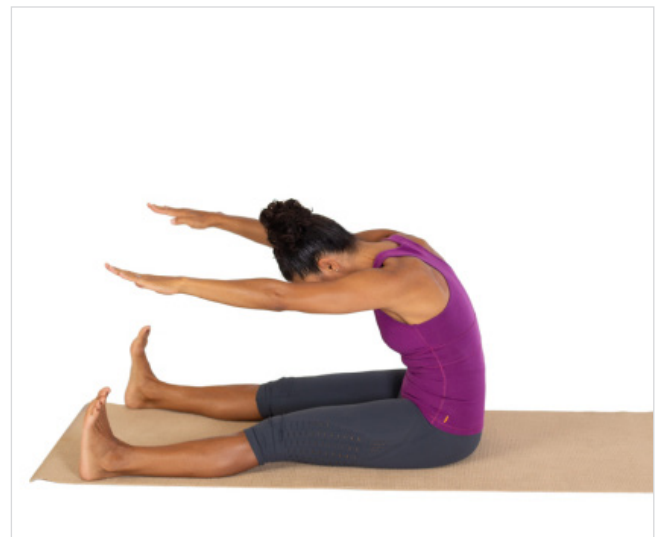
TRANSITION

Beginning: Stay in the same starting position to start the **Spine Stretch Side**.

Intermediate: Bend the knees and draw the legs into the chest with the hands behind the knees. Lift the feet off the floor and balance between the tail bone and the sit bones to begin **Open Leg Rocker**.



1. Starting position. Sitting upright with the legs straight and hip distance apart. Reach the arms in front of the shoulders.



2. Reach forward, round the upper back and keep the sit bones on the mat.

MODIFICATIONS

Tight hamstrings

Bend the knees slightly or sit up on a rolled up mat, towel or small pad.

SIDE STRETCH SIDE

EXERCISE GROUP 2 | BEGINNER | 4 - 8 REPS



STARTING POSITION

Sit up with the legs straight and open, shoulder-width apart. Reach the arms out to the sides level with the shoulders. Sit up on the center of the sit bones and reach out through the crown of your head. If the hamstrings are too tight to sit up straight, roll the mat up and sit on it or bend the knees.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

- ▶ **Inhale** and lean over to one side placing one hand on the floor. Keep the torso facing front as you lean over.
- ▶ **Exhale** and line the head and ribs back up over the pelvis (axial elongation).
- ▶ **Inhale** and repeat to the other side.
- ▶ **Exhale** to the starting position stacking the head, rib cage and pelvis.

Try reversing the breathing on this exercise and notice how it changes the stretch.

MODIFICATIONS

Tight hamstrings

Bend the knees slightly or sit up on a rolled up mat, towel or small pad.

TRANSITION

Stay in the same starting position to start the **Saw**.



Sit upright with legs hip distance apart. Reach the arms out to the sides at shoulder height.



Reach up and lean to the side placing the hand on the floor while anchoring the opposite sit bone to the mat. Return to sitting then repeat to the other side.

NOT FOR PRINT

SAW

EXERCISE GROUP 2 | INTERMEDIATE | 4 - 6 SETS

STARTING POSITION

Sit tall on the center of your sitting bones, maintaining length through the spine and balance across both sides. Extend your legs straight and open to hip-width apart, and reach your arms out to the sides, level with the bottom of the sternum.



1. Starting position. Sit upright on the center of your sitting bones with your legs straight and hip-distance apart. Reach your arms out to the sides at shoulder height, maintaining length through the spine.



2. Rotate to one side.

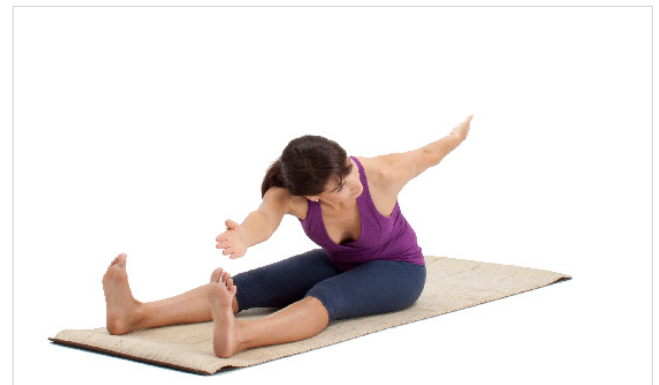
MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

- ▶ **Inhale** to rotate the torso to the left and reach the right arm toward the left foot.
- ▶ **Exhale** round the head and torso forward reaching the right arm toward the little toe on the left foot. Reach the left arm back while medially rotating the shoulder so the palm faces the ceiling. To enrich the stretch, pulse three times in the full stretch position.
- ▶ **Inhale** to return to the starting position with the weight centered on the sit bones and the arms out to the sides. Rotate the torso to the right and reach the left arm toward the right foot.

Try reversing the breathing on this exercise by exhaling to roll forward and inhaling to sit back up.

BREATH AND RHYTHM

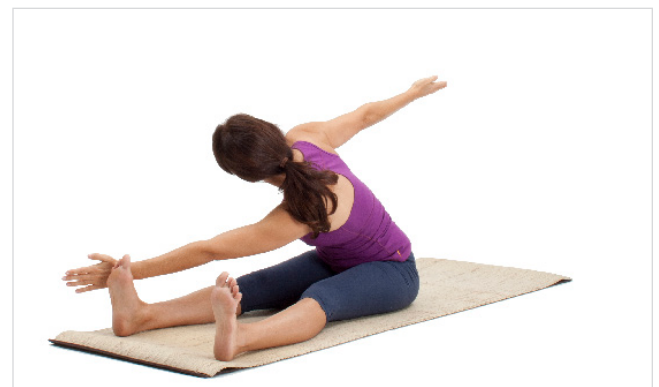
Allow the breathing to be integrated into the rhythm of the movements. When you pulse forward, an audible exhale with each pulse is helpful in releasing into the stretch.



3. Reach the forward arm toward the little toe. Pulse 3xs



6. Rotate to the other side.



7. Reach the forward arm toward the little toe. Pulse 3xs



MODIFICATIONS

Tight hamstrings

Bend the knees slightly or sit up on a rolled up mat, towel or small pad.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Maintain the position of the pelvis as you rotate through the mid and upper back into the stretch.

Saw is a seemingly simple exercise, yet intriguingly complex. There is rotation through the torso, head, and arms, while the pelvis remains the stable seat of that rotation. As you rotate and then flex forward, think of coming up and over the legs rather than collapsing down. You'll discover it's a beautiful way to train lift through the abdominals while creating length and openness through the back body.



4. Roll up to a seated position maintaining rotation.



5. Return to the starting position.



8. Roll up to a seated position maintaining rotation.



9. Return to the starting position.

NOT FOR PRINT

PILATES ESSENTIALS

EXERCISE GROUP 3 | LIMB DIFFERENTIATION AND THE CORE

The lead up to The Hundred includes a considerable amount of strength and coordination of the core against the weight of the leg levers. However, the legs are still throughout. With Single Leg Circles, Single Straight Leg Stretch, Double Straight Leg Stretch and Criss Cross, the moving legs differentiate from a dynamically stable pelvis. One exception are the Large Leg Circles. This version of Leg Circles are unique to the other exercises as the control includes allowing the pelvis and spine to follow the moving leg. This series of pre-Pilates exercises prepares all of the exercises taught to this point and the ones you are about to learn in exercise group 3

LEG DIFFERENTIATION AND LEG CIRCLES

Differentiation of the leg from the pelvis and lumbar spine is important to optimize movement potential and force transference through the lower limb and the trunk. Healthy movement patterns require the moving leg, the pelvis, and the lumbar spine to move, or stabilize, as needed to achieve a desired movement outcome.

Leg Differentiation, Stable Pelvis

- ▶ Femur/Knee Fold passive and active
- ▶ Femur and knee sways, pelvis stable
- ▶ Femur Fall Outs, pelvis stable
- ▶ Leg Slides
- ▶ Leg Rotations
- ▶ Small Leg Circles



Leg Differentiation, Moving Pelvis

- ▶ Femur/Knee Sways, mobile pelvis
- ▶ Femur Fall Out, mobile pelvis
- ▶ Large Leg Circles



COORDINATION AND CONTROL

Pilates trains the core to coordinate and control against moving limbs. Single Straight Leg Stretch, Double Straight Leg Stretch and Criss Cross are all very challenging as both legs differentiate and move against the stability of the trunk. Below are some easy ways to introduce these challenges.

Diagonal Press

- ▶ Arms and legs move toward the midline
- ▶ Cross body connection, remember the oblique slings



Dead Bug

- ▶ Arms and legs are moving away from the stable trunk.
- ▶ Integration of oblique slings



Understanding the Core

Dynamic Pelvic Stability/Control

Even in stillness the coordination and control of forces through the core is complex and dynamic. Control of the moving limbs, as with simple Leg Circles and the Side Lying Leg Series, asks the pelvis to be still as the legs move in the hip socket. Isometric strength is needed through the core to both stabilize the pelvis and lumbar spine, while supporting the leg in motion.

Inner Unit - Diaphragm, Pelvic Floor, Transversus Abdominus and Multifidi

The quartet of the inner unit modulates intra-abdominal pressure, supports the organs, and provides gentle lumbar stability. The diaphragm and pelvic floor form the roof and floor of the inner abdominal cylinder, bridging the upper and lower body. The transversus abdominis and multifidi work in partnership to support the spine, creating space between the vertebrae and allowing for both strength and optimal spinal mobility.

Outer Unit - Anterior and Posterior Myofascial Slings

The anterior and posterior myofascial slings create cross-body stability when the trunk and pelvis are stationary.

The **anterior sling** connects the serratus anterior to the external oblique, crosses the midline to the internal oblique on the opposite side, and through fascial connections, integrates with the inner thigh.

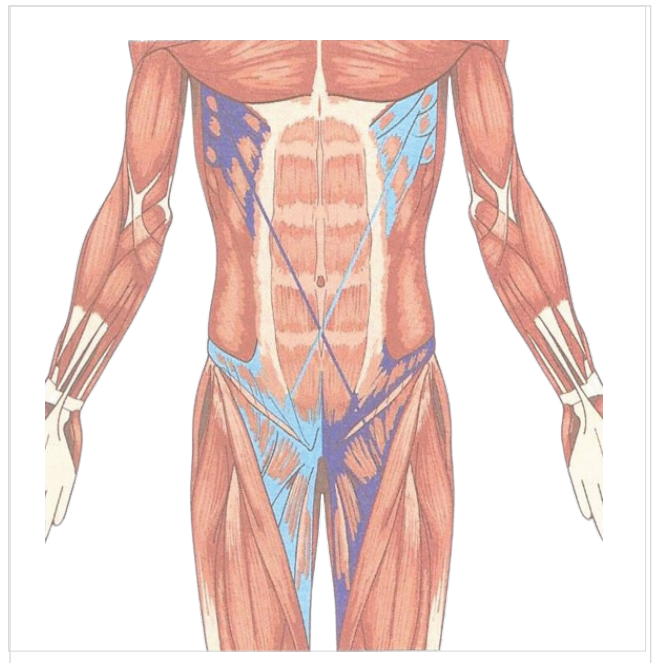
The **posterior sling**, like the anterior, forms a myofascial connection that links the latissimus dorsi on one side of the body through the thoracolumbar fascia to the gluteus maximus on the opposite side.

These diagonal myofascial connection stabilize the trunk and pelvis through the core by creating dynamic tension and integration across the body.

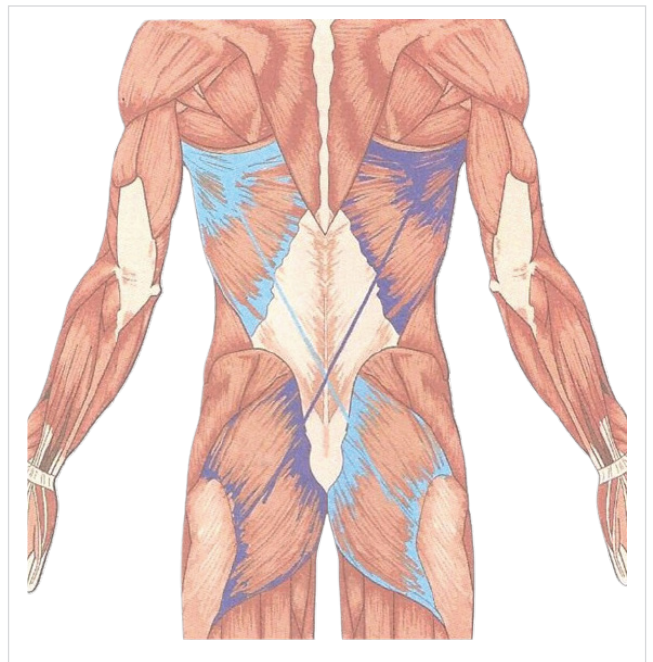
It is all about relationship

The slings, as presented in this training, are a conceptual model to help see the movement, or in this case lack of movement. The relationship between the inner and outer myofascial slings is the dynamic part of stability. To remain stable, the forces which transfer through the core must be managed. The more the inner and the outer unit slings relate to each other the more seamless the movement appears. Like a duck paddling in the water, on the surface not much is happening, but underneath is a different story.

See your movement principles videos and textbook for more on the slings.*



Anterior Oblique Sling



Posterior Oblique Sling

NOT FOR PRINT

SINGLE LEG CIRCLES

EXERCISE GROUP 3 | BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE | 4 - 8 CIRCLES EACH WAY

Small Leg Circles

STARTING POSITION

Lie on your back with your arms resting at your sides. Extend your legs long along the mat, keeping them together and the ankles dorsiflexed..

PREPARATION

Bend one leg into the chest and place both hands behind the knee. Stretch the leg toward the ceiling, flexing the foot until you feel a stretch in the hamstrings. Bend and stretch the leg 3 times with the breath. Take the hands off the leg and place them at your side. Straighten the leg up toward the ceiling and point the foot to begin. Straighten the leg only as far as you can while maintaining the stability of the pelvis and keeping the front of the hip joint soft.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Leg moves

On the inhale, bring the leg across the midline of the body and circle it down toward the opposite leg.

On the exhale, sweep the leg away from the body and back to the starting position. Keep the back of the standing hip rooted into the mat without rocking or shifting the weight throughout the exercise. Pelvis stays on the mat as leg moves.

Repeat the circle 4 to 8 times in each direction, inhaling to begin and exhaling to finish.

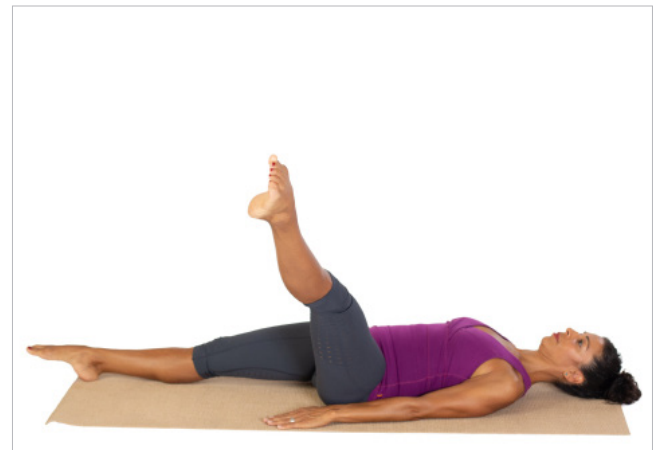
Finish by lowering the working leg back down to the mat and flexing the foot. Lift the standing leg up toward the ceiling, stretch the hamstring and repeat on the second leg.



1. Starting position. Straighten the top leg above the hip.



2. Circle the leg across the body and down toward the foot..



3. Circle the leg out and away from the body.



4. Return the leg above the hip to the starting position.



Large Circles

STARTING POSITION

One leg extended out on the floor and the other pointed and reaching toward the ceiling.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Traditional Version: Leg and pelvis move

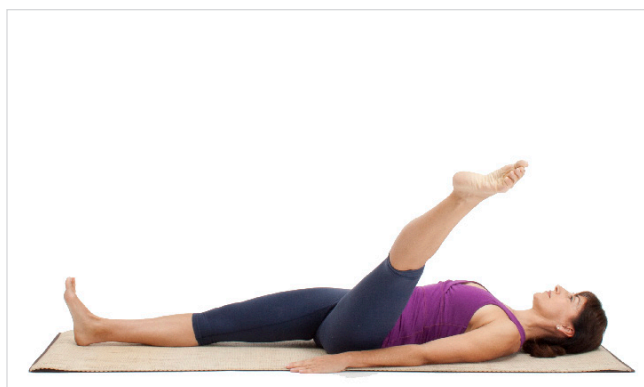
Inhale and reach the leg across the body allowing the hip to lift off the mat but keeping both shoulders anchored.

Exhale sweep the leg down and around in a big circle. Continue the circle away from the body and up returning to the starting position. Keep the back of the standing hip rooted into the mat.

Repeat the circle 4 times starting across the body then change directions.



From the starting position, reach the leg across the body keeping the shoulders anchored.



Continue to circle the leg to the side, keeping pelvis anchored as leg swings around and returns to starting position..

MODIFICATIONS

Knee stirs

Warm up the hip sockets by bending the knees, holding both knees with the hands and circling the legs.

Resistance band support

Support the leg by placing a resistance band around the arch of the foot and holding one end with each hand. Anchor the upper arms into the mat. Circle the leg keeping the hips stable, and imagine softening the front of the hip joint and sinking the femur into the socket.

Tight hamstrings

For tight hamstrings, bend the knees slightly throughout the exercise.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Leg moves

Make the Leg Circles as big as possible while stabilizing the hips and shoulders.

Leg and pelvis movement

As you cross the leg over, visualize your pelvic clock—specifically the relationship between 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock. As one half of the pelvis rotates over the other, one side remains anchored while the other follows the movement of the leg. Circle the leg down, around, and out to the side. As the leg moves away from the body, oppositional stability is key, when the leg moves toward 9 o'clock, the 3 o'clock side works to stabilize the pelvis..

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the front of the hips as soft as possible throughout the exercise. Keep the spine and pelvis in a relatively neutral position.
- ▶ Keep the leg and hip of the standing leg anchored to the mat and feel the support through the back body..
- ▶ Relax the neck and shoulders.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Develop pelvic stability and core control. and increase the flexibility and mobility of the hips.

PRECAUTIONS

For hip and low back injuries: Limit range of motion and use the modifications to keep symptoms to a minimum.

NOT FOR PRINT

SINGLE STRAIGHT LEG STRETCH

EXERCISE GROUP 3 | INTERMEDIATE | 8 - 12 SETS



STARTING POSITION

Lie on the back with the head and upper body rounded off the mat with one leg reaching toward the ceiling and the other leg reaching toward the wall. Lower the leg only as far as you can without disturbing the stability of the low back and pelvis. Place the hands as far up the leg as they can easily reach but not directly behind the knee.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Draw the top leg closer to you. Pulse the leg two times with a short exhale on each one. Inhale to switch legs. Reverse the sniffing breath if desired.



Upper body lifted with the hands on the shins of the upper leg. Pulse the upper leg two times.

MODIFICATIONS

Beginning version

Support the head with the hands as you switch the legs.

Lower body only

Support the head, neck and upper body with a wedge pillow or towels and work the lower body only.

CHALLENGES

Hands off the leg

Reach the arms along the torso as the legs move.

TRANSITION

Reach both legs straight toward the ceiling and place the hands behind the head with the elbows wide for **Double Straight Leg Stretch**.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Keep the torso, pelvis, and low back stable. Shoulders still, elbows wide as the legs move.

BREATH

Single Straight Leg Stretch is an oppositional moment pattern. As one leg comes closer to the body, the other reaches out long. The breathing will help to facilitate this two way stretch. Every switch of the legs can be one breath or you can add a percussive two beat exhale as leg draws in and big inhale as legs switch.



Switch the legs pulsing the lifted leg two times toward chest.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Draw the abdominals in more deeply with every repetition. The exhale to deepen the abdominal contraction.
- ▶ Keep the head and upper body in the same position throughout the exercise.
- ▶ Keep the shoulders relaxed and the chest open.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Develop pelvic stability and core control, strengthen the abdominals.
- ▶ Increase the flexibility of the hamstrings.

PRECAUTIONS

For neck and shoulder injuries: Use the lower body only modification listed above.

For low back injuries: Work with an imprinted spine or use a supported neutral position of the low back.

Avoid with osteoporosis.

DOUBLE STRAIGHT LEG STRETCH

EXERCISE GROUP 3 | HIGH INTERMEDIATE | 2 - 4 REPS



STARTING POSITION

Lie on your back with hands behind the head, lifting the head and upper body off the mat as both legs reach toward the ceiling. Maintain imprint or supported neutral until you can lower the legs while keeping the back completely still.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Lower the legs toward the floor only as far as you can without arching the back off the mat.

Keeping the abdominals engaged, return the legs to the starting position.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Lower the legs as close to the floor as possible without changing the position of the back. Support the torso and head with minimal tension.

BREATH

Try inhale to prepare, exhale as legs lower and return. You may also exhale as legs lower and inhale to return.

MODIFICATIONS

Tight hamstrings

Bend the knees as needed and keep them in the same position throughout the exercise.

TRANSITION

Bend one knee into the chest, reach the other leg out long and rotate the torso toward the bent leg for **Criss Cross**.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Abdominals stay drawn in. Avoid letting them rise as the legs go down.
- ▶ Keep your pelvis and low back steady as the legs lower.
- ▶ Hold the elbows out so that you can just see them at the edge of your peripheral vision.

PURPOSE

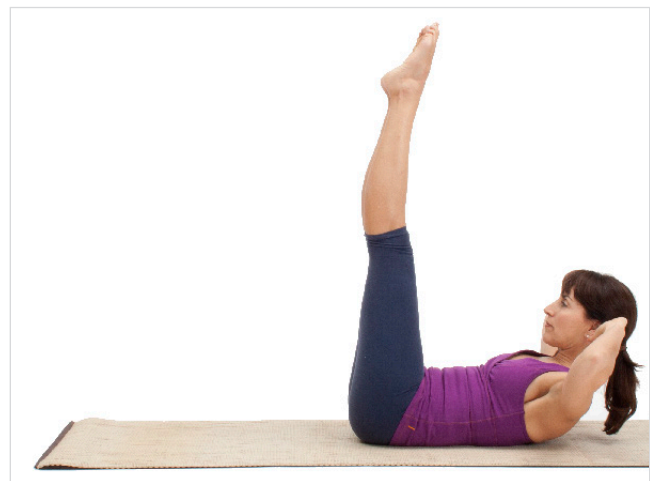
- ▶ Develop pelvic stability and core control.
- ▶ Strengthen the abdominals.
- ▶ Strengthen the hip flexors.

PRECAUTIONS

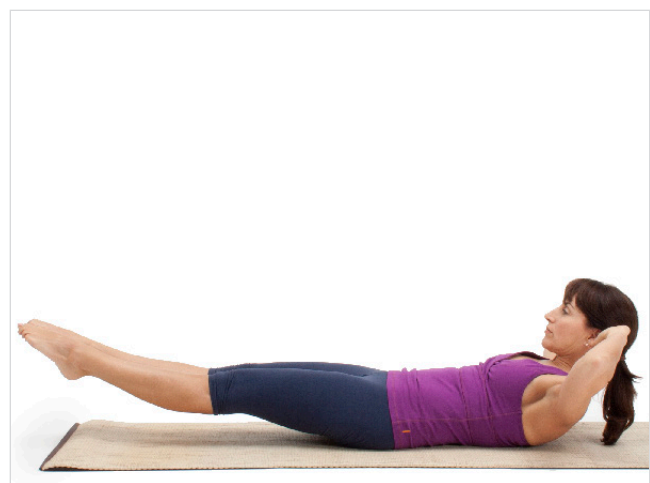
For neck and shoulder injuries: Support the head, neck and upper body with a wedge pillow or towels and work the lower body only.

For low back injuries: Lower the legs only as far as the back can stay stable or avoid. Use an imprinted spine or a supported neutral position of the low back if tolerated.

Avoid with osteoporosis.



1. Starting position. Legs straight and lifted over the hips, hands behind the head with the upper body lifted.



2. Lower the legs toward the floor without moving the lower back.

NOT FOR PRINT

CRISS CROSS/BICYCLE

EXERCISE GROUP 3 | INTERMEDIATE | 8 - 12 SETS



STARTING POSITION

Lie on your back with hands behind the head, head and upper body lifted. One leg bends in toward the chest as the other reaches long. Maintain imprint or supported neutral.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Rotate the torso and reach the rib cage toward the opposite knee while keeping the elbows wide. The lower abdomen stays still and both hips stay anchored to the mat. Stay steady as you switch sides.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Keep the lower abdomen and hips still while rotating the upper body as far as possible in each direction. Lower the straight leg so it is on the same level as your eyes.

BREATH

Exhale as the leg draws toward the body and the torso rotates. Inhale to transition.

TRANSITION

Bend both knees in toward the chest, wrap the arms around the legs and roll up to begin **Spine Stretch Forward**.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the elbows wide and within your peripheral vision, with the back broad. Imagine rotating across the back body rather than pulling the shoulder toward the knee.
- ▶ Rotate around the central axis of the spine. Try not to side bend or sway.
- ▶ Draw the abdominals deeper in with every repetition.
- ▶ Pelvis remains stable, no rocking and rolling as you rotate.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen all of the abdominals.
- ▶ Strengthen the torso in rotation.
- ▶ Develop pelvic stability and core control.

PRECAUTIONS

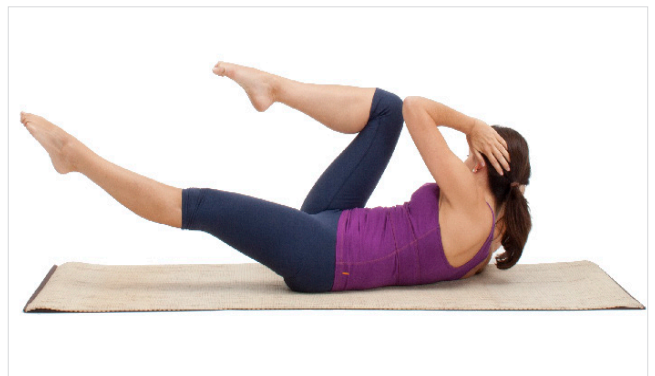
For neck and shoulder injuries: Support the head, neck and upper body with a wedge pillow or towels and work the lower body only.

For low back injuries: Work with an imprinted spine, use a supported neutral position of the low back or avoid.

Avoid with osteoporosis.



Rotate the torso toward the bent knee.



Switch the legs and rotate to the other side.

PILATES ESSENTIALS

EXERCISE GROUP 4 | SPINAL EXTENSION - FINDING YOUR BEST EXTENSION

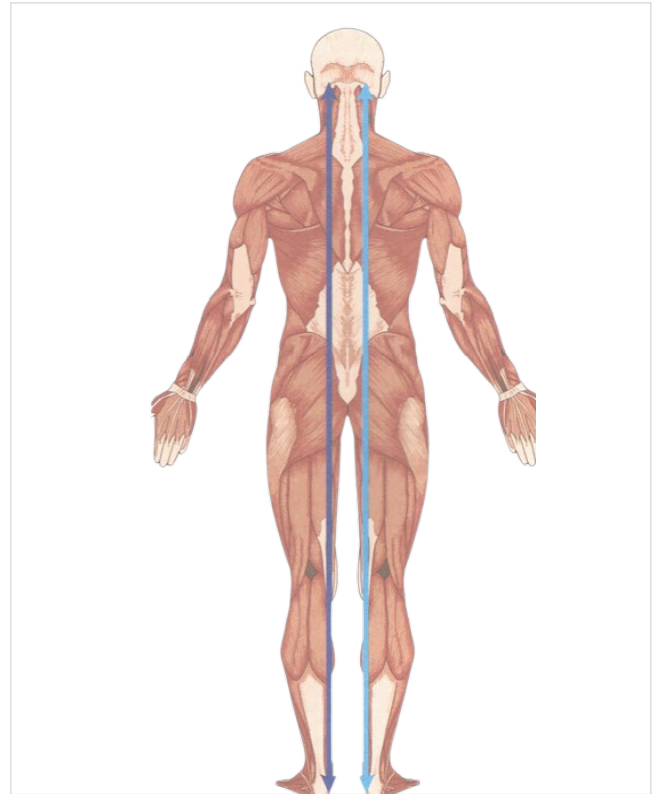
Extension is essential to healthy movement. Extension of the hip is critical in gait. Extension of the shoulder is invaluable for healthy shoulder girdle mobility and extension of the spine is imperative for spinal health. When we stand up against gravity, our extensors work just enough to overcome the pull of the forces which tie us to the ground. Integration of what we call the Deep Longitudinal System are myofascial connections which communicate and relate the entire back body. In Pilates Mat, all exercises, be they flexion based or the obvious extension movements, require integration of this back line. In flexion, the back line eccentrically supports the spine and helps maintain an elongated spine in flexion and in extension, these muscles concentrically shorten to produce movement.

THE DEEP LONGITUDINAL SYSTEM: SAGITTAL PLANE INTEGRATION

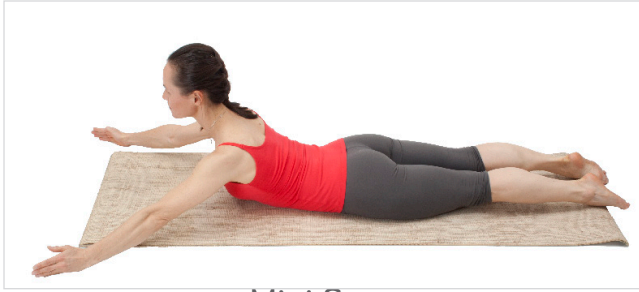
- ▶ The deep longitudinal system includes the erector spinae, sacrotuberous ligament, biceps femoris, gastrocnemius and plantar fascia.
- ▶ Supports the body upright against gravity.
- ▶ Responsible for spinal extension when activated bilaterally and lateral flexion when activated unilaterally.
- ▶ It works with the posterior oblique sling to create extension and counterbalances the anterior oblique sling which initiates flexion.



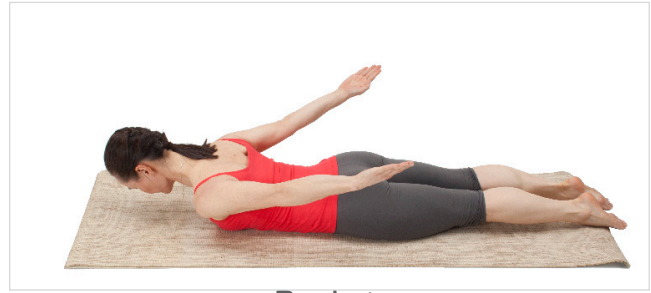
Opposite Arm and Leg



Deep Longitudinal Myofascial Sling



Mini Swan



Rockets

Head Integration

From prone, with arms out overhead, float the head off the floor and allow your eye gaze to follow the floor and then up the wall toward the ceiling. Notice how your head wheel turns. Also notice at what point the thorax wants to follow as the sternum wants to swing forward.

Mini Swan

Lets go one step farther. Allow the eye gaze to initiate the head wheel and as it feels appropriate start to extend through the thoracic spine.

Rockets

Take your arms behind you, with palms facing either down or up toward the ceiling. Initiate the movement by floating the head, allowing the crown to lengthen upward as the eyes begin to turn the head wheel. Let the thorax follow as you rise into extension, reaching the arms up and behind you. Notice how the retraction and depression of the scapula help support and facilitate the extension through the upper spine.

Pelvic Clock Prone

Imagine the clock again on the front of your pelvis. Notice how pressing into 6 o'clock helps set the pelvis and activates the abdominals to support the spine in extension, providing a strong base for the upper spine to lengthen and lift. Feel how the hip extensors naturally engage with the anchoring of the pubic bone at 6 o'clock, creating a connected sense of lift through the back line of the body. From here, you are ready for full-body extension work. What is your experience of this integration and support?

NOT FOR PRINT

SWAN

EXERCISE GROUP 4 | VARIOUS LEVELS | 3 - 6 REPS

Swan

STARTING POSITION

Lie prone with the palms of the hands on the mat, the palms level with the shoulders and the elbows bent. Legs are as close together as is comfortable for the lower back.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Inhale as you roll through the head and thorax into extension, pressing your hands into the ground to support lift and length through the front of the body. Press the hips gently into the mat, thinking of 6 o'clock and feeling the pubic bone anchor down to help release pressure from the low back if needed. Keep the shoulders away from the ears and rise only as far as feels comfortable for the low back. Allow the head to follow the natural curve of the extension and let the eyes lift upward with ease.

Exhale and lower the torso back down to the mat with control.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Extend the back as evenly as possible without putting pressure on the low back or neck. This is a full body extension of the spine, legs are active and reaching long and away from the crown which rises up and reaches toward the ceiling. You will extend the lumbar spine and the cervical spine, use caution not to simply 'fall' into the curve but rather lengthen through them.

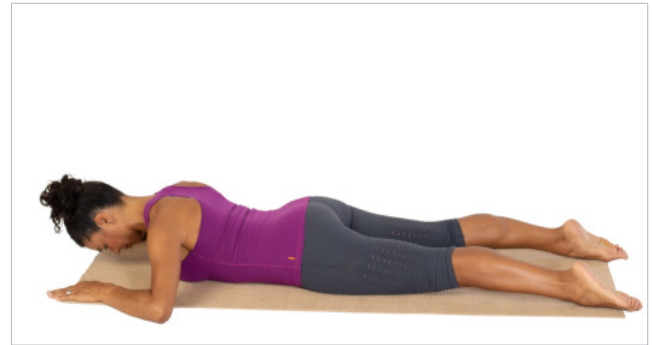
TRANSITION

From the highest point, prepare for Swan Dive or Swan Rocking or lower down to the elbows for Single Leg Kicks.

MODIFICATIONS

Low Swan

Rise up onto your forearms, keeping the elbows under the shoulders and the chest open. Maintain length through the spine, avoiding overextension in the low back, and allow the shoulders to stay broad and relaxed.



Place the hands under the shoulders with the elbows bent.



Beginner Level. Lift the upper body while pressing the hips and feet into the mat.



Intermediate Level. Straighten the arms to press up into extension.

SINGLE LEG KICKS

EXERCISE GROUP 4 | BEGINNER | 6 - 10 SETS



STARTING POSITION

Lie prone and press the forearms into the mat to lift the torso up. Slide the shoulders around the ribs and lift the thoracic spine toward the ceiling. The legs are straight and as close together as possible.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Inhale as you bend one knee and pulse the heel toward the buttocks two times with a sniffing breath..

Exhale, point the toes, and extend the leg back to the floor reaching the leg out long.

Repeat to the other side.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Keep the heel in line with the sit bones and the hips in place. . Shoulders are away from the ears, forearms are pressed into the mat with the shoulders wide. The abdominals are lifted up, low back curve is gentle and the heels kick straight into the buttocks without the toes turning out. The hips are perfectly still as the legs kick.

MODIFICATIONS

Head Down

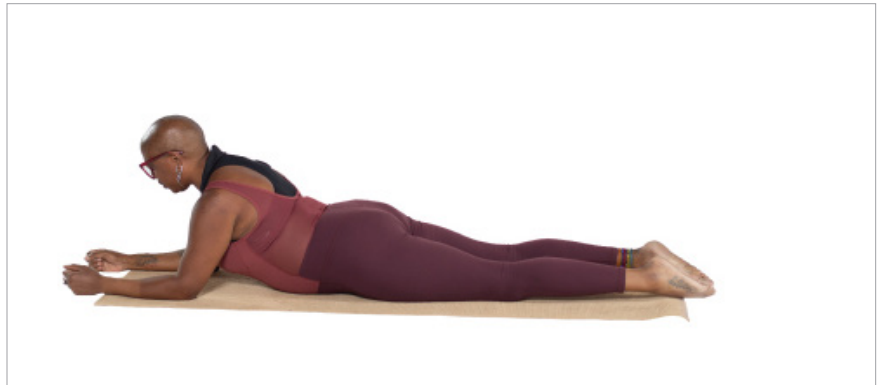
Lie prone with the head on the hands to decrease low back, neck and shoulder stress.

CHALLENGES

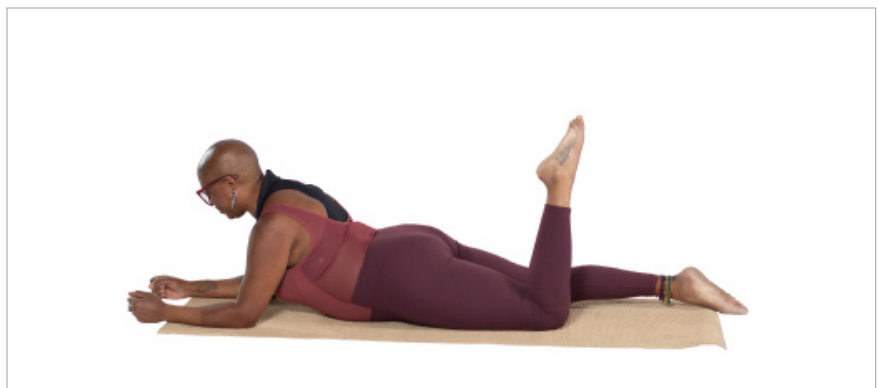
Add pointing and flexing to the foot work to challenge coordination and memory.

TRANSITION

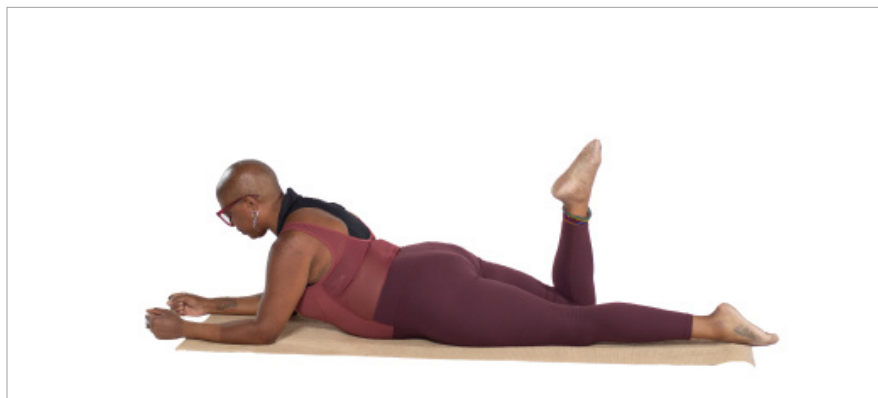
Lower the torso down to the mat with the head to one side and the hands behind the back to start the **Double Leg Kicks**.



Starting position. Press the forearms into the mat and lift the torso.



Bend the left knee and bring the heel toward the buttocks twice. Flex the ankle for a deeper stretch (not pictured)



Bend the right knee and bring the heel toward the buttocks, pulsing twice Flex the ankle for a deeper stretch. (Not pictured)

DOUBLE LEG KICKS

EXERCISE GROUP 4 | INTERMEDIATE | 3 - 6 SETS



STARTING POSITION

Lie prone with both hands clasped behind the low back and the head turned to one side.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Bend both knees and kick the heels toward the buttocks 3 times using a sniffing **inhale** breath. Keep the front of the hips on the mat and the low back stable.

Exhale as you straighten the legs, lift the head and thoracic spine into extension, and reach the clasped hands towards the feet. Keep the head in line with the spine. Lower the torso back to the mat with the head turned to the other side and the hands clasped behind the back.

MODIFICATIONS

Tight shoulders

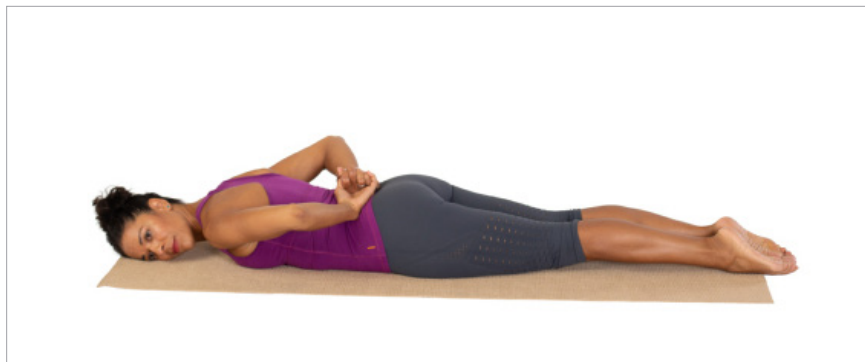
For clients with limited anterior shoulder flexibility, reach both hands toward the feet without clasping them together.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

The hips stay steady on the mat, the back extension is smooth and continuous and the head is in line with the spine.

TRANSITION

Roll to one side for the **Side Leg Series** or circle the arms around and overhead to start **Swimming**.



Starting position. Lie prone with both hands behind the back and the head turned to one side.



Kick both heels toward the buttocks three times.



Reach the legs out and the arms back to extend the back.

NOT FOR PRINT

SWIMMING

EXERCISE GROUP 4 | BEGINNER | 15 - 25 SET



STARTING POSITION

Lie prone on the mat, reach your arms overhead slightly wider than your shoulders, and extend your legs long behind you.

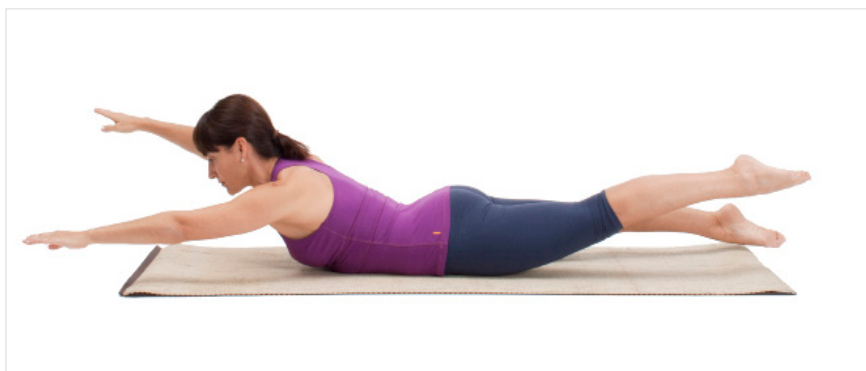
MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Reach one leg and the opposite arm out and up toward the ceiling. Switch the arm and leg quickly without losing the balance on the center of the torso.

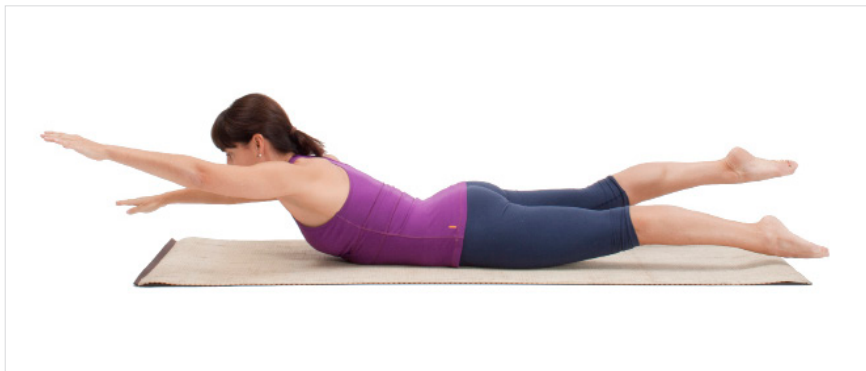
The breath can follow the tempo of the swimming for example **inhale** for two "strokes", **exhale** for two "strokes" or **inhale** for 4 "strokes" and **exhale** for 4 "strokes".

BREATH

Play with your breath here. As you swim, explore inhaling and exhaling with the rhythm of the limbs. Try a sniffing pattern, take one quick breath in and pulse one breath out as you switch sides.



Lift right arm and left leg.



Switch arms and legs quickly while maintaining balance.

MODIFICATIONS

Arms only or legs only

Move just the arms or just the legs.

CHALLENGES

Move as quickly as possible without losing control and balance between the front and back body.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Maintain an even rhythm through all four limbs and a steady, controlled center as the movement quickens.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the center still as the limbs move.
 - Imagine you have a water glass on the small of your back. Don't spill it.
- ▶ Don't rock the hips from side to side.
- ▶ Reach the legs out first, then up.
 - Imagine your legs are reaching to the walls before lifting up.
- ▶ Keep the rhythm even through all four limbs.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthens the back and hip extensors including the erector spinae, hamstrings and gluteus maximus.
- ▶ Improves pelvic stability.

PRECAUTIONS

Low back injuries: Client must tolerate back extension or avoid.

Shoulder injuries: Lift the legs only.

NOT FOR PRINT

PILATES ESSENTIALS

EXERCISE GROUP 5 | LATERAL LINE

Dynamic Pelvic Stability/Control

THE LATERAL LINE

As we continue to explore whole body movement by seeing the relationships side body organization and lateral stability is important to add to our understanding. Remember, the slings as presented are conceptual and provide us a tool to see as we observe movement happening in real time.

Earlier we reviewed the inner unit of the core, the inner cylinder. This inner unit is also referred to as the stability core or the dynamic stability core.

We presented the anterior oblique and posterior oblique slings. This is the moving core or the myofascial relationships between muscle, fascia, tendons and ligaments, that integrates the limbs with the trunk. When in movement they coordinate the core/trunk, limb movement and manages forces to and from the core.

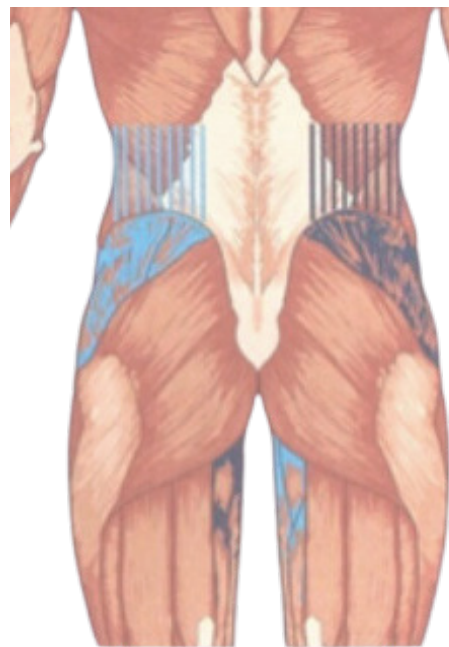
You experienced the Deep Longitudinal Sling System. This chain of vertical muscles and fascia work to keep us upright against gravity. They also eccentrically control our forward motion and when they concentrically work, the spine moves into extension.

The lateral line balances the pelvis over the legs and manages the relationship between the pelvis and the spine. In other words, it works to coordinate motion so that the lumbar spine, legs, and pelvis can move dynamically through space to produce power, amplitude, and expressions of movement required at any given moment. Whether a football forward running and kicking for a goal or the goalie grounding and bracing for the impact or jumping and reaching to deflect the ball, the lateral line both allows and limits motion as needed to maintain lumbo/pelvic/femoral integrity.

Standing Single Leg Balance

Stand on one leg. The free leg is flexed at the hip and knee is held out in front of the body. Notice how the body responds to one point of contact with the ground

- ▶ What is happening at the level of your ankle? Are you completely stable or is your ankle searching for ways to manage the changing load?
- ▶ What is happening at the level of the pelvis? Is the pelvis balanced and level or tipping to one side, or spilling forward or backwards or shifting side to side?
- ▶ As the pelvis works to find balance, what is happening at the level of the spine? Is the trunk moving in opposition of the pelvis to help find balance?



Standing Leg Balance, closing the loop

Try standing on one leg again, this time the free leg presses gently into the standing leg.

- ▶ How does the inner thigh connection help support balance?
- ▶ With this connection, is the spine able to lengthen and core able to support?
- ▶ Can you feel how the abductors work to bring the pelvis toward the center?

Can you find this centering without the legs touching?

SIDE LEG SERIES

EXERCISE GROUP 5 | BEGINNER TO ADVANCED | 6 - 10 REPS



Side Leg Lifts

STARTING POSITION

Beginner starting position

Place the head on the lower arm or on a pillow rather than supporting the head on the hand.

Standard starting position

Lie on your side with the torso and head along the back edge of the mat. Flex the hips to bring the feet in line with the front of the mat. Support the head on the hand with the elbow on the mat and place the other hand on the mat for balance. Stack the shoulders and hips on top of each other and keep the spine straight. The bottom leg can be parallel or turned out with the bottom foot flexed and the toes tucked under.

Advanced starting position

Place the lower hand under the head and take the top hand off the floor and put it behind the head so you are balancing on the bottom elbow.

Forearm starting position

Place the forearm of the supporting arm on the mat. The torso will be higher off the mat.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Inhale and lift the top leg up toward the ceiling, creasing at the top of the femur without moving the top hip or shortening the waist. Keep the shoulders and hips stacked.

Exhale as you lower the top leg back to the bottom leg.

VARIATIONS

Top leg parallel

Keep the top leg in parallel position as the leg lifts. The range of motion will be limited.

Top leg turned out

Turn the top leg out and lift it in line with the hip joint. It will move in front of the torso as it lifts.

MODIFICATIONS

For discomfort when lying on the greater trochanter

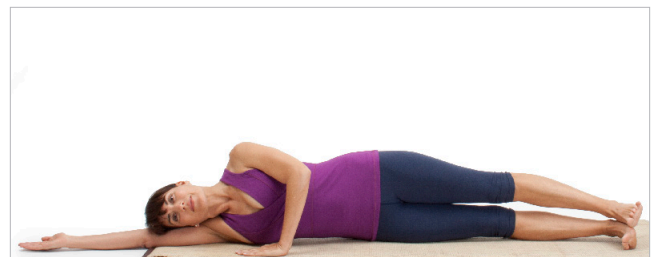
Try bending the bottom leg slightly, supporting the waist with a small towel or padding around the hips to float the trochanter. One can also cut a hole in the mat on each side for the greater trochanter to fit in.



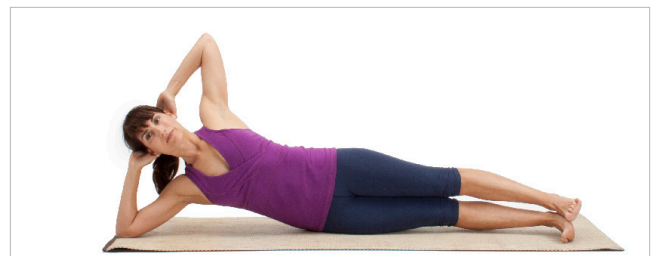
1. Starting position. Lie on side, place the lower hand under the head and the top hand in front of the chest.



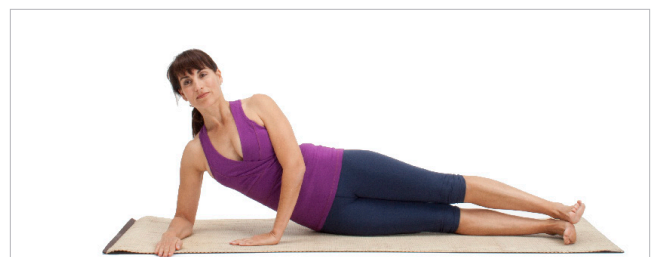
2. Side Leg Lifts Parallel. Lift top leg up to hip height.



Beginner starting position. Lie on the side with the head resting on the lower arm.



Advanced starting position. Place the lower hand under the head and the top arm behind the head and balance on the bottom elbow.



Forearm starting position. Place the forearm on the mat and lift the torso off the mat.

Circles

STARTING POSITION

Same as Side Leg Lifts.

For the Small Circles, the top leg can be parallel or turned out. For Large Circles, the top leg must be turned out.

Small Circles

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Circle the top leg forward and up to its highest point while maintaining steadiness through the pelvis and low back. Think of keeping the 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock points of the pelvic clock stable as the leg moves.

Circle the top leg from the midpoint back and around to the starting position.

Circle in both directions.

Big Circles

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Turn the top leg out and circle it forward and up to its highest point while maintaining steadiness through the pelvis and low back. Keep the 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock points of the pelvic clock stable, allowing the shoulders, torso, and hips to remain quiet as the leg moves..

Circle the top leg back and around to the starting position.

Circle in both directions.

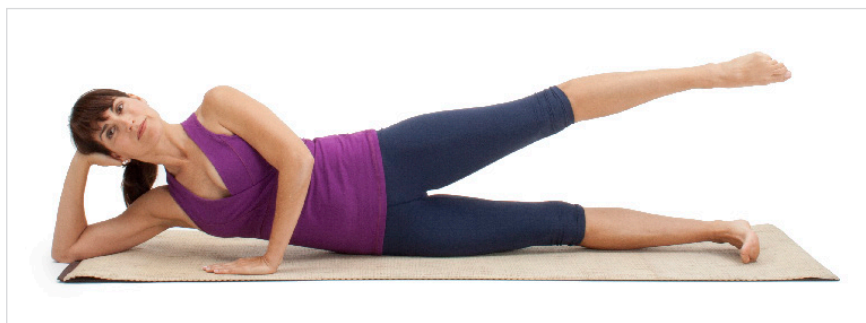
MODIFICATIONS

Circle size

Increase the size of the circle to increase the challenge of the exercise. Start with a circle about as big around as a dinner plate and increase the size until the circle is as big as the range of motion in the hip will allow. The circle will be smaller if the legs are parallel.



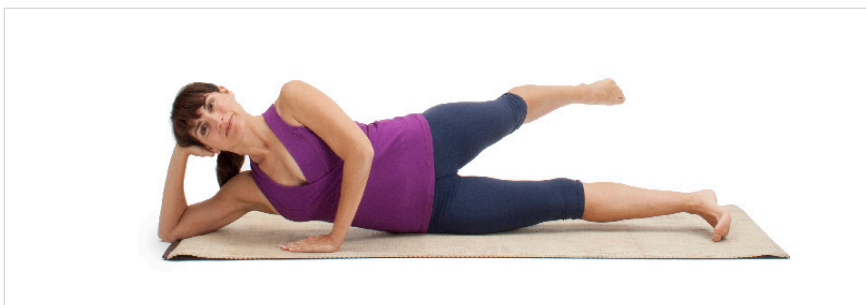
1. Starting position. Bottom hand under head, balanced on hip with top leg lifted hip height.



2. Circle top leg forward and up.



Reach forward then turn out the leg as you circle up and around. Turn out allows for larger circle.



Circle the leg to the back and the forward for next repetition.

NOT FOR PRINT

SIDE LEG KICKS AND BICYCLE

EXERCISE GROUP 5 | BEGINNER TO ADVANCED- 3 | 4 - 8 SETS

Leg Kicks

STARTING POSITION

Same as Side Leg Lifts.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

Kick the top leg forward with a flexed foot and pulse it two times. Use a sniffing breath for the pulses. Keep the hips and shoulders stacked and the leg straight.

Kick the top leg to the back with a pointed foot, maintaining stability through the torso.

MODIFICATIONS

Leg and foot positions

The upper leg can be parallel or turned out and the feet can be flexed or pointed.



1. Kick the top leg forward with a flexed foot without disturbing the pelvis or torso.



2. Kick the top leg back with a pointed foot.



Bicycle

STARTING POSITION

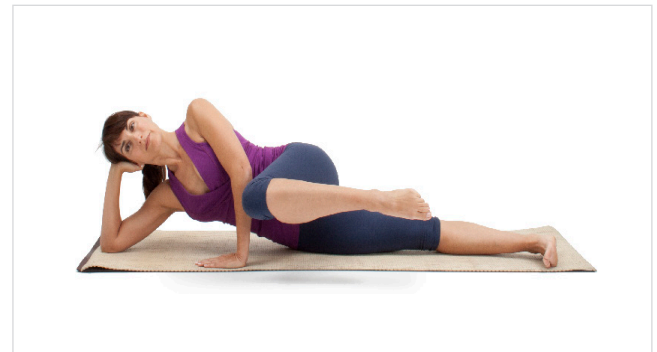
Same as Side Leg Lifts with the top leg parallel.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE

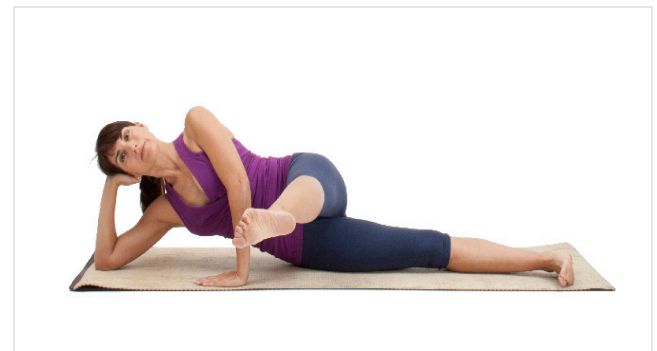
Bend the knee and extend the top leg forward with a pointed foot, keeping the leg parallel to the floor and in line with the hip.

Keeping the leg long, reach it to the back while maintaining stability through the torso and pelvis. In the back position, bend the knee to draw the foot toward the buttock. Keeping the knee bent, flex the hip to bring the leg back to the front.

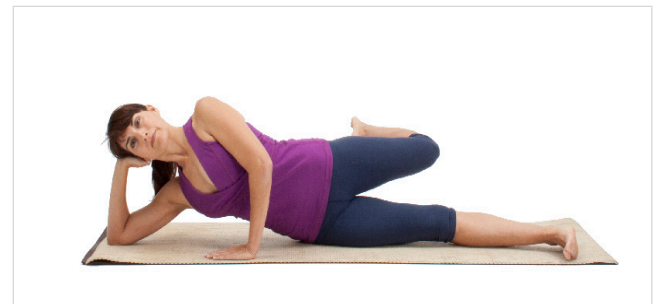
Repeat 4 to 6 times. Change directions!



1. Bend the top knee.



2. Extend the top leg to the front and sweep it around behind



3. Bend the knee of the top leg and sweep it forward to begin again.

CHALLENGES

Use the advanced starting position and change the tempo of the leg movement in both directions. Try speeding the movement up, or slowing it down..

OPTIMUM FORM

The torso, hips and shoulder do not change as the leg moves.

TRANSITION

Bring the top leg back to the starting position to go on to the next **Side Leg** exercise.

If you are changing sides, roll into the prone position with the arms overhead and slightly wider than the shoulders. Roll smoothly into position. Clap the inner thighs together quickly 20 - 50 times (heel beats) and roll onto the other side with control.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ The shoulders and the hips remain lined up throughout the exercise.
 - Imagine you have a cup of coffee balanced on your shoulder. Don't spill it!
 - Imagine you have a stake through the hips and you can't break it.
- ▶ Maintain pelvic stillness
 - Scoop the navel toward the spine as the leg moves.
- ▶ Press the arm into the mat to keep the underside of the body engaged.
- ▶ Reach the leg away from the hip as it extends long.
 - Imagine you are painting a line on the wall.
 - Instructor cue, press into the client's heel.
 - Keep the top side of the waist long and open, allowing the leg to move without shortening or shifting through the torso.
 - Crease at the top of the femur not at the waist.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the hip abductors including the gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, gluteus minimus and tensor fascia lata.
- ▶ Strengthen the hip external rotators including the gluteus maximus, piriformis and deep hip rotators.
- ▶ Strengthen the lateral torso including the latissimus dorsi, internal and external obliques and quadratus lumborum.
- ▶ Develop stability of the torso and pelvis in side lying.

PRECAUTIONS

Neck, shoulder, elbow and wrist injuries: Place the head on a pillow to decrease stress on the neck and upper limb.

Hip injuries: Limit the range of motion and the number of repetitions or avoid if it is too uncomfortable.

Lateral hip and greater trochanter pain or discomfort: Bend the bottom leg or create a hole for the greater trochanter to sit in by padding around it or cutting a hole in the mat.

NOT FOR PRINT

SIDE LEG BANANAS

EXERCISE GROUP 5 | INTERMEDIATE | 3 - 6 REPS

STARTING POSITION

Standard position

Lie on your side with the bottom arm under the head, the elbow straight and the palm facing up. Place the other hand on the mat in front of the torso for balance. The legs are straight and in line with the torso rather than being forward as they are for the other Side Leg exercises.

Beginning position

The palm of the bottom arm is facing the floor.

Advanced position

The top arm is off the floor and reaching along the side of the body toward the feet.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Inhale to prepare.

Exhale as the arm, head, torso and legs lift off the mat. You are making a crescent or Banana shape.

Inhale to return to starting position lowering the arm, head, torso and legs to the mat

Try reversing the breathing pattern as the breath should help support you as you lift and control the lowering of the torso. Determine what works best for you.



1. Starting position. Side lying with hips, knees and toes stacked.



2. Beginning modification. Lift the body off the mat into the shape of a Banana keeping the bottom hand on the floor.



2. Standard exercise. Lift both arms and legs off the mat into the shape of a Banana.



2. Advanced version. Reach the top arm towards the feet and lift the body up into a Banana shape.



3. Top/Bottom Leg Lift. Lift the top leg off the bottom leg or the bottom leg to the top leg. Keep the torso lifted throughout.



MODIFICATIONS

Beginning version

Use the beginning starting position and use the bottom arm to help lift the torso up into the Banana position.

Top leg lift

With the torso up in any of the positions or with the head down as in the starting position, lift both legs then lift the top leg off the bottom leg 10 or 20 times.

Bottom leg lift

With the torso up in any of the positions or with the head down as in the starting position, lift both legs then lift the top leg up a short distance and bring the bottom leg up to it for 20 or 30 beats to strengthen the adductors.

CHALLENGES

Use the advanced starting position and try to stay balanced on the side of the hip as the torso lifts up.

OPTIMUM FORM

The torso in one long line with no break at the hips. Transitions are smooth in both directions and the balance is perfect.

TRANSITION

Bring the top leg back to the starting position to go on to the next Side Leg exercise.

If you are changing sides, roll into the prone position and do heel beats or perform a set of Swimming before rolling to the other side.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Move smoothly up and down.
 - Imagine your legs and torso are as light as a feather as you float up and float down.
- ▶ Keep the shoulders and the hips lined up throughout the exercise.
 - Imagine you have a cup of coffee balanced on your shoulder. Don't spill it!
 - Imagine you have a stake through the hips.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the hip abductors.
- ▶ Strengthen the hip adductors.
- ▶ Strengthen the hip external rotators.
- ▶ Strengthen the lateral torso.
- ▶ Develop stability of the torso and pelvis in side lying.

PRECAUTIONS

Neck, shoulder, elbow and wrist injuries: Place the head on a pillow to decrease stress on the neck and upper limb.

Hip injuries: Limit the range of motion and the number of repetitions or avoid if it is too uncomfortable.

Lateral hip and greater trochanter pain or discomfort: Bend the bottom leg or create a hole for the greater trochanter to sit in by padding around it or cutting a hole in the mat.

NOT FOR PRINT

PILATES ESSENTIALS

EXERCISE GROUP 6 | ROLLING

Roll Up, Rolling Like a Ball, Open Leg Rocker and Seal are all spinal flexion exercises which massage the spine and enhance flexibility of the spine and the lower body. All maximize breath patterns to support the movement and create an energy throughout the whole body. Along with all the Cat exercises you explored earlier, below are some additional essential pre work to create suppleness of the spine and prepare for the unique challenges of the exercises in this group.

SEQUENTIAL ROLL DOWN/UP

Sit Bone Rocking

Starting from sitting tall position on top of sitting bones with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Image the pelvis as a wheel. Turn the wheel back and rock off the sitting bones. Imagery - imagine moving from your sitting bones and they are reaching under toward your heels. This will allow the rotation to start deep within the pelvis, the abdominals will chime in naturally, as will the pelvic floor and the glutes.

Return to sitting up by bringing your sitting bones underneath you.

Lumbar Spine

Start by sitting tall on top of your sitting bones with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Roll down until you are resting on your sacrum, allowing the back of the pelvis to find the mat and the lumbar spine to move into flexion. Notice how the thorax and head respond.

From here, roll back up by first driving the sitting bones underneath, allowing the pelvis to stack first, followed by the rib cage and then the head downward.

Roll Down and Up

Roll down sequentially find the mat, one segment at a time, until the whole body is lying supine.

On the return, begin with a gentle head float, then lead the return from the head wheel, allow the sternum to follow as you continue to roll up through the spine.



Sequential Roll Down

THE ROLL UP

EXERCISE GROUP 6 | BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE | 3 - 6 REPS

STARTING POSITION

Lie on your back with your hands at your sides. Reach your arms up and overhead only as far as you can while keeping the back of the lowest ribs on the mat. The arms may not make it all the way to the floor.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

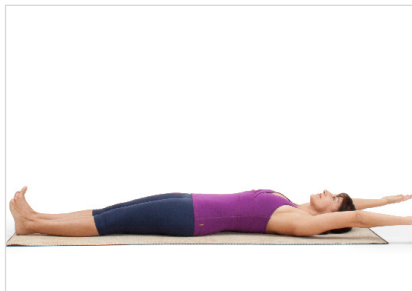
Inhale and lengthen the legs and flex your feet. Arms reach overhead, grow longer with feet reaching away from fingers.

Reach the arms up toward the ceiling, **exhale**, and roll the head and upper body up off the mat. Continue peeling the torso off the mat through the exhalation and maintain the curve of the spine and the internal lift of the abdominals. The upper body is curved over and reaching toward the feet as if you are wrapping your body around a giant beach ball.

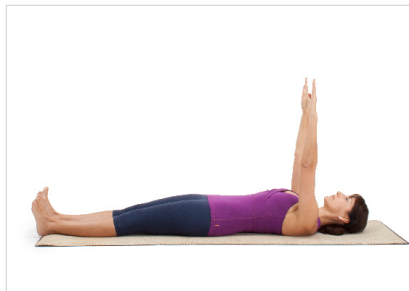
Inhale as you prepare. Maintain your reach over the imaginary beach ball and the internal lift of the spine in flexion.

Stay rounded and turn the tailbone under to begin rolling back down and **exhale**. The pelvis rolls posteriorly and the glutes may turn on in the movement. Roll back down allowing one vertebra at a time to find the mat. Maintain the curve of the spine as you move and unravel it sequentially as you find the mat.

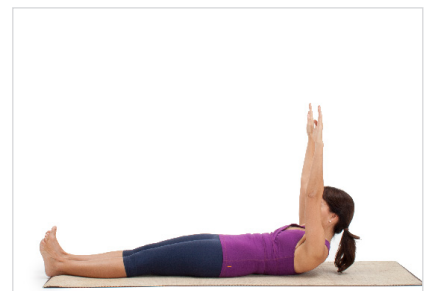
Inhale as you reach the arms up overhead to return to the starting position.



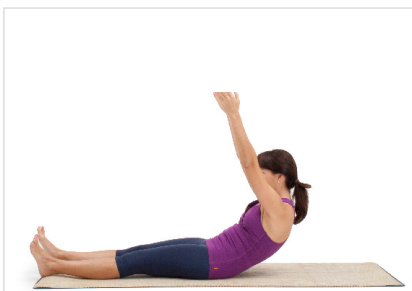
1. Starting position. Lie supine with the arms overhead and the feet flexed.



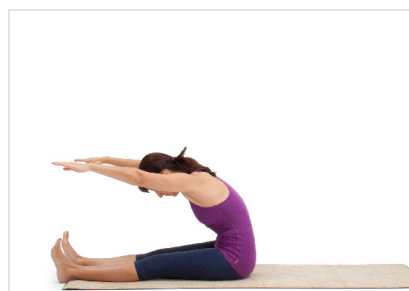
2. Reach the arms toward the ceiling.



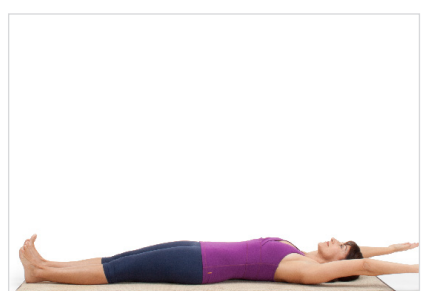
3. Lift the head in line with the arms.



4. Continue to roll up.



5. Roll all the way forward keeping the sit bones anchored.



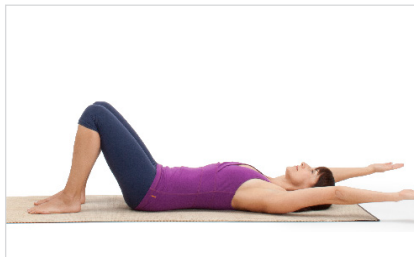
6. Roll back down to the starting position.



MODIFICATIONS

Bent Knees

Bend the knees and place the feet on the floor to begin. Gradually straighten the legs as the torso rolls up to keep the movement smooth. Bend the knees as you roll back down.



Start rolling up with knees bent. Lengthen legs while rolling. This can help clients over the difficult moments.

Roll Down

Sit up tall on your sitting bones to begin. Initiate rolling back from the sitting bones, allowing the pelvis to roll posteriorly as the spine follows sequentially. Either roll to the side to sit up and start again, or roll back only as far as can be supported while maintaining control on the return.



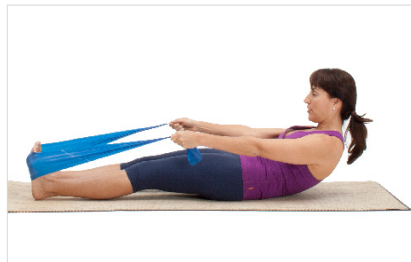
Sit up on the sitting bones and roll down one vertebra at a time.

Low back support

To make this exercise easier for tight lower backs, roll up a towel, sweatshirt or sticky pad and place it under the lumbar curve. Press into the roll as you roll up. Decrease the size of the roll as you get stronger and more flexible.

Resistance band

Place a resistance band or elastic tubing around the feet and hold the ends in the hands. Use the band to assist the roll up.

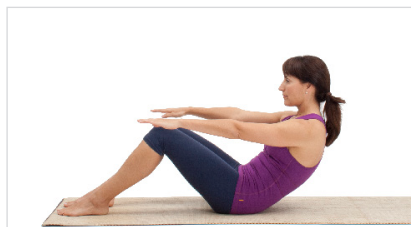


Using a resistance band provides support on the way up and helps teach control by encouraging you to roll down into the

CHALLENGES

Kathy Grant's version

Starting from sitting position, roll back just to the challenge point and hold the position for 2 to 10 full breath cycles while trying to deepen the curve. Roll down a bit more and hold. Repeat this same process until all the way down.



Roll down to a challenging spot and hold, then roll back one vertebra deeper and hold. Repeat until all the way down.

Picture frame (Not Pictured)

Keep the head between the arms as you roll up and down. Imagine your face is a picture and your arms are the picture frame. Don't break the frame!

TRANSITION

Bring the arms back down to the sides to prepare for Single Leg Circles (beginning and intermediate) or Roll Over (advanced).

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Roll up one vertebra at a time.
 - Deeply exhale in order to peel the back off the mat.
 - Imagine you are wearing a striped shirt. Peel one stripe at a time off the mat.
- ▶ Imagine your lower body is strapped down to the floor.
- ▶ Avoid wearing your shoulders as earrings.
- ▶ Float the head and turn the head wheel as you begin to peel up.
- ▶ Move with the rhythm of your breath throughout the exercise.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Increase abdominal strength.
- ▶ Enhance sequential movement through the entire spine.
- ▶ Increase the flexibility and articulation of the spine.

PRECAUTIONS

For low back injuries: Use modification 1 and 2 to keep the stress out of the back or avoid if the Roll Up increases symptoms.

Avoid with osteoporosis

NOT FOR PRINT

ROLLING LIKE A BALL

EXERCISE GROUP 6 | BEGINNER | 6 - 10 REPS



STARTING POSITION

Sit up with the knees bent, the feet off the floor and the arms around the shins. Balance between the sit bones and the tailbone., the feet will lift off the floor creating a ball like position with your spine. Keep the elbows wide. Focus the eyes on the top of the thighs to keep the upper body rounded.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Inhale to roll backwards to the top of the shoulder blades.

Exhale and roll to return to the starting position, maintaining control through the center. Pause and find your balance in the upright position before beginning the next repetition.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Use the breath to initiate and control the return of the movement. Maintain the ball like position throughout and make the ball as small as possible. The abdominals draw in and help the keep the spine lifted. Avoid throwing your head back to initiate the movement, and do not roll up onto your neck. Pause at the top of the shoulder blades, keeping the movement controlled and supported.

MODIFICATIONS

Beginning version

Place the hands on the back of the thighs rather than on the shins and keep the elbows wide to create a larger ball.

For a bony sacrum or protruding tailbone

Place thin pads or folded towels along each side of the sacrum to create a space for the sacrum or tailbone to roll.

TRANSITION

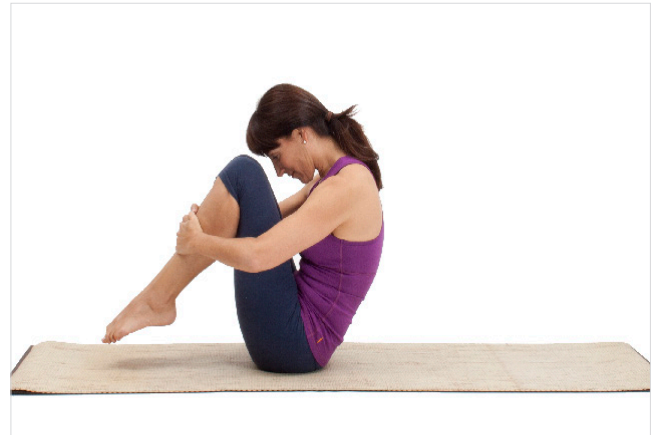
Place the right hand on the right ankle and the left hand on the right knee. Roll back, keeping the head and upper back off the mat and straighten the left leg to start Single Leg Stretch.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep your eyes on your upper thighs to keep the head in position. The elbows are wide. Shoulders relaxed.
- ▶ Don't kick your legs to control the roll. and stop the roll at the top of the shoulder blades. Do not roll onto the neck.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Develops pelvic stability and core control.
- ▶ Increases the flexibility and articulation of the spine.
- ▶ Facilitates breathing into the back body



Sit with feet lifted, arms around shins, spine flexed and find balance point.



Roll back to the top of the shoulder blades with control. Maintain spinal shape.



Roll up to the starting position without changing the ball shape.

PRECAUTIONS

For hip and low back injuries: Do the preparation only or avoid.

Avoid with osteoporosis

OPEN LEG ROCKER

EXERCISE GROUP 6 | INTERMEDIATE | 4 - 8 REPS



STARTING POSITION

Sit up and balance between the sit bones and the tailbone with the knees bent, the feet off the floor and the hands on the ankles. Open the legs so the knees are pointing out and the feet are together.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Prep

Inhale and straighten one leg and balance.

Exhale and bend the knee to return to the starting position.

Inhale and straighten the other leg and balance.

Exhale and bend the knee to return to the starting position.

Full Exercise

Inhale and straighten one leg then the other and balance with both legs open in a V position.

Exhale and roll back keeping the arms straight and the legs in a V. Don't roll past your shoulder blades.

Inhale and take a sip of air at the end of the roll.

Exhale and pull the abdominals in and roll back up to the V position. Lengthen the spine in the V without arching the back.

MODIFICATIONS

Tight hamstrings

Hold the legs behind the knees if the hamstrings are too tight to hold the ankles. Keep the knees bent at the same angle as you roll back and forth to keep the work in the torso.

Balance version

If rolling isn't available, use this position as an opportunity to work on balancing through the abdominals and back muscles. Gently flex and extend the spine, feeling the effort shift from the abdominals as you round to the back muscles as you arch. Then, find the centered position and imagine your core gently hugging your spine upward toward the top of your head, creating length and lift through your entire body.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Once you have a good balance point, picture it before you roll up each time. Have confidence that you will arrive just at the perfect spot.
- ▶ Maintain the shape throughout the roll. Don't collapse as the legs go over the torso or roll up on to the neck.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Develop dynamic pelvic control.
- ▶ Encourages openness and expansion through the back body.



1. Starting position Top of Ankle. Grasp the top of the ankles with both hands while seated.



2. Straighten the legs holding as far up the leg as flexibility will allow.



3. Roll back with control without going onto the neck.

PRECAUTIONS

For hip and low back injuries: Use tight hamstring modification or avoid.

Avoid with osteoporosis.

NOT FOR PRINT

SEAL

EXERCISE GROUP 6 | INTERMEDIATE | 4 - 8 REPS



STARTING POSITION

Sit on the mat balancing between the sit bones and the tailbone with the feet off the ground. Turn the legs out and place the soles of the feet together.

Hands on top of the ankles

Place the hands on top of the ankles, open the chest and slide the shoulders away from the ears.

Hands on the bottom of the ankles

Reach the hands under the calves and hold the ankles from the bottom, press the arms into the legs, open the chest and slide the shoulders away from the ears.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Inhale and clap the feet together three times.

Exhale and hold the feet together and roll back just to the tops of the shoulder blades.

Inhale and hold the balance point and clap the feet together three times.

keep the feet together and roll up to the starting position.

FORM AND MOVEMENT

Move smoothly and with control throughout the movement.

CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the soles of the feet together as you roll back and forward.
- ▶ Find your balance point at each end of the roll. Picture where you are going before you get there.

Don't roll up onto the neck. or let the head touch the mat.

PURPOSE

- ▶ To develop pelvic stability and core control.
- ▶ To increase the flexibility and articulation of the spine.
- ▶ To develop coordination and balance.

PRECAUTIONS

For hip and low back injuries: Hold the balance point in sitting and clap the feet. Don't roll back. Avoid if client can't tolerate sitting or lumbar flexion.

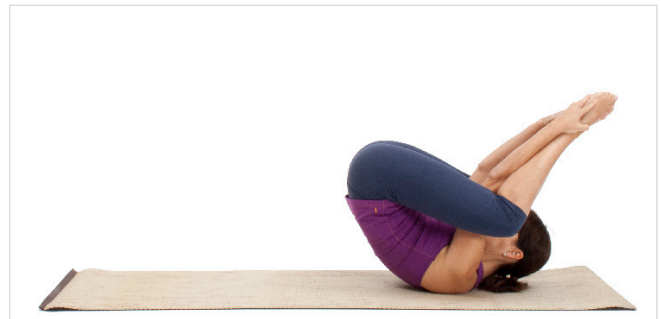
Avoid with osteoporosis.



Starting position Top of Ankle. Grasp the top of the ankles with both



Starting position Bottom of Ankle. Grasp the underside of the ankles



Roll back and balance as you clap the feet 3 times.



Roll up to the starting position.

PUSH UPS

EXERCISE GROUP 6 | BEGINNER THE STANDING ROLL DOWN / INTERMEDIATE PLANK AND PUSH UP | 1 - 3 SETS

STARTING POSITION

Stand at one end of your mat with the arms reaching up to the ceiling.

MOVEMENT SEQUENCE AND BREATH

Inhale and roll down from the top of the spine, as if you are diving over a beach ball, until the hands are on the mat.

Exhale and walk the hands out along the mat until the wrists are under the shoulders and the body is straight from the head to the feet. This is also known as Plank position.

Inhale to prepare

Exhale perform a push up by bending the elbows as far as you can keeping the torso straight and straighten the elbows.

Repeat 4 to 10 times.

Walk the hands back toward the feet and exhale to roll up.

MODIFICATIONS

Preparation

Hold the plank position for 3 breaths.

Wrist discomfort

In order to accommodate clients with wrist injuries or discomfort, use push up handles or hexagonal metal hand weights for them to grip or place the forearms on a sitting box or yoga blocks so no weight is on the wrists.

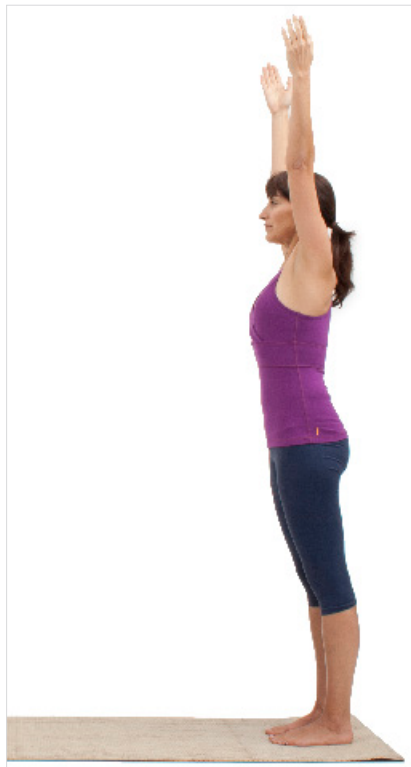
Beginning version

Place the knees on the ground with the torso straight for the Push Up position.

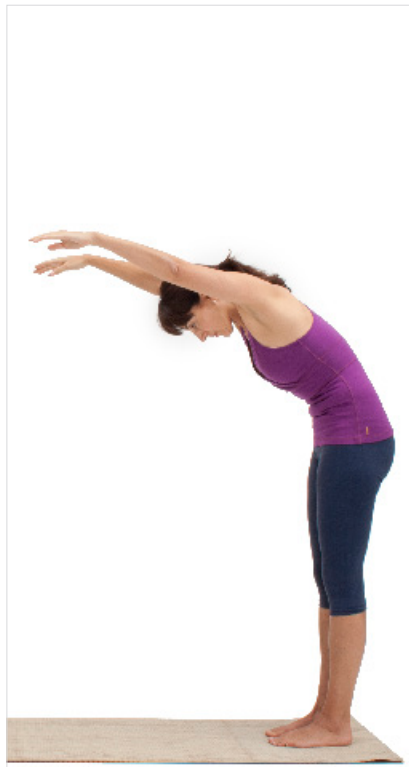
Hold the plank position and roll up to return

FORM AND MOVEMENT

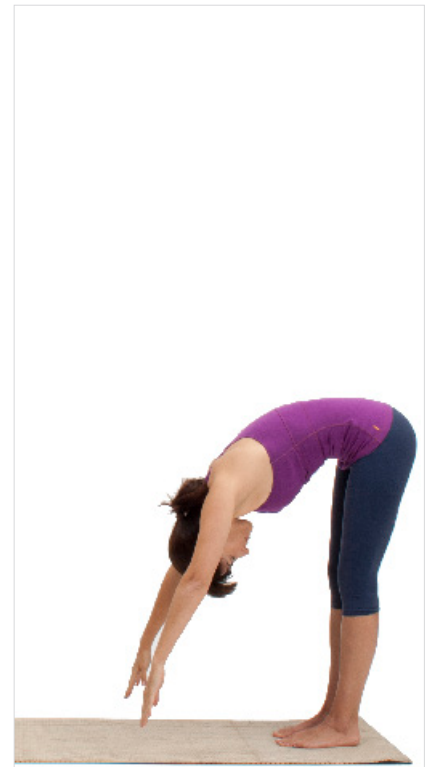
Bend the elbows as far as possible while keeping the torso straight.



Standing with the hands reaching toward the ceiling.



Roll down one vertebra at a time.



Roll all the way down until the hands are on the mat.



CUEING AND IMAGERY

- ▶ Keep the torso in one line from head to feet.
 - Imagine you have a bar on the back of your body and it is touching your head, upper back, hips and heels.
- ▶ Don't stick your butt out, think of a sacral imprint to the 12 o'clock position to help decrease lumbar extension.
 - Don't drop the hips or the head as the elbows bend.
 - Draw your belly up and in, think back to finger tip abdominals from your Pre-Pilates exercises..
- ▶ Keep your shoulders over your wrists.
- ▶ Keep your eyes looking directly in front of the hands.

PURPOSE

- ▶ Strengthen the entire body including the core, scapular stabilizers and lumbopelvic stabilizers.
- ▶ Strengthen the chest, anterior shoulder and triceps.

PRECAUTIONS

Wrist injuries: Use the modifications above or avoid.

Elbow and shoulder injuries: Use the modifications above or avoid.

Foot injuries: Place the ankles on a roller if the toes are uncomfortable.



Walk the hands out until the body is in a long plank position from head to feet.



Bend the elbows to lower the body down toward the mat.

NOT FOR PRINT

Programming Sequences

Here you will find progressive Mat 1 sequences. These sequences are organized as Movement Arcs, meaning they teach from basic skills through to the Pilates exercises in a progressive manner.

You will also find additional programming suggestions on the following pages.

Enjoy and move often, move well, and move joyfully.



MAT SEQUENCES

Beginning Mat 1: Introductory Session

The purpose of the introductory session or sessions is to introduce a new student to the principles of Pilates and to the basic elements of a Pilates workout. This session should include:

- ▶ An introduction to the principles including: Breathing, Pelvic and Scapular Stability and Abdominal work
- ▶ An introduction to all the body positions: supine, sitting, side lying, all fours, standing
- ▶ Exercises to correct common issues: low back, hamstring, hip flexor tightness, abdominal weakness, shoulder weakness and lack of stability
- ▶ An emphasis on safety and form

The sequence outlined here includes Pre-Pilates, standing and stretching exercises in addition to the standard Mat exercises in order to provide a full bodied workout for a typical beginning client.

STANDING

- ▶ Feel weight on feet
- ▶ Introduce standing posture basics—leg alignment, torso upright
- ▶ Knee bends, squats, rotations, side bends, roll downs from standing
- ▶ Finish with a roll down into supine
- ▶ Feel the position of the back in supine, neutral/imprint/supported neutral

SUPINE

- ▶ Pelvic Clock—6x each direction
- ▶ Breathing
 - Hands on abdomen—5x
 - Flex band or towel around ribs -5x
- ▶ Fingertip Abdominals—10x

ALL FOURS

- ▶ All fours Abdominals (Pregnant Cat)—8x
- ▶ Cat/Cow (fast or slow)—8x
- ▶ Hip Circles or Tail Wag—4x

SUPINE

- ▶ Abdominal Curls—10x
- ▶ Toe Taps—8x
- ▶ 100 Prep—10x
- ▶ Roll Up prep (Roll Down from sitting or partial Roll Up or bent knee version)—10x
- ▶ Hamstring Stretch—hold 45 seconds, 2x each leg
- ▶ Small Leg Circles (modified as necessary)—8x each
- ▶ Rolling Like a Ball—8x
- ▶ Single Leg Stretch—10 sets
- ▶ Roll up to sitting

SITTING

- ▶ Adductor Stretch
- ▶ Spine Stretch Forward—6x
- ▶ Spine Stretch Side—6x
- ▶ Saw—6x

PRONE

- ▶ Baby Swan—6x
- ▶ Quadriceps Stretch—hold 45 seconds, 2x each leg
- ▶ Single Leg Kicks—8x
- ▶ Rest Position

ALL FOURS

- ▶ Sternum Drops—8x
- ▶ Opposite Arm and Leg Lift—8 sets
- ▶ Plank Position—3 breaths

SIDE LEG SERIES

- ▶ Side Leg Lifts—8x each leg
- ▶ Side Leg Circles—8x each leg
- ▶ Side Leg Kicks—8x each leg

SUPINE

- ▶ Piriformis Stretch—hold 45 seconds, 2x each leg
- ▶ Seal—8x
- ▶ Finish with a roll up to standing
- ▶ Wall Push Ups or Mat Push Ups—4 to 10x

Beginning Mat 2: Full program

With the addition of some pre Pilates warm up and preparatory exercises this program includes the classical beginning exercises. It builds on the introductory session with more exercises, more sequences and smoother transitions between exercises. This is appropriate for a beginning client who does not have significant neck or back issues and who does not have osteoporosis.

STANDING

- ▶ Feel weight on feet
- ▶ Review standing posture basics
- ▶ Knee bends, squats, rotations, side bends, roll downs
- ▶ Finish with roll down into all fours position

ALL FOURS

- ▶ All Fours Abdominals (Pregnant Cat)—8x
- ▶ Cat/Cow (fast or slow)—8x
- ▶ Hip Circles or Tail Wag—4x

SUPINE

- ▶ Pelvic Clock—6x each direction
- ▶ Breathing
 - Hands on abdomen—5x
 - Flex band or towel around ribs -5x
- ▶ Fingertip Abdominals w/ small ball—10x
- ▶ Abdominal Curls—10x
- ▶ Toe Taps—10 sets
- ▶ 100—Begin with 4 preps then do 2 sets of 50
- ▶ Roll Up—4 roll downs with bent knees, 4 full
- ▶ Hamstring Stretch- 45 seconds each side with contract release

- ▶ Small Leg Circles—8x each way each leg

- ▶ Large Leg Circles—4x each leg each way

- ▶ Rolling Like a Ball—8x

SUPINE (CONTINUED)

- ▶ Single Leg Stretch—10 sets

- ▶ Double Leg Stretch preps—4x

- ▶ Double Leg Stretch—4x

- ▶ Roll up to sitting

SITTING

- ▶ Adductor Stretch—45 seconds each side

- ▶ Spine Stretch Forward—6x

- ▶ Spine Stretch Side—6x each side

- ▶ Saw—6x each side

PRONE

- ▶ Baby Swan—6x

- ▶ Quadriceps Stretch—45 seconds each side with contract release

- ▶ Single Leg Kicks—8 sets

- ▶ Double Leg Kicks—6x

- ▶ Rest Position

- ▶ Come out of rest position into all fours

ALL FOURS

- ▶ Sternum Drops—8x

- ▶ Opposite Arm and Leg Lift—6 sets

- ▶ Plank Position hold 3 breaths or 30 seconds

SUPINE

- ▶ Single Straight Leg Stretch—8 sets

- ▶ Criss Cross—8 sets

- ▶ Pelvic Press Marching—3x marching 6 sets

SIDE LEG SERIES

- ▶ Side Leg Lifts—8x each leg

- ▶ Side Leg Circles—8x each leg

- ▶ Side Leg Kicks—8x each leg

- ▶ Bananas—8x each leg

SUPINE

- ▶ Piriformis Stretch—45 seconds each side

- ▶ Seal—8x

- ▶ Finish with a roll up to standing

STANDING

- ▶ Wall Push Ups or Mat Push Ups—4 to 10x

- ▶ Knee bends

- ▶ Arm reaches

NOT FOR PRINT

MAT SEQUENCES

Intermediate Mat 3

This intermediate workout adds more abdominals and more back extension into the program. In teaching this you will keep the class moving and work on making the transitions as smooth as possible. The goal is a safe workout that warms up the entire body while teaching essential movement principles.

STANDING

- ▶ Feel weight on feet
- ▶ Review standing posture basics
- ▶ Knee bends, squats, rotations, side bends,
- ▶ Finish with roll down onto all fours

ALL FOURS

- ▶ All Fours Abdominals (Pregnant Cat)—8x
- ▶ Cat/Cow (fast or slow)—8x
- ▶ Hip Circles or Tail Wag—4x
- ▶ Roll over onto the back for supine

SUPINE

- ▶ Pelvic Clock—6x each direction
- ▶ Breathing—choose a version
- ▶ Fingertip Abdominals w/ small ball—10x
- ▶ 100—full set
- ▶ Roll Up—6x modified as needed
- ▶ Hamstring Stretch—45 seconds each side
- ▶ Small Leg Circles—8x each way each leg
- ▶ Large Leg Circles—4x each leg each way
- ▶ Roll up to sitting
- ▶ Rolling Like a Ball—8x
- ▶ Roll down to supine
- ▶ Single Leg Stretch—10 sets
- ▶ Double Leg Stretch preps—4x

- ▶ Double Leg Stretch—4x

- ▶ Roll up to sitting

SITTING

- ▶ Adductor Stretch—45 seconds each side
- ▶ Spine Stretch Forward—6x
- ▶ Spine Stretch Side—6x each side
- ▶ Saw—6x each side
- ▶ Open Leg Rocker—6x
- ▶ Balance at the end and roll over to prone

PRONE

- ▶ Baby Swan—6x
- ▶ Quadriceps Stretch—45 seconds each side
- ▶ Single Leg Kicks—8 sets
- ▶ Double Leg Kicks—6x
- ▶ Swan or Swan Dive—6x
- ▶ Rest Position
- ▶ Come out of Rest Position onto all fours

ALL FOURS

- ▶ Sternum Drops—8x
- ▶ Opposite Arm and Leg Lift—6 sets
- ▶ Plank Position hold 3 breaths or 30 seconds
- ▶ Lower the body down to the mat and roll to the side

SIDE LEG SERIES

- ▶ Side Leg Lifts—8x each leg

- ▶ Side Leg Circles—8x each leg

- ▶ Side Leg Kicks—8x each leg

- ▶ Bananas—8x each leg

SUPINE

- ▶ Single Straight Leg Stretch—8 sets
- ▶ Double Straight Leg Stretch—3x
- ▶ Criss Cross—8 sets
- ▶ Pelvic Press—6x
- ▶ Pelvic Press Marching—3x marching 6 sets
- ▶ Teaser 1—6x
- ▶ Piriformis Stretch—45 seconds each side
- ▶ Seal—8x
- ▶ Roll up to standing

STANDING

- ▶ Mat Push Ups
- ▶ Knee bends
- ▶ Arm reaches

Beginning Mat 4: Heating it up

This workout is designed to be a relatively safe, full body workout with a rapid tempo and several abdominal and plank combinations to warm up the class and create a feeling of effort without adding intermediate moves. Good for more fitness oriented environments.

STANDING

- ▶ Feel weight on feet
- ▶ Review standing posture basics
- ▶ Knee bends, squats, rotations, side bends, roll downs
- ▶ Roll down into all fours position

ALL FOURS

- ▶ All Fours Abdominals (Pregnant Cat)—8x
- ▶ Cat/Cow (fast or slow)—8x
- ▶ Hip Circles or Tail Wag—4x
- ▶ Plank Position—hold for 4 breaths
- ▶ Lower the torso to the mat and roll over to supine

SUPINE

- ▶ Fingertip Abdominals w/ small ball—6x
- ▶ Abdominal Curls with feet on floor—6x
- ▶ Abdominal Curls with legs in chair position—6x
- ▶ 100—2 sets of 50
- ▶ Roll Up—4 roll downs with bent knees, 4 full with 3 breaths at the hardest part
- ▶ Hamstring Stretch—45 seconds each side with contract release
- ▶ Small Leg Circles—8x each way each leg
- ▶ Large Leg Circles—4x each leg each way
- ▶ Rolling Like a Ball—8x
- ▶ Single Leg Stretch—10 sets
- ▶ Double Leg Stretch preps—4x

- ▶ Double Leg Stretch—4x

- ▶ Roll up to sitting

SITTING

- ▶ Adductor Stretch—45 seconds each side
- ▶ Spine Stretch Forward—6x
- ▶ Spine Stretch Side—6x each side
- ▶ Saw—6x each side
- ▶ Bend the knees, come into a squat and walk out to a plank to lower the body into a prone position

PRONE

- ▶ Baby Swan—6x
- ▶ Quadriceps Stretch—45 seconds each side with contract release
- ▶ Single Leg Kicks—8 sets
- ▶ Double Leg Kicks—6x stay up on last one to go into
- ▶ Swimming
- ▶ Rest Position
- ▶ Come up from Rest Position into all fours

ALL FOURS

- ▶ Sternum Drops—8x
- ▶ Opposite Arm and Leg Lift—6 sets
- ▶ Plank Position—hold 3 breaths or 30 seconds
- ▶ Lift One leg up and then the other in the Plank position
- ▶ Roll over for supine

SUPINE

- ▶ Single Straight Leg Stretch—4 sets
- ▶ Criss Cross—4 sets
- ▶ Repeat 3 times

SIDE LEG SERIES

- ▶ Side Leg Lifts—8x each leg
- ▶ Side Leg Circles—8x each leg
- ▶ Side Leg Kicks—8x each leg
- ▶ Bananas—8x each leg

SUPINE

- ▶ Piriformis stretch—45 seconds each side
- ▶ Seal—8x

ROLL UP TO STANDING

- ▶ Mat push ups
- ▶ Squats
- ▶ Arm reaches
- ▶ Balances

NOT FOR PRINT

BECOMING A TEACHER

CUEING, COACHING AND TEACHING

What Makes a Teacher?

Teaching is an opportunity to pass on your skills, your knowledge and your inspiration to the next generation. Whether you think of yourself as a teacher or not, one of the key features of being human is your ability to teach those around you what they need to know to be part of the human community. Teaching Pilates is one kind of teaching that may be new to you, but all your skills as a communicator, performer, parent, sibling or adviser can come into play as you develop your unique teaching style.

TEACHING LEVELS

In observing the development of many Pilates teachers over the last several years, I have noted distinct stages students pass through on their way to becoming truly skilled professionals. All of the stages represent the process of acquiring skills that are necessary for progressing to the next level.

LEVEL 1: THE EXERCISE LEADER

The exercise leader is a teacher who can successfully get their students to perform the exercise. If an exercise leader is teaching a group class, they can successfully demonstrate the exercises in an appropriate sequence and the students can follow along without too much confusion. If the exercise leader is teaching a private or semi-private session, they can set up the equipment, make appropriate adjustments and get the students to perform the exercises successfully and efficiently.

The exercise leader understands the exercises they are teaching in order to successfully communicate:

- ▶ Correct equipment set up (if required): # of springs, position of footbar
- ▶ Proper body position: supine with feet on footbar
- ▶ Movement sequence: press the carriage back and return
- ▶ Number of repetitions
- ▶ Transition to next exercise
- ▶ Basic safety instructions for clients without physical limitations
- ▶ Program sequencing and flow to fulfill the objectives of the class

This is the basic level of skill required to teach and it takes practice to achieve all of these things. The goal of the personal sessions and student teaching hours are to develop this level of ability. Until you can successfully teach an exercise safely and efficiently to a student or client you have not reached the basic level required of a Pilates teacher.

LEVEL 2: THE PILATES TEACHER

The Pilates teacher can take a student or a class and teach them not just how to perform the exercise but how to perform it better. The Pilates teacher's goal is to help his or her students achieve optimum function and performance in whatever they do. Whether the student is a mother, a computer programmer, a casual runner or a professional athlete, the Pilates teacher works with the individual student's goals to design a program to address postural, functional and performance goals.

The Pilates teacher can take a student without substantial physical limitations and design a specific program to help them to:

- ▶ Improve overall strength and flexibility
- ▶ Correct common muscular imbalances
- ▶ Improve posture
- ▶ Improve physical function in daily activities
- ▶ Achieve their fitness goals
- ▶ Improve their performance in the athletic activities of their choice

Becoming a Pilates teacher takes many years. It requires practice on a wide variety of body types over a long period of time before the common problems become clear and the solutions, straightforward. Every student provides an opportunity to learn something new about what a particular body or personality needs to succeed.

Pilates Teachers add the following skills to those of the Exercise Leader:

- ▶ Coaching and motivation for clients of all personality types
- ▶ An ability to understand and analyze common postural, movement and muscular imbalances and address them effectively
- ▶ A commitment to work with each student at their level and support their process
- ▶ An interest and ability in creative problem solving
- ▶ A thorough understanding of the mechanics of the Pilates equipment and the effect of each adjustment on each exercise
- ▶ A thorough understanding of the Pilates repertoire and how to modify or challenge as needed
- ▶ An ongoing commitment to continuing education

The goal of the Balanced Body Pilates Instructor Training program is to create masterful, inspiring and compassionate Pilates Teachers.

LEVEL 3: THE PILATES PRACTITIONER

The Pilates Practitioner can possess a variety of skills depending on what they are most passionate about and are instructors who excel in teaching a specific kind of student, for example dancers or golfers. They can excel in teaching clients with injuries, or they can excel in their creativity and ability to stretch the boundaries of Pilates. Many Pilates practitioners become teachers of Pilates teachers and choose to pass on their experience to the next generation. Practitioners show mastery in their own practice and are recognized by the Pilates community as having unique skills that are of value to our profession.

TEACHING, CUEING AND COACHING TOOLS

As a Pilates teacher you will work with students of all kinds. Most instructors discover, once they start teaching, that mastering the Pilates equipment and exercises is a lot easier than learning how to communicate with the wide range of students that show up at classes. Cueing that works beautifully for one person often makes no sense to someone else. A skilled teacher learns to communicate in a variety of ways in order to address the many learning styles of their students. Here are a variety of options for you to consider when you get stuck or can't think of another way to express something.

VERBAL, VISUAL, MANUAL OR KINESTHETIC TEACHING STYLES

People take in information in a variety of ways. One way to categorize this is through what senses we are using to receive and process the information. In your teaching, the more categories you can combine in your instructions, the more effective you will be in your teaching.

VERBAL

Verbal instruction is the words that you say and the order you say them in as well as the qualities of the voice and the body language that accompanies them. Being able to articulate what you want your class or client to do is an essential first step in teaching. Verbal communication includes many aspects of the voice beyond just the words that are being spoken. Aspects of this non-verbal communication that are important to consider include:

Quality of the voice

- ▶ Is your voice pleasant or irritating to listen to?
- ▶ Does your voice convey the quality of the movement it is asking for?
- ▶ Do you speak at an appropriate volume for your client?

Rhythm of the voice

- ▶ Do you vary the rhythm of your voice when you are speaking?
- ▶ Do you speak in a monotone?
- ▶ Do you use your voice to convey the rhythm of the exercise?

Emotional content of the voice

- ▶ Is your voice expressive or dull?
- ▶ How does your voice make people feel?
- ▶ Can you give corrections and take control of a class without getting angry or causing pain or embarrassment to your students?
- ▶ Does your voice create a calm, energetic, manic or boring atmosphere?

VISUAL

Visual cues can be the physical movements that a person sees, or they can be cues that create a mental picture that the client can use.

Actual visual cues include:

- ▶ Performing the movements exactly as the client will be doing them as in demonstrating for a Mat class
- ▶ Indicating the motion desired with a smaller body motion as in rotating the torso to indicate rotation to a client or using the arms to indicate movement of the legs.

Visual imagery cues can include:

- ▶ Reach your arms out to the sides as if you are making the shape of a 'T'.
- ▶ Imagine your spine is like the trunk of a young tree, bending gently in the wind.

MANUAL

Manual cueing uses the sense of touch to instruct the student and is used in addition to auditory instructions to facilitate movement, muscle engagement or muscle tone.

Examples of manual cueing include:

- ▶ Facilitating movement: When teaching a student how to rotate the torso, manual cueing can help the student to feel the movement clearly and to understand what the instructor is looking for.
- ▶ Encouraging muscle engagement: Placing a hand on the muscle to be used can help the student to identify what they are trying to use.
- ▶ Moderating muscle tone: A hand on an area can help bring the students awareness to that area and to decrease or increase the amount of tension in the area.

PRECAUTIONS REGARDING MANUAL CUEING

Not every client is comfortable with manual cueing. Make sure you ask permission before you touch them and let them know what you will be doing and why. If you are a hands on teacher, let them know that in the first session and if they are comfortable with it then you don't have to ask each session.

Move your client into position only as a last resort. In order to facilitate the learning process for the client, it is more effective for them to find the placement themselves then for you to put them there. Resist the impulse to pick up their foot and move it two inches to the right on the footbar. Have them do it themselves unless they just aren't getting it.

Cue bilaterally if possible. The nervous system does not get a balanced signal if you only touch one side of the body in a bilateral movement. For example, if you are placing your hands on a client's shoulders to encourage them to relax, place your hands on both shoulders. Otherwise their nervous system gets a very mixed message.

KINESTHETIC

Kinesthetic learners learn by feeling and doing. This is a fairly rare learning style that is most common among dancers and others athletes who have spent many years training their kinesthetic sense. When you are teaching a Mat class, be sure to use your verbal cues in addition to demonstrating the exercises so your students are getting two different kinds of learning input at the same time.

If you are teaching a private client, try to use your verbal cueing first. For most students watching a demonstration rather than doing the exercise with you is not the most effective way to learn and it is quite time consuming so use demonstrating as a secondary skill. Kinesthetic learning is exactly what you are teaching your client to be better at. Through experience, they will understand the exercise better and be able to refine it more effectively.

CUEING, COACHING AND TEACHING

Refining your verbal cueing

Since verbal cueing is most of what you will be doing in your teaching, it is worth exploring how you use language and how you can expand your cueing repertoire. The key things that need to be communicated about an exercise include:

- ▶ What is the starting position?
 - Equipment set up: 2 springs, footbar
 - Body position: prone, supine, sitting
- ▶ What is the movement sequence?
- ▶ What is the breathing pattern?
- ▶ How many repetitions?

When giving a cue, know that it is much easier for a client to do something good than to stop doing something bad. For example, if someone's shoulders always rise. Try active cues such as "Slide the shoulder blades down your back", "Lower your shoulders" or "Melt your shoulders down" rather than "Don't raise your shoulders".

Once you have covered the basics and the student understands essentially what they are doing, cueing moves to the next level and can include a tremendous amount of creativity. Once the mechanics of the exercise are understood, a variety of images and explanations can improve the student's understanding and refine their experience of the exercise. Imagery categories include:

- ▶ Anatomical cueing and explanations: Engage your abdominals to bring your ribs toward your pelvis.
 - Tighten the quadriceps to pull the patella up.
- ▶ Kinesthetic cueing: Feel your ribs slide down the front of your torso.
 - Imagine someone is lifting your upper body up as the abdominals engage.
 - Imagine you have wheels on your ears and they are rolling towards your torso to lift the head off the mat.

- ▶ Visual cueing: Picture your ribs melting toward your pelvis as the torso rises off the mat.
 - Imagine a pebble sinking from your navel to your spine as the abdominals engage.
 - To feel the transversus working, imagine you have plastic wrap across your hip bones and it pulls tighter as you engage the muscles.
- ▶ Movement oriented cueing: Imagine energy is shooting out the top of your head as you stand.
 - Reach the arms toward the ceiling as if you are reaching for something you want more than anything
- ▶ And lots more...

As a teacher you get to experiment with and develop your individual style and you will attract students who need your particular skills. If you are working in a studio with other instructors, keep your ears open for new ways of saying things and borrow what you feel drawn to. Find cues that feel true to you and that you can vividly imagine as you are using them. Your student's response is directly proportional to your connection to the image. If you are very clear about what you are asking, they will follow along. If you are fuzzy, they will be too.

LEARNING SPEED

As an instructor it is extremely important to be patient and to remember how long it takes to learn a new physical skill. If you are an accomplished athlete or dancer it may be difficult to remember how many years it took you to learn the skills you currently possess. For many of your clients without much of an athletic background it can take quite a while for the basic principles of Pilates to start to take root. Be patient. The mind is fast, the body is slow. Allow your client time to get used to all the new ideas you are throwing at them and to begin to digest the new vocabulary and experiences you are leading them through.

Take your time; enjoy the process of becoming a teacher. If you enjoy people and movement and the miracles the body contains you will have a very rewarding and successful career in Pilates.

NOT FOR PRINT

TEACHING GROUP CLASSES

Teaching Group Classes

Teaching great group classes takes more than just knowing the exercises. It takes inspirational leadership, personality, community and commitment, as well as the right environment. Students look to you to motivate and inspire them to do their best. You help them to achieve their goals, learn new skills and feel better about themselves.

Factors that contribute to your success include external factors such as class size and environment that you may or may not have much control over, as well as qualities specific to you such as skill level, personality, planning, communication style and follow through. As you review this list, identify the areas you feel very successful in and the areas you need work on and make a plan to address your weak spots and magnify your special talents. Teaching group classes is a skill that may take some time to develop. Be patient, keep practicing, take classes with teachers you admire and you will improve.

GENERAL GUIDELINES TEACHING YOUR FIRST GROUP CLASSES

When you first start teaching, it is important that you understand your material and the sequence you will be teaching it in. Write out the program, practice it out loud to hear and refine your verbal cues and practice it on your friends and colleagues to see how long it takes. The first few times you may discover that you have enough material for 2 hours or for 20 minutes. Be well prepared and be prepared to change course if the level you have prepared is inappropriate or if you have misjudged how long it will take to teach the material.

Consider how you will address different levels in the class. If you are teaching a lower level class, demonstrate just the beginning level of the exercise. The class will follow whatever you are doing, so if it is not appropriate for them to be doing the advanced version, don't show it.

Come early to your first class, or any new classes you are teaching, to get a feel for the students and to have the opportunity to ask them if they have any problems or physical limitations you should know about. If you are starting a new class, take the opportunity to create a connection by introducing yourself to each of the students. If you are taking over an existing class, observe it a few times to get a sense of what the previous teacher did and what the level of the class is. Unless you have a class that has the same students each time, introduce yourself and the name of the class at the beginning so that everyone knows your name and a little bit about what to expect. For example:

"Hi my name is Elizabeth and this is Pilates for Everyone. This class is an introductory level course so we will be going over the principles of Pilates and the beginning level exercises. If any of the exercises are uncomfortable or cause discomfort please stop immediately and let me know and if you have any questions, please feel free to ask me either during or after the class."

You may also want to take this opportunity to ask if anyone has back, neck, elbow or wrist issues and to identify who you might need to give modifications to.

If possible, new teachers should spend as much time as possible taking classes from experienced instructors or watching videos of master teachers. Do not be afraid to copy someone you admire. There are only so many ways to say things and do exercises and if you hear great cues or take a class you love, try to replicate it. Pay attention to the voice quality, sequencing, energy level and group feeling in the room and see if you can create a similar experience.

A great way to practice your teaching is to get a small group of friends together and make them commit to 8 or 10 classes. Use the classes to refine your verbal cueing and to get a good feeling for the amount of time each exercise takes and how to create smooth transitions. Another approach is to start out teaching introduction to Pilates classes at a local gym or community center where the students commit to a 4 or 6 week class. This allows you to grow with the class and gives you the chance to see the progress your students make.

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF GROUP CLASS SUCCESS

External Factors – things you can't always control

Class size: Class size can play a big part in how successful you are as a teacher. If a class is too small, it can feel intimate and personal or low energy and unsuccessful for the instructor. If a class is big, it can feel exhilarating and full of energy or it can feel impersonal and unsafe. How you set the mood and the feel of the class can make any size class feel just right but you need to know how to moderate your energy to give what's needed.

As a new teacher, try to keep your class size at the level you can manage safely. This is virtually impossible in many settings where the classes are taught on a drop in basis, but if you have any say, limit your class size to no more than 12 to start. If you are teaching at a facility where large classes are the norm, see if you can recruit local student teachers to assist either as demonstrators or as people who walk around and keep students from getting into trouble. It can be a great learning opportunity for everyone.

Class level: If you are teaching beginning level classes, keep them beginning. Resist the temptation to teach advanced level exercises because you want to challenge your students, or because you are bored. Don't teach any inversions, such as Roll Over or Jackknife, limit the number of straight leg lowers, such as the full Hundred and Double Straight Leg Stretch and don't do single arm or single leg plank exercises. And regardless of the advertised level of the class, do not teach exercises that are clearly beyond the level of the group to perform safely.

Classroom environment: The room you teach Pilates in should have an appropriate floor, (wood, laminate or carpet, no concrete under linoleum), appropriate mats for padding the spine, be a comfortable temperature and be separated from the rest of the studio or fitness center. Classes taught in the middle of the weight floor while other things are going on will not be successful. It is ideal to be able to control the lighting and sound to maintain a pleasant atmosphere. If your classroom is sandwiched between a group exercise studio and a spinning studio with loud music going that your students can hear, they will be distracted and you will be distracted. This is not always something you can control, but asking for a classroom space that is conducive to concentration and awareness will support you and your students.

Class time: This is often the most important element of class success. Prime class hours vary depending on the city and the general demographics but the best morning hours are usually 7:00AM to 10:00AM and the best evening hours are from 4:00PM to 7:00PM. Classes scheduled during the middle of the day are rarely successful. It is also important to have a variety of classes offered in each time slot two or three times a week so clients can commit to a regular workout.

Student expectations: If you are starting a new class, you can set the expectations of the class in your introduction and as you teach. If you are taking over a class from a teacher with a very different style than you, you may want to let them know that you like to move a little faster or slower or whatever. If you are teaching in a gym environment, be prepared to give them a safe but challenging workout. If you are working in a studio, you may be able to start more slowly and thoughtfully.

Personal Factors – what you bring to the class

Skill and understanding: As was discussed earlier in the Becoming a Teacher section, the first requirement of success is a thorough understanding of the exercises and the ability to demonstrate and verbally cue them. This takes time and when you first start you will do a lot of learning on the job. If you are like most beginning group instructors, you will make plenty of mistakes and as long as you learn from them, you will keep getting better. If you are unclear on an exercise or want to add one in that you haven't done for a while, review the notes in the manual and practice demonstrating and teaching the exercise out loud until you feel comfortable with it. Taking sessions yourself can be a big help while you are starting the learning process. Use your personal sessions to ask questions and clarify anything you don't understand.

Leadership: As the instructor of the class, it is your responsibility to create an inspiring, comfortable and safe environment for all of your students. Depending on your style, you may also create a demanding, humorous, entertaining, thoughtful or playful environment. Different classes have different qualities and your job is to uncover and develop your unique characteristics as a teacher. As the leader you are in charge of the flow of the class from the beginning until the last exercise. Plan the class well, guide your students successfully from one exercise to the next, start and end on time and keep everyone focused on the task at hand. As the leader, it is also your responsibility to keep your students progressing and improving in their skills and their physical awareness. You create the goals for the class and you help your students to achieve theirs. Setting specific goals for the class or for a series of classes can reinvigorate a group of regulars and motivate your new comers. You can even create a series of classes which focus on a specific area, for example: Pilates Mat for the Core, Pilates for Great Legs, etc. Through simple changes in sequence and cueing you can focus on any one of the many principles in Pilates.

NOT FOR PRINT

Inspiration: A key part of leadership is being an inspiration and a motivator for your students. You are a role model and how you hold yourself, how you teach and how you communicate with your students are all opportunities for expressing what you want them to learn. A great group teacher draws students in because they know they will have a great experience in the class. You can be inspirational by pushing your students to do more than they thought they were capable of, by teaching them something about their bodies that helps them or by providing the opportunity for them to explore new experiences. The body is often an avenue for profound personal change and creating an atmosphere that encourages your students to discover new abilities can lead to growth and transformation.

When you take on the role of an inspirational leader to your students, you also take on a commitment to your own continued growth and development. In order to be inspirational, you need to be inspired and whether your inspiration comes from running marathons, gardening or teaching, you need to keep yourself fed. It is easy as a teacher to forget that you are an important part of the equation and if you get burned out, nobody benefits. Find the passions in your own life and nurture them.

Personality: Teaching a great group class is like giving a performance and many of the same skills apply. A good teacher knows how to use their voice, body language and appearance to create a certain mood and feeling in the room. A really good teacher learns to read the energy of the room and provide just the right word, exercise or experience to keep the energy moving in a specific direction. As a teacher, your students take an interest in you and your personal life and without making the class all about you, letting them see some of your struggles and triumphs can make you human and help them to see that if you can do it, so can they.

Many of the best class teachers create a lively, entertaining and open feeling where the students are drawn in because the instructor is having so much fun. The more present and comfortable the teacher is, the more likely it is the students will enjoy the class and come back for more. As a new teacher it is often very hard to be present and comfortable in front of a large group of strangers. If you find yourself very uncomfortable when you are teaching, breathe and let your students breathe and see if the atmosphere doesn't lighten up a little. With time and practice you will relax and enjoy your new role.

Creativity: Creativity is an essential element in teaching. Being able to create new cues, new sequences and new experiences is extremely important to keeping your class dynamic and the learning process fresh.

Many things you will teach in class are repetitive and the more ways you can find to say "engage your core" and "lower your shoulders" the better. Creativity is also important to keep the nervous system alert and responsive. If you've heard the same cue for 3 years, you no longer respond to it. Your brain checks it off and moves on without necessarily checking to see if the body has responded.

As important as creativity is, effective teaching is a balance between creativity and repetition. Learning new physical skills requires repetition but too much repetition decreases the body's ability to respond and can lead to boredom. When putting together programs it's important to balance both elements. One way to accomplish this is to have a set beginning and ending to the class so the students can see and feel their progress over time. Keeping the first 10 to 20 minutes of the class consistent creates a smooth transition from "ordinary life" with all of its dramas to the internal focus and attention of a Pilates class. It also makes it easy to accommodate the chronic latecomer who can join in without disrupting the flow. Creating a standard ending for the class helps students to reflect on what they've accomplished and reinforces the satisfaction of completing another great class.

Community: One of the unspoken benefits of being in a class is being part of a community. How you welcome new students into the group will often determine whether or not they come back. As the leader it is your job to make them feel at home. Make an effort to go up to each new student and introduce yourself and anyone else who is around. At the beginning of each class, ask if anyone is new and introduce them to the group. If you know two students have something in common, mention that to them. People come to class for you but they also come to see their friends and to hear the latest about their lives. Classes can be a great support system when a member is ill or having other difficulties. One simple way to do this is to have the students introduce themselves to everyone around them at the beginning of each class. That way they get to know each other, and if there is a partner exercise or other challenges they'll be more comfortable.

Commitment: An often overlooked element in creating successful classes is your commitment level. If you are dragging yourself there every time or cancel twice a month, your students will feel your lack of commitment and they will stop showing up. Students expect regularity and if you want your class to go, you need to be reliable. Very few classes will keep going if the instructor misses more than a few classes a year. When starting a new class, ask yourself if you are willing to commit to the class time for at least a year before signing on.

Progression of Class Elements

WARMING UP THE BODY

Setting the Intention

Successful exercise needs to have the body awake, and the circulation flowing. This is why Joe started his mat classes with the Hundred. Warming up can be done in standing, on all fours or supine but it is important to get the blood flowing and the big muscles working in a safe way before going on to the rest of the exercises. This is also a great time to start the awareness of the breath and to integrating the breath with movement.

For example:

- ▶ Standing
 - Squats
 - Plies
 - Arm motions (Arm lifts, arm circles, shoulder circles)
 - ▶ Supine
 - Hundred
 - ▶ All Fours
 - Cat/Cow
 - Opposite Arm and Leg Lift
 - Tail Wag or Hip Circles
 - ▶ Cardio
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

ACCESSING THE CORE

Building Skills

The core is the foundation of all of the exercises in Pilates. Establishing the engagement of the core, the position of the low back, the pelvic stabilizers, the mobility of the spine and the awareness of body position are what the first piece of class needs to focus on.

For example:

- ▶ Supine
 - Pelvic Clock
 - Marching
 - Bridging
 - Hundred
 - Roll Up
 - Leg Circles
- ▶ All Fours
 - Cat/Cow
 - Opposite Arm and Leg Lift

INCREASING SPINAL MOBILITY

Building Skills

A mobile spine is a healthy spine and Pilates always focuses on spinal mobility at several points in the program.

For example:

- ▶ All Fours
 - Cat/Cow
- ▶ Supine
 - Bridging
 - Roll Up
 - Rolling like Ball
- ▶ Seated
 - Open Leg Rocker
 - Seal
 - Spine Stretch
 - Saw
- ▶ Supine
 - Roll Over (advanced)
 - Jackknife (advanced)
 - Corkscrew (advanced)
 - Hip Circles (advanced)
- ▶ Seated
 - Spine Twist (advanced)
 - Twist (advanced)
- ▶ Side Plank
 - Side Bend Twist (advanced)
 - Side Bend (advanced)

NOT FOR PRINT

STRENGTHENING SPINAL EXTENSION

Building Skills

Pilates programs focus on strengthening the abdominals in a wide variety of exercises. For good balance around the muscles of the torso it is also important to strengthen the spinal extensors as well.

For example:

- ▶ All Fours
 - Cat/Cow
- ▶ Supine
 - Bridging
- ▶ Prone
 - Swan
 - Swimming
 - Single Leg Kicks
 - Double Leg Kicks
 - Swan Dive and Swan Rocking (advanced)
 - Rocking (advanced)

DEVELOPING SCAPULAR MOBILITY AND STRENGTH

Building Skills

Developing a strong and flexible upper body is a key ingredient in balanced physical development and for progressing into the more advanced work. The Balanced Body pre-Pilates exercises add an element of scapular mobility to balance out the scapular stability of many of the Mat exercises.

For example:

- ▶ Supine
 - Pinwheel/Telescope
 - Angels in the Snow
- ▶ All Fours
 - Sternum Drop
- ▶ Standing
 - Wall Push Ups
- ▶ Prone
 - Single Leg Kicks
 - Plank
 - Push Ups
 - Leg Pull Down (advanced)
- ▶ Back Plank
 - Leg Pull Up (advanced)
- ▶ Seated
 - Twist (advanced)
- ▶ Side Plank
 - Side Bend Twist (advanced)
 - Side Bend (advanced)

CHALLENGING THE CORE

Creating Challenge

Once the placement and muscle engagement of the core are established, it is important to challenge the foundation with a variety of exercises. One of the hallmarks of Pilates is that it takes one functional movement concept and challenges it in a number of different ways so the body learns how to activate support system regardless of what position it is in.

For example:

- ▶ Supine
 - Hundred
 - Roll Up
 - Leg Circles
 - Rolling like a Ball
 - Single Leg Stretch
 - Double Leg Stretch
 - Single Straight Leg Stretch
 - Double Straight Leg Stretch
 - Crisscross
 - Teaser (advanced)
 - Neck Pull (advanced)
 - Roll Over (advanced)
 - Jackknife (advanced)
 - Corkscrew (advanced)
 - Hip Circles (advanced)
 - Boomerang (advanced)
- ▶ Seated
 - Spine Twist (advanced)
 - Twist (advanced)
- ▶ Side Plank
 - Side Bend Twist (advanced)
 - Side Bend (advanced)

LEG STRENGTHENING AND FLEXIBILITY

Bring it home

The Pilates mat work includes exercises for strengthening and stretching the hip extensors/hamstrings, hip flexors/quadriceps, adductors and abductors in a variety of positions. In addition to the traditional exercises, adding additional positions of the legs, for example internal and external rotation and standing, can increase the variety of targeted muscle groups.

For example:

Strengthening quadriceps and hip flexors:

- ▶ Supine
 - Hundred
 - Leg Circles
 - Single Leg Stretch
 - Double Leg Stretch
 - Single Straight Leg Stretch
 - Double Straight Leg Stretch
 - Crisscross
 - Teaser (advanced)

- ▶ Seated
 - Open Leg Rocker

Stretching quadriceps and hip flexors:

- ▶ Supine
 - Bridging
- ▶ Prone
 - Swan
 - Single Leg Kicks
 - Double Leg Kicks

Strengthening hamstrings and hip extensors:

- ▶ Supine
 - Bridging
- ▶ Prone
 - Swan
 - Single Leg Kicks
 - Double Leg Kicks
 - Swimming

Stretching hamstrings and hip extensors:

- ▶ Supine
 - Roll Up
 - Leg Circles
 - Single Straight Leg Stretch
- ▶ Seated
 - Spine Stretch
 - Saw
 - Open Leg Rocker

Strengthening adductors: Keep the legs together or add a ball or ring to strengthen the adductors. .

- ▶ Supine
 - Hundred
 - Roll Up
- ▶ Side Lying
 - Side Leg Lifts using the bottom leg

Stretching adductors:

- ▶ Seated
 - Spine Stretch (with the legs wide)
- ▶ Kneeling
 - Side Kicks (Advanced)

Strengthening abductors:

- ▶ Side Lying
 - Side Leg Series

Stretching abductors:

- ▶ Supine
 - Leg Circles

USING A VARIETY OF POSITIONS

One of the strengths of Pilates is the opportunity to train the core in a variety of functional positions including supine, prone, side lying, sitting, all fours and standing. When teaching a class it is important to incorporate each of these positions into the class.

For example:

- ▶ Supine
 - Single Leg Stretch
- ▶ Prone
 - Swan
- ▶ Side Lying
 - Slide Leg series
- ▶ Seated
 - Spine Stretch
- ▶ All Fours:
 - Cat/Camel
- ▶ Standing Balance

As you look over this list notice how many of the exercises are in multiple categories. Most of how we move in life involves a variety of different movement principles and Pilates has that complexity built into it. When putting together a class, start with some of the sample programs we have included and then experiment with your own personal preferences. Strive to become a great class instructor and you will teach your students how to move better, feel better and look better.

NOT FOR PRINT

MAT 1

© 2025 Balanced Body Inc. All rights reserved. itm-mat1